

United Serpents

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois, 60060, USA

Newsletter of United Serpents

September 27, 1992

A note from the Editor

Well, it seems that we had some success with the April 1, 1992 edition of this newsletter. I have received several favorable comments, and no negative ones so far.

I have just returned from a nice tour of England, Germany, and Switzerland, and I mention this primarily as an excuse for publishing this issue a bit late. In England, I found that many *US* members were exceptionally generous in finding time to visit (especially given my habit of dropping in with little or no warning). I wish that I had been able to see more of you friends there; not only is it nice to visit, but personal visits tend to aid in the distribution of useful information.

Anyway, the generosity, enthusiasm, and friendliness of people who have coincidentally decided to involve themselves with the serpent is a wonderful thing. I hope that we can continue to work towards continued serpent gatherings and foster the special camaraderie that seems unique amongst *US*.

I also want to thank those who have sent in comments, letters, money, articles, reports, etc. It is a pointless activity when the editor has to write an entire publication as if it were a novel. When you send in your letters, it helps me to the point where the newsletter almost writes itself (and I don't feel like such a one man show). Keep those cards and letters coming....

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

US is aware if no upcoming serpent workshops. However, if you are interested in setting up serpent gatherings for fun or for formal presentations, *US* may be able to help. Obviously, the *US* Newsletter can be of use to announce your plans if you are able to plan about 6 months in advance. If you are interested in presenting local recitals, gatherings, workshops, or if you just want to get together for informal sessions, let *US* know. Any of the regional representatives listed on page 2 have the *US* mailing list and can probably help you find other serpentists in your area.

Serpent playing can be a very lonely occupation, and the occasional get-together can really help. Please give it a thought; you might discover that the cost of money and time can be surprisingly low for informal meets!

Money Talks.....

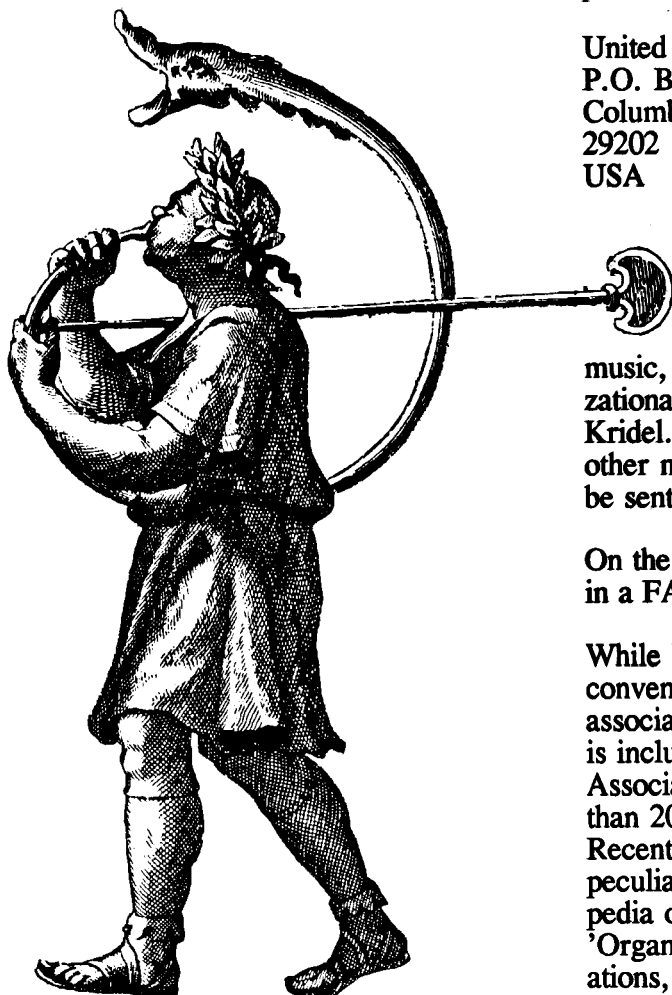
Thanks to the *US* members who sent in contributions, this edition of the newsletter has not put *US* in debt. However, it HAS cost the editor a small amount out-of-pocket. Here's the idea; *US* is no longer able to place the newsletter expenses at the door of some other organization. Costs of publication and mailing come directly out of contributions you send in.

