

Serpent Newsletter

P.O. Box 954 Mundelein, Illinois 60060 USA

Newsletter for Serpent Enthusiasts

April 1, 2024

A Note from the Editor

It is a great relief that for this edition of the newsletter, the subject matter has been moving back towards the balance that it formerly had pre-COVID. We have notices of two serpent workshops, several new materials, including two new CD recordings, reports of performances, and of course lots of interesting videos.

Still, in some of the more traditional areas, e.g. formal performances of 'period' serpent music, there appears to have been very little to report. Prominent players who used to regularly perform and report regarding those performances have been seemingly quiet. Hopefully, they will be able to let us know about their future activities.

Having a newsletter like this only works because of an enthusiastic readership that gives back by submitting information, photos, and references for the editor to follow up on. Please continue sending in any information on past or future performances, sightings, related videos and audio recordings, music and book publications, etc.

This point is important, and not visited for many years. It seems that a growing number of readers are preferring to have PDFs of the newsletter, rather than the traditional mailed hardcopy. On the other hand, it is well known that many long-time subscribers very much wish to avoid having to read it on their computer screen, and want to keep things as-is (note that European distribution is ONLY via emailed PDFs, and this is not likely to change....we are talking only about everywhere else). If you feel strongly either way, please email me (see *About the Organization* section).

And your generous subscription donations are always needed appreciated. Please consider when you last sent in a contribution and send another!

Paul Schmidt

Workshops

- Serpentarium 2024

The biennial Serpentarium that will be held on May 25 – 27, 2024 in Dorchester, Dorset, England is rapidly approaching. The weekend will begin Friday May 24th with a concert by the *London Serpent Trio* starting at 7:30PM in The Courtroom at Shire Hall, Dorchester. This is where the Tolpuddle martyrs were convicted of forming an illegal union in 1834 and subsequently transported to Australia.

Our aim is to stimulate interest in the instrument whilst having fun. PDF's of the music will be available in advance. Phil Humphries is working on new arrangements of music to be used over the weekend, with selections ranging from the 17th through the 20th centuries, including more dance tunes from the Thomas Hardy manuscripts; Hardy is Dorset's famous author who mentions the serpent on a number of occasions in his works.

The venue for the group sessions will be the jury room in The Shire Hall Historic Courtroom Museum, High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UY. The sessions will commence on Saturday May 25th starting at 10:30AM and continue through Monday the 27th, concluding with a showcase concert that afternoon of the music tackled over the weekend. There is a lift in the Shire Hall to all areas for those with mobility issues. The sessions will be led by Phil Humphries and his two colleagues from the *London Serpent Trio*, Nick Perry and Andy Kershaw.

A light lunch will be provided Saturday through Monday and tea/coffee is available at the museum's café. You will be required to organize your own bed and breakfast or hotel lodging as well as each evening's meal in local pub(s). There are a number of bed and breakfast establishments/hotels and guest houses in Dorchester (the nearest being a Best Western hotel just across the road from The Shire Hall); a list can be forwarded by email for those interested in

attending. Dorchester also has many pubs, restaurants and bistros throughout the town.

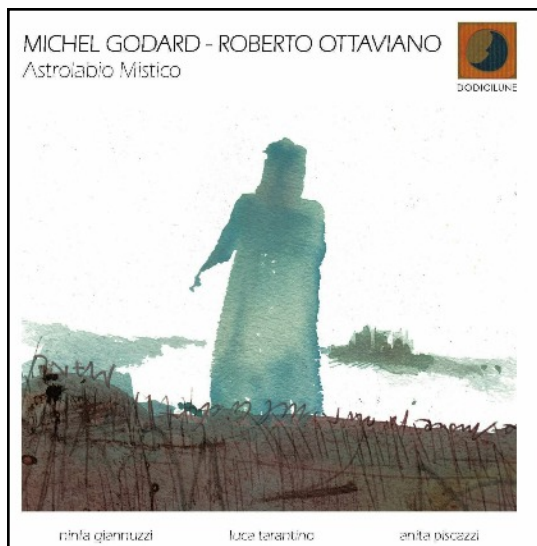
Dorchester is accessible by car, and if you do not mind a stroll, plenty of free roadside parking is not far from the venue, plus there is direct coach/bus or rail travel from London, and the nearest airports are Bournemouth, Bristol and Exeter. The event fee is £240 per person, and an option to pay using PayPal is available. Contact Phil Humphries by email, serpent.phil@btinternet.com



Shire Hall Historic Juryroom

● Serpent Journey

For the 6th time, the Serpent Journey association is organizing its *Serpent Journey* international serpent workshop. Players of all levels will be able to work with teachers who have mastered the instrument to perfection, such as Michel Godard, Volny Hostiou, Patrick Wibart and David Partouche. They will also be able to play in front of an audience at an open stage and at the closing concert. The Serpent Journey 2024 kicks off with an exceptional concert by Michel Godard. The event takes place from April 10 - 14, 2024 in Saignelégier, Switzerland. Register at www.serpentjourney.ch/ or make inquiries at info@serpentjourney.ch.



