



Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2004

A Note from the Editor

In spite of the previous appeal for more donations, we are still very low on funds, so I call on all readers who have not donated recently to send in a modest check (generous ones will not be turned away!) *see page 7*

The previous issue's request for Serpent Poems went unheeded, with the exception of two pieces by Chris Gutteridge. Perhaps more readers will be inspired by his efforts to seek out their muse and take this opportunity to approach immortality.

Those readers who visit the Serpent Website with any regularity will already be aware that the site was down for almost a month during July. This was due to the site's construction articles pages being targeted by a certain extremely popular website, resulting in such high web traffic that the site's prepaid plan limitations were exceeded. This resulted in many thousands of dollars due in excess traffic fees. Happily, the other site has unlinked our site, and our web host has forgiven the fees. After the one month cooling off period, the site was back up.

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the Serpent Website will have some new updates, including new recipes, new recordings, quotations, books, etc.

This issue includes many interesting items, including news of several workshops and quite a few serpent gatherings, plus some new serpent related materials. Enjoy!

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

• Cape Cornwall Serpentarium 2005

The sixth happening of this biennial event will again be hosted by Nigel Nathan and his partner Thelma Griffiths at Boswedden House in the far west of Cornwall (the closest we can get in England to our friends in the USA!) from Friday, the 27th of May to Monday the 30th, which is the late Spring Bank Holiday in the UK. Phil Humphries of, amongst other things, the London Serpent Trio, will once again be at hand to guide our musical meanderings.

The Serpentarium will be residential with space for 14-16 in the house, a camping option and overflow accommodation nearby. Since this is a holiday weekend, this latter may not be available for late bookers who may therefore be forced to camp – so book early! Cost is £155 (£125 for campers) for the three days. Full details on request or on receipt of the £40 booking deposit (credit cards, UK Debit Cards, Sterling cash or cheques payable to Nigel Nathan accepted.) Train of bus service to Penzance and thence by bus to St. Just is a viable transport option.

For those of you who would like to make a longer holiday of it in order to explore this beautiful and fascinating part of the world, you will be welcome to come early and/or stay on as regular B&B guests. Please book at the same time as above.

For Nigel's contact information, see 'About the Organization' on page 7 of this newsletter.

• Report of the 20th Annual Early Brass Festival

The Historic Brass Society once again hosted it's annual festival at a 'remote' location. This year Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio was selected, and the three day event took place from July 23 through 25.

Festival participants began to arrive around noon on Friday, registering at the Conservatory of Music. Unlike many past locations, parking was no problem at Oberlin, and excellent maps and directions were provided, and the schedule was closely followed. Serpentists in attendance were Paul Schmidt, Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, and John Weber. As there were no scheduled events until after dinner, the four serpentists found an unoccupied music room and proceeded to set up for a full afternoon of session playing. To get things rolling, Paul unloaded his car's contents of square plywood instruments, and a few hours were spent with everyone trying the Squarpent, Box-O-Cleide, "Patrick" the contrabass Squarpent, and the Sqworm. Before breaking for dinner, the three guys played a couple of trios using these horns, the Sqworm being excepted. After dinner, the foursome walked to the recital room in Wilder Hall where Lowell Greer and six other natural horn players put on an enjoyable concert. The septet played two French hunting fanfares and some hunting 'chase' tunes, plus a pair of quartets, seven duets, and a pair of quintets. Afterwards, the serpentists used the rest of the evening to play serpents and ophicleides.

On Saturday morning, things got rolling with the first lecture of the festival, Timothy Collins' *Hora Decima: The Musical Theology of the Stadtpfeifer*, which dealt with the relationship of town musicians to the secular community and their influence on the everyday life of the people. This was followed by Dane Heuchemer's *Italian Instrumentalists and the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Century Courts of*

the Holy Roman Empire: Trendy or Exceptional? Following this, the participants separated into groups for informal playing sessions, and the serpent quartet played tenor horn and three ophicleides in readings of military band book quartets.

After lunch was a presentation *Johann Heinisch and the Concertos of George von Reutter II*, a combination lecture and recital by Robert "Bahb" Civiletti on natural trumpet. Next was Sabine Klaus with *Horn or Trumpet – An Instrument by Johann Carl Kodisch, Nuemburg 1684*, where she presented a peculiar crossover instrument and applied the various trumpet versus horn distinctions to its classification. The last lecture of the day was by David Guion, *The Missing Link: The Trombone in Bologna in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. The rest of the afternoon was used for more playing sessions, and Paul, Robert and John played serpent trios with Tra joining in on some numbers. After a light dinner, which acted as an appetizer, the festival participants met in the lounge of the dormitory for the traditional pizza and beer party. During the festivities, the serpentists, who had not been preparing anything specific in their sessions, were asked to participate in the gala concert.