The last edition was mailed using left over *US* funds, but the cost of printing was taken directly out of the editor's bank account. Dick George reports that the *US* account now has just enough to pay for the printing of this edition. That means we are broke again.

Currently the cost of printing just about equals the contributions of 10 members (assuming individual contributions of £5, DM20, or \$10). Our records show that only 7 members in the North America have sent in contributions, plus \$10 each from the *US* treasurer and editor.

As we have said before, there is only one clearing house for serpent information, and it is *US*! We aren't currently printing advertisements, and there are no membership dues yet. The future will be determined by how often the money rolls in. If you like this newsletter and the information it brings you, please consider writing those checks periodically (perhaps once a year or two).

This money talk is starting to sound like a sermon, so enough for now. If you do wish to contribute, just remember that *US* accepts Cheques (checks), postal orders, money orders, Eurocheques, and even cash. Just make them out to 'United Serpents' and send to your nearest regional representative.



About the Organization

United Serpents (*US*) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the support of, and communication between the Serpent enthusiasts of the world. The organization is inspired by Christopher Monk and The London Serpent Trio.

US is divided into three loosely established regions, for purposes of simple logistics. The regional representatives are listed below.

(United Kingdom)	(European Continent)
Nigel Nathan Wessex Hall Whiteknights Rd. Reading, BERKS RG6 2BQ England	Ernst Wilzek Graurheindorfer Strasse 8 5300 Bonn 1 Germany
(USA, Canada, other) (Newsletter, Treasurer)	
Craig Kridel president	Paul Schmidt, editor Dick George, treasurer
United Serpents P.O. Box 8915 Columbia, SC 29202 USA	United Serpents P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, IL 60060 USA

Please send contributions to your local representative. In the case of non-European members, contributions should be sent to Dick George. Orders for music, serpent merchandise, and general organizational comments should be sent to Craig Kridel. Announcements, editorial items, and other newsletter related correspondence should be sent to Paul Schmidt.

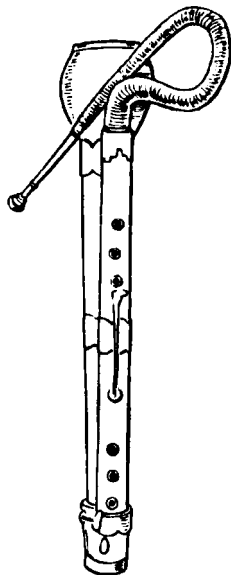
On the subject of organization, Craig Kridel sent in a FAX titled "*US* as an Organized Obsession":

While United Serpents has defied the general conventions and procedures of organizations and associations, *US* has been proud of the fact that it is included in Gale Research's 'Encyclopedia of Associations', THE premier directory of more than 20,000 associations in the United States. Recently, however, a collection of the more peculiar societies, all drawn from the Encyclopedia of Associations, has been published as 'Organized Obsessions: 1,001 Offbeat Associations, Fan Clubs, and Microsocieties You Can

Join' (D.M. Conners, editors; Detroit: Visible Ink, 1992). As the editors state in the preface: "From the surreal to the serious to the strange, 'Organized Obsessions' covers the downsizing of American culture by taking a look at 1,001 associations representing millions of individuals....'Organized Obsessions' is a book for those who just like to browse and contemplate the unusual, the unlikely, and the occasionally underground micro-slices of everyday life."

As proud as we were to be included in the 'Encyclopedia of Associations', congratulations may not be in order for our acceptance into 'Organized Obsessions'. Pride is not necessarily instilled as one examines the other entries:

American Association of Aardvark Aficionados, Annette Funicello Fan Club, Sugar Packet Collectors Club, International Dull Folks Unlimited, American Council of Spotted Asses, and the American Collectors of Infant Feeders, to name just a few. Perhaps the sole consolation is that the editors' critique of *US* was certainly not as scathing as that of most other entries. We may wish to begin monitoring new member applications, however!



