

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 1994

A Note from the Editor

Just when I thought I might have to write this entire edition by myself, letters started to arrive. After reading them all, I came to realize that there would be no shortage of material for this issue, and some things would have to wait until September's newsletter.

About the only part of this newsletter to be written by me appears in the New Materials section. I sent FAXes to three record companies asking for information on how to obtain their releases featuring Serpent. All three responded by sending complimentary CDs for review, along with requests for copies of the published reviews. Only Theloniou Production answered the original question: their answer (if my French- to-English translation program can be trusted) was "no distributors outside of France". Feeling guilty about being the recipient of free goods (I was planning on buying my own copies), I feel obligated to cover these releases promptly and in some detail. Forgive me for leaving the editorial shoes and clomping about in reviewer boots.

Included in this issue is the two year revision of the Serpent Discography. Since the last one in April 1992, I have checked my own collection and have made serious attempts to purchase all those I did not already possess. I have also purchased every Serpent/Ophicleide release which came to my attention. You should be able to obtain all of the items on the revised list. If you have and additions or deletions, PLEASE bring them to my attention!

Also in this edition is the article "How to Get a Serpente" by Gregg Butler. At first I intended to abridge this a great deal, but it is so perfectly composed that it appears here in its original form.

All in all, I think this is the best Serpent Newsletter yet. I hope you agree. Happy Serpentine.....

Paul Schmidt

Money Talks.....

Here is the ubiquitous request for funds. This newsletter is a self sustaining publication. In order to print it and mail it, we need your pocket change. We mail the newsletter free to certain libraries, institutions and Serpent luminaries, but the rest of us have to write a check once in a while so that things don't grind to a halt here at Serpent headquarters. We suggest that Americans (USA & Canada) send \$10 every year or two. Those who call Great Britain home should send £5, and those residing anywhere in continental Europe should send DM20. Persons living elsewhere (Australia, Hong Kong, Mars, etc.) should send checks in US dollars. The addresses of the regional representatives, who should get the payments, are listed on page 2. In all cases, make the checks payable to Serpent Newsletter/ United Serpents.

Getting Serpents

Here is the list of known makers of Serpents. We have received no news from any of them since the last newsletter. We have been attempting unsuccessfully to reach Jeremy West, so we assume that his concert schedule is making him unavailable. However, we have heard nothing which would indicate a reduction in production.

Christopher Monk
Instruments (Jeremy West)
47 Chalsey Road
Brockley
London SE4 1YN
England
Phone: (44) 081 692 8321
FAX: (44) 081 694 8784

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

Robb Stewart Brass
Instruments
140 E. Santa Clara St. #18
Arcadia, CA 91006
USA
Phone: 818-447-1904

Dominique Bouge'
B.P. 29
22330 Colline
France
Phone: 96-31-43-66

Antique instrument dealer Steve Dillon opened a full time shop last year and produced a catalog. All types of early brass instruments are available, including Ophicleides, Bass Horns, Keyed Bugles, over the shoulder saxhorns, etc. The address is Dillon Music, Inc. 325 Fulton St. Woodbridge NJ 07095 Phone: 908-634-3399.

Steve recently informed us that he now stocks wooden Ophicleide cases; these are sized to fit any Ophicleide, but require some modification by the owner to secure the bocal/crook (due to great differences in this component).

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. Since the newsletter provides a forum for all pertinent information of interest to Serpentists, a real effort is made to avoid bias and give a 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 be sent to the editorial address.

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(Our FAX will not answer if you call with receiver off the hook-your FAX machine must place the call automatically. For example, enter the number into your FAX's memory and have the machine dial from memory. FAXs sent from FAX/Modems attached to computers work very well.)

Back issues of the Newsletter, April 1992 to the present, are available as photocopies. Please write to the editor for copies.

Workshops

The United Kingdom representative, Nigel Nathan, has written that there are plans being made for a Serpent workshop in England. A possible date might be over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend in May of 1995. Nigel hopes to publish full details in this newsletter, and is asking for comments from interested persons in the U.K., Europe, or U.S.A. Please write to Nigel if you have thoughts regarding timing, venue, content, etc; as soon as possible!