New Materials

● *Astrolabio Mistico*; CD recording of a collaboration between Michel Godard (serpent and electric bass) and saxophonist Roberto Ottaviano, also including Luca Tarantino on theorbo and vocalists Ninfa Giannuzzi and Anita Piscazzi. Dodicilune Dischi # ED556, www.dodicilune.it. Obtained as a downloaded MP3 album from Amazon; CD version available to order.

This recording features a light jazz treatment of purely instrumental numbers as well as accompanied sung and spoken poetry. The general flavor is a gentle, dreamy background sound, with Roberto Ottaviano's soprano saxophone most prominent, although the string 'continuo' of theorbo and sometimes Michel Godard's electric bass is usually part of the mix. And of course, Godard's sultry serpent improvisations come and go in the course of the 14 tracks.

The album opens with a *cantabile* sax, often doubled or harmonized by the serpent, with the theorbo sounding like a guitar beneath them, on Ottaviano's composition *Astrolabio Mistico*. Ninfa Giannuzzi wrote the poem *Nel racconto di tutte le notti*, which she sings next, first in duet with serpent, and later with sax; the musical accompaniment was composed by Godard, and he composed the next piece, *Light of the Earth*, which begins as a serpent solo until taken over by the sax, and the theorbo plays a gentle ground bass line under them. Giannuzzi wrote the following plaintive poem *L'occhio nell'occhio*, and Tarantino composed the



Roberto Ottaviano & Michel Godard

accompaniment which is primarily his theorbo, although the sax joins in the beginning and near the end. Godard wrote the poem *Ecco sei qui*, which Anita Piscazzi recites while he performs a 'singing through the serpent' accompaniment. Ottaviano's *Spinosa Lacrimae* is next, which rather than being a mournful piece, is instead a short and energetic piece with an energetic sax line underscored by a driving theorbo line. Tarantino next plays his solo theorbo composition *Sette nello scrigno*, which resembles many of the classic Spanish guitar compositions of the past.

Up next, Giannuzzi sings Godard's poem *Il respiro di Bianca*, which for most of its duration has a simple theorbo accompaniment, although both winds add their voices near the end. *Ogni cosa* has Piscazzi reciting a brief verse to some light sax riffs, after which Godard plays a serpent solo of his gentle composition *Amor sospeso*, with some help from Tarantino and Ottaviano. Next Giannuzzi sings Godard's *Rosa del ciel*, and when she takes a break, we hear a pleasing sax and serpent duet, and she sings again on Ottaviano's piece *Far Away*, and again on her sung poem *Al fuoco del mondo*, with music by Godard consisting of a more adventurous serpent accompaniment with sax interludes. The album concludes with Giannuzzi's brief poem *Bianca* being spoken by Piscazzi while Giannuzzi does a vocalise over the top.

This recording was made on September 11 & 12, 2023 at Castello Normanno-Svevo (Norman-Swabian Castle, a Medieval structure on Gioia del Colle, Italy), and has a mildly reverberant character that results from such a location. Listeners will likely enjoy the gentle, almost 'ambient' type of sound found on most instrumental tracks. All performers are very proficient, and give fine performances on their instruments. While this reviewer was less enthused with some aspects of the sung and spoken portions, those were still agreeable enough. As a 'serpent recording', this album presents the instrument in a few different guises, and it can be heard on all tracks except 4, 6, 7, 9, and 14.



- *Twisted*; CD recording of a duet between Michel Godard (tuba, serpent and electric bass) and vocalist Cristina Zavalloni. Encore Music # BD 1784, www.encoremusic.it. Obtained as a downloaded MP3 album from Amazon; CD version available to order.

