



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2003

A Note From the Editor

This is an exciting issue, with plenty of new materials, including the new Doug Yeo serpent project CD, a special article on serpent acoustics, reports of three serpent gatherings, and much more.

I visited the Christopher Monk workshops in London in May. Keith Rogers was in the process of boxing up material and equipment, as the workshops were being moved from the urban environment back to a rural setting. Keith found the cost of operating in London to be significant, and determined that the operation could exist not only more economically but more enjoyably in the countryside. I am happy to see this change, as I have never been able to shake the feeling that, as with Christopher Monk's original operation at his farm in Surrey, the serpent is an instrument that really should be made out in the sticks somewhere. I wish Keith much success in the new location. Note that the new contact information is included in this newsletter in the Getting Serpents section; please revise your personal records! Jeremy West will continue to operate the cornett part of the business from London, and the website has not changed.

The Serpent Website has been updated with additional information, including new information about several recordings in the discography section. For those fans of the website's recipes section, there is a new one for Lemonade Pie.

On another note, the recent newsletters have been larger than usual, due to increased serpent activity in the world. This makes it more expensive to produce and deliver. Please consider when you made your last contribution, and send in some donations. We really need it!

Paul Schmidt

Getting Serpents

Here is the list of Serpent makers who have made themselves known to us. Both Monk and Harding instruments are available through dealers, and all makers will deal directly with individual customers.

Christopher Monk
Instruments
(Keith & Kathryn Rogers)
Perkwood
Station Road
Yaxham
Norfolk NR19 1RD
England

NEW!

www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html
<ktwoagain@btopenworld.com>

(serpents & historical oboes)

[for cornetts, contact Jeremy West
at <j.west@ic.ac.uk>]

David Harding
56 Netherton Road
Appleton
ABINGDON
Oxon. OX13 5JZ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

• You can also build your own
instruments from plans via
<www.serpentwebsite.com>

Robb Stewart Brass Instruments
140 E. Santa Clara St. #18
Arcadia, CA 91006
USA

Phone: 626-447-1904
<oldbrass@worldnet.att.net>

*(ophicleides, metal serpents, bass
horns)*

Nicholas Perry
20 Queen Street
St. Albans
Hertfordshire AL3 4PJ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1727 866080

(early cimbassos, bass horns)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

Where Serpents Gather

• As initially mentioned in the April newsletter, Doug Yeo will be the soloist in Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra on October 25, 2003. The performance will be held at the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science in Sioux Falls. The concert will be a collaboration between the orchestra and the Beethoven and Berlioz Festival, organized by the National Music Museum. In addition to playing the

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concerto, Doug will be involved in several “informances” and discussion about historic brasses from the time of Berlioz, focusing on serpent and ophicleide. Simon will be coming from England to attend the performance and participate in the pre-concert lecture with Doug and the director. For more information, see <www.sdsymphony.org>

- With the ‘retirement’ of Andrew van der Beek and Alan Lumsden from the group, the London Serpent Trio recently found itself without any founding members still playing. Word has arrived that the trio now consists of Phil Humphries, Clifford Bevan, and Stephen Wick, and the tradition lives on.

- The week of August 24, the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s concerts included Mendelssohn’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, wherein Doug Yeo played ophicleide under the baton of Neville Marriner. Doug wrote that several local businesses that support the BSO placed a joint ad in the week’s program, with a picture of an ophicleide prominently placed on that page!

- Sue Bradley writes from ‘down under’ that she recently played an ophicleide gig for which she was rewarded with a large photo in the local daily newspaper. The concert featured Mendelssohn, but more importantly included a piece written for the opening of the Melbourne Town Hall in 1870, where the gig took place. To make things more interesting, the piece was apparently written with her particular ophicleide in mind. Sue had a copy of the original part, and transcribed it on computer. The composer was a local resident by the name of Horsley, who studied with Mendelssohn; he is listed in Grove.

- Berlioz Historical Brass is pleased to announce the launch of its website <www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org> and the forthcoming world premiere performance of Clifford Bevan’s *Les Mots de Berlioz*, scheduled for October 19th at Boston’s King’s Chapel. Berlioz Historical Brass, an ensemble exploring the role of early 19th century brass instruments, commissioned Bevan to write a companion piece to the recently discovered Berlioz mass, *Messe Solennelle* (1824). *Les Mots de Berlioz*, written for chorus and wind quartet, takes as text a letter Berlioz wrote to a friend on the day after the mass’s first performance. Bevan scored this work for buccin, serpent, and ophicleide, instruments scored in *Messe Solennelle*. To these, Bevan rounded out the quartet with bassoon, an instrument often used to double the serpent. For the premiere performance, Jay Krush will perform on ophicleide, Ben Peck will perform on buccin, Douglas Yeo will perform on serpent, and Suzanne Nelsen, bassoonist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, will join as guest artist. Heinrich Christensen, Music Director, King’s Chapel, will conduct the King’s

Chapel Choir for the evening’s program, “Berlioz, Then & Beyond,” also including excerpts from Berlioz’s *Messe Solennelle* and works by Handel, Roze, and Du Mont. For further information: <www.kingschapel.org/sunday/concerts.htm> and/or <www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org>

- On June 9, 2003, Phil Humphries and Craig Kridel played serpent with the St. Etheldreda’s Church Choir in a performance of the first *Messe Royales* by Henri Du Mont (1610-1684). [St. Etheldreda’s Church, the oldest Catholic church in Britain, is located in London.] Peter Wilton, British chant scholar and Director of Music of the Gregorian Association, was commissioned by Berlioz Historical Brass to realize a performance edition of the first *Messe Royale* in the late 18th-19th century *chant sur le livre* style. Dr. Wilton adapted portions of the mass from serpentist Jean-Baptiste Métoyen’s early 19th century treatise, *Recueil de chants d’église* (1810). The premiere was conducted by Dr. Wilton, and plans are currently being made to publish the realization (for one or two serpents) of the mass. For further information: contact <info@berliozhistoricalbrass.org>



Peter Wilton and Phil Humphries

- Craig Kridel presented a lecture on upright serpents at the June conference of the International Double Reed Society (in Greensboro, NC). Entitled *The Serpent and Bassoon: A Forgotten Friendship*, Craig demonstrated the bassoon russe, cimbasso, serpent Forveille, serpent a pavillon, and English bass horn and performed excerpts from Handel’s *Fireworks*, Verdi’s *La Traviata*, Mendelssohn’s *Trauer-Marsch*, and played duets by the Parisian bassoonist, Alexandre Hardy. Craig was joined by noted bassoon pedagogue, Dr. Christopher Weait on bassoon, and Elaine Peterson on contrabassoon.

the above three items were submitted by Craig Kridel



Christopher Weait, Elaine Peterson and Craig Kridel

- On July 30, Doug Yeo gave a masterclass at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's summer home at Tanglewood, for students attending the Tanglewood Music Center and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. The class, titled *Professional Pursuits: Deliberate and Emergent*, covered a wide range of topics facing both young and experienced players including musical curiosity, staving off burnout and exploring new avenues of musical expression. Doug talked about, and demonstrated, aspects of his journey with historical instruments, specifically serpent and ophicleide. He discussed how to play both instruments, and performed Michel Godard's *Serpent Secundo* for serpent soloist (see mention in the New Materials) section. Acolytes were referred to Doug's website, the Serpent Website, and Cliff Bevan's book *The Tuba Family*.

