

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

September 27, 2008

A Note from the Editor

I was worried about this issue, thinking that after several large issues that this might turn out to be a small one. But once I started to sort through the tidbits and articles submitted by serpent enthusiasts worldwide, I found that I had plenty of grist for the mill. For one thing, there were so many photos and other images that I could only include a relative few...apologies to those who submitted pictures but find only a subset of them in these pages.

Doug Yeo also contributed an article regarding his experiences at the musical celebration held in memory of Keith Rogers.

There are also some 'new' players out there who have been making great strides in getting significant performance situations and furthering the connections between the serpent family and the modern musical world.

I'll say no more here, and will let the articles speak for themselves.....

Paul Schmidt

to guide our musical meanderings. The Serpentarium spans the U.K.'s late Spring Bank Holiday weekend. It starts with dinner at 6pm on Friday 22nd May, but you are welcome to arrive any time before that and hang out or explore. It finishes at tea time on Monday 25th May. The Serpentarium will be residential with space for 14-16 in the house, a camping option and overflow accommodation nearby. Since this is a holiday weekend, this latter may not be available for late bookers who may therefore be forced to camp – so book early! Most rooms will be shared. If you have a world-class snore, or other unsocial habits, we can let you have one of the two single rooms – first come, first served. If you want a double room with your partner, let us know. The total cost is £210 (£150 for campers) for the three days, all found. Non-playing partners £165. A £60/\$110/€80 booking deposit secures a place. For those of you who would like to make a longer holiday of it in order to explore this beautiful and fascinating part of the world, you will be welcome to come early/stay on as regular B&B guests (at £29 per night). Do come and be part of another convivial Serpentarium.

Quite a number of people have said they will be coming to the Serpentarium and rooms are filling up fast, so please get your deposits in, as per the web page <http://www.boswedden.org.uk/serpentarium-2009.html>

Workshops

- The 2009 Serpentarium

The Serpentarium is a biennial gathering of all who are interested in the serpent and related instruments: players, makers, restorers and collectors. The eighth happening of this biennial event will again be hosted by Nigel Nathan and his wife Thelma Griffiths at Boswedden House in the far west of Cornwall on Cape Cornwall, 22-25 May 2009. There will be coaching sessions and ensemble playing. The general aim is to stimulate enthusiasm for the instrument whilst having fun. Phil Humphries of, amongst other things, the London Serpent Trio, will once more be at hand

- Report on the Early Brass Festival

The Historic Brass Society's annual Early Brass Festival was held 'on the road' again this year, being away from the more usual eastern host states, in that unique crescent city of New Orleans, Louisiana. Jeremy Brekke of Loyola University New Orleans was the host, and along with HBS president Jeff Nussbaum he structured the event as an examination of both early brass and early jazz.

The "Big Easy" was quite damp for the festival, with the usual July humidity being overshadowed by the frequent strong thunderstorms that whirled past several times daily as part of Hurricane Dolly's entourage. This weather

pattern also impacted the plans of several participants, many of whom arrived a day or more late as a result of delayed or cancelled flights. Those who were able to make it started arriving on Thursday, July 24 around noon, and after getting together were led on foot by Bruce Raeburn, curator of the Hogan Jazz Archives, to neighboring Tulane University to visit that well-known museum. After returning to Loyola, participants were able to meet with dorm management to get room assignments, then head over to the Nunemaker Hall theater for an introduction by Jeremy Brekke and Edward Kvet, dean of the School of Music and Fine Arts; Jeff Nussbaum was still in New York due to flight cancellation. Bruce Raeburn then gave the festival's first lecture, *Winds of Change: Technology, Pedagogy and Disaster in the Making of Sam Morgan's Jazz Band*. Afterwards, attending serpentists Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, John Weber and Paul Schmidt got together for a playing in the band room.



Saturday's serpent session at the New Orleans EBF
L-R: Paul Schmidt, John Weber, Tra and Robert Wagenknecht

Friday began with lectures, first of which was *Woodham-Rodinbostle Slide Trumpet* delivered by Sabine Klaus, about the unique English instrument with the adjustable back bow that allowed for pitch adjustment. Next, Eric Brummitt presented *Tosoroni and the Early Valve Horn in Italy*, followed by *Classical Period Brass Cadenzas* by Dominik Sackmann. Wrapping up the morning's features, Brian Shaw gave a lecture-demonstration on natural trumpet titled *Franz Xaver Richter's 'Concerto in D à 5 voc. per Clarino Principale'*, a discussion of issues relating to this important piece, including a new critical edition and the composition of an original solo cadenza, wherein he also compared extreme high range modern jazz trumpet playing with baroque clarino playing. After lunch, participants walked across the St. Charles Avenue boulevard to catch the trolley, which after a transfer to the Canal Street trolley took the group to the historical French Quarter part of the city. Here access was given to the storeroom of the Louisiana Museum Instrument Collection, which is not exactly a museum and is not open to the public, for a perusal of their holdings. After leaving the collection, two

other displays in the same Old US Mint Building were open for review, one of which featured some equipment from the old mint, and the other being a traveling exhibit of artifacts relating to Napoleon Bonaparte. The group then dispersed for free time in the French Quarter (almost mandatory was a visit to Cafe du Monde and their famous *beignets*), followed by return to Loyola by trolley. The serpent players decided to get dinner back in the Garden District at the west end of St. Charles Avenue, where there are many ethnic restaurants. After a fine Vietnamese meal, the serpentists returned to Loyola for a quartet session, this time with Paul on ophicleide.

Saturday dawned with the realization that, due to renovations, the Loyola food service facility would be closed for the weekend. Participants variously made their ways to adjacent Tulane University coffee shops and other nearby establishments for breakfast. In mid-morning, keynote speaker Gunther Schuller presented *Reminiscences and Thoughts on Moments of Change in Brass Music*. His talk ranged widely, and touched on questions such as why horns, trumpets, clarinets, etc; are still treated as transposing instruments, with various historical reasoning offered for consideration, and why it is human nature to cultivate excesses such as trumpets in jazz always striving for higher notes at the expense of other considerations. After a break, three short lectures were presented, starting with Krin Gabbard's *Bolden's Brass: The Cornet and the Invention of Jazz*, about Charles 'Buddy' Bolden. The other two lectures were *Kid Ory* by Trevor Herbert and Vic Hobson's *Moments of Change: I Got the Blues*, about how the blues became part of jazz. After lunch, John Anthony presented his lecture *The 36 Etudes Trancendante pour Trompette; Cornet a Piston ou Bugle en B-flat by Theo Charlier (1868-1944): An Early Twentieth Century Trumpet Player/Teacher's Response to the Modern Style of Orchestral Writing for the Trumpet*, possibly the longest title of a lecture yet given at an EBF. Next, Bryan Proksch talked about *Buhl, Kresser, Dauverne and Chromatic Trumpet in 19th C. France*, about David Buhl, Joseph Gebhardt Kresser, Francois Georges Auguste Dauverne and their influence, with examples performed by the speaker. There followed the HBS Membership Meeting, and then a party with local beer and sandwich rollups in place of the usual pizza (which would have been much better, most agreed). The serpent and ophicleide quartet met again to rehearse music for possible inclusion in the concluding concert.

