

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2010

A Note from the Editor

I was despairing that this edition of the newsletter would be slim after several large ones, but then in the last month and a half, material has flow in. Indeed, one of the two new CD recordings reviewed herein arrived in my mailbox on the day I was wrapping up the editorial phase and commencing the page layout. All this late-coming material has actually slowed me down, since I had so much editorial work to do at the last minute, but I ain't complaining! Please don't even stop to evaluate any kind of related news you might have; just send it in and let me be the judge of what is useful to the overall content. Remember, the purpose of the newsletter is multifaceted. We want notice of performances, recordings, new music published, old material uncovered, full articles, quips and silliness, and graphics that might look good on these pages.

I will be soon be launching a new and updated page on the Serpent Website for the purpose of complementing the Discography and Filmography pages with one for music written for serpent, ophicleide, or related instruments such as Bass Horn or early Cimbasso. Please refer to the *Music Project* article in this newsletter for more information.

Don't forget that we are on a subscription basis now, so if you have not sent in any contribution lately, please consider doing so before I am forced to send a reminder.

Paul Schmidt



Workshops

- Serpentarium 2011

Nigel Nathan and Thelma Griffiths will host the 2011 Serpentarium at Boswedden House in Cape Cornwall, the same location as the previous event. This will be the ninth happening of the biennial event, and it is open to those who are interested in the serpent and related instruments: players, makers, restorers and collectors. There will be coaching sessions and ensemble playing, breaks for hiking and enjoying rugged coastal countryside, and overall the aim is to stimulate enthusiasm for the instrument whilst having fun. The date will be over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend, which is the same as the Memorial Day weekend in the States, i.e. Friday the 27th through Monday the 30th of May. Phil Humphries will be facilitating, as usual, and the costs are expected to be £225 (£165 for campers) per person for the three days, room and board included. Details can be found at www.boswedden.org.uk/serpentarium-2011.html. Interested persons may also contact Nigel by phone or mail using the information provided in this newsletter in the *About the Organization* section.

Arnold Myers and Murray Campbell are working on blocking out the same weekend for an Edinburgh Serpentarium in 2013, and will be working out costs, etc. This should be a fine location for the occasional 'remote' Serpentarium; the last one was the event in Oxford in 2007.

- Report on the Early Brass Festival

The Historic Brass Society's 26th annual Early Brass Festival was held in conjunction with the second Vintage Band Festival in Northfield, Minnesota, on August 5 through 8. There were 26 groups on the four day program, with a total of approximately 109 concerts between them; many groups performed two or more times. While a normal EBF consists of lectures, presentations, concerts and

playing sessions, in this instance the HBS involvement was less participatory, with formal member activities consisting primarily of morning lectures and presentations; the usual playing sessions and concerts did not take place. The VBF program started at noon each day and went until around 10 PM and consisted of concerts, concerts, and yes, more concerts.

The EBF presentations all took place in the historic downtown Archer House hotel's basement conference room. On Saturday the first lecture was *The Schubert Brass Quartet: Indianapolis 1884 - 1885*, by Michael Smith of Luther College, relating to the group comprised of Herbert L. Clark and his brothers at their church. Next was *A Tale of Bells and Bows: Iconography and the Early Development of the Trombone*, by Stewart Carter of Wake Forest University. Following that was *The Schnitzer Trombone of the Accademia Filarmonica, Verona*, by Hannes Vereecke of the University for Music, Institute of Musical Acoustics, Vienna. The final lecture of the day was *J.S. Bach's Tromba in F: Terminology, Timbre, and Telemann*, by Bryan Proksch of McNeese State University, Louisiana.

On Sunday the first lecture was *Lost Legacy: The Horn in Early America*, by Kathryn Bridwell-Briner of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, about how horns were used, who played them and in which situations. Up next was *The Mounted Band and Field Musicians of the U.S. 7th Cavalry During the Time of the Plains Indian Wars*, by Bruce Gleason of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota.



The groups that performed on historic brass instruments included (listed in order of the festival brochure) the First Brigade Band, Chestnut Brass Company, Dodworth Saxhorn Band, Independent Silver Band, Kentucky Baroque Trumpets, Newberry's Victorian Cornet Band, Matterhorn Alphorn Trio, and the Roving Ophicleides. Some of the more notable non-vintage bands included Tschecháranka (Bohemian style 'polka' band in the Moravian and Czech traditions, from Austria), Helsinki Wind Band, Chicago Brass Band, Kenny Carr and the Tigers (trombone 'shout' band from Charlotte, North Carolina), Ameriikan Poijat Finnish Brass Band (VBF organizer Paul Niemistö's own group), Copper Street Brass Quintet, Jack Brass Jazz Band



The Roving Ophicleides by the Cannon River in Northfield
L-R: John Weber, Paul Schmidt, Leonard Byrne

(a group of young Swedes and Germans from Minneapolis playing New Orleans jazz along the lines of The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, and doing a fine job of it), Lake Wobegon Brass Band, Minnesota State Band, and the Sheldon Theatre Brass Band. Other groups included a few local community bands, a woodwind quintet, a Mexican mariachi band comprised of children, and a quite competent traditional polka band.

Venues included the bandshell in central Bridge Square park next to the Cannon River, some local restaurants which have music spaces, along the riverwalk on either side of the river, sundry other nearby parks, churches, and the library, all in easy walking distance from each other. Festival attendees picked up the large brochure at the headquarters across the street from Bridge Square and found inside the complete list of who was playing where and when, a detailed local map, and a blurb on each group. The trick was to figure out who to see, because those who stayed in one place would miss quite a lot of what was going on, due to the concurrent concert series in each of the multiple locations.

