

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2017

A Note from the Editor

This issue of the newsletter is a bit brief compared to the recent editions, yet it covers two significant early music events of interest to serpentists, one new CD recording, a special article and the usual news. It is always a surprise to me when an edition is larger or smaller than what I have anticipated, and it often hinges on whether certain events get written up by contributors, or the timing of anticipated articles. I have to keep reminding myself that this is a newsletter, not a journal, and it is the nature of news to be inconsistent.

The only other thing I have to say before we get into the main content is, please review your 'donations' to this newsletter in recent years, and don't be shy about making a new monetary contribution. Please make all such contributions to the editorial office, either by preferably sending a PayPal payment to the 'ocleide' email shown on page 6, or by mailing a check to the editorial address.

And if you have any serpent news, or know of *any* serpent or ophicleide performances or events, please don't think whether it is too small or insignificant, just send it along!

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

- Edinburgh Serpentarium 2017

The latest in the long series of Serpentariums held in the UK took place in the vicinity of Edinburgh, Scotland, from Friday, May 26th through Monday the 29th, 2017. The main activities were at the Carlops Church and at the home of Murray and Patsy Campbell in Carlops, a town south of the city. This was the second time that the Campbells have

hosted the biennial event, with the first time being four years ago in 2013.

Early arrivals on Thursday the 25th were John Weber, Ross Nuccio, and Paul Schmidt, who had flown over from Chicago that morning. Also back for their second Serpentarium were two other Americans, Leonard and Helen Byrne from Spokane, Washington state. The three Chicagoans met with Murray and Patsy for dinner in the pub of the nearby Allan Ramsay hotel, where the Byrnes were staying. A fine meal and local brews were enjoyed as the five visitors and the Campbells caught up on events and discussed the coming event.

On Friday morning, Paul, John, Leonard and Ross met in the Campbell's music room to read through some music while Murray got the church ready for the full group. As usual, John had arranged a new piece for the event, *Life's a Treat* by Mark Thomas, the theme from the popular animated TV show *Shaun the Sheep*, a nod to the sheep infested hills nearby. Also used as warmups were trombone trio arrangements of *Harre, Meine Seele* by Cäsar Malan, and *Ach Bleib Deiner Gnade* by Melchior Vulpius, and quartet arrangements of the alphorn tune *De Berner* by Martin Christen, arranged by John, and the hymn *Lead Kindly Light* by John Bacchus Dykes, followed by Liz Gutteridge's serpent quartet arrangement of *Wallace* (theme from *Wallace and Gromit*) by Julian Nott. Another trombone trio arrangement was tried, *Das Treue Deutsche Herz* by Julius Otto, followed by a quartet for alphorns, *Uf dä Bänklialp*, with Murray playing the top part on, yes, his alphorn.

During lunch at the Campbell's house, regular Serpentarium attendees Christian Körner and his wife Anna arrived from Germany. Our leader, London Serpent Trio member Phil Humphries, arrived around that same time. The party took a leisurely walk up the hilly country lane to work off the meal. In the afternoon, a Serpentarium newbie Michael Yelland arrived; he is a medical doctor and university professor in Brisbane, Australia, and very accomplished early musician on multiple instruments, including serpent. Also joining the growing group was Bill Giles, a busy local musician who



Serpentarium group photo; back L-R: Anna Körner, Christian Körner, Ross Nuccio, John Weber, Michael Yelland, Arnold Myers, Bill Giles, Patsy Campbell; front L-R: Leonard Byrne, Tony George, Phil Humphries, Murray Campbell, Paul Schmidt

had attended his first Serpentarium four years previously. The ensemble played two new serpent ensemble arrangements by Phil, *A Medley of Scottish Tunes* and *The Great Escape March* by Elmer Bernstein.

On Saturday morning, the players met in the church and did warmups, then had their first full reading of *Life's a Treat* and *Wallace*. At that time, "Mr. Ophicleide" Tony George arrived and joined in as the group read through *The Great Escape March* and *A Medley of Scottish Tunes*, which consisted of an opening 'bagpipe chant', then *The Campbells Are Coming*, *The Skye Boat Song*, *Loch Lomond*, *Donald Where's Your Trousers?* and finally *Auld Lang Syne*. After a break for tea, the group took advantage of the fine weather to walk up the lane and take the traditional group photo. Afterwards, the group read another of Phil's new serpent arrangements, the *Raiders Theme* from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* by John Williams, and then Murray's new arrangement of the *Y.M.C.A.* song by Jacques Morali and Victor Willis.