- The Eastern Virginia serpent aficionados met for their 11th annual bash on the 25th and 26th of May. In attendance were Bob and Merrilee Pallansch, Connie Palmer (our hostess), Rick and Iris Schwartz (who had just returned from a meeting of the Cornet Conspiracy), and Tra and Robert Wagenknecht. As usual they read lots of music for four serpent, two ophicleides, 19th century cornet, renaissance recorder, E-flat alto horn, and piano. Special music was provided by Bob and Merrilee on serpent and piano; *Poupée Valsante* by Poldini, Mendelssohn's *On Wings of Song*, and Henry Mancini's *Pink Panther*. More music and a mini-lecture were presented by Rick and Iris, about the coming 100th anniversary of the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis. They also talked about their book, *Bands at St. Louis World's Fair of 1904; Information, Photos, and Database*. Their presentation consisted of information on the bands which played, including those of Sousa, Innes, Weil, Weber, Conterno, and Fanciulli, plus the Marine Band, the Mexican Artillery Band and many others. Rick also played two of the cornet solos from that event; *Inflammatus from Stabat Mater* by Rossini, and *The Grand Russian Fantasia* by Jules Levy. Readers interested in the book should contact Iris and Rick at <irisrick@aol.com>. Merrilee then put on her storytelling hat to entertain the others. There was also much conversation and conviviality as well as the usual feasts prepared by Connie and Tra, not

to mention brunch on the 26th, held at Richmond's "The Tobacco Company" restaurant. As always, they had a wonderful time.

submitted by Tra Wagenknecht

- Tony George wrote to confirm that he was the ophicleide player on the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's recording of *Elijah*. He used an 11 key Gautrot in C for most of the music, but for the Coir Tuttiis he used a Perinet B-flat instrument to reach the low notes.

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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Workshops

- 2003 Serpentarium at Cape Cornwall May 23 – 26

attendees:

Nigel Nathan & Thelma Griffiths (host/serpent & host/non-combatant)
Chris Gutteridge (serpent/lyzard)
Harry Woodhouse (ophicleide)
Murray & Patsy Campbell (serpent/cornetto & tenor serpent)

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Paul Schmidt (serpent) [USA]
Phil Humphries & Anita Boorman (leader and serpent & NC)
Simon & Jeni Chadwick (serpent & NC)
Sydney & Mary Hemsley (serpent & NC)
John Weber (serpent) [USA]
Wik Bohdanowicz & Anya Spackman (serpent & NC)
Christian & Anne Körner (serpent & NC) [Germany]

The biennial serpent event known as The Serpentarium was held this year in the Cornwall district of England, at a remote and picturesque place known as Cape Cornwall (England's only cape, and contender with Land's End as the most western point in the country). The host this time around (taking over from previous host Andrew van der Beek at his Lacock home Cantax House) was Serpent Newsletter European representative Nigel Nathan and his partner Thelma Griffiths at their 19th century Cornish mining captain's mansion - turned - bend & breakfast, Boswedden House. East lay the handsome old village of St. Just-in-Penwith, from whence originated the narrow and winding, single lane, walled road that terminated just down the hill at the cape to the west. No trees grow here, with only hedges, ancient stone walls and the odd tin mine chimney ruins competing for tallest objects with Nigel's lone palm tree.

Paul Schmidt arrived from the States late Thursday, having detoured briefly in the middle of the desolate Bodmin Moor to visit a rumored photo of a singular silent-film starlet and

her serpent. This was located on the wall of an old inn, but the young lady had obviously never encountered the instrument before the picture was taken, and her expression was one of surprise, as if the instrument had just been thrown at her without warning. Sadly, the proprietors refused permission to photograph the image for posterity. During Friday morning the other participants made their ways by planes, trains and automobiles. A side benefit for those coming from any distance was the opportunity to see what all the fuss is about regarding Penzance.

The number of players and their 'significant others' was ideal, as every room at Boswedden was occupied, plus one camper in the garden. Most playing would take place in the reorganized large dining room, with some small ensemble work in the sun room and lounge. Friday evening saw the assembled players breaking the ice with several plainsong selections *Hymne á Saint Jean* and the *Dies Irae*. Chris Gutteridge introduced his edition of the Japanese folk song *No Tongues!* (actually *Sakura* a.k.a. the *Cherry Blossom song*), an excellent warm-up which uses grace notes as articulation in place of tonguing. Later came *The Lost Chord*, the *March from Scipio*, and *With Cat-Like Tread*, in homage to the proximity of Penzance. Everyone retired to the cozy bar to sample kegs of the local brews (thanks Nigel!)

Saturday set the pace for the next three days by being partitioned into well-defined periods dedicated to breakfast, playing, walk, tea, playing, lunch, playing, walk, playing,



Serpentarium group photo

(back row, L - R): Chris Gutteridge, John Weber, Harry Woodhouse, Christian Körner, Nigel Nathan, Simon Chadwick, Wik Bohdanowicz

(Front row, L - R): Paul Schmidt, Phil Humphries, Murray Campbell, Sydney Hemsley

dinner, playing, drinking. The selections attempted included those from Friday, plus *The British Grenadiers*, *The Amherst Suite* (Proctor), the *Euryan Huntsmen's Chorus* (von Weber), *Tota Pulchra Es Amica Mea*, *Pavan for Four Serpents* (Schein), *Tiger Rag*, the *Der Freischütz Huntsmen's Chorus* (von Weber), *Scotland the Brave*, *Alte Kameraden* (Teike), and Cliff Bevan's famous abridgement of the *1812 Overture* (Tchaikovsky). In the evening, smaller groups worked on trio and quartet selections, including *Mazurka #49* (Chopin), *Minuet* (Bach), *Equali #1* (Beethoven), *Canon a Due* (G. Gabrieli) and *Verbum Caro* (Victoria), and several others. Fingerings were growing quicker while lips were becoming more limber and ranges getting higher. Much beer was required to settle everyone down before bed.

