

## Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2007

### A Note from the Editor

This is the first issue of the Newsletter to be distributed outside of Europe on a subscription-only basis; Nigel Nathan already does his this way for all European readers. I ask that private recipients (those who are not at music schools, museums, or with reciprocal newsletters) make periodic donations; this is usually a suggested subscription of \$15 every two years, but people who make significant contributions to the serpent world (submitting articles, performing on serpents and related instruments, composing for serpent, etc.) are not strictly required to make cash contributions. When the last issue (April 2007) was mailed, it included a card that indicated to the reader what their status was. I don't want to confuse readers by this system, but as publisher and distributor for all non-European readers, I do have to find a way to accommodate those recipients who are outside of the normal subscription scenario. If you are not in the European distribution region and have any doubts or questions about your subscription status, please call, write, or email me at the address listed in the About the Organization section of this issue.

This issue has lots of good information about exciting new recordings and compositions, as well as coverage of recent serpent activities. It also includes an obituary for a former serpentist that I intended to publish in an earlier newsletter but failed to remember prior to publication; I apologize for the tardiness and it is included in this issue. Finally, I am happy to include a new serpent maker in the list of acknowledged manufacturers. Kaiser Serpents has produced a small number of good serpents made from composite materials and it looks like these will continue to be made for the foreseeable future.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter!

Paul Schmidt

### Workshops

#### • Report on the 2007 Serpentarium

The 2007 Serpentarium was held from Friday, May 25 thorough Monday, May 28, 2007 at The Bate Collection of Musical Instruments and the Faculty of Music's Denis Arnold Hall, Oxford, England. Hosting this time was Andrew Lamb of The Bate, with support from Dr. LaRue and others.

Early arrivals on Thursday were John Weber and Paul Schmidt, just arrived from Chicago. After spending the early afternoon wandering the surrounding area and enjoying lunch at a Thai restaurant, John and Paul stopped in to meet Andy Lamb. After getting a brief tour of The Bate and discussing the plans for the event, they departed for nearby Appleton and a visit with serpent maker David Harding. Jet lag eventually made itself known, and they decided to return to the hotel to turn in, only to be interrupted by a mobile phone call from Nigel Nathan, who had only just arrived at The Bate and wished to get together for dinner. The three met at Head of the River pub, adjoining the Thames River - very narrow at this point in its course.

Friday morning saw Andy, Paul, John and Nigel meeting back at The Bate for some hands-on investigation of the museum's serpents, ophicleides, bass horns and old tubas. American trumpet player Tristan Kadish, a student at Humbolt State University in California and friend to serpentist Bodie Pfost, arrived at The Bate to meet with trumpet maker and expert David Edwards. Tristan was intrigued by the possibility of studying serpent over the weekend and decided to stay for the workshop. Around the same time, ophicleidist Erhard Schwartz arrived from Germany and the growing assembly plus David Edwards slithered down the street to Head of the River for lunch.

In the early afternoon, Andy went to the local supermarket to buy provisions for the weekend. Knowing what to

expect, he wisely concentrated on gourmet beers and tea-time snacks. John, Erhard and Paul went along to help carry the large bags back to The Bate. Erhard and Tristan then started to work on their assigned serpents in a quartet that was rounded out by Nigel and John. In the later afternoon, the event formally commenced with the arrival of Chris Gutteridge, Hans-Martin Schlegel (Germany), Graeme Stentiford (Australia/New Zealand), Edwin Macadam, Stephen Turner, Graham Lyndon-Jones, Christian Koerner (Germany), Shirley Hopkins-Civil, Wik Bohdanowicz and Michelle Lomas. Besides 'these guilty', non-combatants included Wik's mate Anja Spackman, Graeme's wife Hillary, Edwin's wife Sheila Girling-Macadam, and Michelle's son Adam. The group began initial playing sessions under the direction of Paul and John, playing through John's arrangements of *La Bouree* by Praetorius and *Hunting Scene* by Bucolosi, and Paul's arrangements of Bruckner's *Aequale*, von Weber's

*Huntsmans' Chorus*, Beethoven's *Equali No. 1*, Blackwell & Lee's *Friends in Low Places*, and Seiber's *Foxtrot*. The merry band then retired to the Head of the River for dinner and fine beers.

Saturday saw the workshop kick into high gear with the arrival of Murray Campbell from Scotland and Phil Humphries of the London Serpent Trio, who would officiate and direct the group's sessions. It was revealed that this year, the event would drive towards a formal concert on Monday afternoon, as opposed to the informal private concerts of the previous workshops. This decision meant that there would be less time for small group sessions and the teaching of beginners, with full group rehearsals taking priority. Nevertheless, two quartets were established early on to prepare some small ensemble selections for the concert. The group was also augmented by another beginner, Liam Higgs, who had previously



*Serpentarium Participants*

Back row, L-R: Graham Lyndon-Jones, Liam Higgs, Chris Gutteridge, Edwin Macadam, Phil Humphries, Michelle Lomas, Nigel Nathan, Stephen Turner, Shirley Hopkins-Civil, John Weber, Erhard Schwartz, Wik Bohdanovich. Front row, L-R: interloping boy, Christian Körner, Andrew Lamb, Graeme Stentiford, Hans-Martin Schlegel, Murray Campbell, Paul Schmidt



*Finnish postcard serpent*

attended one of The Bate's instrument making workshops to build a Squarpernt. After lunch alfresco nearby, the group convened at the Christ Church War Memorial Garden, located at the northwest corner of Christ Church Meadow, for the traditional group photograph. The area proved to be congested with hordes of tourists and local citizens, out enjoying the beautiful weather and historic scenery, but our official photographer Anja was able to squeeze off a few shots with minimal intrusion by non-serpentists. After more afternoon rehearsals and limited small group sessions, Andy announced that he had arranged for dinner at a local restaurant. This turned out to be The Mitre, a historic pub on High Street that dates from 1261. Andy had booked an upstairs room for our private party, but at the last minute it was discovered that a building inspection that same day had resulted in the upper floors being structurally condemned. Luckily, the management was able to relocate our party to an auxiliary pub-ette in an adjoining building, and our band enjoyed a fine meal and further exploration of the local brews.

