



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2011

A Note from the Editor

This newsletter has a somewhat different balance than some other recent editions. For a while now we have been seeing many new materials in each issue, but there have been no new audio or video recordings uncovered or discovered since April of this year, with the exception of one CD that did not arrive in time for a review. By way of compensation, there have been many notices of other serpent activities and results from some interesting research have also come to light.

There has been some suggestion that more people would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically than in print form. So it's a good time to find out the feelings of all readers and thus inform future decisions. The newsletter goes to players and other interested individuals, as well as to early music directors, composers, college faculty, libraries, museums and to other publications in reciprocal agreements. Some institutions have previously indicated that they require any publication that will be archived to be submitted in hardcopy, but this might not still be true. Many readers like the feel of the hardcopy in their hands, and some don't have access to computers or have high speed Internet access. However, if the newsletter were ALL electronic, there might no longer be a subscription fee, the issues would arrive a few weeks sooner, and the files would be searchable. Myself, I am reluctant to go to an all-electronic distribution, but there are issues of economy of scale if the printed quantity gets too low. I would like recipients to email their thoughts on this to the editorial address provided in the About the Organization section.

I am still trying to get the critical mass required to make it worthwhile creating a list of original serpent compositions on a new Serpent Website page. Please give a thought to submitting the names of any compositions you know about that originally call for serpent.

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

- The 2011 Serpentarium

The latest biennial international serpent gathering took place once again at Boswedden House on the rocky western shores of Cornwall, England. Nigel Nathan and Thelma Griffiths were the hosts, and Phil Humphries of the London Serpent Trio presided over the sessions.

Participants began to arrive Thursday, May 26, in the afternoon. The weather was blustery with plenty of pelting rain, but it was easing up somewhat by dinner time. Early arrivals included John Weber, his friend and serpent newcomer Ross Nuccio, and Paul Schmidt, all from the Chicago area. This trio, plus Nigel, enjoyed getting up-to-speed on the local news during dinner at the golf course tavern just down the hill from Boswedden.

Friday morning, after a fine breakfast in Boswedden's dining room, those present opened up serpent cases to make sure that everything still worked after the ordeals of planes, trains and autos. Following a walk through the Boswedden gardens, the traditional visit to the nearby Levant Tin Mine was made. Although still windy, the sky was clear and blue, with fine vistas of the cliffs and ocean. The mine's old walking-beam steam engine was running, and whilst viewing the spectacle the serpentists were surprised that the engineers knew all about the serpent event from Nigel's blurb in the local paper. Upon returning to Boswedden, those from the mine tour joined more recent arrivals for afternoon tea. Present at this time was another serpent newcomer, John DeWolfe from Nova Scotia (who had taken receipt of a new serpent from Nick Perry in London a couple days previously) and his wife Maureen Woodhouse, plus serpentarium regulars Michelle Lomas with her husband Mike and son Adam, Phil Humphries and his partner Anita Law, Shirley Hopkins-Civil, Harry Woodhouse (no relation to Maureen), as well as the three Chicagoans.

After socializing and dinner, the participants regrouped in Boswedden's secluded mediation room in the garden for a



Serpentarium participants, back row L-R: Paul Schmidt, John DeWolfe, John Weber, Murray Campbell, Michelle Lomas, Nigel Nathan, Shirley Hopkins-Civil, front row L-R: Phil Humphries, Ross Nuccio, Harry Woodhouse, Patricia Gauci

kick-off reading session. Phil started the group off on some warmup exercises by Doug Yeo, followed by *Old Comrades*, *Scotland the Brave* and *The British Grenadiers*, all arranged by Cliff Bevan. Next up was Lizzie Gutteridge's arrangement of *Wallace*, the theme from the animated *Wallace and Gromit* series, followed by Victoria's *Verbum Caro*. Returning to the Bevan book, Arthur Sullivan's *With Cat-Like Tread* was played as a nod to nearby Penzance, and the session closed with D. Jenkins' *In Heavenly Love Abiding* and J.B. Dykes' *Lead Kindly Love*. Participants retired to the lounge for conversation over a few local beers.

Saturday morning began with breakfast and a wide-awake playing session. First up were two excerpts from the *Spring* portion of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, *I. Allegro* and *III. Pastorale*, arranged by Halferty. Phil produced his new arrangement of Williams Walton's *Crown Imperial*, in honor of the recent royal wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton. Next up, Phil introduced the ensemble to another new arrangement of his, *John Barry Waltzes*, including segments from *The Persuaders*, *Curiouser and Curiouser*, *The Girl With the Sun in Her Hair*, *Wednesday's Child*, and *Fancy Dances*. Phil dedicated this work to the memory of Wik Bohdanowicz, since both Wik and John Barry died in January of 2011. After lunch and a walk through the fields into the town of St. Just-in-Penwith and back, John Weber took over the baton, leading the group through his new arrangements of *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* by Eric Idle, also dedicated to Wik, and the traditional Mexican mariachi tune *Jalisco*. The day's session

ended with John directing his well-established setting of *Serpent Doo-Wop*, as originally arranged by Lojeski. Everyone strolled back through the dark and misty garden for beer, interrupting the latest arrival, Patricia Gauci of Edmondton, Alberta, who was trying to use up the dinner leftovers following her late train trip into Penzance.

Sunday arrived with more cool mist in the air, and the participants got things rolling with the new composition by Michel Godard, *Reggea des Serpent*. Murray Campbell and his wife Patsy arrived after a loooong drive by car from Edinburgh. Phil resumed proper rehearsals by returning to *Spring*, *Crown Imperial*, *John Barry Waltzes*, and *Always Look On the Bright Side of Life*. After another excellent lunch, participants enjoyed the traditional walk down to Cape Cornwall. Wik's partner Anya Spackman arrived in her caravan to visit with her serpent friends, and to find new homes for some of Wik's serpents and ophicleides. For the rest of the event, players could be found in odd corners and isolated rooms trying out these instruments. Since the early afternoon weather was the best it had been so far during the event, it was decided to squeeze in the traditional group photo, although hopes remained that Monday would bring clearer weather and a better photo opportunity. John Weber got the rehearsal back in gear with continued study of *Jalisco* and *Serpent Doo-Wop*, and before dinner Phil took the group through *With Cat-Like Tread* again. As there were no sessions scheduled for after dinner, some players met for smaller ensemble reading. One such session included Murray, Phil and John Weber, and another was Paul, Patricia and Ross, who read through the *Nocturne* from

Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Lost Chord* by Sullivan. Back in the lounge, the beer flowed and all slumbered peacefully under the fog thereof.

