

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 1993

A note from the Editor

This newsletter edition marks the first anniversary of its existence as a self-sustaining publication. After one year's time from its pilot edition, it has become apparent that interested (and interesting) people from around the musical world will read such a publication, then spend time and money to support it. Such support has taken many forms, from sending in gentle reminders and tips to faxing reams of paper which contain kernels of Serpent truths. It really makes my job as editor easier when I need only to put such information in a file and then compile it after six months. This brings up the subject of the process involved...several of you have written to ask about the method and tools used in publishing the newsletter. While I don't want to stray too far from the point of the publication, I guess that the following synopsis will answer most questions.

I receive letters, phone calls, and faxes, sometimes directly, and other times forwarded to me by the "regional representatives" (see About the Organization) on page 3. I read them and make notes about what will suit the needs of the readership. Sometimes I write letters asking for more information, and everything ends up in a file folder. At the end of six months I read everything again and write an outline of the newsletter.

Using the outline as a guide, I enter all text into a word processor (Professional Write). In the case of typewritten text, I use optical character recognition software (Read Right) and a scanner to avoid having to key in all the text (fewer mistakes). With everything in the wordprocessor, I use the computer (66MHz 486 type IBM compatible) to edit the text, followed by a session

with the spell checker software. Next, I search my bookshelf for graphics which might enhance the pages, then scan them into the computer (DFI's photo scanner software and Paintbrush IV+ for editing the pictures). Finally, everything is imported into my desktop publishing program (Express Publisher 3.0) and manipulated to form the final layout. "Camera ready" artwork is printed on a Hewlett Packard Laserjet IIIP and taken to the local printers, where they use an offset press to print and fold the finished product. Treasurer Dick George produces money from the bank account to pay for printing and mailing, and packages are sent to the regional representatives for distribution to you.

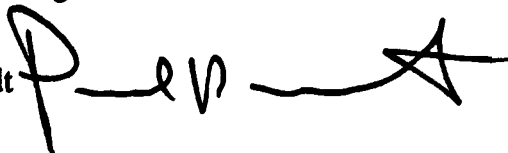
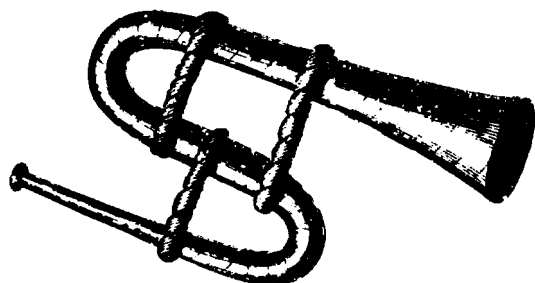
This brings me to the next subject, which is our need to revamp the distribution system. The current system in the U.K. and continental Europe seems to be working well, but we are looking for a volunteer in the USA to handle distribution for the USA, Canada, and the rest of the world. This job will consist of receiving a bundle of newsletters twice a year, folding and inserting them into envelopes, attaching pre-printed mailing labels, and walking them over to the post office. Postage will be provided in the form of a check, issued by Dick George. The entire task can probably be accomplished with a total involvement of six hours per year. Interested persons should write at the newsletter address on page 3. The job starts with the September 1993 edition.

Finally, I need to mention that if all goes according to plan, I will be moving from my congested neighborhood to a somewhat more rural town sometime this summer. This will not affect the mailing address shown on page 3. It *will* affect my home address (which some of you have, and have been using) and telephone

number. Please make an effort to avoid using anything but the "official" address until you hear otherwise. The phone number will be safe to use until at least July; I will send out postcards to people who traditionally send faxes, in order to inform you of the new number if and when it changes.

Happy serpentina.....

Paul Schmidt

New Materials

This section is provided to list recent books, recordings, sheet music, and other published documents which concern serpentists.

