

Composer Grows With His Work

By Damien Jaques
of The Journal Staff

In a small, cluttered apartment on E. Hadley St., a young composer labors late into the night copying his works by hand.

Sigmund Snopek III, a young man blessed with a name that sounds like musical genius, is preparing his new creation, "The Talking Symphony," for its premiere performance by the Milwau-

kee Symphony Orchestra. Snopek and six musical colleagues will appear with the symphony at 8 tonight in the Performing Arts Center.

The concert, which will also feature actors from Theatre X in Snopek's work, is part of the symphony's Young Adult series.

Snopek, who is 24, fits the image of the developing young composer. Quiet, friendly, extremely serious

about his work, he comes across as a very genuine fellow.

However, his background is not a classic one. A Waukesha native, Snopek started playing the piano at 7. As a teenager he started playing the electric piano and organ in rock bands.

"That was when the Beatles came out, and playing in a rock band was the big thing to do," he recalled this week.

At 16 he started writing his own rock music.

Snopek spent two years of college at the University of Wisconsin — Waukesha, and it was there that he organized his own band, the Bloomsbury People. With the creation of the band, Snopek's writing took a classical turn, and the group started playing classical rock.

The Bloomsbury People
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—Journal Photo by John E. Biever

"The Talking Symphony" was rehearsed by (from left) Sigmund Snopek III, James Gorton, Byron Wiemann, Ding Lorenz, David Wadsworth and David Phillips.

Composer

Snopek Gets Ready for Big Occasion

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made national tours and recorded an album on the MGM label While at UW—Waukesha, Snopek started studying music theory. When he transferred to the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee he started studying under John Downey, a composer whose work has been performed by the Milwaukee Symphony.

Learned Flute

Since then, Snopek has learned to play the flute and become involved in electronic music. He plays the synthesizer for some of his works.

Snopek has worked long and hard at his writing. He has written a string quartet in three movements, a woodwind quartet in five movements, a 15 part song cycle called "Nobody to Dream," and a 55 section, four hour long "musical novel," as Snopek calls it, titled "Trinity Seize, Seas, Sees." The "Trinity" piece had its premiere last summer.

Besides his own group of seven musicians which he has named Sigmund Snopek III, the "Trinity" production includes dancers, actors and mimes. Snopek has also written the scores of several locally produced movies including a documentary about the Milwaukee River. Two more records featuring Snopek's work have been released.

This is not the first time the Milwaukee Symphony has played a Snopek composition. In 1971, the symphony played "Orange-Blue," a rock symphonic poem that featured the combination of light and sound.

Snopek says there is a definite jazz influence on his writing. He is also heavily influenced by the contemporary composers, including those who use electronics.

His music has been compared to the classical rock played by Yes and King Crimson, but he shies away from any comparisons. Snopek doesn't own a stereo because he doesn't want to be influenced by any other composers or groups who may be doing work similar to his.

Plays at Clubs

Snopek supports himself by teaching two classes at the Wisconsin College — Conservatory, working as a studio musician for commercials and playing nightclub dates, occasionally with a group called Major Arcana.

He would like to write a symphony about every two years and do more movie scoring. If fame and fortune find him, Snopek would like to open a center in Milwaukee where he and his musicians could rehearse his work all the time without worrying about earning a living.