

# Conductor's enjoyment belies schedule

## the daily Collegian arts



Maurice Kaplow at work

By KATHLEEN PAVELKO  
Collegian Arts Writer

Maurice Kaplow likes tennis and baseball and Beethoven and ballet. He is also an energetic young man who has founded an orchestra and helped bring a ballet company to national prominence.

Kaplow is the musical director and conductor of the Pennsylvania Orchestra, which accompanies the Pennsylvania Ballet. The Pennsylvania Orchestra was formed by Kaplow in 1970 from the unnamed orchestra that had accompanied the ballet since 1964. Both the orchestra and the ballet are at Penn State for their third residency during Nittany Mountain Summer.

This summer's schedule includes three shirt-sleeve concerts by the orchestra, six performances of the ballet, three "At Ease" sessions with the ballet and endless rehearsals. If that kind of schedule can be called restful, Maurice Kaplow is on vacation. "It feels like coming home to come to Penn State," Kaplow says. "The dancers and musicians relax here, glad to be in one place for as long as three weeks. The pressure seems to be off."

Kaplow is a tall, gangly man with a ready grin and a vigorous handshake. He works hard during his weeks at Penn State, but his

obvious enjoyment of it belies the crowded schedule.

According to Kaplow, the orchestra and ballet are here to build an audience for the performing arts in central Pennsylvania. One of the reasons the orchestra performs informal shirt-sleeve concerts is to encourage families and students to attend.

"In Philadelphia and New York, families don't usually attend concerts together. Here they do, and I'm glad about that," Kaplow says. There is little difference between a shirt-sleeve concert and a more traditional one except that avant-garde music would not dominate an informal program.

Kaplow is determined not to patronize his audience — too many prestigious orchestras traveling outside New York City give only pop concerts. "We're here to present a variety of fine music," Kaplow says.

The orchestra performs well here, according to Kaplow, because the University Auditorium is one of the best halls in the country. "This is our home. This is where we sound best," Kaplow says the auditorium's sound is very clear. The "lows" are also good, although the "highs" are sometimes a bit brittle. "When Penn State's fine facilities become known, many orchestras will want to play here," Kaplow says.

Kaplow has been the musical director of the Pennsylvania Ballet since 1964, when he resigned as a violinist from Eugene Ormandy's Philadelphia Orchestra. It was like leaving the Yankees to play with the Bumblebees because at the time, the Pennsylvania Ballet performed only four times a year. But the ballet has come a long way in these 12 years, Kaplow says. "I have an emotional attachment to the Pennsylvania Ballet — I saw it grow up."

Accompanying a ballet company is an important, masterful art, says Kaplow. "In accompanying, you submerge your ego. I may get my ego gratification from the orchestra, but I like accompanying and I think we accompany well."

A ballet without an orchestra is only a half an art, according to Kaplow. When a company performs with taped music, the dance is stilted, always at the same tempo. Kaplow can vary the speed of the orchestra to suit the individual dancer, and it is the whole — music and movement — that makes the performance powerful.

The three-week residency of the orchestra and ballet comes at the end of a 25-week season which began in October on Aug. 1, the company and orchestra and Kaplow will have a few weeks off before the new season begins. Kaplow hopes to spend some time with his family without hearing a single note of music. His wife, Judy, is a violinist who teaches music in the Philadelphia public schools. They have three boys, and the weeks they spend here are almost a family reunion because Kaplow tours alone most of the year.

Kaplow, who is 46, was born in Cleveland and attended the Cleveland Institute of Music. He spent the Korean War in Special Services at Fort Knox, Ky., where he played the viola in the camp orchestra. To forestall any attempt to send him overseas, he learned to play the french horn well enough in eight weeks to join the Louisville Symphony. He even played first horn for a short time "until a real french horn player showed up," Kaplow says.

He doesn't play much now, but does miss playing chamber music with other musicians. "I would like to think that with four weeks practice, I could play again," Kaplow says, "but I may have passed the point of no return."

With all the plans Kaplow has made, he simply may have no time for the viola. His first objective is to develop the Pennsylvania Orchestra as fully as possible. "We're a versatile and young orchestra," Kaplow says, "and as good as any orchestra of this size. But we're not resting on our laurels — we haven't got any yet. We're a Pennsylvania orchestra and we want to continue our touring throughout this state."

Nittany Mountain Summer is an important part of that goal. In future years here, Kaplow would like to bring in a guest composer to work with the musicians and perhaps to write a work that would be performed the next year. "I'd like to leave something permanent behind," he says. "He would also like to bring in talented students for chamber music and for conducting and other workshops. Children's concerts are another possibility."

"An orchestra in 1976, approaching the 21st century, cannot just sit and play for 30 weeks of the year," Kaplow says vehemently.

What Kaplow envisions is an eight-week residency, but he knows that it is an ultimate goal which may take years to achieve. "I have learned the hard way that I must go slow with these ideas," Kaplow says. "When I went to a foundation once with a grand idea, but nothing else, I was turned down. People are usually satisfied with the status quo and you must convince them of what you have to offer."

This year Kaplow will be performing the third symphony of Beethoven. "I know how long we've been here by the number of the symphony we play. I have six years to get a chorus for the Ninth. After that, we'll start the Brahms." And after that, who knows?

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