New Materials

Regarding the Serpent Discography published in the last issue, an effort has been made to verify the availability of each album. This has been done by attempting to purchase one of each album, going as far as checking the publisher's catalog when they are not in stock.

The following albums appear to be no longer available:

Nimbus NI 5175: Berlioz, Grande symphonie funebre et triomphale

Vanguard VSD 71176: Handel, Royal Fireworks Music

CMS Recording: Christmas Cheer, London Serpent Trio

US would be interested in hearing if anyone has been successful in finding a source for these!

Please keep in mind that Christopher Monk Instruments is listing the recording of the Serpent Celebration in their catalog. This recording should be added to the existing discography.

Simon Proctor reports that he has sold only one copy of his new works "Elegy" and "Mamba Samba" for serpent and piano. In case you missed these in the last issue, please send £7 to:

Simon Proctor
2 Yew Tree Cottages
Heath Road
East Farleigh
Kent ME15 0LR
England

If you don't live in Europe, you can order these pieces for \$10 from Craig Kridel (see page 2).

A note from Paul Schmidt:

As many of you know, I publish music for tuba ensembles. I asked Simon Proctor to compose a major new work for tuba quartet, and he has delivered a wonderful piece in four movements, which he calls "Light Metal". I have dedicated the work to Christopher Monk, even though he was never involved with tubas (as far as I know!). Since many of you are tubists, and many know how good Simon is at writing for unusual instrumentation (amongst other things of course), you might be interested. You can order a set of parts for \$10, with the score being an extra \$5. You may write me at the address on page 2.

A suite in F for serpent and strings has been discovered. It is by Pietro Lescosaldi, a contemporary of PDQ Bach. It is in the style of a french overture:

Overture (slow/allegro/slow)
 Grave e largo / Trio
 Bouree I & II
 Sarabande
 Gigue en rondeau

It has not yet received it's modern performance nor is it yet published, but *US* will be the first to know when it is available (from Carl Willetts, or the Lescosaldi archivist Peter Lea-Cox).
(submitted by Carl Willetts)

Robert Steadman has sent a list of the serpent pieces he is now publishing:

Circus Pieces (3 movements with piano)
 Serpent Sonata (3 movements with piano)
 Serpent Studies (in three volumes)
 Suite #1 for Solo Serpent
 Suite #2 for Solo Serpent
 Three English Folk Songs (with piano)
 Sonata #1 (by Telemann)
 Two's Company (serpent duet)
 Henry VIII Suite (3 movements)
 Snakes 'n' Ladders (5 lighthearted movements)
 Three Little Maids (from "Mikado")
 Three Negro Spirituals (for serpent trio)
 Bass Suite (3 movements)
 Red-Hot Polka (from 1987 London Serpent Celebration)
 The Year of the Serpent (trio with piano)

Claire Phipps Music
 11 Warbeck Road
 London W12 8NS
 England

More about getting Serpents

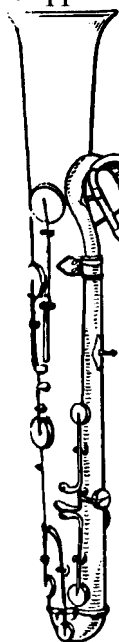
In the April '92 edition of the *US* Newsletter, addresses were given for the three known serpent makers. Since then, much new information has been gathered regarding these sources. The information given below is based on phone calls, reports of personal visits to the shops, and literature sent to *US* by the craftsmen. The addresses are given again, along with phone numbers. No preference or endorsement is implied by this information or the order in which makers are listed.

Christopher Monk Instruments
 (Jeremy West, cornett maker)
 (Keith Rogers, serpent maker)
 47 Chalsey Road
 Brockley

London SE4 1YN
 England

Phone: (44) 081 692 8321
 FAX: (44) 081 694 8784

Jeremy and Keith have finally become settled at the new workshops in southeastern London. The tools and models from Christopher's workshop at Stock Farm have been moved to this modernized Victorian building. Production of cornetts and serpents has been going on for several months, with priority being given to filling back orders. Many orders for various cornetts have been shipped already, and the first batch of standard



French style keyless C serpents has been completed. The first Serpents were shown at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, and as of early September were back in the shop being prepared for shipment.