Possibly the first performance of the VBF was when John Weber and Paul Schmidt found what they thought was a secluded and empty park in which to practice ophicleides. By the time the last notes of the first piece were fading away, a large group of day school students and their handlers, along with the residents of the multi-story retirement apartment building nearby had settled down to hear what they thought was a concert. The first formal concert was soon afterwards at noon in a nearby restaurant, when the Chestnut Brass Company gave a 'lunch, learn and listen' program for a packed house who all came for that purpose. The group was actually in the area staging for their flight from Minneapolis to Korea for a concert tour,

so they had fewer instruments along than usual, but they still fielded a set of keyed brass with Jay Krush on ophicleide. Chestnut trumpeter John Thomas obliged Paul and John by evaluating their keyed bugles they ‘just happened’ to have on them (Paul’s only recently purchased and overhauled). The group was only able to perform Thursday and Friday due to their international travel itinerary, but they did a Bridge Square concert and another on Friday in a neighboring town.

The first time the VBF took place was in 2006, and at that event there was another group with keyed brass, Berlin’s ‘Passion des Quivres’ with Erhard Schwartz on ophicleide. This time around, the only other ophicleides to be heard were the Roving Ophicleides. Paul and John gave a couple short performances Friday, and on Thursday they were joined by Leonard Byrne of Spokane, Washington. Leonard was known to the others, but they had never met previously. After a little get together in an even more remote park to put together a small program’s worth of trio selections, they made a point of playing two or three unscheduled concerts each day. The pieces selected were *Viel schöner Kunst und Gaben* by Sethus Calvisius, *Agnus Dei* by William Byrd, *Das treue deutsche Herz* by Julius Otto, *Das deutsche Vaterland* by H.G. Nägeli, *Harre, meine Seele* by C. Malan, *Ach bleib mit deiner Gnade* by Vulpius, *Allegro from Divertimento #1, K. 229* by W.A. Mozart, *Huntsman’s Chorus from Der Freischütz* by C.M. von Weber, *The Lost Chord* by Arthur Sullivan, arranged by Cliff Bevan, the *Second Movement from “Surprise” Symphony #94* by F.J. Haydn, the *Theme from the St. Anthoni Chorale* as arranged by Brahms after Haydn/Pleyel, and the *Nocturne from A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by Mendelssohn. The festival program listed this trio as unscheduled; “They may appear anywhere at anytime”, and people were always thrilled to be present when the strangers suddenly pulled the odd horns from cases and began to play.

In addition to the ophicleide trio, Paul also performed on B-flat bass over-the-shoulder Saxhorn with the First



Brigade Band in three concerts. The festival wrapped up late on Sunday night with a rousing performance by Tschécháranka in the loft above J. Grundy’s Rueb ‘n’ Stein tavern. It seemed that everyone who did not need to depart earlier was jammed into the space, and the band simply refused to stop or wear out. Beer flowed, and another great festival came to an end.



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.

Serpent Music Anthology Project

As not only editor of this newsletter but also webmaster of the Serpent Website, www.serpentwebsite.com, I will be launching a new and updated webpage for the purpose of complementing the Discography and Filmography pages with one for music written for serpent, ophicleide, or related instruments such as Bass Horn or early Cimbasso. The criteria for a musical piece to be included in the list will be direct evidence that the composer of the piece indicated the name of the serpent, etc; at some time. Pieces for which the composer changed his mind for, or against, the serpent will still be listed as long as the indication was there on at least one version, manuscript, or authorized published version. Pieces arranged by others later on to include serpent would not qualify, unless the significance of the arrangement is substantial. For a purely hypothetical example, if Haydn wrote a piece and called for trombone and Mozart or Berlioz or somebody wrote a new arrangement that called for serpent, it would qualify for the list. But if I made an arrangement for serpent quartet of a pop song, it would not qualify. Modern compositions for serpent would also be included. What I want to avoid is bloating the list with every sundry arrangement that somebody might indicate "serpent" on at some point. This is not to denigrate in any way the many worthy contemporary arrangements for, or including, serpent, but for practical purposes the list needs to be kept manageable. However, The Serpent Website does have a page for modern serpent compositions, and if an author or arranger feels that a serpent related piece should be included there, please let me know.

Now, just as with the Serpent Discography and Serpent Filmography already part of the website, the population of this list will require the contributions of many people. If I have to recall or unearth all the pieces myself, it will be a



small list. Currently the list is limited to a few historical examples, but I feel that enough enthusiasts and scholars have discovered or revealed pieces with serpent parts that the time has come to replace the examples with a complete listing to the best of our collective ability.

I would much appreciate readers who take the time to email (or mail) about

any pieces that come to mind. I will also look through books such as Cliff Bevan's book *The Tuba Family* and other sources. But I would rather have three or four people send me duplicate references than overlook a piece entirely.

With the incremental improvements to the list that I hope we can collectively affect, this listing can become an up-to-date reference we can all use.

Please don't delay! Send in the names of pieces as you happen to think of them. Checking the webpage before doing so will save you effort if I have already listed the piece.

I am also trying to find a single-word title for this new list, something along the lines of 'discography'; if any reader can think of a good one, please let me know. Send all suggestions, both for the titles and the content, to me at ocleide@earthlink.net, or use the mailing address listed for the editor in the *About the Organization* section of this newsletter.