The plans have been made for The Amherst Early Music Festival this year. The festival is divided into several events, as listed below. The Early Music Workshop will take place July 31-August 7 and August 7-14. The Baroque Academy will be August 7-14. The Early Brass Festival will take place July 29-31. The Great New England Reed Rally will be July 31. The Early Music Instrument & Music Exhibition will take place August 6 & 7, and the Festival Concert Series is scheduled for July 31-August 13.

The Workshop will feature music of Northern Europe: Germany, Flanders and France. The Baroque Academy will focus on music of J.S. Bach and his contemporaries. The 10th annual Early Brass Festival will certainly be of interest to most of US. Interested persons should call Jeff Nussbaum at 212-627-3820. For further information on the rest of the festival, call 212-222-3351 or FAX 212-222-5512. You may also write to Amherst Early Music, 65 West 95th Street #1A, New York NY 10025.

New Materials

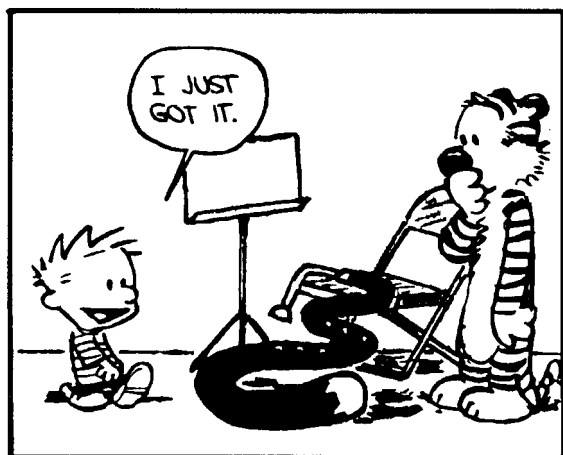
Of great interest to most of US, The New Langwell Index by William Waterhouse is now being published by Tony Bingham. The book is subtitled "A Dictionary of Musical Wind Instrument Makers and Inventors". This reference consists of 560 pages with 400 graphics and contains about 6500 entries. This is a revision of work done by the late Lyndesay Langwell and lists business names, dates of manufacturing activity, company histories, maker's marks, serial numbers used, addresses, patents, catalogues, etc. Each entry gives information that helps the reader place a given instrument in its historical perspective. This book is reputed to be the only reference work in the field of organology that identifies and informs on makers and inventors. It seems to be unique in its breadth of coverage of 450 years worth of wind instrument history. Available from the publisher for £64 (United Kingdom customers) or £66 (all other customers). This price includes postage. Write to Tony Bingham, 11 Pond Street, London NW3 2PN, England. The phone number is (44)(0) 71 794 1596 and the FAX is (44)(0) 71 433 3662.

The Symphonie Fantastique by Berlioz is a famous warhorse which is also popular amongst Serpentists when people ask what well known music includes the instrument. Philips has a recent release on both Videocassette and CD of this work, featuring the Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique and directed by John Eliot Gardiner. The performance utilizes the original 1830 version of the score and a band of all period instruments, including two Ophicleides and a Serpent. The performance appears to be live, and the video version spends a lot of time on closeups of the more interesting horns. This will be a valuable addition to your library. The CD is Philips 434 402-2; the videotape number is Philips 70254. Both should be easy to obtain from your video or record retailer.

See "Where Serpents Gather" for information about the cassette of Phil Humphries Serpent with the The Mellstock Band.

Jazz tubist and busy Serpentist Michel Godard has three recent CDs, making the total four (remember Le Chant du Serpent)! His next CD is called "L'Impossible Trio", and has been mentioned in the last two issues of this newsletter.

After several failed attempts to order the CD in the States, I contacted Michel who gave me the FAX number of the label "Thelonius Production" in Grenoble, France. They say that the recording is not exported, but anyone may order directly. Write to Thelonius Production, 10 bis rue Ampere, 38000 Grenoble, France and refer to catalog number THE 0101. The phone number is 76483262 (dial 011 33 7648 3262 in the States) and the FAX number is 76489345. You will have to inquire about the price and shipping costs. Expect to wait a while for a response, and write your request in French if possible.



