

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2021

A Note from the Editor

This is the third edition of this newsletter to be published during the protracted COVID-19 pandemic. I remain hopeful that all of you are keeping well.

As with the previous edition in September 2020, this one remains skewed in its balance of content from what usually appears in these pages. Nevertheless, I am pleased to be able to report as many things here as I have.

We know of two prominent serpentists who passed away since the previous newsletter, and we remember them here.

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 and appreciated. Please consider when you last sent in a contribution and send another!

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

- Carlops Serpentarium

The next Serpentarium is still planned to take place during the usual late-May weekend in 2022, with the location remaining in Carlops. It has not yet been determined whether this will affect the timing of subsequent Serpentariums. Expect more news in the September 2021 edition of this newsletter.

- Due to ongoing issues with COVID-19 the next *Serpent Journey* event planned for this year has been cancelled. It appears that 2022 will be the next meeting. Please check the Berger website www.serpents.ch for updates, or visit <https://serpentjourney.ch> or send an email to nathalie.quartier@bluewin.ch.

Where Serpents Gather

- As with most musical groups still on hiatus due to COVID-19, there has been virtually no notice of any serpent related gatherings or performances since those mentioned in the September edition of this newsletter. However, Beth Mitchell managed to do a virtual version of a tuba recital she had planned, and the video may be watched on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/3hUYEWelora>, or by searching for *Beth Chouinard-Mitchell, tuba and serpent*. The recital was to be an entry of *Music at Noon*, a weekly concert series offered by Friends of Music at Pasadena Presbyterian Church. This was to be episode 12 of the series, and premiered on January 27, 2021, and it was presented in advance as "Beth Chouinard-Mitchell plays music of the Baroque as well as the 20th and 21st centuries in this home recital for Music at Noon. As a special treat, Beth plays on and gives a short primer of her serpent (the musical instrument), a rarely heard pre-tuba dating back some 400 years." The tuba portion of the program includes an *Intrada* by Phil Snedecor, Anne McGinty's *Naked Tuba*, the *Prelude and Allegro from Cello Suite No. 5* by J.S. Bach as arranged by Ralph Sauer, and closes with *Polka.com* by Jim Self. In between the two movements of the cello suite, at the 18 minute mark Beth briefly describes the serpent and then performs the *Allegro from Sonata No. 1* by Benedetto Marcello as arranged by Donald Little and Richard Nelson.

- I annually look forward to all the musical performances around the Christmas season, but 2020 was the pits due to COVID-19. I put the word out to friends and associates, and to my manager, that I would play for any reasonable musical

situation. I found out that Milwaukee was having two TubaChristmas performances, after first having cancelled the originally scheduled indoor one. The venue was a large beer pavilion that was open to the weather along one side, the hall being filled with long “beer tent” style tables, and a high stage that would normally seat a good sized polka band. The coordinator stipulated that players would be seated spaced far apart on the stage, with no more than about 10 players seated there as a result, and another 8 or 10 below on the floor in front of the stage, and that all players must wear a facemask at all times while in the hall; specially purchased masks were provided by the event organizer. The two performances allowed more Christmas revelers to be accommodated.



A print c. 1810 entitled Musique de la Garde Imperiale features military musicians from the 1st empire, including a serpent player (see bottom-right of below image). thanks to Will Kimball

I have played regular TubaChristmas shows in Milwaukee before, and usually play my ophicleide. But due to the anticipated cold in the open hall, I elected to take my German style oval ‘baritone’ instead. I was seated in the front ‘row’ on the stage, so close to the director standing in front of me that I could not see more than his legs. Only two other euphonium players shared the row with me, and they were many feet away to my left and my right. I think there were only two more rows behind me, of perhaps only three players each. With a few tubas seated on the floor below, we were a small ensemble for the large acoustic space. The supplied masks were both a blessing and a curse; it was good that we all had them, and were using them, but their design was very problematic. They were in the usual COVID cloth facemask shape, but were comprised not of one rectangular cloth panel, but two overlapping panels, with elastic strips sewn to the overlapping edges to keep them stiff. The brass mouthpiece was supposed to fit through the taut gap, the elastic pulling closed all around. Nobody was able to manage getting the mouthpieces of their instruments through the gaps while actually wearing the masks, so they fit them before donning the masks, and then docked the mouthpiece shanks with the receivers on the instruments when ready to play. Hilarity, and some bruised lips, ensued when players would try to pull their faces back from the horns to empty water keys, or turn a page in the music, only to have the

masks refuse to release the mouthpieces, slamming their faces back towards the horns. After a while, gained experience had players deliberately disengage the mouthpieces from the horns and then carefully dock again when ready to resume playing. Glancing around, it seemed that I was in a loose crowd of metallic anteaters, with players’ drooping metal proboscises extending from their masks.

