

Tenting Tonight:

CabMuFest's 25th Season

By Dan Garr

What makes a festival? Is it a traffic jam of music, film, dance and theater that relegates the various and sundry muses to a rush hour ritual? Or would the concept be better served by a focused concentration on both traditional and modern esthetics performed by world-class artists? The latter approach has always distinguished the Cabrillo Music Festival, which begins its 25th anniversary season July 16 and promises rewards for both the casual listener and the aficionado.

Although the Cabrillo Music Festival owes its well-deserved reputation largely to its adventuresome presentation of 20th-century classical music, it has never shied from programming works by composers who flourished before 1900. This year's festival, for instance, features Robert Schumann, perhaps the greatest purely Romantic composer, whose music is marked by solemnity, boisterous outbursts and the infinite variety of characters populating his musical stage. Schumann's music will appear throughout the festival, with the evening of July 24 reserved for his overtures to *Manfred* and *Hermann und Dorothea* and his *Fantasy in C Major for Violin and Orchestra*.

Expanding spatially as well as temporally, this year's festival embraces the work of Isang Yun of Korea and Heinz Holliger of Switzerland, who will join Santa Cruz's Lou Harrison as composers-in-residence. If past

and cited Music Director Dennis Russell Davies for his festival programming as well as for his work with the New York-based American Composer's Orchestra.

Maestro Davies returns for his 14th Season to lead the festival orchestra in four concerts in addition to soloing on the piano in a joint recital with oboe virtuoso Holliger and Concertmaster Romuald Tecco. This recital should provide a ready test for Berlioz's proposition that "the oboe is primarily a melodic instrument; it has a rustic character, full of tenderness; I might almost say, full of bashfulness."

Although the great composers of the Romantic era (with the exception of Richard Strauss) generally avoided the oboe, during the last quarter century a diverse repertory has evolved, and a good deal of it is due to Holliger. He has commissioned more than 60 compositions, the most recent of which is a major concerto by Elliott Carter, himself a festival composer-in-residence in 1985.

Accompanying Holliger to Santa Cruz is harp virtuoso (and spouse) Ursula Holliger. With a spate of recordings for Claves, an elite European label, she has emerged as a leading practitioner of the harp. It comes as no surprise, then, that Eastern Europe's most respected composer, Witold Lutoslawski, wrote his *Double Concerto*

foundry and a flashpoint of democratic aspirations. During World War II, Yun fought in the Korean resistance, was captured, escaped and subsequently lived in hiding until the liberation. He was a major force in the reconstruction of Korean cultural life and, in 1955, traveled to Europe for further study and growth.

This period came to an abrupt end when Yun was kidnapped in 1967 by the Korean secret police and held in solitary confinement for two years. Finally, because of world political outcry and the intervention of the West German government, Yun was released and permitted to return to Berlin.

As a composer, Yun's fundamental aim is the development of Korean music by expressing the Asian imagination with contemporary Western musical techniques. Although he initially used the serial tone row of the Second Viennese School (i.e. Arnold Schoenberg and others), a basic Eastern character began to permeate his compositions. During the festival, many aspects of Yun's musical thought can be heard. In the area of chamber music, works for solo harp, two violins and for oboe and piano have been programmed, as well as a clarinet quintet. The last will be performed by artists-in-residence the New World String Quartet.

The duality of East Meets (or is it Greets?) West is never distant when Lou Harrison is considered. Harrison will be the focal point on July 18, when the "Shadows of Indonesia" program directed by Trish Neilsen features the second-ever performance of his *Piano Concerto No. 2* for a specially tuned piano and Javanese gamelan. In this tricky composition, the Western piano must be in synch with both the Eastern five-tone *slendro* scale as well as with the more complex seven-note *pelog* scale.

A second Harrison work on the program is *A Cornish Lancaran*, scored for Javanese gamelan and B-flat saxophone, the latter played by Don Stevens of Santa Cruz's own Nuclear Whales Saxophone Orchestra. Also scheduled for the Indonesian evening are compositions by two prominent Javanese artists. K. R. T. Wasitodipuro (Pak Chokro) is a leading composer and instrumentalist as well as music director at the Pura Paku Alaman, one of Central Java's four Royal Courts. In the final event of the evening, Widiyanto, a Javanese puppet master, will perform an episode from the *Ramayana* with shadow puppets and gamelan accompaniment.