Sunday morning began with Ron Brooks giving *An Analysis of Terence Blanchard's Improvisational Style: A Look Back in the Tradition and Directions Forward*. Joanna Hersey then presented *Entertainment Value of Novelty: Reinforcing and Challenging Femininity*, about how small women's groups in the early 1900's presented and marketed themselves to gain acceptance and employment. Finally, David Sager wrapped up the lectures

with his talk about *The King Oliver Band at Work*. After lunch, participants walked two blocks east to the St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church for the concluding concert. Instead of the usual gala concert in which all participants are encouraged to play for their peers, this program was basically a formal concert given by natural trumpet virtuoso Robert "Bahb" Civiletti, with a couple of short opening acts. First was *A L'Étendard* by David Buhl, better known as the *Olympic Fanfare*, performed by the natural trumpets present. Next the serpents were invited to perform for "five minutes", forcing a quick editing down of the rehearsed program. With ophicleide and three serpents, the quartet opened with a brief reading of *Chester*. Next was a trio of ophicleide and two serpents plus Tra's leg-slap 'percussion' on *The British Grenadiers*. Closing the set, all four players blew their way through a harmonious arrangement of *Loch Lomond* to thunderous applause, (virtual) thrown bouquets and kisses, and a general swooning of all present. The main feature then commenced, with Bob Civiletti's natural trumpet playing, wonderfully accompanied on harpsichord by the church's organist Steven Blackmon. First was George von Reutter's *Trumpet Concerto No. 1 in C major*, followed by the same composer's *Trumpet Concerto No. 2 in D major*. The last piece was Franz Querfurth's *Trumpet Concerto in E-flat major*, followed by two encores repeated from the Reutter concertos. (Note that these pieces represent some of the heights of clarino technique, a speciality of Bob's; a fine professional recording of these and three other trumpet concerti can be heard, with baroque orchestra accompaniment, on the CD titled *The Art of the High Baroque*, allowing all to experience what Edward Tarr cites



Keith Ryder and his recently acquired 9-key C ophicleide made by Collin of Paris

as reaching the "world record" height of sounding A above high C. This fine recording of previously unrecorded selections can be obtained online at www.tce-studio.com.) After the concert, participants dispersed to dorm rooms, airports, and long drives home (organizer Brekke was heading off to his new job at the University of North Dakota in Fargo). The four serpentists repaired to the nearby restaurant Vincent's for well deserved wine and gourmet Italian grub.

Early Monday, Paul and John dropped Robert and Tra off at the train station, then returned to the French Quarter with time to kill before a late afternoon flight back to Chicago. A spur of the moment decision lead to taking a three-hour Grayline tour of the areas most impacted by Hurricane Katrina, and the experience of actually seeing these still-devastated areas brought home the regional impact much more than all the news programs since that calamitous event have been able to.

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 Jeremy West)

Since the death of Keith Rogers,
contact phone & fax:
+44 (0)1388 526999
<www.jeremywest.co.uk/cmi.html>
<jw@jeremywest.co.uk>

(serpents)

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

David Harding (information only, not
for ordering)
56 Netherton Road
Appleton
ABINGDON
Oxon. OX13 5JZ
England
<david@chimeracrafts.fsnet.co.uk>
Phone: +44 (0)1865 863673

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

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

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

(ophicleides, bass horns)

Nicholas Perry
224 North Street
Luton
LU2 7QN
England

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

Derek Farnell
82 Crumpsall Lane
Manchester M8 5SG
England

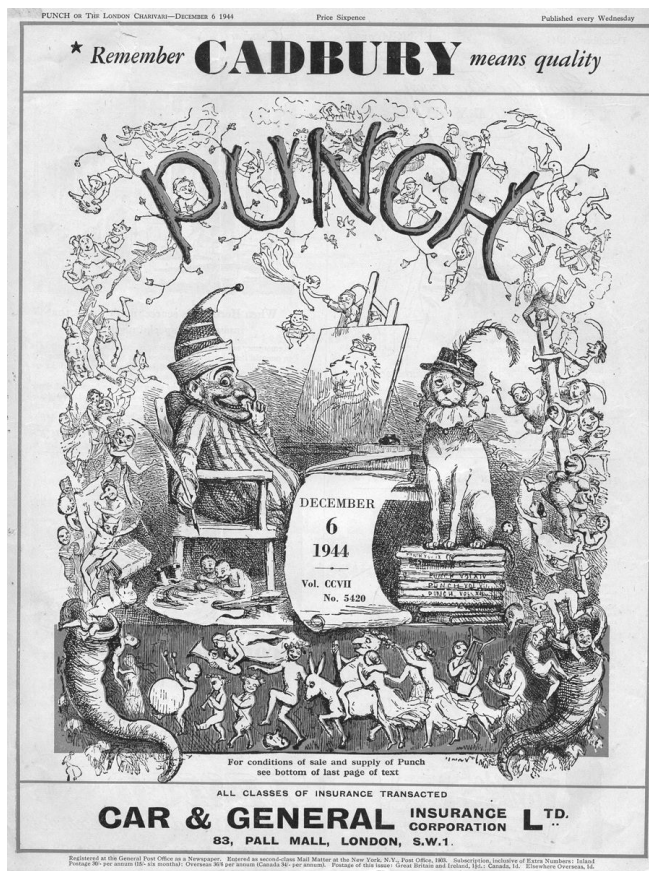
Phone: +44 (0)1617 407778
(ophicleides)

Matthias Wetter
Musikinstrumentenbau
CH-8475 Ossingen
Switzerland

Phone: 0041 (0) 5231 73184
<wetter.m@bluewin.ch>
<www.wetter-instrumente.ch>

(alphorns and serpents)

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



piece exceed the abilities of this reviewer to perform well, it would make a nice project for more accomplished players, and should also make a nice addition to a recital. The printed music includes the solo part and the piano accompaniment, all computer typeset. Overall, the music is clear and easy to read, although the review copy exhibited some places where either the copier or perhaps the original printer glitched and left some distortion of notes here and there. £6.50 / \$13.00 / €8.00, order from the publisher, see below (page 5).