The Winter 1992 (Volume 20, Number 2) of the T.U.B.A. Journal has a remarkable three full pages dedicated to the Serpent. Craig Kridel and Cliff Bevan teamed up to edit a new column called the "Historical Instrument Section", which is intended to focus the attention of the tuba playing world on the heritage of the modern instruments. Individuals interested in obtaining copies of this article should check with their college music library, or write to Steven Bryant (TUBA Journal), Department of Music, Univ. of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, 78712-1208. Back issues of this journal are \$7.50 each, shipping is included in that price, and checks or money orders must be payable to TUBA, and be in US dollars via a US bank. The content of the article concerns the Serpent Seminar at the 1992 International Tuba & Euphonium Conference, a

Serpent Discography, a repeat of the "United Serpents as an Organized Obsession" (published in part in the last issue of this newsletter), and finally a wonderful reminiscence "Christopher Monk: 1921-1991, The Purest Serpentist" by Cliff Bevan (originally published in the Historic Brass Society Journal, Vol.3 1993). The content of this part alone (especially the meaning of "X24") makes the article worth obtaining. Cliff recalls a comment made by a Cockney man after a performance by the London Serpent Trio: "Mikes yer feel prard, dunnit!" (Makes you feel proud, doesn't it!). Reflecting on the man and the instrument, all serpentists who read this essay are likely to feel the same.

Michel Godard, who released the delightful "Le Chant du Serpent" recording a couple of years ago, has reported a new Serpent release. This is a jazz recording which includes two pieces for Serpent, and is called "l'impossible trio". The record label is:

Thelonius Production (0101)

10 bis rue Ampire
38000 Grenoble
France

Michel has also just finished a CD recording with Serpent and harpsichord, featuring music of Frescobaldi and others. This one should be available in October or November.

Ralph Dudgeon's new book "The Keyed Bugle" is now available from the publisher. The book is hardcover and contains some 282 pages with many illustrations and old photographs. Also included are the music for several complete solo pieces, which are apparently the same editions used by Ralph on his recordings. The text covers the invention of the keyed bugle, its development, and varied histories according to individual countries. Literature, performance practice, instrument makers and other interesting details are also thoroughly covered. The book includes miscellaneous coverage of the Serpent and ophicleide as well, and should be of interest to everyone reading this newsletter.

The book may be ordered from the publisher for \$32.50 US, prepaid. Additional charges of \$3.50 shipping (\$4.50 for Canada and all other countries) also apply.

USA and Canada

Scarecrow Press, Inc.
P.O. Box 4167
Metuchen, NJ
Metuchen, NJ
08840

U.K. and Europe

Shelwing Ltd.
127 Sandgate Road
Folkestone, Kent
CT20 2BL
England

Australia

James Bennett
Library Services
4 Collaroy Street
Collaroy
NSW 2097
Australia



On the subject of keyed bugles, this editor has finally been given a chance to see some of Robb Stewart's work first hand. While visiting our treasurer Dick George this month, he showed off his new presentation keyed bugle, made entirely of sterling silver with gold plating on the keys, mouthpiece and bell garland. Apparently at least one more of these is being made for another customer in the states. It's so shiny that it almost hurts to look at it! Unfortunately, since Dick does not yet play this instrument, it was hard to get an idea of it's sound.

About the Organization

The Serpent Newsletter is a not-for-profit publication dedicated to the support of, and communication between the Serpent enthusiasts of the world. As the newsletter provides a forum for all pertinent information of interest to serpentists, a real effort is made to avoid bias and to give fair and uncolored coverage of persons, instruments, and events.

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

(United Kingdom)

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Please note that the old address in Columbia, South Carolina is not valid any longer.

There has been considerable interest in availability of back issues of the newsletter. While surplus copies are not available, photocopies can be made upon request. Please write to the Mundelein address.

Where Serpents Gather

In this section are listed various accounts of Serpent performances, radio & television broadcasts, recitals, etc. If you have been involved in, or have seen, any of the above events, please report them to the newsletter.

The following have been submitted since the last newsletter.

Phil Humphries writes that he has been playing Serpent with his band, as well as playing with The Mellstock Band (and the London Serpent Trio?). The Mellstock band is listed in the Serpent discography for their CD "Under the Greenwood Tree" which features quite a lot of Serpent. During the 1992 Christmas season, the

band put on performances of "A Tale of Two Christmasses", which demonstrated how the traditions and festivities of Christmas in England have developed through the years. The show featured music, song, dance and drama, drawing from roots set in Hardy's Wessex and Dickens' London. Approximately two dozen individual tunes and readings made the production quite an event, and all performances were totally sold out. The band included Tim Hill (clarinets and vocals), Phil Humphries (Serpent, trombone, vocals), Kathryn Locke (cello, vocals), Charles Spicer (oboe, flute, vocals), and David Townsend (concertina, fiddle, vocals).

