

## Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2009

### A Note From the Editor

It has been a busy year for the serpent world; the Serpentarium of course, an especially serpent-heavy Early Brass Festival, a serpent DVD project, to name but a few things.

The new policy of subscription-based distribution in the States has boosted the coffers a bit, so for a change there will be a bit of money left in the bank account after printing this issue. However, if you have not contributed recently, please send in your 'donation'!

In this issue, I have included a non-serpent article (gasp!) because it seemed to have no other place to go and because it seemed almost fitting to be placed here.

Please keep in mind that the newsletter requires news to exist, and most of it comes from thoughtful readers and players who remember to send in their own news, discoveries and other tidbits. It makes my job easier when I have a nice inflow of submittals!

Paul Schmidt

### New Materials

- *Tre Bassi: De Profundis*; Carpe Diem # CD-16274. 2008 CD recording, featuring Michel Godard on serpent with bass vocalists Alain Buet, Paul Willenbrock and Philippe Roche, plus Hille Perl on viola da gamba & lirone and Lee Santana on chitarrone. Available from Amazon Germany.

This album is primarily a showcase for three accomplished bass vocalists, in the same genre as 'the three tenors' and

other collaborations. The artists have decided to answer the question of whether an entire program of only bass voices might sound excessively dark, heavy or even gloomy, or whether sufficient variety in the programmed selections coupled with light accompaniment might instead confound expectations. They have also tried to find little-known treasures written for this combination, including material ranging from the 14th to the 21st centuries. As for the serpent, sometimes it is used as accompaniment, and in some instances it works with the bass viol to stand in for a fourth bass voice when the music calls for it.

The album begins with Godard's solo serpent, playing an improvisation on the theme of the next selection, with two bass voices joining in with chant in Latin. This leads into *De Profundis Clamavi* in the setting by Wolfgang Ebner for three basses plus serpent on bass continuo, dating from mid 17th Century Vienna. The next selection was composed by Godard and Philippe De Schepper, titled *L'Araignée*, or *The Spider*, this for just the three instrumentalists, with serpent on the lead line; this free form selection shows the instrument in several guises. Chitarrone player Santana composed the next three selections for three basses plus the three instruments, with all being secular and quite a contrast to the other selections in their modern style. All three come from a set titled *Chants D'un Vieux, Arrivé Pour Son Vieux, Décédé*, or *Songs of An Old Man, Arrived For His Old Man, Deceased*. The first selection, *Island On An Island*, is in a contemplative mode. The second, *Mr. Ed*, is a bumptious ditty about a large man who is described as being a "vertical walrus". The third, *This Time the Last*, returns to the moody vein, and involves death.

All but one of the remaining selections date from the early and middle parts of the 17th Century. Orazio Benevoli's *Collocet Eum Cum Principis* is a setting of Psalm 112, verse 7, and is for all three basses plus serpent, with accompaniment by the strings. Next is Alessandro Grandi's *Deus Misereatur Nostri*, based on Psalm 66, verses 1 & 2, this setting being for three basses plus continuo by all the instruments. The next two pieces recount epic battles

between the forces of Heaven and Hell, first in Alberik Mazák's *Factum Est Silentium In Coelo* and second in Maurizia Cazzati's *Factum Est Praelium Magnum In Caelo*. The former is set for two basses plus bass continuo and is about Archangel Michael's victory over the Dragon Samael (Satan). The latter is for solo bass and serpent plus the strings, and describes the combat of angelic armies and the fall of Lucifer. Godard's composition *Magnificat* is in the style of traditional chant, sung by the three basses interspersed by instrumental riffs of a more modern sensibility. The album concludes with three pieces for three basses and serpent continuo, Antonio Cifra's *Magi Videntes Stellam*, Johann Melchior Gletle's *Ave Maria*, and Thomas Eisenhuet's *Salve Regina*.

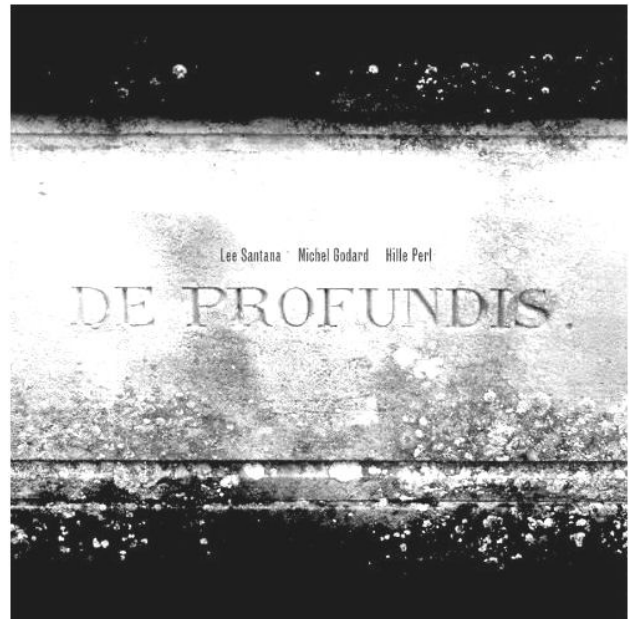
The three vocalists are all quality singers, and the strings nicely complement them. Godard's serpent is in fact a very notable feature of all the older tracks (as well as his own compositions), less so on the Santana pieces. The serpent playing ranges from fairly avante garde to very traditional plainsong stylings. The acoustics of the small Gothic church *Eglise St. Martin* in the French village of Courtisols are perfectly suited to the style of the older pieces, and the recording is technically clean. A bit of trivia; one of the basses, Alain Buet, was also the bass soloist in the recording of the Gilles *Requiem*, reviewed in the April 2009 edition of this newsletter. This CD is a nice addition to the growing canon of serpent recordings.

Note: The CD booklet does not include specifics about who performs on each track, and there are no lyrics included in any language. The booklet does refer listeners to a *Tre Bassi* website for downloads of this information, but there is no website at the URL provided. Luckily, the Carpe Diem website includes this information as a set of PDF files. Your industrious editor has cobbled together a supplemental CD booklet that contains the Latin and English lyrics as well as specifics on who performs on which track, and sources for the music performed. A PDF file of this extra booklet, suitable for printing, cutting out, and inserting into the CD case, can be obtained by emailing the editor (see About the Organization).



*The 1869 brass band from the village of Bess o' th' Barn, near Manchester, England, showing their ophicleide*

- Gabe Stone reported the presence of serpent in the latest remake of the Thomas Hardy novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. This time it is the 2008 four-part BBC mini-series starring Gemma Arterton, Eddie Redmayne and Hans Matheson, directed by David Blair. While a nice enough adaptation overall, for those hoping to see some serpent action it falls far short of the 1998 A&E special, starring Justine Waddell and Jason Flemyng, as directed by Ian Sharp. Both versions feature Phil Humphries on serpent with the Mellstock Band, and both feature the serpent and band in the opening dance practice and later on in the market day dance sequence. The A&E version's dances are extended, with excellent coverage of the band, allowing the viewer to both see and hear the serpent for a considerable amount of time. The BBC version treats these sequences more as a dreaded homework chore, obligatory but quick to be shirked. Phil reports that a brief shot of serpent can be glimpsed in the BBC film's tavern scene, but it was Colin Dipper who was holding the instrument in that instance. Phil also stated that the scenes were filmed, followed by a studio re-recording of the audio; there appear to be some synchronization issues between the audio and video in the key musical scenes.



- David Harding has authored a slim book titled *The History of a Serpent*. This 28 page paperback is dated 2008, and is a brief account of David's serpent making activities over the years. His introduction states that while the book is not intended as a systematic and complete description of 'how to make a serpent', it can serve as an interesting ramble through the trials and rewards of the process of invention and fabrication, and it may be of some use to other craftsmen wishing to produce serpents or similarly odd-shaped items. Since David says his record keeping over those years was casual, quite a few items of possible interest were lost, making it impossible to depict an unbroken record and series of events.