closeup of angel playing and ophicleide, taken from Punch magazine cover at left

New Materials

- In 1982 Cliff Bevan composed a *Concertino* for ophicleide for a recital entitled *The Ophicleide: Pop Instrument of the 1850s*, performed by the composer in 1990 at the Horniman Museum in London. In 2007 he revised it for publication with a new title of *Sonata for Ophicleide and Piano*. In three diverse movements, it is a work for an accomplished player, requiring considerable facility with accidentals, wide pitch leaps, fast movement in the ‘right hand notes’ register around the bottom of the bass staff, command of nearly the full range of the ophicleide, playing in somewhat challenging keys, and some syncopation. The approximate performance time, based on the metronomic markings, is about 9 - 10 minutes. The first movement, titled simply numerically, is *allegro con brio*, with a mixture of chromatic runs interspersed with more melodic figures. The second movement, titled *Pop Ophi* and marked *moderato cantabile*, is considerably more accessible to the average player, with a greater amount of time in melodic passages and an overall easy key and moderate range. The third movement is again titled numerically, and is set in a mix of *allegro vivo* in 2/4, followed by a much slower section in 3/4, and closing back in the original tempo. This movement lays higher than the others, and indeed the composer has offered relief with alternates to the highest notes. While the demands of this

- Cliff Bevan has edited a new collection of transcriptions for ophicleide titled *The English Solo Ophicleide Repertoire*. During the period spanning approximately 1819 to 1888, there were reportedly many solo ophicleide performances in various venues in England, with orchestral accompaniment, of transcriptions of dramatic musical works originally for male voice. They were most likely included in these popular concerts because the audiences would have been expected to be familiar with the original works, lyrics included. The editor has compiled several of these pieces in the chronological order of known performances as ophicleide solos, but without an attempt to produce versions authentic to those performances. For each selection, editorial comments, historical notes, and the original lyrics are provided, with the player encouraged to study them to better inform the performance practice. First is a selection from *The Death of Nelson (a.k.a. The Americans)* by John Braham (1812), a comic opera; here the player follows a piano introduction with a recitative, followed by an *allegro* in a melodic vocal style. Next is a song from the *Incidental Music for Macbeth*, by Matthew Locke (1660s); these excerpt include three airs, *When Cattle Die*, *When Winds and Waves*, *My Little Airy Spirit*, and a recitative *With New Fall’n Dew*. Here, in the editor’s words, “the music is simple to the point of being naïve, and this folk-song quality should be maintained...” Interestingly, historical record suggests that it was no other than the famous Jean Prospère Guivier who played this piece in the noted recital. The next selection is *Rule, Britannia!* by Thomas Arne (1740), from the patriotic masque *Alfred*. From the historical notes, it was again

Prospère who played this piece, possibly on his notorious contrabass Monstre ophicleide, as the selection was reportedly, “set forth from his leviathan instrument with a majesty and grace that no single one ever before equaled”. Next in the collection is *O Ruddier Than the Cherry* from *Acis & Galatea* by George F. Handel (1718). The famous English ophicleide soloist Samuel Hughes had made this showpiece, with its huge range and extraordinary leaps, his call sign (as did later performer J.H. Guilmartin, reportedly one of the first ophicleidists to transfer to the bass tuba). This selection has become one of the most favorite ophicleide solos in modern times, and helpfully the editor has reproduced it in this collection both in the original G minor and the one step higher A minor, presumably because the runs lay better on ophicleides in B-flat and C, respectively. Finally, the set comes to an end with *Fantasy on Airs from ‘La Sonnambula’* by Vincenzo Bellini (1831), as arranged by Giovanni Bottesini. Samuel Hughes is known to have performed this arrangement on ophicleide during the Hallé Orchestra’s first season in Manchester in 1858, although the editor points out that Hughes’ version does not survive, requiring that this edition be based on the version for string bass by Bottesini. This closing selection is probably the most challenging in the book, with many fast technical passages involving plenty of accidentals and a wide range reaching near the upper possibilities. £9.50 / \$18.00 / €12.00, order from the publisher, see below.

- In 2006, Cliff Bevan compiled twenty-seven musical reminiscences, flights of fancy and morality tales into a book titled *Tales from the Bandroom*. This 136 page paperback spans brief bits of music humor with previously published magazine articles. There are mysteries solved, stories about the “days when bands marched, when euphonium players existed and EU regulations didn’t always work out”, a tale of crossing the Pennines mountains to play *Messiah*, and lots more. £8.50 / \$20.00 / €15.00, order from the publisher, see below.

- All of the above Cliff Bevan publications may be obtained from Piccolo Press, 10 Clifton Terrace, Winchester, SO22 5BJ, England, email cliff@piccolopress.info, www.piccolopress.info. In the USA, orders may be placed with Piccolo Press, PO Box 50613, Columbia, SC 29250. As a special offer, all three items may be purchased together for the reduced price of £16.50 / \$33.00 / €21.00.

- Erhard Schwartz wrote, “Another CD is out - it’s of Robert Schumann’s *Das Paradies und die Peri Op. 50*, a fantastic work including three numbers with ophicleide.” This is a 2-CD set featuring the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Nikolaus Harnoncourt directing, RCA Red Seal # 88697 (27155 2). A copy was obtained from

Amazon for review, and Erhard recommends the excellent European distributor www.jpc.de as another source. According to the CD booklet, the actual recording was made in 2005, so this is not a “new” recording. This quasi opera/oratorio was famous in Schumann’s lifetime, but gained a bad reputation after World War II due to abuse by the Nazis as propaganda music. The story itself is not religious as such, as one might normally expect from an oratorio, but rather is based on a legend of middle eastern origin. It concerns the ‘Peri’, a fairy of sorts who is the offspring of an angel and a human, who is barred from her much-desired entry into Heaven until certain redeeming deeds are accomplished on Earth. The story of her travels to India, Egypt and Syria, and failed attempts to please the gatekeeper of Heaven, was a favorite of Schumann’s in his childhood, and he wrote the libretto himself. The music is very fine and the performances are top notch, very enjoyable. However, this is not a recording that shows off the ophicleide, with the instrument being a regular member of the orchestra; on two listenings for this review, it was not apparent in the audio mix as an ‘exotic’ sound - in other words, it fits right in and does not draw attention to itself. There are times, especially when the orchestra is quietly playing behind an aria with low and muffled brasses, that the lowest voice might possibly be that of an ophicleide. Indeed, it was not apparent anywhere exactly which three numbers in the overall work included the instrument as mentioned by Erhard. Unfortunately, he was not able to reply with the specific information on this point at the time of this writing. Perhaps another issue of the newsletter will include an update.



Friedberd Syhre’s “Ventilophikleide”, a new instrument which is intended to allow modern symphony brass players to use their F-tuba skills on traditional ophicleide parts - see More Exciting News

• Readers may recall a mention in a previous newsletter of composer Liam Higgs' *Waltz* which was performed at the most recent Serpentarium in Oxford. Liam has now produced the *Short Simple Serpent Suite (SSSS...)* for a quartet of serpents, ophicleides, bass horns, Russian Bassons, you name it. Liam writes, "In a similar manner to the *Simple Symphony* by Benjamin Britten, this piece re-uses ideas from a number of earlier works...". The suite is comprised of an *Adagio* which was first publicly performed as incidental music for a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, representing Juliet, an *Intermezzo* which was inspired by the waddle of ducks roaming the village of a friend, a *Minuet* which was originally from a *Sonata da Chiesa* for flute and guitar and subsequently arranged for serpents for the Oxford Serpentarium in 2007, and finally *Mr. Higgs Jigs*, the title of which was inspired by John Dowland. On all movements, the range is comfortable and the key is C. Liam has provided lots of wit and thankfully has passed the melody around the parts, giving some glory to different players. Liam also writes that he is still hard at work on his *Concerto for Serpent*, previously mentioned in the September 2007 edition of this newsletter. To obtain a copy of the suite, email Liam at liam.higgs@yahoo.co.uk, or write him at 7 Lapwing Lane, Cholsey, Oxfordshire, OX10 9QR, England.



