

The Newsletter for U S

United Serpents

Number 3
Spring 1987
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United Serpents
P. O. Box 8915
Columbia, SC 29202

Serpents Meet at Gloucestershire Early Music Summer Program

Plans are set for the second gathering of serpentists, this time held at Andrew van der Beek's Gloucestershire International Summer School. A Serpent Workshop, directed by Christopher Monk, is scheduled for July 19-25, and an official meeting of United Serpents will be held on July 21. Serpentists from Great Britain, the United States and Europe have enrolled for the workshop. In preparation for a "grande finale" concert, Christopher has assembled an impressive collection of "pros." Adding these forces to the other members of the London Serpent Trio (Andrew, Alan Lumdsen and Clifford Bevin) creates the finest large ensemble of professional players ever brought together in the twentieth century. This is all to say that workshop participants will not only be receiving superb instruction, but they also will have the opportunity to observe the world's most accomplished players in rehearsal and performance.

Running concurrently with the serpent gathering will be a Renaissance Dance Week directed by Jane Gingell (of Timedance). The dance course is expected to attract a variety of Renaissance instrumentalists. The following week of Andrew's Summer Program (July 26-August 1) will concentrate on the

Monteverdi Vespers under the conductorship of Harry Christopher (who will later record the work with his "Sixteen Choir and Orchestra").

Most workshop participants bring their own tents and camp free of charge. In addition, the surrounding area offers many local farmhouses and "bed & breakfast" establishments. The tuition, board and room (camping) for all of this is only L95, a very modest amount in comparison to American early music summer workshops. I am sorry to report, however, that few North American serpentists have enrolled. Yet, the low tuition comes close to offsetting the transportation costs. I strongly urge American serpentists to support Andrew's and Christopher's efforts to keep the serpent revival alive. An American serpent workshop will not be held for another two years, and this event, with Christopher's inspirational teaching and the impressive array of professional serpentists, is an experience not to be missed.

One can still obtain low-cost trans-Atlantic flights. Registration information may be obtained from Andrew van der Beek, 108 Stapleton Hall Rd.; London N4 4QA; England.

I am certainly looking forward to the workshop-- I hope to see you there.

New Recordings

The second London Serpent Trio record has recently been released on the Saydisc label. "Fill Your Glasses," performed with The Canterbury Clerkes, presents repertoire of the 18th and 19th century English singing clubs. The L.S.T. personnel includes Christopher Monk on serpent d'eglise (by Boudouin c1810), Clifford Bevan on ophicleide and Andrew van der Beek on military serpent-- (by Pretty c1840) and contrabass serpent-- The Anaconda (by the Wood brothers c1840). "Fill Your Glasses" truly "recreates the convivial atmosphere of such an evening with a riotous selection of English Gleees" (as stated in the notes). Digital recording; SDL 361- record; CSDL 361- cassette; CD-SDL 361- compact disc; 56 minutes.

Another Saydisc record includes a serpentist among the recording artists. "Under the Greenwood Tree" by The Mellstock Band presents the music of Thomas Hardy's Wessex from manuscripts of the Hardy family and of Duddletown Church. The performance is on the original instruments of Hardy's day. Digital recording; SDL 360- record; CSDL 360- cassette; CD-SDL 360- compact disc; 54 minutes.

Saydisc recordings may be ordered from the following distributors:

Great Britain: Harmonia Mundi Ltd, H. R. Taylor Ltd, Gamut Distribution, Essex Distribution;

U.S.A.: Qualiton Imports Ltd, 39-28 Crescent Street, Long Island City, N.Y. 11101;

Canada: Scandinavian Record Import Ltd, 187 Lock Street, Peterborough, Ont. K9J 2Y8;

Switzerland: M. T. B., Todistrasse 68, CH-8810 Horgen 1;

Italy: Sound & Music Import, Via Mazzarosa, 7-Lucca;

Germany: Helikon Musikverlag GmbH, Heuauerweg 21, 6900 Heidelberg 1.

"New" Opportunities for the Serpentist

I sense the life of many serpentists is similar to mine. As a member of an early music ensemble, I find few opportunities to incorporate the serpent into our ensemble's instrumentation. Since there are no other players in the area, I am left to practice by myself and, perhaps, find an opportunity to perform with a harpsichordist as background music for some event. Thus, I was quite excited by the musical possibilities when I learned of the existence of Winds, a music publishing house run by David Whitwell (whose work, Band Music of the French Revolution, was cited in the second US Newsletter). Winds provides xerox copies of early wind band and wind ensemble literature and draws upon the extensive bibliographic research of Mr. Whitwell as published in The History and Literature of the Wind Band and Wind Ensemble, Vol 1-9. The 1984 catalog cites 138 works--27 compositions (primarily 18th century English military pieces) include serpent parts. The catalog includes titles, composers, dates, and instrumentation. Upon request, Mr. Whitwell will include an additional listing of Band Music of the French Revolution with 62 additional compositions. The French catalog is not as detailed as the other, but when coupled with his book, one has more than sufficient information for ordering.

Since many of the works require only 7 to 10 musicians (on flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, and horn), a telephone call to your local high school or college music department can easily result in an ensemble. The music is absolutely delightful, and my modest efforts in Columbia, S.C. have led to the formation of an 18th century military wind band. (And, to my understanding, a similar band is being formed in Columbus, OH).

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While many object (and are outraged) by the performance of early music on modern instruments, I have reconciled these feelings by accepting the venture for what it is-- an opportunity to play serpent-- and, I realize, no authentic claims for the music should be made. Yet, a recent visitor to the US Archives has added a new dimension to this project. Dr. Lloyd Farrar directs an authentic 18th century English Military Band in the Washington, D.C. area and describes the ease (and modest financial investment) of transferring a modern ensemble to authentic instruments and performing style. Dr. Farrar has agreed to prepare a short essay-description of this process for the next US Newsletter.

