

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2016

A Note from the Editor

I have said it before, but just when I think there is barely enough information in my newsletter file to justify printing a new edition, new things come rolling in unexpectedly. And checking up on one seemingly lean thing ends up uncovering something else, and all of a sudden there is extra content. So far, so good....

But a review of the newsletter bank account shows that the recent few editions, all of them large, expensive to print and mail, have done their work of depletion. Available funds are scarce. As I periodically remind readers, I personally cover all expenses except for actual printing and mailing fees, and that must come from readers, either as subscription donations or as general donations.

Please seriously consider making a general donation to the cause, and if you receive a subscription expiration notice, I encourage you to renew as soon as possible.

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

● Edinburgh Serpentarium 2017

All known and suspected serpentists (and players of the English Bass Horn, Ophimonocleide, Chromatic Bass Horn, and Ophicleide) are invited to participate in a Serpentarium near Edinburgh in May 2017. This event will include playing sessions, not to mention the eating and drinking in good company. The playing sessions will take place in Carlops, a few miles outside Edinburgh, where Murray and Patsy Campbell have their home. Accommodation is

available at reasonable prices in the area. Accommodation is also available in Edinburgh.

The dates will be May 26-29, 2017, and a website has been established with the latest information, <http://homepages.ed.ac.uk/am/serpent.html>

The provisional schedule of events is:

Friday 26th May

Afternoon: arrive in Carlops; transport can be provided from Edinburgh Waverley station by arrangement (buses from the airport go directly to Waverley)

Evening: small group playing sessions, supper

Saturday 27th May

All day: group playing sessions led by Phil Humphries

Evening: dinner at Allan Ramsay pub

Sunday 28th May

Morning: small group playing sessions, possibility of individual lessons

Afternoon: group playing sessions led by Phil Humphries

Monday 29th May (Spring bank holiday in UK, Memorial Day in the US)

Morning: small group playing sessions

Afternoon: group playing sessions led by Phil Humphries

Evening: informal concert in Carlops

Tuesday 30th May

Morning: depart, transport can be provided to Edinburgh Waverley station by arrangement

Wednesday 31st May – Monday 5th June

The Galpin Society and the American Musical Instrument Society Conference of Musical Instruments will be held in Edinburgh; Serpentarium participants may wish to schedule the extra time in order to attend this conference.

At some stage in the Serpentarium proceedings, there are plans afoot to have a session of informal talks and reminiscences on the history of the serpent revival. Most

likely accompanied by food and drink, Phil Humphries may contribute memories of the London Serpent Trio, Paul Schmidt and Nigel Nathan and others could talk about how the Serpent Newsletter and the regular Serpentaria evolved.

Not specifically part of the schedule yet, but likely to be added, could be a visit to the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, formerly housed in an annex of the Reid Concert Hall, but currently unavailable. St Cecilia's Hall, which houses the collection of early keyboards, has been having a major rebuild the last two years, with extra galleries to house the wind instruments. It should be open in time for the Serpentarium, so a visit will possibly become part of the schedule.

To make reservations for the Serpentarium, email D.M.Campbell@ed.ac.uk. A fee (to be determined) will be payable which will cover tuition and individual lessons, informal meals (Friday dinner, Saturday lunch, Sunday lunch, Monday tea) and other refreshments. Payment via PayPal is preferred. Participants will pay directly for their travel, accommodation, and Saturday dinner at the Allan Ramsay pub.

For further information about the schedule and events, email Murray Campbell at the address above, or Arnold Myers at A.Myers@ed.ac.uk.



Oh mon Dieu! Jouer ophicleide est tel travail!

● Vintage Band Festival 2016

The fourth full-scale Vintage Band Festival took place in Northfield, Minnesota, on July 28 – 31, 2016. The official schedule over the four days listed 99 free concerts of band music, most it being brass-oriented, including national, international, and local groups. Vintage brass bands included *Newberry's Victorian Cornet Band*, *Orphan Brigade Band*, *Independent Silver Band*, *1st Brigade Band*, *Liberty Band of Iowa*, *Marengo Civil War Band*, and *Kentucky Baroque Trumpets*. Some of the more modern brass groups included *Copper Street Brass*, *Jack Brass Band*, *Tom Baker's Mardi Gras Brass Band*, and *Polished Brass Quintet*. The excellent traditional German ensemble *Original Drachenfesler Musikanten*, consisting of baritone, trumpet, accordion and serpentist/ophicleidist Erhard Schwartz on tuba, performed

at least a dozen times throughout the festival. Festival founder and artistic director Paul Niemisto's fine local Finnish brass band, *Ameriikan Poijat*, performed several shows. For one reason or another, this festival had a larger ratio of non-vintage groups than usual, but the event was well attended with large and enthusiastic audiences in multiple simultaneous venues in Northfield and surrounding communities.

A festival regular (albeit unscheduled) group, the *Roving Ophicleides*, was originally planned to advance from busking around Northfield to being a scheduled ensemble. All ophicleidists who had previously been part of the ensemble, Paul Schmidt, Leonard Byrne, John Weber, and Clark Wolf, were expecting to form a quartet. However, life intrudes in peoples' plans, and various emergencies and other issues made it impossible for the group's members to be available on the weekend of the festival. Paul Schmidt was still planning to attend as a member of the 1st Brigade Band, and hoped to be able to at least demonstrate the ophicleide in some short appearances around town.