This recording is a marvelous potpourri of jazz styles, all performed by three instrumentalists. Youval Micenmacher plays drum set and other assorted percussion, Philippe Deschepper plays guitars, and Michel Godard plays tuba and Serpent. Right from the start, it is apparent that all three are versatile and technically proficient musicians. The thirteen greatly varied tracks range from surreal numbers reminiscent of "space music" to funk-rock style to Stravinsky-like (Rite of Spring) to more avant-garde types. Most will be accessible to the casual listener, and hearing Serpent integrated into this type of creative work is interesting, not to mention invigorating. My only complaints are the relatively short playing time (this could have been released on an old LP record) and the apparently small amount of work the Serpent gets, since the tuba seems to play most of the licks. Still, this is a worthwhile addition to your Serpent library.

The next release is a live recording of a concert held in Donaueschingen in 1992. Called "Heloise", the album features thirteen tracks which comprise a single musical work of the same name. Heloise was created on commission, and is a jazz project based on the principle of improvisation of historical themes and styles. The root forms are taken from the European music tradition back to the Middle Ages. The musicians, playing percussion, harp, cymbalon, clarinet, saxophone, hurdy-gurdy, bass, tuba, Serpent, Oud and accordion, all have backgrounds

spanning classical, jazz, folk and new music. The leader and composer is woodwind player Michael Riessler, producer of music for theatre and film as well as a travelled jazz artist. Heloise is loosely based on the dramatic tale of woe between philosopher Pierre Abelard and his pupil/lover Heloise, apparently taken from a significant medieval biography. The listener will probably not be able to divine any of this subject matter from listening, but a great listen it is. This is exiting music, with more depth and freedom of form than one usually hears in popular musical forms. Easier to discover are the various themes around which the sections are based. Here are recognizable medieval themes, ethnic influences galore, and a venture into Indian/Mid-eastern melody and harmony. I find this recording quite fascinating and have already given it many listens.

Heloise is produced by the German contemporary music label "Wergo", and will prove to be the easiest to obtain. I found the folks at Wergo very easy to communicate with, and I did not even have to write in German. Write to Wergo Schallplatten GmbH, P.O. Box (Postfach) 3640, D-55026 Mainz, Germany, and refer to catalog number WER 8008-2. The phone number is 61 31 246 891 (add 011 49 to the front if dialing from the States), and the FAX is 61 31 246 212. Wergo is also distributed by the various Harmonia Mundi companies. In the States try Harmonia Mundi USA, phone 310-478-1311.

The third new recording is called "Aborigene" and features Michel Godard on tuba and Serpent, Virginie Vuoung on harpsichord, Linda Bsiri on vocals, Pierre Charial on Orgue de Barbarie (I think this is a "Didjeridu"?), and Mico Nissim on piano. There are 19 tracks, alternating realizations of baroque and classical music with original works by Michel Godard, Drake Mabry, and some of the performers. The traditional selections include excerpts from Vivaldi's Seasons, works by Diego Ortiz, Rossini, Offenbach and others. The Carnival of Venice by Arban is also included. All realizations are highly eclectic but ultimately satisfy. The newer selections range from "cool jazz" which remind me of Claude Bolling, new age fantasies, and avant-garde studies similar to those on *Le Chant du Serpent*. The instruments used are unaccustomed partners but all work wonderfully together. As always, Linda Bsiri's sultry jazz-scat-vocalise dovetail with Godard's Serpent/tuba ideas in ways that are hard to believe without actually hearing. I can only imagine the "body english" she must have to use to produce some of those virtuoso sound sequences. This album is just plain fun to listen to, but don't try to have it playing as background music-it will just be distracting and will probably annoy the neighbors. Save the wonderful cameo "La Monica", which is a well known old French tune and which ends the album, for the company (just put your CD player on infinite repeat).

Aborigene is also supposed to be distributed through the various Harmonia Mundis', but if you want to try the publisher directly, write LabelHopi, 5 rue de Charonne, 75011 Paris, France. Refer to catalog number HOP 200002. The phone number is 48 07 18 67 and the FAX is 48 07 18 93. If dialing from the States add 011 33 1 to the beginning of these numbers.

Somehow a note regarding an item called "La Fenise" came across my desk then vanished. I don't know if this was a recording, a publication, or what! I suspect that some readers know about this-please send me a note and it will be mentioned in the September newsletter.

