

Distractions

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Gaburo: leading a life which is creative

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There is something exciting about listening to electronic music. Through the aural sensation, you get to be very aware of the environment. At this point of discovery, it becomes clear that "electronic music" is a misnomer; this music is interactive and goes beyond what "electronic music" implies. At least the work of UI School of Music Professor Kenneth Gaburo does.

But it is not merely that he goes beyond the norm in creating interactive music: the facet of explication that Gaburo provides to his students through direction and discussion in the Experimental Music Studio seminars may be the ultimate factor in Gaburo's refusal of the tedium of staid and unimaginative music.

"What I am interested in," said Gaburo, "is human interaction with technology—an experiment which exists on a global scale. Most of what I do is taking advantage of that existential situation; to show people their own relation to technology."

"THIS COMMENTARY is certainly most effective when you actually have something to say about what the machine is doing to society. We must see, I think, that the machine is a means not an end," Gaburo said.

His ideas may seem downright weird, but it would be foolish to scorn such an active and vibrant imagination. The theories Gaburo advances are not without societal implications.

There are some practical reasons for understanding the electronic technology used in musical work such as Gaburo's; people schooled in composition will most likely be working in studio environment situations with the pending technological revolution.

Gaburo teaches these things through his seminars in the Experimental Music Studio. "Most music studios like ours are sterile and rather unapproachable. But this studio is very floppy," Gaburo said.

"WE ALL SIT in a circle, and I am usually the provocateur during discussion," Gaburo said. "We do a lot of critiquing of each other's work. The students have had to have projects they show and lecture about."

"The seminar is a place where people can be free to imagine, but mostly it is the interaction between people which becomes important to them. The students grow to realize that everything involves perception. They realize that while explanation of their own work is demanding, they must rely on the ear for answers," Gaburo said.

Michael Farley, a doctoral student in composition and teaching assistant in the studio, describes what Gaburo proffers in the seminars: "He's a teacher, but he's more of a vehicle because he insists that you express yourself—not only in the sense of creating—but also in talking about the work you created."

"He has a knack for drawing people out of themselves. He's wonderful at steering toward a directed goal and that goal is to

talk about the music we just listened to," Farley said.

GABURO STRESSES the idea of music as autobiography and therefore, that the composer is accountable to the work. That is the reasoning of the demand that work be discussed. It is not enough to create; the composer must also be able to unfold the creation in a comprehensible discussion, to clearly express what the work is

and what precluded its creation.

"What is composed in the music studio is not music which can be heard on a cassette tape," Gaburo said. "This kind of music makes demands on a person; you have to be there and be involved in the culture the work creates. But this society is not involved in its culture," Gaburo said.

"In these 86 years people have not known the compositions of the 20th century. Society is going to have to grow to want contemporary music—to want it the way it wants ballet, opera, or theater. I think there is a need not to ignore the creations of this century. It is an obvious fact that someone who is living in the 20th century must also be participating in the 20th century."

SOCIETY IN GENERAL is not participating in the creation or the performance of contemporary music. Iowa City is not much different from any of the larger metropolitan areas in its amount of support and reaction. What can we expect then, from the experimental work of the 20th century when there it is confronted by apathy when there is no enthusiasm and therefore no participation from its audience?

One might imagine that the existence of studios like the UIE in itself would give credence to the acceptance and the appreciation of contemporary work. But as personal funds are hard to find and even harder to get.

Gaburo lacks some sense of the problem. "We always see the universities as patrons of the arts in a sense. As it turns out, they really haven't done their patronage. It's not hard to understand, for when it comes down to a check or a check, it is, of course, not pragmatic to support the arts—there being no real reason for the arts, given they offer nothing immediately visible," he said.

THE MEDIUM of contemporary music, theater, film or dance should be worth a great deal more than it is now if future implications are considered. For like Gaburo, the product as it stands serves to lead just as well as the exploration of why it stands.

"What I'm really talking about is leading a life which is creative. It is not enough, for example, to read newspapers and say 'here's a problem.' We must be imaginative and creative in order to see a solution to the problem. The active problem solving is what it is to be alive," Gaburo said.

"I refuse to submit that music is one single thing," Gaburo explained. "I try to make my work real; to break down the arbitrary boundaries of the elite so that it is accessible to all."



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