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

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

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

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

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

<info@serpentmakers.ch>
<www.wetterberger.ch>
<www.serpentmakers.ch>

(*resin serpents*)

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

(*alphorns and serpents*)

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

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

(*cornetti*)

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

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

(*fiberglass serpents after Baudouin*)

Where Serpent Gather

- On September 25, Doug Yeo performed Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* with the Terre Haute Symphony in Indiana, under the baton of music director and conductor David Bowden. Doug wrote, "I've played Simon's piece with five orchestras and didn't have plans to do it again any time soon, but I offered David Bowden four pieces - three bass trombone concertos and Simon's - and he chose the serpent concerto, wanting the most unusual thing." Not all performances with smaller orchestras like this go well, due to quality of ensemble and lack of rehearsal time (and this even occasionally happens with large orchestras for that matter), but Doug wrote, "It was nice to have a good, neat performance that was well rehearsed with a conductor who understood the piece. I played my 1996 Keith Rogers serpent with metal mouthpiece that is a copy of an ivory one Keith made for me which I have always used for Simon's piece since my first performance. I gave a pre-concert talk as well and the audience seemed very pleased to have been introduced to the serpent. The concert also included *Mahler 5*, a real yin and yang for a program, for sure! David Bowden is a classmate of mine from Wheaton College; we graduated in 1976." To hear a sound bite of Doug being interviewed on public radio in Terre Haute prior to the performance, go to <http://indianapublicmedia.org/arts/terre-haute-symphony/> and find the "Listen in Popup" or "Download" links; the former activates streaming audio and the latter allows you to download the sound file.



*Doug Yeo playing Proctor's Serpent Concerto
with the Terre Haute Symphony
photo by Carl. L. Bender for the Symphony*

Doug also gave a trombone recital at Indiana State University in Terre Haute on September 22, and included a serpent performance, Cliff Bevan's *The Pesky Sarpent*, in the program.

- Doug's other recent historic brass performances include playing serpent in Mendelssohn's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt* (*Calm Seas and Prosperous Voyage*)



Op. 27 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on August 6, under the direction of Christoph von Dohnányi, and ophicleide on Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture* with the BSO, Susanna Malkki conducting, on August 21; this was his third time doing this piece with the BSO. Both performances took place at the BSO's Summer home in Tanglewood. Doug writes, "To play both serpent and ophi in the BSO in one month was a bonus I never dreamed of... the *Calm Seas* performance was a great success. I was pleased with my playing - it is a lovely piece that had not been played by the BSO since 1916. Dohnányi was gracious and complimentary - he gave me a solo bow at the end - the first time I have ever received a solo bow for playing the bass line."

- Doug also gave a presentation at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts on August 2 on the subject of the serpent. This talk was part of the regular monthly series of talks and demonstrations given in the MFA's musical instrument gallery and the first on the serpent since 1997. He had seven serpents and related instruments at his disposal: the MFA's Baudouin serpent and Thomas Key bass horn (both formerly in the collection of Canon Francis Galpin), a Russian bassoon and French serpent militaire from the Boston Symphony's Casadesus Collection, and three instruments from his own collection: his Baudouin serpent, an English military serpent made by Keith Rogers (2007) and Keith Roger's own plum wood python skin covered church serpent. The capacity crowd - over 75 people - heard most of the subject instruments played and a lively question and answer period concluded the hour.

- In late September, the West Suburban Early Music Society, based in Naperville, Illinois, in collaboration with the Chicago chapter of the American Recorder Society, hosted a meeting of the board of the ARS that ended on Saturday the 25th. WSEMS is a group that includes recorders, crumhorns, dulcians, rebecs, lute, viola-da-gamba, serpent and voices, while the Chicago group is primarily recorders. The gathering concluded with an impromptu jam session, reading and improving three

selections provided and directed by board members. For this special session, the instruments included recorders, serpent, and a singer. Paul Schmidt was present on serpent, being a member of WSEMS and occasional attendee of the Chicago group.

- Although the notice will come too late in many mailboxes to do any good, the group Les Chantres de Saint-Hilaire, artistique@chantres-de-st-hilaire.com, plans to perform the music from their new CD *Musique en la Chapelle d'Henri IV* on Saturday, October 9 in Paris at the German Evangelical Church, 25 rue Blanche.



Keith Ryder plays serpent with Col. Webb's Band of Musick

- On September 12, the Wisconsin-based Revolutionary War military wind ensemble, Col. Webb's Band of Musick, performed at Cantigny Park in the west-suburban Chicago area. The 500 acre wooded green space is home to two history museums and hosts many events, including concerts and historical re-enactments. Decades ago, the band was originally part of the Heritage Military Music Foundation, which sponsored both this group for the Revolutionary War period and the First Brigade Band for the Civil War period. Eventually, Col. Webb's Band became a separate organization and is still managed by one of the two founders. The band is a harmonic music ensemble,

comprised of two oboes, a clarinet, two natural horns, a bassoon and the serpent. Other than the leader's older style oboe, the other three woodwinds play modern instruments. Keith Ryder has been serpentist with the band for the last couple of years, replacing a second bassoon in the ensemble. He plays a Kaiser church serpent, and he gets a good sound that anchors the band nicely.

- Phil Humphries wrote, "Mellstock Band recorded a new Christmas album in August to be available November & December to coincide with two weeks in Washington DC, where Mellstock Band will be performing with the Washington Revels in their Christmas Revels at Lisner Auditorium. The dates are December 4th, 5th, 10th, 11th and 12th. For more information go to www.revelsdc.org."

"I have also been involved with two performances of *Grande Messe des Morts* by Berlioz, using historical instruments which was recorded for a CD; I don't know the release date yet. The project was a collaboration of The Gabrieli Players, The Wroclaw Festival Orchestra, Cheetham's School of Music, The Gabrieli Choir and The Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir. The soloist was tenor Robert Murray and conductor Paul McCreesh. Both performances were at The Mary Magdalena Church, Wroclaw, Poland as part of The Wratistavia Cantans Festival. This massive composition for 430 performers includes in the brass section 12 trumpets, 4 cornets a pistons, 16 trombones, 12 horns, 2 tubas and 4 ophicleides. These ophicleides were played by Stephen Wick, Andy Kershaw, John Elliott and Phil Humphries.