On Sunday, the presentations resumed with Douglas Hedwig's *The 19th Century Coiled, Single Tone-Holed Posthorn of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland*, a lecture-recital. Theodore Albrecht followed with his lively and entertaining lecture *Beethoven's Brass Players: New*



Sunday outdoor concert at Redeeming Brass VIII

L-R: Leonard Candelaria, Geoffrey Brittin, Lloyd Farrar, Scott McBride, Newell Sheridan, Paul Schmidt

Discoveries in Composer/Performer Relations: Or Where's Weidinger? Questions and Answers Concerning Beethoven's Colleagues in the Brass Section; part of this involved putting together odd bits and pieces of facts like a jigsaw puzzle to determine the probable identities of brass players in important performances of Beethoven's major compositions. The Historic Brass Society Membership Meeting followed, after which participants broke into instrument groups for last minute rehearsals, in preparation for the gala concert. The serpentists decided to perform only on ophicleides, and only as a trio. Tra assisted by lending a critical ear to the numerous trio pieces the guys read through, in order to determine which ones were 'keepers' for the concert. A brief lunch followed.

At 2 PM, a short one-hour Concluding Concert took place in Fairchild, a small space with a moderate reverberation. The program was open to the public, and a smattering of the same showed up. A natural trumpet octet opened the show with some fanfares, followed by a trombone (sackbut) trio playing material by Michael East. Festival host Steven Plank followed on the chapel's larger pipe organ, playing a sonata. Bahb Civiletti next played a concerto for natural trumpet with a recorded accompaniment on CD, and the next player followed with a piece for natural trumpet solo with organ accompaniment.

The ophicleide trio followed, with Robert Wagenknecht on the top line, Paul Schmidt in the middle and John Weber playing the bass part. First was a trombone trio arrangement of *Harre, Meine Seele* by Malan; this started badly and was quickly aborted, as something was obviously wrong with the sound. After a quick check of a B-flat tuning note, it was discovered that one of John's keys was hung up on his pants pocket, and the second attempt at the piece was much better. From the same book came the next brief selection, *Ach Bleib Mit Deiner Gnade* by Vulpus. Since the first two pieces were fairly slow, the next piece was an *Intrade* by Scheidt, followed by another slow number, *Sweet and Low* by Barnby. The trio wrapped up the concert with *Auf Dem Wasser* by Carl Maria von Weber, and there was much rejoicing.

Most participants left to check out of their dormitories, as they had afternoon flights to catch. The serpentists repaired to a rehearsal room in the Conservatory to demonstrate the serpent, ophicleide and the various square instruments, as a couple of concert attendees had asked to learn more. Some serpent playing followed, but lips were getting tired from lots of playing over the weekend and it soon became apparent that a nice long dinner somewhere was going to be just the thing.

by Paul Schmidt

● Report of the Redeeming Brass VIII symposium

The annual rural brass workshop and clinic, titled Redeeming Brass, took place this year during the beginning of October in the historic village of Norris, Tennessee. Hosted by Clinch River Brasses and organized by retired musicologist Lloyd Farrar, the idea was to combine local history and music, contemporary brass band, historic brass instruments and lectures from eminent players and scholars. Due to scheduling conflicts and unavoidable personal issues, some invited groups and individuals were unable to attend, and this necessitated some rather sweeping last minute revisions to the plan.

As it worked out, the event got rolling on Thursday, September 30 and wrapped up in the evening of Sunday, October 3, although some individuals arrived earlier and were expected to stay later. For modern brasses, the attending individuals included Ron Phillips (Smith/Watkins trumpets & cornets, playing trumpet, from Phoenix, Arizona), Paul Schmidt (representing the Serpent Newsletter and Serpent Website, playing serpent and ophicleide, from Lindenhurst, Illinois), Leonard Candelaria (professor of trumpet at University of Alabama-Birmingham, playing trumpet and fluegelhorn), William Newell Sheridan (Sheridan Brasses, playing trombone, from Birmingham), Geoffrey Britten (pathologist and trumpet, playing fluegelhorn, from Brentwood, Tennessee), Charles Conrad (conductor of Indianapolis Wind Symphony and trumpeter, playing trumpet, from Carmel, Indiana), Kenneth Kreitner (Euphonium and musicology at University of Memphis, playing euphonium, from Tennessee), Scott McBride (Chair of Music at Morehead State University, playing trombone, from Kentucky), Matthew Frederick (professor at Emory and Henry College, playing trumpet, from Emory, Virginia), and Lloyd Farrar (playing trombone, from Norris, Tennessee). Also briefly participating was Janet Page (oboe and musicology at University of Memphis, playing oboe, from Tennessee).

Participants met on Thursday morning at the Norris Historical Society Museum, and were given a specially arranged presentation on the history of Norris. The town is a recognized historic landmark, being originally a planned community of an almost semi-utopian vision for the purpose of housing workers and administration for the Tennessee Valley Authority. The town went up with the first TVA project, the nearby Norris hydroelectric dam, and was blessed by design with a functional yet rural layout and modern amenities and utilities, a first for Tennessee in the early 1900s. It remains a peaceful and beautiful town surrounded by forests in the hilly region on the west side of the Appalachian Mountains of eastern Tennessee. The group then traveled to the dam to enjoy the spectacular view, then retired to the Farrar household for lunch. The proceedings

then moved to the social hall of Norris' St. Francis church, which was to be the base of operations for the next few days. First on the program was a brief presentation of the serpent and ophicleide by Paul, assisted by Lloyd, followed by a demonstration of the Squarpent, Box-O-Cleide, "Patrick" the Contrabass Squarpent, and the Sqworm. Originally this part of the program was to have been more extensive with more serpentists in attendance, but the scaled down presentation was well received. Lloyd then talked about several older styles of tubas in their context to the evolution from serpents, and showed some examples from his collection. The assembled players then spent a couple of hours reading some Moravian band music, then broke for dinner at the nearby hotel where all visiting participants were staying. In the evening, Leonard was scheduled to give a lecture-demonstration on the fine points of learning proper brass playing, for the benefit of local school band students. In what was afterwards known as a superb example of grace under duress, Leonard proceeded with his lecture even though a staggeringly low number of students (actually only one, a percussionist at that) showed up. The student was attentive and confirmed that the band director had instructed students to attend; it was not clear exactly what had gone wrong with this part of the plans.