Monday opened with a hazy cloudiness that did not bode well for the rest of the day, even though Nigel was at pains to remind all of Cornwall's mercurial weather. It is worth noting at this point that Anita, a professional graphic artist, had been sitting amongst the players all weekend, sketching pencil portraits of each participant with serpent to lips; this was an unprecedented treat, and everyone got to keep their personal piece of art. The morning was occupied by final rehearsal of pieces for the afternoon concert. On the way to lunch it was noted that the sky was suddenly a brilliant clear blue, so everyone scampered into position to repeat the group photo, this time for keeps. After the final lunch, participants divided into smaller groups to enjoy the improved weather during another long walk along the ocean cliffs. Ross helped John DeWolfe re-crate his new serpent for shipment back to Canada, then John and Maureen had to depart for the rest of their vacation trip. Everyone else relaxed until the evening concert at 7:30.

The concert took place in the meditation room, and was attended by a small but enthusiastic group of locals. The opener was *With Cat-Like Tread*, followed by the excerpts from *Spring*. Next, Phil, John Weber and Murray performed the Michel Godard trio *Dsjas*. The full ensemble then played *Reggea des Serpent*, followed by *Crown Imperial* and *John Barry Waltzes*. Phil, John and Murray returned with another arrangement by Phil, the *James Bond Suite*, featuring selections by John Barry and George Martin. The big group then performed *Wallace*, after which Ross, Paul, and Patricia played the *Nocturne*. Everyone was back at their horns when John Weber took the podium to direct *Serpent Doo-Wop*, *Jalisco*, and the evening closed with *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*. Another successful Serpentarium closed with the traditional beer party back at in the lounge.

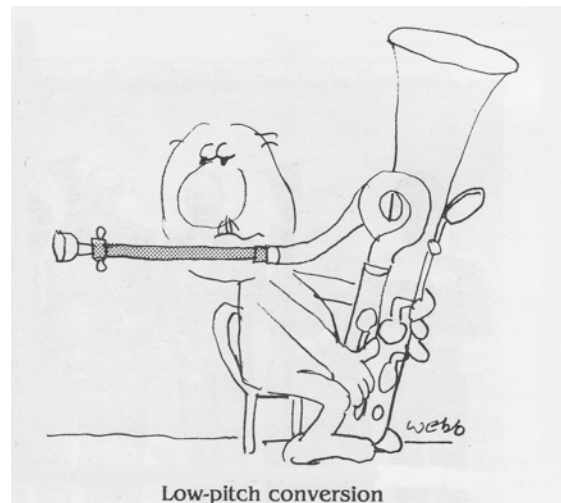
Murray Campbell and Arnold Myers will be hosting the next Serpentarium in Scotland. The dates are already agreed; the English Spring Bank Holiday weekend of May 24 – 27, 2013. Phil Humphries has again agreed to attempt to impose musical order on the proceedings. Most of the weekend will be spent in the small village of Carlops, about 15 miles south of the Edinburgh city center, where Murray and Patsy Campbell live, and where participants can have access to plenty of rehearsal space in the Campbell house, the Village Hall and the church. There is a small hotel in the village and several bed-and-breakfast opportunities nearby. During the weekend a visit will be organized to the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, home of the famous Anaconda and numerous other serpents.

- *Le Serpent Sans Sornettes (Serpent Without Nonsense): Routes, Past and Present of an Unknown Musical Instrument, an International Symposium*, Paris, Musée de l'Armée. The first serpent congress in France will take place at the Paris Invalides Museum on October 6th and 7th, 2011.

The congress will include two days of conferences and exhibitions about serpent matters. It is being organized in partnership between Institute of Musical Heritage in France (CNRS / BNF / Ministry of Culture) and the Army Museum and will conclude with three concerts. The recent renewed interest in the serpent, from the musicians who play and the teacher, researchers, musicologists and historians, will be satisfied through discussion of its diversity of uses, its origins, its iconography, and many approaches will be complemented by studies on the acoustic characteristics of the instrument and organology. The concerts will take place at the Grand Salon of the Cathedral of Saint Louis des Invalides. Information can be found at www.invalides.org/pages/anglais/infos_a.html, <http://serpent.instrument.free.fr/>, and registration & reservations can be made at histoire-ma@invalides.org. Booking the conference gives free access to all three concerts. The street address is Musée de l'Armée, Hôtel national des Invalides, 129 rue de Grenelle, 75007 PARIS.

The schedule includes presentations by Cécile Davy-Rigaux and Volny Hostiou, Bernard Dompnier, Bastien and Isabelle Langlois Mailhot, Jean Duron, Jean-Yves Haymoz, Thomas Van Essen, Eva Godard, Frédéric de La Granville, Benny Sluchin, Christian Arhens. Florence Gétreau, Thierry Maniguet, Stephan Berger, Michel Godard, Sabine Klaus, Bruno Kampmann, Jean-Marie Haussadis, Douglas Yeo, and Hervé Audeon. The concert schedule includes *French Sacred Music With Serpent* presented by Volny Hostiou and Michel Nègre, a wind ensemble led by Douglas Yeo performing divertimenti and military marches of Haydn and English repertoire, serpent solos by Patrick Wibart, serpent with voice performed by Michel Godard and Linda Bsiri, and more.

[Editor's note: Unfortunately the details of this event were not published until after the last newsletter in April of this year, and the timing of this current issue is rather too late for most potential attendees. Most of those who will attend learned about the event through Internet related methods. However, since this newsletter is often archived for reference, it is included here.]



Low-pitch conversion

- 25 Years Ago

This past summer marked the 25th anniversary of the Amherst Workshop, a week-long serpent course that began with a rather startling announcement by Christopher Monk: “Welcome to the first serpent class of the 20th century.” In July 1986, a group of serpent players and enthusiasts came together to spend a week of instruction with Christopher at the Amherst Early Music Festival (at Amherst College in Massachusetts). While the serpentarium is now a way of life for many players (including John Weber who, to my understanding, has never missed a serpent gathering), the thought of a group of serpentists congregating, especially in 1986, did not necessarily instill confidence. Some “serpentists” were proud to display their ability to lip notes rather than focus pitches, and others enjoyed the notoriety of the instrument. Fortunately, the then-director of the Festival, Valerie Horst, was quite welcoming and enthused about the prospect of adding another wind instrument to the rather large array of brass and woodwinds then featured among the course offerings. She whole-heartedly embraced the idea of a workshop and proceeded to hire Christopher even before the first student had enrolled.