Sunday began with a disappointing turn in the weather, with the temperatures dropping, dark clouds moving in, rain pelting at us sideways, and everyone glad that the group photo had already been taken. Rehearsals took up the morning, and after a quick lunch held right there in Denis Arnold Hall, thanks to Andy and another shopping trip, he opened up The Bate for the afternoon. Andy gave a grand tour of the museum, describing its history and the contributions of luminaries such as the eponymous Philip Bate and former curator Anthony Baines. Then came opportunities to get up close and personal with more instruments, including not only brasses but unique instruments like one of Handel's own harpsichords. Unfortunately, Murray also had to depart for home at this time; his fine playing and knowledge were missed. Simon Chadwick, a regular attendee of previous Serpentariums, arrived in the late afternoon to tell us that he had decided to move on to other interests, and was able to sell his

instruments to those present. It being a Sunday and a Bank Holiday, most local restaurants were closed or only serving drinks, so many participants divided into smaller bands to walk the city in the rain and find sustenance. One group consisting of Chris, Hans, Christian, Nigel, Shirley, John and Paul was able to find a very upscale restaurant that served gourmet pizzas and fine wines.

As the cock thought about crowing but went back inside where it was warm and dry Monday morning, the soggy participants made their way through umbrella-inverting winds and rain to historic Holywell Music Room. This building is said to be the oldest purpose-built music room in Europe, making it England's first concert hall. It was built in 1742 and many musicians, including Handel, have performed music there. This important auditorium includes a small pipe organ and U-shaped raked seating. A surprise guest group, added at the last minute, was The Lost Chord, the English Music Hall duet comprised of concertina player David Townsend and Phil Humphries on serpent. Notable guests in the audience included David Harding and serpentist Christopher Baines and his wife Clare; Christopher had been unable to attend the weekend workshop but did not want to miss the concert and the chance to visit with his friends.

The concert, which was timed to run about two hours, began with *Old Comrades (Alte Kameraden)* by Carl Teike, followed by a *Motet* by Lassus. Next, Erhard stood and gave a brief lecture introduction to the ophicleide, playing the *Dies Irae* to demonstrate. The group then performed *The Dambusters March* by Eric Coates, arranged by Graeme for the occasion, with the melodies being introduced as solos by Erhard on his ophicleide;



*Square serpent drawing by Bracelli, from  
The World Encyclopaedia of Musical Instruments  
by Max Wade-Matthews*

subsequently, Erhard performed on both ophicleide and serpent. Next, the first of the small quartets, comprised of Phil, Paul, John and Christian, performed *If Ye Love Me* by Thomas Tallis, arranged by Christian and Murray, and a new *Waltz for Four Serpents* composed by Liam Higgs. The Lost Chord then performed *Alice Where Are Thou* by Joseph Ascher, *The Lost Chord* by Arthur Sullivan, and *In a Persian Market* by Albert Ketélbey. The full band then performed *The Amherst Suite* by Simon Proctor, *La Bouree* by Michael Praetorius, and *Hunting Scene* by Bucolosi, arranged by John.

After an 'interval', the group played *Baby Elephant Walk* by Henry Mancini. Phil then produced Christopher Monk's unique "straight serpent", which he made as an experiment when first starting to make serpents and which is now used by The London Serpent Trio. Phil knelt on the floor to finger its six holes while John stood on a chair to blow the mouthpiece, and together they performed *Heart of Oak* by William Boyce. The second small quartet, comprised of Graeme and Hillary (vocals), Graham and Hans, performed *In Te Domine Speravi* by Josquin d'Ascanio and *Ostinato vo' seguire* by Bartolomeo Tromboncino. The full group then returned to perform *O Magnum Mysterium* by Giovanni Gabrieli. The Lost Chord returned to the stage to play *Rondo alla Turca (Turkish March)* by Mozart, *Berceuse de Jocelyn (Angels Guard Thee)* by Benjamin Godard, and *The Hallelujah Chorus from Messiah* by Handel. Finally, the whole ensemble returned to perform Cliff Bevan's arrangement of *Overture Solennelle 1812* by Tchaikovsky, with Andy joining in with pencils on empty wine bottles in place of pealing church bells and the audience popping a few well timed balloons in substitution of cannon. The audience was ecstatic and an encore was demanded, so *Turf Tavern* by Simon Proctor, part of *Three Pieces for Three Serpents*, was performed to what one could imagine might be thunderous applause.

Those players who did not need to leave for home stayed to have a late lunch at the pub named Far From The Madding Crowd. Beer flowed from the taps as conversation turned to where the next Serpentarium should take place, back at Nigel's home at Cape Cornwall or another location. Everyone present also thanked Andy for his efforts at hosting the 2007 event.

#### ● Report on the Early Brass Festival

After last year's unusual festival, held in conjunction with other events in Northfield, Minnesota, this year's event was a return to the basics. The festival took place in Spartanburg, South Carolina, at Converse College, hosted by Sabine Klaus of the National Music Museum.

Participants began to arrive in the late morning of Friday, August 3, for registration at the Blackman Music Building. All festival functions took place at Blackman, with the

exception of the lectures, which took place at the nearby Phifer Building's Dalton Auditorium. Early afternoon lectures commenced with Tom Crown, of Crown Mutes, presenting *Brass Instrument Mutes Through the Ages*. This was followed by *The Evolution of Trumpet and Bugle Signals in the United States Military from 1798 to 1874*, as presented by Jari Villanueva. After a break, Henry Howey spoke about *Opera in Piazza*, followed by Loenzo Greenwich, who was scheduled to talk about *The Francis Johnson Phenomenon*, but changed the focus to biographies of people who have studied Francis Johnson. After another break for dinner, HBS president Jeff Nussbaum gave to official welcome to open the festival, after which Joella Utley gave her presentation *The History of Music in Spartanburg, SC; A Century of Musical Cooperation Between the Community and Converse College*, followed by *Keyed Bugle Methods: What They Tell Us About the Repertoire*, by Ralph Dudgeon.



