

Modern works well-rendered

By Chris Sagers
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The Oct. 28 performance of the Composer's Workshop was a delightful trip into the hearts and minds of some of the School of Music's brightest young innovators. Four electronic pieces and an acoustic work provided an evening of enjoyable diversion.

The concert began with "Studies from Stanford," written by senior Craig MacMillan, a piece that used an ingenious computer randomizing system that controlled virtually every parameter of the composition. Even the order and nature of the musical events were controlled mathematically by the computer. The sounds created were then transferred to electronic tape to produce a lush sonic landscape full of somber washes and soothing counterpoint.

The only work for traditional instruments, Steven Hoffman's "Interpretations" for flute and piano, included a jolting keyboard

background in juxtaposition with a meditative flute that hovered around certain long notes and teetered off on expressive tangents. The piece, short but sweet, played an interesting trick with little music and a lot of music stands on stage.

Robert Fuller's "Untitled" was a considerably more bombastic effort than the evening's first tape piece. It was a lengthy exploration of complex, static sounds with periodic little windows that let us see, perhaps, the work's internal wiring. The performance was quite loud and could be described as non-stop, for better or worse.

"Men at Work" was David Rogers' piece for two-channel electronic tape. It was a rather humorous collection of motion picture soundtracks and some other sound effects. While audience members didn't seem to know how to react, I found the outtakes of what I believed to be Curly from the three stooges to be most comical.

There were, however, obviously serious elements to the composition. Rogers didn't just present

these sounds haphazardly — except for some unfortunate extraneous noise from the tape machine, I found the performance very entertaining.

The concert ended with an impromptu performance by MacMillan and UI junior Matt Burrier, titled appropriately "Improv." MacMillan played electric bass and Burrier, in a visual parody of the other instrument, played a small echo/reverb device on a large guitar strap.

The sounds were a very pleasant examination of feedback and sounded not unlike MacMillan's other work. The performance was quite evidently experimental, however, and lacked the organized development needed to make it an involving effort.

This year's Composer's Workshop series, if in alignment with its two performances so far, promises to be a highly entertaining one. Kudos to the new director, John Ross, who has helped make the concerts varied and fruitful — in no small way by the addition of his own music to the programs.