On Friday, Lloyd presented some brass band charts, which were supposed to have been read by attending brass band players. It was decided to attempt a reading session, under the direction of Charlie, with only the available players, and this was somewhat successful. Afterwards, Janet gave a brief oboe recital, and then Lloyd's wife brought in a sandwich lunch. After this, Ken Kreitner gave a nice talk on amateur brass bands in small town USA, often the most significant musical influence on the lives of the populace. The lecture was linked to a presentation of his book *Discoursing Sweet Music* (Univ. of Illinois Press). Next, several members of Matthew Frederick's college band arrived, adding two trumpets, two horns and a tuba to the available forces. Soon an ad-hoc harmonie band was

formed, consisting of oboe, trumpet, two horns, ophicleide and serpent (Lloyd played the latter). This ensemble improvised a march in the style of traditional harmonie/military band music. Matthew then presented a history of American Civil War regimental bands, Lloyd followed with a talk on various historical valve systems, with special attention given to the Henry Distin tradition. Next, Newell Sheridan talked about advances in brass instrument technology as implemented by makers such as Shires and Thein, of which he had many examples on hand to show and demonstrate. After breaking for dinner at the hotel, the players met once again at the social hall for several hours of sight reading. Material played consisted primarily of contemporary British Brass Band compositions by Philip Wilby, and utilized the regular group of players plus the five students.

Saturday began with a hour's sight reading of some brass quintet music (Matt Frederick and students having departed the previous night), including some very atonal selections and Wilby's *Partita*. As no tuba was available, Paul used the serpent for this session, and it seemed to work better than the ophicleide, as the part being played was lower and the serpent works better in that range; the bottom of the bass staff is rather froggy on ophicleide. Lloyd then started to explore possible material for the planned mini-concert and church service on Sunday. Afterwards, trombonists Jimmy Self and Scott McBride arrived in time for a lunch of Arby's apple and grape sandwiches (weird, but not bad), brought in by Lloyd's wife. Scott presented a lecture on the music of Philip Wilby, with focus on that composer's *Paganini Variations*. The talk was based on the paper *Philip Wilby: His Biography, Compositional Presuppositions, and Principal Published Works*. Scott discussed Wilby the man, based on his personal experiences studying with the composer, and the structure of the 'Variations' and a couple other well known Wilby pieces. He then played a Grimethorpe Colliery Brass Band recording of the 'Variations', followed by another recording of a concert band playing his own arrangement of the same piece. For those interested, Wilby's *Paganini Variations* for brass band is published by Novello in London and distributed by R. Smith & Co. Ltd., McBride's concert band arrangement is distributed by Studio Music in London, and both recordings can be obtained from World of Brass in England, <www.worldofbrass.com>, under the CD titles of *Wilby* (Grimethorpe) and *Norwegian Wind Band Championships 2003*. The variations in particular is a spectacular piece of music, a real showpiece. After Scott's lecture, Lloyd passed around an interesting set of books of vintage photography by Frank Meadow Sutcliffe for our enjoyment, and the evening's playing wrapped up with a reading of Wilby's *White Knuckle Ride*, with Jimmy Self playing the technically rigorous trombone solo to the highly abbreviated brass band of two trumpets, three trombones and ophicleide. Ron and Charlie having departed to meet

other obligations, Geoffrey, Leonard, Newell, Scott and Paul settled into a booth at the hotel's bar for several hours of beer and shop talk.