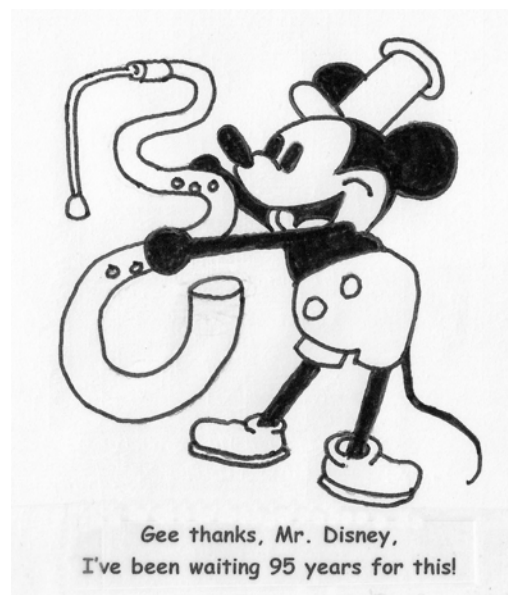
The liner notes for this album are brief, and suggest a scenario of two old musical friends, singer Cristina Zavalloni and Michel Godard, who have not previously had an opportunity to perform together, finding themselves in the same place with some time on their hands, so let's make something happen! The recording is brief in both its small

number of tracks and in overall duration, but is done in the spirit of having fun 'messaging around' in pure improvisation.

The album commences with a loose scat vocal with Godard doing 'serpent special effects' (and probably also on tuba) on *Mira la Madrugada*, which otherwise defies much in the way of description. Next is *Twisted*, which is actually a 'jazz vocalese' song from 1952, which was improvised by singer Annie Ross over a pre-existing 1949 saxophone solo by Wardell Gray, which has been 'covered' many times by various vocal artists; here of course, Zavalloni and Godard just blow down the doors with the possibilities. Godard and his wife Linda Bsiri wrote *Sull'onda Dell'amore*, a quiet and introspective improvisation where he has apparently 'looped' the electric bass part with the serpent solo over it, with the sung part on top of that. Next up is *Idea*, freely improvised by Zavalloni as a scat number, with Godard contributing on tuba with various effects. In the same vein, but more elaborate, is *Sulla Scala Delle Sfere*, with a simple tuba bass line underscoring multi-tracked vocals that consist of everything from choral effects to jazz and scat. The album concludes with the frequently recorded Godard composition *A Trace of Grace*, this time with looped electric bass plus a serpent solo, with Zavalloni's vocals added.

The record company's website description suggests that this is their first CD album, with apparently their earlier catalog consisting solely of LP's.

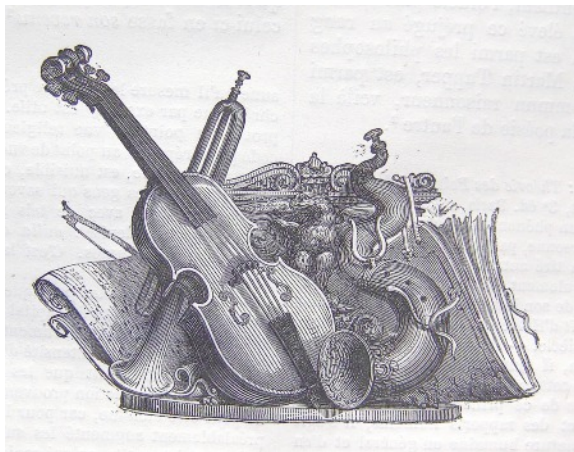
- There have been no updates on Dr. Beth Chouinard-Mitchell's *The Serpent Source Book* other than "delayed but coming". When there is more of an update, it will be included in a future newsletter.



- Michel Godard wrote to remind readers about the re-publishing of the Schiltz *Method complete et raisonnée* by Cherry Classics, cherryclassics.com/products/schiltz-methode-complete-et-raisonnee-de-serpent, and to also point

out some music arrangements and compositions for serpent and piano/organ/harpsichord at "Editions Petit Page" www.petitpage.fr.

● Cliff Bevan published a new article in the ITEA (International Tuba Euphonium Association) Journal's Fall 2023 edition (Volume 51:1), *Rethinking the Serpent's Origins*, where he presents the results of research he has done in regard to the observations and questions of other scholars which suggest alternatives to the usual Canon Edmé Guillaume story. This is an interesting read for any serpent enthusiast. The following URL will take you to the Journal Archives webpage, but downloads are only possible for current members of the ITEA (an option is given for signing up) iteaonline.org/journal/. However, some ITEA "Historical Instrument Section" essays and articles are available for free via the Berlioz Historical Brass website, see below.