Sunday was structured similarly to Saturday, with selections including several from Saturday plus additional selections *O Magnum Mysterium* (G. Gabrieli), *Baby Elephant Walk* (Mancini), and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Nicolai/Bevan). The participants took advantage of the fine weather to line up against the garden wall for group photos with the ocean in the background. Phil Humphries found time to administer first serpent lessons to Patsy Campbell. Small ensemble selections included *Funeral March of a Marionette* (Gounod), *Andantino from Rosamunde* (Schubert), the *James Bond Suite* (arr. Phil Humphries), *Menuetto* (Mozart), *Divertimento #1 K. 229* (Mozart), and *Trio Sonata Op. 1 #5* (Corelli). Overall, more attention was given to preparing works for the Monday concert. Fingerings were now lightning fast, ranges were stratospheric, but lips were starting to tremble from fatigue. The kegs were lightened significantly by midnight.

Monday morning was spent in final preparations for the concert, with the usual breaks for tea and a brief walk. After lunch came local music lovers, musicians, photographers and those passersby who were sucked in by the gravity of the impending event. All were rewarded with tea and biscuits. Then came the music, with the 10 players entertaining the enthusiastic audience under the baton of Phil Humphries. The program was *Euryan Huntsmen's Chorus*, *The Lost Chord*, *With Cat-Like Tread*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Baby Elephant Walk*, *O Magnum Mysterium*, *The Amherst Suite*, the *1812 Overture*, and *Tiger Rag* (amazing glissandi courtesy Murray Campbell). After the concert, some participants departed to catch planes and trains, while Paul Schmidt, John Weber, Phil Humphries, Chris Gutteridge, Wik Bohdanowicz and Nigel Nathan sight-read *Excerpts from the Berlioz Requiem*, *A Few Smiles (When You're Smiling, Smile Though Your Heart is Breaking, Till We Meet Again)*; arranged by Phil), and *Show Me the Way to Go Home*. It should be noted that many of the selections used during the weekend were from Cliff Bevan's anthology *Marches for 4 Bass Clef Instruments*. Everyone went into St. Just for dinner, except

Nigel who had to remain to check in arriving (non-Serpentarium) guests. Wik burned the midnight oil at a local pub playing ground bass for the folk band there. Everyone went their own way the next day, but only after making sure that Nigel would not have to deal with beer-laden kegs .

- Report of the 19th Annual Early Brass Festival

The Historic Brass Society once again hosted it's annual festival at a 'remote' location. This year Yale University at New Haven, Connecticut was selected, and the three day event took place from July 25 through 27.

Around noon on Friday the participants began arriving, making their way to the previously announced meeting place at Silliman College. There were some difficulties due to lack of parking spaces and a last minute unavailability of Silliman during the day, but everyone finally made their way across campus to Sterling Memorial Library's music area for registration. Certain exhibits were open for inspection, and informal playing sessions were a possibility during the early afternoon hours. Later in the library building's lecture hall, Richard Warren gave a lecture *Early Brass Recordings in the 'Historic Sound Recordings' Collection at Yale*, playing many selections to demonstrate. Following this, participants returned to the now-open Silliman College for dormitory registration, followed by dinner and informal playing sessions into the night. Serpentists in attendance were Paul Schmidt, Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, John Weber and Laura Conrad.

On Saturday morning, the university's Collection of Musical Instruments was opened for inspection. In the upstairs recital hall, Eva Heater performed two *Romances for Horn of Camille Saint-Saens, Op. 46 & 67* on natural horn, with two local pianists accompanying. Trevor Herbert then gave his presentation *Studying the Trombone: The Case of Besson*, followed by Sebastián Zubieta's *Wind Music in the Jesuit Missions of the Paraguay in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. After the lectures, coffee and doughnuts were offered and another hour was free for further visiting with the instruments in the collection. The museum has a fine example of a Russian Bassoon, but it was not playable (prior to the event there had been some thoughts about taking it out of the case for a playing demonstration). During the lunch period that followed, the HBS board of advisors held their meeting.

After lunch, the activity moved from the museum to Sudler Hall (part of William L. Harkness Hall, where all rehearsals and informal sessions would be held), beginning with three lectures. First, Keith Polk presented *Sixteenth Century Trumpeters and Instrumental Repertory*, with the Washington Cornett and Sackbutt Ensemble performing and Craig Wright responding. Due to a last minute change of



Early Brass Festival session

L - R: Tra Wagenknecht,
John Weber,
Charlotte Leonard,
Robert Wagenknecht

schedule, this lecture was moved up by an hour, and many people (including this reporter) saw only the last few minutes as they returned from lunch; it was not clear whether the ensemble actually performed and if so, which pieces were played. Next was Joseph Kaminski with his paper *Repertoires, Performance Practices, and Sociology of the Court Ivory Trumpet Ensembles of the Asante of Ghana*. Joseph had given a related lecture on these primitive ivory-tusk trumpets of Africa (and their players) at a previous festival, and this promised to be an interesting follow up. However, he had only just returned from that continent after being robbed while there; his recordings and photos were lost with the stolen equipment. He had high hopes that the missing media might have been discarded by the thieves as useless to them, and with any luck would be found presently. Following was Don Smithers with his lecture *Pittdown Trumpets and Other Anomalies of Ancient Brass Taxonomy*, a very entertaining presentation punctuated by an ongoing battle with the podium microphone. Participants then dispersed for informal playing sessions and a light dinner, followed by a brief informal concert in Sudler Hall; Laura Conrad played a demonstration tune on serpent, as the other serpentists were still at dinner due to another schedule snafu. Everyone returned to Silliman College for the traditional pizza (the local specialty 'apizza') and beer party in the picturesque common yard. Many people thought that they had seen this location in movies whenever the action was supposed to be at Yale.

On Sunday, lectures began back at Sudler Hall, starting with David Clampitt's *Musical Allusions and Compositional Modeling in Brahms's opus 40, Adagio Mesto*. Andre Smith followed with his entertaining and informative, not to mention very elaborately staged, *The Life and Work of Vincent Bach*. Professor Smith was able to punctuate his speech by pulling one relevant artifact after another from his hiding places, and was generous in allowing participants to handle and study these objects

afterwards (they included Bach's very first mouthpiece, his original instrument engineering drawings, etc.) And, who in the audience would have previously known that Bach's excellent engineering drawings were made by the great man's transvestite brother? After an hour for more informal playing sessions, the university provided lunch for all festival participants at the common room at Dwight Hall. Last minute rehearsals followed for those who would be in the Final Concert.