Christopher was not necessarily reluctant; however, his participation did call for some gentle prodding, in part, because many obstacles needed to be overcome for a successful event. Lack of teaching methods was a concern, especially to a former school teacher whose career, prior to full time instrument-making, was defined by primary school and the education of students. In preparation for the week, Christopher prepared *The Serpent Player*, his compilation of serpent exercises and duets from the various period treatises, introducing to many players (and brass musicologists who would later attend the final concert) a set of resource materials that would provide vital for other’s subsequent scholarship. Of course, while difficulties could be anticipated in teaching a group of serpentists, a more pressing question was whether a group of serpentists could be found. The issue became more pronounced after I received a letter from a young English composer, Simon Proctor, who mentioned that he had heard about this event from Christopher and wished to write a four movement piece for eight serpents in what would ultimately be titled *The Amherst Suite*. The quest to attract at least eight serpentists began!

At that time I had organized an informal collective of serpent players, owners, and enthusiasts known as “US” - United Serpents (Paul Schmidt’s Serpent Newsletter would emerge from this informal group). Enough individuals were receiving the United Serpents Newsletter to suggest that eight, possibly, might enroll in the workshop. And, indeed, eleven (including Christopher) would ultimately appear and take part in the festivities. On its own terms, the event was successful with ABC radio preparing a feature about the workshop for national broadcast. Christopher was so enthused by the experience that he, along with members of the London Serpent Trio, Andrew van der Beek and Alan

Lumsden, would organize and coordinate the “Serpent Extravaganza” the next year with a culminating performance in London at St. Johns Smith Square. Christopher continued his role as serpent instructor bringing new insights to the period treatises and documents.

The Amherst serpent workshop was a first of many “serpent firsts” during that era. And I certainly would not claim that the event was any more than what it was—the bringing together of 11 enthusiasts for one week. The 1989 Serpent Festival in South Carolina and Christopher’s 1990 massive 400th Anniversary Serpent Celebration in London would have occurred with or without the 1986 workshop as would all of the monumental recordings by Bernard Fourtet, Michel Godard, the London Serpent Trio, Douglas Yeo, Volny Hostiou, and others as well as the remarkable scholarship by Clifford Bevan and others. Yet, as we remember the legacy of “Christopher Monk, the maker” and applaud the efforts of Keith Rogers and Nicholas Perry who continued to honor the Monk serpent design, I think we must not forget the legacy of “Christopher Monk, the teacher” and recognize and applaud the efforts of Nigel Nathan (with substantial assistance from Paul Schmidt and Philip Humphries) who have continued to organize and host the biennial serpent gatherings.

submitted by Craig Kridel

- On April 9, 2011, multi-instrumentalist Tom Zajac conducted a music workshop at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois with the title, "A Musical Tour of Colonial Latin America". Readers of this newsletter may remember Tom as a member of the American Serpent Players (ASP) which took part in the Serpent Festival in 1989, as the serpentist that performed on The Prairie Home Companion radio show in December of 2000 (performing P.D.Q. Bach's *Two and a Half Variations on "In Dulci Jubilo"*), and as a member of the early music band Piffaro. For the workshop, about 43 musicians from Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Missouri attended, playing all sizes of recorders and crumhorns, plus violin, viola da gamba, sundry Latin percussion, as well as singing, and Paul Schmidt played the basso continuo on the serpent. Rare gems from 16th to 18th Century Nueva España including villancicos, sacred motets, hymns and canciones were rehearsed during the eight hour event. The singers, all drafted from the group of instrumentalists, had to negotiate texts in Latin, Spanish, and native American languages. The music itself was fun because of the varied and unusual rhythms and harmonies, albeit all influenced by the European music of the day. The Chicago-area players were all familiar with Paul's serpent from other local groups and events, but most of the visitors seemed unfamiliar with the instrument, yet commented favorably on its contribution at the end of the day.



New Materials

- A new CD recording of the *Berlioz Grande Messe des Morts (1837)* has been released on the Signum Records label, catalog # SIGCD280. This is the first in a new series of releases from the world-renowned conductor Paul McCreech and his Gabrieli Consort. Recorded in Poland as part of the Wratzlava Cantans Festival, this staggering performance of Berlioz's '*Grand Mass for the Dead*', also known as the *Requiem*, was produced by a force of over 400 performers - drawn from the Gabrieli Consort and Players, the Wroclaw Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir and students from Chetham's School of Music. It features four ophicleides in the orchestra. The CD may be purchased online at www.signumrecords.com and from Amazon UK at www.amazon.co.uk. A copy has been ordered and it will be reviewed in the April 2012 issue of this newsletter.

- The New England Conservatory music has commissioned the young composer Benjamin Pesetsky to write a piece for winds with serpent. The piece will be written with Doug Yeo mind, and Doug specifically asked that it NOT be a solo piece for serpent. Instead, it will be a piece for winds, a modern *harmonie* work. Pesetsky is scoring it for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns, bassoons, then also serpent, alto and tenor saxophone, one percussion player and string bass. Doug writes that he has seen the draft of the first movement and likes it a lot. Hopefully we will be hearing more about this new composition in the near future.

- Douglas Yeo has authored an interesting new article titled *A Good Old Note: The Serpent in Thomas Hardy's World and Works*. It was published in *The Hardy Review*, Vol. XIII No. 1, Spring, 2011, 32–48. Doug based the article on the musical writings of Hardy and the musical activities of his family. Besides these direct Hardy references, subjects touched on include methods of holding the serpent, use in military bands, development of the English Military Serpent, and the instrument's importance to the music in English country churches. For more information refer to the Thomas Hardy Association website <http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/ttha/>



Postcard from 1906, *Buster Brown Series No. 1000* illustrated by R. F. Outcault, "Father of American Sunday Comics" and creator of *Buster Brown*

Getting Serpents

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

Christopher Monk Instruments
(c/o Nicholas Perry)
224 North Street
Luton
LU2 7QN
England

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992
<nicholas@perry2185.freeserve.co.uk>
(*serpents, early cimballo, 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>

(*resin serpents*)

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

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

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

(*fiberglass serpents after Baudouin*)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