I was determined that if I did any more masked playing during the season, I would find a more player-friendly type of mask. I found one, in a ‘veil style’, from www.bellbarrier.com. This is just like a normal fabric COVID facemask, except it has a reinforced circular opening in its center that is sized to admit instrument mouthpieces from flute to reed to large brass mouthpieces. An additional fabric loincloth-like flap is sewn to the mask along the top edge, and it lifts easily to admit the mouthpiece, but when the player pulls back the mouthpiece smoothly slides out from under the flap, which then falls down to cover the hole. There is enough weight in the fabric to keep it down even if the player coughs, and during a sneeze, the flap directs the ejecta downwards rather than forwards. I found this new mask to be completely satisfactory, and mention it here in case it helps other players.

In mid-December, I was invited to play ophicleide in a small Christmas brass ensemble at a German restaurant in northern Indiana, and the Bell Barrier facemask worked out fine. Sadly, my only other public performance of the season was playing helicon in an outdoor caroling performance with a rag-tag group of brass players on a particularly cold, wet and blustery evening, while families packed into their cars drove by slowly as we shivered. Except for the above mentioned ophicleide bit, I have nothing else to report on my own serpent-related performances since the last edition of this newsletter - *Paul Schmidt*.

Paul Schmidt with his 1835 Bb ophicleide and wearing a “Bell Barrier” COVID face-mask, prior to playing in a small Christmas music band



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)

NEW!

3D printable serpent designs by Mark Witkowski after examples at the Bate Collection, Oxford; downloads now hosted on the Serpent Website; see lower right for address

Serpentones Lopez
Juan Lopez Romera, maker
http://serponton.com/
(wooden serpents & cornetti)

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

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)

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>



1616—Stuttgart, Germany: Excerpt from Festivities Celebrating the Baptism of Prince Friedrich von Württemberg includes serpent. First, at the service itself, the Assum Version festival book records that, following the baptism, a Te Deum by Salomon is sung, utilizing three ensembles; “..... The third also with a regal, three trombones, a serpent, in addition to four musicians” (Bowles 199-200, 207). thanks to Will Kimball

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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1851—An illustration by Ebsworth of a British Infantry band includes both a serpent and an ophicleide. thanks to Will Kimball

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

New Materials

- *The Serpent Sourcebook*, subtitled *The French Methods – A Historical Guide to Playing the Serpent*, was due to have been published by now, but author Beth Mitchell has written that due to COVID-19 its publication date has been moved back to the Fall of 2021. Persons interested in getting on a list to be notified when the book becomes available should visit this webpage www.bethmitchelltubastudio.com and use the link to preorder a copy.



- *Risplendenti, riversi*; CD recording featuring vocalist Nataša Mirković and Michel Godard on serpent and electric bass, with Luciano Biondini on accordion and Jarrod Cagwin on percussion. Dreyer Gaido # CD21127. Obtained from Amazon.

This new collaboration between opera singer Nataša Mirković and Michel Godard was recorded in 2019 but was released in late 2020. Their previous collaboration was on the CD *En El Amor*, reviewed in the September 2018 edition of this newsletter. The recording was made in the acoustic environs of the former synagogue in St. Pölten, Austria. It opens with Michel's mournful solo serpent in *The Swallow Birds*, a traditional song from Kosovo, and serpent is joined by Mirković's sung lyrics at a slow tempo, during which the serpent part becomes more improvisational. This is followed by Andrea Falconiero's *La Suave Melodia*, which opens with the serpent playing the lyrical melody against Biondini's accordion on what appropriately sounds like a portative organ. The vocals start on the second verse, and Godard switches to electric bass, with light percussive accompaniment, and the melody then gets passed around to the accordion. Third on the CD is traditional Croatian song *Angel Gabriel*, opening as a serpent and vocal duet before switching gears to take on a more upbeat and driving attitude.

The fourth track is a 10 minute improvisational sounding number, *Marea Alta*, that might be classified as a sort of jazz fusion exploration, and featuring all four performers in

various guises. Godard's electric bass provides the ground over which Mirković's plaintive vocals are laid in the traditional Bosnian *Samai*. *A Trace of Grace* is a popular and often performed composition by Godard, and here it is given a fresh treatment by the ensemble, and Michel shows his virtuosic serpent skills with many different colors and techniques. Luciano Biondini contributes a solo accordion entry with his composition *Verso te*, which then segues into the opening of Francesco Cavalli's *Vivo per te*, a primarily serpent and voice selection.