At 3 PM, the three hour Final Concert took place at Dwight Chapel in the 'old campus', a structure that was both visually and acoustically like a miniature gothic cathedral. This concert was not like the usual 'gala concert' that usually wraps up the EBFs; it was more formal and better rehearsed, and in fact many participants (including the cornetts and sackbutts) did not perform at all. The program opened with the natural trumpet ensemble playing *A L'Etenard from Méthode Pour la Trompette* by François Dauverne. Next on the program was the ensemble Infiorare, comprised of Jim Miller on cornetto and mute cornett, and Holly Mentzer on Italian triple-strung harp and medieval flute. They played three numbers, including *Why Fumeth in Fight* by Thomas Tallis and Amarilli, *Mia Bella* (after Caccini). The third number was announced but was impossible to understand due to the acoustics; a problem that was to take a toll on all spoken words throughout the concert.

The most significant work on the program followed, the hour long and newly commissioned *Requiem du Chasseur* (2003) by Lowell Greer. The piece was written to reflect the period style at the time when French royalty hosted many lavish hunting events, albeit not without some more modern influences. The Latin mass text was sung by tenor Bruce Gardner, and the chapel's pipe organ was played by Chris Pankratz. But it was the massed horn ensemble that dominated the music...twelve expert natural horn players were assembled to perform on the Trompe-de-Chasse, or

French hunting horn; apparently Lowell provided horns to those that did not own this particular kind of natural horn. The players were Cynthia Carr, Lowell Greer, Eva Heater, Marian Hesse, Celeste Holler, RJ Kelley, Douglas Lundeen, Dick Martz, Russel Rizner, Richard Seraphinoff, Christopher Smith, and Virginia Thompson. They were positioned in a wide crescent that extended from one side of the chapel, around the front, and then to the other side, all players facing forward with bells back towards the audience. Antiphonal hunting fanfares rippled through the space between the stages of the mass, which were supplemented by an extra hymn based on *Luke 20: 36-38* and the *Canticle of Zachary*. This was a powerful and emotional work, and very much deserves to be recorded.

After an intermission, the Ensemble Buccina Cantorum performed three selections. The ensemble consists of Bob Civiletti on baroque trumpet, Cynthia Marrs on harpsichord, and mezzo soprano/contralto Katy Sumrow. They performed the arias "*Combatta un Gentil Cor*" from the opera *Titi Manlio* by Vivaldi, *Tecum Principium* (a modern-day premiere of this work) by Antonio Caldara, and "*Chi Nel Camin d'Onore*" from the opera *Enea Negli Elisi* by Johann Joseph Fux. Next, Lowell Greer's trompe-de-chasse ensemble returned for his other commissioned work, the *Gallatin Fanfare (2003)*, in the French tradition of writing horn fanfares for various animals, in this case the American Bison, a favorite of Lowell's. Following was Stanley Curtis on natural trumpet and Cynthia Marrs on portative organ, playing *Suite in D Major* by Handel.

The other new work commissioned for this event was Jonathan Miller's *Stony Creek (2003)*. The composer wrote the piece using layers of poly-rhythms and poly-tonalities, suggesting water rippling over rocks in a creek, basically a 'wash of sound'. The title was suggested by the sound itself, plus a place name familiar to the composer, plus the title of a folk tune he likes (which did not appear to actually be a component of the piece). The instrumentation was Jim Miller and Flora Newberry on cornetts, Steve Lundahl and Fred Moyses on sackbuts, and serpent. Paul Schmidt was originally scheduled to play this part and had prepared it, but a broken arm sustained two weeks previously left him unable to play. Robert Wagenknecht graciously volunteered to take over the part in what was a very challenging piece. In spite of a crash due to the syncopation and overlaying crossed metres, which necessitated restarting the piece from the beginning, the players all did a commendable job and the work was a success.

The concert concluded with a performance of five pieces by the Washington Cornett and Sackbut Ensemble, led by Michael Holmes. The players were Stanley Curtis, Elisa Koehler, Flora Newberry, Walliam Page and Ravi Rajan on

cornetts, and Paul Arbogast, Graydon Barnum, Michael Holmes, Fred Moyes on sackbuts. The selections were *Canzon 19 a 8* (Giovanni Picchi), *Intrada 288 a 6* (Caroubel), *Intrada a 6* (Alessandro Orologio), *Sonata 8 a 8* (Giovanni Gabrieli), and *Canzon 1 a 8* (Giovanni Priuli).

Most participants left to check out of their dormitories. Paul Schmidt, the Wagenknechts, John Weber and sackbut player Charlotte Leonard found that they were all staying the night, and after having dinner together, returned to Harkness Hall for some additional playing. Due to the recuperating arm, Paul only attempted a couple of numbers, but the remaining quartet played through the entire volume *Marches for 4 Bass Clef Instruments* as arranged by Cliff Bevan. Selections from this book had been performed at the serpentarium in May, and Paul had only just received the book on order from Craig Kridel before leaving for this festival. Charlotte's sackbut took the upper line, with the serpents on the lower parts. A few of the selections were Wagner's *Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin*, Sousa's *El Capitan* and *Washington Post*, Bizet's *Entry of the Toreadors*, Verdi's *Grand March from Aida*, Grieg's *Homage March*, Handel's *March from Scipio*, Schubert's *March Militaire*, Teike's *Alte Kameraden*, *Scotland the Brave*, *Tiger Rag*, Mendelssohn's *Wedding March*, and Sullivan's *With Cat-Like Tread (Pirates of Penzance)*.



New Materials

- *Le Monde du Serpent (The World of the Serpent)*; CD recording featuring Doug Yeo on bass and contrabass serpents, with the Berlioz Historical Brass, Gloria Dei Cantores choir, members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Deborah DeWolf Emery (piano), Jennifer Ashe

(soprano), Craig Kridel and Phil Humphries assisting on serpent and ophicleide. Berlioz Historical Brass # BHB 101, released October 2003, available from <www.yeodoug.com> as well as from selected specialist distributors. \$15 plus shipping

Doug Yeo's multi-year, self-produced serpent recording project has finally produced the long awaited CD, titled *Le Monde du Serpent*. As of this writing, the CDs have been produced and are available for purchase, although Doug kindly provided an advance copy to allow a timely mention in this newsletter. Since there is just too much to cover in adequate detail, this is not a review, as such, but rather a brief description.

This is really the first recording dedicated to performances of music spanning the entire breadth of the serpent's repertoire. Doug has selected works that represent almost all of the situations the serpent found itself in over its four century history, West Gallery and military music excepted (and that music was largely not written specifically for the serpent). For its original incarnation, that of chant-plainsong, he plays *Alleluia* from the Auxerre tradition of France, for three voices plus the serpent's cantus firmus. There is also *Domine Salvum* by Abbé Nicholas Roze, a co-author of the first published serpent method. From the same period are excerpts from various other serpent methods, consisting of three *études* and a *duet*, wherein Craig Kridel joins in on the second part.

