

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2003

A Note From the Editor

First, I need to apologize for this issue of the newsletter being a bit slow out of the gate...I have been behind on a long list of other matters that simply needed to be finished first. That, plus a this being a bumper year for churches calling frantically for me to rush over and fix their ailing pipe organs before the Easter related services....

This issue features a number of things that were promised or hinted at, but not delivered in the previous issue. There are also a few small surprises and a record number of new and old audio CDs to bring to your attention. Also, if you haven't visited the Serpent Website recently <www.serpentwebsite.com>, there are many changes and additions there as well. The Discography has new listings, the Links have been updated, the homebuilt serpents page has a new feature plus new downloadable sound files of the instruments being played, and there is a new contrabass serpent photo gallery.

I hope you enjoy the issue, and keep those contributions coming.

Paul Schmidt

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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Workshops

- Cape Cornwall Serpentarium 2003

Plans for the fifth biennial serpent event are coming along nicely. Host Nigel Nathan reports that a critical mass of players have registered, so it will be possible to do all the usual things. The event will take place at Boswedden House, a former Georgian mining captain's mansion located a very short distance from the cliffs of Cape Cornwall, the most western point in England. The dates are May 26 through 29. Many participants will be staying, bed and breakfast style, at the house, while others may be at nearby inns or camping on the grounds. There will be coaching sessions, ensemble playing, and general elbow rubbing and shop talking between players, makers, restorers and

collectors of serpents, ophicleides and related instruments. Phil Humphries of The London Serpent Trio and The Mellstock Band will be on hand to guide the musical meanderings. For more information, see Nigel's contact information in the 'About the Organization' section on the first page of this newsletter.

● Early Brass Festival

The annual Early Brass Festival, organized by the Historic Brass Society, will take place on July 25 through 27, hosted by Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. For more information, see the HBS website <www.historicbrass.org>



Mark Jacobs with bass horn by Robb Stewart

Where Serpents Gather

● The Doug Yeo serpent recording project is close to being finished. In March, another recording session took place, this time in Boston's Symphony Hall. During a long day, Doug played four unaccompanied historic *Serpent Etudes* by Schiltz (#1 and #3) and Metoyen (#8). Next recorded was Drake Mabry's *Quatre Tanka* for serpent and soprano, followed by two harmonie pieces; the Haydn/Pleyel *Divertimento* and the *Allegretto* from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*. Doug used George the contrabass serpent for the Beethoven.

In early May, the final recording session will take place in a church on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Four pieces will be performed with the aid of the Gloria Dei Cantores choir; the *Allelujah* from Auxerre, the credo from the *DuMont Royal Mass*, Roze's *Domine Salvum*, and Cliff Bevan's *Le Mots de Berlioz*. The latter will include serpent, Ben Peck on buccin, Phil Humphries on ophicleide, and bassoon. Doug has been referring to the recording as *le Monde du Serpent*.

● Over the last year, a group of keyed brass players have formed the Denver Ophicleide Association (D.O.A.). Father and son Virgil Hughes and Norman Hughes own the Hughes Dulcimer Company and are active in the civil war reenactment music scene, being leaders of the 4th Artillery Brass Band <www.4thartillerybrassband.com>; they both play European ophicleides in B flat. Rich Cope, a professional French Horn player and restorer-collector-dealer of antique brass instruments, plays an American made C ophicleide. Another C instrument is played by Fred Feinsod, a physician and tubist. They handle the harmony while Margaret Devere leads and plays quinticlave, although sometimes they have added a keyed bugle to the ensemble. Most of their music is from 19th century choral scores, read in four parts split between the five players. They give local concerts and demonstrations, and have performed as part of a concert by the Colorado Symphony.

● On October 29, 2002, the Middle Tennessee Choral Society and Middle Tennessee State University Chorus and Orchestra, under the direction of Raphael Bundage, presented performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. The orchestra's low brass section consisted of three small bore trombones and one ophicleide, performed by Ben McIlwain, Matt Webster, Noah Crossley, and David Loucky, respectively.

● Michel Godard writes that within the coming year he will record an 18th-century improvised mass for serpent, organ and Gregorian chant. He will use the serpent to embellish the chant melody in the historic style. The recording is expected to be released on the Alpha label.