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>

(*alphorns and serpents, both wood and carbon fiber*)

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

(*cornetti*)

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



Visiting the Anaconda Church

by Paul Schmidt

Certainly one of the most notorious serpents ever created is the Wood brothers' contrabass example, better known as The Anaconda. Joseph and Richard Wood of Huddersfield,

West Yorkshire in England made the instrument in 1840, and according to the catalog of the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, which currently holds it in their collection, it was played for some 20 years by the makers in Almondbury Church, Huddersfield, and on occasion in York Minster. Until 1989 it was in the ownership of the descendants of the makers, after which time it was placed on-loan to the museum. It was used in the infamous 1956 Hoffnung Music Festival, as well as by the London Serpent Trio from 1985 – 1988 where it was played by Andrew van der Beek, appearing on the CD album *Fill Your Glasses: Convivial English Glee's*, and in the Serpent Celebration concert at St John's, Smith Square, London, on July 13, 1990. It is a unique instrument which, despite being a "one-off", is well designed, very responsive to the player, and effective when played in an ensemble. Dubbed *The Anaconda* by Morley Pegge, it remains the only surviving historical contrabass serpent, notwithstanding the modern examples such as George, George II, Patrick, Sylvester and the American Anaconda (the latter no longer extant).

The Anaconda



More information, photographs and technical details on this instrument may be found at www.music.ed.ac.uk/euchmi/ujt/ujt2929.html and www.mimo-db.eu/MIMO/infodoc/ged/view.aspx?eid=OAI_IMAGE_PROJECTS_LIB_ED_AC_UK_10683_18242.



All Hallows Church in Almondbury, Huddersfield at corner of Westgate and Highgate

The only verified historic use of The Anaconda was in the Almondbury Church in Huddersfield. The date of its creation places it in the latter years of the West Gallery music era, where rural parish churches in England utilized musicians performing in the raised balconies, or galleries, usually located at the west end of the sanctuaries of the buildings. Here the choir, or 'quire', sang along with small bands comprised of violin, cello, clarinet, flute, oboe and serpent. Reportedly this tradition of unschooled music in the church ran afoul of the Victorian sensibility during the later 1800s, with most of the quires being disbanded and the galleries subsequently removed from many churches during renovations during this period.



Illustration of All Hallows Church from 1818

Early in 2011, I got the notion that not enough was known about the church where the famous instrument was used, and much as one might visit any other historic building, I decided to make the pilgrimage at the first opportunity. This chance began to seem likely during plans for attending the 2011 Serpentarium (see article in this newsletter), and research began to positively identify the correct church. There did not appear to be any existing structure in the Huddersfield area with the name Almondbury Church, excluding a modern Methodist church using that name, so emails were sent to the local diocese of the Church of England. A diocese official took interest and replied that the church in question was undoubtedly the All Hallows Church in the Almondbury neighborhood of Huddersfield.

I was able to reach All Hallows official (Thomas) Malcolm Cruise, who replied, "Your email has been passed to me and I note your interest in our church with reference to the *Almondbury Anaconda*, which has a well documented history. Although I have never seen the instrument, other than in pictures etc; I have long been well aware of its existence and its use during the middle part of the 19th century in All Hallows. The church of All Hallows is quite a bit changed from the days when the Contrabass Serpent in question was made and used. Although the bulk of the 16th century fabric is unchanged, the church was slightly enlarged during the period 1872 - 1876 when the south choir aisle was lengthened. At that time also, the galleries, including the West gallery, which would have been the position of the band in its heyday, were removed and a tall archway opened up into the tower. From some time in the mid 19th century

(date uncertain) a pipe organ was acquired and placed upon the West Gallery and one assumes that this eventually spelled the end of the band - and the Anaconda's usefulness! In the 1872 - 1876 restoration, the organ was moved from the Gallery to the South Chancel area, all the original box pews and three-decker pulpit were moved, a new Nave floor laid with a slope of 1 foot over 60 feet and new oak pews provided."

"As it stands now, the church is largely as it was left in 1876, except for a dais, built during the 1980s, at the Chancel steps, which nowadays is occupied most of the time by a Central Altar. It is also used to accommodate choirs etc; for concerts."



View of the Nave of All Hallows Church viewed through the choir section of the sanctuary

"The church contains many interesting and ancient items - a much-altered Jacobean Chancel Screen, with part of the original Rood Beam, a Jacobean Font Cover of quite intricate design and the most stunning Nave Ceiling of oak, richly decorated with carved bosses, all of which are painted. The Nave ceiling also has a 16th century inscription running



View of Nave of All Hallows Church viewed over secondary Altar at opposite end from main sanctuary

all the way around its outer edge. There are also two ancient record storage boxes, each about six feet long, with original ironwork - ties and hinges etc."

"The Nave consists of five elegant bays with large, plain lighted clerestory above. There are North and South aisles of more or less equal proportion, whilst the 40 ft chancel has no upper lights but a simple and quite plain double hammer-beam construction. There is ancient stained glass in the windows of the North Choir Chapel, known locally as the Kaye Chapel. The Beaumont Chapel, to the south of the Choir, contains two Vestries and the present large three-manual pipe organ. At the Sanctuary, the two lancet windows, originally allowing light from the outside, are said to be much older than the bulk of the 16th century fabric and in this area, we are told that there is some fabric left from the church's 13th century beginnings. The Consecration date was 1220."

"So far as I am aware, the church has had a continuous musical tradition since the days of the Anaconda (and very possibly before that) and during most of the 20th century enjoyed a large all-male choir and a small succession of organists up until 1965."

"As Organist and Director of Music myself, I have been in office at All Hallows since August 1965 and enjoy the facility of our fine organ, built in Leeds in 1890 and rebuilt and enlarged both in 1970 and 1999. Although much of its pipework dates from 1890 it is, to all intents and purposes, a modern instrument."



Almondbury Parish Church, before it was renamed as All Hallows Church, prior to restoration of 1873-1877; the galleries are visible on either side under arches; the Anaconda was probably played from these galleries

"Needless to say, being the guardians of an ancient and beautiful building is not an easy task and fund-raising, to attend to its needs, is a never-ending task. However, so far, the church has been extremely well cared for, as have its artifacts and fittings, thanks to the tireless work of many people."

“I hope this little potted history is of some use to you and if you could let me know the day and approximate time of your arrival here I will make certain that there is someone to greet you.”