If you want to begin forming such an ensemble, music may be ordered from David Whitwell, Winds, Box 513; Northridge, CA 91328. I have not examined all of the works with serpents parts, but a good beginning would include the following pieces:

English:

W714 Brighton Camp March by McLean, \$5;
2 ob, 2 cl, 2 bas, 1 tr, 2 hrn, serpent (10);

W715 Brighton Camp Quick March by McLean,
\$5; 2 cl, 1 bas, 1 tr, 2 hrn, serpent (7);

W720 Royal East India Slow March by
Abington, \$5; 2 cl, 2 bas, 1 tr, 2 hrn,
serpent (8);

W730 Bristol Volunteer Troop by Percival,
\$5; 2 cl, 2 bas, 1 tr, 2 hrn, serpent (8);

French: all include 2 cl, 2 fl, 2 bas, 2 hrn,
serpent (9):

625 Marche Lugubre by Gossec, \$2.50

632-s Marche Victorieuse by Gossec, \$2.50

648-s Pas de Manoeuvre by Ozi, \$2.50

Recent Performances

United States:

The Saurday Serpent Society of Richmond Virginia performed at the February 7th Banquet of the national meeting of the American Musical Instrument Society. Members of the ensemble included Philip Palmer, Connie Palmer, Robert Wagenknecht and Therese Wagenknecht. In addition, members of the SSS (Philip Palmer, Robert and Therese Wagenknecht) performed March 22 at the Larchmont United Methodist Church in Norkolk, VA. They were accompanied on percussion and piano by Caroline Wagenknecht. The program included an ophicleide solo and serpent duets and trios from the Middle Ages through the Romantic period (arranged for serpent by Philip Palmer.)

The American Serpent Players performed as part of the faculty recital at the Southeastern T.U.B.A. Conference on January 31, 1987 in Columbia, S.C. Members included Steven Silverstein, serpent and cornetto, Craig Kridel, serpent, Ronald Davis, The American Anaconda, and Jerry Curry, harpsichord. Program: selections from The Serpent Player compiled by Christopher Monk (Petite Air No. 3; Duet No. 2; Largo Grazioso by Hardy), "Royal East India Slow March" by Abington, and "May Fair" from the Beggar's Opera.

Serpentist: please send in your
program announcements!

New Serpent Repertoire

April 1, 1987 saw the birth of yet another fine composition for serpent by the English composer Simon Proctor. This work, however, is somewhat more idiosyncratic than most in that it has been written for serpent and glass armonica. And, as you might fear, the duet is entitled "A Snake in the Glass." The pun, albeit, terrible, did launch the First International Glass Music Festival, held in Columbus, Ohio in November 1983 and directed by armonicist Dennis James. Commissioned by myself and James, the premiere performance is planned for autumn of 1987.

The serpent repertoire expands in mysterious and peculiar ways.

Serpents for Sale:

New:

Christopher Monk
Stock Farm House
Churt, Farnham
Surrey GU10 2LS
England

David Harding
64 High Street
Cumnor, Oxford OX2 9QD
England

Used:

no known used serpents on the market

1987 United Serpents Members Survey

The formation of United Serpents began with the 1985 Serpent Players Questionnaire. The purpose of that initial project was to ascertain whether or not there was interest in establishing a serpent organization. The information from the questionnaire was tabulated and reported "anonymously" in the first newsletter. Yet, many serpentists have asked for specific information about the membership-- most notably, addresses and composite backgrounds. Responding to this interest, a 1987 US Members Survey is attached. An US Directory will be prepared and distributed to the membership. I ask that you complete the form and return it to me by September 15. Also, I would remind you of the Archives' efforts to document "the modern revival." Please include a photograph of yourself with serpent in hand. Presently, we have 15 photographs of members. The collection proves quite interesting and, I sense, will be important in years to come.

1987 US Members Survey

Name _____

Address: _____

City	State	Zip code
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telephone number (optional):

home: _____ work: _____

Membership Status:

Non-Serpentist:	Semi-Serpentist:
_____ admirer	_____ ophicleide
_____ musicologist	_____ other:
_____ player of historical brass instruments	

Serpentist:

beginner: able to produce "serpent sounds;"

advanced beginner: able to play two octaves and match pitches to a
tuning machine;

intermediate: able to perform Air No. 1 (p. 44) from Monk's The
Serpent Player;

advanced intermediate: able to perform Duets No. 1 & 2 (pp. 65,66)
from Monk's The Serpent Player;

advanced: able to perform "The Fireworks."

Instrument(s) :

_____ year; maker:
_____ year; maker: _____
_____ year; maker:
_____ year; maker:

Musical Orientation :

historical brass player	_____ early musician (non- historical brass)
tubist	_____ modern brass
19th century brass player	(except tuba)

turn over

Survey, cont.-- NOT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION

Yes No

I think I would use the materials/loan program of the US Archives (based on an interlibrary loan format).

I would be interested in attending a three day serpent festival (professional-level performances) held in the autumn of 1988 somewhere in the United States.

I envision sometime attending a one-week serpent workshop (primarily instructional, limited performances).

would encourage U.S. to become a non-profit organization.

I would support the introduction of annual or biennial membership fees (for two newsletter and modest accumulation of archival materials). Suggested annual fees: _____ \$3; _____ \$5; _____ \$8.

After seeing the type of materials presented in the US Newsletter, I would be willing to contribute _____

wish US would initiate the following:

My general advice for the organization is:

Return by September 15 to:

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