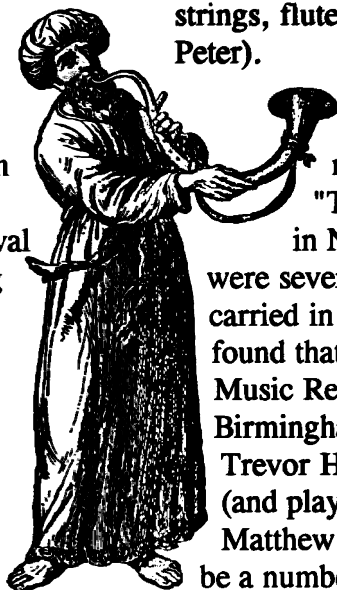
In March, the now notorious keyed brass quartet from the Chicago area gave another repeat performance. The quartet consists of Keith Ryder (cornetto), Gary Gallt (lyzard), Dick George (ophicleide and percussion), and Paul Schmidt (Serpent). The location was Regenstein Hall at Northwestern University, and was held during a two day music festival which had the place literally swarming with students, faculty, and interested public. Drawing upon existing repertoire (used in previous performances, as outlined in past newsletters), the group continued in their now traditional concert/lecture format. Each member of the group presents a brief lecture about their instrument, including

history, literature, playing characteristics, and a demonstration tune. Between these lectures are performed pairs of tunes, where one selection will be some sort of reasonably appropriate historic composition, and the other will be a popular tune arranged specifically for the group. Discussions are currently underway to book this ensemble into a series of expanded programs for a regional Cultural Arts society (which regularly features internationally well known early music groups).

Helmut Schmitt reports that he is playing with an early music group in the Freiburg area. He

writes that his wife has recently taken up playing a new Serpent, one of Jeremy West's first instruments from the Christopher Monk workshops. He is also having a lot of fun playing duets with a friend from Nurnburg. They have been having very good success using sonatas for three flutes by Boismortier, reading the top two parts as if they were in "bass key" and deleting the bottom part.

Peter Davies sent a letter (via Nigel Nathan) saying that Shaw Church, near Newbury England, celebrated the 150th anniversary of its rebuilding in September 1992. Some of those in the congregation wore Victorian dress, and the music was performed in the gallery by the village choir plus a band. The instruments included strings, flute, clarinet and Serpent (played by Peter).



Nigel Nathan sent a note which mentioned a television series called "The Feast of Christmas" which aired in November 1992. He says that there were several seconds worth of a Serpent being carried in a period band. He investigated and found that the band was part of the Military Music Reenactment Society, based in the Birmingham area. The Serpent was made by Trevor Horn of that group and was carried (and played ?) by an individual called Matthew. Nigel supposes that there must still be a number of serpentists out there who have not yet come into the fold.

Craig Kridel wrote to say that things are progressing nicely in regards to his efforts with the T.U.B.A. organization. He also mentioned that he has been accepted at "Aston Magna" and plans to explore the Serpent in the Harmoniemusik. (You might want to refer to the Serpent Discography published in this newsletter one year ago; there is a CD available of just such music.)

Philippa Lunn sent a nice letter which contained several interesting items. She confirms the item from the last newsletter, where it was reported that four of Jeremy West's Serpents (his first

ones) were used in the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, in care of the "Guards". They were played, returned for checkup and some touchups, then sent on to customers at the top of the list.

Philippa goes on to report that her organization, Prelude, recently arranged music for an event at Hampton Court. The group Tarleton's Jig was booked (the ensemble includes Jeremy West playing cornetto). They played incidental music during the evening meal. Also booked was a group called the Scots Guards, including 37 men plus a director and drum major. Philippa discovered that this was the same group which had used the Serpents for the Tattoo. She managed to put the players and Jeremy together for introductions, and he was able to get good feedback from his first Serpent "customers".

Also in Philippa's letter is an item about The London Serpent Trio. They did a number of very successful engagements for Prelude during this last year, including concerts and a performance in the "Sovereign" exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. This last occasion was for a dinner for the female Wimbledon entourage. They also played on the Tower Bridge in London for a publicity event, and they also played at both The Guildhall and The Grosvenor House Hotel for conference banquets.

