



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2022

A Note from the Editor

Huzzah! It seems that we are pretty much out of the COVID pandemic situation, although as the experts say, this virus and its variants will always be with humanity, and people will repeatedly get sick from it. But like influenza, the 'flu', (which used to be a very serious disease) and the common cold, the vast majority of people will just get it mildly and few people will even think about it or take much notice of it. While this is important in general, it will of course have a huge impact on things like 'live music' and all the other good social things in life.

This is another smaller than usual edition, due mostly to a lot less performance activity in the last year, and COVID related issues of supply and such, slowing down many music related things. Happily, most of the subjects covered in this issue came with photos, which help pad things up a bit!

I ask that anyone who is involved with new serpent/ophicleide related books, sheet music, recordings, videos, performances, etc; send an email to the editorial address listed in the *About the Organization* section of this newsletter. If your project was delayed, please advise on its status.

As usual, please continue sending in any information on past or future performances, sightings, related videos and audio recordings, music and book publications, etc.

And your generous subscription donations are always needed appreciated. Please consider when you last sent in a contribution and send another!

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

● Carlops Serpentarium

When Phil Humphries arrived at the Latch (the home of hosts Murray and Patsy Campbell), Carlops (Scotland), John Weber and Ross Nuccio from Chicago were already settled in, sadly minus Paul Schmidt who could not travel due to a back problem (which we hope you are now fully recovered from Paul), and Leonard Byrne from Washington state who was unable to travel due to illness. During the afternoon on Friday with Murray Campbell, the serpentarium weekend started with some informal quartet playing. The first pieces up were from Cliff Bevan's *Marches 4 bass clef* and included *March from Scipio*, *March of the Priests*, *March Militaire*, *The British Grenadiers* and *Old Comrades*. The next participants to arrive were Michael Yelland, all the way from Australia, and Arnold Myers from Edinburgh. The pieces played with this team included *Old Comrades*, *Scotland the Brave*, Phil's arrangement of *A Medley of Scottish tunes for serpent sextet* and Lizzie Gutteridge's arrangement of *The Wallace and Gromit Theme*.

On Saturday morning we were joined by Bill Giles (Scotland) and the session started with a warm up in the form of the hymn tune *Penlan* arranged by Doug Yeo. The next pieces were *A Medley of Scottish Tunes* and a new arrangement by Phil of a west gallery carol from Yorkshire in eight parts, known as *Old Foster*. The group also tackled another new transcription by Phil of *Gabrieli's Canzon XXVIII* and an eight-part version, used in previous gatherings, of William Walton's *Crown Imperial*, particularly relevant this year as it is Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee. After a wonderful lunch at the Latch, as we only had seven serpents, we were joined by Patsy Campbell on bass viol to play the missing parts in the octets, and rehearsed *Crown Imperial*, *Canzon XXVIII* and also another new transcription by Phil of *Tutto li di* by Lassus. In the evening there was time to relax in the Gordon Arms at West Linton for a meal and a pint or two, organized by Murray.



2022 Serpentarium participants, L-R: Phil Humphries, Michael Yelland, Arnold Myers, Murray Campbell, Bill Giles, Patsy Campbell, John Weber, Ross Nuccio

Sunday morning started with Michael, Arnold, Bill and Phil playing *The March from Scipio* and the *Wallace and Gromit Theme*. They were soon joined by John and Ross for more *Old Comrades* and *A Medley of Scottish Tunes* and also John's wonderful arrangement of *Always Look On the Bright Side of Life*. It was also decided to include two children's pieces in the concert organised for Monday evening, and so an arrangement by Francesco Gibellini of *Ah, vous dirai-je Maman* (the *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* tune) kindly sent by Craig Kridel, and The London Serpent Trio's version of *The Teddy Bears Picnic* were rehearsed, to be included in the programme. During Sunday afternoon all serpentarium participants visited the *St Cecilia's Hall* collection of musical instruments in Edinburgh where we were able to blow some of Arnold's instruments which were on loan to the collection. After a tea break back at the Latch the group played through all the eight part arrangements with the full complement of players.

Monday morning was spent rehearsing mainly the larger ensemble pieces and the afternoon setting up in the church with some topping and tailing of pieces for the concert presentation at 8pm.