On Sunday morning, Paul, Newell and Scott visited Norris Dam for warm up exercises, the peals of brass sounds ringing back and forth between valley walls and the face of the dam. At midmorning, they moved to Lloyd's large and wooded front yard for a final rehearsal for the afternoon's planned performances. Geoffrey and Leonard arrived there and all were met by Lloyd. Just as the rehearsal got underway, the local gendarmes arrived, having been tipped off by irritated nearby residents, and the rehearsal was subsequently relocated to the Norris Community Center. At this point, the ensemble consisted of Leonard and Geoffrey on trumpets and fluegelhorns, Newell and Scott plus Lloyd on trombones, and Paul on ophicleide. The ensemble selections were narrowed down to Bruckner's familiar *Aequale I*, Wilby's beautiful *God Be In My Head*, Franz Biebl's lush *Ave Maria* in its arrangement for brass choir by Mark Manduca, James Barnes' *Yorkshire Ballad* in its trombone choir version, and David Uber's treatment of *Amazing Grace* for trombone quartet (three trombones and ophicleide). As it was a beautiful sunny afternoon, the mini-concert took place in front of the church with the small but enthusiastic audience gathered on the lawn. The program consisted of some opening Moravian brass chorales, the *Aequale*, *God Be In My Head* (first section only), *Ave Maria*, *Yorkshire Ballad*, and *Amazing Grace*. The special church service, titled Evening Prayer, followed with participants and audience moving indoors to the rustic sanctuary. Alice Maxfield, a friend of the Farrars from their days in the Washington, D.C. area, had arrived to play organ for the service. The prelude was *Duet for Trombone and Organ, 1st movement*, by Holst, with Lloyd playing the solo part. In the middle of the service was another trombone and organ duet, *Intermezzo* by Ernst Schiffmann, Newell playing the solo. During the offertory, Leonard played trumpet with organ accompaniment on a version of *Be Thou My Vision*. For the postlude, the whole group played the complete *God Be In My Head*, followed by Spiegler's *Canzone II* for fluegelhorn (Geoffrey), trumpet (Leonard), trombone (Newell) and organ. Immediately after the service, Paul had to leave for another event in Ohio the next morning, and the understanding was that the other players would be leaving on Monday. Any last minute activities with the others are therefore not included in this report.

by Paul Schmidt

- Bernard Fourtet sent a brochure about the ancient music part of *La Musique des Cüivres*, which took place between August 7 and 14. Faculty included Gilles Rapin (natural trumpet), Bernard (sackbut and serpent), Jean-Paul Boury (cornetts), Anne-Catherine Vinay (clavichord), Lucien Kandel (chant), and Luc Gaugler (viol da gamba).



David Harding testing one of the Squarpents made during the "Squarpents at the Bate" workshop at Oxford

- Squarepents at the Bate, Part 2, by Andy Lamb

The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments at the Faculty of Music of the University of Oxford presented an evening class for amateur instrument makers, and the Squarpent was selected as the instrument for the course. Part 1 of Andy Lamb's report appeared in the April, 2004 issue of this newsletter.

In the first part of Squarepents at the Bate, I wrote about how a small group of enthusiastic participants had come together for mutual support in the construction of a number of Squarepents. In this part, I would like to share some of our discoveries and observations.

We started the project in October 2003, working two hours per week. Initially we thought we would have everything completed by the following spring but we were to be disappointed in that presumption. In the event, it was a full academic year of 24 evenings before we were to be finished. Some of the course participants had musical performance commitments, which took priority, and there were difficulties in Getting Started every week. Additionally, we did not have access to a full machine-woodworking shop and were often confronted with having to use hand tools for processes that really required machine tools.

Despite these handicaps, we were able to overcome our problems. In particular we developed a stitch and glue technique, which did away with the need for rabbet cuts and internal supports.

We are sometimes told that the master luthier can look at a piece of timber and knows how to cause the latent instrument within to emerge. This was a similar experience. The lengths of plywood, having been cut to the correct taper, were filed along the edges to form a 45 degree

chamfer. Small holes were drilled along the edges of each piece at 8 inch intervals. Short lengths of copper wire were inserted and twisted so that the parts were brought into loose conjunction. Glue was then applied to the chamfers and the copper wires were then twisted to tighten them.

It was at this point that something magical happened. The loose array of components pulled together with every twist of the wires and, as if by itself, the construction seemed to come into focus. There were still a lot of gaps along the long joints but these were filled with a combination of glue and sawdust, as were the wire holes once the wire had been removed.

Once the glue had set and the sections were cut down and assembled we all began to feel we had just about finished. Paul Schmidt kindly emailed to point out a minor error in the workshop plans, which we then avoided. We then invited David Harding over to talk about mouthpieces. He was able to advise us on possible options and also suggested that we might like to insert a short length of 1/2 inch copper pipe, of the sort used by plumbers, into the bocal to prevent the mouthpiece from splitting the glue joints.

The overall finish was not particularly good. We had bought the cheapest sheets of plywood and none of us could cut a straight line so the joints tended to be full of gaps and splinters and excess bits of glue and sawdust. We cleaned them up as best we could but they still looked fairly horrible. Therefore, it was decided to decorate the instruments. We considered a number of suggestions including papier mache, leather binding and flock wallpaper. In the event it was decided to paint them with a gloss enamel.

So, was the course a success? Well, at the conclusion we had four finished instruments and people who had never used woodworking tools before were now considering what they would need to make something more complicated.

What about the instruments? Some worked better than others. They all had a unique timbre, which is to say they all sounded like a toad croaking through a drainpipe stuffed with socks. But some played with less resistance than others.

Along the way we met some new friends. These included Paul Schmidt and David Harding and also Bill Broom from Penistone in South Yorkshire, who came to visit the Bate and when he saw the Squarepents he announced that he had just completed a contrabass Squarepent called Sylvester (completed on St. Sylvesters day).

The course participants are all returning next year to start on a new set of projects. Most are interested in making dulcimers or psalteries but one person has floated the idea of making a square tarogato.