A total of eight pages of the book are photos and other illustrations, most of them in color. The remaining pages are text-only, but provide many of David's unique answers to questions any instrument maker has no doubt had to deal with. The photos include shots of the very first Harding serpent, the first production fiberglass model, the one-of-a-kind 'quint' serpent (made for the First Early Music Exhibition in the Royal College of Music), many tools and molds and patterns, failed instruments, sets of freshly molded polyurethane serpent halves curing on a sunny lawn, diagrams of different methods of joining the halves, and David's early display booths at exhibitions.

The book is available from The Bate Collection, Oxford, for £7 GB + packing & postage of £2.00 (UK and Europe) or £3.50 (rest of the world). Contact Andrew Lamb at [andrew.lamb@music.ox.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.lamb@music.ox.ac.uk) to check availability, or write him at Bate Collection, Faculty of Music, St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1DB, England.

- The company known as Rattlebrained Designs must have a serpent aficionado working for them, since they have many items featuring the instrument. One theme of Rattlebrained is that of cartoon skeletons 'playing' various instruments, and the serpent is not immune to this treatment, but there are bones-free designs as well. Go to their website [www.cafepress.com/rattlebrained](http://www.cafepress.com/rattlebrained) and click the 'skeletons playing instruments' icon, then select the 'Wind Instrument Skeletons & More graphic'; there are four different basic designs shown here, and clicking any of them reveals variations and different apparel you can order with those graphics. There are shirts, sweaters, cooking aprons, hats, underwear, tote & messenger bags, mugs, magnets, stickers, greeting cards, teddy bears (!), thongs (!!!), etc. It brings a tear to your eye to see that valuable and unique items such as serpent-themed thong underwear can be purchased, and that it is proudly 'Made in the USA'. And finally, if you wish to shell out \$150 US, you can have your very own serpent-themed pocket micro HD digital camcorder.



- Phil Humphries' mate Anita Law has responded to the demand of the serpent community by making her famous serpent illustrations available once again on T-shirts and mugs. Anita is a fine artist, and a visit to her website

[www.englishnatureinwatercolour.co.uk](http://www.englishnatureinwatercolour.co.uk) is worthwhile. However, the serpent items are not shown there and must be ordered by contacting her directly via email at [anita-elizabeth-law@supanet.com](mailto:anita-elizabeth-law@supanet.com). Both items are £12.50 each, but she will have to quote terms and shipping costs.



*Gabe Stone plays serpent at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia*

## 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

**NEW!**

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992  
<[nicholas@perry2185.freemove.co.uk](mailto:nicholas@perry2185.freemove.co.uk)>  
(serpents, early cimballo, bass horns)

Derek Farnell  
82 Crumpsall Lane  
Manchester M8 5SG  
England

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

David Harding (by EMS Bradford order here)  
The Early Music Shop  
38 Manningham Lane  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire BD1 3EA  
England  
Phone: (44) 01274 393753  
<[www.e-m-s.com](http://www.e-m-s.com)>  
<[sales@earlyms.demon.co.uk](mailto:sales@earlyms.demon.co.uk)>

(resin serpents)

David Harding (information only, not for ordering)  
56 Netherton Road  
Appleton  
ABINGDON  
Oxon. OX13 5JZ  
England

<[david@chimeracrafts.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:david@chimeracrafts.fsnet.co.uk)>  
Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

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

(fiberglass serpents after Boudouin)

Wetterberger Serpents  
Stephen Berger  
CH-2336 Les Bois  
Phone: 0041 (0) 3296 11188  
Matthias Wetter  
CH-8475 Ossingen  
Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184  
Switzerland

**NEW!**

<[info@serpentmakers.ch](mailto:info@serpentmakers.ch)>  
<[www.wetterberger.ch](http://www.wetterberger.ch)>  
<[www.serpentmakers.ch](http://www.serpentmakers.ch)>

(alporns and serpents)

Christopher Monk Instruments  
(c/o Jeremy West)  
+44 (0)1388 526999  
<[www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html](http://www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html)>  
<[jw@jeremywest.co.uk](mailto:jw@jeremywest.co.uk)>

(cornetti)

Build an experimental serpent from plans via  
<[www.serpentwebsite.com](http://www.serpentwebsite.com)>

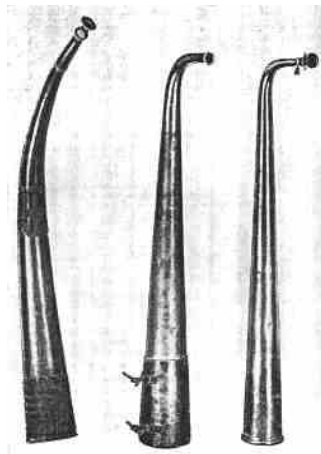
## Separated at Birth?

by Paul Schmidt

Which brass instrument has a purely conical bore, a relatively primitive mouthpiece, has only a few really good notes, elicited favorable comments early on and negative ones later, produces a haunting sound of vocal timbre, requires a playing technique that is considerably different from modern brasses, was originally employed in a fairly small geographic region in Europe, is unknown to a very large percentage of music lovers, is commonly played these days in small groups, and has but a handful of dedicated players? The Serpent, you say?

How about the Russian Horn!

This newsletter is not usually given to articles on instruments other than the eponymous serpent and its brethren, but the Russian Horn seems too good to pass up. Those attending the Historic Brass Society's 2009 Early Brass Festival got what was probably their first exposure to this neglected subclass of the brass family, in the form of the lecture *The Russian Horn Cappella Revisited in St. Petersburg* by Paul Niemisto of St. Olaf College. The following is condensed from Niemisto's forthcoming paper (due to appear in Volume 27 of *Alta Musica*, probably coming out in the Spring of 2010) as well as from the website of the current Russian Horn revival ensemble.



Inspired by past royal entertainments, such as the barge music on the river Thames favored by King George I (e.g. Handel's *Water Music* in 1717), Peter the Great's daughter Elizabeth, Empress of Russia from 1741 through 1762, favored Summer serenades by wind musicians on barges in the river Neva. Initially, the music was performed on a combination of natural horns, natural trumpets, and

posthorns, but while the sound quality was perhaps suitable for the royal hunt, improvements were sought. Elizabeth's royal huntmaster and supervisor of the barge music was Count L. Naryshkin, and he enlisted the Bohemian horn player Jan Anton Mares, a.k.a. Jean Antoine Maresch, to create a new kind of horn band. Maresch's solution was a totally new horn ensemble in which each player sounds a simple conical horn on which its single pitch is the partial one octave above the fundamental. First, small sets of these were used in conjunction with the existing mixed brass ensemble, but eventually the other horns were dropped and the new horn ensemble's size and range was enhanced.



*Russian Horn Capella of St. Petersburg*

Naryshkin drafted peasants to make up these Russian Horn ensembles, with each untutored player knowing enough to sound his instrument's pitch at the correct moments in the music. By 1790 there were at least ten separate groups of this type in the courts of St. Petersburg, Moscow and other palaces. The music performed by these groups naturally required extensive hocketing, much as with hand bell choirs, and through experimentation the notation eventually settled on a system based on the conventional 5-line staff.

Perhaps inspired by the curved shapes of horns designed for playing while on horseback, the earliest Russian Horns had a sharp bend after the mouthpiece, so that the horn would lay along side the player as opposed to extending in front of him. However, extant examples and period illustrations show most horns being made in a simple straight pattern. Niemisto's research has found three basic mouthpiece types used for Russian Horns; the oldest being very conical with a simple flat plate rim (believed to be easiest for the peasants to play on), a later version having the same conical cup but with a more rounded rim similar to a modern horn, and finally a type most often seen on later horns made in Germany, these being almost identical to modern brass mouthpiece designs. The original mouthpiece design emphasized the horn's tendency to resonate most strongly at the desired partial, while the German design made it easier to play other partials, which was counterproductive to the one-note-per-horn concept. Probably the most successful was the interim design, and indeed the current revival efforts have settled on this type of mouthpiece.