We have also received some articles for reprint, but have not yet received permission for reprinting. Hopefully these will appear in September as well.

Where Serpents Gather

Nigel Nathan has noted that the pit orchestra in the Napoleon scene from "Time Bandits", a Terry Gilliam film (available on videocassette), includes a Keyed Bugle and a Serpent. It seems likely that at least one of you readers might know something about the players and/or instruments used. Please write if you have information on this subject...we can use it in a future newsletter.

Stephen Wick of London sent a note about his Serpent involvement. Stephen owns a Gautrot Ophicleide and two Monk Serpents (one each in C and D). He plays with the London Gabrieli Brass Ensemble, the London Classical Players, and the Orchestre Revolutionnaire. He also does freelance work with "The Wallace Collection", the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the A.S.M.F., the English Brass Ensemble, etc. He considers the Tuba to be his main instrument, but teaches Serpent and Ophicleide at the Royal Academy of Music. Does this make him the only current Professor of Serpent in the world?

Andrew Lamb, also of London, plays a Harding C Serpent, using it for bass accompaniment with the "Payne Street Band". He has appeared in a televised biographical documentary. He has been working for a year or so as Conservator of Musical Instruments at the Horniman Museum in south east London. He has been working towards the now opened gallery of musical instruments "The Music Room". The gallery is supposed to have over 3000 instruments on display, representing five thousand years of history. Andrew writes "the oldest (are)...a pair of Egyptian hand clappers dated 3000bc and the newest are...the family of Saxophones donated by Yamaha a fortnight ago". Serpent-like representatives include Serpent, Ophicleide, Basshorn, and Russian Bassoon. There also resides a Bimbonifone, which is a trombone like

creation from 1830, using side-holes and valves. Computers are used to provide interactive displays, allowing the visitor to touch the screen and bring up images of the instruments in action with recorded soundtrack examples. The address is 100 London Road, Forest Hill, London, SE23 3PQ.

Michel Godard continues to produce Serpent recordings with unbelievable regularity. It seems only a couple of years ago that we first heard of him in this newsletter (It WAS only a couple of years ago!). There are now four recordings on CD with Michel playing Serpent. See the reviews and discography in this edition.

The London Serpent Trio has had a strong year, with two memorable performances at The Royal Lancashire and The Dorchester hotels. Phil Humphries has reported that the LST has been busy in general and is going strong.

Phil Humphries wrote that he has been busy with several groups, using the Serpent frequently. The Mellstock Band (see the discography) has had a busy year, including a BBC television broadcast in July, two BBC radio shows in November and December, a Christmas show and a tour of New England in the States. For television, they presented Dave Townsend's adaptation of Thomas Hardy's "Absentmindedness in a Parish Choir" in Thora Hird's "Thora on the Straight and Narrow". For radio, they participated in Radio 2's "Barndancing on the Radio". The Christmas Show included four performances in Hardy's Wessex (Dorset) and Reading Town Hall (Berkshire), St. Donnats Arts Centre (South Wales) and The Quay Theatre (Sudbury, Suffolk). Another presentation for radio was on Radio 3's "Making Waves" arts program. The tour of New England included Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. It was organized by Larry Gordon of the Bayley-Hazen Singers. The two groups presented six joint concerts plus a concert with the Brown University Choir and another with a choir in Hartford. To top it all off, they played for two church services, a dance, a live radio broadcast on Vermont Public Radio and conducted a workshop!

Another of Phil's groups is "The Lost Chord", where Phil plays Serpent to Dave Townsend's concertina. The duo contributed to a BBC Radio 3 program in December and also hit the airwaves playing Victorian parlor music in Radio 2's "Folk on 2". Of course Phil continues to play with The London Serpent Trio and his own group "Courtlye Musick". CM has provided music for Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice", running for two weeks on Broumsea Island in Poole Harbour.

Phil has indicated that a cassette tape of the New England tour program is available from two sources. Write to either Larry Gordon, R.D. #1, Box 668, Plainfield VT 05667 or

Dave Townsend, 109 Corn Street, Witney, OX8 7DL, England. It is worth noting that this editor has heard parts of the aforementioned radio programs, and "The Lost Chord"s realizations of Sousa's "The Liberty Bell" and Ketelby's "In A Persian Market" were priceless.

