

Performance set for electronic poem at UI

By Judith Green

Arts/Entertainment Editor

Peter Tod Lewis' *Perpertusa*, a four-channel electronic poem in five movements, will be performed this weekend in the UI Museum of Art, a location eminently suited to a work that uses space as one of its musical elements.

The piece was composed in 1975, while Lewis, director of the UI's Electronic Music Studio since 1969, was on a developmental leave at the Institute of Sonology in Utrecht, the Netherlands. He says the initial impulse for *Perpertusa* came from a motor trip through Provence before he arrived in Utrecht.

One stop on the journey was the ruined castle of Peyreperthuse, near Carcassonne, in the foothills of the Pyrenees. The ancient fortress, the largest in Europe, was the last refuge of the Albigensians, a 13th century schismatic sect systematically eradicated by the Roman Catholic Church. Fascinated by the place's desolation and its tragic history, Lewis began to develop ideas for an extended tape piece.

THE DESERTED castle's name held special interest for Lewis, since "Peyre" is old Provencal for Peter, his own given name. The entire word means "pierced stone," and Lewis gave the piece this name (in its Latin form) because of the compositional technique he employed in it.

The work's signal source is an earlier piece, Lewis' *Gestes II*, which is fed to the speakers through a variable-range filter. The "wall of sound" pierced by this constantly moving "notch" produces an almost infinite number of sound possibilities, from organ-like chords to the almost pure white noise of rushing wind. Sometimes the sound passes antiphonally from speaker to speaker; at other times, it issues from all four in conventional quadraphonic fashion.

The most overtly programmatic movements are the second, "Farben with Text," and third, "Le vent siffle." "Farben" (German for "colors") owes its idea to Arnold Schoenberg's orchestral work of the same name, based on a single chord and slowly shifting instrumental combinations. The text is Lewis' own, a prose poem describing the doomed Albigensians. "Le vent siffle" ("The wind whistles") is a desolate sound picture.

Perpertusa is Sunday at 2 p.m.