

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2015

A Note from the Editor

Here is the latest newsletter, which I knew even six months ago was going to be substantial. While it is true that there are two fewer CD reviews than expected, there have been lots of serpent performances and other situations to report, an overabundance of images, and other interesting tidbits.

I want to thank the several people who took extra time to submit text and photos, and those who helped with translations and gathering information. Please don't forget that any submitted material is welcome, albeit also subject to editing.

I have had more readers renewing their subscriptions via PayPal, and sending their funds to ocleide@earthlink.net, making sure to add a note in the PayPal payment that the money is for the newsletter. With costs, especially postage, on the rise, it is important that those majority of readers who are receiving hardcopy newsletters keep the contributions coming.

Finally, I want to apologize for the lateness of this edition. A last minute surge of newsletter submittals, combined with a family medical emergency and an unusually high number of playing gigs during the end of September and first weeks of October kept me from doing much editing until the middle of the month.

Paul Schmidt

New Materials

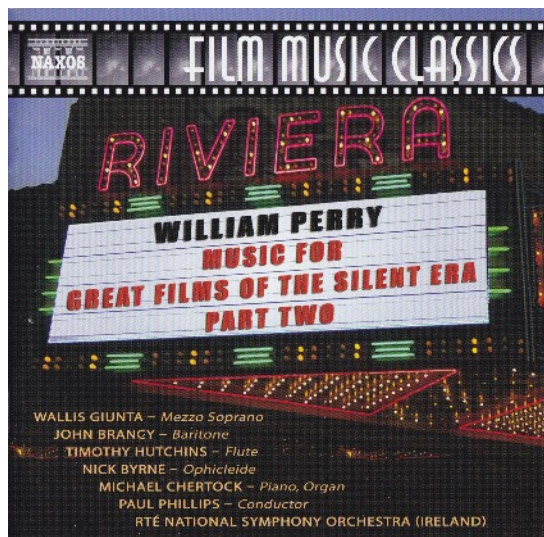
Two CDs that were announced in the previous edition of this newsletter, with reviews anticipated for this September edition, have been delayed. *From the Peninsula to Waterloo*, performed by the Bate Wind Harmony Ensemble, has been delayed due to logistical issues; hopefully this CD will be released in the near future. Nick Byrne's follow-up to his

first solo ophicleide CD, *Back from Oblivion*, was due to be released in August, but was not available soon enough to be reviewed in this edition of the newsletter. Hopefully both of these will be available for review before the April 2016 edition.

● *William Perry: Music for Great Films of the Silent Era – Part Two*; CD recording featuring RTÉ (Radio Éireann) National Symphony Orchestra, Paul Phillips, director, with Wallis Giunta, mezzo soprano, John Bracy, baritone, Timothy Hutchins, flute, Michael Chertok, piano, and Nick Byrne, ophicleide. Naxos, catalog number 8.573105. Obtained from Amazon.

On this CD, which by title would seem to be an anthology of silent movie scores, all of the music on the recording is in fact more recently composed. Composer William Perry has indeed composed and played piano accompaniments for hundreds of silent films at the Museum of Modern Art for a dozen years, and he met some of the old actors who starred in those films. Perry is also a television producer, and his PBS series *The Silent Years* in the early 1970s, hosted by Orson Welles and Lillian Gish, garnered him an Emmy Award. This CD is volume two of his planned series of recordings featuring his compositions. Apparently Perry composes his music for piano, and the music on this CD was orchestrated by his frequent collaborator Robert Nowak.

The first major work on the CD is *Silent Film Heroines: A Song-Suite for Mezzo Soprano and Orchestra*. It is Perry's attempt to characterize in song the famous actresses who starred in the old silent films. Besides the Nowak orchestration, Perry collaborated with lyricists Ronn Carroll and William S. Wheeling. The movements are *Lillian Gish - Orphans of the Storm* (1921), *Mary Pickford - Polyanna* (1920), *Greta Garbo - A Woman of Affairs* (1928), *Gloria Swanson - Fine Manners* (1926), *Vilma Bánky - The Night of Love* (1927), *Betty Bronson - Peter Pan* (1924), *Pearl White - The Perils of Pauline* (1914), and *Janet Gaynor - Seventh Heaven* (1927). These selections have an appropriate silent film feel about them, and Wallis Giunta has a pleasant voice and delivers the lyrics with clarity.



Next is *Summer Nocturne for Flute and Orchestra*, which is a resetting of the main theme from Perry's 1972 silent film accompaniment that he wrote for a screening of 1923's *Three Wise Fools* by director King Vidor. The piece is programmatic and the solo flute portrays a nightingale coming into a city park at twilight and singing love music to accompany the passersby below his tree perch. Timothy Hutchins produces a beautiful sound on the virtuosic solo and the orchestration paints the picture nicely. This is a strong and memorable selection.

For readers of this newsletter, the next selection is of the most interest. *Brass from the Past: Concerto for Ophicleide and Orchestra* gives ophicleide virtuoso Nick Byrne another welcome opportunity to showcase his astounding sound. Perry has previously written concertos for solo instruments such as cello, piano, flute and trumpet, but this new composition qualifies as the first fully-orchestrated modern concerto written since the invention of the ophicleide; Simon Proctor's *Ophicleide Concerto*, a movement of which appears on Byrne's *Back from Oblivion* CD, has a piano accompaniment. Perry heard *Back from Oblivion* and immediately wanted to try his hand at an ophicleide concerto. "I knew that Berlioz, Mendelssohn, Wagner and Verdi had written for ophicleide but then given it up when the modern tuba was born. But I never realized that there was a musician of today who had mastered the instrument so completely that a concerto was certainly called for. I immediately wanted to do this before all the world started writing ophicleide concertos! And given its unique sound, there might well be some future use in film scoring."

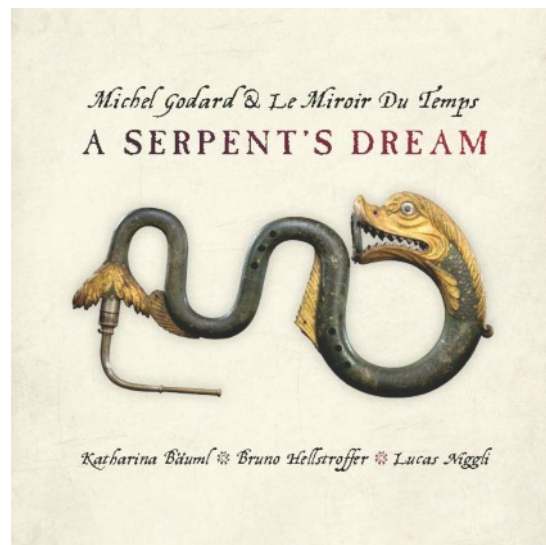
The concerto's four movements represent different views of the ophicleide's history and its musical personality. The first movement is titled *Blue Ophicleide* and shows the instrument as it occasionally still appeared in early 20th century dance bands. As expected from its title, this is a lush and beautiful bluesy number. *Military Ophicleide* is the second movement, and is comprised of four marches, each depicting the instrument in four diverse military settings; a Habsburg parade band in 1840, a Royal Marines band in Portsmouth

around 1900 (this one features embellishments on cornet), a cakewalk band in New Orleans in 1920, and a modern symphonic band. The third movement is *Pastorale Ophicleide* and features a serene and lyrical theme that the composer says is influenced by Vaughan Williams. The fourth movement is *Latin Ophicleide*, and reminds the listener that up until recently the ophicleide was still used in the choro bands of Brazil and Cuba. This is a pleasant excursion with a nice movie soundtrack style orchestration, but at the end of the day this reviewer was most impressed by Byrne's brilliant playing, wanting to hear still more.

The CD concludes with what Perry intends to be his commemoration of the 100th anniversary of World War One. He based this new composition on themes he had written forty years earlier to accompany the silent film *Hearts of the World* by D. W. Griffith, and the new work shares the older one's title. It is a musical ode for mezzo soprano, baritone, and significant piano presence. This piece is stylistically reminiscent of the opening tracks of the CD, and once again the vocalists do a nice job with the material.

Note that with this album, while its labeling, jacket and liner notes are all in English, the CD itself curiously had a track list that appears in Japanese when played this reviewer's computer! This may well be due to Windows Media Player accidentally synchronizing to a Japanese database in order to get the track information, and not an oddity of how the CD was mastered.

- *A Serpent's Dream*; CD recording featuring the ensemble Le Miroir Du Temps, with Michel Godard, serpent and electric bass, Katharina Bäuml, shawm, Bruno Hellstroffer, theorbo, Airelle Besson, trumpet, Lucas Niggli, percussion. Intuition (Schott), catalog number INT 3440 2. Obtained from Amazon.