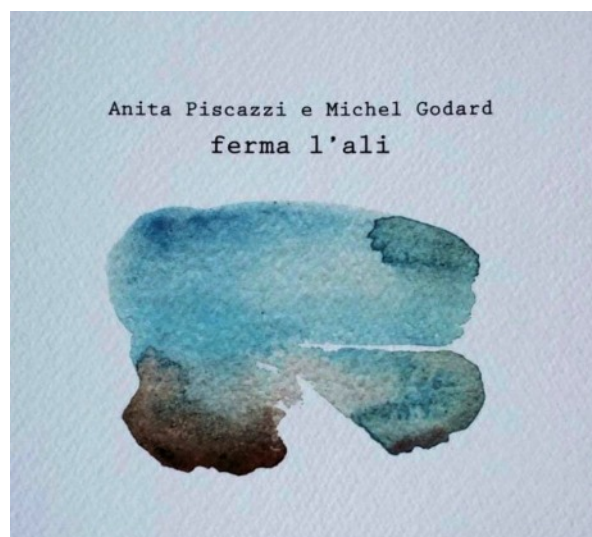
Dragiša Nedović's *Jutros rano* is next, with its simple accordion underlaying the pure tones of Mirković's lonely sounding lyrics. Kicking into high gear, the ensemble next performs the upbeat *Chant de Hérisson*, which showcases the accordion and percussion, with serpent and vocal accents, and it is all about a crafty hedgehog (Jež Miško). The album concludes with the traditional Albanian tune *Kom shtëpin*, in which Godard's serpent shows unusual colors and even gets to take the guise of a didgeridoo, as the mournful lyrics tell of abandonment and deep sadness.

While none of the lyrics on this CD are in English, the CD booklet includes both the native texts as well as their English translations. All performances here are excellent, and besides its other attributes, this is also a strong "serpent album" with Godard showing what the instrument is capable of.

- Michel Godard has several new sheet music publications for serpent, published by Éditions du Petite, <https://petitpage.fr/en/> then navigating to the sheet music options on the *Editions du Petit Page* and/or doing a search within the website for "Godard". Included are scores, arrangements or compositions for serpent and piano or organ. The website seems to often be very slow to respond, and Michel Godard has offered an alternative email contact method editionsdupetitpage@gmail.com. The website has an option for an English version of each webpage. Selections include *31 Exercices Journaliers (31 Warmups) for serpent*; Mel Bonis & M Godard: *Au crépuscule* (serpent and piano); Mel Bonis & M Godard: *Meditation* (serpent and piano); Michel Godard (*on Bach prelude in C*) *Pour Anna Magdalena* (serpent and piano or organ); Michel Godard: *Ave Maria* (serpent and piano or organ); Sartorio/Godard: *Se desti pieta* (serpent and piano or organ); Gedron/Godard: *Nos Esprits libres et content* (serpent and piano or organ).

- *Ferma l'Ali*; CD recording featuring vocalist Anita Piscazzi and Michel Godard on serpent. Desuonatori Music # DES 008. Submitted by Michel Godard for review. As of April 2021, the CD is only available directly from Desuonatori Music, send email inquiries to desuonatori@gmail.com.

On this new CD, Michel Godard provides musical accompaniment on serpent and electric bass, often simultaneously via the technique of looping, to poetry read by Anita Piscazzi. No CD album notes were available on



time for this review, so only limited supporting information can be included. The poems appear to be in Italian and several regional dialects, and the subject of the poems is unknown to this reviewer. The dozen tracks are named *Amor Sospeso*, *Fruscia l'ali*, *Sulla scala delle sfere*, *Scrivo di te*, *A Trace of Grace*, *Le vie del desiderio*, *Cucimi gli occhi*, *Ferma l'ali*, *Infiamma l'oracolo*, *Il sogno del serpent*, *Mille anni dopo*, and *Ho ascoltato la luce*. The musical stylings are varied, and Godard does more electric bass playing here than on many other albums, although virtually every track has extensive serpent playing, and in different styles. The poetry readings tend to be brief, and on most tracks the majority of the time is solely serpent and/or electric bass. Accordingly, it would be reasonable to consider this album to be a solo serpent album, with some help from electric bass and sparse poetry readings.



