

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2020

A Note from the Editor

I am writing while in so-called 'lockdown', or 'shelter-in-place' in my home, having left only briefly a few times to buy food as a result of the spreading Coronavirus outbreak. My first thought to my readers is that you are all keeping well, and that the pandemic has not thus far had significant impact on your livelihood.

I am pleased that quite a few new items and contributions have arrived to make the job of assembling this newsletter a bit easier.

As usual, please continue sending in any information on past or future performances, sightings, related videos and audio recordings, music and book publications, etc.

And your generous subscription donations are always needed appreciated. Please consider when you last sent in a contribution and send another!

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

- This is to announce the launch of the Serpent Journey Association (Association Serpent Journey). This non-profit organization aims to spread information about the serpent to a larger audience and to organize activities revolving around this fascinating instrument, such as concerts, workshops, seminars and association. We would like to invite you to participate in the further development of the momentum currently moving the serpent. An influx of new members into our association will indeed help us finance our projects. The annual fee is CHF 30. Larger donations are, of course, welcome.

Because of the Coronavirus, the next Serpent Journey event, which was to start on Thursday 23 April, 2020, and end with a concert at the Collégiale in St-Imier on Sunday 26 April, has been postponed to 2021. Please check the Berger website www.serpents.ch for updates. You may also write to Association Serpent Journey, Les Prailats 18, CH-2336 Les Bois, Switzerland.

New Materials

- *Akoé: Nuevas Músicas Antiguas*; CD recording featuring ensemble Taracea and Michel Godard on serpent. Alpha Classics # 597. Obtained from Amazon.

This recording is the debut effort of Spanish ensemble Taracea, a trio comprised of Rainer Seiferth, a German musician who lives in Spain and here plays the vihuela (the guitar-like Spanish counterpart of the Renaissance lute), flute and recorder specialist Belén Nieto (who is a regular member of Jordi Savall's ensembles), and double bass player Miguel Rodríguez. On this album, the Madrid-based trio is joined by David Mayoral on zarb, riq and darbuka, singer and percussionist Isabel Martín, and Michel Godard on serpent. The ensemble's name Taracea is the Spanish word for marquetry, the art of wooden inlay, suggesting their preferred intertwined musical arrangements, which are all by Seiferth. The album title mixes the Greek *Akoé* (ak-o-ay') meaning *hearing* or *a sense of hearing*, and the Spanish *Nuevas Músicas Antiguas* meaning *New Old Music*, and is about combining old and new musical ideas.

Playing the first track on this CD, John Dowland's *Preludio*, it seemed that perhaps the entire album would be very traditionally interpreted Renaissance music using period instruments. The recorder is accompanied by the lute-sounding vihuela, and the music is unaffected by more modern influences. This segues into another Dowland piece, *Come Again, Sweet Love Doth Now Invite*, where the vihuela plays the normal part with just a touch of jazz influenced rhythm, the recorder is replaced by transverse flute, the string bass joins with a slightly cool-jazz foundation, and

David Mayoral's battery of diverse yet subtle percussion adds additional interest. Part way into this selection, it becomes a fantasy on the Dowland theme, and only faintly recognizable for a while. By the end of the piece, it is decidedly modern; this is a harbinger of the rest of the album.

The third track is Giulio Caccini's *Amarilli, mia bella*, starting with Godard's serpent solo before it takes a more soulful and dreamy turn, trading melody between serpent and recorder, or presenting a duet of the two, mostly with the help of the strings. Up next is the anonymous *Cuchilleros* with its more apparent Spanish flavor, then *Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen* by Heinrich Isaac, with its drone double bass over which the vihuela sings and is eventually joined by a low voiced flute and/or recorder. Another anonymous selection *Marizápalos* follows, and this is another opportunity for the serpent to take turns with the recorder on the melody.



Juan Del Encina's *¡Ay triste que vengo!* is the only track on which Isabel Martín performs, and her vocalization is clear and suits the music well; this is a rather busy jazz-fusion styled piece. Josquin Desprez's well known *Mille regretz* is next, beginning with a vihuela solo before the recorder takes over with the more recognizable melody. The serpent reappears in *Passemèze* by Adrien le Roy, this time with a free-form sensibility and lots of breathy and tongued serpent effects, while the flute flutter-tongues, the vihuela sounds more like a guitar, the driving double bass line propels everything forward while Mayoral's percussion adds its kicks; this is the most modern piece on the album.

Hildegard von Bingen contributes *O quam mirabilis*, which is preformed by just the core trio in a more subdued treatment. The album concludes with the jazz-rock fusion arrangement of *Tant que vivray* by Claudin de Sermisy, performed by the trio plus Mayoral's percussion and Godard's serpent; this track in particular might remind the listener of Mannheim Steamroller. Although the serpent use is moderate, this is a nice recording of serpent in an

unconventional application, and Godard's abilities in both traditional music and jazz serves him well. The overall set of selections and their performances are quite agreeable, and although far from traditional in their arrangements, the performers are all clearly skilled and play well together.