For the serpent's reincarnation in harmoniemusik, Doug has selected the *Divertimento (Feldparthie) in B-flat*, usually attributed to either Haydn or Pleyel, with members of the Boston Symphony joining in, plus the *Allegretto* from the harmonie band version of Beethoven's *Symphony #7*, also with the BSO winds. The latter is the only track to use George, the contrabass serpent.

Also present on the recording are two pieces that were not originally written for serpent, but which have a certain history with the instrument. In memoriam to Christopher Monk, Doug is joined by Craig and Phil Humphries in Mátyás Seiber's *Foxtrot*, and in tribute to the London Serpent Trio, he plays the top and bottom parts (via overdubbing) to Handel's *March from Scipio*, with Craig taking the middle part. Both pieces were included in the original serpent recording, the LST's *Sweet and Low* LP.

For the serpent in the world of jazz and the avant-garde, Doug is joined by pianist Deborah DeWolf Emery and soprano Jennifer Ashe for Drake Mabry's *Quatre Tanka*, originally written for Michel Godard.

The bulk of the CD is devoted to other contemporary compositions for serpent, including Cliff Bevan's *Les Mots de Berlioz* and Cliff's *Variations on The Pesky Serpent*. In the former, Doug is joined by choir and an instrumental

ensemble with Ben Peck on buccin, Phil on ophicleide, and bassoon. For the latter, Doug first reads the original poem, then plays the serpent solo with piano accompaniment. Another selection is the choral performance of Henri Du Mont's *Credo* from his *Royal Mass*, an historical piece with a contemporary realization, by Peter Wilton, of the accompaniment for organ and serpent. The largest piece on the CD is Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto*, the first commercial recording of this work. Doug performs on his Monk serpent, with piano accompaniment, plus Craig on bells.

This recording is one of the most important for serpent enthusiasts, and the technical quality and performances are first rate. The booklet that comes with the CD is 24 pages long, and has lots of information and some photos. In addition, Doug's website links to extended program notes and additional photos. Doug has self-produced the CD, at considerable expense, and the effort shows. All serpent enthusiasts will want this recording.

- Atem; CD recording with Stefano Battaglia, Michele Rabbia and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Splasc(h) # CD h2501. Reported but not obtained
- Souffles; CD recording with Pierre Favre (percussion) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Intakt Records # Intakt CD 049. Reported but not obtained
- Ocre; CD recording with Sylvie Courvoisier, Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Enja Records # ENJ-9323 2. Reported but not obtained

These three recordings were scheduled for mini-reviews, but have proved impossible to obtain. Extensive web searches turned up no available new or used copies. Michel Godard replied to an email request to at least verify that serpent playing takes place on them, and stated that each had at least one selection with a significant amount of the instrument. These are probably also avant-garde jazz, but no further information was found on these. They are listed here in the interest of being comprehensive.

- Franz Krommer: Music for Wind Octet; CD recording featuring Amphion Wind Octet (Amphion Bläseroktet) on period instruments (2001); Pan Classics # 510 142. Obtained from publisher – Note that it may be very difficult to obtain this recording, but <www.panclassics.com> will sell directly; however, they will not accept credit card payment. Contact Mr. Bernard Halter at <bernard.halter@panclassics.com> and arrange to send cash in Euros or Swiss Francs, mailing to Pan Classics, 12 Rue du Clos, CH – 1800 Vevey, Switzerland.

This CD includes three harmoniemusik pieces; *Partita in F major Op.57*, *Harmonie/Partita in C major Op.76*, and *Partita in E flat major Op. 69* by Moravian composer

Frantisek V. Kramár, a contemporary of Mozart, better known by the name Franz Krommer. He had a special skill in writing for the harmonie wind band, popular in the late 1700's, where the music called for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons (and often contra-bassoon). Krommer's harmonie works tend to balance traditional Viennese-classical harmonies with a lighter, syncopated and forced-metre rhythmic sensibility (characteristics recognizable in the folk songs of his Bohemian upbringing). Although often thought of as a woodwind player's composer, fans of the brass also delight in his horn effects and aggressive bass lines, likely beefed up by a serpent.

The Amphion Wind Octet has decided to play French editions of these pieces that specifically call for serpent, in places a substitute for the contra-bassoon and in other places a complement for it. This is a young and energetic ensemble, and their performance is hot enough to positively crackle. Marc Girardot is excellent on his 1985 Monk copy of a 1810 Baudouin, pitched in D. The recording environment is perfect for the style, and the sound quality is pristine. This is another fine example of the serpent in the harmonie tradition.

Just in case you lust for more of this kind of music, Amphion has others in their 'Wind Octet/Harmonie' series. Refer to the publisher's website <www.panclassics.com> for listings.

- Mendelssohn: *Athalia* (Op. 74, Complete); CD recording featuring Das Neue Orchester on period instruments &



Guy Smith's Squarpenet copy, built from website plans

Chorus Musicus Köln, Christoph Sperring directing (2003), Erhard Schwarz (ophicleide); *Capriccio # 67 068*. Obtained from Amazon.

In 1842, Felix Mendelssohn reluctantly accepted a royal decree appointing him as the general music director of the Prussian court. In this position, he began writing the music to several plays, including Jean Racine's Biblical drama *Athalie* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The text to *Athalie* concerns the rise and fall of a murderess, the Athaliah of the Bible's Kings and Chronicles. She was the princess of Israel that, lusting for absolute power, married into the house of Judah then tried to eradicate the line of David by having her husband, sons and grandsons killed. She was well underway in converting the kingdom to the worship of Baal before the priests dethroned her as a tyrant. Handel had previously set the story as an oratorio, but the scholars that collaborated to translate and adapt the work for the Prussian court decided that the text would remain spoken; so Mendelssohn's task would be the composition of incidental orchestral music and choruses only. The latter he treated as anthemic, stand-alone pieces written with little regard for the surrounding action of the play. Considering that incidental music was a form relatively foreign to him, the composer did a marvelous job on this work. He breaks the mold by not restraining his tunes, but rather brings them to the front and shows them off. Whereas the purely orchestral sections have a great variety of moods, the choruses are almost all majestic and use lots of tympani and brass. The choral themes themselves bear a great resemblance to his *Lobgesang*, while the orchestral sections often resemble sections of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

On this recording, the ensemble playing is excellent. Soprano soloists Anna Korondi and Sabina Martin, and contraltos Ann Hallenberg and Barbara Ochs have a lovely sound, and narrator Dirk Schortemeier sounds, well, like a narrator. The antique brass contingent has a fine sound, and consists of Torben Klink and Stefan Oetter (horns), Hannes Rux, Almut Rux, and Ute Hartwich (trumpets), Michael Scheuermann, Felix Degenhardt and Uwe Hasse (trombones), and Erhard Schwarz (ophicleide). This CD is another fine example of the ophicleide in use.