*Early Brass Festival serpentists*  
Back , L-R: Paul Horner, John Weber, Robert Wagenknecht  
Front , L-R: Russ Kaiser, Paul Schmidt, Tra Wagenknecht

The evening concluded with a short concert in Blackman's Daniel Recital Hall. The concert opened with Barry Bauguess on natural and baroque trumpets and Nathaniel Cox on natural trumpet, accompanied by Steven Plank on harpsichord. Barry began with *Sonata di Risposte detta la Salvati* by Girolamo Fantini, Barry playing on a coiled natural trumpet with Nathaniel on a straight model, followed by *Duet 4* and *Duet 3* by Heinrich Biber. Next was *God Save Great Washington*, an anonymous Moravian selection, after which was *Sonata No. 70* by Johann Pezel, followed by *Romance* by Josef Kail. They closed their part of the program with a selection called simply *Duet*, by Romanus Weichlein based on a Mozart *Horn Concerto*.



The second part of the program featured Ralph Dudgeon on keyed bugle. He began by joining with Jeff Stockham, also on keyed bugle, to perform duets from Charles Noblet's *Nouvelle Méthode de Bugle*. Next, Ralph was joined by Paul Schmidt on ophicleide, performing from *Duets for Keyed Bugle and Ophicleide* from A. Culet's *Méthode Complète de Bugle*, numbers 2 (*Allegretto*) and 3 (*Andante*), respectively. Ralph and Paul remained on stage, and were joined by the returning Jeff, plus Stewart Carter on narrow bore trombone. This quartet performed three selections from Keith's *Collection of Instrumental Music for 2 Keyed Bugles, Trombone and Ophicleide*, the *Rockaway Quick Step*, *Brooklyn Waltz*, and *Medley Quick Step*, respectively. This concluded the evening's concert and the day's events.

Saturday began with presentation of the Christopher Monk Award to Robert Barclay, for his work in the study of natural trumpets and associated manufacturing of replicas. Two lectures followed, *A Recently Discovered Trumpet by Wolf Birckholtz, Nuremberg, 1650*, presented by Michael Munkwitz and Rick Seraphinoff, *Acoustic Impedance of Brass Instruments*, by Robert Pyle. After an hour's playing sessions and lunch, the participants took an excursion to the home of Joella Utley to view the Utley Collection (primarily trumpets). While there, players could also visit the adjacent home of Sabine Klaus, where Robert Pyle was doing analysis on any horn they cared to have tested; he used the same equipment discussed in his lecture (the BIAS, or Brass Instrument Acoustical Analysis, system), which Sabine is also using as part of her ongoing efforts to catalog the Utley Collection for the National Music Museum.

After returning from the Utley home near Landrum to Spartanburg for dinner, a second concert took place. This was a combination reading session and public performance of Andreas Hammerschmidt for Voices and Instruments, directed by Charlotte Leonard. Two selections, *Herr, ich bin nicht werth* and *Gott führet auff mit jauchzen*, were used as the basis for this performance workshop, which was performed by a band consisting of cornettos, sackbuts, some natural horns, two serpents, and organ, along with vocal soloists and a choir provided by a local church, plus college and festival volunteers. Paul Schmidt and John Weber traded off on the single serpent part, according to when the vocal structure changed between one choir and the other, or choir versus organ, etc; and both played when all vocalists were singing together. The evening concluded with the traditional pizza party.

Sunday morning started with Sabine Klaus' *Miscellaneous Observations on Early Brass Instruments With Slides*, followed by *The Slide Trumpet, the Early Trombone, and the 15th-Century Musical Repertory*, presented by Keith Polk, after which Trevor Herbert spoke about *The Way They Played: Early Recordings and What They Offer*

*Historic Brass Research*. After lunch, the HBS Business Meeting took place, followed immediately by the final gala concert. The brief program opened with the world premiere performance of Simon Proctor's *Fanfare for the Historic Brass Society*, performed by Ralph Dudgeon on keyed bugle, Celeste Holler Seraphinoff on natural horn, Stewart Carter on trombone, and Paul Schmidt on serpent. This selection, suggested by Craig Kridel, is intended to be played as an opener at future Early Brass Festivals held by the HBS. It includes several 'in jokes', including in part some quotes from some of Simon's previously composed pieces, such as the *Serpent Concerto* and *Keyed Bugle Concerto*, restated to sound more like fanfares. Don Johnson then played a set of Jean-Baptiste Arban's *Variations on Carnival of Venice* on the echo cornet, and a natural trumpet ensemble played Antonín Dvorak's *Fanfare for the 1891 Prague Exhibition*. The concert closed with a reprise of the Proctor *Fanfare*, this time performed by a larger group of nineteen players who volunteered spontaneously when the opportunity was offered. This time, besides the core quartet from the premiere, the band included natural trumpets, echo cornet, cornetto, natural horns and another keyed bugle. Since this group did not have the benefit of a rehearsal, Paul Niemisto graciously agreed to direct.

While there was very little time in this festival for informal playing sessions, the serpent contingent was able to get some time together by coming in an hour early on Saturday and Sunday, and staying after the final concert on Sunday.



Paul Schmidt and Ralph Dudgeon play keyed brass duets and World Premiere performance of Simon Proctor's *Fanfare for the Historic Brass Society*

The serpentists included established players Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, John Weber, and Paul Schmidt, plus first time EBF participants Paul Horner and Russ Kaiser. Paul Horner had previously started out by being the second known person to build a Squarpent from the plans on the Serpent Website, and subsequently made a very nice wood and leather church serpent of traditional construction; this is the instrument he used for the festival. Russ Kaiser is the man behind Kaiser Serpents, a new operation producing small quantities of fiberglass church serpents, and he played one of his prototypes. Paul Schmidt and Robert Wagenknecht also fit in some time with ophicleides, with Tra Wagenknecht playing her quinticlave by Robb Stewart.