*Funeral Procession of the Duke of Wellington
November 1852, thanks to Mark Jones*

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
<nicholasperry.instruments@gmail.com>
(see Christopher Monk Instruments
website URL at lower right)
(serpents, early cimbasso, bass horns)

David Harding
The Early Music Shop
Salts Mill, Victoria Road
Saltaire
West Yorkshire BD18 3LA
England
Phone: +44 (0) 1274 288 100
<www.earlymusicshop.com>
(resin serpents)

Serpents Ribo
(c/o Pierre Ribo)
Rue Van Oost, 40
1030 Bruxelles
Belgium
Phone: 0032 497 574 496
<pierre.ribo@souslesplatanes.be>
(Serpents)

Wessex Tubas
Jonathan Hodgetts (UK)
Andy Loree (USA)
www.wessex-tubas.co.uk
www.wessex-tubas.com
(ophicleides, quinticlavies)

S Berger Serpents
Stephan Berger & Erna Suter
Atelier de Cuir
Les Prailats 18
CH-2336 Les Bois
Switzerland
Phone: 0041 (0) 32 961 1188
<www.serpents.ch>
<sberger@serpents.ch>

(serpents, both wood and carbon
fiber, serpent cases, accessories)
[formerly Wetterberger serpents]

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

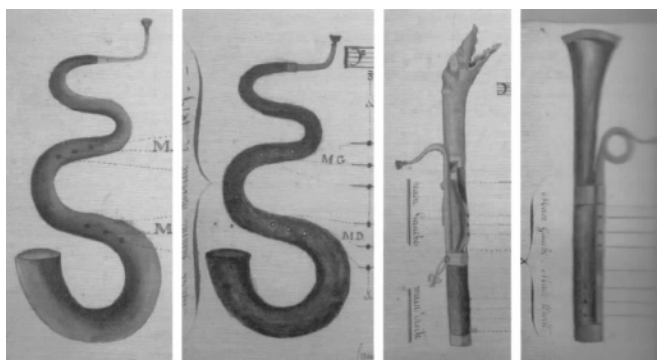
NEW!

Dr. Paul Dorsey / Dulcian, Inc.
pdorsey@dulcian.com
(3D printed serpents after examples at
the Bate Collection, Oxford)

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



*Imbert, Abrégé des principes de musique
thanks to Volny Hostiou*

Where Serpents Gather

● Nick Byrne wrote, “Scott Kinmont & I performed in the Berlioz *Symphony Fantastique* on our Bb & C ophicleide combination with our Sydney Symphony Orchestra in the wonderful 19th Century surrounds & acoustics of the original home of the SSO, Sydney Town hall, conducted by David Robertson last August.”

“Currently in planning is a 3-day Serpent & Ophicleide symposium planned for European Summer 2021 in Europe (Coronavirus willing!) All the leading performers & makers will hopefully be present to give concerts, masterclasses, and talks on the instruments. It will stand alone from all other brass events in that it will only present the Serpent & Ophicleide and their direct derivatives. The exact dates and hosting city are to be determined, but things are falling nicely into place. It will become a biennial event to attract enthusiasts & professionals alike. I will let you know as soon as details are locked in.”



Scott Kinmont and Nick Byrne

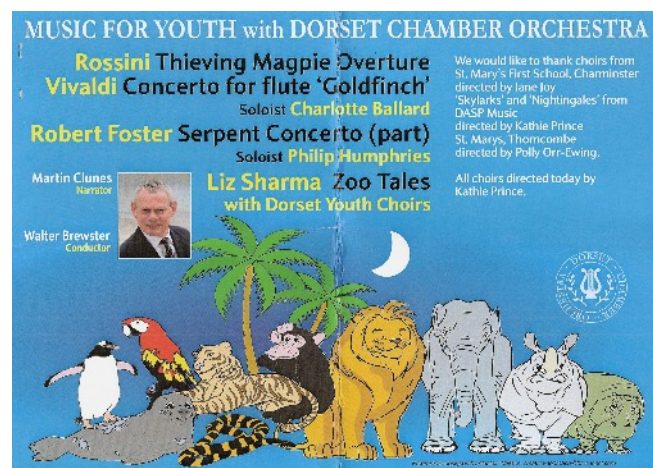
● Bernard Fourtet wrote, “Unfortunately I have no important news to communicate, except that concerts are canceled or delayed.....these days I also have to practice on sackbutt, and to prepare my third renaissance music summer course here in the Pyrenees, the theme is Orlando de Lassus. Not much on the course dealing with serpent, but serpentists

are of course welcome to participate. Last month, before the Coronavirus outbreak, our serpent group *Le trio Méandre* participated in a Baroque Jam session in a bar in Toulouse, performing some Dufay, Scheidt, etc. Best wishes to all serpentists and musicians all over the planet.”

● Phil Humphries wrote with some news. “The Mellstock Band had a really good Christmas tour in December 2019 with concerts in Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Somerset, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Hampshire, which included some great venues including The National Folk Arts Centre and The National Early Music Centre. The London Serpent Trio (Nick Perry, Andy Kershaw and Phil Humphries) meet in London and Dorset on a regular basis and are currently working on a new 6 movement suite by organist/composer Stephen Binnington. We have recently set up a facebook page listed as The London Serpent Trio. I have also put the posts in dropbox for those who do not use facebook; enter the following URL in your browser:”

www.dropbox.com/sh/g8sn9ohkdrki7ne/AAJ40KJL8hcDKH5M9PfnqUUa?dl=0

Included there are several audio and video files of the London Serpent Trio, including one selection from the Serpent Celebration at St. John’s Smith Square on Friday the 13th, July 1990.



“I also performed two movements only, due to time restrictions, of a concerto composed for me by Robert Foster in a ‘concert for youth’ on Saturday 14th March 2020. The concert was animal themed and also included the Vivaldi *Goldfinch* flute concerto, and a piece for orchestra and narrator called *Zoo Tales* by Liz Sharma. The spoken word was delivered by actor Martin Clunes, one of our national treasures (Men Behaving Badly, Doc Martin, etc). Chatting to him in the green room he appeared very interested in our addiction and music in general. He came over as a really nice guy.”