The Russian Horns of the 18th Century were tuned by an expanding sliding tuning collar at the bell end. Horns were also tunable by making the shank of the mouthpiece slide in and out at the small end of the horn, using a thumbscrew clamp similar to those used on modern cornets and flügelhorns. They were produced in sizes ranging from 10cm (4 inches) to 2.5m (8 feet).

By the 1850s, the Russian Horn had become neglected and forgotten. Part of the reason was that foreign wars caused so many of the peasants to be sent into battle, and partially because Czar Nicholas I liberated them and as such they could no longer be conscripted into service playing in these ensembles, and finally because of shifting musical tastes. The last historical revival to meet with success was for the coronation of Alexander III in the late 19th Century. Since that time, the Russian Horn ensembles were often thought of as a reminder of the bad-old-times, and good riddance!

In 2001, a horn player in St. Petersburg named Sergei Peschansky undertook the task of reproducing Russian Horns and reviving the genre. He studied the extant horns, had conical mandrels made, and began to produce the horns in sets, experimenting with raw materials from plumbing and heating suppliers. All the instruments have the same identical bore taper of 4.367 degrees, so it is possible to produce any size horn on the same straight mandrel. He assembled a group of players who shared his dedication, although the limited number of players ultimately available required that many players manage two or three horns of similar sizes, much as hand bell choir players often need to jockey multiple bells. Peschansky chose the name *Russian Horn Capella* for his group, apparently due to an error in translation; he was thinking of the German word *Kapelle*, meaning ensemble, rather than the common definition of *Capella*, meaning church. His *Capella* is based at the Herzin Pedagogical University in the center of St. Petersburg, formerly the Razoumovsky Palace. Their part of the building includes a workshop for making the horns, rehearsal space, and an auditorium that very likely accommodated many performances of Russian Horn music two centuries ago.

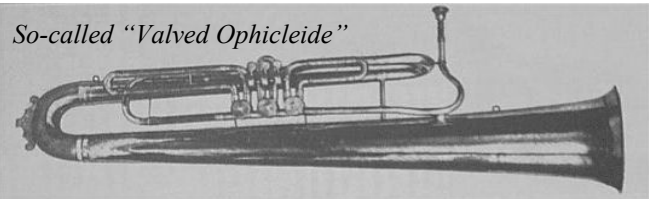


*Paul Niemisto soloing with Russian Horn Capella*

Extant collections of authentic Russian Horns from their heyday are found in the Museum of Musical Instruments (formerly the State Museum for Theater, Music and Cinematography) at Sheremetev Palace, Fontanka, St. Petersburg (known as the “Coburg” set), and at the Russian Museum in Moscow (recently relocated from the Glinka Musical Instrument Museum in Moscow). New York’s Metropolitan Museum houses a Russian made set dating from the 1880s. Smaller sets made much later can be found in the Grassi Music Instrument Museum at the University of Leipzig, the Music Instrument Museum in Markneukirchen, the Music Instrument Museum in Berlin

and the National Music Museum’s Utley Collection; these instruments in the German collections and the Utley set are of later construction and use the modern mouthpieces, so it is doubtful that they represent instruments that could be successfully used in actual Russian Horn style playing.

The technique of Russian Horns is quite different from that required for conventional brasses, and many who have tried to make even initial sounds have met with disappointing results (this should seem very familiar to serpentists!). The player needs muscular relaxation and a large and free air flow in order to achieve the desired open resonant sound. However, accomplished players are able to produce an organ-like volume of sound, with a combination of the shimmer of a great British brass band combined with the vocal timbre of a serpent, all while managing legato melodic passages due to careful modulation as the music shifts from player to player. Besides visiting St. Petersburg today to hear the group live, interested music lovers may visit their website [www.horncapella.com](http://www.horncapella.com), allowing immediate viewing of some video segments of the *Capella* in action, and downloading of 31 tracks of complete performances of traditional Russian Horn music in MP3 format (there is a \$1 US charge for each track, payable using PayPal).



## About the Organization

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

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Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$15 for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are required for individuals, and institutions that manage to receive the newsletter without contributions are doing so entirely at the discretion of the regional representative. Rates for the UK are £5 for 2 years, for Europe £6 or 10 Euros; in these cases the handling of subscriptions is more formal.

## Workshops

- The 2010 Vintage Brass Festival will take place in Northfield, Minnesota, from August 5 - 8. The first time this event took place in 2006, it was a great blowout, with groups from all over attending and wall-to-wall performances. The organizers are expecting to make 2010 even better, and have many interesting groups on the line. Once again, the Historic Brass Society's Early Brass Festival will take place as part of the larger event. For more information and updates, see [vintagebandfestival.org](http://vintagebandfestival.org) and [www.historicbrass.org](http://www.historicbrass.org).



*This is what serpentists do when there are no music stands.  
L-R: Tra Wagenknecht, Craig Kridel, Paul Schmidt*

- Report on the 2009 Serpentarium

The 2009 Serpentarium took place from Friday, May 22, 2009 through Monday, May 25. This was the third time Nigel Nathan and Thelma Griffiths hosted us at Boswedden House, a Cornish miner's mansion-cum-bed & breakfast, due west of Penzance above the rocky cliffs of Cape Cornwall.

Early arrivals on Thursday included Chris Gutteridge and his mate Jayne Thomas, as well as his daughter Lizzie Gutteridge (a first time serpentist) and the recent arrivals from the States, John Weber and Paul Schmidt. After a walk down to the Cape to view the breathtaking ocean vistas, this group was joined by Nigel at the nearby golf resort for a fine dinner (during which the parsnip dish was much discussed).

Friday morning, Chris, Jayne, Lizzie, Paul and John went to the nearby Geevor tin mine to tour the extensive museum and facilities, followed by a nice lunch at the museum café. Afterwards, this band dispersed to independently enjoy the scenic drive up the coast. Returning to Boswedden House in the early afternoon, the first group greeted the newest arrivals, including Doug Yeo, Phil Humpries and his mate

Anita, and Christian Körner and his wife Anna. Doug presented Phil with a water color painting of the two of them, done by artist Jackie Gaff. Wik Bohdanowicz and his mate Anya Spackman appeared soon after, followed by Shirley Civil-Hopkins. Small groups quickly formed to read through trio and quartet arrangement, testing the horns, chops and ears after their journeys. John Weber's serpent arrived worse than it departed home, with multiple popped joints under the leather. Since Nigel was looking to sell a Monk serpent, John bought it on the spot to use for the weekend.

After a fine home cooked dinner in the Boswedden dining hall, the Serpentarium officially commenced with the assembled players walking through the garden to the recently built Meditation Room. This large, friendly space was built with lots of large windows looking over the gardens plus several skylights, giving a warm and well-lit ambience to the rehearsals. As an opener, the group read through *The Elephant* from Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals*. Next, our leader Phil introduced Doug, who suggested that we remember serpent maker Keith Rogers by reciting a poem by Thomas Hardy, *The Choirmaster's Burial*, and playing the old tune *Mt. Ephriam*, which is mentioned in the poem and is associated with Psalm 15, a favorite of Keith's. Phil read the poem in Dorset dialect, and immediately a quartet comprised of Phil, Doug, John and Paul played the hymn twice through. The entire group then proceeded to read through several pieces, including *With Catlike Tread* from Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The British Grenadiers*, Cark Teike's *Old Comrades*, Handel's *March from Scipio* (all four arranged by Cliff Bevan), and *Agnus Dei* by William Byrd. Nigel appeared to announce the arrival of Stephen Berger (of Wetterberger Serpents) and Michele Lomas with her husband Mike and son Adam. Stephan revealed that while he makes serpents, he up until now was not a player and wished to learn; he was the event's second first timer player besides Lizzie. It is worth noting that in previous Serpentariums, Shirley had been the one in beginner mode, but at this event she was capably handling parts on her own with great panache. To keep things challenging, she had brought along her recently acquired ophicleide. Nigel had laid on kegs of draught cider, Skinner's Betty Stogs dark beer and Skinner's Cornish blonde, and the taps were opened for the first night of convivial well-lubricated socializing. Joining the group then was the latest arrival, Lizzie's friend Eric Martens, who had been transported via motorcycle to the remote reaches of Cornwall.