- *Quatre Tanka for Soprano and Serpent*; by Drake Mabry (1998, first published 2003) and *Serpens Secundo pour Serpent Solo*; by Michel Godard (2001, published 2002); published by Drake Mabry Publishing, San Diego, California, www.drakemabrypublishing.com, email <info@drakemabrypublishing.com>, also distributed in Europe by Christine Paquelet Edition Arts, Paris, email <paquelet@club-internet.fr>

Drake Mabry's new publishing company, founded in 2001, specializes in music that deserves to be performed but would not get proper treatment elsewhere. These two

previously unpublished serpent pieces have just been added to his catalog.

Quatre Tanka has already become one of the most often performed contemporary works for serpent. It was originally written for, and performed by, Michel Godard and his wife Linda Bsiri. Subsequently it has been performed several times by Doug Yeo and Jennifer Ashe, and appears on the CD *Le Monde du Serpent*. The music and French lyrics are both by Mabry, with each movement, or Tanka, describing a scene; stars in the night, noon in the desert, springtime in a field, and a village street. The music is colorful and avant-garde, as well as fun to listen to. Both the singer and the player have great latitude in interpretation, with free-form glissandi and special effects, e.g. “air only, relative pitches”, “the order of phrases can change”, “the two parts are not to be synchronized!”, etc. The notation itself is unconventional but with a little exploration can be worked out easily enough by any pair of adventurous performers.

In 2001, Radio France commissioned Godard to write and perform a solo work for serpent, and *Serpens Secundo* was the result. This is a piece of apparently simple concept, basically a driving syncopated series of variations on a theme of martial flavor. A short series of repeated notes at march tempo is punctuated every four beats by a flourish that is different every time. The music calls for flutter tonguing, singing through the horn while playing, long glissandi, circular breathing, and plenty of syncopation. Indeed, this is a very challenging piece of the kind Godard specializes in performing, and will probably be beyond the capabilities of most players. Still, if taken section by section, an ambitious performer can work it up, assisted by the fact that the music does not need to coordinate with anything else. In fact, lots of rubato, while not specified in the score, would suit the music well enough when applied judiciously to the more involved sections.

Both these pieces are well worth while getting for any serious serpentist's library.

- Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* will be published by Southern Music Company in 2004, in its version for serpent and piano; orchestral parts will be available on rental.

- Sarastro Music (London) will publish Doug Yeo's edition of the *Divertimento in B flat (Hob. II/46) "St. Antoni"*, which has been attributed to Haydn. This is the same edition that was used for *Le Monde du Serpent*. Doug will also edit, for publication by Sarastro, the two *Divertimenti in F (Hob. II/44, Hob. II/45)* which are written for 2 oboes, 2 horns, 3 bassoons, and serpent; these two have not been published since they were first listed in the Breitkopf catalog of c. 1782.

- The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's recording of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Virgin

Classics 7243 5 61975 2 7, recorded in 1987 with Charles Mackerras directing, has been revealed to be without ophicleide in the ensemble. Tony George wrote that this CD, while it suggests the use of ophicleide, and apparently some copies included pictures of Alan Lumsden holding the instrument, in fact used a euphonium for the part. Alan has confirmed that he played ophicleide for the pre-recording concert, but did not participate in the recording.

- Harry Woodhouse has published a new booklet titled *The Serpent*. While brief, it has a different approach to the instrument, and includes some fresh insights. It may be obtained by writing Harry at Trenoweth, Porthpean, St. Austell, Cornwall, PL26 6AU, England, or emailing <harry@woodhou.freeserve.co.uk>

- “Dear Mother, I've Come Home to Die” Quickstep and Other Favorites, CD recording of the complete band book of the 19th Virginia Heavy Artillery Battalion and other songs, featuring The Crestmark Military Brass Band and Singers, directed by Dr. Glen Fifield. Produced by Randolph Cabell, <Rcabell@visuallink.com>, no catalog number listed, available from Amazon

This new recording of Civil War music results from a labor of love by Randy Cabell of Virginia. He is known in these pages as an editor and publisher of editions of many individual pieces as well as complete books of 19th century American band music, and he has now branched into recorded music.

For this project, Randy has selected the only Virginia Confederate band book known to survive; the original volume resides at the Eleanor S. Brokenbrough Library at the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond. The book is made more interesting by containing exclusively mournful and homesick tunes about soldier's mothers, sweethearts, and battlefield death, all arranged as quicksteps! He has



Serpentarium session, Phil Humphries and Murray Campbell, with Simon Chadwick and John Weber looking on.

combined the sixteen band songs in the book with another five songs from other sources. The songs are also fairly unique in being for military brass band plus singers, an uncommon feature.

In the year 2000, Randy published modern editions of these pieces, reconstructing the missing bass part and consolidating the two drum books into a single percussion part. The resulting instrumentation calls for two E-flat cornets, alto horn, two tenor horns, one tuba ('bass horn'), snare drum and bass drum. In the album's booklet, he further identifies the original players of the book's originator, the 19th Virginia Heavy Artillery Battalion, including their home towns and counties. In 2002, Randy teamed up with Dr. Glen Fifield's group, The Crestmark Military Brass Band and Singers. This ensemble was organized in 1990 at Utah State University and is comprised of faculty and students, plus local band directors. They play on antique, reproduction, and semi-antique instruments; and the singers consist of a quartet of male voices. When the recording project began, Fifield decided that a lower cornet part was called for, and synthesized a B-flat part. The recording uses this enhanced brass instrumentation plus a side drum.

The quality of the recording is very professional, and in terms of both performance and technical quality, holding its own amongst the best contemporary Civil War CD recordings. The brass players all do a fine job, in spite of what Randy reports as the so-called 'Das Lippenpooper Faktor'; the sustained lines above 'D' in the E-flat cornet parts. The vocalists provide a precise, if slightly unbalanced ensemble sound; one hears tenors but less of the lower parts than would be desired. In between the 21 musical selections, he has added descriptive narration by Col. Keith Gibson, the Executive Director of Museum Programs for the Virginia Military Institute. Enthusiasts of Civil War music and 19th century brass music, will find much to like in this CD.