Old Collection of the Library of the University of Seville [Musical instruments], year and author not recorded by source. Thanks to Gabe Stone

● Craig Kridel wrote, "For those Serpent Newsletter readers who do not receive the *International Tuba Euphonium Association Journal*, three relatively recent "Historical Instrument Section" essays may be of interest and are accessible as PDFs at www.berliozhistoricalbrass.org/itea.htm.

Fall 2023: *Rethinking the Serpent's Origins* by Clifford Bevan [51:1, 21-25]

Spring 2023: *Russian Bassoons and Bass Horns: A Comfortable Uncertainty* by Craig Kridel [50:3, 26-31]

Fall 2022: *Back to the Beginning: Carré on Against All the Odds* by Clifford Bevan [50:1, 30-32]

Also available at this site are previously published ITEA's Historical Instrument Section pieces, dating back to 1992. Select columns from the 21st century that may be of special interest today include: *The Serpent Known as 'French': Aspects of the Instrument and Its Sound* by Volny Hostiu

[Summer 2021, 48:4, 55-65]; *Don't Deride the Ophicleide* by Clifford Bevan [Winter 2020, 47:2, 56-58]; *The Ophimonocleide: Folly or Genius?* by Craig Kridel [Winter 2019, 46:2, 30-33]; *Serpent of Wood and Metal* by Sabine Klaus [Fall 2005, 33:1, 82, 84]; *Serpent and Contrabassoon Acoustics* by D. M. Campbell [Summer 2002, 29:4, 54-55]; and *The Living Role of Historical Instruments* by Arnold Myers [Spring 2000, 27:3, 60-61].



Byers' Choice serpent figurines

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
<nicholasperry.instruments@gmail.com>
(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)

3D printable serpent designs by Mark Witkowski after examples at the Bate Collection, Oxford; downloads now hosted on the Serpent Website; see lower right for address

Serpentones Lopez
Juan Lopez Romera, maker
<http://serpention.com/>
(wooden serpents & cornetti)

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

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>

Where Serpents Gather

● Bernard Fourtet wrote, “Here is some news about Méandre, the famous(?) Toulouse serpent ensemble. We are planning to perform three concerts with organist Emmanuel Schublin, in three different churches, and three different pitches (A= 396Hz, 420Hz, 392Hz). The group will include Anne-Lise Panisset (mezzo-soprano), Philippe Matharel (tenor cornet) and featuring Harumi Baba-Dath, Lilian Poueydebat and myself on serpents. The program, with pieces as different as echo-music, four instruments, four instruments plus voice, solo organ, etc; will have selections by Monteverdi, Bonelli, Schütz, Lassus, Byrd, Rore, Gabrieli, De Wert) and will be configured in order to alternate music with short texts taken from Ovide's *Metmorphoses* and telling Serpent or Dragon stories. I expect we will have lot of fun.... I will tell tell more about how it goes for the next newsletter.”



Tim Laycock and Phil Humphries
Photo by Mark North © 2023

● Phil Humphries wrote, “Back in November 2023, I had a trip with Tim Laycock, a local Dorset folk musician/concertina player, to Pécs, Hungary to play my Francis Pretty Military serpent. The three concerts included mainly music from Dorset with reference to the Dorset writers Thomas Hardy and William Barnes.”

“The Mellstock Band, in which I play serpent, were busy in November and December 2023 with concerts at Bridport in Dorset, Ross on Wye in Herefordshire, Rollston on Dove in Staffordshire, Crich in Derbyshire, Abingdon in Oxfordshire, New Radnor in Powys, Wales and Fordingbridge in Hampshire.”

● Craig Kridel wrote, “I continue to play with the Lititz Collegium, an early 19th century-period Moravian chamber orchestra, and have enjoyed visiting the Moravian museums and historical centers in Central Pennsylvania, notably at Lititz, Bethlehem, and Nazareth. I find it rather astonishing that these three small towns, within 80 miles of one another,



Nazareth serpent's calligraphic 'scales'

represent the center of serpent and English bass horn playing in North America during the late 18th-early/19th century.”

“The Moravian Historical Society, located in Nazareth, has a permanent exhibit of a beautiful English-French style serpent with remarkable calligraphy on the leather to simulate, albeit only somewhat, serpent scales. The Lititz Moravian (Church) Museum and Archives displays a wonderful playing French serpent with painted eyes and an open jaw as well as a replica of an English bass horn that was played in Lititz in the early 19th century (built by J.C. Sherman) and a circa 1830 ophicleide in C.”