In Michel Godard's latest release, he focuses the overall sound on the timbre of the Katharina Bäuml's Renaissance shawm as combined with serpent or his electric bass. To complement the timbre of the shawm is Bruno Hellstroffer's

theorbo, an instrument that works very well in this capacity. But it is the lyrical chemistry between shawm and serpent that defines this album. Godard plays the special Serpent of Villefranche, made by the secretive craftsman Armand and dating from 1830, on some selections (tracks 8 & 13); this marvelous instrument has a spectacular zoomorphic head plus the fins and even the tail of a fish. All of the selections on this CD are composed by Godard unless otherwise mentioned.

The CD opens with the titular *A Serpent's Dream*, an entrancing serpent solo with a driving theorbo behind it that sounds like a Spanish guitar at times, and when the shawm enters about halfway through, a middle-eastern vibe develops. *Days of Weeping Delights* is a melancholy duet between serpent and shawm, with the theorbo getting a nice solo part way through. The anonymous *In Splendoribus* is a chant played by solo shawm. The next selection is *Le Miroir Du Temps*, a mesmerizing improvisational number that starts with Godard's electric bass in duet with the theorbo, and joined by shawm as the percussive line slowly builds and Godard switches to serpent. A version of this piece, with added dulcian, can be viewed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxYOYQWBIso>, or by searching for *Capella de la Torre, Katharina Bäuml - Le miroir du temps*. This is followed by the anonymous *Miserere* from "la Chapelle des Pénitents Noirs" with its plaintive theorbo solo with an accompaniment in what sounds like a dulcian, although the liner notes do not credit anyone playing that instrument, so presumably the musician is Bäuml; when the serpent eventually joins the dulcian, the tears of the listener may start to flow.



Find the ophicleide: Excerpt from Musical Instruction of The Blind in the Paris Blind School, from page 514 of The Graphic, Nov. 25, 1871. On the reverse side of the original page is a review of the English translation of Jules Verne's book *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*

The CD continues with Lucas Niggli's *L'École de la Procrastination*, a solo percussive extravaganza that utilizes many parts of his kit. This segues into *Le Gardien des Rêves*, a busy serpent solo with a feeling of freeform improvisation, nicely backed by the band. Up until this point, Godard has been using his Berger serpent, but now on *Old Black Snake Blues* he switches to the antique Serpent of

Villefranche, which by comparison has a very breathy sound which works rather well on this selection but lacks any body. Up next is the only selection not composed by a member of the band, *Our Spanish Love Song* by Charlie Haden, which has a more contemporary pop feel to it than the rest of the album. Godard starts with a serpent solo, back on his Berger serpent again, and is joined by guest player Airelle Besson on a jazzy trumpet. Niggli collaborated with Godard to write *Les Portes du 7e Ciel*, in which a very jazzy free-form serpent solo is matched by a very pointed statement on drums.

Next is *A La Folie*, an upbeat dance with serpent and shawm chasing each other around giddily. The penultimate selection is one that has appeared on at least one previous Godard CD, *A Trace of Grace*, an extended serpent solo of quiet contemplation; but you have not already heard this version of the piece, since the instrumentation is different. The CD concludes with *Le Sommeil*, for which Godard returns to the breathy older serpent for a quiet parting.



Ophicleide player
- unknown origin

The album was recorded at La Chapelle des Pénitents Noirs (The Chapel of Black Penitents) in Villefrance-de-Rouergue, France. It would be remiss to neglect mention of Lucas Niggli's contributions to the album; his imaginative percussive licks add a nice frosting to the sonic tapestry.

- In October 2009, a symposium titled *The Cornett – History, Instruments and Construction* took place at the Michaelstein Monastery Foundation near Blankenburg, Germany. Volny Hostiou and Doug Yeo have lectures on the serpent, and the book of the symposium has finally been published. Visit this webpage <http://arbeiten.kloster-michaelstein.de/de/bibliothek/Publikationen>, and scroll way down to the line beginning Nr. 79: *Der Zink – Geschichte, Instrumente und Bauweise*, which is the listing for the book. This webpage has not been well updated, and has conflicting and confusing information. But if you scroll further down to almost the bottom, there is an address for where to buy the book: *Auslandskunden bestellen bitte direkt bei (foreign customers order directly from): F. Delbanco, International Books & Journals*; they normally just sell to libraries, not individuals. This newsletter has communicated with the personnel there, and their instructions for how individuals can order is as follows; email Cindy Denecke, who is fluent in English, at cindy.denecke@delbanco.de, advising her of how many of the Nr. 79: *Der Zink – Geschichte, Instrumente und Bauweise* books you wish to order, and provide your name and mailing address. She will email back

with the total amount due, which should be 39.80 Euro per copy, plus shipping. Once you have that number, make a PayPal payment to her email address, and she will mail your book(s). This newsletter has ordered a copy but has not received it yet.

● *Harmoniemusik Website with Editions for Low Brass*: I am pleased to announce the formation of a website devoted to harmoniemusik: *Harmoniemusik North America*, at <http://harmoniemusik.org>. On the *Editions* page, 19th century harmonie performance editions are offered for free by Hogtown Harmonie and include many works for serpent including an 11 part period arrangement of Haydn's *Symphony No. 91*. This informal "organization" seeks to provide opportunities for individual musicians, ensembles, researchers, and collectors to examine this yet-to-be-fully explored historical repertoire scored for 6-12 wind instruments. *submitted by Craig Kridel*

Getting Serpents

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

Christopher Monk Instruments
(c/o Nicholas Perry)
224 North Street
Luton
LU2 7QN
England

Phone: +44 (0)1582 457 992
<nicholas@perry2185.freemove.co.uk>
(see Christopher Monk Instruments
website URL at lower right)
(*serpents, early cimballo, bass horns*)

David Harding
The Early Music Shop
Salts Mill, Victoria Road
Saltaire
West Yorkshire BD18 3LA
England
Phone: +44 (0) 1274 288 100
<www.earlymusicshop.com>
(*resin serpents*)

Serpents Ribo
(c/o Pierre Ribo)
Rue Van Oost, 40
1030 Bruxelles
Belgium
Phone: 0032 497 574 496
<pierre.ribo@souslesplatanes.be>
(*Serpents*)

Kaiser Serpents
<http://www.kaiserserpents.com>
(*fiberglass serpents after Baudouin*)

Serpentes Lopez
Juan Lopez Romera, maker
<http://serpenton.com/>
(*wooden serpents & cornetti*)

Wessex Tubas
Jonathan Hodgetts (UK)
Andy Loree (USA)
www.wessex-tubas.co.uk
www.wessex-tubas.com
(*ophicleides, quinticlavies*)

S Berger Serpents
Stephan Berger & Erna Suter
Atelier de Cuir
Les Prailats 18
CH-2336 Les Bois
Switzerland
Phone: 0041 (0) 32 961 1188
<www.serpents.ch>
<sberger@serpents.ch>

(*serpents, both wood and carbon
fiber, serpent cases, accessories*)
(*formerly Wetterberger serpents*)

Christopher Monk Instruments
(c/o Jeremy West)
+44 (0)1388 526999
<[www.jeremywest.co.uk/
christopher-monk-
instruments.html](http://www.jeremywest.co.uk/christopher-monk-instruments.html)>
<hmcornett@gmail.com>
(*Cornetti*)

Sam Goble Historical Mouthpieces
phone: +44 (0) 77 8056 4370
<www.samgoble.com>
<info@samgoble.com>
(*cornett and serpent mouthpieces*)

Build an experimental serpent
from plans via
<www.serpentwebsite.com>

Workshops

● The 2015 Serpentarium

The latest biennial international serpent gathering took place once again at Boswedden House near Cape Cornwall in extreme southwestern England. Nigel Nathan and Thelma Griffiths were the hosts, and Phil Humphries of the London Serpent Trio presided over the sessions. Participants began to arrive the afternoon of Thursday, May 21. Unlike most Serpentariums of the past in Cornwall, the prevailing weather for this weekend was shaping up to be mostly foggy. Early arrivals John Weber, Ross Nuccio, and Paul Schmidt from the Chicago area met with other Americans Leonard Byrne and his wife Helen from Spokane, Washington state, for whom this was their first Serpentarium. Dinner with Nigel was had in nearby St. Just.



*Serpent: Musicien du 3ème Régiment de ligne
(grande tenue 1809-1810)*

On Friday, the five Americans took a day trip up to the picturesque coastal village of Port Isaac, a site where many movies and TV shows have been filmed, most famously *Saving Grace*, *Oscar and Lucinda*, and the TV series *Doc Martin* (standing in for the fictional town of Portwenn). A fine visit, a great lunch in the town tavern, and a chance meeting with actor Ian McNeice added to the charm. Upon returning to Boswedden House, the small group was cheered to find that all of the other participants had arrived. After a fine dinner, Phil Humphries started the evening off with the Swiss alphon tune *De Berner* as a warmup. Inspired by Bernard Fourtet's infamous expression, "Charpentier without a serpent is like a kiss without a moustache", John Weber had prepared his new *Charpentier's Moustache Suite* for four serpents, which included Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *Prelude to Te Deum*, Louis Armstrong's *A Kiss To Build a Dream On*, and Stephen Foster's *If You've Only Got a Moustache*; the ensemble had fun reading these very diverse movements. Besides John, Paul Schmidt was



Serpentarium group photo. Back row L-R: Christian Körner, Shirley Hopkins, Leonard Byrne, Michelle Lomas, Murray and Patsy Campbell, John Weber, Nigel Nathan, front row L-R: Ross Nuccio, Phil Humphries, Paul Schmidt

the only one familiar with the song, so he sang it to show the group how it should sound. The group promptly voted, and Paul was the designated vocalist singer for the concert. The evening closed with a reading of the traditional *20th Century Fox fanfare*. Everyone headed for the room with the selection of beer kegs.