Gregg Butler of Freckleton, England, has written mentioning his exploits with a couple of ensembles. The name Ceilidhs is mentioned, although it was not clear whether this is a place or a group name. In any case, he is involved with a group called Strawhead, which centers on various civil wars and has made CDs and other recordings. We will try to get more information on what these recordings are; they apparently include at least some Serpent playing. The CD is available from Dragon Records, 5 Church Street, Aylesbury, Bucks HP20 2QP, England. He also plays Ophicleide regularly, on an instrument made by Manchester Brass Makers. See Gregg's article on "Howe to Gette a Sarpente" in this issue.

More on Strawhead. This is a trio made up of Malcolm Gibbons, Chris Pollington and Gregg Butler, all individuals with folk music experience. They feature 'pop songs' from the collections of street bands covering the late 16th to late 19th centuries. They are not above composing new material to fill in the gaps, where the old words are good but the music bad, etc; and they use a rather 'catholic' array of instruments. Malcolm plays 12 string guitar and sings, Chris handles the keyboard parts and arrangements, and Gregg sings, introduces selections, and plays cornetto, recorder, melophone, trumpet, cittern, and mute cornett. For more information write Malcolm Gibbons, 107 Park Road, Adlington, Chorley, Lancs PR7 4JW, England (0257 482737).

In the last newsletter, there was mention of the Crediton West Gallery Quire. The article named Clavell Tripp as a member, but indicated that there was another (nameless) member. This has turned out to be Syd Hemsley, who has also constructed a Serpent, after one built by Clavill Tripp. Hopefully, Syd will bow to pressure and submit the story of that project for a future newsletter. Syd wrote with some details of his Serpent playing, and has revealed some startling things. He likes to play Serpent along with taped recordings of Bennie Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, etc. Many of us have dreamed of "blowing a raspberry or two" along with these greats, but probably not on Serpent!

Syd also plays Serpent with carolling parties around Woodbury, Devon, England, for two nights during the week before Christmas. Here Syd used his tape recording method again. To learn the parts to "Good King Wenceslas", "The Holly and the Ivy", etc; he recorded them first using his melodeon. The Serpent was

played along with the tape while reading the sheet music; he quickly learned the material. Cold and wet, the evening of December 20, 1993, Syd and his merry band of carollers started their first stroll. The Serpent's first sonorous notes nearly stopped the singing, but soon everything was going well and the session ended with Serpent converts helping themselves to mince pies and hot toddy at the local church. The second night blew a gale as well, testing the weather resistance of Syd's paper laminate Serpent. Syd now plays with a small group including concertina and cello. Regarding the Crediton West Gallery Quire, Syd plays the drum and sings, leaving the Serpent playing to Clavil.

Dennis James, an enthusiastic non-Serpentist (not quite true- there was that performance of "A Snake in the Glass" in South Carolina) known to many of us, appeared on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno lately. He was playing his Glass 'Armonica to provide a space-music like background for pop singer Linda Ronstadt (did I spell that correctly?). The camera spent as much time on him as it did on Linda, and of course Jay wanted to know about the instrument and its player during the post performance interview. Dennis is doubtless proud that he can add to his reputation the distinction of being called only "that guy" by Linda on national television. We're cheering for you anyway, Dennis!



Simon Proctor, composer of The Serpent Concerto and Concerto for Keyed Bugle, amongst other works for Serpent, was in the Chicago area during mid-March. The College of Lake County Wind Ensemble under the direction of Bruce Mack performed the world premier of Simon's "Windy City". This work, commissioned by Paul Schmidt as a gift for the band, runs about 12 minutes in a single movement. There are about 33 individual parts, requiring a concert band of fairly typical size, with capable players in every chair. The piece features two main themes which are restated many different ways, each suggesting some aspect of the City of Chicago. Although Simon has declined to define most of the impressions by name, the piece opens with the sun rising over Lake Michigan in a figure comparable to the sunrise in Also Sprach Zarathustra. Subsequent sections have been appraised by listeners as being trains in Union Station, Chicago Jazz sections, gangster themes, wind themes, etc. Although not necessarily intended as such, the piece could be compared with Gershwin's "An American in Paris" in terms of scope and attitude.