The International Serpentarium 2022 concert programme took place at the Carlops Parish Church, and consisted of *Old Comrades* (Teike), *Tutto li di* (Lassus), *Pur ti miro* (Monteverdi), a selection with Michael Yelland and Murray

Campbell (cornets) and Patsy Campbell (bass viol), *Medley of Scottish Tunes*, *Hearts of Oak* (Boyce) with Michael Yelland and Phil Humphries playing the straight serpent, *Old Foster* (West Gallery Carol), *Canzon XXVIII* (Gabrieli), *Ah, vous dirai-je Maman* (Old French Melody), *The Teddy Bears Picnic* (Stratton), *Wallace and Gromit Theme* (Nott), *Crown Imperial* (Walton), and concluded with *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life* (Idle).

Special thanks to Murray, Patsy and Arnold for organizing such a successful and rewarding Serpentarium. It was so lovely to be back playing with great company.

submitted by Phil Humphries

- International Symposium and Workshops on Serpentina and Serpent, Musik-Akademie Basel, Switzerland

On October 17 - 21, 2022, a special symposium and workshop will be held at the Hochschule für Musik FHNW, part of the Musik-Akademie – Basel in Switzerland. This event has been advertised under the name *International Symposium and Workshops on Serpentina and Serpent*, and also simply as *Serpent Days* or *Serpent Week* in various places and formats.

The official flyer described the event as "The redevelopment of the historic Serpentina, using innovative methods from

the fields of bio- and fluid- engineering, provides an opportunity for an international symposium on the instruments Serpentine and Serpent. In addition to explanations of the latest scientific findings in the fields of musicology and organology, the workshops are all about practice and exchange and are open to all interested parties. The lecturers convey the variety of instruments in the historical area, but also in world music, improvisation and jazz."

Lecturers and workshop leaders will include Christoph Moor, Michel Godard, Patrick Wibart, William Dongois, Ayumi Nakagawa, Norbert Hofman, Erwin Eichelberger, Francis Schwarze, Anh Tran Ly, Stephen Berger.

Stephen Berger also wrote, "The *Serpent Days* will take place from October 17 - 21, 2022 at the Music Academy of Basel. This will be a workshop - symposium plus concerts. The teachers are Michel Godard, Patrick Wibart and William Dongois, in addition to various lecturers. This event is open to all those interested in Serpent, and to the students of the Music Academy of Basel, i.e. of the Baroque, Classical and Jazz sections. This is the final point of the two-year research project on the Serpentine. In a few words, this project was about understanding the acoustics (Professor Norbert Hofmann, FHNW Windsisch), musical repertoire and performance practice of Serpent and Serpentine (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis), and wood conservation (Professor Francis Schwarze, EMPA St Gallen / (Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology). Michel Godard and I made surprisingly interesting discoveries during this research project. All these results and also the Serpentes that were created during this time will be presented. Dr. Christoph Moor, project leader, was able to secure the financing of these *Serpent Days*, i.e. the participants do not have to bear any costs!

The entire event is free and open to all interested persons. For more information, visit the website www.serpent-tage.ch, or email Nathalie Quartier at nathalie.quartier@bluewin.ch.



Murray Campbell and Arnold Myers with The Anaconda at St. Cecilia's, Edinburgh

Half of a Civil War vintage stereoview scene, Including an ophicleide player (and natural horn player too), thanks to Mark Jones



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
<nicholasperry.instruments@gmail.com>
(see Christopher Monk Instruments website URL at lower right)
(serpents, early cimbasso, bass horns)

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)

3D printable serpent designs by Mark Witkowski after examples at the Bate Collection, Oxford; downloads now hosted on the Serpent Website; see lower right for address

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

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

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]

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

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

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

New Materials

While there are several anticipated serpent-related book and CD music releases that have been watched for over the last few years, none of them has yet become a published reality. This has mostly been attributed to delays resulting from the protracted COVID pandemic. When these finally appear, they will be covered in this section in future editions.

If any reader knows about the status of long-pending books, sheet music, audio (or video) recordings, please email the Editor.



In Memoriam: Gerhart (Gary) Alan Schmeltekopf

Gerhart was born Gary Alan Smeltekop on September 18, 1941 in Muskegon, Michigan, and remained in that area throughout his childhood. When he became an adult, he adopted his original family name of Schmeltekopf. After graduating from Michigan State University with a Brass Specialist Degree, he played trombone in the Glenn Miller Band with Buddy DeFranco, and in ensembles accompanying Tony Bennett, Lena Horne, The Carpenters, Sonny and Cher, Sammy Davis, Jr., Rita Moreno, Pearl Bailey, Peggy Lee and others. He toured Mexico with Orquesta Sinfonia del Noroeste and played with a touring company of *Man of La Mancha* throughout much of the US.