• *Archangelica* is a new CD recording by Michel Godard, featuring the baroque orchestra l'Atelier des Musiciens du Louvre and directed by Mirella Giardelli, plus jazz musicians including Maria Pia de Vito on scat and vocalise, Freddy Eichelberger on harpsichord, Gérard Marais on electric guitar, and of course Michel on his serpent. C.A.M. Jazz # CAMJ 7806-2, obtained from Amazon.

This new effort by Michel Godard brings together a group of musicians accustomed to playing baroque music and another that usually plays avant-garde jazz, and lets them improvise into each others worlds. Their themes and

approaches to the music are allowed to intermingle, and the result is like, in the words of reviewer Nancy Huston, "an endless conversation between lovers as they wander through the streets of a city at night." This is a recording that is extremely easy to listen to, regardless of one's musical sensibilities, and can serve as a quiet background while working, or more pronounced to set the mood for any number of activities, intimate and otherwise.

Godard's serpent is omnipresent and forward in the mix, in most cases functioning as a partner to the vocals. The guitar and marimba seem to fade in and out opposite the orchestra, although there is often at least one violin and a string bass present, even when otherwise only jazz players are audible. The serpent playing is not as virtuosic as one usually expects from Michel, simply because the gentle nature of the music does not require it; his sound here is quiet and introspective. Michel has written to advise that he used his anonymous 18th Century (probably) church French serpent for the project, the same one that Matthias Wetter has been copying (see Getting serpents). A very nice album.

• Veteran composer Barton Cummings recently wrote a piece for serpentist Sue Bradley of Australia, the *Little Suite No. 5* for solo unaccompanied serpent. The piece is comprised of four movements; *Reflections* is a slow thoughtful 5/4, *Gigue* is the most difficult due to the upper notes reaching to G, *Song* is indeed very vocal and easy to play, and finally the *Galop* sandwiches a short 'Land of Hope and Glory' theme between the fast bits. The ranges are for the most part easy for serpent, and the keys restrain themselves to no more than one sharp or one flat, excepting the middle of the *Galop* which is in E-flat major. The piece is available from the publisher, Brassworks 4 Publishing, www.brassworks4.com.

• In the so-old-it's-new category, *Music of Praetorius (Dances from "Terpsichore" 1612 & Motets from "Muses of Zion" 1605-10)* is classic recording by The Early Music Consort of London, David Munrow, director, and featuring Alan Lunsden, serpent (Alan also plays sackbut, etc; and former London Serpent Trio member Andrew van der Beek also plays many non-serpent instruments). Originally released as Angel # S-37091 on LP in 1974, it has been reissued on CD as Virgin Veritas # 7243 (5 61289 2) 7. Obtained from Amazon.

This recording dates from the cusp of the early music movement, and features many young and eager musicians who (if not already well known) later became quite famous with their names headlining a vast array of CDs. Two founders of the original London Serpent Trio, Andrew van der Beek and Alan Lumsden, perform here on a broad spectrum of brass and woodwind instruments, the pursuit of which kept them busy in these days before they and

Christopher Monk formed the London Serpent Trio (and of course, even after the first performance as the LST in 1976, they continued to play the other instruments). Here, Alan plays serpent, sackbut, recorder, and rackett, while Andrew plays recorder, crumhorn, rackett, rauschpfeife, and dulcian. To name but a few of the other players, David Munrow, Simon Standage, Christopher Hogwood, and Peter Hurford appear frequently in the list. This is a well conceived and performed project, with evidence of proficiency and scholarship throughout. As a 'serpent' recording, it is less important, as the serpent appears only in the motets section, and then only in the tutti sections of one track, *Erhalt uns Herr bei deinem Wort*. Nevertheless, the serpent does its thing here backing up the vocals, and is audible doing so.



Erhard Schwartz plying ophicleide with his new Chôro group

- Two new editions of historical serpent methods have been republished by Sarastro Music of London in collaboration with Berlioz Historical Brass. *Six Duos Concertants for 2 Serpents* [SAR 0167] is taken from *Méthode de Serpent* by A. Hardy (first name unknown other than the initial), a professor of the instrument in Paris in the early 19th Century, edited here by Nessa Glen. These are challenging duets, extending to the highest ranges of the serpent tessitura and generally requiring considerable technical facility with the instrument. One of the most significant contributions of the editor is to dispense with the alternating bass and tenor clefs of the original, putting everything here in bass clef. These duets are also useful for other instruments, and while even an ophicleide player might find his eyes bugging out in the upper ranges, players of euphonium and certain low woodwinds may find these to be useful exercises. *8 Duos Progressifs / 8 Duos extraits des Operas for 2 Serpents* [SAR 0168] is taken from *Méthode Complete et Raisonnée de Serpent* by H. Schiltz (first name also recorded as the initial), a composer, arranger and trumpet player, also edited by Nessa Glen. Schiltz is known to have prepared methods for trumpet, cornet, saxhorns, valve trombone, ophicleide, clarinet and bassoon. These duets are much more accessible than those in the Hardy collection, residing mostly in comfortable

keys, within an easy range and with moderate demands on technique. The first eight duets are more instructional in nature, while the subsequent eight are melodic, taken from two operas by Giacomo Meyerbeer, *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*, and one opera by Fromental Halévy, *L'éclair*. The operatic duets are more challenging than the exercises, and may work better on ophicleide for those individuals who play both instruments. Prices are SAR 0167 at £11.50 (UK) / £12.00 (Europe) / £12.50 (elsewhere), SAR 0168 at £11.50 / £12.00 / £13.00, and if ordering as a pair £22.00 / £22.50 / £23.50. Sarastro Music, PO Box 17096, London, SW15 1ZT, England, email info@sarastro.com or let@sarastro.com, website www.sarastro.com.

- Doug Yeo wrote that he recently met Phil Teele, the LA-based bass trombonist who has recorded 1000 movie soundtracks. While they were talking, Phil said that the movie *Barabbas*, starring Anthony Quinn, used serpent. He recalled that there were three serpent solos in the movie, and that the serpent player was probably bassoonist Don Cristlieb. A copy was obtained for review, and the 1962 film also stars Jack Palance and Ernest Borgnine and was directed by Richard Fleischer. It does seem likely that Cristlieb was the player, since he also played serpent on other Hollywood movies at about the same time. This is a fictional story of what happens to the criminal Barabbas after he is released, instead of Jesus, by Pontius Pilate. The serpent does not appear in the movie, but can be clearly heard doubling voices and/or as a solo in three places: at 0:14:00 and 0:16:20 during the crucifixion of Jesus, later at 2:01:10 as Barabbas takes his friend's body from the pauper's grave, and finally at 2:09:15 during the burning of Rome.