The piece was well received by an enthusiastic audience, which included legendary tubist Harvey Phillips and jazz trombonist Bill Watrous. Both players were on hand for solo appearances later in the program. Persons interested in more information on this piece should contact Heavy Metal Music, care of Paul Schmidt at the address on page 2.

On April 19, the Chicago area keyed brass consort mentioned in previous newsletters presented their annual recital at Northwestern University. The recital attendance was almost at the capacity of Regenstein Hall's auditorium, with an audience comprised of professional, faculty, amateur and student musicians. Keith Ryder played cornetto, Gary Gallt played lyzarden, and Paul Schmidt played Serpent. Missing was (*US Treasurer*) Dick George who usually plays Ophicleide with the ensemble. The recital consisted of the group's trademark combination of traditional selections and pop-music arrangements sandwiching mini-lectures on the instruments. The notable pieces included "Pastime With Good Company", Claude Gervaise's "Galliard de la Guerre", Sousa's "The Liberty Bell" and "Yellow Submarine".

HOWE TO GETTE A SARPENTE

by Gregg Butler

A tale from the '60's.

This story begins in the stacks beneath Swansea University library in 1967. A poor tortured soul is trying to cram enough metallurgy into his head so that the results of the forthcoming degree exams do not adequately reflect 3 years of rugby football, sailing, and learning to drink!

The aforementioned tortured soul is already an enthusiastic if unaccomplished folk musician has been forced by economic circumstances to make his own instruments, and is fascinated by "strange things that make interesting noises".

The stacks or book stores to which we refer are not in the Science section - they are in the music and folklore section so that idle moments of browsing do not have to be as boring as the cramming process. It is during just such a browse that an article in the Galpin Society Journal is encountered where someone is getting quite a lot of mileage out of having examined and x-rayed a serpent. This article also mentioned what a lovely noise the serpent made and how long it had been since they had been manufactured. From that moment I wanted one, I knew I couldn't afford to buy one, so I knew I'd have to make one!

But how? My material scientist's view of life is that people make things out of the best materials available. In the heyday of the serpent this made for easy choices, and once someone had decided on that shape, wood, or a short-lived instrument made of papier-mache were about the only choices.

Not so in 1967, however - and it did not take me very long to select glass reinforced plastic on the grounds of strength, durability, ease of manufacture, and price. I did, however, resolve that serpents should have skins on them, so leather covering would be the order of the day. As for method of construction this could vary but in all cases would require a male mould of the serpent bore, for which I needed measurements, and for which I needed a serpent.

Where to find and examine a serpent when you are a poor student in Swansea with no contacts in the early music scene? Well, fortunately I did know of the Horniman Museum, London, and of the Musical Instrument Collection which included serpents, so this was the obvious place to start. A letter duly winged its way to the museum and produced a fairly chilling response - it basically said "you are an oik not even studying music, you are unfit to darken our doorstep, but if you really must come you should make an appointment at least 2 months in advance, and then you might, just might get to see a serpent from some considerable distance".

My youthful enthusiasm was such that I remained undeterred. I made a required appointment and travelled all the way down to London in my totally untrustworthy ex-post office Morris Minor van and arrived at the Horniman. I had brought with me a very large sheet of graph paper, a camera with a telephoto lens, various callipers and measuring instruments and a coherent plan. This plan was to put the serpent on the sheet of graph paper on the floor of the lower gallery, go up into the balcony with the camera, and photograph the serpent vertically from above (long distance therefore minimal parallax error), then do a few detailed notes and measurements, and we're home and dry.

This plan was consigned to the dustbin with my host's first sentence - "what have you brought that for? No photography in the museum". Simple as that. Totally obdurate. Plan in ruins, somewhat chastened and abashed I still felt just tall enough to look into the display cases, and I selected the serpent I found the most handsome and it was duly removed from its case and placed on a table. It was, and presumably still is, a magnificent creature. A 5 keyed English serpent by Bilton of Westminster Bridge Road, London. A sturdy beast with stout brass fittings and an air of purpose - a typical English military serpent. Picture the scene, the serpent, a table, a chair, me and the adamant gaze of the Horniman musicologist. I have never started a task so gingerly or with such trepidation.