L-R: Stephen Wick, Andy Kershaw, John Elliott and Phil Humphries in Wroclaw, Poland

The Case of the Waterloo Serpent

by Andy Lamb

One of the reasons we seek to preserve old musical instruments is for their value as historical documents. This is in common with other museum artifacts. The majority of



researchers who come to study our collections tend to be primarily interested in the instruments social or technical context. Who made them, the techniques they used, who owned them and the circumstances in which they were played.

Sadly, it is not very often that we have a chance to find fine details of the histories of the instruments in

our collections. There are some, such as those violins by the great makers, which have been granted a title and we can trace their ownership all the way back. Such an example is the *Messiah* in the Ashmolean Museum by the wood-butcher and luthier Stradivarius. However, for most instruments very often all we have to rely on is a maker's mark and the stories related to us by the donors.

A maker's mark can be pretty definitive and tell us a lot about the date and origin of an object, but we have to be cautious about anecdotal evidence. For example, we have a historical harpsichord in the Bate Collection which, according to legend, was played by Haydn when he came to receive his honorary doctorate. It's a good story but sadly there is absolutely no evidence to support it. Nevertheless, that doesn't stop us from repeating it at every opportunity.

There is one instrument in the collection which is much more intriguing. It is a serpent by the wind instrument maker Thomas Key. Key worked at various addresses around central London, including Pall Mall and Charing Cross Road, from 1807 until 1855 when the company was taken over by Rudall, Rose, Carte and Co. He was most famous for making brass instruments such as bugles and Sax-valve horns but his portfolio included other instruments such as flutes, bass horns and military serpents. In 1809 he was listed as musical instrument maker "to their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales, Dukes of York, Kent, Cumberland and Cambridge."

The serpent (Bate Collection number 505) is fairly typical of an English style military serpent. It is of sectioned wooden construction in the classic "S" bend arrangement with all parts stapled together and then bound in linen and painted with black pitch. There are six open tone holes and seven brass keys mounted on saddles. The brass crook fits into a brass socket ferrule which bears the engraving: "KEY / 20 CHARING CROSS / LONDON ; LGL5 from 1813". The bends are supported in plane by brass struts and

the bell is angled forwards at about 40 degrees. It is complete with an ivory mouthpiece and is in mostly playable condition.

What is particularly interesting about this instrument is that the brass bell mount also bears an engraving: "RICHARD BENTINCK / -DRUMMER- / 23RD REGIMENT OF FOOT / - R•W•F - / WELLINGTON - WATERLOO / JUNE 18TH 1815".

That is a pretty exciting piece of evidence and would tend to give us a fairly unshakeable provenance from the time it was made. It was donated to the Bate Collection by William Morley-Pegge in memory of his father, the noted horn player and organologist Reginald Morley-Pegge. Unfortunately there is no indication on file or in the archives as to where or when he acquired the instrument.

It has had a few brushes with fame in recent years and featured in a Proms concert in the Albert Hall in the late 1970's. More recently, it was played by Doug Yeo when he visited on a study tour in 2009. A recording was made and can be heard by visitors to the Bate as part of the sound guide and also on the Bate website: <http://www.bate.ox.ac.uk/military-serpent.html>.

ALL IS NOT AS IT SEEMS

However, there is a question mark hanging over the instrument. While we are convinced that it was made by Key in about 1813 (as claimed) we are less convinced that Bentinck played the instrument at Waterloo. I was first alerted to the discrepancy when I considered the engraving. For a start, it is highly unlikely that the Duke of Wellington played this instrument, which seems to be implied. More damning still is the evidence that Bentinck was a Drummer and drummers didn't play serpents.

We know from the records of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers that he was attached to the Grenadier Company of the 23rd Regiment. This means that he was not a military musician. The instruments used by drummers in the British army have included drums, bugles and military flutes, or fifes. Serpents were never used by Corps of Drums, instead they featured in Regimental Bands which, in those days, were staffed by professional musicians and conformed to the wind-harmony standards as laid down by Frederick the Great of Prussia c1763.

My suspicion, therefore, is that this instrument is probably some kind of bogus memento. It is a little like all of those bugles in museums around the UK which are meant to have sounded the charge for the Light Brigade at Balaclava. (I have seen at least thirty for which this is claimed. They can't all be the one.) Bentinck certainly fought at Waterloo and he also owned the serpent. That, I think, is the most that can be proven.

That aside, it is a very fine instrument and the story is one that excites interest. Even the doubts that have been raised have attracted the attention of visitors and researchers. And that raises another interesting point. It may well be that this particular instrument didn't make the round trip in 1815 but it is certain that others by the same maker did. So this instrument stands as a prime example of the type.



