

The Evansville Press

88th Year, No. 200

© MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1994

50¢

Far-out sounds propel eerie musical tale

By Sandra Knipe
Entertainment reporter

Is it William Bootz, or is it his trombone?

Sometimes it's difficult to tell as Bootz grunts, growls, screams and blows his way through "Goblin Market," a combination of music and theater written for him by composer Joseph Klein.

Bootz, an associate professor of music at the University of Evansville, will premiere the new piece at his faculty recital at 8 p.m. tomorrow at the university's Wheeler Concert Hall. The concert is free and open to the public.

Basing his work on Christina Rossetti's poem "Goblin Market," Klein composed the piece for trombonist and "assistant" — in this case, keyboardist Douglas Reed.

Bootz plays tenor trombone, alto trombone and "prepared" euphonium, which means that the tuning slides have been removed and hoses attached to the air tubes. The hoses lead to a police whistle, a kazoo, a duck call and a siren submerged in a bucket of water.

Reed plays "prepared" piano, which means he plucks and rubs the strings of the opened piano with a variety of unusual objects including bow hair, twine, guitar picks, chain, a flexatone, an inflated balloon, yarn-wrapped mallets and "superball" mallets — those small, high-bouncing balls children can buy for a quarter in supermarket vending machines, attached to sticks.

The piece also utilizes four music boxes, special lighting and electronic effects and taped trombone sounds. At any given moment, Bootz is likely to pull a off a part of his trombone and use it for a prop, scream through the horn or lie on the floor, which he discovered is a very difficult way to play because "the visual perspective to the horn is so skewed." He also uses a variety of mutes, among them a plunger top and an aluminum pie pan.

"I've seen this kind of work done often, but I've never been personally involved in a performance before," laughed Reed, UE professor of music and organist who is best known for his more sedate concerts in UE's Neu Chapel and area churches.



By Angie Cobb

TUBULAR — Trombonist William Bootz plays a "prepared" euphonium connected by plastic hoses to a variety of sound-makers, including a bucket of water.

Bootz, on the other hand, is no stranger to "theater music," which he describes as "music in which the performer is called upon to behave in specific, extra-musical ways to tell a story or even act the part of characters in a story."

The trombonist is a charter member of the "musicfelling" — musical storytelling — troupe, Tales and Scales, an ensemble of classical musicians who have performed touring pieces ranging from former Evansville author Walter Wangerin's "Thistle" to Klein's own adaptation of the

classic fairy tale, "Stone Soup."

It was Bootz who recommended Klein to Tales and Scales after meeting him at Indiana University while they both were working on their doctorates.

"His music is wild and imaginative and perfectly suited to theatrical display," noted Bootz, who describes "Goblin Market" as an unusual work in the genre known as theater music.

When Bootz approached Klein with

Musical • Continued from Page 1

Rossetti's "Goblin Market" — a poem to which he was drawn for its lush language and sensual undertone — he made it clear that he wanted to do "more than just stand up and play notes with a piano behind me."

"I think I've misunderstood the poem for a long time. It seemed magical when I first read it," he said, summarizing Rossetti's tale of two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, who encounter the Goblin men, who entice young maidens to taste their forbidden fruits.

"It is magical, but the poem really has an unpleasant underside. After Laura tastes the fruit, she can't hear them anymore and is pining away, wasting away and aging rapidly. To save Laura, Lizzie purposely exposes herself to the Goblin men but won't taste the fruit. They surround her, even grind the fruit into her face trying to get her to taste it and then finally leave in disgust. It has a lot to do with the pleasures and pain of the sexual experience, especially for a young woman in the 19th century, an experience that is sweet and bitter at the same time. . . . In the end, even though Lizzie doesn't taste the fruit, her own experience with the Goblin men creates a bond between the sisters. You feel that they're

ready to go through life able to make their own way."

Klein, who will attend tomorrow's world premiere of his work, said he didn't try to tell the story with his music but rather tried "to distill the essence of the story and make a metaphor of it."

"It's a specter or a shadow of the story, another image or reflection of it . . . almost a kind of alternate reality," said Klein, whose piece is composed in five movements with a number of variations, beginning with the sisters' temptation by the Goblin men and continuing through Laura's fruitless attempts to find them again, her "dwindling" (when Bootz lies on the floor), Lizzie's resistance and finally the fifth movement, titled "bitterness without a name," which explores emotions ranging from the delirious and passionate to the resolute and reflective.

Klein said he also was inspired by Bootz, who he knew "would be willing to do almost anything I tried to do with the music."

"If I'm writing something for performers I know, I usually try to instill something of their character in their piece. That's especially true for someone like Bill. He's a character."