- The Hands on Music organization in England will be presenting a series of weekend workshops on various historic and folk instruments. The 'Melodeons at Witney' will take place on the 13th and 14th of November, 'Strings at Witney' will be on February 5 & 6, 2005, 'Accordions' on February 19 & 20, and Village Music Weekend will be March 5 & 6. The latter will include village band music, West gallery singing, early music & song, street bands and improvisation, and will be led by the Mellstock Band and the duet Alva (Vivien Ellis and Giles Lewin). March 19 will be 'World Voices Day', devoted to vocal traditions from around the world. For more information, write to Hands on Music Weekends, PO Box 1162, East Oxford D.O., OX4 4WS, England, or email <info@handsonmusic.org.uk>, or phone 01865 714778, or visit the website <www.handsonmusic.org.uk>.

- The Historic Brass Society has announced the dates and location for the 2005 Early Brass Festival. The event will take place on July 8 – 10, 2005, at Bennington College, Bennington, Vermont. The special theme will be 19th Century Brass: A World of Transition.



Excuse me, darling; I think I'll slip into something a little more comfortable.....

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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Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$15 for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are by voluntary contributions, not formal subscriptions, but those who manage to receive the newsletter without contributions are doing so entirely at the discretion of the regional representative. Rates for the UK are £5 for 2 years, for Europe £6 or 10 Euros; in these cases the handling of subscriptions is more formal. *Note the revised UK phone!*

New Materials

- *Master the Tempest is Raging...*, CD recording featuring The Datura Blues, with Bodie Pfof on serpent plus trumpet, fluegelhorn, trombone and tuba. Other instruments include various woodwinds, keyboards, strings, percussion, electronics and vocals. Obtained from The Datura Blues, c/o Ryan Jones, 1320 Sunset Ave., Arcata, CA 95521, USA, or by emailing Oryan Jones at <daturablues@hotmail.com>.

This recording is the latest effort by the group The Datura Blues; Wizard Cotton, Bodie Pfof, Owen Ott III, Nick Burmeister, Garrett Kelly, Oryan Jones, Lincoln Haury, plus a trio of female vocalists, the 'Sirens', a trio of mixed voices, the 'Light House Gang', and a pirate/stowaway band of five singer-instrumentalists. The interesting packaging includes a worn and burnt 'pirate treasure' map, marked outside with a wax seal. One can imagine a fully commercial version based on this self-produced effort.

The five tracks include *Stella Maris/Beast, Please Be Still, The Ocean Thief...*, *Master the Tempest is Raging, They'll Have to Drag Me Kickin' and Screamin'*, and *The Golden Vanity*. The each track is really an mini anthology of nautical themes, songs, and atmospheric sound effects. The quality of the performances is quite good, and the album's sound is generally accessible to the average listener. The serpent is used on track 2, *The Ocean Thief...*, very softly in the background as three overdubbed lines that remind the listener of a foghorn and then suggest mounting tension (from about 7:00 through 8:20 minutes into the track). The serpent also appears on track 4, *They'll Have to...*, during the *Ave Maria* motet, after the violin and clarinet solo section (from about 3:00 through 3:30). Not a real 'serpent' recording, of course, but quite a nice contemporary use for the instrument.

- Nick Byrne in Australia is working on an ophicleide recording project, wherein he hopes to record quality versions of all available solo works for the instrument. Some samples that he has worked on can be heard by visiting his website, <www.ophicleide.com>. He is hoping for international distribution starting sometime in 2005. His intention is to set a standard of playing where there will be no more reasons for the ophicleide to be the butt of George Bernard Shaw-style derision. Nick welcomes repertoire



Oh! Such a relief!
(Thanks to Marit Strömberg)

suggestions, and he may be reached via his website or by email at <nabyrne@aol.com>. Here's hoping for total success with this project, and the samples sound excellent.

- *Glad Tidings: A West Gallery Christmas*, CD recording The Mellstock Band with Phil Humphries on serpent & ophicleide, plus a quartet of guest vocalists. Serpent Press # SER008, obtained from Serpent Press, 22 Swinbourne Road, Littlemore, Oxford OX4 4PQ, England, £12.50, post included, or £13.50 outside Europe. An order form may be printed from the website <www.mellstockband.com>.

Just in time for Christmas, the new Mellstock Band album arrives to give season's cheer in the form of authentically performed West Gallery versions of traditional songs and carols. The band consists of Dave Townsend (English concertina), Tim Hill (early clarinets), Charles Spicer (early oboes), Phil Humphries (serpent & ophicleide), Pete Cooper and Giles Redmond (violins), and Gill Redmond (cello). The vocalists are Viven Ellis (soprano), Helen Chadwick (alto), Keremy Avis (tenor), Ian Giles (bass).

This group aims to present some of the more familiar songs in unfamiliar guise, using the settings, instruments and singing styles of the West Gallery choirs of the past. The quality and listenability are up to the usual Mellstock standards, and the selections are well chosen. They include *Portugal New* (O Come, All Ye Faithful), *God's Dear Son*, *Lyngham* (While Shepherds Watched), *Sir Roger de Coverley*, *Glory Shone Around*, *Old Christians* (Christians, Awake), *A Virgin Unspotted*, *Dives & Lazarus*, *Winchester Tune*, *Sellwood Mollineux' Carol* (Hark the Glad Sound), *The Dorchester Hornpipe*, *Speed the Plow*, *Star in the East* (Brightest and Best), *Jerusalem* (Joy to the World), *God Rest You Merry*, *The Triumph*, and *Glad Tidings*. This is a nice CD and should find a welcome place in your collection.