On Saturday morning, the playing sessions began in earnest. Phil brought his newly revised arrangement of William Walton's *Crown Imperial (Coronation March 1937)*, and after reading this the ensemble played Murray Campbell's new setting of the *Divertimento in Bb "St. Antoni"*, by either Haydn or maybe Pleyel. After morning tea, the group read through Phil's arrangement of Dvorak's *Finale from the New World Symphony*, and rehearsed the first two movements of the *Moustache Suite*. After a marvelous lunch supervised by Thelma, the participants took leisurely walks around the cape. Resuming in the afternoon, the group familiarized themselves with the traditional Serpentarium theme song *Always Look On the Bright Side of Life* by Eric Idle and arranged by John Weber. Before dinner, Phil started to refine the group's skill level with *Crown Imperial*. During this time, Steve and Jenny Dixon, acting as representatives of Wessex Tubas, had brought a vanload of Wessex instruments and set up a display in the lounge. In the evening and throughout the rest of the weekend the participants took advantage of the opportunity to try out the various Bb and C ophicleides, the new quinticlavé, tornister tubas, trombones and sackbuts. Small groups formed, in

preparation of the final concert, and dispersed to distant rooms to start selecting their material and working up the pieces, with thoughts of a beer reward waiting for them later.

On Sunday, the morning was spent in further refining the already rehearsed music, and after another sumptuous lunch the same pieces were addressed again until evening when the small group rehearsals picked up after dinner. Monday was crunch day, but the weather had finally broken and the sky was visible, so after breakfast the group photo was taken in the traditional spot with the Cornish flag and the ocean backdrop. The entire concert program was run through in actual order. Before lunch, the group reconvened in the garden for a second group photo, this time including Steve and Jenny. After lunch was a final run-through of the concert, interrupted by a snack of tea and scones. The meditation room, where most rehearsing had taken place, was reconfigured to have the group at one end in concert formation and the audience at the other end.

The concert commenced with the *20th Century Fox fanfare*, followed by *Crown Imperial*. A trio comprised of Paul Schmidt, Christian Körner, and Murray Campbell performed *In Darkness I Will Dwell* by 'Coprario', a.k.a. John Cooper, and arranged by Körner, and *Lo Spensierato* by Giovanni Gastoldi and arranged by Michel Godard. The whole group then performed the *Divertimento's* last three movements, *Chorale "St. Antoni"*, *Menuett*, and *Rondo*, after which Shirley Hopkins, Michelle Lomas, and Patsy Campbell

formed a trio to perform *With Cat-Like Tread* from *The Pirates of Penzance* by Arthur Sullivan and arranged by Cliff Bevan. Next up was *Charpentier's Moustache Suite*, which has another story: En route to the Chicago airport to fly to England, Paul Schmidt had realized the what John Weber's new suite needed was a big handlebar costume moustache for somebody to wear during the performance. Pulling up Amazon UK on his smart phone, a suitable costume moustache was quickly purchased, with Boswedden House selected as the delivery address. Nigel was clued in to its imminent arrival, and indeed it arrived the day of the concert. But being a cheap item, its own adhesive backing was dried out and barely sticky. Nigel ransacked his cabinets and kitchen drawers, and located some double-sided transparent adhesive tape, which was applied to the back of the moustache. He also produced the rear view mirror of a car, which was propped up on a window ledge next to Paul's seat in the 'concert hall', to facilitate affixing the prop immediately before it was time to sing the lyrics for the third movement of the suite, the comic song *If You've Only Got a Moustache*. This all worked well enough, except the adhesive was giving out alarmingly during the song, to the great amusement of the audience. The moustache all but dropped off of Paul's face at the end of the song during the bows.



Second Serpentarium group photo, with Wessex representatives Jenny and Steve Dixon in front with ophicleides

John Weber, Ross Nuccio, and Leonard Byrne made the third trio of the evening, and performed the *Nocturne* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Felix Mendelssohn, followed by the Barnes arrangement of Sousa's *The Liberty Bell*, Helen Byrne gamely joining in on the requisite bell borrowed from Nigel. The announced program concluded with the *Finale from the New World Symphony*. With the enthusiastic applause of the 'capacity audience', they were treated to the encore, *Always Look On the Bright Side of Life*. The evening wrapped up with socializing over plenty of beer, and another great Serpentarium came to a close.

The next Serpentarium is expected to take place near Edinburgh in 2017.

● Serpent Journey

The third occurrence of the *Serpent Journey* workshop will take place from April 21 to 24, 2016, in the town of Les Bois in northwestern Switzerland. The workshop/seminar will be directed by Michel Godard, with teaching by Volny Hostiou, Patrick Wibart and David Partouche. Information and a registration form can be found online at on: www.cargocollective.com/lesassortiments/seminaire-serpent



VCU serpent and ophicleide workshop

● Serpents and Ophicleides, Oh My!

As late summer gentle Virginia breezes blew over and through Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond on September 16, 2015, five serpentists/ophicleidists gathered at the university's Singleton Center for the Performing Arts. Ross Walter, low brass professor at VCU, brought the group together to try to interest his students (and some attending adults) in learning to play and enjoy serpents and ophicleides. All comments indicated success. At 3:30 that afternoon Robert Wagenknecht led off by discussing history and present-day usage, social context, playing issues, procuring instruments, sources of further information, etc. Paul Schmidt provided musical demonstrations. The assembled were then let loose to try several church serpents



Paul Schmidt and John Weber play serpents during the closing concert at VCU

in C and D, tenor and military serpents, C and Bb ophicleides, and a quinticlavie in Eb. Robert and Tra Wagenknecht (from the Richmond, Virginia area), Paul Schmidt and John Weber (from the Chicago, Illinois area), and Gabe Stone (a balladeer at Colonial Williamsburg from Yorktown, Virginia), helped students hold, blow, and play on their instruments of choice. A lovely cacophony ensued for about an hour. One student was so enthusiastic that hugs were bestowed on two faculty members. Another student became proficient enough on the ophicleide to leave us with a learned-on-the-spot melody. The faculty then adjourned to a favorite VCU area restaurant, Edo's Squid, for dinner. At 7:30 students, faculty, and interested public gathered on the stage of Vlahcevic Concert Hall for an informal demonstration/concert. John and Paul played duos on their serpents and ophicleides and made observations. Gabe talked and performed on serpent and ophicleide. He was joined by Stephen Christoff, a performer at Colonial Williamsburg, who played sackbut, musical saw, and other instruments.



Stephen Christoff and Gabe Stone play sackbut and serpents during the closing concert at VCU

The pieces performed in the concert were excerpts from *Six Petits Duets* and *Petit Duo II* by Hermenge (serpent duets), the *Dies Irae* (serpent with ophicleide doubling down an octave), the *St. Anthony Chorale*, the theme from *Wallace and Gromit* by Julian Nott, *Lead Kindly Light* by Dykes, the *Huntsman's Chorus* by von Weber, the alhorn piece *De Berner*, *Harre Meine Seele* by Malan, *Ach Bleib Mit Deiner Gnade* by Vulpius, *Das Treue Deutsche Herz* by Otto, the *Nocturne* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *O Hills, O Vales of Pleasure* by Mendelssohn. Paul and John played up to this point, slowly transitioning from a serpent duo to serpent and ophicleide, and ending as an ophicleide duo. Then Gabe stone played *O Isis und Osiris* by Mozart on ophicleide, then the *Rakes of Mallow* on serpent, *Through the Fields of Frost and Snow* by Playford, *Greensleeves*, and *God Save the King*, *Chester* by Billings, and *Italian Rant*, not necessarily in that order. Gabe was joined on most selections by fellow Williamsburgian Stephen Christoff on sackbut and other instruments. Bringing the experience of using

serpents and ophicleides to those who need to know was fun and rewarding for all. *submitted by Therese Wagenknecht*

● Michel Godard wrote about the first serpent workshop in Villefranche de Rouergue (the same place where the new CD *A Serpent's Dream*, reviewed in this edition of the newsletter, was recorded last year). "The workshop started on August 10, 2015. On the 12th, we had a concert with the twelve serpent players in the *Chapelle des Pénitents Noirs*, where the Villefranche Serpent used to be played. We played some early music, some free improvisations and some new compositions featuring Linda Bsiri (voice). The church was full and it was great to see that people in Villefranche are aware of the serpent voice by now and love it!! The 13th was the last day of the workshop. The serpent players came from France, Germany, Spain, and Taiwan. Stephan Berger was with us and did a great lecture on his work as a serpent maker."