Since Mr. Cruise was unable to be present on the days following the Serpentarium, he arranged for another officer to be available to open the building and give a tour on Tuesday, May 31st. Serpentists John Weber, Ross Nuccio and I arrived in the late afternoon, having spent the day driving up from Cape Cornwall with a lunchtime visit to the historic Ironbridge en route. Our GPS lead us unerringly to Huddersfield, then east on the A629 and then southeast to the village of Almondbury and its intersection of Westgate and Highgate roads. There, on a hill among many very old residences in what had clearly once been a self-sufficient rural village, and surrounded in three sides by nearby countryside, was the All Hallows church. Having been in mobile phone contact with the church official, he had known our progress and had arrived only shortly beforehand. After taking a few pictures of the outside of the building and the adjacent church cemetery before the sun set too low for photography, we were admitted.

All Hallows is indeed a beautiful old place, and every aspect of it practically oozes history. The nave is the larger and taller portion, with the combined sanctuary and chancel area, holding the choir and altar, being shorter and not quite as tall. The ambulatory on either side of the nave contains the original stone arches that once formed the openings from which the quire most likely performed; these arches are now simply openings between the nave and the ambulatory, but at the time of the Wood brothers there was a floor separating the arches and ambulatory into upper and lower levels. Since our information was that the current choir stalls on either side of the altar were added during the Victorian renovation, the Wood's band and quire must have played

from the raised galleries under the arches. With the galleries now gone, we were sadly unable to place ourselves in the exact musically historic location, so we paused to try and imagine hearty singing from those heights with the even heartier contrabass serpent tones carrying them along. Viewing the drawings and old photos arrayed along the wall helped us, since there one could actually see what the galleries looked like. We departed before sunset with the imagined sounds of the Anaconda our ears.

About the Organization

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

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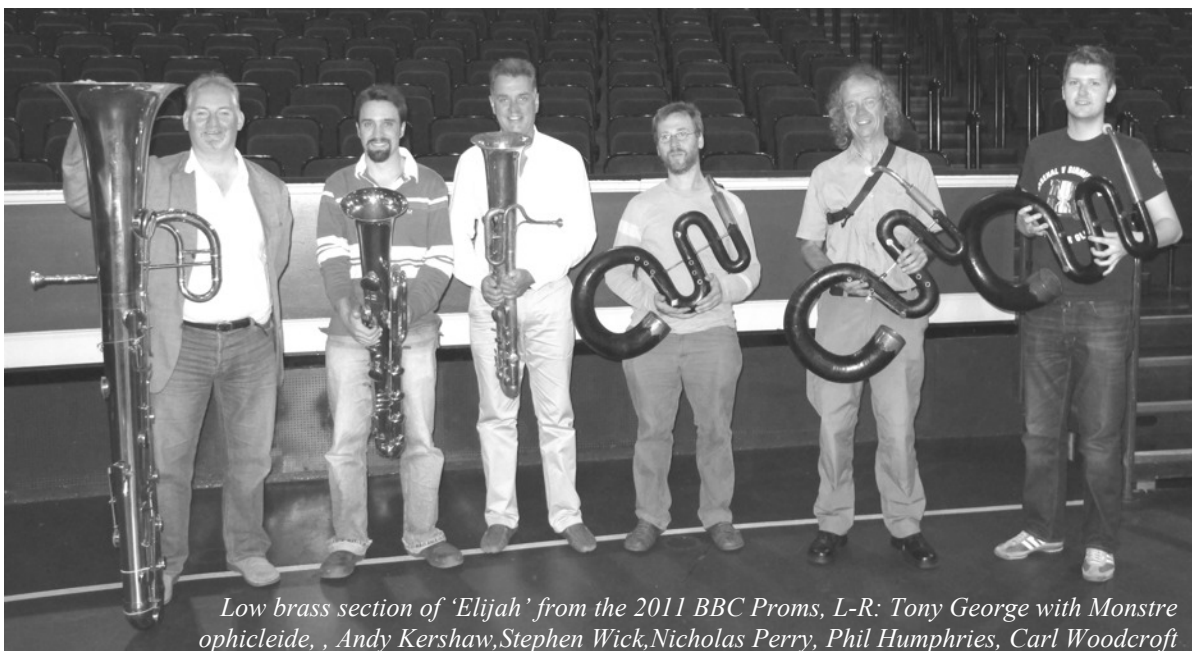
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Low brass section of 'Elijah' from the 2011 BBC Proms, L-R: Tony George with Monstre ophicleide, , Andy Kershaw, Stephen Wick, Nicholas Perry, Phil Humphries, Carl Woodcroft

Where Serpents Gather

- On August 28, 2011, a concert of the recreated 1847 London performances at Exeter Hall of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was given at The Royal Albert Hall as part of the BBC Proms. 440 persons strong, the performers were comprised of the groups Gabrieli Consort and Players, Taplow Youth Choir, Ulster Youth Choir, Chethams Chamber Choir, North East Youth Choir, Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir, all under the direction of Paul McCreesh. Vocal soloists were soprano Rosemary Joshua, mezzo soprano Sarah Connolly, boy alto/treble Jonty Ward, tenor Robert Murray and baritone Simon Keenlyside.

Note that the original 1846 Birmingham premiere of the work was recreated in that city on October of 2008, with Tony George playing the monster ophicleide (see the April 2009 issue of this newsletter for the article).

From festival publicity, "The Birmingham performance is well documented with a list of all those who took part, but the London ones are not quite so meticulously recorded. Apparently there was a model made (half an inch to the foot, now sadly lost) of The Sacred Harmonic Society, who were responsible for the London performances. The model consisted of the company, complete with ophicleides in the orchestra and serpents seated alongside the bass singers in the chorus. Paul McCreesh, to whom we are very grateful 'as a service to unemployed serpent players', thought that it might be fun to revive this tradition. For authenticity we all used 19th century English military serpents, one of which, made by Milhouse of London, was kindly on loan from Andy Lamb at The Bate Collection, Oxford. The other two were an un-marked 19th century original and an 1840 Francis Pretty. All the instruments had 3 keys which came in very handy, especially for the E and D major sections! The serpent players, Nicolas Perry, Carl Woodcroft and Phil Humphries, certainly had a good blow which included 21 out of the 41 sections in the oratorio. The contrabass ophicleide, the only one in the world, was kindly lent by Ron Johnson of Albany, New York state, and played by Tony George. The other two ophicleides were a C by Muller 1840-1850 and a Bb by Gautrot 1870, the players being Stephen Wick and Andy Kershaw. The concert was broadcast live on BBC radio 3 and the forces were kept together on days after the Prom to record the work for a CD on the Winged Lion/Signum Records label www.signumrecords.com which will be released in Sept 2012."