Saturday morning, Harry Woodhouse arrived with an interesting array of ethnic wind instruments to show. He had not intended to play, but was soon caught up in the fun and joined in on his antique military serpent for the rest of the event. The day shaped up according to the schedule that would apply to Sunday and most of Monday as well, with

full breakfast in the dining hall, massed playing session in the meditation hall, tea break, another massed playing session, lunch in the dining hall, early afternoon set aside for local hiking or swimming in the pool and/or small group rehearsals, dinner, a third massed playing session, and the reward of plenty of beer in the later evening. Additional pieces were read through, including the hymns *Lead Kindly Light* by J.B. Dykes and *In Heavenly Love Abiding* by D. Jenkins (both arranged by Doug), *Hunting Scene* by Bucalosi as arranged by John, Schubert's *March Militaire* as arranged by Cliff Bevan, *Verbum Caro* by Victoria and arranged by Robert King, Martin Christen's alhorn piece *De Berner*, as arranged by John, and the *Matrosen Chorus* from Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer (The Flying Dutchman)*, also set by John.

The real meat of the rehearsals was in the larger arrangements. Of course there was the excellent five movement *Amherst Suite* by Simon Proctor, but there were also new pieces. Doug provided Guy Gyles' arrangement for trombone ensemble of *The Pirates of the Caribbean* by Klaus Badelt. John introduced us to his new edition of *Serpent Doo-Wop* for four serpents, based on the Ed Lojeski medley arrangement *The Best of Doo-Wop*, which included those 50's era crowd-pleasing favorites *Duke of Earl*, *Get a Job*, *Book of Love* and *Goodnight, It's Time to Go*. Lizzie contributed her neat arrangement of Julian Nott's theme from the *Wallace & Gromit* animations.

Stephan displayed his serpent T-shirt, one of a large selection of skeleton-playing-serpent themed clothing

available from Rattlebrained Designs, see [www.cafepress.com/rattlebrained/6730294](http://www.cafepress.com/rattlebrained/6730294). Murray Campbell arrived in the afternoon, completing the full group. The hikes included a visit to the Cape Cornwall tin mine chimney, the National Coastwatch Institution's weather and ship-safety observation station, though fields being munched by contented looking yet rare Highland miniature cattle. Since the weather was clear blue skies and temperatures in the low 70s (and this continued every day except Monday), a group photo was taken in the garden. Anita had a selection of serpent themed bone china mugs for sale, and Chris and Lizzie had some of their minstrel show CDs available. See Anita's website [www.englishnatureinwatercolour.co.uk](http://www.englishnatureinwatercolour.co.uk) or email her at [anita-elizabeth-law@supanet.com](mailto:anita-elizabeth-law@supanet.com); she has produced serpent T-shirts with her artwork in the past, and may do another batch if enough serpentists contact her soon to express their interest. While Chris & Lizzie's CD features no serpent, but rather lizard, sackbut, cittern, lute, shawms, recorders, rebec and bagpipe, you can investigate at [www.wyldesnoyse.co.uk](http://www.wyldesnoyse.co.uk). With everyone thoroughly worn out at the end of the day, the beer flowed.

Sunday was a repeat of Saturday's schedule, except that the pieces to be used for the concluding concert had been selected, and actual rehearsals, as opposed to reading sessions, were the name of the game. The small groups also were practicing their pieces in earnest, including in part the trio of Phil, Paul and John, the trio of Phil, Doug and Murray, the quartets of Murray, Doug, John and Paul, and Phil, Doug, Murray and John, and a trio of Christian,



*Serpentarium participants*

*Back row, L-R: Chris Gutteridge, Lizzie Gutteridge, Michelle Lomas, Murray Campbell*

*Middle Row, L-R: Christian Körner, John Weber, Shirley Civil-Hopkins, Harry Woodhouse, Stephan Berger, Nigel Nathan, Wik Bodanowicz*

*Front row, L-R: Doug Yeo, Phil Humphries, Paul Schmidt*

Shirley and Wik, in addition to others. The official group photo was taken on the garden wall facing the ocean. Monday, the weather finally remembered that it was in Cornwall and turned overcast with an almost empty promise of rain. After a morning and early afternoon that repeated the previous two days, the concert took place in the mediation hall. In front of a small, colorful, and appreciative group of locals, the program opened with all players performing *With Catlike Tread*, followed by *British Grenadiers*. Next, Chris and Lizzie switched to lyzarden for the duet *Fortune My Foe*. The full ensemble then performed *Verbum Caro*, followed by *Lead Kindly Light* and *In Heavenly Love Abiding*. Phil, Murray and Doug then played the *Nocturne* from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by Matyas Seiber's *Foxtrot*, a favorite of the London Serpent Trio. Phil, Murray, Doug and John presented the *Huntsmen's Chorus* from Carl Maria von Weber's *Euryanthe*. The whole group then returned with the *Serpent Doo-Wop*, followed by Phil, Paul and John playing two movements from Mozart's *Divertimento K. 439b in F major for Three Bassett Horns*, the *I-Allegro* and *V-Rondo*. The large band then finished the concert with *Wallace & Gomit*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and the *Amherst Suite*. Since the applause from the small audience was so thunderous, we had to check outside to verify the current weather conditions. Since it was the audience's hands, and not atmospheric electrical discharge at work, the group quickly played *Wallace & Gromit* again as an encore. Everyone moved to the bar at Boswedden House for the reception (beer!), during which the kegs were emptied and Nigel was forced to raid the cellar for bottled brew, assisted by Wik who had brought a healthy supply in his car for just such an eventuality. After the last member of the audience disappeared into the dark, the serpentists got busy with the real beer consumption until they faded away upstairs to well deserved slumber.

Tuesday after breakfast, most said their goodbyes, although a few decided to stay on and enjoy the remote locale for a bit more vacation time. Doug was on the way to the airport, and Paul and John headed east through Dartmoor National Park enroute to visits with Nick Perry to see his new serpents, Kathryn Rogers and her ongoing cornett making activities, and Simon Proctor.

- Report on the 2009 Early Brass Festival

The 25th Annual Historic Brass Society Early Brass Festival was held on the campus of Connecticut College in New London, across the street from the Coast Guard Academy campus and overlooking the Thames River with a fine view of the General Dynamics submarine factory across the water. Participants began to arrive around noon on Friday, July 17. Early arrival serpentists included Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, John Weber and Paul Schmidt. The first thing we noticed was the fact that we were sporting the



One of the Serpent sessions at the Early Brass Festival  
L-R: John Weber, Tra & Robert Wagenknecht, Paul Schmidt

new serpent gig bags designed by Paul Schmidt and made by Donna Altieri. This was Paul's first actual use of his prototype bag, and it was interesting to see the small variations in the first production bags brought along by the others. Soon, we got to see more options in the Altieri bags sported by Doug Yeo and Craig Kridel.