Lititz serpent's painted 'eyes' and 'jaw'

“The Moravian Museum in Bethlehem, which was the center of the late 18th/early 19th century Northern Moravian province, holds within its collection the three original English bass horns from the area as well as an English military serpent. I have found the archivists at each museum delightful and quite accommodating and willing, with prior notice, to pull out instruments from their displays. While much attention has been given to Moravian trombone choirs, I would maintain that a “Northern Moravian serpent tour” is a must for any serpentist living in the Eastern United States.”

- Recording Adventures with the Serpent and Crumhorn

by Michael Yelland

In October last year (2023), I was asked by a student, Aaron Everson, from the School of Audio Engineering at Brisbane's (Australia) West End to help him with a recording assignment for his degree in audio-engineering. The project was to create a sample pack of notes (i.e. "samples") from the serpent and crumhorn that could ultimately be used by a MIDI keyboard attached to a computer to create music of these instruments from the individually recorded notes. It sounded interesting and worthwhile, so I agreed to help him. Being a student of limited means, my recompense was to be the opportunity to record a tune on each of these instruments.

So, I turned up one afternoon to the very dark and mysterious, soundproofed recording studio of the school with my C serpent and tenor crumhorn ready for a long session of sustained notes covering the full 2-1/2 octaves of the serpent and 1-1/2 octaves of the crumhorn. Players of these instruments would well appreciate that playing an unwavering sustained note is quite a challenge, so it took multiple takes of each note and every ounce of concentration I could muster to achieve the goal.

After a short break I had my recompense by recording a version of the bass solo of Henry Purcell's *Hush, No More* from the semi-opera *The Fairy Queen* on the serpent, and the tune of Henry VIII's chart-topping hit *Pastime with Good Company* on the crumhorn. The beauty of this process was that Aaron was electronically able to smooth out irregularities in some notes and to apply some reverb to make me sound better. If only he could shadow me at any future concert performances!



So, armed with the recordings I decided to create a video of the serpent performance to make my rather belated debut on YouTube, hoping for at least a dozen views and perhaps a couple of likes by the end of 2024. This exercise started with the creation of a Powerpoint presentation with a painting of a sleeping maiden, followed by a series of serpent images in the public domain, each containing a couple of lines of the song. With the help of my IT buddy, Guy Stephens, we managed to sync the music to the words, resisting the temptation to use any 'follow the bouncing ball' facility.

Bass Horn player, illustration by Alexander I. Sauerweid Russia, circa 1815

The final result, lasting less than 2 minutes, was posted on YouTube on March 9th. It can be viewed at this URL www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PMRCYQe7Gs or by searching for "Hush, no more (Henry Purcell) - serpent solo by Michael Yelland". To my surprise, after 8 days my video recording had had 613 views, 14 likes and 2 comments. So, I can now safely add this whole venture to my bucket list and retire from YouTube, while I am ahead, as a 'One Hit Wonder'. Viva la serpent!

Post script: To see what a quality performance of *Hush, no more* looks and sounds like on the opera stage go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEwLLWrqBPc.

1807-08 Strasbourg, France: A print by J. Gottfried Gerhardt illustrates, among a variety of soldiers from the Napoleonic army, an infantry regiment band that includes a serpent (public domain)

thanks to Will Kimball



About the Organization

The Serpent Newsletter is distributed according to two regions, each with its own representative. All monetary 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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David Harding inspecting a fancifully shaped build of a Squarpent at The Bate Collection

In Memoriam: David Harding

David Albert Harding was a long-time English musician and instrument maker, perhaps best known in the early music world as the “competition” to Christopher Monk Instruments as the ‘other’ serpent maker.

He was born on August 20, 1932 and passed away in a nursing home in Faringdon, near Oxford, on July 11, 2017, aged 84 years, reportedly after suffering from dementia for some time.

Little is known about his life, other than his musical activities in the Oxford area (he played in a local orchestra, reportedly on bassoon). At some point, presumably in the 1970s, he decided to make reproduction serpents. Unlike Christopher Monk, who used a famous ‘name brand’ church serpent as a model for his reproductions, David claimed that he based his own design on some period illustrations and a few photos of serpents in museums. He did not take measurements, but knew enough to figure that an 8 foot-long tube would be necessary in order to result in a serpent in C. He produced his original serpents in the garden shed behind his house, laying them up in fiberglass, and painting them black outside and red inside the “bell” opening.