“I hope you all keep well, and on that topic I did have a good chuckle over the following post put on facebook by 3D serpent maker Paul Dorsey; ‘COVID-19 and serpents... after consulting with a doctor friend of mine (after several beers),

he has authorized me to report that serpent playing is a great way improve lung capacity -- which actually has almost no effect on the virus. However, he concluded after hearing me play that it could work really well to assist with social distancing.' "

- In December 2019, Doug Yeo traveled to Austin, Texas, to play ophicleide on two performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with a period instrument group assembled by George Dupere, Chief Musician of Austin's Redeemer Presbyterian Church. The performances were only the second time the piece has been performed by a period instrument orchestra in the United States; the other time was by Boston's Handel and Haydn Society in 2015, conducted by Grant Lewellyn. Doug played ophicleide in those performances as well. Doug wrote on another topic, "The ITA Journal and the HBS Journal have just published reviews of my Bate Serpent book (reviewed in the previous edition of this newsletter). It's heartening to receive such supportive reviews."



*Brass section of the Austin Elijah orchestra
Doug Yeo at right*

- Serpentist Lilian Poueydebat, a member of Trio Méandre, wrote with some more advance information on the new CD, hopefully to be released soon, where he played in accompaniment with Ensemble Antiphona on a new album of music by Joseph Valette de Montigny (the previous edition of this newsletter has some more information). Of the two selections on the recording, *Salvum me fac Deus* and *Surge Propera*, the latter is especially interesting as an *obligato* Serpent is requested, as written on the original score. An other peculiarity, the tuning was 392 Hz, so that the serpent had to play a full tone lower underneath the C, i.e. Bb. About the scores, the Serpent is written along with the *basso continuo* part (as "Serpand"), underneath the cello and bassoon part., and in the 'serpand' part the dynamics are "fort"/doux, which are a bit hazardous....

- See this newsletter's section on 3D printed serpents for news of performances by François Spaltenstein.

- Patricia Gauci wrote, "On 25 January 2020 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, the Early Music Society of Nova Scotia (EMSNS) hosted one of its most enduring and popular events, the annual Mid-Winter Tune Up, wherein all members of the EMSNS, or ensembles including at least one

member, are invited to share the music on which they have been working. John De Wolfe and I chose to perform *Sonata 1* by Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), originally for two recorders but easily adapted for a pair of serpents. Following the performance, a member of the EMSNS executive said to me, "You two are getting too good. You're not even funny anymore."



Patricia Gauci and John De Wolfe

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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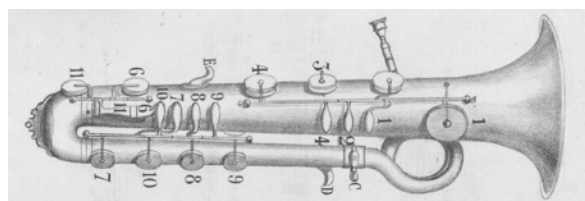
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Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$20 US for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are required for individuals, and institutions that manage to receive the newsletter without contributions are doing so entirely at the discretion of the regional representative. As of April 2012, all newsletters distributed in the European region are electronic, not printed, and there is no subscription charge. European region readers may choose a printed hardcopy option, in which case rates for UK subscribers are £5 for 2 years, for Europe £6 or 10 Euros. For the time being, newsletters distributed elsewhere remain in printed form. Non-UK/EU contributions may be made using PayPal, sent to the email address ocleide@earthlink.net



Adventures and Explorations with 3D Serpents

● My first 3D printed serpent

by Paul Schmidt

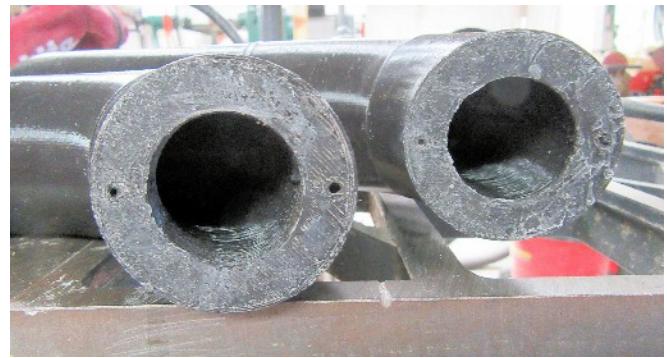
In January 2020, Mark Jones emailed to say that he was now the proud owner of a new 3D printed serpent. Having communicated previously with Mark Witkowski and Andy Lamb about their efforts in recreating some original serpents in the Bate Collection using 3D printing techniques, as well as consulting with Robert Wagenknecht about his ongoing efforts to design and fabricate 3D printed serpents (photos of both efforts can be found in several previous editions of this newsletter), I realized that while I had enjoyed very brief exposure to such serpents, I had no significant experience with them. I could have made my own example, but not having a 3D printer or a good place to set one up and use it, I had not taken any concrete steps in that direction. Upon inquiry, Mark directed me to Paul Dorsey in New Jersey, who has a separate introduction in the addendum at the end of this newsletter. I contacted Dorsey and discussed exactly what he was making, and he said he was following the Witkowski plans for the Bate #504, an anonymous serpent. Once he had printed the sections, his son was tasked to align the sections and glue them together. Then they were applying a thin overwrap of fiberglass, to add strength and to cover the seams between sections, and then painting to give an appearance of black leather. He was not making mouthpieces, although the Witkowski plans included files for making those as well.



Dorsey/Witkowski 3D printed serpent, after Bate #504, as received with separated joint, and its detached bocal. Note discoloration at each joint due to use of CA glue accelerant

I said that I was interested in trying a 3D serpent at minimal cost, and actually wanted it to look like it was 3D printed; I have plenty of serpents that look 'normal'. He agreed to expedite one printed serpent so I would have time to experiment with it in time for a report in this newsletter. Because he would not be adding the usual fiberglass and paint, there was a modest reduction in the purchase price.