● On March 22 and 23, several wind players of the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave two concerts of *harmoniemusik*. The first concert was held for an invited audience in the Cabot Canner room at Boston's Symphony Hall, as part of the BSO's outreach program for folks in the State House; about 80 people filled the room. The next day, the same program was performed in St. Catherine's Church in Somerville, as part of a community outreach program for an audience of about 600. This space is an Italian style basilica with marble everywhere, a beautiful space if a bit boomy for wind instruments. The program for both concerts included *Three Military Marches* by Haydn, the Haydn/Pleyel *Divertimento (Feldpartita)* "St. Antoni", the *Allegretto* from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, and *Harmonie in E-flat* by

Krommer. Doug Yeo played serpent and also used George, the contrabass serpent. This program was basically a repeat of another done at Tanglewood a few years ago, except the previous program used the Hummel *Partita* where the recent one used the *St. Antoni Divertimento*. Doug writes that he is really becoming very comfortable with playing George, having had few years of experience with this unique instrument, and is delighted with the sound. He has also had the keys worked on, and they are now very quiet.

- Cliff Bevan wrote an article in the Winter 2003 issue of the ITEA (International Tuba and Euphonium Association, formerly the T.U.B.A.) Journal, as part of the regular Historic Instrument Section. He recounts an instance in 2002 at the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London, where Shakespeare's *The Golden Ass* was performed using a small and motley band. Composer and music director Claire van Kampen modeled the ensemble on a Sicilian town band, and her music evokes the vocal style of many 19th century Italian marches, plus references to Verdi and others. The instrumentation included a soprano saxophone doubled by clarinet, an alto sax, two trumpets, one small bore "pea-shooter" trombone, one tuba, one sousaphone, two percussionists, and a serpent. The composer gave the serpent a prominent part in the middle of the texture, and the instrument sometimes had a leading role. Nick Perry was the performer, but he had a significant challenge to overcome. The composer was not well versed in writing for serpent, so Perry had to contend with key signatures of five flats, solos beginning on B natural (a non-note on many serpents), whole-tone scales, etc. Happily, he managed with great success, and to quote Bevan's article, "after 400 years the wooden S finally meets the wooden O".

- On October 16, Doug Yeo returned to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to give another lecture/demonstration titled *Serpents and Ophicleides: Low Brass of the Romantic Era*. The event, preceded by a wine and cheese party, found Doug playing, demonstrating and discussing both his serpents and his 1855 ophicleide, as well as the museum's ophicleides.

- On November 20, Mark Jacobs gave his debut performance on English bass horn, as part of a concert entitled *The First 120 Years of Wind Band*. The concert was given by the newly formed Southern Oregon University Civic Wind Ensemble, and held at the university's Music Recital Hall. The group is comprised of faculty and advanced students at SOU, as well as members of the musical community. Mark is the principal trombonist with both this ensemble and the Rogue Valley Symphony. The concert opened with two of Beethoven's 1809 *Marches for Bohemian Military Band*, numbers 18 & 19, and Mark used his new reproduction bass horn by Robb Stewart, playing on a modern Bruno Tiltz 'ophicleide #1' mouthpiece with a reduced shank. The concert also included a Strauss *Serenade*, the Mozart *Grand Partita*, the Holst *Hammersmith* and the Vaughan Williams *Sea Songs*.

- Doug Yeo will be the soloist in Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra on October 25, 2003. The performance will be held at the Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science in Sioux Falls. The concert will be a collaboration between the orchestra and the Beethoven and Berlioz Festival, organized by the National Music Museum. In addition to playing the concerto, Doug will be involved in several "informances"



*The Denver Ophicleide Association (D.O.A.), L-R:
Norman Hughes, Rich Cope, Margaret Devere, Fred Feinsod, Virgil Hughes*

and discussion about historic brasses from the time of Berlioz, focusing on serpent and ophicleide. For more information, see <www.sdsymphony.org>

Getting Serpents

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

Christopher Monk
Instruments
(Jeremy West & Keith Rogers)
Workshop 4
30-32 Devonshire Road
Forest Hill
London SE23 3SR
England

Phone & fax:
+44 (0)2082 916900
www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html
<cmi@jeremywest.co.uk>

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

Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

• See the 'More Exciting News' section for information on homemade serpents and ophicleides

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

Phone: 626-447-1904
<oldbrass@worldnet.att.net>

(*ophicleides, metal serpents, bass horns*)

Nicholas Perry
20 Queen Street
St. Albans
Hertfordshire AL3 4PJ
England

Phone: +44 (0)1727 866080
(*early cimballo, bass horn*)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

New Materials

- *Music for the Royal Fireworks & Water Music*; CD Recording featuring the Boston Baroque orchestra on period instruments and tunings, Martin Pearlman directing, with Douglas Yeo (serpent); Telarc # CD-80594. Obtained from Amazon.