Erhard Schwartz and Paul Schmidt play ophicleide duets at the Vintage Band Festival

About one week before the event, Erhard Schwartz emailed to ask if an ophicleide could be made available for him to play on, if the busy *Drachenfesler* schedule allowed time to join the *Roving Ophicleides*. In addition to his usual antique Bb ophicleide, Paul brought along his Wessex Bb ophicleide for Erhard's use. Paul played two brief solo sets for demonstration purposes on Friday the 29th, and on Saturday the 30th Paul and Erhard were able to play three half-hour sets as a duet in different locations in downtown Northfield. It was not possible to manage any other ophicleide appearances, since both Paul and Erhard were fully occupied with their own groups on Sunday the 31st. Still, the

passersby audiences clearly appreciated the sound of two ophicleides, and both players enjoyed the chance to play together.



'Le Concert', anonymous 1989 etching

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 cimbasso, 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)

Serpentones Lopez
Juan Lopez Romero, 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>
<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>

New Materials

● The two CDs that were previously announced in this newsletter, *From the Peninsula to Waterloo* and *Reverie & Romance* are still delayed, remaining unavailable for review in this edition. Nick Byrne wrote, "The recording *Reverie & Romance* (aka *Reverie et Caprice*), is still on track for early 2017 release but whether it will be a streaming-only release [MP3 download?], or a limited CD release, is yet to be decided. A long tired story, I know, but we're getting there and thanks for your enthusiasm and patience. Not a large calling for more ophicleide solo CDs in the small musical world I'm afraid." We hope for these to finally be available for review by the next issue of this newsletter.



● *Irineu de Almeida e o Oficleide 100 Anos Depois* (Irenaeus de Almeida and the Ophicleide 100 Years Later); CD recording featuring an unnamed sextet, with Everson Moraes on ophicleide. The record label appears to be Biscoito Fino, www.biscoitofino.com.br, but no catalog number is specified. Obtained from Amazon as MP3 download; download also available from iTunes, and CD may be ordered from Amazon with a long delivery delay.

The subject of this recording is the "choro" styled music of Brazilian musician and composer Irenaeus Gomes de Almeida, known as Irenaeus Batina or Irineu de Almeida. Living in Rio de Janeiro in the period of 1863 ~ 1914, he played ophicleide, trombone and euphonium. Information found online, after rough translation from Portuguese, seems to suggest that Everson Moraes rescued an ophicleide from an old coffee plantation in the interior of Brazil. The original document refers to his ophicleide as *em mi bemol* which due to the inherent uncertainties of the *solfège* system might mean that his instrument is in Eb, which would make it a quinticlave, or it could mean almost any other key depending on the starting pitch used. The instrument is shown being played in several videos referenced in this newsletter's *More Exciting News* section, and it appears to be a regular ophicleide in C, and sounds like it as well. Besides Everson Moraes, the group consists of Aquiles Moraes on cornet, Leonardo Miranda on flute, Iuri Bittar on guitar, Lucas

Oliveira on cavaquinho (small Portuguese guitar), and Marcus Thadeu on tambourine. On a couple of tracks there seems to be another bass brass instrument, perhaps a euphonium or small tuba, in the mix alongside the ophicleide, but the list of performers does not mention such an additional instrument or associated player. Irrespective of that question, the musicians are all very skilled and the ensemble is as tight and musical as can be wished for.

The selections are in the form of, or influenced by, the polka, schottische, waltz, mazurka and habanera, all with the addition of African rhythm. Most are upbeat and usually feature a single solo part on either flute or cornet, with an infectious and cantabile *obbligato* ophicleide line underneath; the interplay is wonderful and beautifully played. Without trying to describe the individual selections here, the titles will be given. The 14 tracks are *São João Debaixo D'água*, *Dainéa*, *Pisca-Pisca*, *Lembranças*, *Mariana em Sarilho*, *Irene*, *Albertina*, *Qualquer Cousa* (polka), *Jaci*, *O Lico Sorrindo*, *Qualquer Cousa*, *Despedida*, *Aí Morcego*, and *Arthur Azevedo*.



*Choro band soloists, left to right
Aquiles Moraes, Everson Moraes, Leonardo Miranda*

The recording has an immediate feel, as if the listener is part of the ensemble, yet no instrument seems overly present. The sound suggests that instruments were not 'close mic-ed', which means reduced studio editing opportunities, so apparently the performers were as proficient as they sound here. It is not clear whether the referenced YouTube videos of this group show practice sessions or perhaps even the actual recording session, but the sound is comparable. This recording is a fine and enjoyable example of the ophicleide in its application as a *choro* instrument, and will reward the listener on a purely musical level as well.

● *Der Zink - Geschichte, Instrumente und Bauweise* (The Zink/Cornett - History, Tools and Construction); soft cover book, 319 pages, Michaelstein Conference Reports number 79, published by Wißner-Verlag, Augsburg, 2015, ISBN 978-3-95786-013-2, and Stiftung Kloster Michaelstein, ISBN 978-3-89512-141-8. www.wissner.com or www.kloster-michaelstein.de. Obtained from F. Delbanco



International Books & Journals (F. Delbanco GmbH & Co. KG), www.delbanco.de or email post@delbanco.de. Price: 40€ (Euro) (approx \$45 US, or £35), plus shipping. It should also be possible to order the book directly from the Kloster Michaelstein by emailing Uta Talke at uta.talke@sds-kloster-michaelstein.de.