The serpent arrived in a huge box, with two sides having dimensions approximating a rectangular serpent case, and then about 24 inches of depth. The weight of box, padding



Dorsey/Witkowski 3D printed serpent, two halves of separated joint, showing wall thickness and alignment holes

(foam peanuts and re-used air-pillows) and box was still minimal, but the size drove the shipping costs upwards of \$100 US. The padding had shifted, allowing the serpent to migrate to the bottom of the box, and no doubt shocks experienced there while in transit contributed to the body of the serpent coming apart at one of the joints between sections. Communications ensued about how to reduce the box size, improve the padding techniques, and reduce the cost of shipment for future shipments.

I learned that Dorsey's serpents are currently being printed using the PLA (Polylactic acid) type plastic, a bioplastic polymer made from renewable resources. Another popular plastic would have been ABS, as used for plastic recorders, car bumpers and LEGO blocks, but 3D printing with that material is less friendly to being done inside a home environment, so Dorsey prefers to stick with PLA at this time. Witkowski's recommendations call for chemical welding (also called solvent welding) of the sections, which is a safe and strong method familiar to many people who have joined PVC water or drain pipe using solvent, or 'glued' plastic airplane models together. The instructions also allow that another adhesive might be used, such as a fast setting two-part epoxy resin (common 5-minute epoxy).



Dorsey/Witkowski 3D printed serpent, after repair of separated joint, with bocal inserted and Monk mouthpiece installed.

A few wraps of plumber's Teflon tape was used to seal the bocal joint, and a few wraps of dental floss were used to seal the mouthpiece joint

Dorsey has advised that he and his son are joining the sections using Cyanoacrylate adhesive (also known as CA Glue, super glue, Krazy glue, etc.) followed by application of an accelerant to instantly cure the adhesive, making for relatively fast assembly. It can be important to consider that while solvent welding is likely to be stronger than using an adhesive/glue, it has a downside that the sections on either side of such a joint need to be held, or otherwise secured, firmly while the solvent does its job and slowly evaporates. This is no doubt why Dorsey is not using the solvent welding method, and explains why he normally gives the serpent a reinforcing fiberglass wrap.

While the acrylic resin formed by cured CA glue is normally clear, one result of using accelerant is that the cured resin is white instead, and thus much more visible. Since my serpent was printed using black PLA, the joints are much more visible due to the white adhesive. However, I had asked for my serpent to be unadorned and uncoated, so this is not a problem for me. Obviously, anyone ordering the serpent as Dorsey usually makes them will not have to consider how the joints will look.

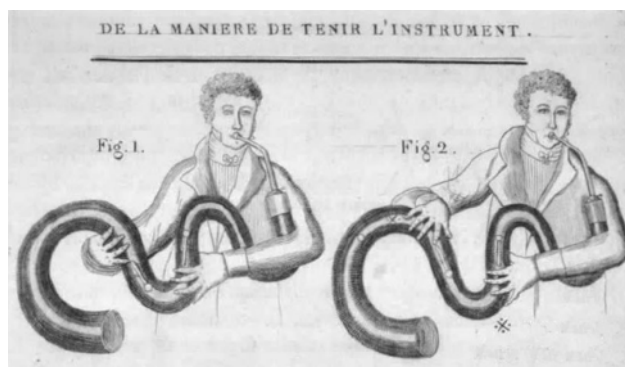


*Dorsey/Witkowski
3D printed serpent,
with Monk church
serpent in C
posed in front.*

*The contoured
bell rim of the
original Bate #504
is more noticeable
by the comparison.*

Having mentioned the above, I still had to deal with a separated joint on my serpent. The first order of business was to file or sand off the failed acrylic resin left over from the CA adhesive. I used an orbital sander and pressed the face of the joint (rather, each side of the joint, one half at a time) against the flat sanding surface, and carefully removed material until I could see that I was down to the original printed plastic surface. Witkowski's 3D printing files create small alignment holes, two per end of each section, and small pins, or bits of stiff wire, or even short sections of the PLA filament from the 3D printer, can be inserted into these holes and thus ensure correct alignment of the sections. Using a small drill, I slightly enlarged the holes to fit bits of 12AWG copper wire, commonly used on residential

electrical wiring, since I had some on hand. After test fitting the halves of the separated joint, I removed the bits of wire, and applied a bead of Weld-On #16 solvent, which is a mixture of four different but related solvents, being the closest thing I could find for solvent welding of PLA. Pressing the opposite half to the first, I rubbed them together for a few seconds to spread the solvent and start dissolving the plastic surface. I pulled the sections apart, applied another bead of the solvent, and repeated the rubbing action to build up a certain thickness of dissolved plastic paste to fill any gaps at the joint, and finally re-inserted the bits of alignment wire, applied one more bead of solvent, and pressed the aligned halves together. Since two sizable halves of the serpent were on either side of this joint, I had some wooden shims set up on the table to support them and prevent gravity from pulling them apart. I also laid four pre-cut strips of "duct tape" over the seam at 90 degree increments around. After allowing the solvent to evaporate overnight, I removed the tape and rubbed some more solvent around the edges of the seam and waited another 12 hours. The 3D printed serpent was whole again.



*Hermenge, Méthode pour le serpent ordinaire et à clef
thanks to Volny Hostiou*

On further inspection, I realized that the Witkowski design did not allow for tuning the serpent. Instead of a short cylindrical section at the large end of the bocal, and a corresponding section inside the small end of the serpent body, this design uses a reverse taper on both sections, so the bocal plugs into the receiver on the body much in the same way as a brass instrument mouthpiece inserts into the mouthpiece receiver of its instrument. This allows a good air seal, and provides for swiveling the bocal around to adjust for player comfort, but moving the bocal in and out of the body for tuning is a practical impossibility. Using a traditional serpent mouthpiece by Christopher Monk Instruments from my collection, which by the way fit into the small end of the bocal quite nicely with just a couple wraps the dental floss for seal and tightness, the instrument tuned about 10 cents sharp at A=440 Hz, although I could lip most notes into tune. As such, I would have had a hard time playing the 3D printed serpent in an ensemble, but it was no problem by itself.