- *Berlin for Brass* and *Foster for Brass*, CD recordings featuring The Chestnut Brass Company. Naxos # 8.559123 and 8.559124, respectively. Obtained from Amazon.

The Chestnut Brass Company's two new CDs include only performances on modern brass instruments, something that seems almost odd given the group's long history of recordings that feature all antique instruments or a mix of old and modern. Since this newsletter, as a rule, only reviews recordings with at least some serpent or ophicleide, this mention is provided as a courtesy to the group. However, anyone familiar with Chestnut knows what a fine job they do, and their work on modern brasses belongs with that of the other leading modern brass quintets. Each of these CDs boasts a long list of tracks taken from the best selections of each composer. Highly recommended.

- Doug Yeo's arrangement of the *Divertimento in B flat*, "St. Antoni", often attributed to Haydn or sometimes Pleyel, is being published by Sarastro Music in London. This is the version used in many of Doug's performances in Boston, as well as on his CD *Le Monde du Serpent*.



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
(Keith & Kathryn Rogers)
Perkwood
Station Road
Yaxham
Norfolk NR19 1RD
England

Phone & fax:
+44 (0)1362 691198
www.jeremywest.co.uk/ cmi.html
<ktwoagain@btopenworld.com>

(serpents & historical oboes)

[for cornetts, contact Jeremy West at
<j.west@ic.ac.uk>]

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

Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

- Build your own instrument from plans via <www.serpentwebsite.com>

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

Phone: 626-447-1904
<oldbrass@altrionet.com>

(ophicleides, metal serpents, bass
horns)

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

Phone: +44 (0)1727 866080
(early cimbasso, bass horns)

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

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

In Memoriam Dr. Terence Pamplin (1941 – 2004)

Although Terry only appeared on our contact list this Spring, suggesting a very recent interest in things serpentine, his obituary in the 27th May edition of "The Independent" newspaper describes him as a "musical-instrument polymath". It is thus likely that some of our readers have other knowledge of him and may not have heard of his sudden death. His enthusiasm for music and musical instruments was all-embracing. He was an accomplished performer on many instruments and had to see, handle, photograph, play, make and research whatever instrument he came across. Amongst many other positions, he had been President of the Early Music Instrument Makers' Association, Head of Department of Musical Instrument Technology at the Guildhall School of Music, Director of Arnold Dolmetsch Ltd., and Founder and Chairman of both the Nonsuch Guitar Society and the International Baryton Society. The energy he brought to his wide-ranging interests will be sadly missed. He was a special person who made the world a better place. One can only speculate what his contribution might have been had he lived to turn his attention to the Serpent.

by Nigel Nathan

Where Serpents Gather

- Bodie Pfost writes about his serpent playing of late, "Unfortunately, I haven't had any 'legit' serpent gigs in quite a while, but I have been playing my serpent in a psychedelic, all instrumental 'rock' band called Datura Blues. It's always a good feeling to hear the gasps from the audience when I take my serpent out of its case. The serpent is not a featured instrument in the ensemble, but without it there would definitely be something missing." See the review of the new Datura Blues CD in this newsletter (pp7).
- Sue Bradley wrote several times to tell about her serpent and ophicleide activities in Melbourne, Australia. On June 22, she played a concert including some Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff, using her C tuba. On the same concert, she played serpent for Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and ophicleide for the composer's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. It was sheer pleasure to have more notes on serpent than on tuba! On June 29, Sue played ophicleide in a Bassoon Marching Band to celebrate the opening of the International Double Reed Society Conference. She writes, "the term 'marching' is used loosely here, as it immediately became clear that many bassoonists have a limited concept of moving in time to music. As to why I was playing ophicleide, well, I live in the same suburb as the organizer, and it seemed like a good idea at the time.....my ophicleide was not impressed with being taken for a Sarrusophone, although to be fair, one bystander (of American origins, by his accent), recognized it as an ophicleide." On July 25 and July 31, She played ophicleide again in two performances of *Elijah*, with completely different orchestras and choirs for each performance. She was asked by the main radio station for an interview, associated with one of the performances...the ophicleide is finally making a comeback!
- The Virginia serpent get-together had its yearly meeting in Henrico County on May 29 and 30, 2004. Those attending were Connie Palmer, our host; Merrillee and Bob Pallansch; Rick and Iris Schwartz; and Robert and Therese (Tra) Wagenknecht. Serpents, ophicleides, recorder, cornet, bass trombone, and piano were played. Saturday was replete with lunch, lots of playing, dinner, and more playing. Storytelling by Merrillee was a special delight. Another special was a performance by Robert, bass trombone and Tra on piano of *Jump Tune* composed by Tra's father, Florian Mueller, in 1960. The work was written for tuba, bass trombone, cello, or string bass solo and piano. On Sunday, ophicleidists Bob and Robert, flutist Iris and cornetist Rick were joined by guitarist George Wagenknecht, drummer Daniel Baker, and organist Verta Blake, for performances at the Wesley Chapel United Methodist church in Matoaca, where Tra is music director. The weekend concluded with brunch at a local Chinese buffet. Submitted by Tra Wagenknecht
- Boston's Handel and Haydn Society will be playing a Brahms Concert on April 8, 2005, and repeated on April 10, which will be preceded by a performance of the *St. Antoni Chorale Divertimento*. Doug Yeo will be playing the serpent part. The Brahms concert will include *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, which of course is based on the *St. Antoni Chorale*, as well as the *German Requiem*.
- Paul Horner of Clemmons, North Carolina has completed his six month serpent making project. Just prior to this, Paul became one of the first people to build a Squarpent from plans on the Serpent Website, and he was inspired to attempt the real instrument. He made the instrument from 21 overlapping half sections of walnut, sloshed with Danish oil inside, and covered with 1.5 oz split cow hide. He obtain a real serpent mouthpiece, bocal and receiver and used dimensions kindly provided by Keith Rogers, who was apparently impressed with the earnestness in Paul's voice when he called the workshop. In August, Paul Schmidt was in nearby Charlotte for a couple of days on a business trip, and contacted Paul Horner about seeing the newly finished serpent. One evening, Paul Horner and friend Russ Kaiser drove down and visited for dinner. The hotel agreed to provide a conference room so that serpents could be tried without bothering people in actual hotel