This new book is a collection of papers from the Musikinstrumentenbau-Symposium Michaelstein, which took place from October 23 ~ 25, 2009; the collection was edited by Christian Philipsen, in association with Monika Lustig. There are 15 papers presented, and they are not in a uniform language; the language of each paper is the same as its title as listed below. The first ten papers are exclusively about the zink/cornetto, while the last five papers are on the subject of the serpent. The papers are:

- *Zinkenbau und Zinkenspiel in Süddeutschland - von der Fien Reichstadt Nürnberg bis zum Königreich Württemberg* (Cornett making and playing in southern Germany - from the free imperial city of Nuremberg to the Kingdom of Württemberg), by Sabine Klaus
- *Die Entwicklung des Zinken zwischen 1500 und 1700: neue Erkenntnisse* (The development of the cornett from 1500-1700: new insights), by Roland Wilson
- *Der gerade Zink* (The straight cornett), by Fritz Heller
- *Akustische Untersuchungen an Zinken aus dem Instrumentensatz des Freiburger Doms, ihren Nachbauten und modernen Vergleichsinstrumenten* (Acoustic tests on cornetts from the set of instruments at Freiberg Cathedral, their replicas and modern instruments compared), by Gunter Ziegenhals
- *Einblicke in das "Zinkenpaar" SAM 230 und SAM 231 - Zur Methode der 3D-röntgencomputertomographischen Vermessung* (Insights into the "cornett pair" SAM 230 and

SAM 231 - The method of 3D - measurement by computed tomography [CT scan]), by Beatrix Darmstädter

- *Der Zink bzw. das Cornett in Samuel Scheidts Werk (The zink/cornett in Samuel Scheidt's compositions)*, by Klaus-Peter Koch

- *Für eine Erneuerung der Cornettino - Praxis (For a renewal of Cornettino - practice [experience?])*, by William Dongois

- *"L'ultimo sospiro": Cornetto virtuosity between Bologna and Florence at the turn of the eighteenth century*, by Bruce Dicky

- *Zum Gebrauch der Zinken beim (hohen) Wiener Kammerton (To use the zink at [high] Vienna pitch)*, by Gerhard Stradner

- *Nicks, kerfs, and joints: The story of the cornett, 1750 - 1850, in documents and surviving instruments*, by Stewart Carter

- *Der Basszink - Irrtum oder Absicht? - Versuch, ein besonderes Mitglied der Zinkenfamilie in der Musik seiner Zeit zu positionieren (The Bass zink - mistake or intention? - An attempt to position a special member of the zink family in the music of its time)*, by Wolfgang Köhler

- *The Serpent in the Church Choirs in France*, by Volny Hostiou

- *Depictions of the Church Serpent in France: Characteristics, Uses, Symbolisms*, by Florence Gétreau

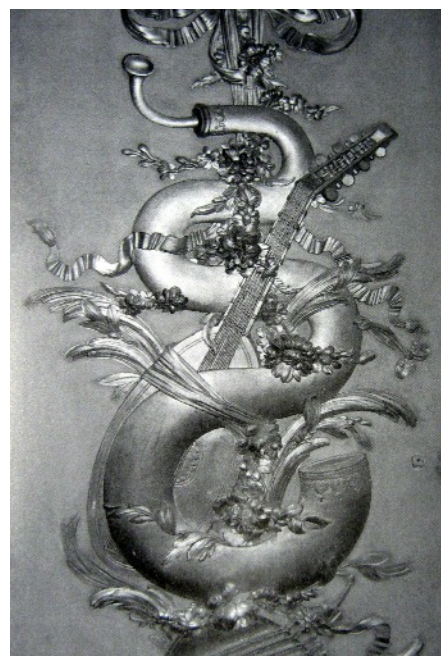
- *Marches and Divertimenti: Haydn and the Serpent*, by Douglas Yeo

- *Barbarischer Ton oder dynamische Flexibilität? - Einsatz und Bewertung des Serpents bis zum 19. Jahrhundert (Barbaric sound or dynamic flexibility? - Application and evaluation of the Serpents to the 19th century)*, by Christian Ahrens



'Angel Playing Serpent', wooden statuette decorating the organ case of Saint-Salvi collegiate church, Albi, southern France, by the workshop of Christophe Mouchereau, c. 1737

The time allotted for review did not permit translation of the papers written in German, so this review will simply present a few highlights from the serpent-related articles written in English. Volny Hostiou's paper on serpents used in church choirs in France covers many bases, but of special note is his coverage of the earliest mentions of serpent use, his documentation of the origins of the serpent, and of the first professional serpent player known through historical documentation. He discusses the instrument itself, its use in the French churches, details of the employment of church serpentists, the function of the serpent in church music of the time, and its playing characteristics.