- French serpentist Bernard Fournier, with bassoonist Camille Borzeix and accompanied on a portable organ, performed as *l'ensemble In Nomine* in February of 2009. A video of them playing *Danza Alta à L'hôtel Du Barry Toulouse* can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrXVFjRUxdw

- On September 10, 2011 a "Moravian Day" festival was held at New Philadelphia Moravian Church in Winston-

Salem, North Carolina. The Moravians are a protestant denomination which began in 1457 in Bohemia. Settlers came to Pennsylvania in 1741, and to the area around present day Winston-Salem in 1753; Salem itself was founded in 1766. The Moravians have long had a rich



Moravian Day bass section, L-R: Tom Abbott with anonymous OTS Eb bass, Brown Clodfelter with Dodworth (Stratton) German Silver OTS Eb bass, Paul Horner with 9 keyed Guichard Bb ophicleide

tradition in music, and this was a main theme in the Festival. Several bands, choirs and musical groups performed throughout the day; players of all ages from grade school to their grandparents often play in these Moravian Bands. Instrumentation in these bands is typically brass, but a few woodwinds will be found. Music used was taken from *Chorales and Music Moravian Church Band, Vols. 1 & 2*. Books are in typical four part harmony, with a total of ten versions to cover different instrumentation. The festival began at 8 AM with a 5 kilometer 'fun run' and a small band to send them off. The actual opening ceremony was outdoors at 10 AM with invocations and a mass band of perhaps 75 players under the direction of Reverend Nola Reed Knouse, Ph.D., director of the Moravian Music Foundation. A prelude of 45 minutes of chorales and music was played by this group. Selections included the Haydn *Creation* hymn, *The Spacious Firmament on High*, and *Sing Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!* by Christian Bechler. The last is a favorite of the bass section as it has a fine descant part played on the second verse. The Moravian Low Brass, in traditional costume under the direction of Allen S. Goslen, performed next inside on stage for the better part of an hour. Most of the 20 or so players were members of Home Moravian Church in Salem, but other area churches were represented. All four parts were played on euphonium, trombone, and tuba, though in this case no tubas proper were

present. The bass was carried by two Civil War over-the-shoulder saxhorns and an ophicleide. The music was taken from the chorale books mentioned earlier, and included *Hymn to Joy*, and *Diadem (All Hail the Pow'r of Jesus' Name)*, another favorite written with the bass section in mind.

submitted by Paul Horner

- Clark Wolf of Iowa State University wrote about two recent Summer performances with the Ames Community Band, directed by Michael Golemo. He played Herbert Clarke's *Maid of the Mist* on double-belled Euphonium, which can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1BagjSueXU, and Schubert's *Serenade* on ophicleide with, www.youtube.com/watch?v=if1nSrzdteU. These videos are 'unlisted' on YouTube, meaning that they cannot be accessed by searching; they must be reached by entering the URLs shown here. Clarke writes, "The ensemble wasn't ideal, and I'm afraid it was partly my own fault. I couldn't see the conductor from where I was standing, and in some places I failed to follow his clear direction. The Ames Community Band puts on concerts on warm summer Thursdays in Ames Bandshell Park. There's always a big crowd, and people serve ice-cream and sometimes homemade pies. And next time I'll bring a microphone stand with a long arm so I won't have to lean over!"



L-R: Phil Humphries, Andy Kershaw, Stephen Wick, Cliff Bevan

- Phil Humphries wrote, "On Father's Day, June 19th, 2011, four fathers got together at Steve Wick's house in London to play serpent quartets. Approximately 15 pieces were played including some previously performed at the latest Serpentarium. Amongst them arrangements by Cliff Bevan, Michel Goddard, John Weber, Doug Yeo, and Phil Humphries." The players were Cliff Bevan, Phil Humphries, Stephen Wick, all members of the London Serpent Trio, as well as Andy Kershaw.



Norris participants, L-R: Russ Kaiser, Ben Horner, Paul Horner, Tra Wagenknecht, Robert Wagenknecht, and Lloyd Farrar (seated)

- Six serpent players met on April 2, 2011, in Norris, Tennessee, to honor the memory of Christopher Monk. The group included host, Lloyd Farrar; serpent builder and player, Russ Kaiser, of North Carolina; Paul Horner and his son, Ben, also from North Carolina; and Therese and Robert Wagenknecht of Virginia. The instruments used were two original Monks, two Kaisers, one Horner, and one Russian bassoon. In the morning we read from the collection, *Viel Schöner Kunst und Gaben*, and Cliff Bevan's *marches4bassclef*. After lunch we played *La Monica/une Jeune Fillette* transcribed by Paul Schmidt, a repeat of *Scotland the Brave* from Bevan's collection, Wenzel Lambel's *Equali für 3 Tromboni in C Dur*, and several pieces from other collections. Everyone then trooped to the Norris town center to have a wonderful dinner of baked tilapia, salad, vegetables, and dessert at Hensley Happenings. Joining the group at the restaurant were Lloyd's wife, Doris, Russ' wife, Carol, and the Kaisers' four children. It was a beautiful Spring day for celebrating Christopher and serpents.

submitted by Tra Wagenknecht

- Cliff Bevan can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5350QhEjM8, playing *Cavatine de Pasquarello* from *Benvenuto Cellini* by Hector Berlioz on an ophicleide in Bb made by Gautrot aîné, Paris, c 1860.

- Sue Bradley of Australia writes, "On the bass clef side of things, I have a bit of fun with the ophicleide and cimbasso tomorrow, Sunday September 25; it's very odd going out to

a rehearsal/gig without a tuba! Playing an all Puccini programme, and the notable bits, apart from the usual overly lush arias, are *Preludio a Orchestra*, and a *Preludio Sinfonico*. Very early works, apparently, written when he was a student (and bits of it sound like it)."

- Mark Jacobs of Oregon wrote to tell about his ongoing ophicleide performances. "I am playing ophicleide and trombone in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. The play opened on June 11 and will run in the festival's outdoor theater until October 8. We are now well into our run here in Ashland, Oregon, usually selling out the 1200 seat Elizabethan theater every show, two or three shows per week."