Celebrating Keith Rogers:

His Music – His Instruments - Himself

by Douglas Yeo

Readers of the Serpent Newsletter are aware of the tectonic shift our community felt when on January 21, 2008, Gerald Keith Rogers, serpent maker for Christopher Monk Instruments, passed from this world to the next. For many of us, Keith was the man behind the serpent in our hands, a voice on the other end of the phone, a courteous businessman who worked to be attentive to his customers' needs, wants and desires. And for those of us who have one of the nearly 100 serpents he made – with the able assistance of others including Nicholas Perry and Frank Tomes – Keith certainly was that. But for many of us, Keith was a friend. There was much more to the man than serpent making, and for his family and those of us who knew other, more personal sides to Keith, his loss is even more deeply felt.

Yet Keith, with his vibrant Christian faith, would not want for those of us “left behind” to mourn with gloomy, long faces. Death is a part of life, and Keith was well aware that his passing was simply from one world to another. His struggle with cancer is over even as those who knew him feel his loss every day. Even before Keith’s funeral on February 2, Keith’s wife, Kathryn, and his four daughters, Esther, Ruth, Sarah and Naomi, began plans for a concert to celebrate Keith. It was felt that the funeral would bring the necessary closure of a life lived and now passed, but a concert would be a joyous occasion of shared collaboration, laughter, and happy tears of remembrance.



Cliff Bevan and Doug Yeo at Keith Rogers’ Celebration

On April 19 – what would have been Keith’s 65th birthday - St. Michael’s and All-Angels Church in Blackheath (London), was filled with hundreds of friends of Keith and his family, all gathered to rejoice over a life of influence that was well-lived. Friends from Britain, Europe, America (including this writer) and Australia made the trip to hear Keith’s instruments breathed with life, his music sung and played with enthusiasm, and spoken tributes delivered with love.

Jonathan Rea, who had been a student of Keith’s during the Rogers’ family sojourn in Northern Ireland, acted as musical organizer of the event. The concert turned out to be a nearly three hour-long affair but who even thought to look at the clock? Jonathan, working with Kathryn and Keith’s daughters, put together a rehearsal schedule and concert program that not only highlighted important aspects of Keith’s creative life, but also had the effect of bringing together many who had shared Keith’s love and friendship and who could then share in music making in ways they perhaps had not been able to do ever before.

Of course, the serpent was central to the proceedings, both musically and visually. The tremendous “Anaconda” that Keith built for Matthew Betteson in 1996, using the specifications that Christopher Monk had drawn up for the construction of the first modern “Anaconda,” “George,”

built for Philip Palmer in 1990, stood in front of the altar in the church choir as if a sentinel, seeing and hearing all and ensuring the audience’s focus was always front and center.

The London Serpent Trio (Clifford Bevan, Phil Humphries, Stephen Wick) performed a set of pieces, introduced by Cliff, that introduced Keith’s serpentine obsession to those assembled. The LST was then joined by Murray Campbell and myself to perform a serpent quintet version (arranged by Phil) of the Berlioz *Requiem*. Jonathan Rea conducted the ensemble in this unlikely but effective rendering of some of the great moments of Berlioz’s masterpiece. One could not help but recall Cliff Bevan’s abridgement of Tchaikovsky’s *Overture 1812* for massed serpent ensemble, although the *Requiem* excerpts were, of course, performed without the popping of balloons.

In this, Keith’s instruments began to come to life. Both Murray Campbell and I played French church serpents that Keith had made. To conclude the first half, I performed *Le Elephant* from St. Saens’ *The Carnival of the Animals* on Keith’s “Anaconda,” with Jonathan at the piano. Since “George” is now part of my collection, it was a thrill for me to spend many hours getting to know the other modern “Anaconda,” one which has key work which is absolutely counter to Christopher Monk’s design of the key work for “George.” [NB: On “George,” all holes are open in the resting position and they close when keys are pressed. On



Jonathan Rea and Doug Yeo at Keith Rogers’ Celebration playing ‘Le Elephant’ from ‘The Carnival of the Animals’ Doug is playing Keith’s Anaconda “George II”

Keith's Anaconda "George II," all holes are closed in the resting position and they open when keys are pressed. I confess that it was not until an hour before the concert – after over 10 hours of practice – that I felt confident that I would actually be able to remember to push the right key at the right time for the right note.]

Jeremy West gave beautiful performances on two cornetti that Keith had made, including a stunning ivory instrument that had an exquisite, sweet sound. One of Keith's baroque oboes was played by Katharina Spreckelsen and at intermission, the "petting zoo" was open where those assembled could hold and appreciate Keith's "worm" serpent, a lute, crumhorn and a "pochette" (pocket violin) that his hands had made.

Throughout the evening were performances of a number of pieces that Keith had composed. His vocal treatment of Shakespeare's *Full Fathom Five* from *The Tempest* was beautifully sung. My arrangement for brass band of his *Dormi Jesu* was performed with a band that included Jeremy West on E-flat horn, Cliff Bevan and Phil Humphries on trombone and Stephen Wick on tuba. Keith's daughters – all accomplished string players – collaborated on Keith's beautiful arrangement of *Song of the Creuse* while the grand finale for massed choir and organ of Keith's *Think on Me* and *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* brought the evening to a joyous close. Throughout the concert, photos of Keith were projected on a screen above the platform and none was more touching than the video of Keith reading a Christmas story to his grandchildren just a few weeks before his death.



Serpentists at Keith Rogers' Celebration
L-R: Murray Campbell, Doug Yeo, Phil Humphries,
Stephen Wick, Cliff Bevan

A post-concert party provided opportunity for more shared memories of Keith, and for hugs, tears and another round of farewells as all assembled began to drift back home. For me, the events of that weekend are still strong in my memory, as I expect they will be for a long time. For the concert was not the end of something, but rather a reminder that the influence of people that intersect our lives is

ongoing. I am grateful for the tangible reminders I have of Keith's craft – the two serpents and many mouthpieces he made for me – but far more important are the memories of the man whose life we celebrated at St. Michael's and who lives on not only through the instruments and music he crafted, but in the lives of his loving wife, daughters and grandchildren, and in the rest of us who were blessed to have known Keith Rogers for a time.

Requiescat in pace.