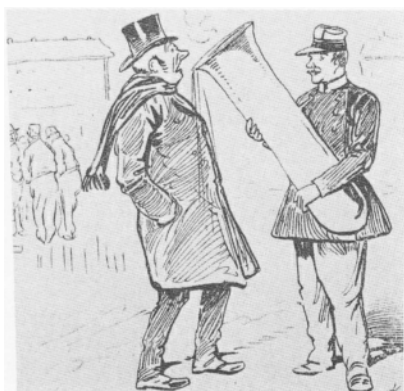
Musical instruments of the church, gilded wood carving on the west side of the base of the musician's gallery organ, Chapel Royal of Versailles, by Jules Degoullons and associates, c. 1708-1709

Florence Gétreau's paper is an exploration of images of the church serpent and what those depictions can tell us about the use of the instrument. There are sections involving the frequent depictions of celestial serpents and serpent-playing cherubs, exploration of the serpent's appearance on the Gradual of Notre-Dame de Paris, iconographic use of the serpent as part of 'trophies', or artworks intended to glorify the monarchy, the stone relief sculptures of cascades of instruments in the Chapel Royal at Versailles, panels in churches, fashion plates, commercial images, use in imagery of the French Revolution, and finally depictions of cathedral, parish and village serpentists. This paper includes reproductions of many images described in its text.

Doug Yeo's paper focuses on the pieces of music composed by Haydn and in which the serpent is called for by name. In his introduction, Doug touches on the lack of certainty regarding the origin of the serpent, and a brief overview of the serpent's use in music before Haydn's time. He then devotes sections to *Divertimenti* numbers 1, 4, and 6, and

March – The Prince of Wales, and the Derbyshire March, and finally the March in E flat (unfinished). Doug takes the time to set the stage for how each piece came to be, and he discusses certain controversies regarding different accounts of their compositional history and disputes over authorship, as well as the way that the composer used the serpent in the music. The paper concludes with sections on serpent construction in the late 18th century, and considerations when performing the pieces in today's musical environment.

This book is well worth obtaining for any student of serpent history. Even though the focus of the symposium was the zink/cornetto, we can be thankful that its serpent cousin was included. Of course, the overall book is additionally valuable for the wider subject matter. Even for English-only readers, there is enough unique content herein to justify purchase.



Comic illustration by Henriot (Henry Maigrot) printed in L'Illustration, Paris, March 16, 1985. A man on a cold day learns that an ophicleide player keeps warm by filling his instrument with hot water.

thanks to Will Kimball

About the Organization

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

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Suggested minimum contribution for non-European subscribers is \$20 for 4 issues (2 years); these subscriptions are required for individuals, and institutions that 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. As of April 2012, all newsletters distributed in the European region are electronic, not printed; for the time being, newsletters distributed elsewhere remain in printed form. Non-UK/EU contributions may be made using PayPal, sent to the email address ocleide@earthlink.net

In Memoriam: Donald Beyer

Don Beyer was a multi-instrumentalist and musical philanthropist, well known in early music circles in the States. A graduate of Lindenhurst, New York High School, he played Eb clarinet in the US armed services, and majored on oboe at Hofstra University, Long Island and also studied Trombone at East Carolina University and bass clarinet at SUNY (State University of New York) Stony Brook.

Don played bass clarinet with the Omaha Symphony Orchestra, and was principal oboe with the Long Island Symphony Orchestra. He served for more than 25 years as organist in a Masonic lodge in Manhattan. He was also a frequent clinician and guest soloist with many college jazz bands, especially on trombone and bass flute. Don also took up the serpent, and was a regular attendee at the Historic Brass Society's Early Brass Festivals, and often joined the other attending serpentists in their small ensemble sessions. Also as a serpentist, Don joined various New England area orchestras in their performances of Berlioz, Mendelssohn, etc.

Often recognized for his sponsorship of young musicians, Don often helped to pay for the education of promising young musicians, and was known to cover the costs of airfare, lodging and fees so that they could attend music conferences. Many music students had their private lessons with great teachers paid for by Don. To foster an interest in older instruments, he was known to loan rare brass instruments to students. He was a direct benefactor for many jazz students at East Carolina University. On one reported occasion, which was typical of Don, he sponsored a student bassoonist by giving him a great bass sordune (Renaissance double reed instrument), reed making tools and supplies for the instrument, and paid for the student's attendance at a



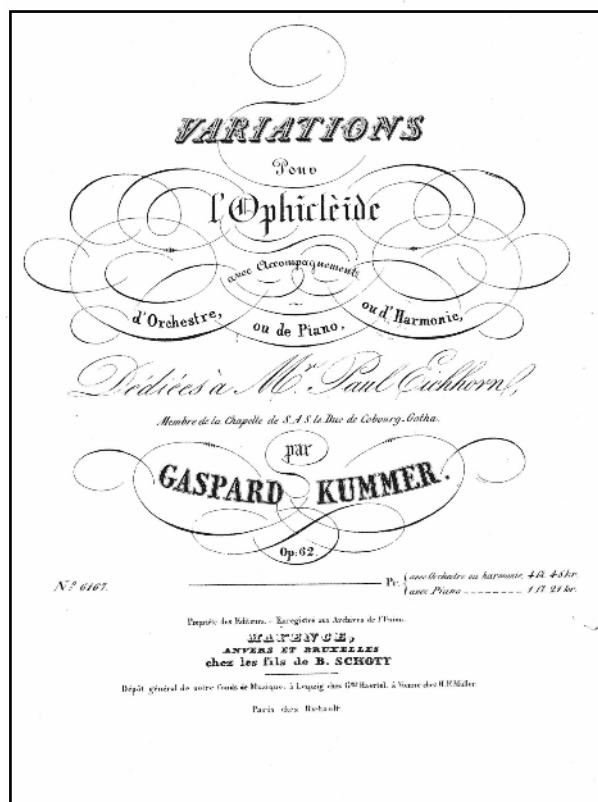
L-R: Don Beyer, Jiggs Whigham, George Broussard. Whigham is an acclaimed trombonist, band leader and educator, and Broussard is Professor Emeritus at East Carolina University (and Don's former teacher there)

Renaissance music camp. On another occasion, he provided a complete scholarship for a young South African bassoon student, including paying her transportation, housing, meals, all of her needs during a conference, all music that she would need for one year of study, and tools to make her own reeds once she returned home.