New Materials

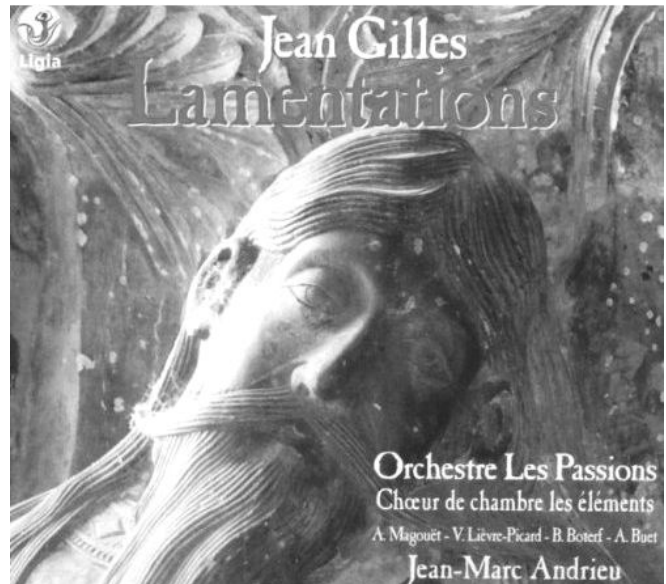
- Late in September, Doug Yeo wrote to say that all of his materials for the DVD *Approaching the Serpent: An Historical and Pedagogical Overview* had been sent to the manufacturing plant. Now it is just a waiting game, but hopefully he will receive the disks from the manufacturer in another month's time. The Blu-ray version is being prepared and will be released later. Doug writes, "I want to thank the many readers of The Serpent Newsletter for their interest in my forthcoming DVD. Having produced five solo CDs and five more as music director of the New England Brass Band, I thought I was prepared for the lengthy post-production process for my DVD project. I learned something very quickly: DVD is nothing like CD. My self-imposed deadline of getting the project released in the Spring has long passed, but the good news is that the disc finally went into production at the manufacturing plant on September 22, so I am optimistic I will have discs in hand in just a few weeks' time. I am very pleased with how the project looks and feels and, with thanks for your patience, I hope you will be, too." You can check up on the availability before the next issue of this newsletter comes out by going to the website www.yeodoug.com/publications/approaching_the_serpent/approaching_the_serpent.html.

In the meantime, two video segments from the DVD have been placed on YouTube, so you can preview them at www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWez9hhitXQ and www.youtube.com/watch?v=LE93PqbuRvM, or by searching YouTube for *Douglas Yeo plays the serpent*.

- Jean Gilles: Lamentations*; Ligia Digital # LIDI 0202212-10. 2009 CD recording featuring Orchestre Les Passions and the Chœur de Chambre les Éléments, Jean-Marc Andrieu directing, and Volny Hostiou on serpent. Obtained from Amazon France.

Les Lamentations is based on the text of the Biblical book of Lamentations, which relates the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 DC, following a period of siege by King Nebuchadnezzar. Over time, the terrible drama of the text was set to music many times and used for services of more than one branch of the Abrahamic religions.

Starting in the 16th Century, the text was given musical settings by composers such as Sermisy, Isaac, Palestrina, Morales, Victoria, Lassus, Byrd, Tallis and others. In the Baroque period, Galilei, Cavalieri, Cazzati, Scarlatti and still more put their spin on it. French composers also got into the act, and many of the efforts were given to elaborate stylistic treatments that did not necessarily complement the narrative ideas. In April of 1692 Jean Gilles (pronounced like the second syllable of 'congeal', with the 'g' leaning more towards a soft 'j') was given an award by the administration of the Cathedral of Aix-en-Provence, where he was organist and assistant master of music, for his setting of *Lamentations*.



Gilles' treatment avoids the overblown embellishments typical of some other settings in this period, instead relying on simple melodic formulas and harmonic structure. He applied considerable effort to matching the poetry of the text with appropriate musical ideas. Here is an enemy

sarcastic in their victory, contrasted with sorrow and anguish of the victims, and ultimately violence and judgment as well.

This recording also includes the motet *Diligam te Domine*, probably written by Gilles around 1700 when he was working as music master at the Cathedral at Saint-Etienne in Toulouse. There is written evidence that it was performed in 1708 for a reception for the queen dowager of Spain in Bayonne. With its alternating solos and choral passages, the motet was well received and eventually became quite popular in the concert series referred to as *Concert Spirituel* in Paris.

The performers here use the same forces as on their earlier recording of the Gilles *Requiem* (reviewed in this newsletter in April of 2009). As with that CD's somber mood being lightened at the end by the inclusion of the motet *Cantate Jordanis Incolæ*, the motet here has the same effect after the *Lamentations*. The four vocal soloists are also the same as on the earlier CD; soprano Anne Magouët, countertenor Vincent Lièvre-Picard, tenor Bruno Boterf, and baritone Alain Buet. The ensemble retains the tuning of A=392 as before. This fine pair of ensembles has once again produces an excellent recording, with a flawless performance and clean, natural acoustics. Volny Hostiou's serpent is not given a solo as it was in the *Requiem* CD, but it is still quite audible in the mix. And this time around, the liner booklet includes notes in English as well as French, although the extended performer biographies remain in French only.

- For those lonely serpentists who wish they could play duets with another instrumentalist, Berlioz Historical Brass has sponsored the development of a mouthpiece that permits a modern brass player to obtain a sound similar to the serpent. Designed by Douglas Yeo and named in honor of the late Keith Rogers who continued the work of Christopher Monk Instruments, the mouthpiece is produced by J.C. Sherman, Cleveland-area instrument maker and player of the serpent & ophicleide (and tuba). Sherman prepares a tenor and a bass rim mouthpiece suitable for players of larger instruments (the Rogers 255 with an inner rim diameter of 25.5 mm and the Rogers 280 with an inner rim diameter of 28 mm). The mouthpieces may be ordered in either blackwood or olivewood. For more information, go to www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org.

- Craig Kridel wrote to remind us that, for those players looking for suitable duets for serpent and euphonium (with a Rogers mouthpiece), Sarastro Press [let@sarastro.co.uk] has released two editions as part of the Berlioz Historical Brass Harmoniemusik Series: *Six Duos Concertants* by A. Hardy (flourished c.1810), edited by Nessa Glen (2008), for 2 serpents (SAR 0167) and *Eight Duos Progressifs and Eight Duos extraits des Operas* by Schiltz (flourished

c.1835-1870), edited by Nessa Glen, for 2 serpents (SAR 0168). For more information, go to www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org/harmoniemusik.htm.