Serpent quartet playing the Phil Humphries' arrangement of the Berlioz 'Requiem' during Keith Rogers' Celebration
Clockwise from far left: Stephen Wick, Cliff Bevan, Murray Campbell, Phil Humphries, Doug Yeo

About the Organization

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Where Serpents Gather

- Doug Yeo will perform on both serpent and ophicleide with the Boston Classical Orchestra on Saturday, November 22 at 8:00 PM and again on Sunday, November 23 at 3:00 PM at Faneuil Hall, Boston. Doug will play Gordon Bowie's *Concerto for Serpent: Old Dances in New Shoes*, which was written for him and is being premiered on this program. The other selection will be Handel's *O Ruddier Than the Cherry*, showcasing the ophicleide. For more information go to www.bostonclassicalorchestra.org/schedule/program3

- Clark Wolf wrote to tell about two of his recent ophicleide performances. On June 8, "I played with the Fort Dodge, Iowa, Karl L. King Municipal Band earlier this summer, performing *Beautiful Colorado* [Joseph De Luca, arr. Charles Roberts] on double-belled euphonium, and *Serenade* from *The Student Prince* [Sigmund Romberg, arr. Larry Gookin] on ophicleide. The *Serenade* sits well in the range of the instrument, and was very effective. Unfortunately, a heavy rainstorm just before the concert winnowed the audience down to a small group of tough, appreciative enthusiasts. With the Ames, Iowa Municipal Band, I performed Herbert L. Clarke's solo *The Debutante* on doubled-belled euphonium, and a version of *I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen* on ophicleide. This was for a special concert celebrating RAGBRAI, an event that brings thousands (around 30 thousand) of bicyclists through small Iowa towns like Ames. Unfortunately, my microphone was turned off during the Ames concert while the band was still amplified! It is a tribute to the power of these instruments that I could still be heard over the rowdy (but appreciative) bikers and the amplified brass band in the background! But it would have been better if the band had NOT been amplified, or if I HAD been. I'll be more careful to do a mic check in the future. My ophicleide playing has improved with practice and familiarity. My aim, or more properly my dream, is to become the ophicleidist for the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra, and for the Minneapolis Chamber Orchestra. We all need our dreams, right? While they don't have high-culture panache, I understand from Trevor Herbert that outdoor community concerts like these were a standard venue for British ophicleide soloists like Sam Hughes." Clark plays a French ophicleide made in about 1890 by Millereau.

- On Tuesday, June 17, Paul Schmidt played serpent for a musical workshop and subsequent public performance at First United Church in Oak Park, Illinois, on the near-west side of Chicago. *The Glory of Gabrieli-A Taste of San Marco* event was directed by Stephen Alltop and organized by William Chin and Andrew Paul Fredel. The orchestra was to have consisted of a quartet of viols, another of sackbuts, plus recorders and sundry other woodwinds. As it

turned out on the day, there was no bass viol and also insufficient sackbuts. Paul had anticipated doubling the bass voices, but was also asked to play the bass of both instrumental groups as well, to the degree possible. This made for an interesting juggling act, with multiple parts on the music stand and eyes jumping back and forth between them, but the best was made of the situation. Paul also played the bass line with all three instrumental groups on their own separate non-vocal numbers, including *Canzon Seconda à Quattro (1608)*, *Canzona Prima "La Spiritata"*, *Canzon à 12 (1615)* and others. The vocal pieces included, to name a few, *Magnificat à 8 Voci*, *O Magnum Mysterium*, and Monteverdi's *Hymnus: Ave Maris Stella* and *Domine ad Adjuvandum* from *Vespro Della Beata Virgine (1610)*. While most of the instrumentalists were amateurs, the viol consort was Chicago's *The Spirit of Gambo* with Ken Perlow, Phillip Serna and Russell Wagner, and there was especially good rapport between this group and the serpent. Most of the vocal soloists were from Northwestern University, and after the program they spent time asking about the serpent and commenting on how surprised they were to ever hear one and how well it worked in context. The director and harpsichordist/organist were also quite interested, and hopefully these contacts will bear fruit in the future.



Low brass players of the Orchestra Sinfónica de Castilla y León in Valladolid, Spain, for the performance of Wagner's "Lovefeast of the Apostles". Erhard Schwartz is far left with his ophicleide, and Hans-Martin Schlegel is in the center with his bass horn

- Doug Yeo will be playing ophicleide with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan, conductor, for four concerts in February. The dates and locations are San Francisco (5th), Palo Alto (6th), Berkeley (7th and 8th). With these concerts, the PBO will be celebrating Felix Mendelssohn's 200th birthday, sampling music from all stages of Mendelssohn's life; from the *Overture to A*

Midsummer Night's Dream, written at age 16, to *The Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave)*, written in the middle of his life, to his completion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written seventeen years after the *Overture*, and the *Scherzo* from the *Octet in E-flat major, Op. 20*. Doug will play on the *Midsummer Night's Dream* segments. Also, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the San Francisco Girls Chorus, the director has arranged Mendelssohn's beautiful *Three Motets, Op. 39* to feature the girls with the Orchestra. See <http://www.philharmonia.org/feb09>

- Williamsburg Serpent Gathering

Anguis in herba

On July 12, and 13th a gathering of Serpentists was held in Yorktown, VA. In attendance were Robert and Tra Wagenknecht, Evan Calloway, Purcell Bronk, and Gabe Stone who hosted the event. The attendees played quartet and trio music during the day on Saturday, followed by dinner and an impromptu performance of half a dozen quartet pieces at Chowning's Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg. The audience reveled in what was undoubtedly their first experience with a Serpent Quartet! Several of the audience members were Balladeers in Colonial Williamsburg, who have heard Gabe Stone playing solo in the Historic Area, but were delighted to hear Serpents in four part harmony. The second day of the event, Robert and Tra Wagenknecht and Gabe Stone continued to play trios in Yorktown for several hours.



Williamsburg Serpent Gathering participants
L-R: Tra Wagenknecht, Purcell Bronk, Robert Wagenknecht, Evan Calloway (with his Squarpent), Gabe Stone

Attendees traveled to Yorktown from Chesterfield, Windsor, and Virginia Beach, Virginia. There appears to be a great deal of interest in early instrumental music here in the Old Dominion. Some of the trios played included *Three German Renaissance Songs for Serpent Trio*, arranged by Phil Palmer, *Minuetto Grazioso* by Anton Reicha and arranged by Phil Palmer, *Intrade* by Melchior Franck, another *Intrade* by Samuel Scheidt, and *The Hen, the Cuckoo, and the Donkey* by F. A. Hoffmeister. Quartets included *Chester* by William Billings, *British*

Grenadiers arranged by Phil Palmer, *Shepherd's Song* by Christóbal de Morales and arranged by Phil Palmer, *Loch Lomond* arranged by Mike Forbes, and *Selections from Music for International Tuba Day, Books 1 and 2*, arranged by Sy Brandon. Plans are being made for the "Second-Annual" Serpent Gathering for next summer. A catchy name is still in the works!

Submitted by Gabe Stone



Serpent Gathering participants play at Chowning's Tavern in Colonial Williamsburg

- Phil Humphries writes, "I have been involved with a new version of [Thomas Hardy's] *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and it is to be shown on BBC television on Sunday evening, September 14th. The band should appear in the opening shots." Hopefully this will appear on DVD soon so that it can find a wider serpent audience!