rooms. Paul Schmidt studied and played both of the Horner instruments, the Squarpen and serpent, and also discussed the project Russ was working on; making a serpent vocal from scratch. All were happy to see that the Squarpen played like the prototype, and the serpent itself was nicely made and played like it should; no surprises! Paul Horner says that he is now practicing with Doug Yeo's *Le Monde du Serpent* CD, and hopes to premier his new serpent in the upcoming North Carolina Merry TubaChristmas concerts.

- On May 19, Doug Yeo presented a program *Tempted by a Serpent* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Boston. The event took place in the André Mertens Galleries for Musical Instruments, and was an informal foray into the world of the serpent. Doug played a *Dies Irae* and an *Alleluia v. Sapientia Deundabit* to demonstrate plainchant applications, four etudes by Schiltz, Métoyen and Dragonetti, and Michel Godard's *Serpens Secundo*.

- In June, Paul Schmidt was invited to sit in with the well known Civil War reenactment group, The First Brigade Band, in Watertown, Wisconsin. Besides joining the group on over-the-shoulder tenor horn, Paul played the ophicleide for the group's arrangement of a medley of Stephen Foster tunes, written originally for ophicleide solo by the director Dan Woolpert. The solo was written to demonstrate the ophicleide in the band's collection, but no ophicleide players had ever materialized to play it. Paul also gave the band a brief talk on the serpent, and demonstrated the serpent, Squarpen and Box-O-Cleide. Paul gave the group a copy of Doug Yeo's CD for their extensive library.

- On February 26, 2005, Doug Yeo will be playing ophicleide for a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* by Berlioz. The group will be Boston's Pro Musica Chorus, with a pick up orchestra mostly comprised of players from the Handel and Haydn Society, and the concert will take place at Jordan Hall at New England Conservatory. Doug also expects to play bass trombone on another part of the same piece, when it is performed next season by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. As previously mentioned, Doug Yeo performed Drake Mabry's *Quatre Tanka* at Tanglewood on July 11.

- Jon Hall, director of the Centennial Brass Band of Portland, Maine, writes that he joined Bob Eliason for a duet of two ophicleides with saxhorn band (The Yankee Brass Band) in July. They have been trying to get the personnel of the New England Ophicleide Quartet together for a full rehearsal (so far they have managed only three at any given time). The members include Bob Eliason, Steve Gasiorowski, Jon Hall (Steve and Jon from the Yankee Brass Band), and John Bieniarz of the 12th New Hampshire Serenade Band. A few years ago, Jon did work up the *Kuffner Polonaise for Keyed Bugle* for performance, and



Paul Schmidt playing the new wooden church serpent built by Paul Horner

hopes to do it again soon. He adds, "Guess I'd better get to know more proponents of the "ill wind that nobody blows good", or, if you prefer, the Platypus of the brass instrument family." (*Only actual players of the keyed brasses are allowed to make such rude comments on our favorite instruments in this newsletter. And, anyway, isn't that quote-let more correctly associated with the bassoon?the Editor*).

CANTAX GARDEN (after Ogden Nash)

I fear that I have never heard
A serpent lovely as a bird.
Perhaps when all the serpents cease
The birds can once more sing in peace.