Gary moved to the Chicago area and was a band director in the Chicago Public Schools, and also taught trombone at the American Conservatory of Music and at Concordia University. He played for the musical *1776* for one season, and played in the back stage band at Lyric Opera of Chicago for about 8 years. After moving to the adjacent village of Oak Park in 1973, he began building harpsichords and clavichords and established The Gerhart Ensemble, later renamed The Early Music Celebration. This early music group played concerts and gave school demonstrations in

Illinois, Missouri and Michigan. By 1978 he had opened The Early Music Center on Garfield Street, where he sold sheet music, harpsichords, recorders, krummhorns, cornamuses, lyzards, serpents, rebecs and replicas of other early instruments, some of which he made. He was the Chicago region representative of Zuckermann Harpsichords International.

Gary played alto horn in the Mockingbird Band of Naperville, Illinois, with other local early brass players Keith Ryder, Gary Gallt, and Paul Schmidt, as well as playing lyzard in some gatherings that included the above players plus Craig Kridel and former Serpent Newsletter treasurer and ophicleidist Dick George. He could often be seen in Chicago area early music concerts for which he had been hired to supply and tune a harpsichord. Although not generally known as a serpentist, he did own and occasionally play the instrument.

Gary had a humorous view on life, told stories that always brought humor and light-heartedness to every conversation, was an avid gardener and made excellent rhubarb sauce. He passed away peacefully on the morning of July 21, 2022.

edited from personal knowledge and the obituary published by the Chicago Tribune on July 31, 2022.

About the Organization

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

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Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$20 US for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are required for individuals, and institutions that manage to receive the newsletter without contributions are doing so entirely at the discretion of the regional representative. As of April 2012, all newsletters distributed in the European region are electronic, not printed, and there is no subscription charge. European region readers may choose a printed hardcopy option, in which case rates for UK subscribers are 'price on application'. For the time being, newsletters distributed elsewhere remain in printed form. Non-UK/EU contributions may be made using PayPal, sent to the email address ocleide@earthlink.net

Where Serpents Gather

● Michel Godard wrote, “There are many things happening around the serpent here (in France and Switzerland). In Basel, Switzerland, we’ll have a *Serpent Week* from 17 to 21 of October 2022. There will be workshops, master class, and concerts with myself and Patrick Wibart (serpents) William Dongois (serpentino/F serpent) and Stephan Berger (serpent maker). We will also present the result of two years of research Stephan and I did on the smaller serpents found in museums. A serpent in A=415 is now ready (based on an example of an instrument in Vienna), and a Serpentino in F as well (based on an instrument in the *Paris Musée de la Musique*).” This will all be presented in the International Symposium and Workshops on Serpentino and Serpent mentioned in the *Workshops* section of this newsletter.



*Chapelle Royale ensemble, serpentists L-R:
William Dongois, Jean-Loup Dartigues, Michel Godard*

“We did a recreation, in Versailles on December 2021, of a concert in the *Chapelle Royale* around Jean de Bournonville’s *Missa Sex vocum Pro Defunctis* (1619) with



Serpent Journey teachers at the Café du soleil in Saignelegier, L-R: Patrick Wibart playing the new Serpentino in F, Michel Godard, David Partouche, Volny Hostiou

an ensemble of cornets and serpents. The sound of the cornets & serpents ensemble (2 cornets, tenor cornet, serpentino in F, two church serpents) is fantastic, soft and powerful; it was a very special and emotional event. The players were William Dongois (F Serpent) Michel Godard & Jean-Loup Dartigues (serpents), Tiago Simas Freire & Maude Caille-Armangaud (cornets), and Liselotte Emery (tenor cornet).”

“I have sent some photos from our last *Serpent Journey* which took place on April 20 - 24, 2022. The teachers were Michel Godard, Patrick Wibart, Volny Hostiou and David Partouche, with guest Ihab Radwan (Oud).”