---

## 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](http://www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html)>

*(serpents & historical oboes)*

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

---

David Harding (by EMS Bradford-  
order here)  
The Early Music Shop  
38 Manningham Lane  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire BD1 3EA  
England  
Phone: (44) 01274 393753  
<[www.e-m-s.com](http://www.e-m-s.com)>  
<[sales@earlyms.demon.co.uk](mailto:sales@earlyms.demon.co.uk)>

---

David Harding (information only, not  
for ordering)  
56 Netherton Road  
Appleton  
ABINGDON  
Oxon. OX13 5JZ  
England

<[david@chimeracrafts.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:david@chimeracrafts.fsnet.co.uk)>  
Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

Kaiser Serpents  
<http://www.kaiserserpents.com/>

*(fiberglass serpents after Baudouin)*

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

Phone: 626-447-1904  
<[oldbrass@altrionet.com](mailto:oldbrass@altrionet.com)>

*(ophicleides, bass horns)*

---

Nicholas Perry  
224 North Street  
Luton  
LU2 7QN  
England

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992  
*(early cimbasso, bass horns)*

---

Derek Farnell  
82 Crumpsall Lane  
Manchester M8 5SG  
England

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

---

Matthias Wetter  
Musikinstrumentenbau  
CH-8475 Ossingen  
Switzerland

Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184  
<[wetter.m@bluewin.ch](mailto:wetter.m@bluewin.ch)>  
<[www.wetter-instrumente.ch](http://www.wetter-instrumente.ch)>

*(alphorns and serpents)*

---

Build an experimental serpent  
from plans via  
<[www.serpentwebsite.com](http://www.serpentwebsite.com)>



## Denis Wise - In Memoriam

Dorset serpentist Denis Wise (pictured above), who died June 16 of 2006, was born in 1933. After a brief period during which he was evacuated to the States when the clouds of war gathered in Europe, he was returned to England and at the age of 14 took up the trombone at school. Preferring his music lessons to more boring youth activities, he rapidly progressed and joined the National Youth Orchestra two years later.

He gained a degree in physics at university and joined the Royal Signals for his national service. He spent his first year as an instructor of radio theory before transferring to the Corps Band, where he began taking lessons from the renowned Sam Holt of the Hallé Orchestra. Denis got a scholarship to the Royal College of Music and began playing professionally as principal trombone of Sadler's Wells touring company in 1958. Presently, he joined the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli's leadership. In 1963 Denis moved to the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra when Constantin Silvestri was at the helm. He played in a section that included Charlie Smith, Dick Taylor, Arthur Mason, Fred Launn, Malcolm Warne Holland, Alwyn Green and Colin Young. Denis undertook the role of chairman of the orchestra committee, and when financial problems in the orchestra in the early 1980s resulted in calls for reductions in personnel, he was crucial in setting up an appeal fund, speaking at concerts, and marshalling the efforts of the orchestra. He even applied for the post of chief executive to show his dedication, as well as going on a sponsored mountain climb of all 14 Welsh mountains of over 3,000 feet in one day in an effort to raise

money for the appeal. Without the hard work of Denis and his colleagues, it is doubtful that the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra would have continued to exist.

After 18 years in the orchestra, Denis took on varying roles with the Berkshire Music Service, becoming deputy director. His commitment and enthusiasm to music education influenced parents, teachers and professionals alike, and well-known orchestral musicians would visit Berkshire regularly to give master classes, refusing to take a fee. By 1990 Denis thought he had retired, but he soon took up a teaching position at Canford School, a post he only recently relinquished.

Denis was an active person, playing excellent squash, running marathons, enjoying outdoor life, camping with family and friends. Those who knew him were familiar with his great energy, breadth of knowledge and a prodigious memory that allowed him to indulge in hours of storytelling and poetry quotation, more often than not at a marching pace deep in the Dorset countryside. Denis is survived by his wife and two daughters.

*condensed from emails and an obituary in The Trombonist*



*Ralph Dudgeon and Doug Yeo*

## Where Serpents Gather

- Donald Beyer wrote to say that there is an annual convention of contrabassoon players that convenes on New Year's Day in Las Vegas, and that he has been participating as a guest serpentist. Donald also played serpent as part of the International Double Reed Society's conference at Ithaca College in New York state. The event took place for three days starting on June 12, and included a mass ensemble



*Gabe Stone in Colonial Williamsburg*

session wherein the players read excerpts from Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*; Donald says that he played from the contrabassoon part.

- On August 21, a recording session was held in Boston for the soundtrack for the New York Historical Society's upcoming exhibition, *French Founding Father: Lafayette's Return to Washington's America*. The exhibition will run from November 14, 2007 - August 2008. Scored for flute/piccolo, violin/viola, keyed bugle and serpent, the soundtrack will accompany various presentations in the exhibition and will provide setup and background music for spoken commentary. The players at the recording session were: Peter Bloom (flute/piccolo), Brian Clague (violin/viola), Ralph Dudgeon (keyed bugles) and Douglas Yeo (serpent). The works recorded included published pieces that were used at Lafayette's visit in 1824. The selections included *Hail! Lafayette* by Major J. N. Barker, *LaFayette's Welcome to Philadelphia*, a march with variations by a "Young Lady", *The Marquis de Lafayette's Welcome to New York* with variations, *Welcome to the Nation's Guest* by Oliver Shaw, *Honour to the Brave Lafayette (Grand March)* by Francis Johnson, *The General*

by Francis Johnson Monmouth by Francis Johnson, German Town by Francis Johnson, and The Cadmus by Francis Johnson. With overdubbing, various combinations of instruments were utilized including an ensemble of three keyed bugles and four serpents on *Welcome to the Nation's Guest*. For more information on the New York Historical Society exhibition on Lafayette, visit the following websites:

[https://www.nyhistory.org/web/default.php?section=exhibits\\_collections&page=exhibit\\_detail&id=2917008](https://www.nyhistory.org/web/default.php?section=exhibits_collections&page=exhibit_detail&id=2917008) and <https://www.nyhistory.org/web/PDF/Lafayette&Washing.pdf>

- Gabe Stone plays with the Colonial Williamsburg crowd and submitted a photo of himself playing his Harding serpent on the day that Queen Elizabeth II visited in May. Gabe splits his time between directing a high school band and playing professionally as a balladeer at Williamsburg. Besides serpent, he also plays flute, cittern, mandolin, bagpipes, to name but a few. Gabe plays one of the new model Harding serpents in C, which he calls 'Jennifer', and recently purchased Nigel Nathan's Monk serpent in D, which he fittingly dubbed 'Penny' (a reference to the 'D' symbol on old English pennies as well as to Penzance & Penwith, the towns closest to Nigel's home). He prefers the D serpent for those tunes that are played in the key of D, as many fiddle tunes are, since playing such tunes on a C serpent is quite difficult. Gabe recalls that after the Queen viewed his band, one of her ladies in waiting came over and asked him whether the serpent was a proper instrument. Gabe replied that, yes, the serpent was indeed a proper instrument, and the Queen was obviously relieved.