We have had several communications with Jeremy recently, and he has stressed that anybody who has outstanding orders for Christopher Monk Instruments should write or call to reconfirm. A number of orders are believed to have been lost during the move from Stock Farm to London. Waiting a while longer for your instrument is probably OK as long as you know that the shop *really* is aware of your order!

The serpent related instruments encompass the original Monk line plus some new items. A partial listing follows:

Soprano Serpent "Worm" in C
 Tenor Serpent "Serpenteau" in C
 Bass Serpent in D
 Bass Serpent "French Style" keyless in C
 Bass Serpent "French Style" w/3 keys in C
 Bass Serpent "French Style" w/1 key in C
 Bass Serpent "English/Military" w/3 keys in C
 Contrabass Serpent "Anaconda" in C
 New Oval Fiberglass Case for "French Style"
 Bass Serpent
 Fiberboard Case for D or "Military" Bass Serpent
 Fiberboard Case for "French Style" Bass Serpent
 Serpent Celebration Tape

David Harding
56 Netherton Road
Appleton
ABINGDON
Oxon. OX13 5JZ

As mentioned in the last newsletter, David Harding has been making his serpents for quite some time, and has been making evolutionary changes in his instruments. As of September, David had several keyless serpents in stock, and is in the process of developing a new model. The existing instruments are the synthetic resin type and are finished nicely; these are very robust instruments. This model is well established and can be heard on several recordings. There has been some work done to design a new model based on X-rays of an historical serpent. Please write to David for more information and prices.

Robb Stewart Brass Instruments
140 E. Santa Clara St. #18
Arcadia, CA 91006
USA

Phone: 818-447-1904

Robb Stewart has become established as one of the premier brass craftsmen. He is much in demand for his reproductions of antique brass instruments as well as for repairs made to actual old horns. Robb does not work in wood, so all instruments are of the all-metal variety. These include a replica metal serpent (copied from a horn in the Shrine to Music Museum), as well as an all metal Bass Horn and Ophicleides of various sizes.

Robb builds instruments to order, so you can request specific materials and modifications. He is currently occupied building some Sterling silver presentation keyed bugles, but is eager to take orders for serpent related instruments. Robb has indicated that new metal serpents will probably be made with a smaller bore than previous models, in order to be closer to wood serpents in tone and fingering.

Dominique Bouge'
B.P.29
22330 Collinee
FRANCE

Phone: 96-31-43-66

This maker has just been introduced to *US* by Carl Willetts, who sent a copy of the catalog. The main product line seems to consist of bagpipes, cornemuses, Uilleann Pipes, musettes, oboes, and cornetts. Under "other instruments made" is a listing for Serpent in C, fabricated from walnut with leather covering and brass bocal. *US* has no other information or experience with this maker, so please write him if interested. If any of you know more, please write *US*.

Where Serpents Gather

One of the best things about playing the Serpent in public is the uniqueness of the occasion. *US* would like to hear about public performances, radio & television broadcasts, recitals, etc; you have been involved with or have witnessed.

The following have been submitted since the last newsletter.

On June 27, 1992 a quartet of early brass players gave a two hour concert in Rosemont, Illinois. The group was asked to be the featured lecturer(s) for the monthly meeting of the Illinois Mensa organization. The lecture/demonstration/concert was titled "Instruments Your Mother Never Told You About", and drew record attendance for a single meeting. Performers were archaeologist Keith Ryder (cornetto & lyzard), musicologist Gary Gallt (lyzard), engineer Dick George (ophicleide), and engineer Paul Schmidt (serpent & ophicleide). The program began with the William Tell Overture performed on modern brass instruments, followed by individual mini-lectures by each player. Between lectures, a pair of tunes were played using the early brasses. In each case, one tune would be historical, attempting to demonstrate how these instruments might have been used in their heyday. The other selection in each pair was always a popular tune arranged for the old instruments.