● On April 23, 2022, Doug Yeo gave a recital at his alma mater, Wheaton College, in Wheaton, Illinois (near Chicago). The recital took place in the Armerding Center for Music and the Arts, a fine concert hall, with the tagline “Celebrating the 46th Anniversary of Douglas Yeo’s Wheaton College Senior Recital, April 1976”. Doug had



Group photo after the final concert of the Serpent Journey, in the Collégiale de Saint Immier

intended to perform this recital, which he called *A Senior Recital*, on the 45th anniversary of his college Senior Recital, in April of 2021, but the whole COVID issue upended that plan, so it was rescheduled for one year later. This new recital had several tie-ins with Doug's original senior recital. Both concerts opened with the same Bach selection, his collaborators then were all friends and classmates, and here he again called upon friends who are Wheaton Conservatory faculty members or alumni of the college, or current students there. The theme of both recitals was the same, namely to present a 'rambunctiously diverse program'.



Doug Yeo with his 6-valve Sax 'trombone'

The program commenced with a greeting and invocation by Dr. Michael Wilder, dean of the conservatory of music, followed by the opening selection *Quia fecit mihi magna* from Bach's *Magnificat*, for solo bass trombone with piano accompaniment by Thomas Messer, then the same two players performed *Concertino* by David F. Wilborn, which was composed in 2006 and which Doug calls a 'dramatic *tour de force* for bass trombone'. For these first two pieces, Doug used his Yamaha YBL822G bass trombone. He then presented another instrument, *le nouveau trombone Sax à pistons et à tubes indépendants*, which is a six-valve 'trombone' in B flat, made around 1897 by Joseph Persy in Brussels. To demonstrate this unusual instrument, Doug performed *Oraison funèbre* (Funeral Oration) from the *Grande Symphonie funèbre et triomphale* by Hector Berlioz *. Doug noted that during Adolphe Sax's lifetime, this piece was often performed using the instrument inventor and maker's 6-valve instrument.

Up next was Elizabeth Raum's 2008 composition *Turning Point*, which was on bass trombone with piano, and offered as a hope that by this time, the COVID pandemic had also reached a turning point for the better *. The next selection was one that Doug has previously performed on many occasions, Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Canzona primo basso solo, F. 8.06b* from 1628. As the composer wrote the piece for unspecified bass instrument, with accompaniment which is often by piano, organ, harpsichord, etc; Doug decided to

perform it at this recital on bass trombone with a 'recomposed' electronic techo-pop accompaniment by Netherlands-based composer, arranger and percussionist Eddy Koopman. For this piece, Doug used his carbon fiber conversion by Butler Trombones of his Yamaha YBL822G bass trombone *.

In the second half of the recital, Doug opened with his poetry recitation of *On Springfield Mountain* (anonymous), about a tragedy of a young farmer couple following a bite by a rattlesnake, followed immediately by Clifford Bevan's 1996 composition for serpent and piano, based on the poem, *Variations on "The Pesky Serpent"*, for which Doug used his C serpent with two keys by Baudouin (c. 1812, Paris) *. Staying with the ancient instruments, Doug followed with Arthus Sullivan's *The Lost Chord*, played on his C ophicleide with nine keys by Roehn of Paris, c. 1855. The piece was played from the organ loft, with accompaniment by Tony Payne on the college's new Taylor & Boody pipe organ.



Doug Yeo plays *The Lost Chord* on ophicleide

The recital concluded with Joseph Haydn's *Achieved is the Glorious Work* from *The Creation*, arranged by Donald Miller for trombone quartet *. This was the signature piece of Doug's original college trombone quartet of 1974-1976. The other three players were Doug's current/recent trombone students at the college, Eric Barnes, Michael Rocha, and Jonah Brabant.

The recital was well attended, in spite of the outdoors offering the alternative of a beautiful Spring afternoon. Local serpentists Paul Schmidt, John Weber and Ross Nuccio were in attendance. A number of Chicago area low brass luminaries were also present, including Chicago Symphony tubist Gene Pokorny. Another notable attendee was George Krem, formerly trombone of the Winnipeg symphony, and later trombone professor at University of Iowa.

As always, Doug's performances were of a very high level, and his musicianship was always at the forefront. The selections were indeed diverse, and the sheer entertainment

value was high. The venue's acoustics seemed very appropriate for the music and instruments. Doug's collaborators also did a fine job.