Mark Jacobs playing for 'The Pirates of Penzance'

"My part is mostly ophicleide peppered with some trombone. My instrument is a 9-key C ophicleide made by 'Beauboeuf Freres' in Paris circa 1850. It was restored for me a few years ago by Robb Stewart. I am using a modern Bruno Tiltz ophicleide mouthpiece. The mouthpiece came with a shank similar to a modern tuba mouthpiece which I reduced to fit to the ophicleide, which has a receiver slightly smaller than a modern small-bore trombone."

"I have played trombone for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in the past, and was asked to come and play for the *Pirates of Penzance* show this season. We are using a custom scoring for our 14-piece orchestra, and I suggested ophicleide thinking that it would add an interesting sonic dimension to the production. As you know, Arthur Sullivan included ophicleide in his score for his overture *Di Ballo*. Although he did not specify ophicleide in *Pirates*, the inclusion is a good fit. Among other scoring benefits, when the ophicleide is scored with the woodwinds, a certain bassoon quality is achieved. The ophicleide is featured soloistically in several spots, most notably in *When the Foeman Bears his Steel*." The Oregon Shakespeare Festival's web page is <http://www.osfashland.org>.

- Phil Humphries writes, "I have just finished recording an album with Dave Townsend [appearing in our musical act known as The Lost Chord] titled *Sound of Leather*, which is

fourteen tracks of concertina and serpent arrangements of light classics." It should be available by the end of the year, so please refer to the London Serpent Trio website www.whitecottagewebsites.co.uk/1st or the Mellstock Band website www.mellstockband.com for more details.



Frank Tomes at the 1987 serpent event at Beauchamp House in England

In Memoriam: Frank Tomes

Frank Tomes, maker of reproduction sackbuts and natural trumpets, died on Wednesday, July 27. He had been suffering from cancer for a while so it was expected, but he deteriorated quite quickly. The funeral was on August 9th at St Mary the Virgin, Merton Park, London.

Frank came on the scene with Christopher Monk as a sackbut maker; Ted Kirby had previously made sackbuts for Christopher. Frank reportedly helped to develop different sizes of the non-serpent instruments. Frank was also one of the earlier adoptees of the serpent, and was participating in the notable events such as the 1987 Beauchamp House serpentarium and the 1990 Serpent Celebration in London, although he was not present at more recent events of this sort.

At the time of his death, Frank had retired from making instruments, and was seeking a buyer for the sackbut business.

Wik Bohdanowicz's notable five-keyed Military Serpent by James Jordan of Liverpool, circa 1840



More Exciting News

- On August 17, 2011, Doug Yeo wrote, “Today I have announced my intention to retire as Bass Trombonist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, effective August 27, 2012, after over 27 years of service. I will also be retiring from the faculty at New England Conservatory of Music at the same time. I will not, however, be retiring to sit on my sofa and watch television all day - there is much ahead for me. A decision like this has a lot of parts to it, so I have prepared a page on my website that gives all of the details about this decision and the exciting future that awaits my wife and me in a new part of the country.”

Doug and his wife Patricia plan to relocate to Goodyear, Arizona, in the southwest valley of Phoenix. He will be teaching at Arizona State University at Tempe, and will continue performing, researching and writing about the trombone, serpent, ophicleide and other historical low brass instruments. Doug also plans to spend time as an advisor-docent at the large new Musical Instrument Museum, MIM, located at 4725 E. Mayo Boulevard in Phoenix, website www.themim.org. The Yeos also plan to continue pursuing their love of hiking in the great National Parks of the American West.



*A portion of the painting 'Procession à Saint-Sulpice'.
The bocal of a second serpentist can be barely seen
two people to the visible serpentist's left side (our right).
photo by Michel Levassort*

- Doug Yeo has been doing some research involving a famous painting of a church procession with serpents. The painting is *Procession à Saint-Sulpice* by an artist named Bazin, probably done around 1816. A small portion of this illustration, specifically showing the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, graces the front cover of the Bernard Fourtet CD recording *Le Livre d'Orgue de Montréal*, Ateliers du Fresne #300 002.2 (see the September 2001 issue of this newsletter for a review). The cathedral of Saint Sulpice is situated near the Louvre Museum in Paris, and is the second largest church in Paris after Notre Dame de Paris. The actual painting is quite large and has as its subject both the procession itself and the immense architecture of the building. The actual painting is not in the church and hasn't been there for decades. It is located in the living room of the

living quarters of the cathedral's clergy. Doug hopes to be able to visit both the cathedral and the painting when he visits Paris in October for the Serpent Symposium (see the Workshops section of this newsletter). The photo reprinted here was taken by Michel Levassort and forwarded to Doug by Michel Rougé.



*Serpentist detail from
Procession à
Saint-Sulpice*

*photo by
Michel Levassort*

There is some question about the date of the painting. Study of the canvas reveals what appears to be 1876, but *Galignani's New Guide of Paris*, dated 1830 (downloadable from Google books for no charge) makes mention of it in the section about the cathedral. This makes the date seem more like perhaps 1816 since the 1 and 7 may look similar. Doug points out that, “The vertical holding position [of the serpents shown in the painting] was still used since Hermenge's book, which was the first mention of the horizontal holding method in France (England adopted it in 1795) was published around 1821.” On the other hand, the authorship of the painting is in question, as it is signed simply as Bazin. Neither Doug nor your newsletter editor have been able to find more definite information on a painter of this name, with the exception of a Charles-Louis Bazin who was born 1802 and died in 1859. It is possible that a painter aged 14 years old in 1816 [assuming that this year is correct] might have done such a piece of artwork, but it seems unreliable. If any reader knows more about this, both Doug and the editor would like to learn of it.

Doug continues, “The expression on the serpent player's face on the left is terrific.....and there are two serpent players. This is significant, offering more proof of two serpent players being in some churches just as in Amiens, shown by Charles Wild's painting that I wrote about for the HBS Journal a few years ago.”

“My friend in Paris who sent me the photos of the Bazin painting has sent me another photo - not very sharp but you will get the idea - from the sacristy at the church. It shows a collection of liturgical objects, including a serpent and the

Pope's tiara. But you'll notice the serpent has an extra bend - you'd need three hands to play it! Interesting that there is some chant music around the serpent. I hope to visit the church when I'm in Paris in October [ed; see the Workshops section of this newsletter] and if I can, I will take some better photos."