- On September 3, a happy convergence of events brought several of the world's leading ophicleide players together in Berlin for an Ophicleide Summit. The catalyst for the



*Erhard Schwartz, Doug Yeo, Nick Byrne  
at the 'Ophicleide Summit' in Berlin*

meeting was the Boston Symphony Orchestra's European Festivals Tour which found Doug Yeo, the orchestra's bass trombonist, playing ophicleide on four performances of Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust*. With one concert in Berlin (where the Berlioz was not performed), Doug contacted Berlin ophicleidist Erhard Schwartz, from the period brass quintet Passion des Quivres, about the possibility of getting together to play duets. That idea fell into place rather quickly but within a few days, Doug learned that Nick Byrne, second trombonist of the Sydney Symphony, had taken a six month leave from his orchestra and was living in Munich. Doug contacted Nick, who was happy to make the trip to Berlin to make up a trio of ophicleide players from three continents. As plans unfolded, Mark Evans, tubist with the Deutsches Oper in Berlin who also plays ophicleide, decided to join the group. The quartet met at the Musikinstrumenten-Museum Berlin, part of the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung, adjacent to the famous Berlin Philharmonie, home of the Berlin Philharmonic. Gerd Kempkes, who is keeper of brass instruments at the museum and the person who does the restoration of brasses for the collection, graciously provided a room in the museum for the historic gathering of ophicleide players.

The day unfolded with trios and quartets as well as hours of conversation about instruments, mouthpieces, music and ophicleide history. Here is a rundown of the instruments that were used: Erhard Schwartz - ophicleide in B flat, 11 keys Eppelsheim (Munich), 2007, Nick Byrne - ophicleide in C, 10 keys Halari/Sudre (Paris), c. 1875, Douglas Yeo - ophicleide in C, 9 keys Roehn (Paris), c. 1855, Mark Evans - ophicleide in B flat, 9 keys L'abbaye, c. 1830 (?). Erhard's ophicleide is a new instrument, newly designed and made by Eppelsheim in Munich; it represents the first new ideas in ophicleide manufacturing in nearly 130 years. Nick, Doug and Mark all purchased their historical instruments from the Parisian dealer, Andre Bissonnet, and their instruments represented a cross section of early, middle and late ophicleide design. Each had a different system of key work and differing sounds and playing characteristics.

Using trios provided by Paul Schmidt, the group rotated players and parts, reading old German arrangements, Renaissance trios and fugues as well as some contemporary selections brought by Erhard. The sound of an ophicleide ensemble was a rare one indeed and to say that the participants had a good time would be a profound understatement. Recognizing that the event was unique, cameras were put to good use and a brief video was made of Nick, Erhard and Doug playing together (using Doug's cell phone!); this video has been put up on the YouTube website at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUS-NJ8nSnI> (or simply search YouTube for the word 'ophicleide'). The piece being played is *Das treue Deutsche Herz* arranged Rob. Müller.

After lunch at the Philharmonie canteen and another session of playing, Gerd Kempkes led the group on a private tour of the Musikinstrumenten-Museum. The Museum has an impressive collection of brass instruments (although it houses just a fraction of the instruments it owned before World War II, many instruments having been damaged beyond repair during the war or looted at war's end) including a superb 11 key ophicleide in B flat by C. W. Moritz (Berlin, 1900). The collection also has an impressive Serpent Forveille (France, c. 1823) with a zoomorphic bell, and several early trombones including a stunning bass trombone by Wolf Wilhelm Haas (Nurnberg, early 18th century). Also on display is an unmarked and undated church serpent in C which, while in poor condition (the museum had several serpents before the war but only one remains in the collection), was beautifully displayed with a fine ivory mouthpiece amongst several beautiful cornetti. The tour concluded with a visit to the museum's basement storage area where instruments damaged during the war are kept for inspection by scholars, and a visit to the museum's restoration workshop.

The bringing together of several leading ophicleide players from three continents was a unique event that opens possibilities for subsequent gatherings. Lieber ophicleide!  
*submitted by Doug Yeo*



*Cliff Bevan plays Besson's Giant Tuba  
at the Horniman Museum, London*

● It's always pleasing when someone admits that bass instruments exist, and if that someone mentions contrabass instruments it's more pleasing still. When television production company Tiger Aspect suggested using the Anaconda in the 'Bass' episode of their four-part series on the elements of music (the program segments included 'Melody', 'Rhythm', 'Harmony', & 'Bass') I was therefore delighted to be asked to play it. Filming took place in Scotland, where the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments has been the Anaconda's home ever since director Arnold Myers arranged its preservation for posterity. It's twenty years or more since I had played this unique instrument, so I arrived the afternoon before to relearn the fingering. Since the visual aspect was so important I thought it best to use the original crook rather than either of the two improved versions made by Christopher Monk. This didn't help either note production or tone, but then the sound on my television set isn't as faithful as all that and I hoped that the populace at large wouldn't object. I was required to perform on various bass instruments as well, curator Darryl Martin and postgraduate saxhorn expert Eugenia Mitroulia spending the afternoon scrabbling around in large crates and assembling an ophicleide, G bass trombone, sousaphone, euphonium and six-valved CC tuba for me to get to know. The filming took place the following morning, the crew quickly overcoming the initial shock of coming face-to-face with this array of wood and metal tubing. With excellent commentary by composer and expositeur-extraordinaire Howard Goodall, the series was well received. As for me, I played the bass part of Sousa's 'Liberty Bell' on the tuba and part of the bass line of a chorus from Mendelssohn's *Elijah* on the Anaconda. This extract introduced the entire programme, Howard commenting 'It never really caught on . . .'. So I got my comeuppance in the end.