Early in the afternoon, this quartet hooked up with fellow serpentists Craig Kridel and Don Beyer, and a sight reading session was proposed before the main activities started in the evening. Sackbut players Steve Lundahl and Charlotte Leonard were looking for a session group, and were quickly incorporated into an octet. The first piece out of the gate was Bach's *Die göldne Sonne, voll Freud und Wonne*, and this was followed by Lizzie Gutteridge's arrangement of the *Wallace (& Gromit)* theme (first played at the Serpentarium). Next was John Weber's Serpentarium arrangement of *Serpent Doo-Wop*, and John quickly produced another of his arrangements, this time of William Byrd's *Earl of Oxford Marche*. To close the session, John produced his version of *It Was a Lover and His Lass* by Thomas Morley. After dinner, the festival's first lecture was presented by Eric Brummit, titled *The Belloni Horn Players: How One Family Helped to Define the Way Italians Played the Horn in the 19th Century*.

Saturday began with brief playing sessions, and serpentists Robert, Paul, John and Don joined once again with sackbut players Steve and Charlotte to read through *Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern* by Michael Praetorius, *O bone Jesu* by Palestrina, Johann Walter's setting of *Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott*, and Praetorius' *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ*. With Don switching from serpent to mute cornetto, the group played *Lamentations I & II* by Giovanni Maria Nanino and closed with the Josquin des Prez favorite *In te Domini speravi*. The group adjourned to the day's first lecture, *The Privilege of Joseph Riedl and Joseph Kail: 1 November 1823*, prepared by Ralph Dudgeon, Siegfried Kristöfl and Michael Söllner and presented by Dudgeon; the subject involved the license and protection to the





*Premiere performance of Cliff Bevan's "Mendelssohn's Seasons"  
Back two rows, The Anglican Singers of New London (Wim Becu on far left of front row of chorus)  
Front row, L-R: Jeff Snedecker, David Loucky, Craig Kridel, Doug Yeo  
Photo by A. Vincent Scarano*

invention of brass instrument valves given by the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the inventors of the valve, and the associated progression of the invention and its patents. Next was Joanna Hersey with *A Musician as Well...The Low Brass 'Schule' of Robert Kietzer*, a lecture-demonstration on the tuba and euphonium using selections from the Kietzer's *Orange Book* of etudes. After lunch, Charlotte Leonard directed a special reading session in the Palmer Auditorium, with choir accompanied by a band comprised of sackbuts and two serpents, plus harpsichord and serpent continuo. The choir was The Anglican Singers, the harpsichordist was John Anthony, the band serpentists were Robert Wagenknecht and John Weber, and the continuo serpentist was Paul Schmidt. The selections played were by Johann Rudolf Ahle, his *Benedicamus* and *Höre, Gott (Psalm 61)*.

Next on the schedule was a lecture-demonstration by Craig Kridel and Doug Yeo, *In Medias Res: Considering the Sounds of the Bass Cornetto*. Doug played the unique (and experimental) bass cornetto made by cornett player Roland Wilson and based on a tenor cornett, a.k.a. *Lyzard*. Since some historical documents refer to the serpent being the "bass of the cornett family" (a familial relationship almost universally dismissed by organologists, who place the serpent in a separate, albeit related, branch of the brass family), an assertion hitherto unprovable due to a total absence of any known examples, this scaled up tenor was produced to see how an instrument having a cornetto bore profile, finger hole layout and typical serpent's 8-foot bore length would compare with the actual serpent. Doug Yeo played the instrument and discussed the differences in playing technique and left the comparison of timbre up to the audience. As expected, it was apparent to all that this bass cornetto sounded very little like a serpent, adding

credence to the organologists' classifications. Later in the lecture, Doug went further by discussing and demonstrating various serpent mouthpiece shapes and asking the question, "what are proper serpent mouthpiece characteristics?" Next was Keith Polk's presentation *Cornetts and Sackbuts in the Early 16th Century, a.k.a. The Mystery of the Missing Repertory for Cornetts and Sackbuts*. Closing the day's lecture schedule was Paul Niemisto with the very interesting *The Russian Horn Cappella Revisited in St. Petersburg*, regarding the Czarist tradition of so-called Russian Horns bands, where each player blew a simple conical tube with a primitive mouthpiece and capable of only sounding the fundamental pitch and the partial one octave above that, using handbell-like hocketing techniques in an ensemble of many different sizes to perform complex music. (Note: the website [www.horncapella.com](http://www.horncapella.com) features downloadable music files, videos, photos and general information on a contemporary recreation of a traditional Russian Horn band. Also see the brief article on the Russian Horn bands in this newsletter.)

After a light dinner, serpentists John, Robert and Tra, plus Paul on ophicleide met for more sight reading. Walter's *Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott* was repeated from earlier, then selections from the collection *Vier Italienische Tänze* were played, including *Gagliarda: Peschatore, Pavane: Svizzera, Intrada* by Johann Pezel, *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland* as arranged by Böhler, *Macht Hoch die Tör*, and *Nun Singet und seid froh*. The players then joined the other festival participants for the traditional pizza and beer party.

Sunday morning saw a smaller band, comprised of Paul and John on serpents plus Charlotte on sackbut, sight reading William Byrd's *Agnus Dei*, Julius Otto's *Das treue Deutsche Herz*, plus *Harre, meine Seele* by C. Malan, and



*Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade* attributed to Vulpui. Eva Heater began the lectures with her playing presentation *An Addition to a Small But Significant Repertoire: The Horn and String Quartets of Nicola Petrini-Zamboni*, followed by Jeff Snedecker's lecture-recital *New Wine for an Old Bottle: Contemporary Music for the Natural Horn*, wherein he played *Fasten Seatbelts* by John David Lamb, part of a modern hunting fanfare collection titled *Signals for Our Times* which also includes pieces such as *You've Got Mail* and *No Smoking*, etc. Next was the Membership Meeting, where amongst other business Paul Niemisto discussed his plans for the joint Vintage Band Festival and Early Brass Festival in Northfield, Minnesota in August of 2010; those interested may visit [www.vintagebandfestival.org](http://www.vintagebandfestival.org) or email [VBF2010@gmail.com](mailto:VBF2010@gmail.com). Next in the meeting was the posthumous presentation of the 2007 Christopher Monk award to the family of Robert King, accepted by his daughter Judith King. After lunch, Paul spent time with Joanna Hersey, letting her try playing the serpent and ophicleide for the first time.



*Berlioz Historic Brass participants and directors*  
L-R: Jeff Snedecker, David Loucky, Ralph Dudgeon,  
Simon Holt (the normal director of The Anglican Singers),  
Wim Becu, Doug Yeo

There followed two concerts held *attacca*. The first program was sponsored by Berlioz Historic Brass and began with a performance of Simon Proctor's *Fanfare for the Historic Brass Society*, a.k.a. the *HBS Fanfare*, in a revised edition and performed this time by Jeff Snedecker on natural horn, David Loucky on period trombone, Ralph Dudgeon on keyed bugle, and Doug Yeo on ophicleide. Next on this program was the world premiere of Cliff Bevan's composition titled *Mendelssohn's Seasons*, which is in four movements with seasonal words by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and set to music based on themes from various Mendelssohn works. The movements were titled *An April Day*, *Rain In Summer*, *Autumn*, and *King Witlaf's Drinking-Horn*. The chorus was The Anglican Singers of New London, the players were Jeff Snedecker on horn, David Loucky on trombone, Craig Kridel on English Bass Horn, and Doug Yeo on ophicleide, all directed by Wim Becu. Closing this program was another world premiere

performance, *De Bronze et de Lumière* by Thérèse Brenet, which was originally written for Michel Godard but never performed by him; Doug Yeo played serpent, accompanied by John Anthony.