He has scholarships in his name for the New York Brass Conference, IAJE (International Association for Jazz Education), IDRS (International Double Reed Society), ITA (International Trombone Association) and the Liszt Academy in Budapest.

Don was also a frequent financial supporter of this newsletter, often sending generous checks to help defray expenses.

He suffered from severe arthritis, diabetes, partial vision loss, and several heart attacks. Don's son Harvey wrote in April that his father had died in January 2016 from congestive heart failure.



A Kummer-nundrum, part two

In the April edition of this newsletter was the subject of which composer wrote *Variations for Ophicleide* by “Kummer” or “G. Kummer”. The candidates were Gottself Heinrich Kummer and Kaspar (Caspar, Casper, Gaspard) Kummer. Happily, informed readers have shared their knowledge.

Wolf-Dieter Rase from Bonn (Germany) wrote, “A few years ago I suggested to Erhard Schwartz, a renowned

ophicleide player living at Bonn, to perform a piece for ophicleide with our chamber orchestra where I used to play double bass. Erhard decided to play the *Kummer Variations*. I was put in charge of getting the scores for the orchestra. The original publisher, Schott & Söhne at Mainz (Mayence), could not help me because their archives had been destroyed during WWII. Erhard suggested that I contact the Staatsbibliothek Berlin (German National Library at Berlin). Indeed I was able to get (bad) copies of the original sheets of the *Kummer Variations*, with accompaniment either for orchestra, harmony music, or piano. The music sheets were originally published by the Schott subsidiaries in Belgium at Anvers (the French name of Antwerp) and Brussels, with explanatory text in French only. I assume that Schott changed the original forename Kaspar or Caspar (it was usual at that time to use both C and K for the first letter of a name) to Gaspard. One reason could be that the publisher wanted to evoke the impression that Kummer was a French composer. After all, the ophicleide was invented in France, and only a French composer would be able to write in the correct style for that instrument. Another reason may have been the less friendly relationship between France and Germany in the 19th century, which caused Schott to hide the nationality of the composer. The change in forename was intended to increase sales in France and Belgium, of course. From the information on the title page it was clear that Kaspar or Casper was the correct Kummer. The German-French hostility at that time, by the way, impeded the career and appreciation of the composer Louis Théodore Gouvy, of French ancestry, but born in Germany near the French border (near to my home village), after the territorial rearrangements after the Congress of Vienna. For the French he was German, for the Germans a Frenchman, with negative connotations on either side. Fortunately we have overcome that obstacle in our generation.”

“I received an email from the publisher Schott, telling me that the older prints of Schott are kept by the Bavarian State Library at Munich, including the *Kummer Variations pour Ophicleïde* which are catalogued under the number 6079. I looked in the OPAC of that institution, but I was not able to find that number or the Kummer sheets. The lady from Schott recommended that those interested contact the library by phone or mail, which seems to be the easier way to receive copies of the sheets. Communications in English should not be a problem.”

Another contributor was Nicolas Indermuehle, who contributed additional information. The often given Opus number 62 might vary on different versions of the score, because of the way the piece was published. According to the plate number (edition number), the score should have been published between 1840 and 1841, according to Austrian musicologist Otto Erich Deutsch's *Musikverlags Nummern* (music publisher numbers), although the piece is often listed as being composed around 1870, which seems more likely. “I did find the Kummer piece referenced in old newspapers as a *mazurka and variations*. They have the same opus number, but different publication dates. The

explanation is that the two versions were published in two different towns; probably the same work, but with different titles.” Nicolas also submitted a scan of the entire *Variations* in the version with piano accompaniment, of which the title page is reproduced in this newsletter, which Steven Mead had sent to him. The cover page’s dedication is to ophicleidist Paul Eichhorn, the composer as Gaspard (Kaspar) Kummer, and the musical sections are identified as *Introduction*, *Mazurka*, and *Variations*.

The specificity of this title page, and other associated information, seems to solidly establish Kaspar Kummer as the composer of this famous work. Thanks to those who contributed to the first article in April, and to Wolf-Dieter Rase and Nicholas Indermuehle for their invaluable contributions to this edition.



Nick Byrne with his new son Reuben

Where Serpents Gather

● Nick Byrne wrote, “We recently had a baby boy, Reuben [see photo], and that, along with inventing a new rotary-style valve that I am developing here with a precision engineering company, has really consumed my time outside the Sydney Symphony. On September 5th I performed the *Telemann Fantasia in A minor* (Alan Raph edition) on ophicleide as a musical sorbet alongside the usual trombone heavy program of Speer, Tomasi, Handel, Persechetti & a piece I wrote entitled *Credo* for four antiphonal trombones; the concert took place at St. James Church in Sydney. Otherwise I have a trip to Perth in November to play ophicleide in the Berlioz

Symphonie Fantastique with the West Australian Symphony Orchestra, and some more solo CD recording in early December.”