- Making a Natural Trumpet: An Illustrated Workshop Guide; Richard Seraphinoff and Robert Barclay (2003) [ISBN 0 907635 46 6]; 30 page spiral bound soft-cover book, published by Edinburgh University, order form available from <www.music.ed.ac.uk/euchmi/> at a cost of £12 Sterling or £14 for overseas shipments, or by writing to Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, Reid Concert Hall, Bristo Square, Edinburgh EH8 9AG, UK.

Over the last decade, trumpet maker Robert Barclay and horn maker Richard Seraphinoff have been hosting annual workshops where participants make authentic replicas of Nürnberg (1632) natural trumpets from scratch, with their own hands. In that time, no student has gone home with less than a fully functional trumpet of good pedigree and

excellent playing characteristics. In recent years, these workshops have been offered in more than one location each year, giving twenty or thirty individuals a chance to see what they, and a baroque trumpet, are made of.

Many participants have lugged cameras and notebooks to these workshops, determined to document the tools, process and materials for posterity. The BBC made a documentary of one year's event, and Barclay has authored an informative volume titled *The Art of the Trumpet-Maker: The Materials, Tools, and Techniques of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in Nuremberg* (Oxford Univ. Press 1992, softcover 1996). Where Barclay's book is scholarly and full of hard-learned knowledge, it is short on photos and an essence of What It Is Really Like to make a fine brass instrument by hand using the simplest of tools.

Happily, the hosts of the workshops have collaborated with photographer Raymond Parks (with supplemental pictures by Jenny Nex), to make this definitive document of the experience. The candid photographs show hot, dirty and tired arms and hands beating sheets of yellow brass into submission as trumpet parts slowly emerge from chaos. 52 clear, well illuminated photos and two engineering drawings of the trumpet comprise the excellent illustrations. The text is organized as captions to each photo, and no secrets are held back. The process is explained, details are made clear, and choices rationalized. A list of tools and materials wraps up the volume. Anyone else interested in early brass instruments will want a copy. Visit the website listed above and print the order form, as you are unlikely to find it sold elsewhere.

- Marches4bassclef (Marches for 4 Bass Clef Instruments): 20 Marches in Four Parts for Bass Clef Instruments, arranged by Cliff Bevan and published by Piccolo Press, 10 Clifton Terrace, Winchester, SO22 5BJ, England, or in America, c/o Piccolo Press, PO Box 50613, Columbia, SC 29250, email <piccowinch@aol.com>

This 2001 publication by Cliff Bevan adds a quantity of very playable arrangements to the serpent quartet repertoire. While intended for any quartet of bass clef instrument, they are perhaps most appropriate for those types of horns that lack, for various reasons, either large numbers of expert players willing and/or available to get together, or a clear voice in mass. Tuba and trombone quartets have long established themselves as having plenty of players available who can handle rigorous parts, and can be managed in moderate sized ensembles without becoming too muddy. Happily, Bevan has carefully arranged all 20 selections so that the ranges and general part density are kept to a minimum, while textural clarity is enhanced. Accordingly, these versions of popular pieces might not be the best choice for college or professional quartets of euphoniums, tubas, or trombones, as they might be deemed to be a bit

too simple or thinly scored, but will find a happy home with instruments such as serpent, ophicleide, bassoon, etc. Of course, students on any bass instrument will appreciate these in any case. The pieces have proven themselves at recent serpent and ophicleide gatherings, where they succeeded while some other arrangements intended for tubas or trombones had noticeable problems with range, clarity or technical difficulty.

The selections are *El Abanico* (Javaloyes), *Bridal Chorus from Lohengrin* (Wagner), *The British Grenadiers*, *El Capitan* (Sousa), *Entry of the Gypsies from The Two Pigeons* (Messenger), *Entry of the Toreadors from Carmen* (Bizet), *Funeral March of a Marionette* (Gounod), *Grand March from Aida* (Verdi), *Homage March from Sigurd Jorsalfar* (Grieg), *Huntsmen's Chorus from der Freischütz* (Weber), *March from Scipio* (Handel), *March of the Priests from The Magic Flute* (Mozart), *Marche Militaire* (Schubert), *Old Comrades / Alte Kameraden* (Teike), *Le Régiment de Sambre et Meuse* (Planquette), *Scotland the Brave*, *Tiger Rag*, *The Washington Post* (Sousa), *Wedding March from A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mendelssohn), and *With Cat-Like Tread from The Pirates of Penzance* (Sullivan).



Serpentarium session, Paul Schmidt, John Weber, Murray Campbell and Christian Körner (L - R).

Serpent In The Garden

by Murray Campbell

Early in 1990 the English musician and instrument maker Christopher Monk issued an invitation to “all known or suspected serpent players.” It is generally accepted that the curious antique bass wind instrument, known as the serpent because of its sinuously curved shape, was invented in or around 1590 by a canon in the French town of Auxerre. Having been largely responsible for the twentieth-century revival of the serpent, Christopher decided to mark the

400th anniversary of its birth with a celebration concert in London. In response to the invitation, 29 serpent players from all over the world assembled for a week-long workshop at Christopher's Surrey farmhouse.

At the end of the week, on 13 July 1990 [Friday the 13th], the celebration concert was held in St. John's, Smith Square, London. By that stage the number of serpent-playing participants had swelled to 58, making it the largest ever assembly of serpents.

The serpent is a fascinating instrument from the point of view of wind instrument acoustics. Even its musical classification raises a question: is it a member of the woodwind family, or does it belong more properly with the brasses? The basic form of the instrument is a conical tube around 2.5m [8 feet] long, expanding in diameter from around 1 cm [0.4 inches] at the input end to around 10 cm [4 inches] at the output end. The side wall is pierced by six side holes, in two widely spaced groups of three; in some instruments additional side holes are provided, covered by pads and operated by keys.

The serpent was normally made of wood, although metal instruments were not unknown, and the side holes (opened or closed by the player's fingers) are a typical feature of woodwind instruments. On the other hand, the method by which the sound is generated in the mouthpiece of the instrument is typical of the brass family; the lips of the player are pressed against the rim of the mouthpiece cup, and their vibration modulates the air flow into the instrument. This feature places it firmly in the acoustical class of “lip-reed” instruments, along with the trumpet, the trombone and the French horn. Lip-reed instruments generate sound through a non-linear coupling between the mechanical resonances of the player's lips and the acoustical resonances of the air column in the instrument tube.