The second program was a short version of the traditional Gala Concert that usually closes most EBFs. It began with Bahb Civiletti playing natural trumpet on three pieces with harpsichord accompaniment by John Anthony. His selections were George von Reutter II's *Concerto in C major*, Johann Wenzel Anton Stamitz's *Concerto in D major "Clarion Principale"* (listed in the program as the world premiere of this piece), and Johann Michael Haydn's *Concerto in D major*. Next, a natural trumpet ensemble performed the world premiere of Jonathan Miller's piece titled *Jump In*. The players were Robin Pyle, Bahb Civiletti, Dave Maller, Lorenzo Greenwich, Jeff Nussbaum, Flora Newberry, Randy Barbiero and Joe Kaminski, plus the composer on drums, all directed by Ralph Dudgeon. Closing the concert was a natural horn trio comprised of players Jeff Snedecker, Eric Brummit, and Eva Heater, playing three trios by Anton Reicha, a *Lento*, an *Allegretto*, and an *Allegro*. After the concert, the remaining serpentists headed to New London for a leisurely dinner, then returned to the campus for a final late reading session. The players at this point included Paul, John, Robert and Tra, and Charlotte on sackbut, and they played the *Serpent Doo-Wop* once again. Craig Kridel then arrived and joined in for re-readings of the *Earl of Oxford Marche* and *O Bone Jesu*. The group was then joined by a cornetto-cum-serpent student from California, Brad Schwartz, who was having his first try in a serpent ensemble. The group read *O Bone Jesu*, *Wallace*, and *Serpent Doo-Wop* again for his benefit, then read through *It Was a Lover and His Lass*, *De Berner* by Martin Christen and arranged by John Weber, the *Lamentations I & II* (previously read) plus *III*, and *In te Domini speravi*, *Die göldne Sonne voll Freud und Wonne*, and *Viel schöner Künst und Gaben* by Calvisius.

This EBF was in the end notable from a serpent-centric standpoint because of so many professional serpent and ophicleide performances, the first serpent-related EBF lecture in recent memory (if ever!), and a record size for the serpent reading sessions. Also, next year's EBF in Northfield promises to be an interesting and entertaining event.

*both reports by Paul Schmidt*

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## Where Serpents Gather

- Sue Bradley in Australia wrote about her recent ophicleide playing opportunities. She played late in April for a performance of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, which she says gets played in Melbourne a surprising amount. This was her 12th time through it: nine on tuba, and the three on

ophicleide. The performance in this instance was with the Camerata Orchestra and Camberwell Chorale, conducted by Douglas Heywood. Sue writes, "Despite being full of typical Mendelssohnian rollicking good tunes, the ophicleide part is fairly simple, but very enjoyable. May I recommend taking a book to rehearsals, and a crossword or two, perhaps some knitting..... I get a lot of reading done in the rehearsals....." A few days later she took the serpent on an outing to the Dandenongs, a temperate rainforest semi-rural area on the edge of Melbourne, where she played duets with Graeme Stentiford and his modified tenor serpent. Sue concludes, "Oddly, this music from several hundred years ago seemed to fit perfectly in the shadiness of the gum trees!"



*Instigator-collaborators of Le Concert des Parfumes  
Ursula S. Yeo and Michel Godard*

- Over the Summer, Doug Yeo met with Russ Kaiser and Paul Horner of Kaiser Church Serpents and they had a good visit, with Russ taking photos and measurements of Doug's Baudouin serpent and having productive discussions. Russ hopes to be able to make his current line of fiberglass serpents even better with the additional information.

- One July 18 & 19, Michel Godard produced two concerts in the Abbaye de Noirlac. The Abbey, located southwest of Bourges on the bank of the river Cher, was founded in 1150 and is one of the best preserved examples of Cistercian architecture, with an arcaded cloister dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. The program was titled *Le Concert des Parfumes*, and was an experimental collaboration between Godard and German perfume and aromatherapy designer Ursula S. Yeo. She has a company called *Schellenpfeffer & Bade* that distributes her products, but with Godard she wanted to support the musical emotion with fragrances, while attempting a fair balance between the music played and special aromas wafting around the convent. With collaborators Gavino Murgia (vocals, saxophone), Sébastien Marq (recorder), Gerard Marais (guitars) and Patrice Héral (percussion, electronics, voice), Godard conceived the idea of mixing jazz, electronic music

and baroque music in this unprecedented concert. Yeo has permeated all of these sounds, imagining a dozen fragrances that could be successively released during the concert. Both artists agreed that the sounds and perfumes complemented each other in the evening air.



*Doug Yeo and Craig Kridel in South Carolina*

- In June, Doug Yeo traveled to South Carolina, where he visited with Craig Kridel, Sabine Klaus (curator of the National Music Museum's Joe and Joella Utley Collection of Brass Instruments) and Joella Utley to complete the video recording of his serpent DVD project *Approaching the Serpent: An Historical and Pedagogical Overview*. Doug is producing the project himself and it will appear on the Berlioz Historical Brass label; partial funding has been provided by the New England Conservatory of Music Faculty Development Fund and Berlioz Historical Brass. Doug hopes the DVD will be out by the beginning of 2010, and it is expected to be available through Doug's website [www.yeodoug.com](http://www.yeodoug.com) and through Berlioz Historic Brass at [berliozhistoricalbrass.org](http://berliozhistoricalbrass.org). The DVD will be produced in versions for both American and European/UK video players.

The video is divided into several sections. The first is an introduction to the serpent and various forms of the instrument, with Doug talking about and playing church serpent, military serpent, serpent Forveille, serpent pavillion, contrabass serpent (the anaconda, "George"), ophimonocleide, English bass horn, bass cornetto and several other instruments. In many cases, this DVD will be the only recording available of some of the instruments. The second part of the DVD is a "lesson" for beginning serpent players, with Doug playing several etudes from 19th century French serpent methods while discussing issues related to serpent playing including posture, ergonomics, and air flow. This section is followed by Doug playing duets - both parts - so the viewer can play along with him. All of the music played on the DVD will be provided as PDF files on the disc. The disc concludes



*Serpent DVD project participants*

*L-R: Sabine Klaus, Doug Yeo, Craig Kridel, Joella Utley*

with Doug discussing where and how to get serpents, music, recordings and other resources for the modern serpentist.

- On October 23 - 25, 2009, a symposium titled *The Cornett – History, Instruments and Construction* will take place at the Michaelstein Monastery Foundation near



*Doug Yeo playing Serpent Forveille for his DVD project*

Blankenburg in the edge of the Harz Mountains. On Friday the 23rd, Volny Hostiou and Doug Yeo will give an evening recital on serpents. On Saturday the 24th, Hostiou will give a lecture *The Serpent in Choirs of French Churches in the 17th to 18th Century*, followed by Doug's lecture *Marches and Divertimenti: Haydn and the Serpent*. Besides the inclusion of the serpent in a symposium otherwise devoted to a somewhat different subclass of the brass instrument family, the names of some other lecturers familiar to readers of this newsletter include Sabine Klaus, Bruce Dickey and Stewart Carter.

- Nick Byrne wrote with some news, "Something that may be of interest to the Serpent readership is that the Sydney Symphony recently completed the entire *Midsummer Night's Dream* with [Vladimir] Ashkenazy, and it is available anytime to view via online streaming at [www.SydneySymphony.bigpondmusic.com](http://www.SydneySymphony.bigpondmusic.com), just click on the left-side 28th of February performance link. It is an interesting performance if you have the patience for the complete work. [Editor: I was unable to view this video regardless of which browser I used, as it required a dubious looking download that I refused to install].

"Other news is that I have several recitals planned for around Australia including in Sydney, Canberra, the Melbourne International Festival of Brass in September, Port Fairy Music festival in October, and a recital tour of several European music instrument museums in Early 2010 with good friend and Ophicleide colleague Joseph Bastian (Bavarian Radio Orchestra-Bass Trombone) which will be fun.

"I am still working on a complete performance of the Proctor [ophicleide] concerto as well as a new commission by Australian composer Elena-Kats-Chernin (Composer for 2000 Olympics, etc.) which I hope to perform, along with a recently discovered original concerto for 2 Ophicleides from the mid-19th Century, also early in the new year.