After lunch, the London Serpent Trio's arrangement of Handel's *Royal Fireworks Music* was read; this includes the selections *Allegro*, *Largo alla Siciliana*, and *Minuets I & II*. It should be noted that Edinburgh musician and scholar Arnold Myers had joined the group earlier. Then Tony George did a presentation of three serpent related instruments; a Serpent Forveille, an English Bass Horn, and the prototype of the new Wessex Valved Ophicleide. The

instruments were passed around and everyone got a change to try them. After more work on *Fireworks*, there was a tea break, followed by reading a major serpent composition that was always used at Serpentariums but which has been given a rest in the last few events, Simon Proctor's *Amherst Suite*. Dinner took place at the pub of the Allan Ramsay hotel, and in the evening the larger group divided into small ensembles; Ross, John, Christian and Bill formed on quartet, Murray, Paul and Phil formed a trio, and Michael and Leonard made a duet. It is not recorded what the quartet and the duet played, but the trio read through Cliff Bevan's collection *Thomas Weelkes: Six of His Ayres or Phantasticke Spirites for Three Voices*.

On Sunday morning, while the church was in use (Murray is the organist), the rest of the group met at the Carlops Town Hall next door. Phil played a multitrack recording of a new composition for serpent, Robert Foster's *Concerto Grosso*, a work still in progress; the piece consists of four movements, *Allegro Cantabile*, a slow movement in the style of a folk song, *Scherzo Diabalo* and *Rondo*. Then the group rehearsed the selections for the concert. Bill Giles introduced his serpent arrangement of the trombone solo piece *The Acrobat* by John A. Greenwood, which the serpentists would be playing later as part of *The Acrobat Challenge*, a fundraiser for the treatment of the young trombonist Stephen Sykes' illness. After lunch, the group traveled in several cars to see the new home of the historic musical instrument collection at

Edinburgh's St. Cecilia's museum. Some people decided to remain in the city for a while to experience the night life and some concerts, while the rest returned to Carllops for dinner at the Allan Ramsay. Later, Phil, Ross, John, Paul and Christian read an *Excerpt from the Berlioz Requiem*, arranged by Phil, as well as excerpts from Bevan's collection *Marches 4 Bass Clef*, namely the *Huntsmen's Chorus* by Carl Maria von Weber and the *March from Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi. Meanwhile, Michael and Bill joined in a rehearsal of a choir that Murray directs.



.....but there were a few other performance opportunities for an ophicleide player, but not on the big stage (or even in the pit) of the opera house. In this postcard, two comic actors imitate typical French street buskers - 'Chanteurs des Cours' or 'Singers of the Court'. The woman sings, "Jeunes filles, gardez bien, Ce qui vous appartient" or "Young girls, Keep well what is yours.". It is part of a set of comic postcards published by A. Bergeret in Nancy, showing clowns and actors from the French vaudeville stage of the 1900s. Again, the instrument and performer was understood as part of the prevailing culture, the humor was in the buffoonery. - from Michael Brubaker website, <http://temposenzatempo.blogspot.com>

On Monday morning, the players ran through the entire concert program, with a break for tea. After lunch, the three small ensembles took time to refine their own concert selections. After dinner, everyone returned to Carllops Church to do the video recording of *The Acrobat* for the aforementioned challenge, followed by the well-attended concluding gala concert. The show opened with *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (*La Réjouissance*, *La Paix*, and *Menuetts I & II*), and then the first of the small ensembles performed, Leonard and Michael playing a *Largo Grazioso* from a serpent tutor book. Up next was *A Medley of Scottish*

Tunes, followed by another small ensemble, Murray, Paul and Phil playing from the Thomas Weelkes collection; *Strike It Up*, *Tabor and As Deadly Serpents Lurking*, and *Since Robin Hood*. The full ensemble returned to perform *Y.M.C.A.*, after which the quartet of Christian, John, Bill and Arnold performed the pieces *Ich Schwing Mein Horn* by Ludwig Senfl, and *Der Berner* by Martin Christen.