He initially sold them directly, and through various vintage musical instrument shops in the UK, Europe and America. David stated that he only intended them to be “playable wall hangings”, good for quick demonstration toots, and he was concerned when some of his serpents ended up being played in formal early music concerts and even on music recordings, some by well-known groups. Years later, he made a new design, this time based on measurements of original examples in museums, and instead of fiberglass, he had them molded in skinned structural foam and painted.

These new-model Harding serpents played considerably better than his first offering, and he produced a couple batches, made by a hired outside firm, which he sold by mail and shipped from his house. After some time, he made arrangements with the Early Music Shop in the UK to have them produced, and they remain available through that company today.

After Paul Schmidt’s “Squarpent” design was published, David worked with the Bate Collection in Oxford to present recurring workshops where students would make their own examples of that simplified design in a room in the museum, and he would evaluate the results. David also served as a serpent consultant to Bate Collection curator Andy Lamb. In 1990, David was one of the serpentists playing in in the grand concert at St. John’s Smith Square concert hall in London, part of Christopher Monk’s 400th Anniversary of the Serpent Celebration.

David was predeceased by his wife Erika, who died at their home on Netherton Road, Appleton, on May 29, 2006. He was survived by his sister Maureen. It has not been determined if he had any children, or other surviving family at the time of his death. His funeral took place on July 31, 2017 in Oxford.

[Editor’s note: I knew that David’s health had declined, as this was apparent the last time I visited him at his home just prior to the Serpentarium that took place in Oxford in 2007. Over the next few years, many attempts were made through various channels to learn how he was getting on, but with no results other than that he had been committed to an Oxford area facility having a “memory care” wing. Finally, in late 2023, I hired a private investigation firm in Oxford to see what they could learn. The above is a combination of the local obituary and other things the investigation revealed, as well as some personal knowledge and Serpent newsletter archives. I wish I could have published this article earlier, but even late is better than nothing in order let David’s friends know what happened.]

In Memoriam: Peter Schickele

Johann Peter Schickele, American composer and music educator/personality/parodist, passed away on January 16, 2024 at his home in Bearsville (adjacent to the famous Woodstock), New York, at the age of 88.

He was born on July 17, 1935 in Ames, Iowa. He studied music and eventually graduated from the Juilliard School in 1960 with a master's degree in musical composition. He was an accomplished bassoonist, and was also a member of the chamber rock trio the *Open Window*, which wrote and performed music for the 1969 revue *Oh! Calcutta!* He wrote music for a number of folk musicians, most notably Joan Baez, for whom he also orchestrated and arranged three albums during the mid-1960s, *Noël*, *Joan*, and *Baptism*. He also composed the original score for the 1972 science fiction film *Silent Running*.



He married poet Susan Sindall in 1962, and they had two children, Matt and Karla, both of them becoming musicians; Karla is also an orchestral music composer. His brother David Schickele (1937–1999) was a film director and musician. Peter composed more than 100 original works for symphony orchestra, choral groups, chamber ensemble, voice, television and an animated adaptation of *Where the Wild Things Are* (which he also narrated). He wrote five string quartets, concertos for bassoon, clarinet, oboe, French horn, piano and cello. He also hosted a long-running weekly radio program called *Schickele Mix*.

The above would be enough accomplishment for many musicians, but Peter Schickele is best known for comedy albums featuring his music, which he presented as being composed by the fictional P. D. Q. Bach. From 1990 to 1993, Schickele's P. D. Q. Bach recordings earned him four consecutive wins for the Grammy Award for Best Comedy Album. For his P.D.Q. Bach shows, he adopted the alter ego of Professor Peter Schickele, head of the Department of Musical Pathology at the University of Southern North Dakota at Hoople. Some of his best known P.D.Q. Bach "decompositions" include *Missa Hilarious*, *Pervertimento for Bagpipes*, *Bicycle and Balloons*, *Short-Tempered Clavier*, *Half-Nelson Mass*, *Canine Cantata "Wachet Arf"*, *Eine Kleine Nichtmusik*, and *My Bonnie Lass, She Smelleth*. For his live concerts, the program books included an airsickness bag, labeled "For Use In Case of Cultural Discomfort."

For the First International Serpent Festival in 1989, Craig Kridel commissioned Schickele to 'discover' a new P.D.Q. Bach piece, and he delivered the round *Oh, Serpent*, which is first sung, then played, with the lyrics, "Oh, Serpent, Oh Serpent, how wondrous art thou, thou looks like a snake, yet sounds like a cow". For the December 23, 2000 performance of Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*, which took place at Town Hall in New York City, he discovered another P.D.Q. Bach piece, *2-1/2 Variations on "In Dulci Jubilo" for koto, crumhorn, serpent, musical saw*; the serpent part was performed by Tom Zajac.