Editor's note: The two Sarastro publications were first mentioned in this newsletter in September of 2008.

- *Musique en la Chapelle d'Henri IV* (*Music in the Chapel of Henry IV*), music by François-Eustache du Caurroy; Disques Triton # TRI331167. 2010 CD recording featuring the choral group Les Chantres de Saint-Hilaire, François-Xavier Lacroux directing, and Michel Nègre on serpent. This is a 2-CD set. Obtained from Triton, www.disques-triton.com/uk/default.asp. Amazon France also carries this recording.



Du Caurroy was born in 1549, and likely had experience in his youth in the local church choirs. By the time he was about 20 years old, he had begun a lifetime of royal service, working first for Charles IX, then Henri III and finally Henri IV. His first position was as a counter-tenor at the royal chapel, and within a decade he was acting as musical advisor to the king, helping to organize functions of the court and especially the royal chapel. 17 years later he was appointed composer to the royal chamber and soon afterwards was awarded the title of composer to the royal chapel. Another decade passed before he published the *Preces Ecclesiasticae* (*The Prayers of the Church*), a collection of motets composed during his career, two of which comprise this recording; the titles are *Pater Filius et Spiritus Sanctus* and *Ave Maria Conclusio*. He died within the year.

These motets are considered by many to be the composer's best work. Their structure is the *cantus firmus*, set in long duration notes, overlaid with more rapid phrases which mirror that chant melody. While this technique was widely

used during the 16th Century, Du Caurroy was a master of the form and takes its alternating tension and release to heights of emotion rarely heard. As the CD booklet notes by the director observe, “Du Caurroy understood the art of introducing into each of his works subtlety and surprising ideas, including polyrhythms, unexpected modulation and varying the number of singers used at any given moment. It is as if he was saying: ‘What I have written will work, because it is simply applying the rules of contrapuntal theory. It is up to the singers to sort out how to make the music sound well.’”

Les Chantres de Saint-Hilaire is six singers, one female soprano and five male voices, plus an additional voice as noted below. The regular vocal performers are soprano Lucie Fouquet, alto Guillaume Figiel-Delpech, counter-tenor Charles Maurel, Tenor Deryck Webb, baritone François-Xavier Lacroux, and bass Gérald Martin. The music is performed here by between one and six voices, with the serpent doubling whatever is the lowest vocal line, thereby filling its original role of accompanying plainsong. Nègre plays on all but three of the movements, and two of the exceptions he remains busy as an additional bass singer. The ensemble tunes to varying pitches, sometimes at A-392, A-415 or A-440.



Les Chantres de Saint-Hilaire, Michel Nègre on serpent

This is another fine recording, with the excellent acoustics of the Collegiate Church of Uzeste, clean vocals and a clear recording technique. Nègre’s playing is appropriate to the style and balances perfectly in the mix.

You can hear a track from the album on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ev_F4tmk-H4; if this link does not work, search for *Eustache du Caurroy : In exitu Israel - extrait*. Also, the group has emailed to say that they are giving a live performance of this work in October; see the Where Serpents Gather section of this newsletter.

- Also in the *Where Serpents Gather* section, see the notice about the new Mellstock Band CD *The Leaves of Life*

that will be coming out soon, as well as another CD by The Gabrieli Players in collaboration with other groups in Poland. For the Mellstock CD, watch their website www.mellstockband.com for the release of the CD. The Gabrieli Players CD will likely be available through more outlets. Reviews of these CDs will appear in these pages.

- Doug Yeo has recently finished an article for *The Hardy Review* titled, *A Good Old Note: The Serpent in the World and Works of Thomas Hardy*. It will be published in the Spring 2011 issue. The article includes Doug’s latest research on the development of the English military serpent. For more information on this publication, see www.maney.co.uk/index.php/journals/hdy/



Doug Yeo plays the Waterloo military serpent at The Bate

More Exciting News

- The Bate Collection at Oxford has a new page about their a military serpent by Thomas Key on their website, www.bate.ox.ac.uk/military-serpent.html. This notable instrument has engraving on the bell garland that reads, “RICHARD BENTINCK / -DRUMMER- / 23RD REGIMENT OF FOOT / - R•W•F - / WELLINGTON - WATERLOO / JUNE 18TH 1815”, an unusual bit of provenance for a serpent. The webpage includes more information on the instrument and also includes a brief sound bite of Doug Yeo playing it when he visited the museum in 2009. Bate curator Andy Lamb has also authored an article *The Case of the Waterloo Serpent* which appears in the newsletter.

- Doug Yeo has updated his gateway webpage to all of his articles and resources about the serpent on his website. The new page is www.yeodoug.com/articles/serpent/serpent.html. He also plans to also rework the serpent photo

gallery with more and better photos. That will take some time, but progress is being made.

- Many people reading this newsletter probably find themselves hunting for hard-to-find audio recordings, often of classical music. It does not help that so many 'classical' labels have vanished, merged, discontinued older recordings, etc. ArkivMusic.com reissues out-of-print audio recordings, and includes the original booklets and cover artwork. They reportedly already have over 10,000 classical & early music titles, originally produced by labels such as Archiv, Decca, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, L'Oiseau Lyre, Sony, Teldec, Virgin, Erato and others. Less popular CDs are burned using recordable CD-R media, while more popular ones are pressed. Many titles that were never, or only briefly, available in the States are also now available from this source.