Up next, the audience was tantalized by the announcement that *The Plasticine Suite* would be performed next, consisting of selections associated with Aardman Animation Studios TV shows and movies; *Life's A Treat* in honor of *Shaun the Sheep*, the theme from *Wallace & Gromit*, and *The Great Escape* due to it being the inspiration for the similar sounding theme from *Chicken Run*. The last announced selection on the concert was *The Amherst Suite*, but the crowd demanded more, so the show concluded with *Raiders March*. Another great Serpentarium was coming to a close, so everyone repaired to the Allan Ramsay pub for some well deserved pints.

- Third International Historic Brass Symposium

New York, July 13-16, 2017

On July 13th, around 200 people gathered at the Kimmel Center in New York University for the start of the Third International Historic Brass Symposium. This meeting was organized by the Historic Brass Society, whose musical interests cover a vast time span from antiquity to the twentieth century, and the next three days provided a feast of inspiring talks and performances on a wide variety of brass instruments from many different periods. The moving spirit and principal organizer of the Symposium was the indefatigable HBS President Jeff Nussbaum, assisted by Sandy Coffin, Greg Ericson and Bradley Strauchen-Scherer.



Patrick Wibert performs the Ferdinand David Concertino
photo by Doug Yeo

The first day of the Symposium included the presentation of the 2017 HBS Christopher Monk Award to Sabine Klaus, and a session in which Trevor Herbert interviewed the noted jazz critic Dan Morgenstern. The afternoon lectures included a brilliant presentation and performance by Jamie Savan, in which he explained his recent research on fingering patterns on Venetian cornetts.

On the 14th, the venue for the meeting shifted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A discussion session on the role of James Reese Europe in the development of jazz in the early twentieth century included a brief contribution by his grandson. This was followed by a stirring performance of some of the First World War repertoire of the band of the 369th Infantry Division, known as the Harlem Hell Fighters, by an ensemble of period instruments led by John Wallace. The band included Dave Pearson playing an 1890 helicon and Steve Lundahl on a 1921 Conn Double-Bell euphonium. In the afternoon three natural trumpet ensembles played in the Arms and Armour Courtyard and in the organ loft overlooking it: the Trumpet Consort von Humboldt directed by Gil Cline, the University of Kentucky Baroque Trumpet Ensemble directed by Jason Dovel, and the Kentucky Baroque Trumpets directed by Don Johnson III.



Scott Robinson and Doug Yeo, photo by D. Yeo

A musical highlight of the Symposium was the concert in the evening of the 14th in St. Luke's in the Field Church. In an exquisite performance of works by seventeenth century Italian composers, Bruce Dickey on cornett and Wim Becu on sackbut demonstrated that they are still unchallenged masters of this repertoire. Michael Collver also displayed remarkable skill in both singing and playing the cornett. Serpent and ophicleide enthusiasts were waiting eagerly for the performance by Patrick Wibart, and the playing of this astonishing young virtuoso was rapturously received.

Accompanied by Walter Hilse on organ, he played serpent in *Psaume 37* by Louis Couperin and *Les Délices de la Solitude* by Michel Corrette. He then switched to ophicleide for a barnstorming performance of Ferdinand David's *Concertino Op. 12*. Since it was Bastille Day, he concluded his recital with his own *Variations on La Marseillaise*.



A newly acquired Baudouin serpent with painted skin at the Metropolitan Museum of Art - photo by Doug Yeo

On the 15th, the Symposium returned to New York University, this time in the Frederick Lowe Theatre. The morning session featured the world premiere of a specially commissioned piece for serpent and ophicleide by Jaron Lanier, entitled *Caduceus Mixtus*. The piece was dedicated to the memory of Gunther Schuller, and cast an intriguing and contemplative musical spell in a fine performance by Doug Yeo on serpent and Scott Robinson on ophicleide. In the afternoon the repertoire of the Distin Family saxhorn band was recreated by an ensemble including Richard Formison and Richard Thomas on cornets and alto saxhorns, Anneke Scott on tenor saxhorn, Phil Dale on baritone saxhorn, and Jeff Miller on contrabass saxhorn.