Peter told this newsletter editor that he "owned a serpent and had done some work on learning to play it unsuccessfully" (lack of punctuation intentional). He was a long-time subscriber to this newsletter.



Berger serpents as described by Michel Godard (below)

More Exciting News

- Michel Godard wrote about his work with serpent maker Stephan Berger, "We have by now two new types of serpent available. First is a serpent a half-tone higher than the regular church serpent (C in A=465 Hz or D in A=415 Hz) like the serpent catalog number SAM 237 from the Kunst Historical Museum Vienna (one of the oldest instrument from our museums), this instrument allow you to play early music at the common Italian or German tuning without having to take a longer or smaller crook that always makes the intonation weaker. Second is a serpent a fourth higher than the regular church serpent: "Serpentino" (F in A=440 Hz or G in A=392 Hz) which is a copy of the serpent E.2387 from the *Musée de la Musique* in Paris, similar tuning as the serpent Inv.1829 from Bologna (also called *Cormone basso*, probably from beginning of 16th century); this serpent can possibly be the transitional instrument between the tenor and bass cornetto to our church serpent. More information will come soon on Stephan Berger's website: serpents.ch".
- Michel also wrote, "Our 6th "Serpent Journey" will take place soon, April 10 - 14th) in Saingnelegier (CH). Patrick Wibart, Volny Hostiou, David Partouche and myself will be the teachers. About 30 serpents will come together for 5 days of concerts, workshops and master classes. [editor's note; this workshop was previously announced in this newsletter]. At the Paris Conservatory, I had seven serpent students this year, some of them will for sure take part of the future of the instrument. (see also *Workshops* section).
- At a display of unusual vintage musical instruments at a music educator's convention in late 2023, a college student approached Paul Schmidt and, pointing at an ophicleide,



Stephan Berger & Bologna small serpent

pronounced, “I am studying low brass history in college, and this is the first time I have ever seen a *cephalopodocleide* up close!” He seemed serious, and subsequent online searches were made to see if this might have been a reference to a ‘meme’, but apparently is not. But the name is great! What would such a creature, or instrument, look like to justify such a moniker? Logically, it must have some sort of ‘head’, and feet, and be serpent related or at least serpentine, and also have keys. One concept is shown here. If any reader thinks they can do better, please submit to the newsletter editor (see the *About the Organization* section).



Could this be the fearsome *Cephalopodocleide*?

- Michel Godard reported that Belgium serpent player Berlinde Deman has posted several serpent videos to YouTube. She combines electronic music, looping her serpent playing, as well as multi-tracking and other recording techniques. The results are atmospheric, dreamy, “ambient”, and can be quite relaxing. Here is a list of a few of them, and more can be viewed by clicking from any specific video to view her ‘channel’. “So long friend’s mother (Berlinde Deman on serpent)”, URL youtu.be/_uRCSEeIudY?si=lyzw9Q1oke5kTWHn (in some videos, the viewer can see her moving her feet, and this is to press buttons on her “looping” device which allows her overdubbing). “Bottled Poem by Berlinde Deman (on serpent)”, URL youtu.be/WK2Wbq2IpZo?si=LqH3hwUDv7iEJnT3. “Berlinde Deman on serpent impro: frozen mood with a little rhyme”, URL youtu.be/zyUIxoZqBTE?si=cBv-weY77RFLXrgk.

- David Partouche wrote, “If you’re interested in the upright serpent, I’m sharing with you this YouTube video that I made with a “basson russe” and the historical reconstruction of an orchestra: search for “Marche des grenadiers de la Vieille Garde à Waterloo, Gebauer Partouche. Serpent droit basson russe”, or use this URL youtu.be/Ru4n1RN_6Do?si=PWBTAIRXX7bYSo01 or alternately youtu.be/Ru4n1RN_6Do?si=tioVODN7TI13UWqZ ”. [Editor’s note: the instrument David is playing in the video is generally referred to as an “early cimbasso”, whereas a “basson russe”, aka “Russian Bassoon” is a different looking serpent variant with a zoomorphic bell. Also, here is a partial translation of the video description’s French text: ‘This (cimbasso) instrument was made by luthier Pierre RIBO (Belgium) and is played here within a small orchestral ensemble on period instruments, in a musical arrangement created by D. Partiouche on the occasion of the bicentenary of the death of Napoleon I.’]