Carving with
odd-looking
serpent at
Saint-Sulpice

photo by
Michel Rougé



- Sue Bradley forwarded a contribution from her brother, "When we boarded the MS Zuiderdam in Vancouver to sail up to Alaska there was a private cocktail party held for our group. In the room there was a serpent that we thought might be of interest, unfortunately the room was fairly dark with dark fittings, huge windows letting in reflected light from the water and an incredibly reflective cover over the instrument. There was a brass name plate below it and artwork in one corner." The serpent image has been cleaned up a little in photo software to remove most of the glare artifacts; the



generally awful appearance is mostly due to your editor's ineptitude with that software. The artwork is also reproduced here, although happily it did not need any rework. The cruise line operating the Zuiderdam was contacted for more information about why they have a serpent and a serpent painting on their ship, but in their reply they said they could turn up no information about it.

- Doug Yeo sent a PDF file of a Royal Music Association publication titled *Private Concerts on Land and Water: The Musical Activities of the Sharp Family, c.1750- c.1790*, by Brian Crosby. It is concerned with the musical activities of William, James and Granville Sharp in London during the second half of the eighteenth century. It opens with the



Serpent painting on MS Zuiderdam

passage, "the three Sharps were capable amateur musicians who hosted private concerts of sacred music in their homes, and that at different times many of the leading professional musicians of the period either played or sang on one of Sharps' vessels on the Thames. These shadowy images gained bodily form in 1978 when the National Portrait Gallery acquired on indefinite loan *The Sharp Family* by Johann Zoffany, a portrait which revealed that the three brothers were but part of a larger musical family." [Ed. part of this painting was reproduced in the April 2011 issue of this newsletter]. It is revealed that the serpentist in the painting is James Sharp, who was not just holding the instrument but could actually play it, "This fortunate situation gained me the encouragement of Mr. James Sharp, the merchant, who astonished me by playing the violoncello part of trios on a serpent" as one writer is quoted as commenting about the man. His fortune was reportedly derived from a Royal Patent he held for household stoves, and he produced a wide range of farming and other machinery and marketed improved rolling carriages and carts. His death is listed as occurring in 1783. Another interesting serpentist!

- Doug Yeo wrote, "I came across a book *Military Bands and their Uniforms*, by Jack Cassin-Scott and John Fabb, Blandford Press 1978, ISBN 0 7137 0895 6, in which appears a picture of the West point band with serpent on page 138. No commentary accompanies it. The serpent player seems to be rather stylized - either he's playing a Piffault model (not likely) or the artist (who seems to be modern, not contemporaneous) doesn't know how a serpent was held. In any case, I've contacted West Point Archives to see if a serpent was ever part of the West Point Band. I know the US Marine Corps band in DC purchased a serpent on August 23, 1812, but I wasn't aware it was used at West Point. I'll let you know if I get any more information."

- Doug also referred your editor to an article by Eric Halfpenny in *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol. 17 (Feb., 1964), pp. 113-114, titled *Lament for 'Fusedule Tecil'*. Halfpenny was a founder of the Galpin Society and wrote many articles about the serpent, including this one. The title

refers to, in his words, the “infuriating and philologically-impossible name” used for many years in reference to the engraving on a particular serpent in a museum. The engraving had been taken at face value and did appear to have the maker as ‘Fusedule Tecil’. The bulk of the article consists of the author’s humorously recounted detective work in debunking the odd name and discovering the correct one through some basic scholarship. ‘Tecil’ was actually “nothing more than an engraved italic script *Fecit* [Latin for ‘made by’ or ‘maker’], with the very faint cross of the initial capital ‘F’ and final ‘t’ eroded by time”. The ending ‘-dule’ was an eroded ‘-dale’, that latter being a common ending for an English proper name. Fragments of the maker’s address



West Point band from 1818 with Piffault (?) serpent

were fleshed out by Halfpenny to reveal the full address and neighborhood, the uses of the building during the maker Fusedale’s career and later by his widow and then a violin maker. That in turn shows that serpents of this type were being made in 18th Century London, extending the previously assumed late limit by which six keyed English serpent were produced. He then discusses the features and playability of the serpent in question, and concludes with the verse:

*Farewell, Mr Tecil!
No longer that guess'll
Hold water, since research can break it.
You must feel confused! You'll
Not even be FuseDULE,
But simply John FuseDALE ... Fecit!*

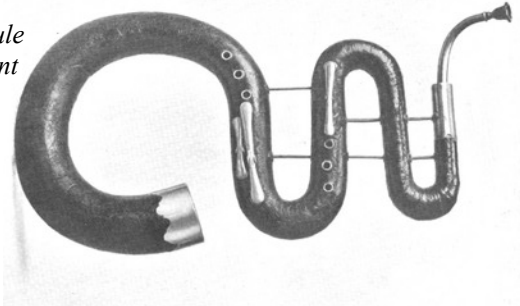
The article is available for download to institutions, and for a fee to individuals. Contact the Galpin Society www.music.ed.ac.uk/euchmi/galpin or the archive www.jstor.org/pss/841324.



Eric Halfpenny

photo by permission of The Galpin Society

The ‘Fusedule Tecil’ serpent



- In this issue is a photo, taken by Doug Yeo’s Boston Symphony Orchestra tuba colleague Mike Roylance, during his recent visit to an exhibit of musical instrument inventor Gunner Schonbeck’s work at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. Schonbeck, a long time faculty member at Vermont’s Bennington College, reportedly created more than 1000 instruments that required the storage space of five old barns near the basement workshop of his mountaintop home in Hoosick Falls, New York state. At the age of 16, Gunnar played in the Boston Symphony and began teaching clarinet at Smith College. After working as a toolmaker during World War II, where he became adept at working with metals and plastics, Schonbeck joined the Bennington College faculty in 1945 where he taught acoustics and experimental orchestra. Some creations include his nine-foot banjo, drums made from airplane fuel tanks, a xylophone constructed from truck springs and other singular devices for producing music. Schonbeck famously orchestrated a concert featuring hundreds of his instruments once every



Gunnar Schonbeck photo by Mike Roylance

semester. The ophicleide he is pictured with seems to present a mystery; was he a player of the instrument, or did he make a good replica, or was he simply posing with it? The man who has even made a violin from a coconut has been quoted as saying, “Everything has its sound, you just have to bring it out.”; a sentiment not unknown to serpentists.