I have now spent probably eight hours playing and experimenting with this new instrument. For the most part, I can use the fingerings I am accustomed to, and get notes



3D printed serpent made by François Spaltenstein, after the Witkowski model files based on Bate#500. As with the original, this instrument has metal braces between the bends. The maker also added reinforcing strips along the inside and outside curve edges, most visible here on the bottom bow.

pretty much where I want them to be. I can play the same pitch range that I can on my other serpents, with about the same level of effort and success. I have recorded myself playing it, and listening later I can report that the timbre seems pretty normal, not significantly different from my wooden instruments. The sound is about as loud as a normal serpent. The finger holes are NOT undercut as they should be, but the instrument does not seem to suffer greatly from this. I have not yet experimented with modifying the finger holes, and probably will not do so, out of a desire to keep this as-is and not something other than the original design.

I am eager to compare this serpent with another made from Witkowski's plans based on the Bate #500 design after "Dittes", which reportedly does have a tunable bocal. Dorsey has the files and as I write this is reportedly printing one with my name on it. I hope to write about that instrument in the next newsletter.

In partial conclusion, it is my view that 3D printed serpents are viable, especially at the low price point. I doubt that they will be very attractive to more experienced, or serious, serpentists as primary instruments, but will probably be attractive to beginners. I had a long discussion with Craig Kridel about the issue of whether prospective serpentists might wish to start with one model or another of less expensive serpent, including Harding, Kaiser, and others including the Dorsey or other similar ones printed from the same designs. In my view, these play well enough that serpent students, especially those in college, and other beginners 'testing the water' will find these to be satisfactory, and the techniques they develop on them will translate well to better serpents they may graduate to later.

● François Spaltenstein reported on the 3D printed serpent he made using the plans and printing files provided by Mark Witkowski of the Imperial College, London. He has not reported which of the two sets of plans were used, the Bate #500 or the Bate #504, but from his photos it appears that he has used the #500, the museum's "Dittes" serpent. After printing and joining the 3D printed sections, he reinforced some parts since the collage of the sections is less solid than a serpent made of larger overlapped pieces in the traditional way. He painted the body black, then applied shoe polish and buffed with a rag to give more depth to the painted

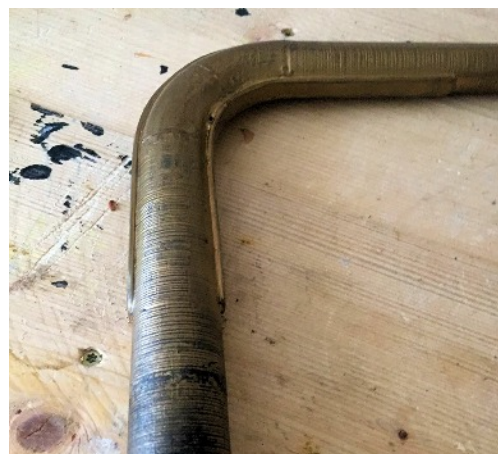


Spaltenstein 3D serpent, middle section, showing braces and reinforcing strips.

While the seams at the joints are visible, the maker's paint & shoe polish coating is effective in improving the overall appearance

coating, thinking of the painter Pierre Soulages. For the bocal, he used a golden spray intended for Christmas gifts, applying with the rag that had polished the polish of the body: everyone thinks it's metal, some even think of bronze!

As he reported to Mark, he would never have started playing the serpent if he had needed to buy a commercial serpent, being afraid that it would be a passing fantasy; he is a clarinetist and bassoonist, also playing Baroque bassoon and dulcian. But he took the chance with this printed serpent, and says he thinks it plays very correctly, having had it evaluated by Robert Ischer of Lausanne, who was a pioneer of the cornetto in the 60s.



Bocal of 3D printed serpent made by François Spaltenstein, showing reinforcing strips

He has performed on this 3D serpent twice. On February 10, 2019 at Crans-sur-Céligny (Canton of Geneva, Switzerland), playing the bass line on Monteverdi's *Ecco mormorar l'onde* for five voices. And again on June 6, 2019 at Yverdon-les-Bains (Canton of Vaud, Switzerland), playing *Adoramus te Christe* by Orlando di Lasso, other instruments in the ensemble being dulcian and cornetto.

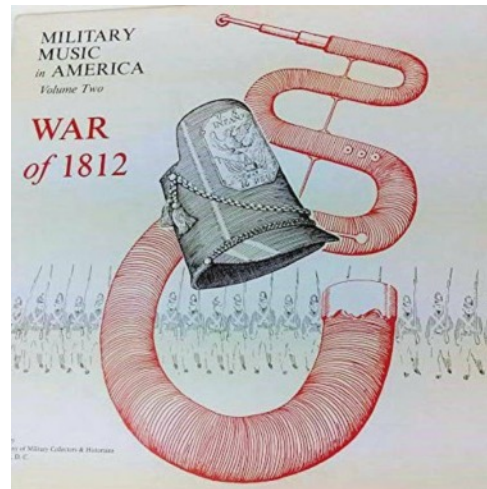


From the December 29, 1955 edition of Jet Magazine, this photo was previously printed with a much lower resolution in the April 2009 edition of this newsletter. The original caption reads, "Serpentine Bop: Tooting a centuries-old serpent horn, bop exponent Dizzy Gillespie tries out strange instruments at the Odd Horn Shop, a New York musical instrument store. Originated in the Far East [sic], the rare horn is rented out for shows by store owner at \$10 per session." Thanks to Mark Jones

More Exciting News

● In the September 2019 edition of this newsletter, an old LP album *Military Music in America, Volume 2, War of 1812* was mentioned and questioned about whether it actually had any serpent playing on it. Thanks to Mark Jones for doing some detective work. He writes, "The liner notes of the LP read, 'The Band of Music used two clarinets, two oboes, two horns, and a serpent. The horns were played without valves and an ancient German upright bass (tuba) was altered and fitted with a special mute so that it approximated the tones of an early serpent in the Smithsonian Institution as closely as the sound of one serpent of the period approximated another.', so much for accurate history."

