

# HISTORICAL INSTRUMENT SECTION

Craig Kridel and Clifford Bevan, Editors

## Serpent

May and July 1997 will certainly be months well remembered by serpentists and serpent enthusiasts as three events occurred that represent the further integration of the serpent into the musical mainstream. Michel Godard's performance at the July 1997 International Tuba Euphonium Conference in Riva del Garda, an event described in the last issue of the *TUBA Journal*, certainly represents the serpent's emergence as a true musical instrument as opposed to a mere curiosity. A serpent workshop occurred at a past ITEC, yet Godard's performance is the first full recital at this event. While I have yet to receive a detailed report of the performance, I have witnessed Michel converting the skeptical and unsympathetic while bringing ovations at the 1995 International Historic Brass Society's Symposium. For those interested in obtaining any of Michel's many recordings, a discography may be found on the *Serpent Newsletter* web site: [www.wwa.com/~ocleide](http://www.wwa.com/~ocleide).

In May, Douglas Yeo, bass trombonist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, performed the Proctor *Concerto for Serpent and Orchestra* with the Boston Pops at Symphony Hall. The concerto, written for Alan Lumsden in 1987, and premiered at the 1989 First International Serpent Festival in Columbia, South Carolina (an event celebrating the 399th anniversary of the serpent), elicited great delight from Pops conductor John Williams, members of the orchestra, and the approximately 4,000 audience members at the two evening performances. The *Concerto for Serpent and Orchestra*, a connected three-movement work, is considered the most substantial piece ever written for the instrument and, as described by Yeo, explores "the complete tonal range and technique of the instrument in an accessible style



Photo by Craig Kridel

encompassing jazz, minimalism, and unabashed romanticism." Yeo will perform the *Concerto* in December 1998, with the Boston Classical Orchestra, Harry Ellis Dickson, conductor.

While Yeo and Proctor were preparing for their performance with the Boston Pops, Andrew van der Beek and 16 other serpentists from four continents and six countries met for what has become a biennial weekend gathering, now termed the Lacock Serpentarium, at Andrew's historic home in the village of Lacock, Wiltshire, England. During the weekend, representatives from the BBC Radio 3's "Music Matters" arrived to prepare an edited show. Paul Schmidt provides a delightful account in the most recent *Serpent Newsletter*, and closes the description with the following statement:

▲ Doug Yeo after performing the Proctor *Concerto for Serpent* with the Boston Pops, Symphony Hall, Boston; (l. to r.) Doug Yeo, Simon Proctor, John Williams.

"Well, at least the Lacock event ended at The George (pub) where all good serpentariums should."

In essence, three major events have occurred within three months portraying the serpent to hundreds of viewers and thousands of listeners. Much of this work is attributed, of course, to the wonderful serpent exploits of Godard, Yeo & Proctor, and van der Beek; however, the selfless organizational work of Paul Schmidt, Dick George, and Nigel Nathan

