

Harvey Sollberger and the status of New Music

For more than 20 years, Harvey Sollberger has been a champion of contemporary music. The ink was barely dry on his master's degree when, in 1962, he joined Charles Wuorinen in founding the Group for Contemporary Music. The organization was based first at Columbia University, where Sollberger studied with Otto Luening and Jack Beeson, and then at the Manhattan School of Music, where Sollberger taught for many years.

SOLLBERGER IS NOW a member of the music faculty at Indiana University and has taken over the directorship of its New Music Ensemble. He has of course observed that audiences for new music concerts in Bloomington are small. He also believes that performances of contemporary music at IU are generally not up to the standards of the major music schools in New York City.

The reason, he says, is that students at the Manhattan School can hop on a subway and go to hear good professional performances of modern music, while such performances are simply not available in Bloomington. "Alas," he commented, "the faculty here does not perform that much at all, much less 20th century music. We have 18 voice teachers and not one of them does any 20th century music. We have all these piano teachers, but they don't go beyond Prokofiev or Bartok."

Sollberger hopes that specialists in contemporary music performance will eventually be hired. In the meantime, he plans to invite some current faculty members to appear as soloists with the New Music Ensemble.

THOUGH SOLLBERGER has been described as an organizer and an "impassioned musical advocate," he is

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By Anita
Heppner Plotinsky

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primarily a flutist and composer who writes chamber music for his own use and for particular performers and occasions. His place, he believes, is among the group of composers who came of age in the '60s, and the greatest influence on his career was the experience of performing music by Babbitt, Martino, Wolpe and Wuorinen.

One of his own pieces, *Killapata/Chaskapata* (1983), was played in a concert by the New Music Ensemble Monday evening in Studio 301 of the Musical Arts Center. Commissioned by the National Flute Association, the piece is designed for performance by an accomplished flute soloist together with a high-school-level flute choir.

The title of the work refers to recently discovered archaeological sites in the Peruvian Andes, and one of the ideas behind it was that of the "utterly remorseless wind of the high altitudes, of the vanished imperial splendor of that ancient culture." The music uses measured rhythms suggesting religious ritual, and the words of the title, which mean "above the moon" and "above the stars," are spoken by the players. Soloist in Monday's performance

was Rita Linard, a most capable flutist, who was backed by an ensemble that contained a number of equally skilled students.

ALSO ON MONDAY'S program were student performances of William Bolcom's *Session II* (1966), Marta Ptaszynska's *Space Model* (1971), John Cage's *59 1/2*" (1960), Toru Takemitsu's *Garden Rain* (1976), George Crumb's *Madrigals, Book I* (1965), and pieces by Berg and Webern. Of all of these, probably the most unusual was the piece by Ptaszynska, a Polish composer and percussionist who joined the University of California at Berkeley faculty in 1977 and who is temporarily in residence at IU.

The piece is in three movements, each of which is played by the solo percussionist from a different spot and on a different group of instruments. The first movement, performed from the first station, involves mostly toms, bongos, cymbal, temple blocks, triangle and cowbells. When the second movement is played on a different group of instruments (including marimba, xylophone and timpani), a tape of the first group of instruments sounds simultaneously from a speaker located at station 1. When the third movement is played on still another group of instruments (bells and chimes), similarly, tapes of the first and second groups of instruments are heard coming from speakers at stations 1 and 2.

PERCUSSIONIST Kay Stonefelt did a magnificent job with the piece, whose interest has less to do with its novelty than with its quality. Ptaszynska obviously has as intimate a knowledge of percussion instruments as anyone,

and she has used it to create a significant addition to the repertory.

Toro guest flutist

There was more 20th century music for flute later in the week, when Luis Julio Toro presented a recital under the auspices of IU's Latin American Music Center. Toro is a young Venezuelan flutist who has been associated with the National Youth Orchestra of Venezuela and the Simon Bolivar Youth Symphony.

His recital Thursday night, which was given together with former IU piano student Arnaldo Pizzolante, included works by Latin American Music Center director Juan Orrego-Salas and two IU students, Javier Alvarez and Ricardo Lorenz-Abreu. Also on the program were Hindemith's *Sonata* (1936), Debussy's *Syrinx*, and the *Sonatina* (1943) by French composer Henri Dutilleux.

TORO BROUGHT to these pieces a high degree of control over technique, tone and timbre. He breezed through the register fluctuations and octave multiphonics in Alvarez' *Lluvia de Toritos*, executed the scampering third movement of the Hindemith with ease, and gave a lyrical account of material in the two French pieces.

Pizzolante's contributions to the performance were secure, though some of his playing was on the aggressive side. For the *Variaciones Aidana* by Lorenz-Abreu, the flutist was joined by a student string quartet. The piece is stylistically eclectic and the ensemble was a little shaky. On this first hearing, therefore, the piece did not leave an impression of unity.