*submitted by Cliff Bevan*

● On May 2-3, Doug Yeo travelled to South Carolina to play on and record two rare metal serpents in the Joe R. and Joella F. Utley Collection of Brass Instruments. The sessions were overseen by Sabine Klaus, curator of the Utley Collection at the home of Joella Utley. The Utley Collection has two extraordinary metal serpents: a church serpent in D of brass by Nicolas Pierre Joly (Bar-sur-Aube, France, 1829) and the other an English military serpent in C of copper by William Lander (Mere, Wiltshire, England, c. 1825).

Videographer Martin Aigner and photographer Mark Olencki were on hand to document the recording which will be used both on the website of the National Music Museum as well as in an accompanying DVD to the forthcoming book by Sabine Klaus, *Trumpets and Other High Brass: A History Inspired by the Joe and Joella Collection*. While serpents don't usually qualify as "high





*Doug Yeo with metal serpent by Nicolas Pierre Joly  
standing L-R: Joella Utley, Craig Kridel, Sabine Klaus*

brass," these instruments are unusual enough that they have merited discussion in the book.

Doug Yeo reports the Joly serpent had beautiful playing characteristics and a nice sound. The instrument was tight and resonant. The Lander serpent presented additional difficulties with a creative overtone series requiring very different fingerings than one might ordinarily use on a military serpent. Doug recorded several French and English serpent etudes; his video recording of the chant *Dies irae* was shown to participants in the recent Early Brass Festival at which time several other players were invited to make similar recordings in the Utley Collection.

- One of England's proponents of the West Gallery tradition is The Madding Crowd, which researches and performs the church and secular music of the English village bands and choirs in the period 1660 to 1861. The serpent in this particular band is played by Peter Hackston, who was interviewed in a program on BBC Radio 4 titled Song of Praise which aired at the end of August. Peter is a serpentist from way back, being counted among the

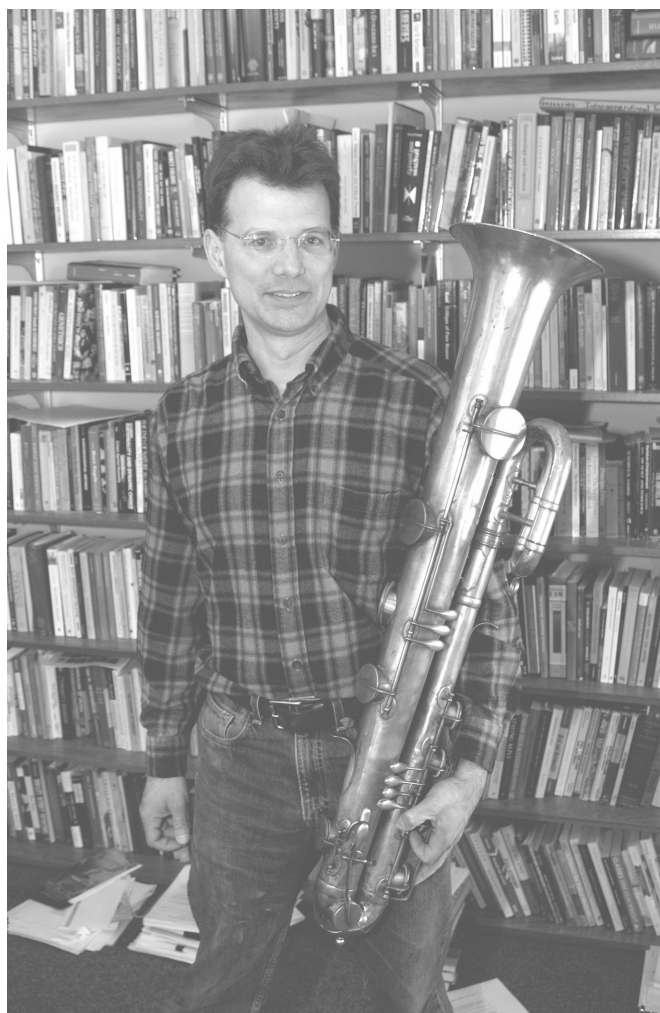
players at the 400 year celebration at St James, Smith Square in 1990. Unfortunately, the BBC website no longer lists this program in its online archive, but you can learn more about this band at their website <http://homepages.rya-online.net/mikebailey/>

- Boston's Handel and Haydn Society will give performances of Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* on February 25, 2008 (8:00 pm) and February 27 (3:00 pm) in Boston's Symphony Hall. Roger Norrington will conduct and Doug Yeo will play serpent. Doug previously played serpent on *Fireworks* in 2001 when he played with Boston Baroque (Martin Perlman, conductor) and recorded the work for Telarc Records. For more information and tickets, visit <http://www.handelandhaydn.org>

- Clark Wolf of Iowa, who only recently obtained an ophicleide, has been busy; in June he performed a solo with the Ames Community Band. Clark, a trombonist, has embraced the ophicleide so recently that as of last summer's Early Brass Festival in Northfield, Minnesota, he did not yet have an instrument. He happened upon one by Millereau in C, and has been hard at work. He writes that he received a standing ovation for his performance of the famous *Serenade* from Schubert's *Schwannengesang*, transcribed for euphonium and concert band by Leonard Falcone. He writes, "My wife made a movie of the performance, but I was unfortunately standing behind a flag from where she was set up. So all you can see is the flag." Hopefully we will have lots of opportunities to hear Clark's playing in the future.



*The Madding Crowd band, with serpentist Peter Hackston  
photo by The Image Works, courtesy of Mike Bailey  
used by permission*



Clark Wolf with his ophicleide in C by Millereau

## New Materials

• Nick Byrne's solo ophicleide CD, *Back From Oblivion*, has been released after a long period of anticipation. Although it has not appeared in the catalogs of most popular retailers as of yet, it is readily available from the record company, [www.melbarecordings.com.au](http://www.melbarecordings.com.au), as catalog number MR 301111.