*Group photo from the Villefranche workshop
Michel Godard is at center*



*Major E.A. Bardin (1774 - 1840)
Musiciens de l'Infanterie de Ligne (1812)*

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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In Memoriam: Helmut Schmitt

Helmut Schmitt was born in 1941 in Waldshut, Germany. He started his musical career playing jazz trombone in cafes and on ships plying the waters of Lake Constance. He studied trumpet in Winterthur, Switzerland and graduated with a certificate in Orchestral Trumpet, and played in the

Winterthur Sinfonie Orchester. But he was not satisfied with this life and took jobs painting cars, hauling pianos, driving trucks, and as a translator.

Later he took up the study of the whole recorder family, and in 1975 moved back to Germany to become a member of the Renaissance Ensemble of Freiburg. He taught the recorder as a private instructor and also in local schools.

Over time, Helmut added other instruments to his list of proficiencies; baroque trumpet, cornetto, sackbut, crumhorn, cornamuse, kortholt, trombone, and tenor zink/lyzard. Finally he took the step to learn the serpent, and attended the big Serpent Festival and workshop in England in 1990. He



*Opposite:
Helmut Schmitt*

*Right:
Helmut Schmitt with
Phil Humphries at
the 1990 Serpent
Workshop held at
Christopher Monk's
Home 'Stock Farm'*

was active in the entire workshop at Christopher Monk's farm, played at the London Zoo and as a member of the serpent band at St. John's Smith Square, which numbered nearly 60 players.

Helmut held frequent musical gatherings at his home in Freiburg, often accompanied by his wife Gabrielle (who also played serpent) and friends. In 1994, Helmut played serpent on the commercially released CD recording *Louis Marchand: Orgue et Plain-Chant*, with Ensemble Alternatim and featuring Bernard Coudurier on organ, catalog number BNL 112851 A/B, which was announced in this newsletter's April 1995 issue and reviewed in the September 1996 issue.

Helmut spent his free time taking long distance tours, many thousands of miles, through Germany, Italy, France, Hungary, and the Netherlands on recumbent bicycles and later on his recumbent 'tadpole' style recumbent tricycle. He loved to cook and do repairs around the house.

Helmut endured two bouts of lung cancer, and then the bone cancer which finally took him on August 4, 2015.

edited by Paul Schmidt from an English translation by Christian Körner of the obituary written by Gabrielle Schmitt, plus the official obituary published in the Badische Zeitung on August 6, and information provided by the City Library of Freiburg



In Memoriam: Tom Zajac

Thomas Edward Zajac, Jr., multi-instrumentalist and music educator, died on August 31, 2015, at a hospice near his home in Swampscott, Massachusetts. He had suffered for three years from brain tumors that eventually turned cancerous.

Tom was born in 1956, and grew up in Schiller Park, Illinois. His parents were singers, and the entire family was brought up with a love of music and experience making that music. As a boy Tom collected classical records and educated himself about composers, styles, and music history. In school he played trombone and oboe and percussion, participating in the concert and jazz bands, as well as the drum & bugle corps. Besides music, Tom had a keen interest in science, was a gifted student, and was in the National Honor Society. He received degrees at Triton College and Northern Illinois University, and while at NIU he became a part of the emerging World Music Program initiated by Professor Kuo-Huang Han, gaining his first experiences with Balinese Gamelan and the traditional instruments of China. Tom traveled with Han and classmates to Hong Kong and other countries to give performances, sparking the love of international travel that would characterize his 35-year career.

Tom became fascinated with the instruments and music of the Medieval and Renaissance periods. He became proficient on recorder and sackbut. In 1982, Tom studied at Sarah Lawrence College in New York where he earned a Master of Fine Arts in Early Music in 1984, studying recorder with Charles Coldwell. Tom became adept with a remarkable number and diversity of early instruments, and established a professional career in New York City as a freelance multi-instrumentalist praised for his versatility and stylish playing of medieval and Renaissance music.

He performed with New York's Ensemble for Early Music (now Early Music New York), the wind band Piffaro, and was a co-founder of the New York-based theatrical/musical group Ex Umbris. He also appeared frequently with The Tallis Scholars, the Folger Consort, The King's Noyse, The Newberry Consort, The Waverly Consort, Hesperus, The Rose Ensemble, The Texas Early Music Project and other leading US ensembles. Tom moved to Philadelphia and later relocated to Boston, which became the home base from which he continued his freelance performance and teaching career, and directed the Collegium Musicum at Wellesley College from 2003 to 2015.

Tom's versatility as a multi-instrumentalist afforded him unique opportunities. He was part of the American Serpent Players (SSS) when they performed as part of the First International Serpent Festival in Columbia, South Carolina in 1989. He performed 14th-century music in the East Room of the White House during the Clinton years, played serpent on PDQ Bach's *2-1/2 Variations on "In Dulci Jubilo"* on the December 23, 2000 episode of *A Prairie Home Companion*, and a recording of his bagpipe awoke the astronauts every morning on a 2001 space shuttle mission. He performed on the soundtracks of several PBS documentaries for Emmy award-winning producer and composer Brian Keane as well as 18th-century music for the score of the Ric Burn's *New York: A Documentary Film*. Tom played hurdy gurdy for the American Ballet Theater, bagpipe for an internationally broadcast Gatorade commercial, and shawm for the NYC Gay Men's Chorus in his Carnegie Hall debut. Later in his career, Tom took up the santur, miskal and zurna, learning the beautiful repertory of Ottoman court music and performing with the Boston-based collective Dün̄ya. He traveled widely over three decades, playing in virtually every country in Europe and Britain, as well as Hong Kong, Australia, Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, Guam, Australia, Israel and Turkey.

Tom was a beloved teacher of amateurs, students, and professionals alike. He directed collegiums at Mannes College, University of Maryland and Wellesley College, and became one of the most popular teachers at the annual Amherst Early Music Festival. He taught regularly at Pinewoods, the Madison Early Music Festival, The Texas Toot and other workshops throughout the US. For several years he directed the Medieval and Renaissance week of the San Francisco Early Music Society workshops in California. He researched and directed performance projects in Colonial Latin-American music, music of the three religious cultures of pre-expulsion Spain, and music in Eastern Europe from Poland to the Ottoman court of 16th to 19th-century Turkey.

Although a person of immense talent and extraordinary professional accomplishment, Tom was known as a friend to all. His unassuming warmth, humor and generosity of spirit were a delight to all who knew him.

edited and augmented by Paul Schmidt from the official obituary written by Ellen Hargis

Where Serpents Gather

● *The Bethlehem Bass Horn*: Three early 19th century, German-oriented English bass horns from the Northern Province of the Moravian Church of North America are housed at Historic Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Bass horn #110 with swan-neck bocal and raised mounts from Jacob Tetzer of Gemein House, and two bass horns, #108 and #109 from Central Moravian Church. I commissioned J.C. Sherman of Cleveland to obtain measurements of the most complete instrument (#110) and to construct a bass horn, "The Bethlehem Bass Horn." The instrument was completed this past year, and I performed one of the three American-Moravian anthems with a designated bass horn line: *Freuen und frölich müssen seyn* by Johann Ludwig Herbst (1760 - 1824) at the Bethlehem Conference on Moravian History and Music. The other two anthems, *Kommt, ach kommt ihr Gnadenkinder* by Johann Christian Bechler (1784-1857) and *Heiger Schauer deiner Nahe* by Andreas Jakob Romberg (1767-1821), had been performed in 2008 at this conference on a generic German-English bass horn by Robb Stewart.

submitted by Craig Kridel



J.C. Sherman with his reproduction of the Bethlehem Bass Horn (left) and the original instrument (right)

● The annual one-day mini-Vintage Band Festival, which is held in the intervening years between the triennial large-scale Vintage Band Festivals in Northfield, Minnesota, took place this year on August 1. Paul Schmidt and Clark Wolf were on hand as this year's incarnation of the *Roving Ophicleides* musical act. As readers of this newsletter know, the *Roving Ophicleides* have participated in the VBFs since the beginning, and are always well received, but the group varies in size and personnel. While all other musical acts are scheduled around town, primarily in Bridge Square, the ophicleides busk around downtown, setting up in various spots and playing sets of 15 to 30 minutes long. An appreciative and interested audience always forms, but the players move on before wearing out their welcome.