Boston Baroque's latest recording includes two of Handel's best known war-horses for outdoor performance, the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and the three suites of the *Water Music*. The performers use period instruments and remain fairly close to the composer's intentions, even where these are at odds with historical accuracy as it is described in accounts of the original performances.

The album begins with the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. King George II had commanded Handel to write suitable music for a large ensemble of "war-like instruments", i.e. no strings, as accompaniment for the pyrotechnic celebration. Handel quietly objected and wrote the score for a string orchestra with a larger complement of winds, but then relented at the last moment and performed a version for winds only. Nevertheless, the surviving autograph manuscript calls for strings, plus the more controversial contrabassoon and serpent, neither of which were common in England in 1748. Handel knew the serpent mostly by its reputation on the Continent, but was probably familiar with a German practice of including in martial music a single part that doubled the normal bass line, for use by both contrabassoon and serpent. Subsequent discovery that the serpent was actually an octave higher than its partner, and was in fact doubling the regular bassoons, might have led the composer to regard it as redundant. Whether this was the case, or whether Handel found serpentists hard to come by, or just decided he did not like their sound, he crossed out the part in the manuscript and historic reports make no mention of anybody playing serpent in the premier performance.

Director Pearlman has elected to reject the contrabassoon part but include the serpent, in the spirit of achieving the 'grand effect' desired by both king and composer. Serpentist Douglas Yeo used an original 1810 Baudouin serpent in C. Since the orchestra was tuning to A=415, his C instrument was fitted with a shorter bore and the part transposed from D to C, allowing it to tune properly. The serpent is quite clearly the dominant bass in the ensemble, and Yeo gives a precise and energetic reading, laying out only on the *Bourrée* and the first *Menuet*. And why is the presence of the serpent and absence of the contrabassoon important? It is because the performance conforms to Handel's original concept and stays with a smaller, string inclusive band, where the heavy contrabassoon sound would not work and the lighter serpent sound does. The performance has the



Doug Yeo at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

perfect mixture of gravity and lightness, and the performances are at once technically accurate and musically sublime.

Following the *Fireworks* are the three suites comprising the *Water Music*; a pair of two suites for large ensembles including brass, plus a third suite for a small string and woodwind ensemble. The loud pieces were to be played by an orchestra on a barge chasing the King's on the way up the Thames from London to Chelsea for dinner, while the more intimate suite would most likely have been used for the indoor feast itself. The liner notes state that one of the loud outdoor suites, the F major, was historic in being the first English piece to elevate the horns to first-class status in the orchestra, much as Bach did in Germany with his contemporary piece, the first *Brandenburg Concerto*. Previously, the horns were used primarily as a special effect to depict hunting themes or to startle the listener. On this recording, the assembled natural horns do a fine job.

Somewhat Long-In-The-Tooth Materials

- *Hey for Christmas*; CD Recording featuring The Mellstock Band and The Oxford Waits with Phil Humphries (serpent, plus sackbutt and vocals); Beautiful Jo Records # BEJOCD-31, <www.bejo.co.uk>. Obtained from The Mellstock Band's website <www.mellstockband.com> (print out their order form and mail it in).

This CD was released in 2000, but is still available from the band's website. It features seventeen 17th-century folk carols, ballads, Christmas hymns and seasonal comic ditties, all taken from the ballads collection at Oxford's Bodleian Library. Compared to most recordings by this group, the ensemble is quite large, being supplemented by the Oxford Waits. Serpentist Phil Humphries performs with the band and also plays sackbutt and sings with the waits. An added feature of this CD is its multimedia capability; it can also function as a CD-ROM. In a computer, the CD provides a link and a tutorial for using the library's on-line catalog of scanned sheet music <www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads>, and also includes the actual tunes used on the recording (no web access required for these). The tunes are all delightful and nicely performed. The serpent part is prominent on some selections.

- *Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream*; 1997 CD recording featuring the orchestra of the Eighteenth Century (part of their Grand Tour series), Frans Brüggen directing, with Stephen Wick (ophicleide). Glossa # GCD 921101. Obtained from Qualiton Imports

- *Mendelssohn: A Midsummer Night's Dream and Symphony No. 4 "Italian"*; 1988 recording, re-released on CD in 2001, featuring the Orchestra of the Age of

Enlightenment, Charles Mackerras directing, with unspecified ophicleide player. Virgin Classics # 5 61975 2. Obtained from Amazon

Both of these recordings were recommended by John Davies of the Ophicleide Directory. There is little to say about these as the quality is uniform, the selections familiar, and the groups well known, other than to list them as including the ophicleide. However, if any reader knows the identity of the player on the older recording, please advise!