The five selections noted * were recorded as video and posted to YouTube. For more details, see the *More Exciting News* section of this newsletter.

contributed by Paul Schmidt



*The London Serpent Trio perform at Café Oto in London
L-R: Phil Humphries, Andy Kershaw, Nick Perry*

● Phil Humphries wrote, “Besides the serpentarium, a few other things that have happened this year. On April 25th, The London Serpent Trio shared a concert with Secluded Bronte (an avant-garde ensemble) at Café Oto in London. The two groups merged for the last piece, a freely improvised number called *Cyclops* which was the LST's first venture into this style of music. A good time was had by all. On the 14th July, The Mellstock Band performed at Bourne Abbey, Lincolnshire as part of a *Music in Quiet Places* series of concerts, and The Lost Chord playing and singing music from the Music Halls were booked to play for the Thomas Hardy Society as part of their festival.”



*The Lost Chord at the Thomas Hardy Society festival,
L-R: David Townsend, Phil Humphries*

More Exciting News

● Five of the selections performed in Doug Yeo's April 2022 'senior recital', as described in the *Where Serpents Gather* section of this newsletter, were recorded as video and uploaded to Doug's YouTube channel *The Last Trombone*. They may be viewed directly using the links provided below, or by searching YouTube for the titles provided.

Joseph Haydn, arr. Donald Miller: Achieved is the Glorious Work from *The Creation*

https://youtu.be/i_dCmbhEK9Q

Hector Berlioz: Orasion funèbre (second movement of *Grande Symphonie funèbre et triumpnale*, H. 80)

<https://youtu.be/xOiTX2oJ6G8>

Girolamo Frescobaldi, arr. Eddy Koopman: Canzone

<https://youtu.be/Sk2BiD2FUYM>

Elizabeth Raum: Turning Point for bass trombone and piano

https://youtu.be/yzHZZW0zF_K4

Clifford Bevan: Variations on "The Pesky Serpent" for serpent and piano

<https://youtu.be/uDBfGTllGLo>

● Mark Jones wrote about his newly “acquired and restored 9 key Eb quinticlave, marked ‘Guichard a Paris’ AND ‘Prentiss Boston’..... made by Guichard and sold by Prentiss.....it's a perfect match to my Bb Guichard Ophicleide.”



Mark Jones' 9 key Eb Quinticlave and Bb Ophicleide

Mark also noted a “fascinating discovery by Patrick Wibart on Facebook; the *Psalette* (religious children's choir) of the Cathedral of Saint Briec (western France-Brittany) in 1898. The serpent, the ophicleide, the double-bass and singing-leader are three brothers from the same family (the Collin family), all of them canons. Their father was organist at the cathedral and studied with Gabriel Fauré. The Serpent and the Ophicleide they used are apparently still well preserved in the city's reserves but inaccessible for the moment (which has preserved them from destruction and looting by certain antique dealers in the 80s ...). It is interesting to see here a testimony of the practice together of these two instruments at a very late period.”



Psalette children's choir, with detail showing the three brothers Collin, two playing the Ophicleide and Serpent

thanks to Mark Jones and Patrick Wibart



● Prior to his April recital, Doug Yeo wrote, “For many years, I’ve tried in vain to find a comfortable way to play the ophicleide while standing. A lot of people use a neck strap, but I don’t have an eyelet on my instrument and I don’t want to add one. And I don’t want the neck strap pulling down on my neck. I’ve tried playing with my right foot a little higher than the left and resting the ophicleide on my right thigh but that’s not really comfortable. The horn always feels like it’s slipping out of my hand. For my upcoming recital, I’ll be playing standing in the organ loft of the concert hall. I needed a solution. Then I found it!”



Doug Yeo's leather hammer holder which he has pressed into service to support the weight of his ophicleide

“I went to my tool box and pulled out my leather Stanley hammer holder. I’ve had it for 45 years. I put it on my belt, then rested the finial on the bottom of my ophicleide into it. When I put the horn to my face, it was *exactly* at the right height. Very comfortable in all respects. See the attached photos. I looked for it quickly and couldn’t find this exact product. But it would be easy to make, and perhaps someone still makes this design; more looking needed. It is a simple solution to a problem and I’ll be using it in concert for the first time next week.”



Below: Detail from a hand colored early sheet music cover for GREYS QUICK STEP, c. 1839, published by Prentiss of Boston, with a bandsman and his ophicleide

Half of a stereoview scene showing a (probably) Civil War band, with an ophicleide player in front of a bass helicon player

both thanks to Mark Jones