On the other hand, another old LP dating from the same period, *The Fifes & Drums and The Band of Musick*,



The old LP album that does NOT have serpent

featuring two bands from Colonial Williamsburg (Colonial Williamsburg catalog # WS101) does include an actual serpent, played by Richard Haas. The serpent appears on alternate tracks with The Band of Musick, and is featured on one selection, *Rule Britannia*. Due to the age and current unavailability of this recording, it has not been included in the *New Materials* section of this newsletter, however it is listed on the Serpent Website's *Discography* webpage.

Robert Wagenknecht is familiar with the above recording, and knows Richard Haas, and wrote, "I called Dr. Richard Haas today and asked him your question. He is quite sure the recording was made in 1962 when he was about 16 years old and in high school. He remembered the recording quite well and with pleasure, especially (in addition to *Rule Britannia*) track three, *Excerpt from Water Music*, but he referred to it as *La Rejouissance*, which is from *Fireworks*. [In fact, although the album jacket notes don't mention any other details, the track is actually the *Overture* from the *Suite in D major* from the *Water Music*.]"



Michel Godard, photo copyright by Thomas Radlwimmer

- Michel Godard wrote with the following:

Hope that you are doing OK ! I'm at home for some weeks, never had so much free time....By the way, the next *Serpent Journey* in April is postponed to next year."

Do you know this poetry by Boris Vian (1920-1959, writer, poet, musician, singer, translator, critic, actor, inventor and engineer), his brother was collecting ancient instruments:

Y en a qui ont des trompinettes
Et des bugles
Et des serpents
Y en a qui ont des clarinettes
Et des ophicléides géants
Y en a qui ont de gros tambours
Bourre bourre bourre
Et Ran plan plan
Mais moi j'ai un mirliton
Et je mirlitonne
Du soir au matin
Moi je n'ai q'un mirliton
Mais ça m'est égal si j'en joue bien.
Oui mais voilà, est-ce que j'en joue bien.

Google translation:

Some have trumpets
And bugles
And serpents
Some have clarinets
And giant ophicleides
Some have big drums
Bourre bourre bourre
And ran plan plan
But I have a mirliton
And I mirlitonne
From evening to morning
I only have a mirliton
But I don't care if I play it well.
Yes but here, am I playing it well.



*Hermenge, Méthode élémentaire pour le Serpent-Forveille
thanks to Volny Hostiou*

[It seems that a 'mirliton' in this context is a home-made instrument with some soft or vibrating diaphragm, often made from onion skin, a piece of balloon, etc; and either blown to make noise, or whirled around on a string to the same effect, and 'mirlitonne' is to whirl the mirliton.]

A new recording will come soon, *Risplendente Riversi* with vocalist Natasa Mirkovic, Luciano Biondini on accordion, and percussionist Jarrod Cagwin; early music from the Balkans and some new compositions; I play serpent.

I also have new management, Ambresia Music, www.ambresiamusic.com.



- Doug Yeo spotted a serpent related photo in the March 1939 issue of *The Etude* magazine, page 160 (see above photo). The lengthy caption reads, "AND THEY USED TO PLAY THIS IN CHURCH.....Here is the serpent, and its tamer. In ancient times it was the natural bass of the cornet family and was played with a cupped mouthpiece. The wooden tube would be about eight feet long, if stretched out. Sometimes, the instrument was made of brass and copper. Because it was invented in 1590, by a religious Canon, Edmé Guillaume of Auxerre, France, it was supposed to be especially important for church services. Its use spread from France to England, where it was considered necessary in rural churches, especially where there was no organ. Its compass was seventeen diatonic notes, from low C to C''. The instrument is now supplanted by the Tuba or, occasionally, by the ophicleide. Mendelssohn, Wagner and others prescribed it for use in their scores." [It does seem that whoever wrote the caption was citing some information already quite out of date by 1939.....]

- Recent Treatments of the Ophicleide and Ophimonocleide

Two essays have appeared in the International Tuba Euphonium Association (ITEA) Journal that may be of interest for those who subscribe to the Serpent Newsletter. Most recently, Clifford Bevan has written *Don't Deride the Ophicleide* for the Winter 2020 issue of the Historical

Instrument Section of the ITEA Journal where he examines some recent and inaccurate criticisms of the instrument. In the Winter 2019 Historical Instrument Section of the journal, I prepared the essay, *The Ophimonocleide: Folly or Genius*, in my ongoing review of various bass horns for the ITEA readership (the serpent Forveille and English bass horn have also been featured; the basson russe and cimbasso essays are forthcoming).

The details are: *Don't Deride the Ophicleide* by Clifford Bevan, ITEA Journal 47:2, Winter 2020, 56-58. *The Ophimonocleide: Folly or Genius* by Craig Kridel, ITEA Journal 46:2, Winter 2019, 30-33. These essays are available for free download at www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org/itea.htm submitted by Craig Kridel

- Patrick Wibart wrote about the new concerto *Adh Dhohr* by French composer Benjamin Attahir, first mentioned in the previous edition of this newsletter. It was recorded November 2019 with the Orchestre National de Lille, and will be released this season in their next CD. Also in the works is a solo serpent CD project, which will be dedicated to French music of the first half of the 18th century.

