

The Spotlight

A Rare Musical Breed!

BY ANN HOLMES

Fine Arts Editor

We hear a lot about the cause of contemporary music but not many people can count a real, live, contemporary composer among their close friends.

Do you play Saturday night poker with a composer? Sail or fish with one? Ride to work in the morning with a 12-toner? Probably not.

It is, therefore, interesting when one composer breaks down the invisible barriers between musical creator and the townspeople.

Houston has had, in the past, and still does contain, a handful of such producing musicians.

Distinguished

Andre Previn is a distinguished one. He was writing on solo concertos — and completing his Broadway musical "Coco" when he was here earlier this season at 1400 Hermann.

He is even now composing special music for a student concert — "the instruments at the back of the orchestra which seldom get much attention." Barbirolli has written some music and made arrangements.

Arthur Hall at Rice University; Elmer Shoettle at University of Houston; Bolivian-born Velasco Maidance are constantly jotting down notes for works given later performances here. Louis Gordon and Bill Rice are composers of ability who once worked here and now are living elsewhere. One postman in Bellaire carried the mail to earn his keep while creating new music. But there are not many of them — composers are a rare breed.

In this context one can delight in the music and the bustling, outgoing spirit of the University of Texas' Dr. Luther Klein, who comes to Houston often. Klein's father works here at the Manned Spacecraft Center, and the 35 year old Lothar motors down in his bright red Opel. He always clutches a brief case full of new scores.



LOTHAR KLEIN

They Don't Care

Knows Stravinsky

Klein was born in Germany, but is an American. He was a student of the well known composer Boris Blacher at Berlin and the University of Minnesota where he won his PhD in musicology for his work on Stravinsky and the Problems of New Music.

I first met Klein at a symposium on criticism and journalism at University of Texas several years ago, when his piece "Epitaph for JFK" was played.

It was one of a group called Epitaphs for Orchestra inscribed to the late President, Author Ernest Hemingway and French Writer Albert Camus. The concept, the textures and the immediacy of the music stuck in mind.

Later at a symposium in honor of Stravinsky at the University of Texas, Klein conducted a group of Chamber Players in Stravinsky music.

His own "Charivari" ("Music for an Imaginary Comedy") was played by the Houston Symphony at the Rockefeller New Music Week at University of Houston here last April. The young composer's works have been heard all over the world, at music festivals and on symphonic programs across America.

'A Go Go'

One of his liveliest is "Musique a Go Go" ("Symphonic Melee") which has been played by the Cleveland, the Minneapolis and the New Orleans orchestras. It is interesting to note his concern for literary topics. Along with two symphonies, concertos and choral and chamber works, he has done for instance, Three Creek Rites for eight percussion instruments.

Previn is now looking at several Klein works for possible future performance.

And when Ruggiero Ricci was here to play with the Houston Symphony, Klein met him to give him the completed score of his new Collage for Violin and Orchestra based on Paganini themes extrapolated and collated into new patterns, and dedicated to Ricci.

While he is first and foremost scholar, teacher, creator rooted in the Groves of Academe, Lothar Klein has the energy, alertness to the passing scene

public point of view to catch the attention, through his music of a large audience out there that basically couldn't care less. And more power to him.