The Up-Side-Down Sound

LAST week's observation that the musical score printed on a University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Fine Arts brochure was up-side-down produced a tongue-in-cheek phone call from Jim Saker, who is the university's new band director and a man who will be much involved in the upcoming summer workshops.

He tried to blame the whole thing on the printer, but I already know from my brief sojourn as a newspaper-type that printers never make mistakes. But, enough of that.

To the intriguing part: Jim’s answer to an inquiry about what that up-side-down score would sound like if someone tried to play it...

About that particular passage he couldn't guess, but playing scores up-side-down or even backwards is apparently commonplace in some 20th century music. The former is called “inversion;” the latter, “retrograde.”

Jim explained to me (understand, my musical knowledge dates only from “Maltzy Doats”) that Arthur Schonberg, one of the best known of contemporary musicians, was given to “serial” compositional devices. One is: a score whose latter parts are simply the earlier parts written up-side-down.

Saker went on to tell me of a work by American composer Charles Ives in which the second part is nothing more than the first half played backwards.

And then there’s ‘Ludue Tonalis’ (that may sound just like you’d think it should) by Paul Hindemith.

Its postlude, according to Jim, is the prelude played backwards... which goes a long way toward explaining why there will always be a market for tunes like “You’re the Hangnail of My Life and I Can’t Bite You Off.”

A Super Show

THE very vision of “Morning Mouth,” Dave Wingert, belly-dancing on the stage of the Orpheum could be enough to keep a body away from tonight’s “CELEBRATING US: A Super Show,” but don’t let it.

There’ll be another 199 actors, singers, dancers and what all, each working to raise a few bob to send an Omaha Community Body away from tonight’s “CELEBRATING US: A Super Show,” but don’t let it.

Finally...

SOME satisfying news to pass along — about a mentally retarded adult who refuses to roll over and die because his speech is halting and his thought processes a little more deliberate than yours or mine.

His name is Ray Loomis, the 1979 winner of the Jefferson Award, presented to KETV and the American Institute for Public Service.

He’s already received his bronze medallion — about a month ago — but now he’s been notified that he is one of 16 finalists for five national honors. If he’s one of those eventual winners, he’ll go off to Washington and on June 26, in the Supreme Court of the United States, he will be rewarded with a gold and silver medal and $1,100 in silver money.

Bette Shapiro, who helped to screen the 180 local nominations, says Ray stood so far above the field there could be, plainly, only one winner in the Midlands this year. He is, Bette says, intelligent, perceptive, with an uncanny range of leadership abilities.

Concerning this: He spent 15 years in the Departmental Stastics Developmental Center and on his release organized (perhaps as much for his own benefit as for others’) Project II, a kind of support group for the mentally retarded and otherwise handicapped.

From this handful of frightened people, not sure of their ability to deal with the world around them, has come a statewide organization with hundreds of members — People First of Nebraska — drawing the consideration of national groups and learned individuals who share their concerns.

At its helm: a middle-aged man who scrubs the dried food from a mountain of dishes every day in the steamy recesses of a west Omaha restaurant, who goes home in wet shoes each night to a special woman named Penny and their small yellow-haired son, Billy.

If you can spare the extra moments it takes to listen as he struggles with his words, this man — this man who, no matter the outcome on June 28, already has his reward — will say to you:

“If you think you are handicapped, you might just as well stay indoors.

“If you think you are a person, come out and tell the world.”

You can help them get the ball rolling by returning this coupon.

Though your generosity may be a small drop in the ocean, we know there are many others like Bette — people who will tell you what can be done to help these people.

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Iowa Sets Survey

One winner in the Midlands this year. He is, Bettie says, intelligent, perceptive, with an uncanny range of leadership abilities.

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