- Hans-Martin Schlegel wrote with a few notes from Germany, "In the last month I've had some very exciting performances with my upright serpent (which I usually call wooden basshorn but Nicholas Perry made as an early Cimbasso). With the Weimarer Staatskapelle, under [the direction of] Christopher Hogwood, I had the pleasure to play the serpent part in Mendelssohn's *Reformation Symphony* last May. Hogwood, this year's Handel Award winner, is currently working on a new edition of the complete Mendelssohn works and gave a probably never-before-heard version. He was easy to convince that serpent in this case doesn't necessarily mean church serpent, which wasn't so wide-spread in the protestant Germany, and that it is much more likely that Mendelssohn had a serpent-in-bassoon-shape in mind and at his disposal. The basshorn fit quite well in the bassoon group of the modern orchestra and Hogwood asked for and received some serpent/basshorn demonstrations in his concert introduction."

Hans-Martin continues, "In February, Marc Minkowski conducted Wagner's *Liebesmahl der Apostel (Lovefeast of the Apostles)* with the Orchestra Sinfónica de Castilla y León in Valladolid, Spain. Erhard Schwarz played ophicleide and I took the serpent part on my wooden

basshorn. In June we will repeat the same piece with the same conductor and the orchestra Staaskappelle Dresden on its birthplace. The *Lovefeast* was written 1843 for a male choir of 1200 singers to be performed on a *Sängerfest* in the famous Frauenkirche. Destroyed during World War II and now reconstructed, the rotunda of the Frauenkirche is a unique center of worship and culture - quite touching to experience this music on this very special place.”



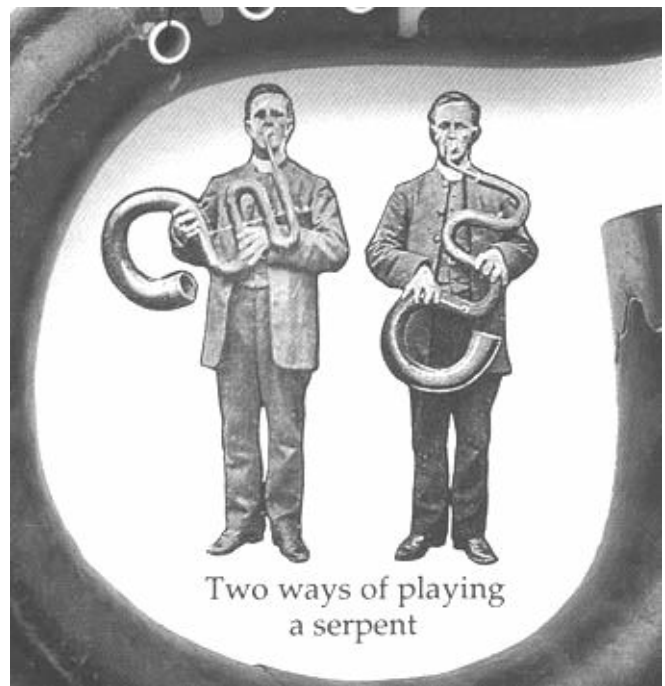
Hans-Martin Schlegel plays serpent and bass horn for director Christopher Hogwood in Weimar

- Erhard Schwartz wrote that he is playing ophicleide in, “...a recently founded band to perform the early choro-music. Our first gig we had at 22 April and the next one is at 20 May. So we keep going to do this at least monthly.” Choro is a Portuguese term leaning ‘lament’, and is a popular Brazilian folk form originating in 19th Century Rio de Janeiro. *See photo on page 7*

- Wik Bohdanowicz wrote to tell about his involvement in the Black Dyke Arts Festival of April 5, 2008, where he was able to sit in with the famed brass band and toot his serpent. A report in the press read, “Saturday afternoon was an absolute delight with the spotlight falling onto the lower brass, with around forty players gathering with Black Dyke players to perform repertoire of varying nature under the watchful and very enthusiastic eyes of Joe Cook, David Thornton and Philip Goodwin, all tailed off with a thrilling romp *William Tell*. Whilst standards in the levels of the playing ability varied, it mattered not a jot, as the enjoyment of those involved was clearly seen and heard – a gentleman who turned up with a serpent had an absolute ball!”

More Exciting News

- Doug Yeo is seeking assistance in locating two photographs that apparently show the late Canon Francis W. Galpin holding English military and French church serpents. He is conducting research for an article on the serpent collections in Boston, focusing particularly on the Boston Symphony's collection of seven serpents and related instruments, given to the Boston Symphony in 1926, formerly owned by Henri Casadesus, and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts collection of six serpents and related instruments, given to the Museum of Fine Arts in 1917 by William Lindsey, formerly owned by Canon Francis W. Galpin. See the picture below which is actually a collage of two photographs of Canon Galpin holding serpents. It appears on page 21 of the book *Music* by Neil Ardley. In the acknowledgements section of the book, the publisher indicates the photos of Canon Galpin were obtained from the Mansell Collection, a British collection of historical photographs and images that, since publication of this book, was subsumed by Time-Warner. Doug has not been able to contact Time-Warner or the book's publishers about this. Neither of these images appear in any of Canon Galpin's books, nor in the well known books and articles on brasswind/woodwind instruments by Baines, Halfpenny, Carse and others who knew Canon Galpin well. With all of those in Canon Galpin's inner circle now deceased, and many of those who knew him or knew of him in significant ways also no longer with us, Doug realizes that he is looking for a needle in a haystack. Friends who have volunteered to search a number of possible places where duplicate copies of the photos may be found, including



The Galpin serpent-holding images (see above)

various British archives and collections, have come up wanting. Doug is hoping that somebody recognizes these photos and may have a lead they could pass on so that clearer copies of these photos may be obtained. More information is available at www.yeodoug.com/articles/serpent/galpin.html, and Doug may be contacted via the same website.

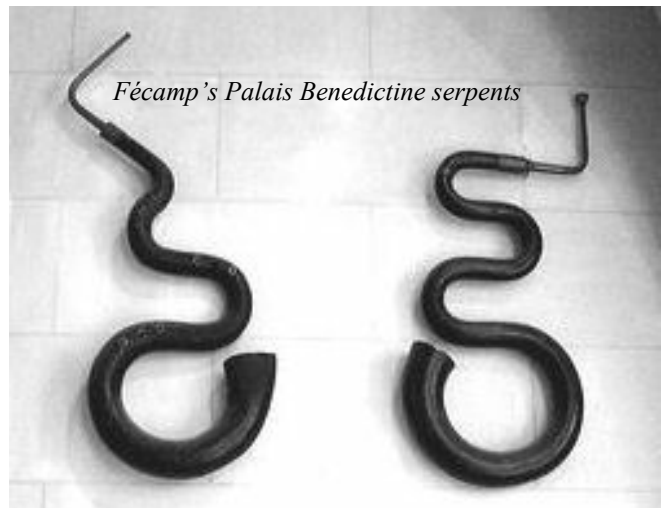
Note the extra finger holes that would be unreachable, and the apparently missing smallest section of the bocal where the mouthpiece would plug in.....