It is exciting to finally see a solo ophicleide recording appear on the world stage. The label is Melba Recordings, a small Australian company that specializes in recordings of great 'bel canto' singers. Nick's ophicleide is accompanied by David Miller, one of Australia's leading vocal accompanists, on piano. Happily, Clifford Bevan was enlisted to write the authoritative liner notes, so the album not only sounds great, but there is something to be learned from reading as well. This CD nicely complements the previously released serpent album by Doug Yeo, *Le Monde du Serpent* (2003).

Nick has selected carefully from the relatively small pool of quality (and published) period ophicleide compositions, but

the set also includes transcriptions of vocal music, bassoon and trombone solos, and contemporary solos written for the ophicleide.

The actual period ophicleide compositions include *Fantasie Variée* by Belgian composer Dieudonné Dagnelies, and *Variations for Ophicleide* by Gottfried Heinrich Kummer, an obscure composer who liked to write for unusual instruments. Simon Proctor's *Ophicleide Concerto*, a work-in-progress, is represented here by the *Adagio* movement. In the category of vocal transcriptions are *O Ruddier Than the Cherry* from Handel's opera *Acis and Galatea* (formerly a favorite solo of ophicleide virtuoso Samuel Hughes), Edvard Grieg's *Ich Liebe Dich*, and Rachmaninoff's haunting *Vocalise, Op. 34 No. 14*. Playing compositions written for other bass wind instruments, Nick has included *Introduction et Polonaise, Op. 30* by Jules Demersseman (originally for valved trombone) and *Romance, Op. 62* by Edward Elgar (for bassoon). Hyacinthe Klosé, whose compositions have been used for everything from clarinet to tuba, contributes here his *Air Varié, Op. 21*, and Peter von Wienhardt's *Oblivion*, in its transcription by tango master Astor Piazzolla, closes the album. These selections allow Nick to show the ophicleide in both its expressive and plaintive upper register, where it is simultaneously vocal, resonant and vibrant, and its "warm and gruff" lower reaches that otherwise would be heard only in its former use as the bass member of early brass bands. The most virtuosic selections are the *Fantasie Variée*, *Introduction et Polonaise*, and *Air Varié*, while the most hauntingly vocal are the Proctor *Adagio* and the *Vocalise*.

For this recording, Nick used his excellent 1875 ophicleide in C by Halary/Sudre. The performances are lyrical and touched with that slightly fruity buoyancy that so typifies fine 'bel canto' style, so appropriate to the Victorian sensibility. Nick's playing shows the instrument in the best possible light, complemented by the exceptionally natural sounding recording technique; here, the sound itself more closely resembles that of a vocalist standing near the piano; all sense of the unfortunate aspects ophicleide-ness are absent, with only that subtly unique timbre, which is at once both vocal and brass, identifying the instrument.

This CD has already been popular on the play-lists of many classic radio programs, and according to the sales personnel at Melba, it has dominated their sales over the past two months, showing no sign of slowing down.

• The 2007 movie *Becoming Jane*, starring Anne Hathaway, James McAvoy, James Cromwell, Maggie Smith, and directed by Julian Jarrold, has a brief appearance of a serpent, which appears briefly below the pulpit of the church where Rev. Austen (Cromwell) gives a sermon in one of the first scenes of the film. The church band is not playing at that time, so no serpent sound is

present. The film tells the story of the youth and first love of future novelist Jane Austen.

● Liam Higgs, who wrote the nice waltz for serpents that was performed as part of the Serpentarium concert, has composed a new *Concerto for Ophicleide*. The piece is in three movements and from the submitted solo part, requires a fair amount of virtuosity on the part of the player. Liam also provided a CD with the computer generated accompaniment, and this reveals the concerto to be approximately 20 minutes in duration. I have played the piece a few times through using my bass trumpet; this is the only instrument I have that approximates the timbre of an ophicleide, other than the actual instrument, on which I have no where near the required skill to manage the rapid running lines of sixteenth notes. The work as a whole is charming, with a light style and breezy accompaniment. Liam indicated that this composition is also suitable for tuba, although many tubists would probably find that the piece goes a bit high at A above middle C. The low end is comfortable on ophicleide, as well as any tuba, at C two octaves below middle C. The movements lie in F, G, and E flat major, not bad for ophicleide, but at least half the notes lie within that awkward part of the ophicleide range that switches back and forth between 'left hand notes' and 'right hand notes', making it both more challenging to negotiate quickly, and also perhaps a bit muddy in color. For this reason, I feel that the piece will most likely be embraced more readily by tubists than by ophicleideists, but there are virtuosos out there who can certainly handle the challenges. Who will step up to the plate and perform this? - please write to Liam Higgs, 7 Lapwing Lane, Cholsey, Oxfordshire, OX10 9QR, England.

*reviewed by Paul Schmidt*

● Andy Lamb of The Bate Collection in Oxford belongs to a "team of muscular folk musicians", calling themselves The Alligator Horses. Their first CD is titled *Sporting & Military*, Wolgrub catalog number W001, and is available directly from Andy at [andrewlamb@music.ox.ac.uk](mailto:andrewlamb@music.ox.ac.uk). This is a collection of 19 boisterous selections, most of them American folk tunes, performed on various strings (fiddle, guitar, banjo, dulcimer, mandolin), percussion, and Russian Bassoon for no apparent reason. Andy sings lead vocals on most of the songs, but plays his serpent surrogate on only one track, *British Grenadiers*. The tunes include *Trayne of Artillery*, *Yankee Doodle*, *Marching Down to Old Quebec*, *Sydney Smith's March*, *See the Smoking Bowl*, *Derby Kelly*, *Napoleon's Grand March*, *Hunters of Kentucky*, *Oh California*, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, *John Brown's Body*, *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, *British Grenadiers*, *Drink Puppy Drink*, *Razors in the Air*, *Battle of the Somme*, *I Don't Want to Join the Army*, *Rob 'Em All*, and *Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground*. The playing is energetic and proficient, and the vocals are delivered in a manner that reminds one of Celtic folk singing. As for the

Russian Bassoon, there are few CDs featuring the instrument, but this is one of them! Contact Andy and ask him to send you a copy.