● Phil Humphries gave a full length recital on serpent with piano accompaniment on July 16, 2016, in the town of Dewlish, England. While many concerts and recitals involving the serpent have taken place in recent years, Phil



Walter Brewster provided piano accompaniment for Phil Humphries during his serpent recital

wonders of his might be the first of its type in modern times. If any reader knows of an earlier full-length concert or recital with serpent as the only instrument, not including the accompaniment, please email this newsletter. The concert was recorded for posterity, but it is not available for distribution to others.

Phil wrote, “My other serpent activities recently have included a trip to Dvorak Hall, Prague with The New London Consort. The concert was part of The Prague Spring Festival and the program was music of the 17th and 18th centuries, inspired by William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The first half was music from 1667-1694 and featured the composers Matthew Locke, John Banister, Pelham Humfrey and Giovanni Battista Draghi. The second half was music from 1695-1730 composed by John Weldon, Henry Purcell and Jean-Baptiste Lully. The serpent was only used in Weldon's music *Masque of Devils*. This was the 3rd performance of this concert, and we previously did it at the Cité de la musique in Paris and also The Brighton Festival two years ago. “

“There was also a concert for the Thomas Hardy Society with the Mellstock Trio doing our latest show *The Thomas Hardy Songbook* which includes material from the latest album [of the Mellstock Band] of the same name (reviewed

in the April 2016 edition of this newsletter).” Phil also wrote that he was scheduled to perform Simon Proctor’s *Serpent Concerto* on October 15th Wimborne Minster (in Dorset) with an orchestra, but due to some scheduling complications that performance has been postponed.



The Mellstock Trio, left to right, Phil Humphries, Dave Townsend, Caroline Butler

● Susan Bradley, a.k.a. *Goddess of Unusual Plumbing* (Tuba, Ophicleide, Serpent, Cimbasso), wrote about her recent adventures down-under, “I was invited to play a couple of tuba solos with a community band in rural Victoria, a state of Australia. I support these projects wholeheartedly, as it takes huge commitment to keep bands running in country towns, competing with, and sharing players with, sports teams, especially on weekends, with members often driving 50 km or more to attend rehearsals. I had chosen two light pieces for solo tuba, as I only got one rehearsal with the band. I offered to take my ophicleide, serpent and cimbasso, and this was eagerly accepted, although I don’t really think they knew what they were getting!”

“The gig was at a pub in a tiny fishing hamlet on the river, about fifteen km outside of Bairnsdale (Australia), the nearest ‘big’ town, population 13,000 – the town, not the hamlet. The hamlet would have had about one thousand inhabitants, if you included the surrounding area. I was accommodated at the pub, simple and spotless. Several players of the band were unable to make the rehearsal due to sport commitments on the Saturday afternoon, and there were some interesting ‘holes’ in the accompaniment. I soon realized that the venue was unlike anything I had played in recently: the last time I had played in a pub was in my pub rock days, 20 or so years ago and more. The gig was in the dining room, with spectacular views out over the broad, navigable river, and was, to my surprise, at 1PM, usually the

busiest hour for a pub to serve lunch. Yep, they served lunch to all several hundred people during the concert; the bar was open and people came and got drinks. In a most Australian touch, the large screen television at the back of the room, directly in my eye-line, stayed on, broadcasting critical details of the Olympics. There was no backstage, or safe area to set up my instruments. Luckily I had brought the cimbasso stand, and the serpent and ophicleide pretty much looked after themselves, until the air conditioning was turned on, directing an air stream directly on to the serpent. Fancy footwork on my part, and the serpent was safe.”

“Yet, despite all this totally non-classical approach, I don’t think that I have ever done a more enjoyable gig! The audience were responsive and enthusiastic during the tuba solos, still tucking into their parmies (chicken parmigiana), and steaks; I can’t recall the last time I played for an audience eating lunch, but it was fun! They were relaxed, attentive and appreciative. After a few more medleys from the community band (I swear I saw *Instant Concert* in their folders, although I don’t think they played it – when will that piece die?), I did a swift set-up of my cimbasso, ophicleide and serpent, with the assistance of a young tubist in the audience who had announced his interest, and who promptly got press-ganged into Chief Serpent Handler. I do my demos in different ways, tailoring to the audience. This audience were rural folk; even those from the big smoke a few kilometres away were still rural in community and style. I made a narrative style of Canon Edmé Guillaume wanting to boost the lower voices of his choir, and immediately several choir members nodded understandingly. I gave them a little taste of the serpent sound, showed them the ‘D’ problem, and the limitations of the human hand, and then gave them a bit of a piece that Christopher Monk gave me, a *Pferdeballett* (music for horse *dressage* maneuvers).”



