

Snopek's Music Zany, Lyrical

By Dominique Paul Noth
of The Journal Staff

It would be tempting to take the 5th on Sigmund Snopek III. He is such an antic paradox — a clown, a crowd teaser, an experimental modern composer of talent and proficiency, a banana nut cake, and just when he does something that makes you want to grab him by the hand, he does something else that makes you want to grab him by the throat.

He offered a world premiere Friday night before a large, attentive and willing crowd of young adults as could be wished for in a free Vibrations Unlimited program at Uihlein Hall.

Sequence Changed

It was full of spastic bodies, wa-wa pedals, primal screams about lack of communication, cymbals and symbols, and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

Edward Mumm substituted without explanation for the scheduled conductor, Kenneth Schermerhorn, and the symphony copped a plea and threw out its original program sequence. Instead, it "pre-viewed" — actually, rehearsed for just the second time — its parts in Snopek's hourlong "Talking Symphony."

Romantic Streak

After the symphony re-familiarized itself (and over-familiarized us) with Snopek's unusual techniques, the composer and six rock friends did a set. Then we got the "Talking Symphony" in proper sequence, so far as anyone could tell.

The audience throughout was quietly responsive, and so was I. It's hard to say what I liked in this work, and certainly it didn't seem to mesh its diverse elements comfortably.

But darned if it wasn't entertaining, in a provoking way.

The composer, although he set the symphony to clashing and wailing and sighing against itself, is a romantic. Underneath all the bashes and bumps in the night is an eerie lyricism, as if Debussy had backed into Donovan in an electric eye door.

Snopek is also a gadgeteer, fascinated with electronic boxes and sound effects, tinkering with his capable rock musicians and the symphony like a toymaker exploring harmonics. He is also dramatic, having Theatre X members participate as white faced wraiths babbling grippingly.

Wearying Antics

As a showman he is deliberately unexpected, whipping about the stage like a catlike Groucho Marx, seeming to bound in joy to his music, or flop on the floor for poetic or

ludicrous effect. Much of this is gauche, wearying, indulgent, but though it may not help the music it diverts the eye.

The orchestra? Well, it performed with cool efficiency, and the rehearsal incorporated into the evening seemed to help.

But though this is a fairly young orchestra, they are older in spirit than Sigmund Snopek Puck. And several incredulous stares could be detected among them, the kind Dad would give if invited to chaperone a marijuana party.