

Monday evening's concert by the Indiana University Percussion Ensemble included six pieces by living composers. One piece — by IU composer Frederick Fox — was a premiere, and of the others, four had never before been presented in Bloomington.

Fox's new piece is called *GABER!* The title tells the whole story: the composer wrote it for Percussion Ensemble director George Gaber in gratitude, he said, for the "wonderful support" Gaber has given to IU composers. "He has done so much," Fox said, "for all of us."

The piece calls for six percussionists playing everything from xylophone and marimba to various kinds of drum, vibraslap, and flexatone. Essentially a set of variations on harmonic and rhythmic patterns, the piece demands virtuoso technique.

The composer, who is not a percussionist himself, discussed the special problems involved in writing a piece for this kind of ensemble. On the technical level, Fox indicated, he first had to discover the many different kinds of sounds that these instruments are capable of producing. On the substantive level, he had to overcome some natural inclinations — in his words, to "consciously work at not being rhythmic."

As in so many of Fox's other works, there is an emphasis on timbre, as instruments are combined and re-combined to create different tone colors. As in at least one or two of his other works, moreover, there is a brief and abrupt shifting of gears at the end — in this case, a melodic fragment that injects an element of humor into an otherwise serious piece.

Of the evening's other offerings, the most memorable were Jindrich Feld's *Suite Concertant* (1979), Russell Peck's *Lift-Off* (1978), and Mario Kuri-Aldana's *Xilofonias* (1936), the last of which is already establishing a minor reputation, and which is in fact scored not only for percussion, but for piccolo, oboe, bass clarinet, and bassoon as well.

Feld is a Czech composer who spent some time in Bloomington in 1981; most of his compositions are classically-oriented works such as sonatas, concerti, suites, and string quartets.

The Suite Concertant consists of

The music beat

By Anita Heppner Plotinsky



four movements. The inner ones are a passacaglia and scherzo; the outer ones, and the scherzo as well, are based on steady rhythmic pulsations coupled with a Baroque-like clarity of counterpoint.

Peck is a Detroit-born composer who was associated for a time with the Indianapolis Symphony, and who wrote a choral and orchestral piece called *Song of Mankind* for the 1971 Indianapolis Sesquicentennial. The scoring of *Lift-Off* is straightforward: there are three percussionists each playing a bass drum and tom-toms. The tom-toms, of course, have definite pitches, making some melodic possibilities available in addition to the predominantly rhythmic ones.

Probably the most fascinating thing about this piece is that it allows a trio of percussionists to explore chamber music playing in ways previously accessible only to such conventional ensembles as piano trios and string trios. Drummers Craig Hetrick, Kay Stonefelt, and Lou D'Agostino negotiated its substantial technical obstacles skillfully. In addition, moreover, such musical matters, as the crescendi and diminuendi by the bass drums in turn were superbly done.

All of the playing on this program, in fact, represented a high level of professional-quality playing. Gaber's ensemble, as usual, was not only rhythmically precise but uncompromisingly musical. On such melody instruments as marimba and xylophone, for example, melodic lines were not merely banged out; where appropriate, they were given shape and direction. Rhythmic counterpoint, too, was handled with a sensitive ear.

Alexandra Papastefanou was the capable piano soloist in Heskell Brisman's *Concerted Music* (1975), and Lisa Aplikowski did a fine job with the solo horn part in Tibor Puzstai's *Interactions* (1976). The percussion parts in *Interactions*, incidentally, are as demanding as the

horn solo, and they were expertly played by Dan Hostetler, Dietmar Kauffman, and Tom Utroske.