She finally mentioned that the most extraordinary event was a four evening spectacular at Claremont, a park in Surrey. The London Serpent Trio was on stage as the public (about 5,500 each night) flooded into the garden for elaborate picnics. The theme was "The Garden of the Gods", and the audience was more or less dressed to fit. After a fine first act, the LST put on a second set which occurred between the acts of a belly dancer and a sword swallower! All in attendance who were involved with Serpents were mindful of the fact that this was happening on the anniversary of Christopher Monk's death. As Philippa notes, the "over the top" event was just the sort of thing the her Dad would have loved.

Workshops

Since Serpent Playing can often be a lonely pursuit, most of us look forward to those occasions when we can get off our asp do some woodshedding with fellow slitherers. Unfortunately, only two events have been brought to our attention this year.

The Departement de Musique Ancienne in Lyon, France held a Seminar for Serpent with Bernard Fourtet. So far, we always receive these notices too late to publish them in advance of their occurrence (the seminar was held on the 3rd and 4th of April). The program was Technique for bass instruments regarding repertoire of the Serpent. The seminar was open to the public for a fee of 600 francs. It seems that Bernard Fourtet puts on several seminars of this type each year, so interested individuals should write to get on a more timely mailing list:

Department de Musique Ancienne
CNSM de Lyon
3, quai Chauveau 69266
Lyon Cedex 09
Phone: 72-19-26-26
FAX: 72-19-26-00



The Historic Brass Society is planning the 9th Early Brass Festival (part of the Amherst Early Music Festival) on July 30 - August 1, in

Amherst, MA. Stewart Carter and Ralph Dudgeon have indicated that there will definitely be participation opportunities for players of keyed brass instruments this year. Those of you who play ophicleide will certainly want to attend, and players wanting to bring a Serpent should contact Ralph Dudgeon for more information.

Department of Music
Ruth E. Dowd Fine Arts Center
State University College at Cortland
P.O. Box 2000
Cortland, New York 13045

Getting Serpents

In the last two issues of this newsletter, addresses for the known makers of serpents were printed. Since this is an item of major importance, the addresses appear here again. No new information has come from these makers, with the exception of Christopher Monk Instruments; that information appears after the address.

David Harding	Robb Stewart Brass Instruments
56 Netherton Road	140 E. Santa Clara St. #18
Appleton	Arcadia, CA 91006
ABINGDON	USA
Oxon. OX13 5JZ	
England	Phone: 818-447-1904

Christopher Monk Instruments	Dominique Bouge'
47 Chalsey Road	B.P. 29
Brockley	22330 Collinee
London SE4 1YN	France

Phone: (44) 081 692 8321 Phone: 96-31-43-66
FAX: (44) 081 694 8784

Jeremy West, operator of Christopher Monk Instruments, has written to report an upturn at the workshops over the first quarter of this year. He is pleased to announce that developments

include a new model of wooden cornett (which he is now using himself on a daily basis), a new military Serpent (the completion of work begun by Christopher), and the release of the C and D church serpents. The C model is the well known copy by Christopher of his own Baudouin instrument (with minor bore alterations which Christopher had begun but was unable to complete), and the military model is a copy of the Pretty instrument owned by Andrew van der Beek. The first shipments of the military instruments are scheduled for sometime in May.

Jeremy indicates that work procedures and administrative details have both been streamlined, and he now expects a waiting time on all instruments of about three or four months. He expects that one of the military models will be on exhibit in Boston at the von Huene Workshop stand, and later in London for the November exhibition at the Monk Instruments stand.

Money Talks.....

As you probably know by now, this newsletter is now a self sustaining publication. This means that all money required for printing and distribution comes from you. For the time being we will continue to deliver the newsletter to everyone on our mailing list, as long as sufficient funds are available. However, if the day comes when we end up short of money the distribution will have to be trimmed to those persons who have provided support.

Thanks to those who have sent in donations since the last newsletter, and special thanks to Dennis James for a real hurricane of fresh air.

When sending in donations, please note that Craig Kridel should not be receiving money any longer. Only the addresses listed on page 3 should be used in the future. Also, please make all checks payable to The Serpent Newsletter.