- *Mendelssohn: Elias/Elijah*; 1993 live CD recording featuring La Chapelle Royale, the Collegium Vocale and the orchestra des Champs Elysées, Philippe Herreweghe directing, with Petteri Salomaa as Elijah and Marc Girardot (ophicleide). Harmonia Mundi France # 901463.64. Obtained from Amazon



Denver Ophicleide Association with keyed bugle substitution

- *Mendelssohn: Elijah*; 1997 CD recording featuring the Edinburgh Festival Chorus and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Paul Daniel directing, with Bryn Terfel as Elijah and unspecified ophicleide(s). London # 455 688-2. Obtained used via Amazon

Another pair of recordings that include the ophicleide and recommend by John Davies, there is a greater gap in terms of style between these fine recordings. The French recording seems to have a more expansive sound, possibly due to larger forces, is sung in German, and as a live concert recording it is quite obviously European (no coughing, program rustling or candy wrapper crinkling in the American performance style). There is much to like

about the lighter sound of the UK ensemble, but Terfel has a more operatic sound than Salomaa, which has something of a 'sore thumb' effect on the general ensemble. Neither group really has an 'authentic instrument' sound, in spite of the presence of ophicleides, etc. Once again, please advise if you know the identity of the unnamed player on the second album.

- *Victorian Christmas*; 1996 CD recording featuring The Wallace Collection, with The Trinity Boys Choir and The Britten Singers, Simon Wright directing, with Tony George (ophicleide). JVC # JVC-2052-2. Obtained used via Amazon

It is a tragedy that this quite recent recording was quickly moved to the out-of-print bin, a fault likely due to JVC being the label. Hopefully it will be re-released by a more notable record company in the future! Here are 24 expertly done period performances of Christmas selections done in the style and based on the arrangements of the Victorian era. Some, like *In the Bleak Midwinter*, are no different from today's versions. Others, such as *Angels From the Realms of Glory* bear little resemblance to our contemporary settings. The vocal solos and choir's sound are first rate and have a nice period character. The instruments are old ones and include keyed bugle and ophicleide. Some players that will be familiar to readers are John Wallace, Tony George and Trevor Herbert. This is also a fine example of the ophicleide as a solo instrument, being featured on several tracks.

- *No Roses*; 1971 recording, re-released on CD in 1991, featuring Shirley Collins and The Albion County Band, with Alan Lumsden (ophicleide) and Gregg Butler (serpent). Mooncrest Records # CRESTCD 011, obtained from Amazon

This is a fairly well known folk album that has had more labels over the years than can be conveniently listed here. This reviewer was unable, even after much effort and extensive web searches, to ascertain whether it is actually still in print. However, Amazon churned and groaned and finally disgorged a new copy after a couple of months. The album is very uneven in quality, with some rather haphazard ensemble choices that often drown out Collin's overly breathy 'folksy' voice, or at least render the lyrics unintelligible. Other than dedicated folkies, listeners will likely find this recording rather irritating. Still, it boasts a barely audible ophicleide solo on *Van Dieman's Land* and a similarly buried serpent line on *Hal-An-Tow*.

- *Music All Powerful*; 1970's (?) LP recording featuring the Purcell Consort of Voices, Grayston Burgess directing and singing (counter-tenor), with Jennifer Partridge (piano), Iona Brown (violin), David King (speaker) and Alan Lumsden (ophicleide). Argo # ZRG 596. Obtained on loan from the public library

Here is another nice example of Victorian selections done in appropriate style and color. There are tuneful selections by such well know composers as Sullivan, Mendelssohn and Barnby, and others perhaps less well known. Alan Lumsden shines in his virtuoso performance of H. Klose's *Air Varie for Ophicleide*. A nice album throughout, but long out of print.



