



George Krawczyk (left) and Marga Eickholt have combined piano, bells and computer technology to form the musical scores for "Symphonic Lightfoot!" to be performed at the Cheboygan Opera House Jan. 11 and Jan. 12. When they realized the orchestral music needed for the concerts did not exist, they used Lightfoot's CD's and a computer program to develop a score for 19 backing musicians to play.

COURTESY PHOTO

Duo pens Lightfoot's music

Tribune Staff Report

CHEBOYGAN — A pair of accomplished musicians are developing an orchestral score for a weekend of upcoming Opera House concerts featuring the music of Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot.

Marga Eickholt, of Alanson, is arranging parts for violin, cello, viola, flute and oboe for some of the 25 songs of "Symphonic Lightfoot!" to be performed on the Opera House stage at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 11 and Jan. 12. Eickholt is a professional cellist who currently performs with the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra and the Gaylord Chamber Orchestra. She has also worked with symphony orchestras in Midland, Saginaw and Alma.

Cheboygan keyboardist George Krawczyk is writing piano music for a few songs and bell parts for others that will be played at the show by members of the bell choir from St. Mary-St. Charles Parish. Krawczyk directs the bell choir, chancel choir and plays the

church's organ and grand piano at weekly services.

Together, an ensemble of 19 musicians will augment Mike Fornes (who regularly portrays Lightfoot) and the sounds of "Whispers of the North," a five-piece Gordon Lightfoot tribute band that has drawn large crowds to the Opera House before.

"There's a lot of nostalgia in Gord's music; it has great lyrics and beautiful harmonies," said Eickholt, who transcribed the songs into a computer music program to create the written sheet music the ensemble will play. "You can't just go out and buy these orchestral accompaniments — they don't exist — so I wrote them from various Lightfoot CD's, mostly "Gord's Gold."

Krawczyk has been working from piano reductions that Eickholt produced from her laptop computer. As the keyboard player in "Whispers" Lightfoot

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tribute shows, he is used to playing string parts but says there is a lot more going on musically in the version audiences will hear in January.

"I have to think more orchestrally," Krawczyk remarked. "You're painting a backdrop with this music. You get to use some fun sounds to create these songs."

Krawczyk's involvement in the project has been enhanced by advice and software from Michael Heffer-

nan, a Toronto, Ont., keyboardist who has played in Lightfoot's stage band for more than 30 years.

"Mike is a very gracious person and very willing to share information with us. He has a lot of depth as a musician and as a performer," said Krawczyk, who has met and spoken with Heffernan following three Lightfoot concerts in recent years. "He has a good theoretical background. There are a lot of structures going on."

Eickholt, also a classically-trained musician, said that transforming Lightfoot's music to the written page has endeared the Canadian icon to her musical tastes.

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— **Cheboygan keyboardist George Krawczyk**

"Some of these songs I had never heard before," Eickholt said, referring to songs not as well known as the major hits Lightfoot wrote that will be heard in the Opera House shows. "I've always thought it was such honest music. Now a lot of them have become my favorite songs. I think Gordon has a lot of love in his heart. I don't think he would write like this if he didn't feel it."

Krawczyk shared Eickholt's appreciation for Lightfoot's work.

"I'm intrigued by the philosophy of his music," Krawczyk said. "There's a northern quality to it. I often hear the water, waves and wind even when he's not talking about it in his songs. There's an elegance in the way they wrote these lines."

The Opera House has begun selling advance tickets for "Symphonic Lightfoot!" Both January shows will be taped by a television crew for an upcoming public television program featuring the concert.