**"DON'T TREAD ON ME
SNAKE"**

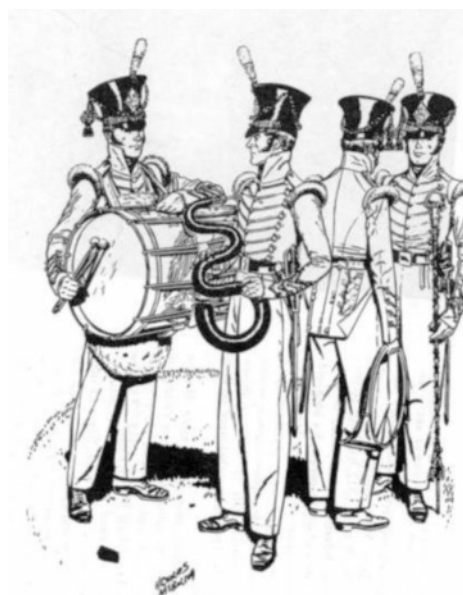
**The Musical Instrument
SERPENT and its use in
Early America**

A presentation & demonstration by Mark Jones
featuring a real 200 year old SERPENT instrument!



- Mark Jones wrote, "I have a new PowerPoint talk/lecture/presentation for 2020. *DON'T TREAD ON ME SNAKE - The Musical Instrument SERPENT and Its Use in Early America*. A LOT of research went into this, and I begin with a brief history of this ancient strange bass instrument and proceed to show its use in colonial America through the Revolutionary War and proceeding to the War of 1812, and also how it was used in church ensembles, town bands, and militia organizations. Many 18th & 19th original 'show & tell' items are brought, along with a demonstration of a c.1800 Military Serpent and concluding with the latest high tech 3D printing of a replica of an 18th Century serpent, just created in 2020 [by Dorsey], which I'll demonstrate too. Unfortunately, the scheduled presentations are now postponed in each location due to library closures due to the virus outbreak."

Some excerpts from Mark's presentation: "From a letter penned in 1815 by (West Point) Academy Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer, we find a list of instruments purchased for the band: trumpets, bugles, clarinets, bassoons, cymbals, drums, flutes, *serpents*, and horns." "In September 1816, Willis signed for some musical accessories as "Teacher of



U.S. Military
Academy Band
1822-1831

Music" for "the Military Band at West Point," & three months later Willis received an additional trumpet and a *serpent* from John Paff." "In December 1821, a letter listed some of the instruments that had been purchased at that time for the band, & condition. It showed the band had fifteen clarinets, eleven flutes, two horns, one *serpent*, one trombone, and a bass drum in good condition, with one bassoon, one keyed bugle, and one trumpet in damaged but playable condition. The rest were either "unfit for service" or "worn out."" "Additional musical instruments provided for the band by 1822, besides the issue drums and fifes, were a violonette, three trumpets, five clairionettes, two bassoons, two flutes, a French horn, a Patent Kent Bugle, a *Serpent*, and probably a bass drum." "Finally, an attachment list to a letter from Superintendent Thayer to Macomb, dated October 1, 1822, included 'Returns of Musical Instruments Purchased for the Band of the U.S. Military Academy from the formation of the Band in 1815 to the 30th September 1822, George Blaney, Lt Corps of Engineers Post Adjutant (RG 94, MB, NA).' The return lists: 2 Bassoons, 2 Royal Kent Bugles, 1 Fila Bugle, 10 Clarinets, 1 Cymbal, 1 Bass Drum, 8 Flutes, 3 French Horns, 1 *Serpent*, 2 Trumpets—as purchased 'prior to Sept. 1817.' "

- A Plea for More Use of Historical Serpent Mouthpieces

I have just completed my second year as a member of the Lititz (Pennsylvania) Collegium, a chamber orchestra of 22 players with a designated harmoniemusik windband within the ensemble. The Collegium, founded in the 1760s at Lititz, then one of the major Moravian settlements in the United States, performs two concerts each year and serves as a venue for the Lititz Moravian Congregation's Director of Music Ministries and ensemble conductor, Dr. Jeffrey Gemmell, to prepare modern performance editions from the original music library and, thus, make available works by many of America's first classical music composers from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

As a serpentist using an historical mouthpiece and playing with primarily modern instrumentalists (albeit, who take seriously historically-informed performance practices), I have been astonished, as have the bassoonists, how the serpent blends with bassoons when such a mouthpiece is used—the sharp-throated mouthpiece rather than the modern curved- (or soft-) throated mouthpiece that produces a more modern brass sound. I write to encourage all serpentists to obtain an historical, sharp-throated serpent mouthpiece in case you, too, have the opportunity to play harmoniemusik, either with an historical or modern instrument ensemble.

The serpent as a solo instrument has reached new heights with the next generation of virtuosi—Patrick Wibart, Volny Hostiou, Roland Szentpáli and, we hope, soon-to-emerge others. And the future of the serpent ensemble is now back on track with the reemergence of the London Serpent Trio and the efforts of Phil Humphries, Nick Perry, and Andy Kershaw. I hope more serpentists will seek out opportunities to play with late 18th and early 19th century harmoniemusik ensembles and join in the exploration of the acoustical properties of the serpent by using an historical mouthpiece. Perhaps, with insights from hearing the instrument in another of its natural habitats, we can better understand the importance of the sharp-throated cup design and its effects on acoustics and intonation.

submitted by Craig Kridel

*H. Brispot,
Personnage d'église
jouant du serpent*

*thanks to Volny
Hostiou*



● Volny Hostiou wrote, “I have many new CDs in preparation: an organ mass by François Couperin, Monteverdi’s *Vespro della Beata Vergine*, and Volume 2 of of Jehan Titelouze, following the earlier Volume 1, *Les Messes retrouvées de Jehan Titelouze – Hymne, Magnificat & Pièces d’orgue*, and a new piece by Philippe Hersant. There is also a paper about Serpent methods, *Les méthodes de Serpent en France - reflets du parcours d'un instrument aux multiples facettes* (Serpent methods in France - reflections on the journey of a multifaceted instrument), written along with Cécile Davy-Rigaux and Benny Slucin.” We hope to hear more about these in the next issue of this newsletter.