Paul Schmidt playing "Patrick", the 5th contrabass serpent, with the prototype Squarpent and Box-O-Cleide in the background

Esoteric Recordings With Some Serpent On Them

- *The Root of the Problem*; 1997 CD recording featuring Misha Mengelberg on piano and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Hat Hut Records # hatOLOGY 504. Obtained from Amazon
- *The Sultan's Picnic*; 1994 CD recording featuring Rabih Abou-Khalil (oud), Howard Levy (harmonica) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Enja Records # ENJ-8078 2. Obtained used from Amazon.
- *Translucide*; 2000 CD recording featuring Vincent Courtois (cello) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Enja Records # ENJ-9380 2. Obtained used from Amazon

- *Sequenze Armoniche (Some Gregorian Reflections)*; 2000 CD recording featuring the Dolmen Orchestra, with Linda Bsiri (vocal solos & sea trumpet) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Leo Records # CD LR 291. Obtained from Amazon
- *European Chamber Ensemble*; 1999 CD recording featuring Pierre Favre (percussion) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Intakt Records # Intakt CD 062. Obtained from Amazon Germany
- *Tentations d'Abélard*; 1995 CD recording featuring Michael Riessler (saxophones) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). Wergo Schallplatten # WER 8009-2. Obtained from Amazon Germany
- *Ottomania*; 1999 CD recording featuring Kudsi Erguner (ney – reed flute) and Michel Godard (serpent & tuba). The Act Company / Act Music # ACT 9006-2. Obtained from Amazon Germany

This group of seven recent recordings have, as a common denominator, one track each with Michel Godard playing a significant amount of serpent. Other tracks have little or no serpent, with Michel playing tuba instead. Most are avant-garde jazz, although some are a bit closer to mainstream jazz, and most readers would likely find the Pierre Favre album to be downright listenable. While all are quality music, the amount of serpent playing on these makes them hard to recommend on that basis alone. Mengelberg's album is interesting in that it is a sort of musical chess game between the pianist and various soloists. Abou-Khali's compositions have the expected middle east sound, and Erguner's similarly evokes the appropriate region. Courtois is basically playing solo cello with accompaniment from three other instruments. Riessler's improvisational ensemble delivers pretty much the same wild ride as on the earlier *Heloise* recording. The Favre composition has an almost new age feel, mostly peaceful and relaxing and very nice in it's own way. The most ambitious of the seven is probably the chant-inspired Dolmen offering; a suite of compositions all based on the notes of the famous Gregorian melody *Victimae Paschali Laudes*. The selections are by both 'invited' composers and those of the area where the recording took place in rural Italy. Godard and his wife Bisiri are soloists throughout the selections, while others come and go. Still, don't confuse this with a traditional 'chant' recording!

More Esoteric Recordings With Some Serpent On Them

Three more CDs by Michel Godard have been ordered but did not arrive in time for this issue. More in September....

More Exciting News

- Sabine Klaus of the National Music Museum (Shrine to Music Museum) writes to say that the serpents of the Utley Collection, one of the museum's recent acquisitions, are now on the web at <www.usd.edu/smm/UtleyPages/Serpents/serpents.html>. It seems that this URL is touchy when it comes to capitalization, so be careful typing it into your web browser.
- One of Michel Godard's biggest fans is a fellow from Germany by the name of Engelbert Schramm. He has put up a fan site dedicated to Michel, and it can be found at <michelgodard.fanspace.com> (no 'www' in the URL).
- Chris Gutteridge did some research and came up with the name of the serpentist in the movie *Quills* and its soundtrack CD. Dave Powell is listed as the serpentist, along with a band featuring other colorful instruments such as didjeridu and cittern.
- Scott Hall of Florida has made one or two serpents, using unconventional woodworking techniques. Lately, he has branched out with a series of unique serpentine creations such as the Italian serpent (some sort of lyzarden with a different shape) scaled up from an old engraving, and a short mini-serpent, sold via eBay. None of these are actually serpents, but they are related to the cornetts, albeit



player's side view of Patrick

with a less conical bore and having only the reduced hole pattern of a simple folk flute. He makes them by laminating plywood, then bevel cutting using a sabresaw and then wrapping in black electrical tape. He gets a kick out of making them, then quickly disposes of them on the web.

- Michel Godard was asked about a report on a website claiming that he played ophicleide on a recording. Michel replies “I play ophicleide on one tune, *Serpent d’Or*, of the CD *le Chant du Serpent*. I use it as a drone instrument, opening and closing the back key to change the color of the sound with the microphone close to the key. I will not say that I can play this instrument!”