"On an interesting note, I recently had the good fortune of finding another Ophicleide right here in Sydney. It is an anonymous brand in C that is in excellent condition. I was very fortunate that the Sydney Symphony had the foresight (rear-sight?) and purchased it for me. Are there any other Orchestras world-wide that have an Ophicleide in their collection??.....we have 2 ( ! ) now in the Symphony; however we will be selling one, the 1840's Finke in C if anyone is interested. I will post details of the upcoming sale on [ophicleide.com](http://ophicleide.com).

"I am in Melbourne at the moment where I gave another Ophicleide recital at the Melbourne International Festival of Brass, and will give another next Sunday, October 11th, as a guest of the Port Fairy Music Festival (which is sold-out!!). In both recitals I am playing Klose, Berlioz, Satie, Kats-Chernin, Proctor amongst other tidbits..."

## Ophicleide - What's In a Name?

by Paul Schmidt

Regarding that very odd word, Ophicleide, we have all heard and accepted the word origin of “Keyed Serpent”, with Ophi=Serpent and Cleide=Key, with both words originating from the Greek. During the 2009 Serpentarium, it was mentioned that Tony George, in his comments regarding the monstre ophicleide as printed in the program for the 2008 recreated premiere of Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, stated that the word origin was Cleide=Door Stop. This made us wonder about the accuracy of the commonly accepted etymology, even though “keyed serpent” makes sense and “serpent door stop” makes none; one wit observed that if one cannot play the ophicleide, it might well be a door stop.

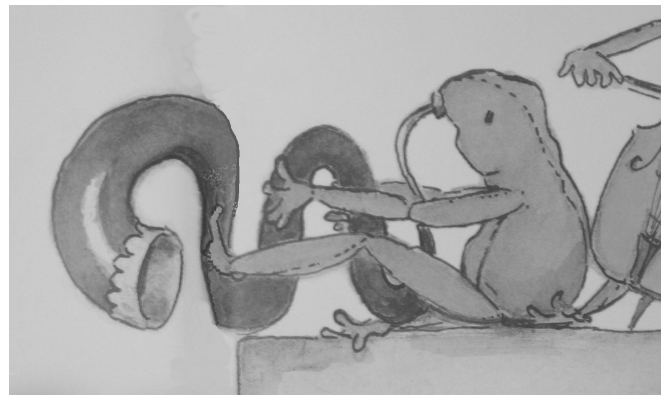
Being a veteran of the “We Never Guess, We Look It Up” club from grade school, I decided to put the matter to rest. Consulting several Greek dictionaries at the library as well as the Google Language Tools online, it was easy to type in the English words Serpent and Key. Using a reverse translation on the choices resulting from the initial translation, I was able to narrow down the correct forms of the words.

The word “Serpent” translates as **ερπετο** (Epsilon, Rho, Pi, Epsilon, Tau, Omikron) while the word “Snake” translates as **οφις** (Omikron, Phi, Iota, Sigma). How does one pronounce Greek words given the letters and no other knowledge of the language? I found a useful website [www.ibiblio.org/koine/greek/lessons/alphabet.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/koine/greek/lessons/alphabet.html), which has a wealth of information on the Greek alphabet. I also found information about the early Renaissance scholar Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, a contemporary of Martin Luther and well known for his work on Greek and Latin books, including the Bible. One of his accomplishments was the establishment of a way of pronouncing Greek that was until recently the most accepted version. In Erasmian Greek, Epsilon = E in the English word End, Rho = R, Pi = P, Tau = T, and Omikron = Off. This would then result in “Erpto”....nope! Going with the second translation choice, we need to know that Iota = It, Phi = F or PH and Sigma = Say, resulting in “Ofis” or “Ophis”, bingo!

Getting to the more interesting part of our subject, “Key” translates as **κλειδι** (Kappa, Lamda, Epsilon, Iota, Delta, Iota) or **κλεις** (Kappa, Lamda, Epsilon, Iota, Sigma). The former is most closely translated back to English as a key, in the context of something that you push on to move something else, such as a lever. The latter translates back as a key that acts to close something, but it was unclear whether this was more applicable to closing/locking a door or to closing a hole. Professor Erasmus tells us that Kappa = English K, Lamda = L, Delta = D, and the rest we

already know, except that when **ει** are used together, they are pronounced as a diphthong, as in **Freight** or **Fate**. This would result in “Klaydih” for **κλειδι** and “Klayss” for **κλεις**. The “Cleide” is most often described as coming from the Greek “kleis”, which I suppose most accurately matches **κλεις**, or a ‘key that closes something’. However, Klaydih from **κλειδι**, or a ‘key you press on to do something’ is a closer match for the version of the word we use for our instrument. Actually, both are close enough to each other that you can take your pick.

I could find nothing even close to “Cleide” that meant anything to do with a door stop. I have to assume this was Tony’s little joke. Therefore, the word according to Erasmus should be pronounced as Ofis-Klaydih rather than Ofi-Klide! Since modern Greek pronunciation differs significantly from that suggested by Erasmus, I looked at a wonderful website [www.biblicalgreek.org/links/pronunciation.php](http://www.biblicalgreek.org/links/pronunciation.php), which plays sound bites of people speaking all the letters and diphthong combinations in Erasmian, Historic Biblical, and modern versions. According to this, our instrument would be Ofis-Kleedih, a bit closer to what we prefer to say. So, the next time somebody asks the name of your keyed brass monstrosity and you answer only to get that simultaneously quizzical and doubtful look in response, you can know in your heart that you got it right!



*Frog playing serpent (or is it serpent-playing frog?)  
illustration from “One Ted Falls Out of Bed”  
by Julia Donaldson and Anna Currey*

## More Exciting News

- Michel Godard writes, “I’m playing the Wetterberger all the time now, will still keep the anonymous from which they made the copy (one very similar is at the Paris museum, an other one in Basel museum). The Wetterberger is just as good as the original one. Stephan Berger just did a new leadpipe that really helps for the intonation of the middle D and E.”

Because Michel is playing the Wetterberger and its source instrument exclusively now, he wants to sell his excellent

Baudouin serpent for 6500 Euros. Interested persons should contact this newsletter, and the query will be forwarded to him.

- Chris Gutteridge wrote, “(daughter) Lizzie was asked to do a music workshop with some small children this week, and was given a book to base it on. Imagine her surprise when she opened the book to find an illustration of a serpent being played by a frog. Although unorthodox, the frog's method of playing would probably work - for a frog!” The book is *One Ted Falls Out of Bed*, by Julia Donaldson and Anna Currey, pub. Macmillan, ISBN 0-333-94782-7.



*An ophicleide case made by Wolf-Dieter Rase using an SKB golf case, based on the Serpent Website design shown housing his Halary instrument*

- Andrew van der Beek contributed with a cautionary tale about the vagaries of translations, “Did you know that the serpent features in *Madame Bovary* (1851-6)? It comes right at the end, at Emma's (Madame Bovary's) funeral. It's a reference that must have been missed by many readers of the book in English, because the standard translation, that of Alan Russell, published in 1950, has ‘the harmonium wheezed for all it was worth’; but a complete transcription of Flaubert's manuscript has just this week been put on the web, and I found it by going to [www.bovary.fr](http://www.bovary.fr) and then entering “serpent” in the search tool. Here is the passage:

*“La cloche tintait. Tout était prêt. Il fallait se mettre en marche. Et assis dans une stalle du chœur, l'un près de l'autre, ils virent passer devant et repasser continuellement les trois chantres qui psalmodiaient. Le serpent soufflait à pleine poitrine. Mr Bourdisien en grand appareil chantait d'une voix aiguë ; il saluait le tabernacle, élevait les mains, étendait les bras. Lestiboudois circulait par l'église avec sa latte de baleine, et près du lutrin, la bière reposait entre quatre rangs de cierges. Charles avait envie de se lever pour les éteindre.”*

“The bell tolled. Everything was ready. It was time to start. And seated close to each other in one of the choir stalls, they watched the three choir-men pass and repass continually in front of them, chanting. The serpent-player blew lustily [with full lungs]. Mr Bourdisien, in full vestments, intoned in a shrill voice, bowed to the tabernacle, raised his hands, spread out his arms. Lestiboudois moved around the church with his verger's staff, and beside the lectern, the bier lay between four rows of tapers. Charles felt a strong desire to get up and snuff them out.”