*The Roving Ophicleides in Northfield, Minnesota
Paul Schmidt (left) and Clark Wolf (right)*

The music also varies from year to year. This time the duo played from a book consisting of a *March* by Schiltz, the *Second Movement from Symphony No. 4 in A Minor "Italian"* by Mendelssohn, the *Prelude* from the opera *Hansel and Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck, the *St. Antoni Chorale* by Haydn/Pleyel, *The Second Movement from Symphony No. 94 in G Major "Surprise"* by Haydn, *Das Deutsche Vaterland* by H.G. Nägeli, *Das Treue Deutsche Herz* by Julius Otto, *Harre, Meine Seele* by C. Malan, the *Nocturne from A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Mendelssohn, *De Berner* by Martin Christen, the *Huntsman's Chorus* by von Weber, the theme from *Wallace and Gromit* by Julian Nott, and *In Heavenly Love Abiding* by D. Jenkins. The duo also played some pieces arranged in duet form by Paul for the event, *The Dicky Bird and the Owl* by Arthur Sullivan, *O Hills, O Vales of Pleasure* by Mendelssohn, the ballad *Tom Bowling* by Charles Dibdin, and six duets by Mozart; three flavors of *Menuetto*, a *Polonaise*, a *Larghetto*, and an *Allegro*.

Festival organizer Paul Niemistö asked the duo to advance from busking to doing a set on the main stage in Bridge Square, and this was well enough received that it was suggested that the *Roving Ophicleides* give a full scheduled concert in next year's big VBF.

● On Sunday, June 21, Paul Schmidt played serpent at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago as part of a music festival that encouraged a sort of 'flash mob' style of musical acts appearing all over the city. The early music band was comprised mostly of members of the local American Recorder Society chapters and other area early music bands. The forty five minute set was directed by Lisette Kielson of L'Ensemble Portique. The selections played ranged from well-known Renaissance dances to Baroque favorites such as the *Rondeau* from Jean-Joseph Mouret's *Suite de Symphonies*, better known as the theme from Masterpiece Theater. The group selected a sunny spot in front of the main café, so there was lots of traffic and people stopped to listen.



Paul Schmidt plays Serpent as part of a Chicago music festival in the Lincoln Park zoo

● Bernard Fourtet wrote about some of his serpent activities in France. “On Thursday, June 25th, we played the *Lettre D'Amour* by Stephane Bonneel for two sopranos, contralto, cornetto, serpent and triple harp, in the castle of Pibrac, near Toulouse. The text of the piece is a love letter written by Guy Dufaur de Pibrac to an unknown lover, about 1580, when he was a counselor to the king of France. Pibrac was also a poet known for his *quatrains*. Nowadays, the castle is still inhabited by *le Conte de Pibrac*. The concert was dedicated to love letters written by musicians such as Debussy, Fauré and Mozart, and melodies by the same composers. The piece by S. Bonneel was part of this same program. The performers were sopranos Ann-Yi Bingoel and Annelyse Aragou, contralto Charlotte Calmettes, Sylvie Boyer playing cornet à bouquin, Clémence Aguila on the *harpe triple*, and myself on serpent.”

“On Sunday, June 21st, the serpent ensemble *Meandre* from Toulouse, performed three concerts in the *Musée des Augustins* in Toulouse as part of a music festival. The serpentists were Michel Negre, Lilian Poueydebat, and myself, and we were joined by the singer and tap-dancer Anne-lise Panisset, and Philippe Matharel on tenor cornetto. The program included six songs by Guillaume Dufay, the *Serpent Dance* by Jim Theobald, the famous *Tankas* by Drake Mabry, *Daphné* by Jakob Van Eijk, a *Passacaglio* by Biagio Marini, an *Air* by Alphonse Moulinier, and a selection of Renaissance dances. The very interesting and original role of the tap-dancer consists in playing-dancing a percussion part on the Theobald piece, or an improvisation on the Renaissance dances, or a choreographed new percussion part on the van Eijk and Dufay, or an ostinato on another of the Dufay pieces. Please see and listen on the *Meandre* website http://triomeandre.free.fr/MEANDRE_TRIO_DE_SERPENS/Bienvenue.html. If you want to hear and see *Mendre* playing with the tap dancer, use the *Les Serpents à Claquettes* link at the top of the webpage, and then look at

the bottom of the new webpage for a triangle with *Serpents I* inside. Click on this and you can download a video file titled *Serpents I - Wi-Fi.m4v*.”

“Last but not least, the serpent class in the Toulouse Conservatoire has been canceled as of June 28, after 21 years of activity; also disappearing are the classes of traverso flute (both baroque and renaissance), musette de cour, early harps, lute/theorbo and early guitar. The pretext seems to be political-administrative-financial, according to the conservatoire director. This is the end of a beautiful experience with what I think was the first official serpent class since the last one a century and a half ago. The Early Music Department of Toulouse, working some 25 years, is now almost dismantled. This is also the last episode of a curriculum that has just begun; today, the accounting shows 534 lost work hours in the conservatoires of France. I must add that closing these classes is NOT a budget problem, as argued by the conservatoire directors, but mainly actions of those who seem to have completely forgotten a sort of deontological position; for instance, the gamba teacher has been replaced by three persons, including the wife of the director.....Good news - we will have, here in Toulouse, a brand new lawn for the European football competitions. Does anyone know where on Earth I can emigrate ?”



Painted image of a Monk or priest playing an ophicleide on a late 19th century partially engraved panel, an example of Sicilian folk art; image taken from an eBay listing for the item, part of a New England estate sale

“Late news, *Meandre* played two days ago on October 13, along with a madrigal group, for a party organized by Airbus, Boeing, Bombardier, and so on; what we call *concert pendant qu'ils bouffent* (bad language for *concert while they have dinner*) eventually with the background noises of clutched forks, etc.... Actually, the mood this time was very different, with a very sympathetic and attentive public. We are now preparing a new program including organ, that we will propose for instance to festivals in Toulouse such as *Toulouse les orgues* and *Passe ton Bach d'abord*.”

● Bernard Fourtet played serpent for a performance of Charpentier's *Kyrie de la Messe des Morts H 7 (bis)*, with

the vocal ensemble *In Nomine* on March 29, 2015 in the church of Castanet Tolosan, under the direction of Didier Borzeix. A video excerpt can be seen at <https://youtu.be/ZuM3w4l6b8c>, or www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuM3w4l6b8c&feature=youtu.be, or by searching YouTube for *Charpentier Kyrie de la Messe des Morts H 7 (bis)*. When praised for the good sound, Bernard wrote that he thinks “Charpentier without a serpent is like a kiss without a moustache”, a phrase that has grown in notoriety in the serpent community, even having significant influence on the 2015 Serpentarium (see the *Workshops* section of this newsletter).

As part of the same concert, Bernard played in other selections, such as *Weinen klagen sorgen zagen* by J.S. Bach (BWV 12), www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK_-s0cKC_o, and *Le Reniement de St Pierre* by Charpentier, www.youtube.com/watch?v=baRADeBQH8Y. Bernard's serpent appears clearly in the video, and his fine sound is very present and easily heard in the mix. Director Borzeix has a YouTube channel on which the above pieces appear. There are many other fine selections there as well, too many to list here.

● Recital at Hamamatsu

by Doug Yeo

The Hamamatsu (Japan) Museum of Musical Instruments is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2015. The core of the museum's holdings came from the collection of the late American collector Robert Rosenbaum. To these have been added an extraordinary array of instruments from around the world, in particular instruments from countries in Asia; it is the only museum in the world to have three kinds of Indonesian gamelans including the world's largest bamboo gamelan, Jegog.

Museum Director Kazuhiko Shima made the unusual request for me to give a concert played on museum-owned instruments. Mr. Shima had long been aware of my serpent



Doug Yeo plays ophicleide at the Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments

playing and especially wanted me to perform on it. Given that I had never played on any of the Museum's instruments and my experience of playing museum serpents - that were usually dry and showing cracks and signs of rot - I brought my own 1996 Christopher Monk Instruments church serpent (1 key, by Keith Rogers) - to Japan.

I had planned a program that included demonstrations of several instruments, as well as performances with piano accompaniment of several other instruments. My original title for my recital was, *The Unexpected World of Historical Brass Instruments: A Conversation and Recital by Douglas Yeo*. But Naoki Suzuki, Yamaha's point person for the Academy, told me that the word "unexpected" did not translate well into Japanese, so we changed the title to begin *The Fascinating World*. Certainly my experience with the instruments was both unexpected and fascinating.

Since I planned the recital from home in the USA, I had to account for surprises once I actually started practicing on the museum's instruments. One initial disappointment turned into a good situation; the Museum has a stage on its first floor that is made of marble... unfortunately, the stage is not structurally supported enough to support the weight of a concert grand piano. So my fine accompanist, Hitomi Takara, would have to play on an electronic piano. But this unexpected situation turned out to have a silver lining - once I started playing the instruments, it was clear that most of them did not play at A=440; the English bass horn, for instance, played at A=429. Happily the electronic piano by Yamaha had a pitch control on it so instead of having to deal with transpositions and mouthpiece/bocal crooks, we were able to change the pitch of the piano to match the instruments.