These many events are far different in scale but similar in spirit to the impromptu chamber series begun in 1961 at the Sticky Wicket, an Aptos coffeehouse, which gave rise to the Cabrillo Music Festival.



Composer-in-residence Isang Yun

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

(All concerts take place at the UCSC Festival Tent unless otherwise noted. Call 479-6331 for ticket information.)

Thursday, July 16
Anniversary Prelude with Dennis Russell Davies (7pm)

Friday, July 17
Spotlight on the Orchestra (8pm)

Saturday, July 18
Shadows of Indonesia (8pm)

Tuesday, July 21
Open Rehearsal (7:30pm, free, Cabrillo College Forum)

Wednesday, July 22
Meet the Composers (6pm, free)

Thursday, July 23
Festival of Strings with the New World String Quartet (8pm)

Friday, July 24
Holliger Conducts Schumann (8pm)

Saturday, July 25
All Aboard for Santa Cruz Day (3pm)

Saturday, July 25
Davies, Tecco and Holliger (8pm)

Sunday, July 26
Silver Jubilee Day (3pm)

(KUSP-89FM will broadcast the festival concerts live and on tape beginning the second week. Call 476-2800 for details.)



Composer-in-residence Heinz Holliger

performance is any indication, this triumvirate will add to the excellence for which the festival has often been honored. Just a month ago, in New York, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) awarded the festival its fifth consecutive first-place citation for commitment to contemporary music,

for Oboe, Harp and Chamber Orchestra specifically for the Holligers in 1980. At Mission San Juan Bautista on July 19, the Holligers will perform a similarly scored work, the *Double Concerto for Oboe and Harp* by Korea's Isang Yun.

Yun exemplifies his nation's recent emergence as a formidable industrial

val two years later. It was officially launched in 1963 by Lou Harrison, composer-conductor-bassoonist Robert Hughes, Cabrillo College instructor Ted Teows and numerous civic leaders.

Today, a quarter century later, the Cabrillo Music Festival has become an event of international stature, a growth made possible by the vision of its management and music directors (notably Gerhard Samuel, Carlos Chavez and, since 1974, Davies) and by the quality of the Festival Orchestra, which has been compared to that of Bayreuth, the Wagnerian Mecca, by London's *Financial Times* and whose technical excellence has been praised as that of "a first-class symphony" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Yet, as with every arts organization, there are questions that remain concerning the festival's future. First, with Davies in his 14th season, one wonders whether the direction of his career may alter his summer plans. Conductors are a notoriously peripatetic breed and long tenures are now the exception rather than the rule. Given his extensive European responsibilities (he has been general music director of the Stuttgart Opera for seven years and will become general music director for Bonn's Beethoven Festival and Opera House) will the Cabrillo Festival remain the stimulating oasis it has always been for Davies, or will he ultimately succumb to the pressures of a burgeoning international career?

The direction of Davies's career

has also had a predictable impact on the nationality of the composers and musicians who are invited to perform. Consequently, the emphasis on American music is shifting to a more international focus. Although there may be strong partisan views on this issue, few can quarrel with the quality of Davies's choices for guests or the interest their music provokes. Since 1963, the festival has presented 56 world premieres and a number of American debuts. The 1987 season will present three American premieres and one for the West Coast.

Gambling on its increasing reputation, the festival is now two years removed from its traditional venue at the Cabrillo Col-

lege Theater, having jettisoned the limited seating capacity and dead acoustics of Cabrillo for a large tent at UCSC in an effort to draw a larger audience. As to the acoustics experienced by canvas-engulfed concertgoers, the reviews last year ranged from neutral to mildly favorable. Maestro Davies pronounced them "open and warm," and they will be much improved this year. The former horseshoe arrangement now gives way to a stage at the narrow end of the tent with the seating proceeding to the back so that all seats are in the direct path of the sound. In addition, an enhancement system has been installed so that bass tones do not tend to disappear through the walls. Finally, Hagar Drive will be closed to traffic during performances in a con-

siderate gesture by UCSC.

The spaciousness of the tent is also a major plus for the festival, increasing seating from 541 to 1,026. Although the core audience has traditionally been from Santa Cruz County, about 25 percent now comes from the San Francisco Bay area and that number appears to be on the rise. In addition, the festival is being cross-promoted with Shakespeare Santa Cruz, thus permitting a cultural synergy to develop.

This year's East-West confluence presents an excellent opportunity to measure the future aspirations of the Cabrillo Music Festival against the considerable progression of its first quarter century. We have much to look forward to as its second commences.