Sir John retires

Previn to star in extended season

By MIKE KARCHMER

What has long been a rumor has just been officially confirmed: Andre Previn will next fall become the new conductor-in-chief of the Houston Symphony. He will also lead the orchestra on its Midwest tour in the spring of 1968.

Sir John Barbirolli will become the symphony's conductor emeritus and will lead six pairs of concerts in an extended subscription season.

The appointment of Previn may prove to be one of the most exciting steps in Houston musical history. Previn is a first-rate musician in every way.

Although he is known primarily as a fine "Hollywood" pianist, arranger, conductor, and composer, his serious music credentials are equally impressive. He has conducted nearly every major U.S. orchestra and has produced many superb recordings.

Previn is not a newcomer to Houston. He has conducted the symphony several times during each of the past two years. And each concert was characterized by a musicality and vitality rarely heard around these parts.

But enough about the future of symphony. The big news for the present was the appearance Monday and Tuesday evenings of the 24-year-old Israeli pianist Daniel Barenboim. This reviewer won't soon forget Mr. Barenboim's remarkable handling of the difficult Brahms Concerto No. 1. This long concerto is not as spectacular as the more popular second concerto, but it is every bit as beautiful.

Unlike the later work, the solo piano is often subordinated to the orchestra. Throughout the first two movements, the piano introduces the thematic material and the orchestra develops it. But in the Rondo third movement, the glory all belongs to the piano.

The technical mastery Daniel Barenboim displayed in the concerto was complete and his understanding of Brahms seemed to illumine every note. In addition, after the inconsistent accompaniment of the first movement, Sir John and the orchestra settled down to give the soloist magnificent support.

The pianist and the orchestra were in every respect deserving of the generous ovation accorded them by a very appreciative audience.