Fortunately, there was another person in the room, an elderly male musicologist doing a preliminary sort on what at first glance looked like a skip full of old iron, but on closer examination was probably the clearance of a brass instrument workshop's loft, circa 1860. He at least smiled and the level of surveillance dropped somewhat as I kept working away diligently and making no sudden moves. The ice was finally broken when my fellow worker took a very battered keyed bugle from the pile and handed it to me saying "Are you a brass player? What do you think of the mouthpiece on this instrument". Fortunately I know a 1950's brass band cornet mouth piece when I see one and ventured that the mouthpiece was certainly not original. He nodded approvingly then said "Have you sounded one of these". I don't turn invitations like that down, and played a few faltering notes on a very leaky instrument. During this passage of play, the Horniman rottweiler was clearly half thinking that this was her opportunity to throw me out, but was being kept in check by the fact that my fellow worker was clearly a person of some consequence. In the end she resolved the situation by snorting, turning on her heel, and I never saw her more.

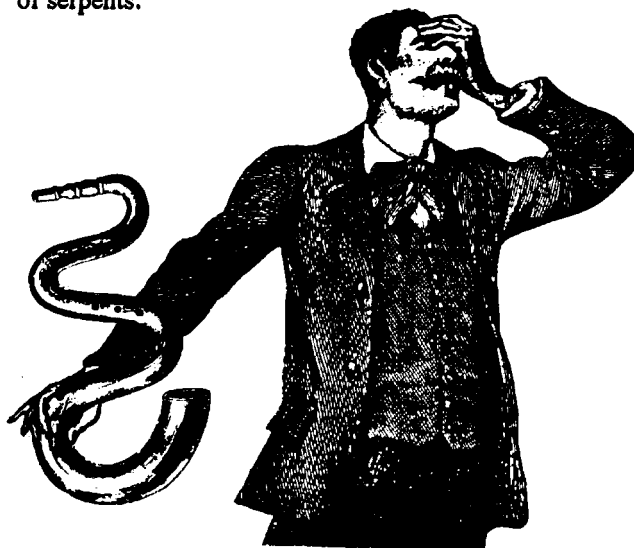
Back in Swansea with all the measurements, I did a graph of my dimensions of the bore of the instrument and came up with something like a Stegosaurus's spine - the instrument was clearly only being held together by the leather. I took a length of 3/4" aluminium bar and bent it to the shape of the serpent's centreline, I then threaded on circular formers and linked the whole thing in 1/4" balsa wood, finishing it off to the smoothed version of my graph of the bore.

At this point the original intention was to make a female mould in plaster of Paris, cast a male mould of the bore in paraffin wax, lay up glass fibre on the paraffin wax, and then melt the wax out with boiling water. A musical instrument version of the lost wax process much used for metal castings.

In the event, the search for bargain priced wax took longer than my patience could hold, and I tried a riskier method involving laying up a couple of thicknesses of thin glass tape onto the mould, cutting this into two along the plane of the centreline, removing from the mould in 2 pieces, and then carefully aralditing back them together. This delicate form now needed more thickness and strength.

At this point the National Health Service came to my aid! I had recently had my left knee extensively re-arranged during a rugby match, and was in possession of about 15 crepe bandages which had been donated during various visits to the hospital. Thick glass tape and glass matt are very difficult to lay up around the tight compound curves of the serpent, but crepe bandage is designed to wrap round tight compound curves - so why not?

I duly laid up two layers of resin soaked crepe bandage and produced a structure of similar weight to the original but, unlike the original, one which would bounce if dropped. I covered the beast with an alligator-grained leather which was rather too thick for the purpose. It therefore had to be put on in quite small sections but after about 10 coats of black paint gave a very pleasing appearance. A blacksmith chum of mine made the keys which have been somewhat refined since, and much more recently a purpose-built crookjoint has replaced the original central heating fitting. The final instrument looks magnificent and plays considerably better than I do. It has performed on record a couple of times and proudly took its place at the 400th serpent birthday concert in London resplendent in a new coat of paint - quite clearly the oldest of the new generation of serpents.