● It looked good initially, but it was a false alarm.....the CD *Vinci: Li Zite 'ngalera* on the Opus 111 label does not in fact include any serpent playing, in spite of the cover artwork. But it is interesting that the same CD was

apparently reissued with what the label considers to be more politically correct cover artwork; it is sad that a record company would find the image of a serpent objectionable. As for the models used for this cover artwork, see this newsletter's *More Exciting News* section.



Alternate, politically correct version of the CD cover artwork

Or maybe they were getting too many complaints from mislead serpent-loving CD buyers?

Adventures and Explorations with 3D Serpents, Part 3

Following up on the two previous articles on the efforts of the Imperial College London's Mark Witkowski and the Bate Collection's Andy Lamb to make available plans for making 3D printed serpents, here is some more news. Mark's two serpent designs are based on the Bate's anonymous church serpent, catalog 504, and the church serpent by Dittes, catalog 500, and both have already been built in small numbers by persons interested in trying to better understand this unusual type of instrument without breaking the bank. Based on feedback from some experienced serpent players who had tried the Dittes model, Mark took note of their reservations regarding the lack of undercutting on the finger holes and the unusual reverse tapered large end of the bocal. In the case of the bocal, this was intended to make it insert into the main body of the serpent in the same way that the tapered shank of a typical brass instrument mouthpiece fits into the receiver of the associated instrument, at the expense of much tunability of the serpent. Mark has thus designed an alternate set of 3D files to result in a printed serpent whose bocal is cylindrical where it fits into the instrument body, just like most traditional serpents do, and requiring that it be wrapped with thread to form an airtight seal. Also included in the revised design are finger holes that incorporate some undercutting to make the holes acoustically more effective.

Remaining was the issue of how to make the 3D printable files available to students and other curious persons, without bombarding Mark with requests, and while still maintaining some measure of control over them. Mark also wanted to keep a registry of those players who had made serpents from his designs. After some back and forth negotiations, it was agreed that the Serpent Website would include the plans and associated computer files on the existing webpage that already includes plans for other homemade serpent related instruments, such as the *Squarpernt*, the *Box-O-Cleide*, the

Sqworm, and *Patrick the Contrabass Squarpent*. At the time of this writing, the website has not yet been updated in this way, but this should be done soon. The plan is to have a few photos of the 3D printed serpents on the *Build a Serpent or Ophicleide* webpage

www.serpentwebsite.com/SQPT_concept.htm, and including instructions to send an email requesting details on how to access the download webpage. After the person making the request has been vetted and registered, they will be provided a link to the actual download webpage. This service is considered to be a trial only, and may be discontinued if it ends up being problematic.



In Memoriam

● Alan Lumsden

Alan Frederick Lumsden was born in 1934, the fourth of six children. He became a self-taught multi-instrumentalist who learned to play the trombone by the age of 14 and used money from his paper route to collect ancient instruments that he would then learn to play. He read history at Downing College, Cambridge, where he earned money by playing in the university dance band and by translating Russian Music Catalogues for Musica Rara, a London music shop which specialized in importing music. His aptitude for languages led him to train as a Russian interpreter during his National Service, and towards the end of his service he became the official Russian interpreter at the Admiralty and was later employed by the BBC Russian service to give talks on music. He made several trips to Russia, selling clothing on

the black market in order to pay for rare editions of lesser-known Russian composers and bring them back from behind the Iron Curtain; on the last trip he was apprehended by the Russian authorities and given a suspended sentence of three years hard labor in Siberia.

During the late 1950s and 1960s he was trombonist with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and also played with the London Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé, the BBC Scottish Orchestra, the Northern Sinfonia and many more groups. As a specialist in early brass and woodwind instruments, he was a founding member of the London Trombone Quartet, the London Cornett and Sackbut ensemble and the London Serpent Trio. He was an expert on the Serpent and Ophicleide, and became a leading virtuoso on those instruments. He was also an expert in Russian music and 16th century musical ornamentation. His skills as a multi-instrumentalist made him much in demand as an Early Music specialist, and in the late sixties he gained an international reputation, playing with Musica Reservata and with David Munrow's Early Music Consort. He was once filmed by the BBC playing pieces on 115 instruments for the Guinness Book of Records to raise money for charity.