- Wolf-Dieter Rase wrote with some information for the serpent community, “Regarding the Serpent case, two years ago I bought a case for my Harding serpent from Bassbags in England. The case is re-enforced (cardboard, I assume), lined with soft velvet, and has a separate compartment for the crook and other stuff. Bassbags put on backpack straps for me, in addition to the ordinary handles and the shoulder strap. Bassbags can be reached at [www.bassbags.co.uk](http://www.bassbags.co.uk). The Early Music Shop, [www.earlymusicshop.com](http://www.earlymusicshop.com), which has bought the license for the Harding serpent, offers now a padded bag as well as a hard case.

“Regarding the Ophicleide case and bag, for my first Kelherman/Gautrot ophicleide I followed Paul's (Schmidt) advice and got a hard case from SKB (H4812W). I padded it with two foam pieces (pre-cut half-cylinders), and cut out the contours of the instrument and the crook by an electrical kitchen knife. For a comfortable transport I got a backpack system originally designed for violoncello cases by Cello-Fiedler, [www.cellofiedler.de](http://www.cellofiedler.de). It can be removed and put on again very fast and easily.



*Wolf-Dieter Rase's serpent case made by Bassbags*

“For my Halari ophicleide I bought a year ago, I use the same case including the backpack system. This time I padded the case with four short half-cylinders, which made cutting much easier. I left out some space in the middle where a small music stand or music sheets can be stored,



fixed safely by the straps which came with the case. The Halari instrument is shorter than the Kelherman, which made it easier to place the crook inside the case. In the close-up picture you can see the new mouthpiece offered by Nick Byrne, including the pouch which is made from a kangaroo scrotum.

“For the Kelherman, now without a case, I bought a golf bag on sale for about \$20. I adapted the original foam pieces from the SKB case to the size of the golf bag, added a plywood circle to protect the top of the ophicleide, and the gig bag was ready. I am thinking of adding a plywood plank at the bottom to add more mechanical protection, but I not sure if that is really necessary.

“Regarding a Sue Bradley’s (as well as others including me) search for an ophicleide stand, I tried the bassoon and contrabassoon stands manufactured by Koenig & Meyer, but they are not really suited for an ophicleide. I got in contact with Koenig & Meyer, because I had the suspicion that an appropriate stand can be assembled from parts of stands for other instruments. K & M suggested [that I] bring the ophicleide to the factory in order to find the proper combination of parts. Unfortunately the factory was closed when I was in the neighborhood. Next time I will be in the area (Wertheim, Franken) I am going to give K & M another try. If we are successful I’ll send you a report.”

- Doug Yeo was at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, looking through several hundred catalogs of museum collections in order to track down examples of transitional serpents that led to the English military design. He photographed two pages from the Descriptive Catalog of the Collection of Antique Musical Instruments at the State Academy of Music in Berlin, dated 1922. Entry number 222 describes (in translation) a “Serpent, tetragonal/square (!) made of spruce with birch, maple, and box verneers and ebony veins/trim, and the finger holes are set in ivory squares, near the lower end of the instrument is a burn mark reading “London 1796”, Height 105cm (41.3”),

Diameter/cross-section [presumably at bell end] 10.5cm (4-1/8”).

Doug wrote, “My friend, Howard Weiner (who is an American musicologist living in Germany - you’ve seen articles by him in the HBS Journal and he is helping me with translation work for my Haydn article), said that collection in Berlin [as referenced in the catalog] still exists but is only a shadow of its former self. WWII did a job on museums in Germany, particularly in Berlin. When I was at the main musical instrument museum in Berlin a few years ago, the curator told me that art from museums was taken to the mountains and hidden in caves, but things like musical instruments were hidden in the subway - not deep enough to survive. It was sad to see so many instruments that were flattened or in pieces, lying in boxes in the basement of the museum. Catalogs made today often list the damaged or lost instruments with the sad comment, ‘Kriegsverlust’ (lost in the war).”

- British composer Philip Wilby, known because of his compositions for brass band, choir, wind band, chamber orchestra and keyboards, recently wrote an article for the September 5 issue (5577) of the *British Bandsman* magazine. Titled *Back From Oblivion: The Ophicleide and the Internet*, it unfortunately does not include any information new to ophicleide aficionados, but it still gives the instrument a bit of extra publicity. The first part of the article reveals that Professor Wilby encountered the beat up remains of an ophicleide in the Tavistock Parish Church in county Devon, on the west edge of Dartmoor National Park. A local musicologist advised him that this particular instrument is “the only clue to existence of the West Gallery choir tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries” in that church. While this tidbit seems perhaps somewhat inaccurate for a number of reasons, Wilby was impressed and followed his newfound enthusiasm for the instrument through various internet searches, and the middle part of his article assembles in brief form the history of the instrument.



*Cloth golf bag used for an ophicleide  
as designed by Wolf-Dieter Rase*



*the Kelherman/Gautrot  
ophicleide inside the cloth golf bag*

The last part of the article recounts Wilby's chance meeting with ophicleide player Nick Byrne during a recent trip to Australia, and mentions Nick's excellent website [www.ophicleide.com](http://www.ophicleide.com) and his unique solo CD *Back From Oblivion* (reviewed in a previous issue of this newsletter). The article concludes with the well known bit of doggerel, "The ophicleide, like mortal sin was fostered by the serpent..." (you know the one), and his assertion that the instrument is undeserving of the rude reputation implied by that verse. Hopefully, while not earthshaking to readers of this newsletter, the article may encourage readers of the magazine not already familiar with the serpent or ophicleide to investigate further and check out some websites, recordings and perhaps even take up the instrument.

Nick wrote, "Philip Wilby was here in Sydney with the Black Dyke Mills band about a month ago, and we discussed the ophicleide's history in the BDMB and the ophicleide in general. He was also writing an article for the *British Bandsman* on the Ophicleide; I gave him some insights into the capabilities of the instrument in the light of a possible piece being written for the ophicleide. Watch my website for details, I guess. I am sure, judging by his euphonium concerto, it will not be easy....."

Philip Wilby then wrote, recounting the same visit with Nick. He also shared information on a valuable resource, the improbably yet descriptively named Internet Bandsman's Everything Within website [www.ibew.co.uk](http://www.ibew.co.uk), wherein can be found links to a large collection of brass band websites, recordings, sheet music, old band photos, etc. This is where Wilby obtained his ophicleide photo for his article, in this instance it was the 1968 photo of the Besses o' th' Barn brass band, a famous and old group from the village of that name near Manchester.

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## A Serpent Collection

by Bruno Kampmann

(continued from this newsletter's April 2009 edition)

I own an instrument collection, and among those, 15 instruments are of the serpent family. Most of them are in good playable condition, with mouthpieces, and if you wish you are invited to try them if you go to Paris.

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R53- COEFFET (father) - Ophimonocleide in C, wood covered with brown leather, S brass crook, brass bell, one big brass key. Holes bushed with ivory. Average condition.

R137- TURLOT - serpent Forveille in C, wood covered with brown leather, S brass crook, 3 brass keys. Good condition. The commonest upright serpent.

R232- COEFFET (son) - Ophimonocleide in C, wood covered with brown leather, S brass crook, brass bell, one big brass key. Holes bushed with ivory. The main wood U tube can be separated in two parts via a huge brass tuning slide. Good condition.