Nick Byrne performing the Telemann ‘Fantasia in A minor’

“I moved on to how the Industrial Revolution changed the manufacturing of the serpent, and improved metal techniques leading to the ophicleide, as a keyed serpent, and all the farmers and factory workers nodded approvingly. I

gave them a few bars of the Berlioz *Dies Irae* on my F tuba, and pointed out that it was meant to depict ugly witches. Then on to the ophicleide, and suddenly the ugly witches came to life! Finally, as a bonus, they got a little bit of the Verdi *Dies Irae* on the cimbasso, to show them that the tuba and the trombone have an unacknowledged Italian cousin. The audience loved it, and were most appreciative with the applause. After that, the band played a medley of tunes from *The Blues Brothers*, people got up and danced, and somehow I ended up with several beers, and surrounded by people wanting to know more. *A perfect afternoon!*"

- Sue also wrote about, "Turning Down A Serpent Gig! Shock, horror! How dare she!.....In a first for me, I turned down a gig. Not due to the money, due to the music. For the first time ever, I had to say 'I can't do it in the time available'. I could have done it with a few months' notice, but not in two weeks' time. One of my orchestras, Corpus Medicorum, decided to do a concert on short notice; Haydn's *Surprise Symphony*, and Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*. Due to the short notice, there had been trouble getting a second bassoon, and the esteemed Musical Director, a violist, suggested I might like to do the Haydn on serpent. I dutifully printed out the part, and played through it. To use a modern phrase – *OMG*. So many notes, so much tuning! Just playing it in my studio nearly killed me! And let's not mention the tenor clef! I confess, I am a serpent coward. I have, for the first time in twenty-six years, turned down a gig on serpent. There are bassoonists out there, I shall hunt them down and find them."



Cartoon by Charles Edouard de Beaumont c. 1850—Paris
"Clarisse, beware...the serpent!" - thanks to Will Kimball

More Exciting News

- British antiques dealer and TV presenter Paul Martin visited the Bate Collection of Music Instruments in Oxford for an episode of his TV program *Flog It!* In the video, viewable on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQuSf86L1XA, or search YouTube for *Bate Collection, Oxford*, curator Andy Lamb leads Martin through brief encounters with a few old instruments, including an 1815 English Military serpent by Thomas Key, known to have been played at the Battle of Waterloo. As is often the case with such brief programs intended for a general audience's quick video fix, the subject instruments are not given their due in either factual coverage or musical demonstrations, yet hopefully at least some viewers will choose to learn more about what they see here.



'Liberty's Pulpit' by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris,
c. 1900 - Philadelphia - thanks to Will Kimball

- Phil Humphries can be seen discussing the serpent in a brief video taken in 2008 as part of the *Christmas Revels* in Boston, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vm8HIY9BzAs or by searching YouTube for *Revels - Phil Humphries and the Serpent*. Phil also appears with Dave Townsend, playing trombone and serpent, in this video www.youtube.com/watch?v=htiV9DMxJzY or by searching YouTube for *Live in Eynsham - The Lost Chord - Dave Townsend & Phil Humphries*.

- A tuba enthusiast and YouTube blogger who calls himself *Tubadylan* has surprisingly posted a video on the Squarparent, which of course is a simple plywood home-made variant of the serpent, previously featured in this newsletter, and for which plans can be downloaded from the Serpent Website. The brave and hopefully tone-deaf soul who

chooses to view the video may find it at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScCbJtJal1c, or by searching YouTube for *The Squarepent - Homemade Tuba (Serpent)*. The information provided in the video is mostly nonsense, and the playing totally unskilled and unrepresentative of the instrument, but nevertheless it is surprising that anyone bothered to make multiple versions (often fanciful) of the Squarpent and then present it in such an unabashed way. The comments from viewers are just an onslaught of uninformed blather, but this newsletter editor did post some hopefully useful comments that the video's author responded to nicely. Pieces attempted in the video include *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, *The Imperial March from Star Wars*, and the theme from the gameshow *Jeopardy*. You won't know whether to laugh or cry.

- Swiss multi-instrumentalist Roland Schwab has posted a video where he and guitarist Volker Ell perform *Trace of Grace* by Michel Godard. Roland plays a Berger serpent, while Ell plays a Yamaha Silent Nylon MIDI guitar, looped using a Boss RC-50 device (Godard uses a similar approach to play this and other compositions wherein he overlays himself on bass and serpent). The video can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qClc9YGwczs, or by searching YouTube for *Serpent & Gitarre / Serpent & Guitar: Impro "Trace of Grace"*. This is a very nicely realized version of a beautiful piece of music.



Members of the ensemble *Nulla Dies Sine Musica*

- Another interesting new video on YouTube may be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKtgs0u9Bs4, or by searching that site for *Les Visites Musicales de Nulla Dies Sine Musica carnyx, keyed trumpet and bugle, ophicleide, piano*. This video is comprised of excerpts from an educational program called *Une expo dans le vent ? un voyage dans le temps ! (An exhibition in the wind? A journey through time!)*, which is a living, traveling museum presented by *Nulla Dies Sine Musica*, <http://nulla-dies-sine-musica.blog4ever.com>, a collective of nearly a dozen skilled multi-instrumentalists; their serpent and ophicleide player is Guy Estimbre. The very skilled musicians are shown playing cornetto (the serpent is ALMOST shown but the excerpt ends before the performer can be shown playing it), keyed trumpet, natural horn, clavichord & fortepiano duet, keyed bugle, romantic trombone, zoomorphic ophicleide, and a Saxhorn polka.