Alan married Caroline Hewitt-Jones, a violin student at the Guildhall School of Music, and with her eventually became the father of five children. He was a Professor of Sackbut at the Royal College of Music, and Professor of Recorder and Early Music studies at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Throughout the 1970s, Alan toured extensively in Europe, Australia, and America, mostly with the London Early Music Group and with the London Serpent Trio, with whom he contributed to the sound effects in the Ridley Scott film *Alien*. He also appeared on soundtracks for many other films and historical television productions, including Shakespeare plays, *Doctor Who*, the movies *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, *The Devils* and *Life on Earth*. In 1981 his family moved to be near Caroline's parents, and he helped her to create Beauchamp Music Group, now called the Gloucestershire Academy of Music, which started in the front room of their old house, known as Beauchamp House. There, Alan juggled running Musicland Publications Ltd with a full-time position as head of brass at Malvern College, adjudicating around the world, conducting orchestras and organizing residential courses at his home.

In 1989, Alan played the solo on the premiere performance of the world's first *Serpent Concerto*, composed by Simon Proctor, as part of the First International Serpent Festival in Columbia, South Carolina. Throughout the 1990's Alan continued his Early Music research, creating more than 500 editions of early works under the imprint *Beauchamp Press*. Alan and Caroline then moved to the Charente-Maritime, in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region on the southwestern coast of France, and spent 19 years running a thriving holiday gîtes business there. Alan was officially diagnosed with Alzheimers disease in 2012, and the couple returned to Gloucestershire.

Alan could still harmonize with the local Alzheimers singing group, play the recorder and enjoy concerts such as the Carducci Quartet's annual Highnam Festival. His Alzheimers progressed quite dramatically in the last two years, and when Caroline could no longer help him, he moved to the Old Vicarage care home where he spent the last year of his life. Caroline wrote that she got the call that Alan had pneumonia, and when she accompanied him in the ambulance to the hospital, "The ambulance man was talking to us and asked in an Italian accent what Alan did, and when I said that he loved Italian early music, he chirped up that he was a flautist. What happened next really surprised me. He asked if he could speak to Alan in Italian and to that I said 'of course'. As he did, Alan's face lit up and he replied in Italian!" Alan survived the pneumonia but his health quickly declined afterwards, and he died peacefully on September 30th, 2020 with all the family surrounding him; he was 86 years old. He left behind his wife of 46 years, four deeply appreciative children, nine adoring grandchildren and a wealth of musical memories.

Condensed from information in an obituary by Janet Hughes for GloucestershireLive published on October 13, 2020, and a letter from Alan's wife Caroline.



● Robert Pallansch

A native of Washington, DC, Robert (Bob) J. Pallansch was born on January 22, 1930 and after public schools attended Peabody Conservatory on a scholarship and studied with trombonist George Garstick. After graduating from Peabody and he joined the United States Army Field Band in 1950; Harvey Phillips and Ronald Bishop were fellow members of that band. After five and a half years there, he transferred to the United States Army Band, where the other players in the tuba section were Ron Bishop, James Self and Daniel Perantoni. After retiring from the Army Band in 1976, Bob remained active as a tuba teacher, as a professional and later semi-professional tubist, playing in community orchestras, brass quintets, Civil War instrument ensembles, a Dixieland

band, and substituting for the National Symphony and at Wolf Trap. He also learned and performed on serpent and ophicleide. He never missed a TubaChristmas. Bob was also a well-respected brass instrument repairman and restorer, giving new life to many antique brass instruments.

Bob recalled that he got his start repairing brass instruments while in school. His tuba needed a valve job, but when he took it to the local repairman, the guy would not take the whole instrument, and asked Bob to take the valve section out so that he could work on them individually. Bob figured that the next time he had to have that done, he might as well just learn to do it himself. A saxophone player and repairman in the Field Band gave Bob a lot of tips, and henceforth he took every opportunity to work on horns belonging to various people who would submit them to him for experiments. Bob played in a church band in Alexandria where they had a closet full of old instruments, and he offered to fix the horns for free, and they agreed to give him the experience. Bob later said that, "I sort of learned how to do things just by guess and by golly."

Bob married Marielouise (Fifi) Widmer in 1960 when he was about 30 years old; it was a second marriage for both of them, and they remained together for the next 60 plus years, living in the DC area and sharing their mutual love of music and the arts.

Longtime Pallansch friend Tra Wagenknecht remembered that when the T.U.B.A. (Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association, later the International Tuba Euphonium Association ITEA) was formed, and their first complete, official election was held in 1973, the officers included Robert Eliason (International President, replacing Robert Ryker), Dan Perantoni (North American Chairman, replacing Harvey Phillips), Barton Cummings (Secretary), R. Winston Morris (Publications Coordinator), and Robert Pallansch (Coordinator of Tuba Design).