On the final day of the meeting, serpent and ophicleide made a final appearance in the expert hands of Barry Bocaner, playing in a group entitled *Grand Harmonie Brass*. The program included a *Divertimento* by Sigismund Ritter Von Neukomm, played on English slide trumpet, two horns, three trombones and ophicleide, and *Quatre Pas Redoublés* by Luigi Cherubini, played on trompette demilune, three horns and serpent.



c. 1900—A French chocolate advertisement depicts a soldier playing ophicleide

Jeff Nussbaum and his team richly deserved the thanks and congratulations which they received at the end of this well organised and highly rewarding Symposium.

submitted by Murray Campbell

1820—Milan, Italy:
A hand-colored engraving entitled Banda degli Ulani Francesi (Band of French Lancers) features a number of mounted musicians, including a pair of ophicleides



*thanks to
Will Kimball*

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

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

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992
<nicholas@perry2185.freeserve.co.uk>
(see Christopher Monk Instruments website URL at lower right)
(serpents, early cimballo, bass horns)

S Berger Serpents
Stephan Berger & Erna Suter
Atelier de Cuir
Les Prailats 18
CH-2336 Les Bois
Switzerland
Phone: 0041 (0) 32 961 1188
<www.serpents.ch>
<sberger@serpents.ch>

(serpents, both wood and carbon fiber, serpent cases, accessories)
[formerly Wetterberger serpents]

David Harding
The Early Music Shop
Salts Mill, Victoria Road
Saltaire
West Yorkshire BD18 3LA
England
Phone: +44 (0) 1274 288 100
<www.earlymusicshop.com>
(resin serpents)

Serpents Ribo
(c/o Pierre Ribo)
Rue Van Oost, 40
1030 Bruxelles
Belgium
Phone: 0032 497 574 496
<pierre.ribo@>souslesplatanes.be>
(Serpents)

Christopher Monk Instruments
(c/o Jeremy West)
+44 (0)1388 526999
<www.jeremywest.co.uk/christopher-monk-instruments.html>
<hmcornett@gmail.com>
(Cornetti)

Kaiser Serpents
http://www.kaiserserpents.com
(fiberglass serpents after Baudouin)

Sam Goble Historical Mouthpieces
phone: +44 (0) 77 8056 4370
<www.samgoble.com>
<info@samgoble.com>
(cornett and serpent mouthpieces)

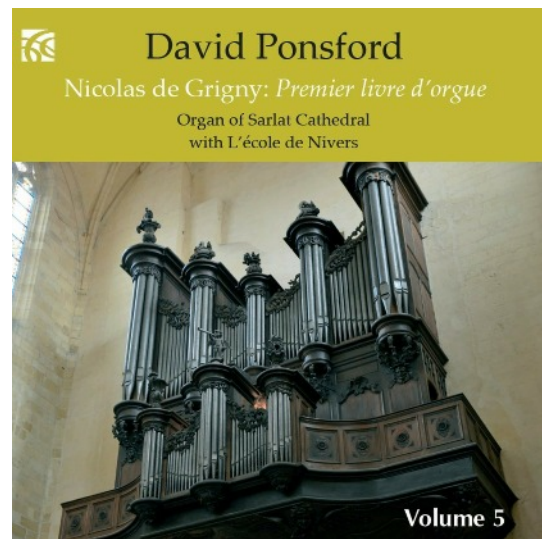
Serpentones Lopez
Juan Lopez Romera, maker
http://serponton.com/
(wooden serpents & cornetti)

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

New Materials

● *David Ponsford - Nicholas de Grigny: Premier livre d'orgue (aka David Ponsford - French Organ Music from the Golden Age, Volume 5)*; 2-CD recording featuring David Ponsford (organist), L'école de Nivers (vocal ensemble); Phil Humphries (serpent). Nimbus / Alliance # NI 6342. Obtained from Amazon.

This new album is primarily a solo organ feature, with David Ponsford performing the pieces *La Messe* and *Les Hymnes* by 17th Century French composer Nicholas de Grigny, who is often ranked as one of the best organ composers from the time of King Louis XIV. Each of these pieces exceeds an hour in length, with one piece per CD in the 2-CD set. They follow the old practice of *alternatim*, where each section or movement of the music is alternated with the related plainchant. For example, in the *Kyrie* section of *La Messe*, there are five organ solo sections alternating with four sung plainchant versets. This makes for quite a lot of short bits of plainchant, and as we know, the serpent will have a hand in this.