Ten years ago, I made a video *Making Trombones* at the Yamaha Toyooka Factory, in which I took viewers through the factory to observe the trombone manufacturing process. That video can be seen here at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcstdl5lJ8>. While making the video, I saw two copies of historical instruments at the factory that had been made by Yamaha craftsmen around 1985; a copy of a seven bell/six valve trombone by Adolphe Sax, and a copy of a French buccin (dragon bell trombone). I asked if those instruments could be made available to me for the recital, not only to promote Yamaha's sponsorship of the event, but also to have modern reproductions available in case the historical instruments presented unexpected surprises.

In all, I had twelve instruments at my disposal:

- Church serpent (reproduction after Baudouin, Christopher Monk Workshop, 1996 [Keith Rogers])
- Military serpent (Anonymous, France, first quarter 19th C.)
- Basson russe (Rust & Dubois, Lyon, first quarter 19th C.)
- English bass horn (Anon., England, 1st quarter 19th C.)
- Ophicleide (Anonymous, France or Belgium, 11 keys, third quarter 19th C.)
- Tenor sackbut (Jacob Bauer, Nürenberg, 1608)

- Buccin (Anonymous, France, first quarter 19th C.)
- Buccin (reproduction by Yamaha, Hamamatsu, c1985)
- Trombone with six valves (Adolphe Sax, Paris, 1868)
- Trombone with six valves and seven bells (Adolphe Sax?, Paris)
- Trombone with six valves and seven bells (reproduction by Yamaha, Hamamatsu, c1985)
- Over-the-shoulder Saxhorn (Anonymous, France?, third quarter 19th C.)



Doug Yeo plays Basson Russe at the Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments

Within the first hour of practicing, I had sized up the instruments and began tackling their fingerings and other challenges. I found that the military serpent was in spectacular visual condition but was very dry and the sound, as a result, was quite dull. The basson russe was also very dry and played at A=445, while the English bass horn had a nice sound but played at A=429. The ophicleide was a superb instrument with a beautiful sound; two of the pads had been replaced by one of Yamaha's technicians in order to make the instrument playable. When the original pads were removed, everyone was surprised to find small bits of music written on paper had been used for backing of the pads. The sackbut by Bauer was extremely fragile and while it had a nice, soft quality sound and the slide moved reasonably well, it played B natural in first position and therefore had no usable seventh position for lower notes. The French buccin was playable but the slide was rather "crunchy" so I determined it would be most useful for a demonstration rather than a performance. The trombone with six valves by Sax was in excellent condition and needed only some oil on the valves to be in top condition. The seven bell/six valve trombone attributed to Sax was likewise in very good condition but I decided it was rare and fragile enough that it should not be played much. The over-the-shoulder Saxhorn was also in excellent condition and had a clear sound and good intonation. The two reproductions by Yamaha - the buccin and seven bell/six valve trombone - were excellent instruments that were comfortable to play.

On the night of the recital, the museum staff had laid out all of the instruments on two tables, with the two serpents having pride of place on stands on the front of the stage. After introductory comments by Mr. Shima, I began the concert by improvising some chant on my CMI serpent. My translator, tuba player Keita Kimura, was a superb interpreter who captured the pace and tone of my words and even imitated my facial expressions. In my opening comments I asked the audience to imagine that they were 150 years old. At that age you are very tired, and spend most of your time sleeping in your favorite chair. But then, one day, a friend comes by and says, "Tomorrow you are going to run a marathon!" Imagine your surprise at that challenge! I then told the audience that the museum instruments, all of which had been sleeping for at least 150 years, were going to be awakened from their slumber by me and asked to do the equivalent of a musical marathon. As a result, some instruments would be happy to be awake and others would rather go back to sleep. It proved to be a metaphor that everyone could understand and it diffused the oft-heard comment that old instruments sound terrible when in fact they simply are not in playable condition after years of not being used.

I demonstrated the French military serpent and basson russe by playing *Le Marseille*. The audience could hear the difference between my 20 year old CMI serpent and the nearly 200 year old instruments. The military serpent was a modified upright Piffault design that was easy to hold and, had it been fully restored and oiled, would have had a very full, robust sound. I played the *Nocturne* from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on English bass horn with piano accompaniment. This instrument had a "marching bocal" that resulted in the bell pointing more forward than upward; it certainly is not the most



Doug Yeo plays a six valved trombone with seven bells at the Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments

comfortable position for playing but it had a nice, clear sound and Mendelssohn's famous piece proved to be a nice way to demonstrate its sound and playing characteristics. I then followed with Arthur Sullivan's *The Lost Chord* on ophicleide with piano. My own ophicleide has nine keys and this was the first time I had played for an extended period of time on an eleven key instrument. Many fingerings were different but the ophicleide's intonation was excellent and its sound both robust and pure. It was a pleasure to play this fine instrument. The first half of the recital closed with the introduction of several forms of trombone. The 1608 sackbut by Jacob Bauer (restored by Robb Stewart) had a pitch that was so high that I simply demonstrated it rather than playing with accompaniment. After demonstrating the museum's Rust & Dubois buccin, I performed the Frescobaldi's *Canzone* on the Yamaha reproduction buccin.



Doug Yeo plays serpent at the Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments

I began the second half by demonstrating the six valve trombone. This instrument has a simple but intuitively complex valve system where each valve works independently and has its own length of tubing; the valves are not used in combination. First valve equals the first position on a slide trombone, second valve equals second position and so on down to the sixth valve equaling sixth position...using no valves equals seventh position. This instrument, invented by Adolphe Sax, proved to be popular for several decades - it was even taught at the Paris Conservatoire - before falling out of favor. But Sax was not content to make a trombone with seven valves. His fertile imagination led him to make instruments with seven BELLS as well, with each valve having its own bell. Looking like something from a book by Dr. Seuss, this instrument was made in a variety of configurations and keys. There was some confusion over whether the museum's seven bell trombone was actually a trombone or perhaps a trumpet. We will need to get more measurements to confirm this but as I

experimented by trying to play the upper partials of the seven bell instruments on my trombone mouthpiece; it seemed to work better in the trumpet register than the trombone octave, although with my mouthpiece, it was not possible to make a definitive conclusion.

So while I was able to demonstrate the Yamaha-made seven valve trombone by playing the theme of *The Carnival of Venice* - the museum had another six valve trombone that was by Sax that had a single bell like my own instrument by Persy, and I performed the Berlioz *Oracion Funèbre* on it, all the while reveling in the fact that I was playing music of Berlioz on an original instrument by Adolphe Sax. I then turned my attention to a three valve over-the-shoulder tenor Saxhorn, a beautiful instrument of the design that was popular with bands during the time of the American Civil War. To demonstrate it, I marched around the audience playing, *When Johnny Comes Marching Home* so they could hear the sound of the instrument when they were in front of or behind it.

The recital concluded with a performance of Simon Proctor's *Serpent Concerto* with piano accompaniment, played on my church serpent after Baudouin, made by Keith Rogers. For this performance, I used a metal mouthpiece that was made for me in 2001 by Hiroaki Imaoka of Yamaha, since I could not take my ivory mouthpieces on the trip due to customs regulations. Simon's humorous piece was a big success as the closing piece, and after a few bows I played Sieber's *Foxtrot* as an unaccompanied encore. In all, my recital was very satisfying and a tremendous success, highlighting the Museum in a unique way and bringing several historical brass instruments front and center to an engaged, appreciative audience. Mr. Shima and I are already having conversations about my doing another program at the museum. Until then, the museum's instruments are back on the wall, sleeping, until I or another performer take them down to blow life into them once again.



Le Joueur de Serpent (Serpent Player)
Anonymous 19th Century

● On October 18th, just before this newsletter went to print, Paul Schmidt played serpent in Chicago at a workshop directed by Andrew Schultze, bass-baritone, conductor, stage director and teacher. Schultze had led a similar workshop on February 16, which was reported in the April 2015 edition of this newsletter. This time he led the ad-hoc group, comprised of Chicago-area early music teachers and enthusiasts, in music composed by Jewish musicians from the Baroque era. *Continued on page 20 of this newsletter.*



The new Wessex quinticlave (left) next to the previously reviewed Wessex B-flat ophicleide

Wessex Quinticlave

In the April 2015 edition of this newsletter, the new Wessex quinticlave was announced, but the instrument ordered for review had not yet arrived. The instrument became available during the May Serpentarium, and arrived in June. This review is based partially on the instrument that was brought to the Serpentarium as part of the Wessex display there, and also on the instrument purchased for review in June.

The Wessex is the only reproduction quinticlave (alto ophicleide) currently available. As with most quinticlaves, it is pitched in Eb. It is a copy of an 1824 Halari instrument, with some minor tweaks based on feedback from Tony George. It is available in raw lacquered brass, and also in lacquered brass.