Bob played serpent at the First International Serpent Festival in South Carolina in 1989, and he and Marielouise travelled to England in 1990 to participate in the week-long Serpent Celebration workshop and grand performance, celebrating the 400th anniversary of the serpent. During the week, they shared a couple rooms, with future Serpent Newsletter editor Paul Schmidt, in the farmhouse of a neighbor of Christopher Monk, and the three remained friends.

Bob finally suffered a stroke or two, and a couple years ago he and Marielouise moved to an assisted living home. Bob died on January 11, 2021 at age 90. Sadly, Marielouise followed him in death only a few days later on January 16; she was 91.

Condensed from information in a 2005 interview by Carole E. Nowicke for the International Tuba Euphonium Association, and from an obituary by the Money & King Funeral Home, Vienna, VA, and from personal knowledge of the editor

More Exciting News

● As a follow-up on the mention of the cover artwork on the CD *Vinci: Li Zite 'ngalera* mentioned in this newsletter's *New Materials* section, Michel Godard coincidentally wrote about an item in the collection of Museo di Capodimonte, an art museum in Naples, Italy. Located in the Palace of Capodimonte, a grand Bourbon palazzo that city, the museum is a prime repository of Neapolitan painting and decorative art, with several important works from other Italian schools of painting, and some important ancient Roman sculptures. The item in question is a nativity scene from the 17th or 18th century, apparently including a group of Moorish or perhaps Janissary musicians, one of which is blowing enthusiastically on a serpent. Michel notes that the serpent seems to be small, like an F serpent. An attempt was made to reach the museum for more information on the artifact, but without success.



*Serpent playing
figurines in a
Nativity scene
in the Museo di
Capodimonte*



● An ophicleide player (presumably named Jomar Luke, or perhaps Luke Jomar) using a Wessex C ophicleide, has recorded himself playing the euphonium part on the wind ensemble arrangement of Percy Grainger's *Colonial Song*. The accompaniment is the Dallas Wind Symphony, from their album *Lincolnshire Posy*, <https://youtu.be/-rekimE8krQ>.

● Michel Godard wrote, "We are working with Stephan Berger on a copy of the small serpent from the Bologna museum, which seems to be the oldest we know of, dating from the beginning 16th century. A 3D copy of the instrument has been made. It is a very fascinating instrument, in F (A=465), with a thumb hole, its sound is very soft, and it has weird fingering. We could see from the marks around the holes that it has been played a lot. Still a lot to discover...."



Zouave band

● A fellow with the YouTube name of 'sekarenggal' has used a looping app to record himself playing all the parts of Ravel's *Bolero* on late model David Harding plastic serpent, <https://youtu.be/KZp0dZLWZnw> or search for *Ravel's Bolero on SERPENT*.

● The newsletter received a photo from the late Mike McAfee Collection of a presumably CdV (carte de visite) photo of a Zouave band of the West Indies Regiment from Bermuda, ca. 1860. The photo is fuzzy, but appears to be comprised mostly of lower pitched brass instruments, presumably Saxhorns, with a fair number of ophicleides in the mix. No other information seems to be available on this picture; any extra information about this is welcome.

● An original early model fiberglass serpent by David Harding is for sale. If interested, email mariaboxall@mac.com to discuss price and terms.

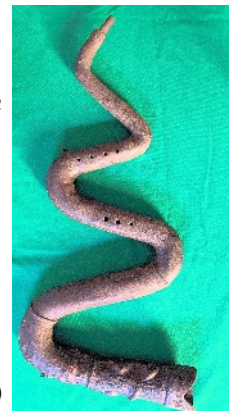
● Scott Hall wrote, "Last year I showed you the green octagonal sea serpent shaped tenor-bass horn I created, with Dasha Kudryasheva doing the detailed paint job. I write now to show you the brother instrument to the green one, this black, octagonal, eel-shaped tenor-bass horn which I created and finished entirely by myself. It's has a short, cylindrical bocal made of copper tubing and sculpted epoxy putty. The body is high-grade plywood made in a three-layer lamination, yielding a rectangular bore. The interior and exterior are so heavily filled, sanded, painted, and varnished, it's hard to detect that plywood is the material used. This one is likewise fun to play and has a very nice tone akin to Russian bassoon. I'm confident that this horn and the prior green one are quite a bit better than just megaphones amplifying falset."



< Scott Hall
Eel bass-horn

Early >
Bologna
serpent

3D model
of Bologna
serpent
(lower right)



Zouave band ophicleide players