This album was recorded on the Organ of Sarlat Cathedral. The plainchant is performed by the male vocal ensemble L'école de Nivers, accompanied by Phil Humphries on this album. Although the amount of serpent playing on this album is not very extensive, it remains a fine example of the serpent's original purpose, and is a very good performance. Note that the vocal/serpent performance was recorded in Tewkesburh Abbey in the Gloucestershire district of England, while the organ performance was recorded in France; the singers & serpent do not perform at the same time as the organ. The album has been edited to make it seem that the singers are in the same acoustical space as the organ, which seems to play immediately after the plainchant.

● Nick Byrne has advised that there is no news yet on his delayed sequel for his *Back from Oblivion* solo ophicleide CD; the most he, and we, can do is sit on our hands until the record label decides to release it.

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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Caduceus - partial inspiration for illustration at right

An Ophisaurus Rex (Awesome Ophie)

by Robert Eliason

Mount your horses, call the hounds, man the whaleboats, the hunt is on. Doug Yeo recently called attention to the following passage in the *Catalogue Of The Exhibition; Horticultural hall Boston*, January 11 to 26, 1902, page 33:

“Still another kind of ophicleide is the double bass or monster instrument in F and Eb, being a fifth below the bass ophicleide, or an octave below the alto. One was made by E.

G. Wright, of Boston for Thomas Davis, of Concord, N. H., it being the only one made in America. It has been lost track of.”

Somewhere in Concord area attics or Boston basements lurks a monster ophicleide we might call “Awesome Ophie.” This rare and dangerous creature, with wide-open throat and sharp keys at the ready, is awaiting discovery by some brave searcher. Unlike *Nessie* in Scotland who is occasionally sighted, Awesome Ophie hasn’t been seen for over a century, though she is undoubtedly still hiding somewhere, stashed in an unused storage area or maybe even incognito as part of the plumbing.

I suggest we immediately search the 1840s and 1850s Concord City Directories to find out where Thomas Davis lived, and have the current owners of the property search the closets, attic, basement, garage, and under the porch. We must also look carefully at the utility systems of any former residence of Mr. Davis, as the elaborate piping and key system of a giant ophicleide might well have been adapted for use as a heating duct, water tank, or sewer pipe.

We should also check the Concord Historical Society to see if they are preserving the instrument as an example of local musical history. Concord town records might turn up the will of Thomas Davis and reveal if she was bequeathed to some family member or area musician. Someone should get on Family Search or Ancestry.com and look for living descendants of Thomas Davis who might have saved her. Music stores in Concord might have taken Awesome Ophie in trade for a modern instrument and need to be contacted. It may also be worthwhile to check the scrap metal dealers in Merrimack County for any unusual brass object received in the last century.



*‘Awesome Ophie and George’
drawing by Lena Nechet,
Huntington Beach,
California*

E. G. Wright was one of the greatest musical instrument craftsmen of 19th-century America; so discovery of his Awesome Ophie is of considerable importance to the history of instrument making in this country. Because of her rarity, likely beauty of design and historical significance, an image of her might well be intertwined with George, the monster Christopher Monk serpent for the emblem of our society.

A substantial prize is offered for information leading to the discovery and apprehension of this instrument, which will probably look something like the Prosperé's *Monstre Ophicleide* or the only known Wright bass ophicleide in B-flat. Absence of the bocal on the surviving Wright example is not surprising, given its location. This double loop of small tubing would have been very useful in the apparatus required for making Missouri moonshine. It hasn't been found yet, but interested people are still searching.



Above left:
Ophicleide in B-flat; signed "E. G. Wright,
Roxbury, Mass.;"
Don Essig Collection, Central Missouri State University,
Warrensburg.

If you find Awesome Ophie, an appearance on Antiques Road Show is almost guaranteed, but think also of the marketing possibilities: a clothing line for musicians identified by distinctive little Awesome Ophie images; jewelry such as ear rings, pendants, and bracelets; a shoe line; handbags, belts; the possibilities are endless. Just imagine the importance of being the first kid in school or person in your neighborhood or senior living facility to wear an Awesome Ophie nose ring! You and those nearest you will be reminded of the importance of E. G. Wright wind instruments every time you blow!