The instrument measures 36" (91.4cm) long, has a bell diameter of 6.5" (16.5cm), and weighs 6.2 pounds (2.8kg). It has 9 keys (quinticlaves rarely had the 11 keys found on

many Bb and C ophicleides), and they are padded using resonator type saxophone pads. The bell has a very shallow flare, presumably based on the Halari original. Unlike the other Wessex ophicleide models, this instrument does not have a tuning slide, and instead sports the "English" style circular boccal which must be pulled in or out of the body of the instrument for tuning. The mouthpipe receiver is sized for a modern baritone (not euphonium) shank mouthpiece, and is slightly smaller than 0.5" (1.3cm) diameter. The mouthpiece has an appropriately funnel shaped cup and is gold plated.



Two more views of the new Wessex quinticlave

As most players who have experience playing quinticlaves have observed, these instruments never seemed to get the degree of development enjoyed by the lower pitched ophicleides in C or Bb. They all seem to have some significant intonation difficulties, and this is often attributed to lack of enthusiasm by the manufacturers due to relatively low demand for the smaller instruments; antique quinticlaves are fairly rare, supporting the low numbers of instruments manufactured. The two Wessex alto instruments played for review were no exception to the intonation curse, but it was a pleasant surprise that (possibly due to tweaks made by Wessex) this instrument's problems in this area are at least relatively moderate. Of course, being a nine key instrument also deprives the player of some fingering choices on certain notes, but overall this is insignificant to playability.

The key action on the reviewed instruments was firm but even across all keys, an improvement over the Wessex Bb ophicleide reviewed previously. Also improving on the

earlier reviewed instrument, the bocal screw could be tightened easily to lock the bocal in position. The fit and finish was very good, better than one is likely to find on an extant surviving quinticlave. This is certainly a quality example of the type.

The purchased review instrument was checked against a tuner, and with the bocal fully into the body of the instrument, the 'open' note was an in-tune Eb at A=440. This suggests that it would be impossible to tune this instrument to play at high pitch, as many antique ophicleides can be. Overall, this instrument plays quite well in comparison to many others of its type.



Wessex quinticlave in the included case

The instrument comes with a light-duty hard-shell case which is apparently made from thin plywood, filled with some kind of firm foam and covered with velvet on the inside and textured black vinyl fabric on the outside. A conical velvet-covered plug is provided that fits inside the bell and helps to pad that end. The bocal fits into a hidden compartment under the tail of the instrument. There is one socket for holding a single mouthpiece. The purchased instrument did NOT come with the promised method book, but it did come with a basic neck strap. As with the hard cases for the Wessex ophicleides, this case does not have a valance or other means to keep the top and bottom halves of the case aligned with each other, so some misalignment can be expected after some use. The previously reviewed Bb ophicleide's case's latches were not equipped with locks, but this case does have heavy duty butterfly type twist latches with hasps that can receive a padlock; not exactly locking latches, but at least they can be made to lock if you provide the lock(s). Unfortunately, Wessex has curiously made the accompanying latch 'keepers' attach to the case in such a way that the keeper's screws can be easily removed



while the latch is closed, making it simple to defeat the lockable latches! Wessex makes good instruments, but they still need to work on their cases.

At the time of this review, Wessex-USA lists the unlacquered quinticlave at a reduced price of \$1875, a bargain price that one would be unlikely to come close to with an antique instrument of this type. Interestingly, the Wessex ophicleide in C is also on sale for \$1795 (this instrument was not reviewed by this newsletter), while their Bb instrument's price went up to \$3320 and is not on sale. This seems to suggest that the Bb instruments are selling better than the more recently introduced C and alto instruments, but this has not been confirmed with Wessex and is thus simply speculation. Nevertheless, if you are looking to purchase a quinticlave or reproduction C ophicleide, the current sale is attractive.

reviewed by Paul Schmidt



L-R: Stephan Berger, Roland Schwab, and Phil Humphries form impromptu serpent trio at Berger's serpent shop

More Exciting News

● *Why We Play Historical Brass?!?*: Clifford Bevan has written a "tour de force" essay, *Looking At the Past*, about playing historical low brass. Published as a three part series, the essay is appearing in the *Historical Instrument Section* of the International Tuba and Euphonium Association Journal. The first two portions are available on-line at the Berlioz Historical Brass (BHB) website. Go to the ITEA Historical Instrument Section at www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org/itea.htm

Part 1: *Why Play Historical Brass?* by Clifford Bevan [ITEAJ 42:2, 53-56]

Part 2: *God Save Us from the Ancient Serpent* by Clifford Bevan [ITEAJ 42:3, 67-69]

Part 3 is currently in press and will be available this autumn on the same BHB website.

submitted by Craig Kridel

● Phil Humphries wrote, “I’ve just got back from a trip to Switzerland to pick up my new Berger serpent. Stephan Berger has re-positioned the finger holes differently for me, so it can be played English (palm up) style. The latest model (MK III) is also thinner in construction and blows incredibly freely and beautifully in tune. A lovely instrument. On the day I arrived at Stephan’s home another serpent player from Interlaken, Roland Schwab, was also there so we got straight into trio playing. In addition to the serpent itself, I purchased the care kit and ventilator, and also the new addition to Berger’s catalogue, an accessory pouch which he calls *Tin Etui*; this fits nicely into the existing black felt and leather case.” Phil also wrote that in preparation for his planned performance in the Maidstone area of the Proctor *Serpent Concerto*, he had a long overdue meeting with Simon Proctor at his home, and was pleased to see Simon well and busy.



Simon Proctor and Phil Humphries visit at the Proctor home

● In February 2016, Doug Yeo will be traveling to San Francisco to play four or five concerts of Handel’s *Music for the Royal Fireworks* with Philharmonia Baroque, directed by Nicholas McGegan. Also early in the year he will be playing two recitals with his ASU horn colleague, John Ericson; their recital is titled *Stuck in the 19th Century*. John will play natural and early valve horns, and Doug will play serpent, ophicleide and 6-valve trombone. One recital will be at ASU on February 26, and the other will be at the Phoenix MIM on February 24.

● Andy Lamb of the Bate Collection at Oxford wrote, “My colleague, Mark Witkowski of Imperial College, has been working on a new project. He has taken measurements of a serpent in the Bate Collection (anonymous French, Bate No 504), spun his evil magic and created a full-size copy using 3D printer. At the moment it takes 208 hours of printing. I tried it and it works!! We are planning to produce a completed article for the newsletter, probably for next year. We are also planning to produce a research paper for presentation at the Galpin Society Conference. Our ultimate aim is to post the 3D printer files online so people can download them for free. A half-linear-size “serpenteau” was also produced, with the printer programmed to alternate



Mark Witkowski’s 3D-printed “serpenteau”

colors. We think it resembles an eastern coral snake, one of the most venomous snakes in the world!!

● In the April 2015 edition of this newsletter, the current disposition of George II, the second contrabass serpent made by the Christopher Monk Instruments, was reviewed. Following the Serpentarium in May, some of the American serpentists visited Kathryn Rogers, who owns the instrument



Mark Witkowski’s 3D-printed bass serpent (left) and the Bate Collection original serpent

and whose late husband Keith actually made it. Kathryn’s brother is Jeremy West, and he sent an email, “The instrument is housed in our private flat within Girton College in Cambridge. That said, we have a lot of people coming through the area so it is much admired and considerably visited (and photographed!). This is the reason that it’s better off here than at Kathryn’s, since it flies the flag of Christopher Monk Instruments spectacularly well. It’s also more handy here for outings too: this year George II has been played for the Gabrieli Consort and Players at Hampton Court Palace (played by Andy Kershaw); Nicholas Perry sometimes takes it to the Globe Theatre where it takes part in productions and he also takes it sometimes to

excursions with the London Serpent Trio. I always take it with me to the annual exhibition of early music at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, where it serves as a magnet for the workshop's annual trade show."

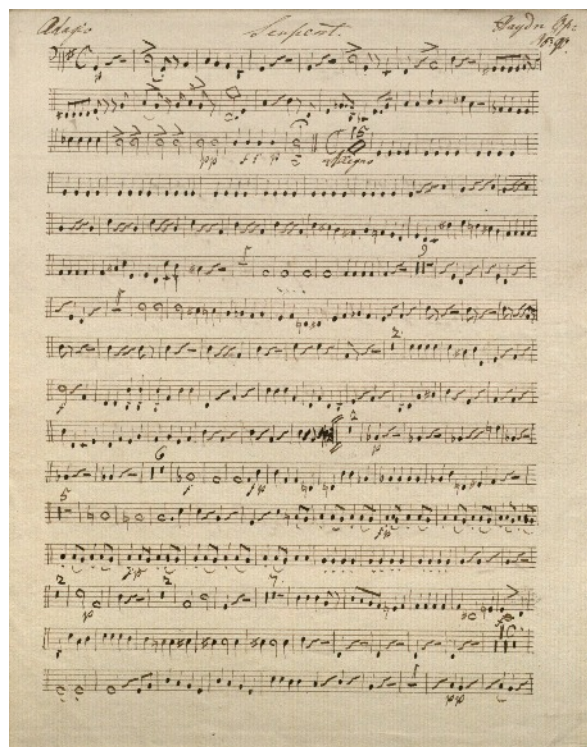


George II in front of a tapestry at Jeremy West's residence at Girton College, Cambridge

- Michel Godard is the subject of a 10 minute interview on YouTube. The spoken language is French, but there are also subtitles in English. He primarily plays serpent on the video, but he is also shown playing tuba. To view, use the URL www.youtube.com/watch?v=r36JIsfUWcA or search YouTube for *Michel Godard Serpent Tuba EPK*.