- Keith Ryder submitted an image from a postcard dating from around 1899, and featuring a photo of a choir that includes accompaniment of serpent, ophicleide, and string bass. The postcard is shown on the website of the Diocese of Saint-Brieuc et Treguier (with a "can you identify anyone in this photo?" request from Les Amis de l'orgue de la cathedrale de St. Brieuc et Treguier). The photograph was taken in Treguier, which is a port town in Brittany in northwestern France. The website is <http://saintbrieuc-treguier.catholique.fr/Peut-on-mettre-des-noms-sur-ces>.



Saint-Brieuc et Treguier postcard

- Bernard Fourtet wrote (your editor's translation from French into English, no fault of Bernard's if something is incorrect as a result), "I would like to provide some clarification and correction to your review of the CD *Messe de Bordeaux*, page 11 of the April 1, 2010 newsletter. Michel Negre (and not mistaken MichAel), serpentist, IS actually a professional musician, and has been playing the serpent for almost 20 years. He is very far from being a "newcomer" in the field ! His instrument is a very fine original serpent from early 19th century. I allow myself to write for him, as he will never do it, I believe, he doesn't

care; he is very far away from the ways of thinking of our 3 stars of the moment." (Editor's note: Bernard is doubtless referring to names that come up in this newsletter with great frequency, such as Doug Yeo, Michel Godard, and perhaps Volny Hostiou at the moment.)

"I knew Michel after a few years of his 'self-made serpentine', he already used to play rather well and had decided to become one of the first serpent students in the serpent class of the Toulouse Conservatoire in France, of which I am the teacher since 1994. Michel was also one of the first graduates in Serpent of this section, in 2000 I believe, with a superb and diabolical program. Since this period, he's become a fine serpent player, and sings regularly with the gregorian group of toulouse. In 2005, we founded, together with Lilian Poueydebat (who made almost the same serpent pursuit), le Groupe Méandre, Trio de Serpents de Toulouse, with which we have a calm but honest career in France and Europe."

"By the way, I have the feeling you have become much too much apart from the reality of serpent interpreted music, in which are involved a greater number of good players than you may know and think, and a much more intense activity, even if not communicated by media nor our 3 stars of the moment..."

As editor, I feel that Bernard is quite correct. There are no doubt more, perhaps many more, serpentists doing high quality work in Europe and elsewhere. But as Bernard so aptly put it, if these players are not either communicated in the direction of this newsletter by the media, by fans or by themselves, it is indeed unlikely that you, the readers, will hear of them in these pages. I do personally try to ferret out any and all performances and news of hitherto unheralded players, but this is no small task. It is my position that if players choose to ignore the fact that there is a sort of community of fellow players, especially when the number of those players is so small, then they have only themselves to blame if they are relatively unknown in that community. I have said it before, and I am pleading, if anyone gets even a hint of serpent activity out there, please PLEASE P*L*E*A*S*E with sugar on it, let me know!

- Nigel Nathan has a somewhat off-topic item for sale, but if you cannot accommodate the host of the Serpentariums....well, he is selling one Sackbut, Bb tenor with flat stays, by Frank Tomes - best offer around £1,000. Contact Nigel at serpents@boswedden.org.uk.

- Doug Yeo submitted a clipping from the London Oracle and Public Advertiser dated Friday, August 14, 1795 (issue 19 084), purporting to recount the origins of the famous serpent quotation attributed to Georg F. Handel, "Aye, but not the Serpent that seduced Eve." The clipping is reproduced on these pages, but since it can be difficult to read, here is a transcription.

HANDEL.

A Music-seller, of the name of Lowe, having seen a musical instrument in some of the churches of French Flanders, called "a Serpent," bought one; and having learned to perform on it, on his return to England got it strongly recommended to HANDEL to introduce it in his Messiah.

HANDEL withstood the solicitation for some time, as looking upon his own music to want no such assistance; at last, being much pressed, he appointed a morning for Lowe to perform on it.

He accordingly attended, but whether from the want of skill, the original defect of the instrument, or the awe of practising before so great a master, Lowe could do very little to the satisfaction of either HANDEL or the audience.

HANDEL bore it for some time with evident signs of perturbation; at last he could hold out no longer, but bawled out in an angry tone, "Vere did you buy dat dere damned instrument?" "At Lisle, Sir," said the man in a trembling voice. "At the Garden of Eden you mean," says HANDEL; "for, by gar, it is nothing more or less than the damned old Serpent himself."

EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTERS
(this line omitted from the graphic image).

HANDEL

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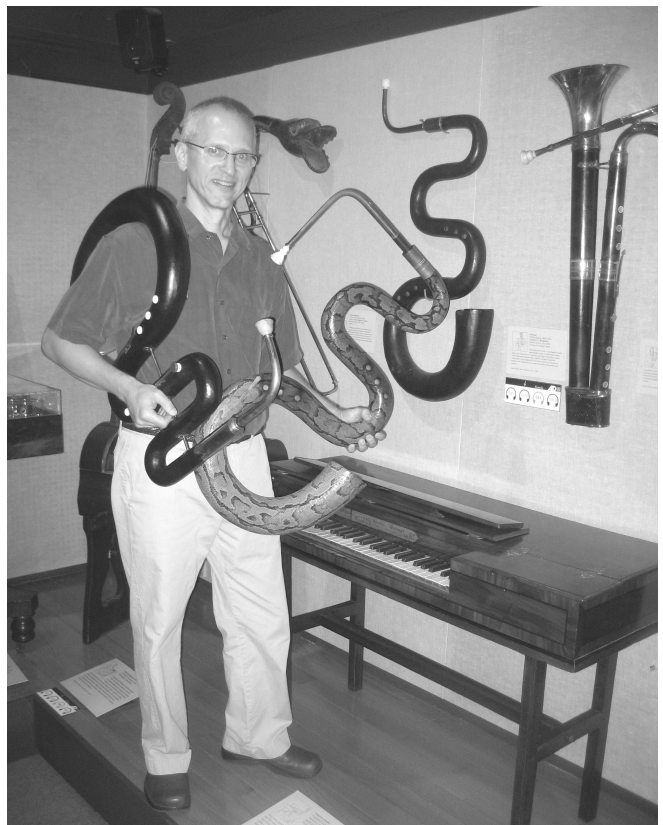
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Seems at least a bit apocryphal.....