Any sightings, clues, or new information should be reported immediately to:

Bob Eliason <roberteliason@comcast.net> or Doug Yeo <douglas.edward.yeo@gmail.com>



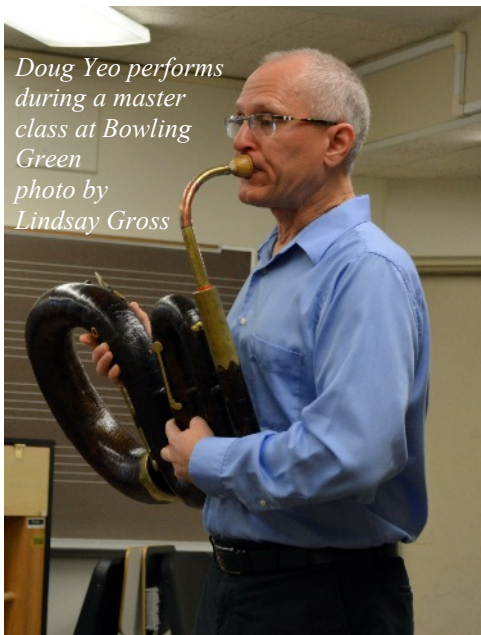
Doug Yeo with serpent donor Glenn Varney
at Bowling Green - photo by Lindsay Gross

Where Serpents Gather

- Bernard Fourtet wrote about his Summer serpent activities, "On July 15th, my group *l'Echappée Madrigale* (Marie Petit and Camille Balssa, soprani, Anne-Lise Panisset, mezzo soprano, Nicolas Desroziers, ténor, and Bernard Fourtet, baryton and direction) presented their *Monteverdi Madrigals* program in Lourde France, Pyrénées. During this set I also played serpent and sackbut. I played the *Amarilli mia bella* solo and diminutions by Jakob Van Eyck after Giulio Caccini. I used my snake skin covered C Serpent with three keys by Christopher Monk."

"On July 29th, I played again in the same little village of Lourde (no S, no Sainte Vierge, but a Serpent) as part of the duet *l'Ophicleide enchanté*. Together with Anne-Lise Panisset (*dancer, singer, choreographer*) we performed a new program during the *Festival de Formes Animées* (puppets, marionnettes, silhouettes and so on...). The scenography was by Justine Lebars. Their theme during this 30' set was *Eve Enjoys the Garden of Eden*. It consists in several tableaux, with an introduction (the *Genesis* with Betty Roe's *Euphonium Dance*, voice and ophicleide), *Eve Discovering the Animals* (Scarlatti's *Light Butterfly*, solo serpent), the language (Luciano Berio's *Sequenza a Voce Femminile*), the literature (Ovide's *Metamorphoses* & Jakob van Eyck's *Daphne*, solo serpent), the pleasure of a nap (José-Maria de Herredia's *La Sieste*, with Katchaturian's *Andantino*, voice and ophicleide), the sin (Simon Proctor's *The Original Sin*, voice and serpent), and the Betty Roe as a danced *finale*. Of course, the snake skin Serpent was particularly connected with the theme.... the ophicleide used is an original Millereau one with eleven keys."

● On April 4 through 6, 2017, Doug Yeo was in residency at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, at the Moore Musical Arts Center in their College of Music Arts. Plans for this residency were first laid in July 2014 when Doug received an unusual request; BGSU had recently received a 19th century English military serpent and they wanted to know if he would be willing to come to the university to introduce the instrument to the community. Dr. Glenn Varney, BGSU Professor of Management (Emeritus), had gifted the four keyed serpent to the College of Musical Arts. The instrument was probably made around 1830, had been in the family of his late wife for many years, having been purchased from a dealer in London who said the serpent was last used by a musician in a regimental band during the Boer War (1899-1902). Over the years, the serpent had suffered some accidents and some needed restoration, which was done by J.C. Sherman of Cleveland.