Is this really a serpent, or perhaps a version made in the islands by a colonial European musician who tried to reproduce a serpent from memory or with limited local craftsmanship?



Guy Belegaud of Honolulu, Hawaii writes, "Congratulations on your Serpent website. We own one serpent from the 1800's from my great grandfather's unconditional love for music, invention and curiosity. It's missing the mouth piece..." *see photo above*

• Paul Horner wrote, "I picked up another old horn....a nice original ophicleide, a Guichard B-flat, 9 keys, ca. 1835 with the original (?) case. It is a very clean instrument with only a couple of small pings, no obvious dents, and all the keys work well. It has an old patina and has not been polished. I don't intend to polish it or otherwise improve it. I plan to build a replica of the case to store and carry it in. It looks like the lining is some sort of sheepskin tacked in without much extra padding. I do plan to add some additional padding and a better way to secure the bocal, mouthpiece and music. I had read that the fingering system on these things was odd. Totally bizarre fits closer. And I found that throwing in a few tuba fingerings doesn't help. Whew, talk about teaching an old dog new tricks! I hope to be able to play a few songs on it by TubaChristmas."



• Doug Yeo wrote, "A woman emailed me yesterday, saying she had come across my website and wanted to order my serpent CD. She mentioned that she had seen serpents for the first time in France during a trip she took last year. She said it was in the room called the *Oratoire* at the Palais Benedictine (*see photo above*). I thought for a second that the instrument on the left was a bass cornetto until I realized it was a standard church serpent that had been broken and then put back together - with one piece missing and in an incorrect alignment. I found this to be hilarious, since it would be nearly impossible to hold the instrument as it's currently put together (note that it is also missing an ivory bushing on the second finger hole). Perhaps we should call this the "Dr. Seuss" serpent! *Editor's note: The Palais Benedictine is a former abbey that was long ago converted to a distillery. Interestingly, it is nearby another abbey which also has some serpent significance. Chris Gutteridge wrote that his brother saw an engraving in wood of a serpent in the Abbatiale de la Trinité in the coastal town of Fécamp in Normandy (see photo below).*



Fécamp Abbatiale's serpent woodcut

Yes, it is in fact upside down!

- Nick Byrne writes, “Dear Colleagues, friends...and the others, due to numerous requests, I am proud to announce the completion of a limited run of exact CNC machine copies of the 1830's model Ophicleide mouthpiece, as used in my *Back from Oblivion* recording, available in 2 shank sizes and 3 choices of plating. If you are interested in details of this historic and indeed emotional event, please follow the link below.....if not, I humbly apologise and beg your forgiveness in advance!
www.ophicleide.com/articles/Shop.htm

- The International Tuba Euphonium Association (ITEA, formerly T.U.B.A.), has annual awards at each year's convention. Existing awards include the Harvey G. Phillips Awards for Composition and the Roger Bobo Awards for Recording. Craig Kridel reported from the latest convention that there is now a new award, the Clifford Bevan Award for Research. At the time of this writing, there is nothing about this new award on the ITEA website www.iteaonline.org, and a quick Google search also turned up nothing about it. Hopefully there will be more information on this appearing in the next newsletter.

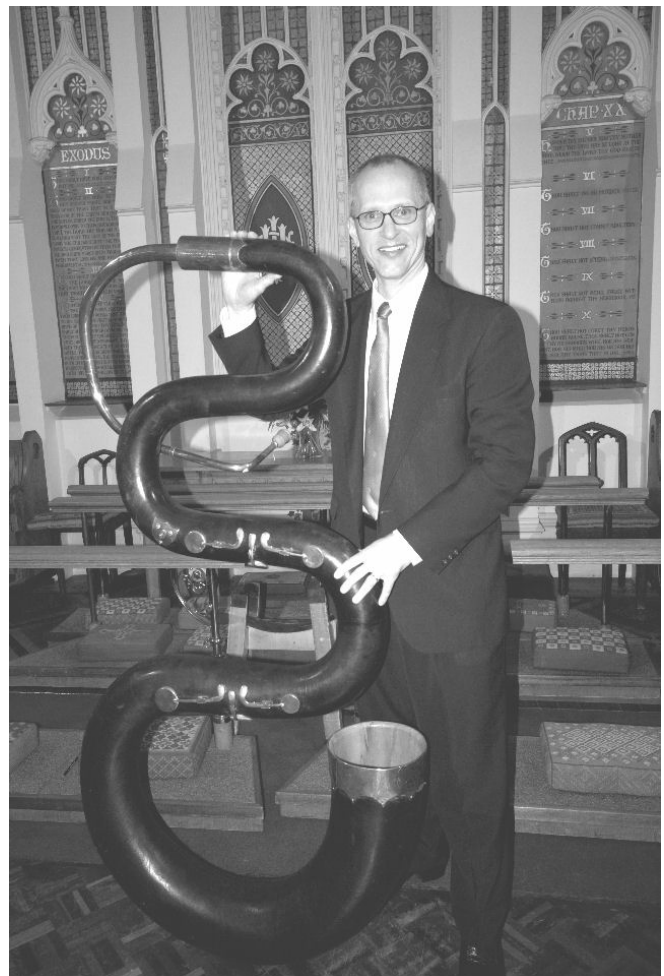


Cliff Bevan with his serpent 'Monty Python'

- Hans-Martin Schlegel wrote, “Yesterday I tried out an instrument which I guess is worthy of being known to the early low brass community. When Friedberd Syhre, an brass instrument maker from Leipzig passed away suddenly and unexpectedly this Summer, he had recently finished his last contribution to the modernization of early brass instruments. He called it a *valved ophicleide*, referring to his aim to offer modern tuba players an alternative instrument for ophicleide parts. I would prefer the term *modern bombardon* as you will understand from the photo (see page 5). The instrument is tuba shaped, pitched in F

and gives the orchestra tubist all the comforts he is used to having on a modern F tuba; same fingering (with a large whole tone on the fifth valve alternatively for the right thumb or the left hand), nearly equal response, perfect intonation, tuning slide trigger, etc. As the measure especially of the bell is less wide than a modern tuba has, the sound is less powerful too and so the instrument offers a possibility to make a step to historic informed interpretation without running the risk of unequal sound and badly tuned notes. The orchestras of the Middle German Broadcast Symphony and the Gewandhaus Leipzig have already purchased their modern valved ophicleides and used them in Wagner's *Rienzi*, Mendelssohn's *Paulus*, Bellini's *Norma* and it seems that they enjoy their choice.”

- Simon Proctor is again working on his *Ophicleide Concerto*. The middle movement was completed a couple of years ago, and Nick Byrne performed it on his CD *Back from Oblivion*. Simon says that he has now completed the first movement, taking care to write it with the extant middle movement in mind so that it suggests what is (has already) to come. Progress is being made on the final movement, so hopefully we will see this exciting project reach completion soon.



Doug Yeo with Keith Rogers' Anaconda "George II"