---

## 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.

(United Kingdom & European  
continent)

Nigel Nathan  
Boswedden House  
Cape Cornwall  
St. Just-in-Penwith  
PENZANCE  
Cornwall TR19 7NJ  
England

Phone & Fax: +44 (0)1736 788733  
email:  
<[serpents@boswedden.org.uk](mailto:serpents@boswedden.org.uk)>

(USA, Canada, other countries,  
Editor, Treasurer)

Paul Schmidt, editor  
Dick George, treasurer

Serpent Newsletter  
P.O. Box 954  
Mundelein, IL 60060  
USA

phone (no fax): 847-356-7865  
email: <[ocleide@earthlink.net](mailto:ocleide@earthlink.net)>  
webpage: [www.serpentwebsite.com](http://www.serpentwebsite.com)

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.



*John Williams reminiscing with Doug Yeo*

## More Exciting News

• Andrea Sauer of Germany, a music teacher and amateur trombonist, saw her first serpent at the age of 15 in a museum in France, and since that time has wanted one. She saw it listed every year in the Moeck catalog, but when she at last had the money it was not being produced anymore. But one year ago she found one on eBay, a reproduction by someone in the Museum Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, which was played for many years by the seller's father. Her serpent has a special story, told to Andrea by daughter of the player. It was apparently built by an instrument maker named Beck, based on X-rays of another instrument from the museum of Berlin. She has been looking for a serpent workshop, but has found no playing situations in Germany. She writes that she learned about the May Serpentarium in Oxford only after committing to participate in a trombone workshop in Truro, Cornwall, at the same time. Only too late for the Serpentarium did she learn that the other workshop had been cancelled! She hopes see in us May of



*Andrea Sauer with her special reproduction serpent*



*Guy Smith with his new Monk serpent*

2009....She writes, "I heard Michel Godard some months ago here in Nürnberg, it was very interesting, because it was in a very small jazz club and I could watch him with a distance from 3 meters... he played the most time Jazz with another saxophone player and sounds from a personal computer, not my music, very special, but very interesting!"

• Doug Yeo writes, "It was nearly 10 years ago, May 29 & 30, 1997, that I played Simon's *Serpent Concerto* with the Boston Pops, John Williams, conducting. John is back conducting the Pops this week and we got talking about the serpent again, and how much fun it was to do the piece 10 years ago. Tonight I brought my serpent in and we took a 10 year anniversary photo. Our expressions reflect the fun conversation we were having at the time, talking about Bernard Hermann's use of serpent (we were doing a film night tribute to Hermann at the concert tonight), how the serpent is constructed, Keith (who made it) and the piece. A nice moment and I thought I'd send you the photo. Amazing what has happened to me with the serpent in the last 10 years..."

● Guy Smith, a luthier in the Pacific Northwest, and the first person known to make a Squarpent from the plans on the Serpent Website has graduated to a 'real' Serpent. He writes, "I started on a Squarpent, but I rapidly graduated to a Harding plastic model, one of the molded foam ones. After a couple of years on the Harding, I finally bit the bullet and ordered a Monk, and have been playing that for several months now. I actually was quite impressed with the Harding instrument. The Harding was a good playable "student" quality instrument (and I mean "student" in the best sense) that I'd say is comparable to the better quality plastic recorders that most of the recorder players I know got started with. The performance (associated with the submitted photo) was actually something of a joke, playing *Hail to the Chief* and accompanied by two kazoos for the entrance of the Lute Society's past president to the LSA meeting. I was there for the LSA seminar, which was part of the Vancouver Early Music Festival, so I was mainly concerned with lute. I was sight reading from treble clef, which I don't read well at all, and hadn't warmed up, so it wasn't exactly my best performance, but it was meant to be for laughs. I hope no one recorded it....That said, I am playing the instrument tolerably seriously in a loud band of shawms, one or two cornettos, an occasional sackbut, and me on serpent playing bass. We are playing mainly late 16th and 17th century stuff (Praetorius, Hauptman, Demantius, Merulo, and the ever popular "anonymous"...). I've also played in several dance bands for SCA dance events; I'm not an SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism?) member myself, but a couple of the folks in the loud band are. I alternate between serpent and cittern depending on the dance to make my chops last longer (the events have typically run at least two hours)."

● An alert reader pointed out that Cliff Bevan was spotted 'playing' the giant tuba mockup that formerly decorated the Besson factory. The Giant Tuba was made in the early 20th century by Besson in London. The Giant Tuba has over 34 feet of tubing, weighs 112 pounds, and is nearly 8 feet tall. The lowest playable note on this open valve instrument is the B-flat three octaves below middle C, or the second lowest note on a modern piano. This Giant Tuba was a London music business landmark for much of the 20th century. It was originally fitted to the wall of the Besson & Co. factory as a shop sign. This tuba plays like an open valved instrument as the valves do not move. It was an outside display piece for the main Boosey & Hawkes Shop in the Edgware Road until 1948 when it moved to the B&H Factory in Edgware, North London. Tina Southwell, a longtime employee of Boosey & Hawkes, acquired the Giant Tuba on its return to B&H just before the Edgware Factory closed in Aug 2001. Currently, the Giant Tuba is on loan to the Horniman Museum in Forest Hill, South London, along with a collection of instruments from Boosey & Hawkes - part of an archive of its own

instruments the company maintained while it was still manufacturing.

● While Nigel Nathan was visiting an art gallery in his town of St. Just-in-Penwith, he noticed a piece of sculpture that might be of interest to players of the serpent or ophicleide. The piece was called *Trumpeters*, but Nigel recognized that the caricatured players held not trumpets, but rather a stylized ophicleide and serpent. The artist responsible is Christy Keeney, who wrote, "The instruments in the piece are made up, they're not trumpets rather a mixture of wind instruments. I haven't heard of your type of instrument, i.e. Serpent and Ophicleide, I must look into it!" Should any readers wish to view more of his work, take a look at his website <http://www.christykeeney.com>. You may also contact him at Doonglebe, Newmills, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland, phone :(00353) 749167258, or email [christykeeney@eircom.net](mailto:christykeeney@eircom.net).



*"Trumpeters", a ceramic sculpture  
by Christy Keeney  
gallery photo reprinted by permission  
see text above for information about the artist*