“And in a separate video, I’m talking about the “serpenteau” in this interview; it’s the small serpent, like a kind of soprano serpent, that we built for my young students” Search YouTube for “Le serpent, comment ça marche ? David Partouche” or use the URL youtu.be/YlgxDjO18BA?si=RHb5gzG-h40BIYo1.

- As previously noted, Doug Yeo gave presentations at the International Tuba Euphonium Conference that was held at Arizona State University in 2023. Arizona Public Broadcasting aired some of his performances, and also has that program available on their website as streaming audio, and at the time of this writing, the URL still works: azpbs.org/arizonaencore/2023/12/serpent/. The program begins with a non-serpent portion, Dahl’s *Sinfonietta*, and at about the 25 minute mark the serpent portion begins. First is Cliff Bevan’s *Variations on “The Pesky Serpent”*, followed by Haydn’s *Divertimento in B-flat (Chorale St. Antoni)*, and concludes with Hummel’s *Partita in E-flat*.



17th century - An anonymous painting depicting numerous angel-musicians, with Mary and Christ child, includes two serpents. I have been able to find very little information about the painting; 17th century is simply my best guess (art.com sells a reproduction and calls the painting "A Concert of Angels") (public domain). Another art reproduction company lists the artist as "Spanish School." (see detail below) thanks to Will Kimball



● Scott Hall wrote, "Here's a little more news about The GEMINI Twin Serpents, a sonic sculpture I created in 2022 in collaboration with MONAD Studio (see the September 2023 edition of this newsletter). I played this horn live in the Miami Art Week event *Installation for Pollinators* which took place on December 6, 2023 in The

Kampong Botanical Garden, Coconut Grove, Florida. To capture my diatonic improv and loop-layer, I used a piezo pickup clipped onto the shank of my plastic Kelly 6.5AL mouthpiece. You can see and hear this performance in brief videos located at <https://m.youtube.com/@hallsf/shorts>, and see the two videos titled "Part 3: select sonic sculptures in the Kampong Botanical Garden, Coconut Grove, Miami Art Week", and the similarly titled "Part 4:...."

● As a man of many talents, Sydney Symphony Associate Principal Trombone player Scott Kinmont has also performed and directed original instrument ensembles on sackbut (Renaissance trombone), serpent and ophicleide. YouTube captures his use of the serpent in this take on

Terpsichore La Volta by Michael Praetorius. Search for "Scott Kinmont's rendition of Praetorius' *Terpsichore: La Volta*" or use the URL youtu.be/oBknFCEbgOc?si=W-GT_18rRZSz-Ae3.

● Roland Szentpali is producing quality serpent-related performances and posting them on YouTube. In one of them, he plays an early cimballo on Dutch composer Willem De Fesch's *Sonata* in a video titled "Szentpali plays De Fesch on cimballo", part of a performance at the Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Berlin, February 16, 2014, accompanied on harpsichord by Krisztina Fejes; the URL is youtu.be/iUhSmDkFQzE?si=8jPFInWZWFrpBW9P. In another video, Roland again plays the early cimballo on an unnamed piece, with piano accompaniment, part of a performance at the 15th International Master Class for Tuba and Euphonium at the Bavarian Music Academy in Hammelburg. The video is titled "Roland Szentpali Cimballo" and the URL is youtu.be/0WIK14Xxc44?si=HXrpFuVuaF4I83K. In a third video, Roland is shown playing a military serpent with harpsichord in a rehearsal of a Galliard Sonata by an unnamed composer; the title is "Galliard Sonata played by Roland Szentpali" and the URL is youtu.be/7b3ST6siZiM?si=i0U18PoEgc0vkl-7. The keyboard player in this video is Richard Révész, a reportedly famous Latin-jazz pianist in Hungary.

● Here is a bit of a want-ad: A small museum is looking to acquire the following, and is asking for help in locating available instruments. An English Bass Horn, an early cimballo, a serpent Forveille, and a Russian Bassoon (basson russe). Please contact the newsletter editor (see *About the Organization* section) if you have any of these to sell or know of any available. Antiques are preferable, but authentic reproductions will be considered. All must be in readily playable condition.



1781~1854 - Amsterdam, Netherlands: *Military Music, a catchpenny print produced by Erve H. Rijnders, includes a serpent; Catchpenny Prints of the Dutch Royal Library*). (public domain) thanks to Will Kimball