The serpent is remarkable in this respect, in that the wide-bored conical tube has a set of air column resonances whose frequencies are fairly close to a harmonic series – if the frequency of the lowest resonance is f , the frequency of the n th resonance is close to nf . The second resonance is therefore almost exactly an octave above the first (a frequency ratio of 2). This contrasts strongly with the trombone, which has a considerable fraction of cylindrical tubing and ends with a rapidly flaring section: as a consequence, the interval between the first two resonances is typically around six semitones more than an octave (a frequency ratio of 2.8). For that reason, the lowest played notes on the trombone (the “pedal” notes) do not make use of the lowest tube resonance; the sound is powerful, but lacking in body and warmth. The bottom note of the serpent is quite different, with a rounded mellowness which can be traced to the fact that the fundamental frequency is strongly boosted by the well-tuned first resonance.

The situation changes dramatically when side holes are opened by the fingers. The basic acoustical principle of side holes on wind instruments is that opening a hole is equivalent to cutting off the tube just below the opened hole. A sound wave travelling down the tube from the mouthpiece encounters a sudden drop in acoustic impedance when it reaches the hole; if the hole is large enough the tube is “fully vented,” and almost all the sound energy is reflected back up the tube. This is however a low-frequency approximation to the actual behavior of a side hole: above a certain cut-off frequency the venting becomes inefficient, and most of the sound energy continues past the open hole to the lower end of the tube.

On the serpent, the holes cannot be bigger than the human fingertips which have to cover them, which means in practice that the hole diameter is not more than 10% of the main bore diameter. The cut-off frequency can be as low as 100 Hz, which is in the middle of the playing range of the instrument.

A further acoustic complication is introduced by the irregular separation of the side holes. Although the successive opening of holes is intended to produce a regular ascent through the musical scale, the length of the instrument makes it impractical to place the holes in the acoustically desirable positions. Typically the lowest three holes are spaced around 4 cm [1.6 inches] apart; there is then an unpierced section of tubing around 35 cm [14 inches] long, followed by a second set of three holes with a spacing of around 4 cm.

This looks like acoustical mayhem! Yet, somehow, it works: a skilled serpent player can play a well-tuned musical scale over a compass of nearly three octaves.

The crucial factor which has been ignored in the discussion so far is the role played by the lips of the player. In the non-linear equations which determine the playing frequency of the serpent for a given fingering pattern, the parameters describing the mechanical resonances of the lips exert an influence at least as great as those describing the acoustic resonances of the air column.

As a consequence, the serpent player can “lip” most notes over a range of several semitones around the pitch corresponding to the nearest air column resonance. It is much easier in practice to lip a note below the air column resonance than above it. Exactly what the player does when lipping a note is still not entirely clear: this is one of the hot topics in current brass instrument research.

In the foreground of the photograph taken in Christopher Monk’s garden during the 1990 serpent workshop [the original article included the famous serpent lineup photo, not reprinted here], two instruments much larger than the remaining 27 take pride of place.

The smaller of the two is the only antique contrabass serpent in existence. Now in the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, it was constructed in 1840 by Joseph and Richard Wood, two Yorkshire handloom weavers.

It is twice the bore length of the normal serpent, and plays one octave lower, with a magnificent fundamental tone at 33 Hz. The larger instrument is a contrabass serpent made by Christopher Monk in 1990 for the late Philip Palmer, now in the possession of the Boston Symphony Orchestra bass trombonist Doug Yeo. It is of special acoustical interest because Christopher chose not to reproduce the original contrabass serpent (lovingly known as the “anaconda”), but rather to scale up a particularly satisfactory French serpent in his possession.

The internal bore dimensions of the Baudouin serpent used as the model [of Monk serpents] were obtained by John Bowsher and Phil Drinker at the University of Surrey using acoustic pulse reflectometry. Subsequently a third contrabass serpent was constructed using essentially the same bore measurements [not to mention the other two contras, the American Anaconda and “Patrick” The Contrabass Squarpen]. It is good to know that acoustics has played an important role in tripling the world population of such a rare species as the contrabass serpent.

Murray Campbell is professor of Musical Acoustics in the School of Physics at the University of Edinburgh. His research interests include the physics of musical wind instruments and the application of laser-based techniques to the study of non-linear acoustic fields. He was a participant in the 1990 Serpent Celebration, and retains an active involvement in serpent playing.

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text in [] added by the editor for this reprint



More Exciting News

- The first reported copy of the Squarpenent, based on plans in the Serpent Website, has been completed. Seattle area resident Guy Smith, a former tubist, current amateur lutenist and luthier, made his example using a very high grade plywood called Appleply, as opposed to the prototype's cheap Oak surfaced three-ply material. In making his copy, Guy omitted the external frames and wire, and applied a luthier's technique – masking tape – instead. In place of staples for temporarily holding the internal braces, he used dots of hot-melt glue. His experiences with the horn have inspired him to look towards obtaining a 'real' serpent sometime soon (and that was a big part of the idea behind the Squarpenent project).

- The Squarpenent and the contrabass squarpenent "Patrick" have been written up in several publications, including the Historic Brass Society and Early Music America journals. Charles Jackson reads both, and was intrigued by the similarity between these instruments and the tapered square-cross-sectioned profile of microwave ducts of various sorts. Jackson is an early instrument enthusiast, claiming only somewhat in jest that he became a microwave engineer in order to design and test renaissance instruments. He currently plays recorder and crumhorn, and formerly played French horn. Besides his employment in the microwave field, he is active in the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society, is newsletter editor for the Southern California Recorder Society, and authors articles on the application of microwave theory. He has applied his knowledge to the design of experimental renaissance flutes, cornettos, and similar instruments. He is working on an article which uses microwave theory to analyze the acoustics of the Squarpenent, and has written to advise of some possible improvements. While the current Squarpenent design is satisfactory for its purpose, he suggests that the outer corners of the bends be trimmed after gluing, essentially beveling the corners; of course, it will then be



Serpent in the Herschel Museum in Bath, Wiltshire, England

necessary to glue squares of plywood over the resulting holes, and then trim away the excess material. Doing this would reduce reflections, or echoes, in the standing waves. It would also be possible to reduce the 'throat' width of the bore as it goes around the 'bends', achieving the same result, but this would be much more difficult to fabricate.

- David Loucky of Middle Tennessee State university has added another ophicleide selection to his faculty page on the university's website. Here you can hear some tunes in RealAudio format. <www.mtsu.edu/~music/index.html>

- Another serpent sighting has been made in the world of poetry. In C.S. Lewis' *The Silver Chair* (1953), from his *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, can be found the following passage:

"A little Faun who had been standing quietly beside the Dwarf's elbow all this time now handed him a silver ear-trumpet. It was made like the musical instrument called the serpent, so that the tube curled right around the Dwarf's neck....."

No Tongues!

Cherry Blossom
Trad. Japanese

To be played entirely un-tongued throughout

Serpent