- Paul Schmidt has rounded out the series of homebuilt serpent related square, cross-section plywood instruments by designing and building a contrabass serpent, more accurately a contrabass Squarpent. This is only the fifth contrabass serpent known to have been made. It was designed over a three week period, and was fabricated over a five week period, using two large sheets of thin Oak plywood and other wood scraps, plus narrow brass rod for the key levers and some leather for the pads. Unlike its four predecessors, this one is as compact as possible, folding back abruptly on itself a few times. Like the Squarpent and Box-O-Cleide before it, it solves the trickier fabrication problems by having the square profile and using wood right up to the mouthpiece, instead of brass. Following with the tradition that started when Christopher Monk finished his contrabass close to St. George’s Day, thereby suggesting the name of George, this new one was given it’s first preliminary toot one week before St. Patrick’s Day and has been dubbed Patrick. The horn has a rich, full tone and plays acceptably in tune. It is at its best when playing in the lower register, but it can manage the normal span of a traditional serpent, one octave lower. Patrick has already been used in several public recitals.

A complete construction article on Patrick now appears on the Serpent Website, and the reader may download a one minute long MP3 sound file of Paul playing the traditional contrabass serpent demonstration tune *Annie Laurie* on Patrick. While there, other short demonstration tunes for the Squarpent and the Box-O-Cleide may be checked out.

- Following the news of the Box-O-Cleide project in the last issue of this newsletter, two readers have contributed information on an historical wooden ophicleide. The information comes from two different listings:

from Southeby’s catalog where Tony Bingham bought it in 1979:

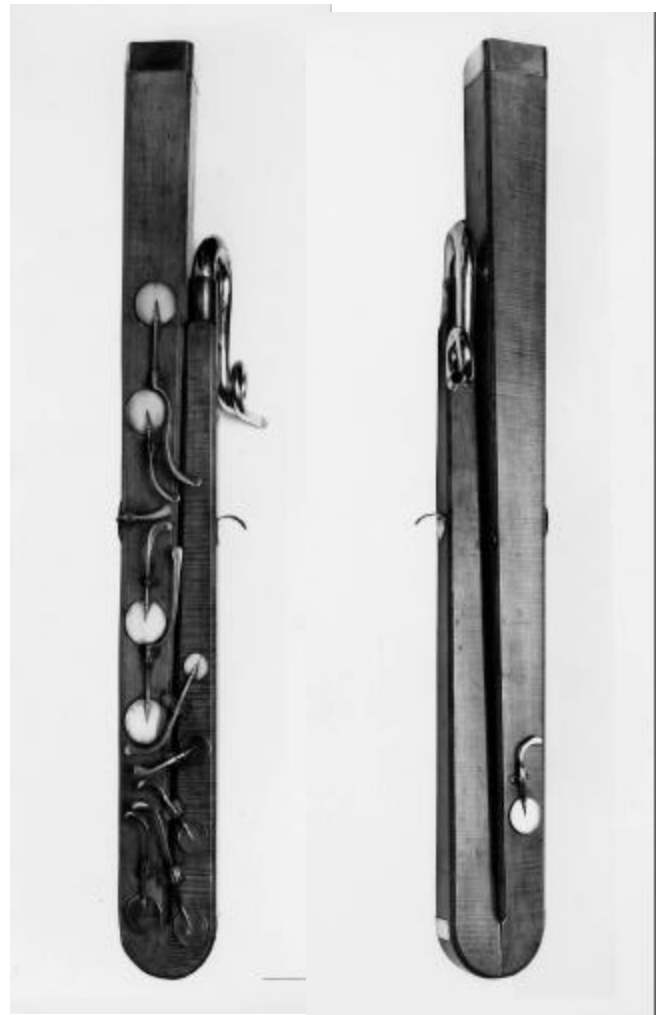
“A rare and unusual wooden ophicleide, the body of sycamore of square section with chamfered edges, brass

mounts, eleven brass keys with circular covers, brass crook and shank and original ivory mouthpiece. Length 48-3/4”, probably French, second quarter of the 19th century in original wooden case.”

from Tony’s own catalog when he listed it for sale in 1987:

“Ophicleide in wood with brass crook and mounts and 11 brass keys. Unsigned but made in England, c. 1840. Height 123 cm. The rectangular body is constructed from four pieces of maple with chamfered outside corners. In original fitted wooden case with three tunings bits and ivory mouthpiece with brass shank. Rectangular wooden ophicleides are very rare. I have not seen another.”

Note how material and country of origin changed between these listings. If any readers have more information on this instrument or its whereabouts, please write or email the editor.



the historic wooden ophicleide, front and rear views; this instrument is very close to the Box-O-Cleide in many ways, but has a curved bottom bow, a brass bocal and brass keys... note the atypical fingering for what would normally be the left hand thumb key