● This video with Alim Qasimov on YouTube, youtu.be/cHkXM-i_1MU, now has over one million views. The video was also mentioned in the previous edition of this newsletter, as part of the review of the associated CD recording, *Awakening*. The selection is Michel Godard’s own popular composition, *A Trace of Grace*, and if you have not already seen this, please take a moment to be moved.



The ensemble from the recent recording of Risplendente Riversi, left to right Jarrod Cagwin, Natasa Mirkovic, Michel Godard, Luciano Biondini. Photo copyright by Thomas Radwimmer

● Michel Godard has a new video on YouTube, youtu.be/2W0aWsMvv_o, or find it by searching for *Michel Godard - Concert des Parfums II "A timeless journey" at Festival des abbayes de Lorraine*. From the video’s description: This video is a music documentary of *Concert des Parfums II* at Festival des Abbayes de Lorraine on July 19, 2019 where and when the first concert took place. Perfume makers and musicians use a similar language; they speak of chords, of notes, of harmony. Michel Godard and perfume maker Ursula S. Yeo present a dialogue between sound and fragrance. The perfume maker created her “chords” according to the original compositions by Michel Godard. Ms. Yeo’s different perfume creations were spread out in the abbaye, giving the musicians the possibility to “respond”. Michel wrote that there will be a CD album soon.....

● YouTube has a video of the restoration of an ophicleide by Wolfgang Puszkas, www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZjUOFdf3dg, or search for “Ophicleide Restauración”.

● An ophicleide player (presumably named Jomar Luke, or perhaps Luke Jomar) using a Wessex C ophicleide has a performance of himself playing the ophicleide part to Wagner’s *Rienzi* overture, playing along with a recording of an orchestra, on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ph2Jg7qKXk, or by searching for *Rienzi on an ophicleide*. He also has a video recording of himself playing all four parts of the quartet *Vermählungslied* (he is uncertain of the name or the composer) at youtu.be/Wf5hHN3YZsI, or by searching for *Ophicleide Quartet* or his YouTube ‘handle’ *jomarluke*.

● The following edited biography was found, highlighting the life of a certain Mormon explorer, enthusiastic family man and musician. Some of the history seems of a dubious nature, but still interesting. "Thomas Benjamin Clark was born on November 23, 1819, in Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, England. He married Susannah Pryor and they had two children together. He then married Sarah Charlotte Neal and they had 14 children together. Before going to North America he was in the British Army, and he was in Gibraltar and also a member of the Queen's Guard protecting the gates of the Queen's Palace. He travelled to Utah with other Mormon settlers, and had various enterprises around Provo, and he also helped establish better overland routes to Utah. In Utah, he was a bass singer with the pioneer-day choir. He played tuba also and was a member of the brass band which performed at the Golden Spike ceremony at Promontory Point [sic], May 10, 1869 when the transcontinental railroad link was completed. He died on October 11, 1910, in Provo, Utah, at the impressive age of 90, and was buried there." It is not known if Clark actually played ophicleide, or merely posed with one for the photo (see below).



● For your viewing pleasure, here is another crop of serpent-related YouTube videos.

The Dallas Ophicleide Consortium and Social Club, Richard Demy, musical director, performs *Yesterday* by Paul McCartney, in an arrangement for tuba quartet by Akira Miyagawa, at youtu.be/tI91zHCCzHM, or by searching *Ophicleide Quartet-"Yesterday" by Paul McCartney and the Beatles, (Richard Demy, and the DOCSC)*.

Volny Hostiou plays *Sonata sopra la Monica* by Philipp-Friedrich Boeddecker, from his CD *Le Serpent Imaginaire*, on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT-Voq3Cz6c, or by searching for *Volny Hostiou - La Monica – Boeddecker*.

Pablo Dopazo plays serpent, with harpsichord accompaniment by Samuel P. Maíllo, in a performance of

Recercada sesta sobre "La Spagna" by Diego Ortiz, from a live recording at *Museu de la Música de Barcelona*, 2018, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8ZtISAS9Yk, or by searching for *Diego Ortiz - Recercada sesta sobre "La Spagna"* - Pablo Dopazo – serpent.

Patrick Wibart performs on serpent with Ensemble Lacertae in a live outdoor venue at www.youtube.com/watch?v=kicyL2fynds, or by searching for *Lacertae*.

Michel Godard performs on serpent and tuba with the Keep in Touch Tuba Project in a full concert at www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9oHawS3THM, or by searching for *Visite, Keep in Touch Tuba Project + Michel Godard. Full concert*.

● Robert Eliason's 12-key in ophicleide in C is still for sale. It is in playable condition. Robert is asking \$3,000. Inquire by email at roberteliason@comcast.net.



1855—Paris: Henri C. de Ploosen's ophicleide method book, *Nouvelle méthode d'ophicleïde*, cover image. thanks to Will Kimball

New 3D Serpent Maker (addendum)

Paul Dorsey (pdorsey@dulcian.com) is an early music geek and an engineer who runs his own software company. He and his 14 year old son are 3D printing serpents and restoring harpsichords. The serpents are playable the way he is making them now but he is still evolving them based on feedback from established players. Even the bocal is 3D printed so they are obviously not "authentic" even from a distance. But he coats them in fiberglass and paints them black so they look like a leather covered instrument from 10 feet away. He can print them in any size (C, D, F, G) tuned to 415, 440, 460 or whatever. He is selling his serpents for \$450 which includes shipping to anywhere in the US. Shipping outside the US is more (serpents are quite large). If you want a real bocal, leather covering, or something else different, he will try to accommodate you. He is not doing mouthpieces yet, so either use a trombone mouthpiece or buy a real serpent mouthpiece from a maker. Email him directly with questions.