- Some wonderful Brazilian "choro" music can be seen and heard on YouTube in these videos: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rmi4tztyV5c, or search YouTube for *Ophicleide e Bombardino - Boêmia Terra (Irineu de Almeida)*, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGV4uGr1D70, or search for *"Pisca-Pisca" - Irineu de Almeida*, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vaPcWWmKYU, or search *"São João Debaixo d'Água" - Irineu de Almeida*, and www.youtube.com/watch?v=D37Q-y3yI0Q, or search *"Qualquer coisa" - Irineu de Almeida*. The excellent ophicleidist is Everson Moraes. A related video is www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLDIDLdjk04, or search *Irineu de Almeida - 100 Anos Depois*. These videos are of the same group of performers that produced the new CD recording *Irineu de Almeida e o Oficleide 100 Anos Depois*, reviewed in this newsletter's *New Materials* section. The composer of the selections, Irineu de Almeida, can be heard playing ophicleide on a vintage audio recording that has been thankfully posted to YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCkxPyw8u1U, or search *Irineu de Almeida (Irineu Batina) - QUALQUER COISA - solo de ophicleide - Irineu de Almeida*.

- Andy Lamb wrote about an unusual instrument inquiry he received from a correspondent, who spotted the weird aerophone contraption at the *Festival Interceltique de Lorient* in Brittany; it is the largest Celtic music festival according to Wikipedia. The correspondent wrote, "I saw the group with this instrument twice, the first time they were playing in the national bagadou (the pipe band tradition in Brittany, which uses bagpipes, cornemuse, and drums) competition - first division. Most of the bagad groups had a bass wind instrument, but they were mostly conventional instruments such as contrabass clarinet and saxophone. One band had an instrument which was clearly a bass bombarde. So it seems there isn't any standard bass instrument used - so it's possible this odd one is a one off - but it did look ancient. I think the band is *Bagad Sonerien Bro Dreger* or possibly *Bagad Cap Caval* (based on the time I took the photo during the competition)."



*Can you identify this unusual bass wind instrument?
It seems to have a cup mouthpiece and be slide operated.*

Viewing the photos, Andy and Paul Schmidt thought that this is a modern instrument that is probably without an historical precedent. The horn appears to be made from carbon composites or other plastic resins, and we wondered if it was made by 3D printing, like the serpents described in the April 2016 and current editions of this newsletter. It also appears to have a slide mechanism, along the lines of the slide saxophones that some manufacturers made as novelty instruments in the first quarter of the 20th Century, except apparently with a cup mouthpiece (although from the photo it is hard to tell, and there might be a double reed inside the player's mouth, as on a chanter or shawm). The player seems to be holding a small handle to manipulate the slide. This might even be a one-off instrument.....Internet searches so far have not turned up anything about this. If any reader can identify this instrument, please email this newsletter.

- Volny Hostiou plays serpent with organ and vocal soloist in a performance of *Ave Maris Stella* by Jehan Titelouze, www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WIIcoGrhzI or by searching YouTube for *Jehan Titelouze : Ave Maris stella*.

- Near the end of September, Paul Schmidt visited Bob Pallansch and his wife, Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, and Connie Palmer in Virginia. One highlight of the trip was a visit to the *Vincent & Ethel Simonetti Historic Tuba Collection* in Durham, North Carolina, www.simonettitubacollection.com, with its more than 300 tubas and related brass instruments. Although at this time, the collection includes only a single ophicleide and no serpents, Vince is actively interested in acquiring an antique serpent, or at least an authentically made reproduction. Please contact the museum through their website of you know of any candidate instruments.

- Also during the Virginia visit, Robert Wagenknecht revealed his latest project, inspired in part by the 3D-printed serpents covered in the April 2016 edition of this newsletter; a 3D-printed copy of his Monk tenor serpent. Robert had previously studied and measured his tenor, and had X-rays made of the bore, and had gone so far as to fabricate half molds for laying up a fiberglass or carbon-fibre serpent. He has now partnered with another person who is affiliated with a local "maker" facility that counts a 3D printer amongst the tools it makes available to the public for their construction projects. The two of them have modeled the tenor serpent in the computer software, and the sections of the serpent have been printed. Robert has taken the first steps in assembling the many sections into a complete instrument, but has temporarily put it on hold because the bocal section was also printed, and he is reconsidering whether that part should actually be made of brass, which would necessitate redesigning and reprinting the section that would act as the bocal receiver. Also under re-evaluation is whether to try boring the six finger holes in the existing sections, or possibly redesigning and reprinting the sections to have the finger holes in them as part of the printing process. Certainly, with the rise in popularity of affordable and available 3D printing machines and associated design software, we will be seeing much more variety in homemade musical instruments. See *3D serpent and Monk tenor*, below.



- Bernard Fourtet appears playing serpent, along with Régis Singlit's cornetto and Philippe Matharel's tenor cornett/lyzarden, in a performance of *Alleluja, lobet den Herrn* by Heinrich Schütz at www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX_oB-gyU5Y or by searching YouTube for *Heinrich Schütz: Alleluja, lobet den Herrn*.

- Nicolas Indermuehle in Finland wrote about his ophicleide repertoire website, ophi.referata.com (placing WWW in front of this URL takes you to the wrong place). The site lists more than 1,500 works the include parts for ophicleide! They are cataloged according to title and composer, and each piece includes links to URLs where the music can be obtained. Nicolas is looking for some help in order to keep the website up and add information and small articles, such as one about the Kummer *Variations* (in this edition of the newsletter), and permalinks.