

SIGMUND SNOPEK III

40th Birthday Party

November 16-17

Walker's Point Center for the Arts



Sigmund Snopek III.

Celebrating his 40th birthday, consummate Milwaukee composer Sigmund Snopek III eschewed cake and let 'em eat music. Luscious music. In a performance of two new works and piece from 1972, Wisconsin's musical bad boy tossed balls (rubber balls, glass balls), aluminum foil, verbal curves and glorious glissandos during this intimate and impish bash. Glad to be out of the bar scene, if only for two nights, in a place where people listen without benefit of beer and brats, Snopek shared a memorable natal night.

Sparsely thatched, powerfully built and wickedly wonderful, Snopek lit up the night with starburst sounds: electronic, demonic, stratospheric and decidedly diverse. The event, funded by the Wisconsin Arts Board (Pan Wisconsin '90), was a tour de force-farce by a solidly-trained musician who attained national success at age 19 and hasn't stopped rolling since.

Avenue Fanfare, a four-minute technopop ode to Wisconsin Avenue, served up quadrants of Apple Pie Americana and tossed in just enough soy sauce, giving Milwaukee's east-west fast track a gee whiz bird's eye view. *Stages 15* (now celebrating an 18th anniversary) was based on Herman Hesse's *Glass Bead Game*. Divided into fifteen elements marking life's passages, this piano composition, played by master pianist David Bohn, was tumultuous and discordant, with tender transitory moments reflective of the few quiet times on the way to the grave.

Concerto for Myself, a shared birthday card extraordinaire, was Snopek at his wildest and best, as he worked bass clarinet, trombone, Indian bells and impassioned vocalization in and around a bank of equipment blipping pre-recorded instrumentation. Floating and sensual — not New Age, but new from the heart and head. This composer, at age 40, knows and likes himself.

Theoretically set up as if it could "go on forever, like a baseball game," the final work was a sensual exchange between piano and pianist. The instrument literally opened to receive balls, bells, foil and erasers. Snopek teased the piano and made life-eternal a possibility, if only in the heart of *Calmness of the Heart*. If you missed the party in 1990, try to catch it in the year 2030. And who cares if Siggie's hair is thinning?

Judith Ann Moriarty