- The website Blog at Wordpress has an article titled *God Save the King: Music from the British Royal Court, 1770 – 1837, An exhibition at Beinecke Library, Yale University, October 1 – December 10, 2010*, with the URL being <https://osbmss146.wordpress.com/tag/serpent>. The article is by Karen Spicher, an archivist in the manuscript unit at Beinecke Library. She writes in part, "Among the most significant works for orchestra in the Archive are printed editions of symphonies of Haydn and an early copyist's manuscript of Beethoven's Symphony no. 1. A set of well-used volumes contains early editions of orchestra parts for Haydn's Symphonies no. 97 and 100, as well as works of other composers. Volumes are present for second violin, viola, bass, basso obbligato, flute, oboes, and horns. Some parts have manuscript additions or performance annotations, such as this bassoon part for Haydn's Symphony no. 100. Accompanying the volumes are additional parts in manuscript for serpent and trombone, neither present in Haydn's original instrumentation. It is not clear why these parts were added; as these instruments are typically present

in sets of parts in the Archive, they may indicate the preferred instrumentation of ensembles employed at the royal court."



Serpent part for Haydn Symphony, H. I, 100, G major. manuscript in an unidentified hand.

- J.C. Sherman has produced the world's first sopranino serpent, the *Inch Worm*. It is pitched in A-flat, because this is as small as he could make it and still have it manipulated in a functional way by the fingers, and even this required angled drilling of the finger holes. The instrument is made of walnut and is quite attractive in appearance. Sherman placed a video on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=h70KZ8r9eWg showing him giving the instrument its first toot on the tune *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*.



J.C. Sherman with his "Inch Worm" sopranino serpent in A-flat

● Nick Byrne's Sydney Ophicleide Quartet can be seen on YouTube in a rehearsal of Mendelssohn's *Festlied zur Stiftungsfeier* and Telemann's *Allegro from Quartet a 4*. Use the URL www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG5pbPcXnC0 or search YouTube for *Sydney Ophicleide Quartet plays Mendelssohn/Telemann*. This is as good a reason as any to remind the newsletter readers that there is a simple way to download all of these interesting YouTube videos. With the desired video actively playing, put the video on pause, then edit the contents of the URL window on your web browser to insert the letters 'ss' just before 'youtube', e.g. where the URL reads in part www.youtube.com/, edit it to read www.ssyoutube.com/. Once the 'ss' has been inserted into the URL, press ENTER on your keyboard, and the savefrom.net webpage for that video will appear. The YouTube URL appears in a text window, and in a moment there will be a series of dots moving left and right below that window. When the dots stop moving, you will be presented with a green box that says 'DOWNLOAD' on its left side and something like 'MP4 720p' on its right side. Clicking the DOWNLOAD should give you a pop-up window allowing you to download and save the MP4 video file to your computer. The savefrom.net webpage is full of other links that want to download various things....ignore those and don't click on anything other than the green DOWNLOAD box. As a safety precaution, once the MP4 file has downloaded, select it for immediate scanning with your favorite virus protection software; this is good practice with any file downloaded from the web.



*Sydney Ophicleide Quartet in rehearsal
Nick Byrne on left, with Scott Kinmont,
Jono Ramsay, Brad Lucas*

● The serpent appears in another YouTube video, this time of the *Prelude-March* from Charpentier's *Te Deum*, played by *Le Parlement de Musique* and conducted by Martin Gester, and viewable at www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7exNrmWXyA or by searching YouTube for *Marc-Antoine Charpentier - Te Deum*. The serpentist is shown very briefly, and does not look familiar to your newsletter editor; if any reader knows the identity of this player, please send that information to the editor.

● Also on YouTube is a video where Hungarian tubist *Roland Szentpali* talks about his tubas (this is also the name of the video),

www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGqdaOegDEM&feature=youtu.be. However, besides the tubas, Roland also demonstrates his military serpent, which he picks up at the 7:52 minute mark, holds it while continuing to discuss his tubas, starts to talk about the serpent at 10:04, and plays at 11:12. His serpent demonstration is done holding the military instrument in vertical 'church' orientation, rather odd, but he gets a nice sound out of it in the high range that he employs for the played selection. One might wish that he had also played in a more typical range that a military serpent would normally be expected to be used in, but it is still great that he is enjoying the instrument and exposing his fans to it.

● Author, literary critic and political writer Joseph "Jody" Bottum wrote a piece about the National Music Museum, also known as The Shrine to Music, in the September 21, 2015 (Volume 21, No. 02) edition of the magazine *The Weekly Standard*, titled *Pearl of the Plains*. The article can be read online at www.weeklystandard.com/articles/pearl-plains_1028469.html. Bottum opens his piece with a mention of his love for the sound of, or really the idea of, the serpent.

● Adam Lomas, son of frequent Serpentarium participant Michelle Lomas and Serpent Newsletter contributor Mike Lomas, stopped by the late 15th century parish church in the Cornish village of Sancreed, only about five miles southeast of the town St. Just near Cape Cornwall where the most recent Serpentarium took place. The village is named after St. Credan, also known as Sancredus. There Adam found some interesting panels of the old rood (choir) screen, which are well known for their odd engravings. One panel shows a character playing a long serpentine instrument that is intertwined with a snake.



*Engraving of
serpentine horn
player on the old
rood screen in the
parish church in
Sancreed, Cornwall*

*photo by
Adam Lomas*

● Adam Reynolds in England wrote, "You may remember me and my rather garish yellow ophicleide case (made by Kingham Cases in England, <http://kingham.merion.co.uk>, see September 2014 edition of this newsletter), so I thought



Adam Reynolds' serpent case made from a archery case

you appreciate a new addition to my case collection. A natural progression, I feel, is the serpent, so having come into possession of one I had the same dilemma as with the ophi, what to do for a hard case? My instrument (bass in C with 3 keys) came from the Monk workshop with a soft case but I needed a hard case for traveling to and from school. My father, an avid archer, had the idea of using a flight case for a compound bow, made by Plano, a venerable maker of all sorts of plastic cases. With its adjustable straps and foam lining it fits perfectly and is wonderfully strong and safe!" Of course, Kingham makes a fine serpent hard case which many serpentists have used for years for travel, including on airplanes, but the bow case is an interesting idea.



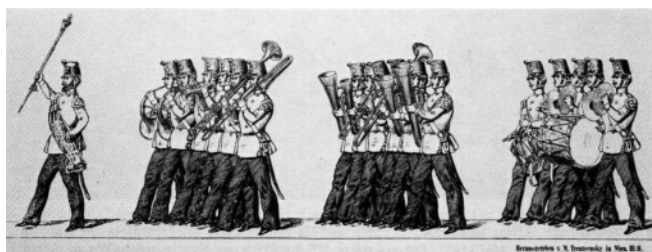
Plano brand bow case used by Adam Reynolds

- Scott Hall of Florida, who makes many unusual musical instruments as well as playable musical sculptures, some of which are serpent-related, wrote, "Pictured is a new one from me which soon goes into the collection of David Wornham over in England; the one and only topographic ophibaryton in 12 foot F. I made this by cutting cross sections, as I did in the three smaller box/book serpents which exist. I painted the bore several times to resist water, then laminated it closed with waterproof glue and painted it very black on the outside. The leadpipe is 1/2" diameter cylindrical copper tubing with a flat flared end to receive any small shanked trombone mouthpiece. Beyond the lower and very sonorous fundamental F note, the main gains here over my prior flat bass horns are the rippled edge, which suggests the existence of the zig-zag S shape within, and the bit of bell I've added onto the front panel".



Scott Hall's ophibaryton

- Following up on the Chicago workshop on Baroque music written by Jewish composers, mentioned on page 15, being too late to include details until here at the end, Andrew Schultze lectured on the relevant history and the specific composers and their situation. The ensemble of roughly a dozen players, plus three vocalists occasionally augmented by Schulte's own bass voice, read several works by Salamone Rossi, including *Canzon per sonar à 4*, *Tirsi Mio Core* and *Mi Chamocha*. Also played were a *Sinfonia* and matching *Zemirot* written in the town of Casale Monferrato in the Piedmont region of Italy, Louis Saladin's *Canticum Hebraicum* in several movements, and the uncredited pieces *Adon Olam* and *Psalm 13*.



1830's image of Austrian band with multiple ophicleides



Then, out of the Cape Cornwall fog, came an odd looking fellow, and we knew at once that it must be Charpentier!