

New Music has energizing start

By Lisa Norton

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PERSPIRATION glistened on his brow as he shook my hand. "It took me about two months to get this piece worked up," Michael Geary said. "After I know it, it only takes about an hour to warm up and feel good about playing it."

Geary spoke of the energizing percussion composition "Ever Livin' Rhythm" performed in the Saturday night concert of the UI Center for New Music, the first of its 1985-1986 season and the first in this, the Center's 20th year of existence.

"Ever Livin' Rhythm," written in 1977 by Neil B. Rolnick, a West Coast composer, states that much of its musical material is derived from the

vocal music of the Ba-Benzele pygmies of Central Africa, but such words can hardly convey the impact of this music. Backed by electronically taped music, the nine-minute composition is an explosion of sound and emotion, gripping the listener, haranguing, impelling.

GEARY STANDS on stage, surrounded by percussion instruments — a kettle drum, bass drum, an elaborate wood block, zither, gongs, and cymbals, playing intensely, all the time his sounds accompanied by a loud, rhythmic background tape.

The use of electronically taped music/sounds dominated the concert. The first piece, "Dream Sequence," composed in 1976 by George Crumb for violin, cello, piano and percussion also used "automobile brake

drums," Geary said. "They're pretty standard equipment these days.

"They're supposed to be Japanese temple bells, I use Japanese temple beaters, though, to play them even though I use brake drums.

"Camellia," written in 1985 by Michael Farley, a student in the Center for New Music, also utilized electronically taped sounds. The piece is for piano and electronic tape and was inspired, as Farley put it, by the "work of three visual artists — Motherwell, Avery and Malevich. I wanted to imitate their use of the very basic shapes and colors which retain their characteristics rather than blend smoothly." And this the music did to a tee. Although the two musical lines — tape and piano — were distinctly different voices, they came together and created a unified whole.