Leonard Byrne reports that his ensemble, "E.L.M.", has been playing some gigs in the Spokane, Washington area. The quartet consists of one ophicleide and three double belled euphoniums, and plays primarily jazz/pop arrangements. Leonard is working on learning his Serpent and plans to integrate it into the group.

David Malcolm plays Serpent, Lyzard, Cornetto, and recorder with the group "Lachrimae", based at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. This ensemble has been doing mostly vocal

music, although it appears David has been doing his part to reintroduce the Serpent.

On April 20, 1992, Therese and Robert Wagenknecht, members of the Richmond, Virginia, based serpent quartet Saturday Serpent Society "SSS", gave a lecture/performance for Dr. Dika Newlin's graduate seminar on Medieval and Renaissance Music at Virginia Commonwealth University. After a performance of several works for serpent duet and a discussion of the history and workings of the serpent, several other instruments (cornetts, shawm, sackbut, and smaller versions of the serpent) were presented. The students then had a chance to try out some of the instruments themselves. Our thanks to Phil and Connie Palmer, the other members of SSS, for the loan of a mute cornet to complete out set of instruments. *(submitted by Therese Wagenknecht)*

The Canterbury Waits regularly use a serpent in their performances of 17th century wind music. The serpent is used mostly as a substitute for bass sackbut or bass cornet. The line up is two cornets, lyzard, tenor sackbut and serpent (Carl Willetts). The group includes the cornet maker Tony Harris. The lip reed group has to take its turn in performances with other Waits instruments such as shawms. *(submitted by Carol Willetts)*

I recently attended a concert by 'Courtly Music' in Leicester (England). Their serpentist is Phil Humphries who played Van Eycks divisions on the tune 'Tower Hill', accompanied by bass crumhorn and two racketts - an unforgettable few minutes. *(submitted by Carl Willetts)*

The Thomas Clark Quial perform English Country Parish Church music from the period 1700-1861 with a typical church band including serpent. Based in West Kent, England, they are only one year old but hope to give several performances over the next year. *(submitted by Carl Willetts)*

Claude Engli, the principal tubist with Orchestra London Canada, has been presenting a one-man show for children, "Claude and His Family of Tubas". Claude, who has been very active in recent serpent gatherings, is apparently doing his part to educate kids in the Toronto area about everything from serpent to tuba.

Randy Cabell of Bluemont, Virginia, has submitted photographs of his group "Musick of Turkey Run Farm". This ensemble consists of Randy on serpent along with strings, early woodwinds, and other early brasses. Apparently the group is not active at the moment, but has performed in period costume (the group looks very good in photos sent to US). Hopefully, this group will start up again?

Donald Beyer sent in a note indicating that he uses his serpent to accompany brother's singing at Masonic Funerals. Donald and his serpent are also active in the Lindenhurst, New York, area ensemble "Ensemble di Vento".

On May 12, Craig Kridel was present at the International Tuba & Euphonium Conference, held at the Univ. of Kentucky - Lexington. The conference was sponsored by T.U.B.A. The intent of the clinic was to present an historical overview of the serpent and contemporary serpent activities, and to portray the serpent within its four musical settings: sacred, orchestral, military, and folk.

Audio, video, and photographic presentations were coupled with live musical selections by Handel, Josquin, Seiber, and West Gallery Music (from David Townsend's 'The Mellstock Carols'). Craig was joined by Ronald Davis and James Woodrum on euphonium, Nan McSwain on piano, and the Beaumont (Kentucky) Presbyterian Church Choir. Approximately 200 conference participants attended the clinic (including US treasurer Dick George), and all were impressed by the two major themes of the session: 1) the serpent is meant to blend into an ensemble, and 2) the natural partners of the serpent include bassoon or voices (and not the tuba). The clinic was dedicated to the memory of Christopher Monk. *(submitted by Craig Kridel)*

Several serpents were reportedly in attendance at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, which took place in late summer. The instruments and their "handlers" (we are not sure if they were played or just carried) were seen on BBC television. No other information was forthcoming on this event.