Doug Yeo performs during a master class at Bowling Green
photo by Lindsay Gross

Doug has been playing the serpent since 1994, and has played many historical instruments in museums around the world, so he knew that he needed to hold it in his hands and spend time with it. So in 2016 BGSU shipped the Ruth P. Varney Memorial Serpent to him so he could get to know this instrument. No two serpents are alike and it took him several months to understand the instrument's unique qualities. Once he had come to grips with its playing characteristics to the point where he could commit to using it in performance, he organized a program of chamber music that had been written to include the serpent, a program he had given in 2011 in Rouen and Paris, France. It included marches by Christopher Eley, Samuel Wesley and Josef Haydn, and a *Divertimento* attributed to Haydn that included the famous St. Antoni Chorale. The concert was presented by a superb group, featuring a mix of BGSU faculty, students and other local players, and was enthusiastically received by the audience. The instrumentation besides the serpent included two oboes, two clarinets, two horns; three bassoons and a trumpet.



The London Serpent Trio at Jever Castle
L-R: Phil Humphries, Andy Kershaw, Nick Perry

Doug titled the concert *The Ruth P. Varney Memorial Serpent: A Conversation and Concert Led By Douglas Yeo*. He was able to engage the audience with information about the serpent, its role in music from its important work accompanying chant in the church in France from the 16th century, through its introduction into military bands, chamber music and the symphony orchestra, and the generosity of Glenn Varney in donating this extraordinary instrument to BGSU in memory of his late wife.

While at Bowling Green, Doug also had the opportunity to lead a music history seminar that discussed the serpent. He also taught a masterclass for the BGSU tuba/euphonium studio, and gave a trombone masterclass where he worked with several students on solos, heard a low brass section play excerpts from Brahms' Symphony No. 2, and also a trombone quartet.

condensed from a blog by Doug Yeo

● Phil Humphries wrote, "There have been some changes to the personnel in the London Serpent Trio. Since Cliff Bevan's retirement the trio was reduced to a duo with Steve Wick and myself, but I am pleased to announce that two new members have been recruited; Nicholas Perry (of Christopher Monk Instruments) and Andy Kershaw (freelance tuba, serpent and ophicleide player). This keeps in with Christopher Monk's idea that serpent trios have more than three members and so we now have a pool of four players. Christopher formed this group with Alan Lumsden and Andrew van der Beek and they gave their first performance at St. John's, Smith's Square, London on the first of April (April Fool's Day) 1976 and it is a honor for all of us to keep this unique group established. The trio has

recently returned from a concert in North Germany at Jever Castle, and the members on this occasion were Phil, Nick and Andy.”

- Patricia Gauci wrote, “It’s been quite a while since I have attended a serpent gathering, the Historic Brass Society symposium in New York City in 2011 was the last time, I think. It’s a little harder for me to travel internationally in recent years; moving to Canada’s comparatively impoverished Maritimes from oil-wealthy Alberta in 2012 forced me to take a pay cut of almost 50%. Notwithstanding, I am a lot happier living here than I was in Edmonton. You know, I get to play serpent quite a lot. John DeWolfe and I rehearse duets weekly, and the serpent duo makes an appearance publicly once or twice a year. We perform with the Early Music Society of Nova Scotia’s annual Winter Tune-Up every January, trying to stick to 18th century repertoire for that; last year we did a Boismortier bassoon duo-sonata, and this year an adaptation of a Telemann canonic recorder sonata. However, on May 4 John and I appeared as part of a larger concert with Scotia Brass in St. John’s Church in Truro, Nova Scotia. We played Duo No. 4 from A. Hardy’s *Six Duos Concertants for 2 Serpents* as well as *Allegro & Rondo* from Opus 49 Movement 4 of Jacques Offenbach’s *6 Duos for 2 Violoncellos*.”



Nick Byrne with the other low brass of *Damnation of Faust*

- Doug Yeo wrote, “I wrote a brief commentary on my time at the HBS Symposium in New York City on my blog, <https://thelasttombone.com/2017/09/04/three-trips-music-friends-and-faith/>. Also, I will be playing serpent on Mendelssohn’s *Symphony No. 5 “Reformation”* with the Northbrook Symphony, Northbrook, Illinois on Sunday, November 5. My daughter Linda plays in that group. I’ll be using the serpent in D that Craig Kridel has; it was made by Christopher and modified by him and Craig. I’ve used it on the Mendelssohn before and it’s the perfect instrument. It’s being used by J.C. Sherman for a performance of the piece in October 2016 and Craig has asked him to add a C# key to the instrument.”