by Chris Gutteridge

More Exciting News

- Scott Hall, an artist from Florida who likes to make playable musical objects among other things, has made a new instrument called the BassOon. It is a hybrid which has the body shape of an electric bass guitar and yet is fully chromatic and playable using the lip-vibrated mouthpiece and basic horn-and-finger hole system of brasswinds such as the cornett. Basically, you strap it on your chest, hold the mouthpiece to your mouth with your right hand, work the three finger holes with the left hand (to control tone, not pitch – it's all done with the mouthpiece), and enjoy the deep sounds that result from the long and narrow bore (possibly akin to a rackett). A picture of the instrument can be viewed on <www.geocities.com/scottfranklinhall>.
- Serpent newcomer Marit Strömberg of Uppsala, Sweden, writes that she plays a Harding serpent, purchased in 2003. She is a music teacher and already plays cornett, bassoon and sings. She is currently a member of Joculatores Upsalienses, an ensemble of recorders, violins, lutes, crumhorn, percussion, and singers, and a recently formed group of three cornetto players and a lute. To break the ice, Marit submitted a couple of lightly humorous pictures, before and after serpent. She may be contacted at <marit.stromberg@rocketmail.com>. (see pp 6 & 7)
- Doug Yeo recently took delivery of a buccin by Sautermeister in Lyon, 1839, obtained from Andre Bissonet in Paris. The instrument apparently had slide issues, so Doug is using only the bell, in combination with a slide from a French trombone from the late 19th century, itself once owned by Johannes Rochut. He now has the three historical brasses Berlioz called for in his Messe Solennelle; serpent, ophicleide and buccin. And he'll be playing them, too.
- Judith Gibbons, of Coventry, England, has communicated several times in her efforts to learn more about a serpent maker in her family tree, John Fusedale of London. She has not been able to locate his will so far, very frustrating, but has established his burial at February 14, 1817, St. Margaret's Churchyard, Westminster. She has also found some mention of him in directories from the late 1700s and early 1800s. One such entry by Roger Wakefield, a merchant near London, mentions "Fusedale, J., Musical Serpent Maker, 13, Dartmouth Street, Westminster." She located this entry via an on-line service that allows searching various old texts, and only found the name after substituting 'f' for 's', as the long 's' was in use at the time (As Stan Freberg famously said in his reading of the Declaration of Independence, "the perfruit of happineff ?? Oh, well, as long as it's 'in'!") This entry is interesting, as



"DeGaulle in Bathtub", a local rock formation just off the coast at Cape Cornwall, and visible from Boswedden House, site of the upcoming 2005 Serpentarium

it's the only one to describe him as a serpent maker. In 1776, he and his brother Thomas ran a carpet and cabinet warehouse at 101 High Holborn, and by 1778 is was simply a carpet warehouse, and in 1781 they were certified bankrupt upholders (upholsterers). In 1791, brother Thomas as a carpenter and joiner in Croydon, and John as listed as cabinet maker in Dartmouth Street. He was still listed that way in 1811, so Judith wonders if he tried to make a living as a full-time serpent maker but found it didn't pay? In her directory searches to date, John is the only person listed as being a serpent maker. If you would like to correspond with Judith, email her at <judes@futura.ision.co.uk>.

- Another serpent website has surfaced, <<http://serpent.instrument.free.fr>>, in the French language. It is apparently devoted to research and educational efforts in France, pertaining to the serpent and related instruments.

- Doug Yeo wrote to say that his CD, *Le Monde du Serpent*, has sold out it's initial production run of 500 disks, and he has reordered another 500. As the album has been out for a while now, more reviews have made it into print, and many are included in Doug's website, <www.yeodoug.com/publications/le_monde_du_serpent/le_monde_du_serpent_reviews>. These include some from mainstream music magazines, such as American Record Guide and Fanfare Magazine. Doug also says that he has had two new mouthpieces made by Keith Rogers for "George" the contrabass serpent, and is very pleased with them.

- In 1859 the Staunton band, which was then known as Turner's Silver Cornet Band, purchased a complete set of Over-the-Shoulder Saxhorns, made by Antoine/Adolphe Sax himself. These horns were carried through the Civil War as the band of the 5th Virginia Regiment, The Stonewall Brigade. After the surrender at Appomattox, General Grant allowed the members of the band to keep the horns instead of confiscating them. These horns remain the property of the Stonewall Brigade Band and are the only remaining complete set of Confederate Civil War horns in existence. Since these original horns are very fragile, the band feels that they are better preserved as historic relics, rather than subjected to the rigors of regular use.

Thanks to a generous donation, the band has now ordered a complete set of reproduction Saxhorns, and will field a small ensemble which will be called The Stonewall Brigade Mountain Saxhorn Band. The instruments are being acquired through the Dr. Jobe Coy Metts and Dr. Margaret Cabell Metts Trust Fund. The fund was established by Randy and Mary Kay Cabell, Margaret's parents, and includes a grant from the IBM corporation. Randy and Mary Kay are well known in the serpent and antique brass community, and they have started three 19th century brass

bands in Virginia and North Carolina. The instruments are being made by Robb Stewart, and while the group waits for the two year delivery date to arrive, they have borrowed a previous set of Stewart reproductions from the Cabell-Breckinridge Brass Band at VMI.



*the current Stonewall Brigade Mountain Saxhorn Band
with reproduction Over-the-Shoulder Saxhorns*

by Robb Stewart

*L-R: John Koplitz & Eric Laser (E-flat Sopranos), Roger
Ergenbright (B-flat Bass), Bob Hanson (E-flat Alto), Bill
Brannock (B-flat Baritone)*

SERPENT

Even the sensual curves of
the sinuous serpent
seem strangely secular.

Clad in tight, black leather;
breaking all musical rules;
he seems the epitome of sin.

Yet he sneaked in
with a catholic canon,
singing amongst the monks.

Under the eaves of cottages,
in open air, he is mocked as
he honks and hoots.

Once under the church's roof,
he makes the rafters ring;
but he never sings the words.

by Chris Gutteridge