• Another editor's blunder uncovered! The illustration of the Napoleonic serpent player on page 12 of the April edition of this newsletter stated that the drawing was early 17th Century, while it is actually from the 19th C.

• Doug Yeo writes, "The [new display] of the seven BSO-owned serpents at Symphony Hall in Boston is a permanent installation. There have been five display cases in the Hall for instruments and a further two cases have now been made available for instruments (they had been used for rotating BSO Archives displays). As a result, a number of instruments that had been in storage - among them four serpents - can now be displayed. Museum of Fine Arts instrument curator Darcy Kuronen and I got things in good shape but the text cards still need to be added and that will add measurably to the look of the case. We [plan to] get this done for BSO opening night on Saturday, October 1. The instruments are all part of the Casadesus Collection, an intact collection purchased by friends of the Boston Symphony from Henri Casadesus and given to the BSO in honor of its founder, Henry Lee Higginson in 1926."



Doug Yeo at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

• Doug Yeo's friend Michael Cwach did some digging and found a reference to serpent being used in Richard Wagner's *Columbus overture* in the January 28, 1897 edition of *The London Musical Courier*. Doug asked another friend, Howard Weiner, if he knew anything about this and he went to look at the New Wagner Edition (18/1)

and found that serpent was called for in both the *Columbus overture* [WV 37A] AND the first version of *Faust Overture*." Cliff Bevan's *The Tuba Family* (2nd ed.) mentions that the revised edition of *Eine Faust-Ouverture* calls for tuba but there is reason to believe that this part was originally for another instrument, perhaps ophicleide; the *Columbus overture* was not listed in the index of this book. The article in the *Courier* is by William Tappert, and he wrote, in part, "In May, 1835, a drama by Theodor Apel, *Christopher Columbus* was performed in Magdeburg. Wagner was a friend of the Leipsic [Leipzig] poet and wrote an overture to the piece. When Wagner left Riga for Paris he took his Columbus overture with him. It was played there on February 4, 1841.....The French critic Blanchard spoke kindly of it.....only the dominating brass was disagreeable to him. The score brings it forward everywhere. There are four horns, six trumpets (!), three trombones. Among the parts which I have seen was one for 'serpent'. Wagner had striken that word out and written 'contrafagotto'."

- Will Kimball, an associate professor of trombone at Brigham Young University, has put together a very nice website on trombone history. One page in particular, www.kimballtrombone.com/trombone-history-timeline/19th-century-second-half/ includes some ophicleide information and quite a few interesting illustrations that include ophicleide, both realistic and in caricature.

- Virgil Hughes, a member of the Metropolitan State College of Denver, Colorado's community Band, speaks about the challenges of playing the ophicleide in a YouTube video titled *Ophicleide - a conversation with Virgil Hughes*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLAH2jpXiII. Another ophicleidian can be similarly heard by searching YouTube for *David Guerrier - «Airs variés» pour ophycléide et piano de Hyacinthe Klosé*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=-RfkgMEXx8. A less polished and certainly informal ophicleide performance appears under the YouTube heading *Eric Budd - ophicleide*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftN5EiH1urg. Finally, Glenn Calkins' ophicleide appears in a jazz duet with a trombone near the middle of YouTube's *Ted Shafer's Jelly Roll Jazz Band "My Blue Heaven"*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1uKiCk3W28.

- Have you ever found yourself trying to figure out the names of musical instruments or voices in other languages? The Yale University library has put together a useful webpage, www.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/instname.htm, having a chart in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian. The page also links to an other reference that correlates instrument names with their ranges. Aren't you glad you read all the way to the end of the newsletter? But.....wait! The webpage does not include the serpent. We'll have to write them about the *Schlangenrohr!*



The Roving Ophicleides, again. Just 'cause they pose well.

A Serpent Collection

by Bruno Kampmann

(continued from this newsletter's September 2009 edition)

I own a wind instrument collection, and among those, 15 instruments 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.

Contact : Bruno Kampmann – 136 Boulevard Magenta (door code 43B97) F75010 Paris France. Tel : +33 621778774 or +33 148787009, email bkampmann@free.fr.

R661- GEO & AUG. KLEMM - German bass horn in V shape, copper, 3 brass keys, large flared bell; Good condition.

R102- CUVILLIER – Russian Bassoon in C, maple, brass crook, brass bell, 3 brass keys. Good condition. As with all known Cuvillier instruments, the second hole of the right hand communicates with the two parallel bores, leaving a shunt between them even when the hole is closed, which is acoustically astonishing.

R620- PEZE – Russian Bassoon in C, maple, brass crook, brass bell, 4 brass keys. Good condition.

R804- GALANDER – Russian Bassoon in C, maple, brass crook, brass bell, 3 brass keys. Good condition.

see photo gallery in page 14



4 ivory and 1 wood serpent or Russian bassoon mouthpieces



102 Cuvillier



620 Peze



661 Klemm



804 Galander

*Bruno Kampmann collection gallery
See page 13*