More Exciting News

After two days of intense meetings, with culturally savvy attendees from across the States, Cleveland (Ohio) Mayor Michael R. White proclaimed January 22, 1994 as "Early Music America Day". A gala reception was held at University Circle, the cultural center of Cleveland, to honor Early Music America and its board of directors. For those who are not in the know about this event, Early Music America (EMA) is an international organization whose mission is to serve as voice and advocate for the field of early music in North America. The board includes performers, scholars, instrument makers, concert presenters, arts administrators and advocates. Happily no early music haters were invited. This editor has been trying unsuccessfully for years to have Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley proclaim April 1, 2001 as Universal Galactic Serpent Day. *And yes, the answer to the Ultimate Question is 42.*

Andrew Lamb of England has divulged that the tune "Rule Britannia", when played on Serpent in a field in Gloucester will attract the herd of cows in the neighboring field.

Serpent Discography*updated in March 1994 (previous listings which are apparently out of print have been deleted)*

Nimbus NI 5175	<i>Berlioz, Grande symphonie funebre et triomphale</i> The Wallace Collection; serpentist: Stephen Wick
Erato/Musifrance 2292-45607-2	<i>DeCaurroy, Missa Pro Defunctis</i> Ensemble Vocal Sagittarius, Bernard Fourtet
Musica Mundi 314011	<i>Fress-und Sauflieder der Renaissance</i> Musica Canterey Bamberg; serpentist: Enrique Crespo
Accent ACC 8860 D	<i>Harmonie und Janitscharenmusik</i> Octophoros; serpentist: Andrew van der Beek
also Musical Heritage MHS 512700Y	<i>Music for Harmonie and Janissary Band</i> Octophoros; serpentist: Andrew van der Beek
Label la Lichere LLL 37	<i>Le Chant du Serpent (avant garde jazz)</i> Michel Godard; serpentist: Michel Godard
Nimbus 5318	<i>Mendelssohn, Symphony No. 3, "Scottish" and "Calm Sea & Prosperous Voyage"</i> The Hanover Band, serpentist: Alan Lumsden
Saydisc SDL 360	<i>Under The Greenwood Tree: Music from the Time of Thomas Hardy</i> Mellstock Band; serpentist: David Townsend
Saydisc SDL 361	<i>Fill Your Glasses: convivial English Glee</i> London Serpent Trio; serpentists: Clifford Bevan, Christopher Monk, Andrew van der Beek
Music Masters MMD6-0236 F	<i>Music of Francis Johnson and Contemporaries</i> Chestnut Brass Company; serpentist: Jay Krush
Dog Rose Sound DR13930	<i>Serpent Celebration 1590-1990 (400th Birthday of the Serpent)</i> The London Serpent Trio and Guests The largest assembly of Serpent Players for at least 200 years
Larry Gordon	<i>The Mellstock Band (excerpts of American tour 1993)</i> serpentist: Phil Humphries
Thelonious THE 0101	<i>L'Impossible Trio (Jazz)</i> serpentist: Michel Godard
Wergo WER 8008-2	<i>Michael Riessler: Heloise (Jazz improvisation)</i> serpentist: Michel Godard
Hopi HOP 200002	<i>Aborigene (Classical, baroque, renaissance, jazz)</i> serpentist: Michel Godard
Philips 434 402-2 (CD) and Philips 70254 (VHS video)	<i>Berlioz, Symphonie Fantastique, Op. 14</i> Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique Serpent & Ophicleide
<i>related....</i>	
Newport Classic NPD 85548	<i>Tippecanoe and Tyler Too (American political marches and songs)</i> The Chestnut Brass Company and Friends, Ophicleide: Jay Krush
Newport Classic NPD 85516	<i>Listen to the Mockingbird (19th Century brass band music)</i> The Chestnut Brass Company and Friends, Ophicleide: Jay Krush
Crystal Records CD 562	<i>Pastime With Good Company</i> The Chestnut Brass Company, Ophicleide: Jay Krush
EMI (Reflexe) CDC 7 49541 2	<i>Berlioz, Syphonie Fantastique, Op. 14</i> The London Classical Players; Ophicleides: Stephen Wick, Stephen Saunders
<i>of interest....</i>	
New Albion NA013CD	<i>Stuart Dempster in the Great Abbey of Clement VI</i> Didjeridu: Stuart Dempster