- Nick Byrne wrote about a couple of concerts that have happened recently or are coming up, “We are performing on December 11 a *200 years of Ophicleide* concert in Sydney at

the historic Garrison Church. It will be a collection of ensemble music & solos from the beginning of the Instrument’s creation to the present, performed by myself, *The Sydney Ophicleide Quartet* and virtually every ophicleide player on the continent. I figured I won’t be seeing the next anniversary so it would be amiss to not commemorate one of the great instrument’s bicentenaries in some way! I also performed recently at a couple of interesting places including live ‘on the air’ for Alan Jones



Nick Byrne rehearses the *Pastorale* movement from William Perry’s *Concerto* with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra

(Australia’s most listened to talk-back radio host), who picked up on an article that appeared in the Sydney Daily Telegraph outlining my path to the instrument through motorcycle crashes, etc). I then performed solos at his pet event, the Joan Sutherland Foundation, to several hundred overfed & under-informed wealthy donors. Taking ophicleide to the people! I also had the pleasure to perform the *Pastorale* movement from William Perry’s wonderful *concerto* at a Sydney Symphony Orchestra ‘Playlist’ concert which brings to the public favorite music from members of the orchestra (see More Exciting News section of this newsletter). Finally last month I joined the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Edo De Waart conducting, for Berlioz’s *Damnation of Faust* in Auckland & Wellington.

More Exciting News

- Nick Byrne can be seen on a YouTube video titled, *William Perry ‘Pastorale’ from Ophicleide Concerto ‘Rehearsal!’* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNhljY6l8rc&feature=youtu.be. He is rehearsing with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Benjamin Northey, in preparation for the concert mentioned in the *Where Serpents Gather* section of this newsletter.

Serpent Newsletter

- Michel Godard can be viewed on YouTube in a video titled, *Soyeusement (Michel Godard) Monteverdi "A Trace of Grace" live in Fürth* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=edcTf-LZQLc&app=desktop. He is in ensemble with Fanny Paccoud on violin, Bruno Helstroffer on theorbo and Gavino Murgia on soprano saxophone. The concert took place on May 7th, 2016.

- Organist Irene De Ruvo accompanies two serpents on a YouTube video titled, *G.B. Riccio sec XVI-XVII: Canzon a 2 bassi (2 serpentoni e organo)* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK3rQ6oG5NU&feature=youtu.be. The serpentists are Roberta Pregliasco and Corrado Colliard, and the performance took place at the Church of Santa Maria Assunta in Lesmo, Italy on December 2, 2012. The selection performed is *Canzon a 2 bassi* Giovanni by Battista Riccio, who lived in the 16th-17th Century. Another video with Roberta Pregliasco, this time with organ and flute, is titled, *G.B. Riccio: Canzon La Grimaneta* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=edFZiidlswk. Roberta is also a trombonist, and she has a website www.robortapregliasco.com.



Doug Yeo records the serpent solo of *Devils & Angels*.

- Doug Yeo wrote, “My friend and former student, Gerry Pagano, who is bass trombonist with the St. Louis Symphony, and I just recorded a new CD of duets for bass trombones. We’ve got a lot of different things on it, from classical to Renaissance, baroque, Bartok to jazz, funk and much more. Michael Lake was our recording engineer and he’s also a really talented jazz alto trombone player and gifted composer. We asked him to write a piece for the album that would also include his playing some jazz trombone. So he wrote *Devils & Angels*. I really love this

piece, and what Mike did with it. The piece can be heard at this website www.altobone.com/devils-angels/, and I’m playing lead bass trombone (right channel) and Gerry is on the left channel. In the middle section where Mike improvises, we’ve overdubbed a trombone quintet. And at the end, that’s me improvising on the serpent; something different. I used the python covered serpent that Keith Rogers made for himself, that Katherine entrusted to me after Keith’s death. It seemed like the right instrument to use for a recording in Arizona.”



1909—An oil painting showing cantors playing bassoon and ophicleide is signed “Galla 1909?” -this set of three drawings thanks to Will Kimball-



1897—Paris, France: Pépin’s *La musique adoucit, etc...*, a satirical political print, depicts two conjoined ophicleides (*Le Grelot*, no. 1389, Nov. 21, 1897).



1876—Paris, France: Pépin’s *Musica de chambres*, a political print published in *Le Grelot* (no. 278, August 6, 1876), depicts dueling ophicleides