

At Clapp Recital Hall

'New Music' opens season

The Center for New Music opened its seventh season last Sunday evening in Clapp Recital Hall with a program at once engaging for its variety, awe-inspiring for its technical requirements, and puzzling for its compositional and interpretative problems.

The concert began with a presentation of "Signal-Messe" for 4-channel electronic tape and film, which is described by its creators, UI faculty members Franklin Miller and Peter Lewis, as an "attempt to make a single coherent 'bi-sensory' experience from two independent media expressions." The collaborators were afforded an obvious departure point for synchronization by the fact that both the visual and the aural material exhibit constant pulsating rhythms.

The speed of micro-changes in the structure of amoeba shapes and grid patterns in Miller's film was paralleled and reinforced by a pattern of shifting pitched and non-pitched beats in Lewis' timbrelly-stratified, polyrhythmic tape.

Sudden gross changes in register, timbre, or in the number of layers active in the electronic texture were successfully accentuated by analogously striking changes in the geometric structure or in the hue content of the film patterns. Gradual or subtle metamorphoses in the aural material, however, seemed to occur independently of similarly gradual changes in visual material. Synchronism of visual and aural elements was only partial.

Large structural points were related by means of sudden simultaneous changes in both visual and aural material, while the microstructures of the visual and aural elements were so similar that superimposition was possible.

The difficulty of establishing a clear-cut relationship between aural and visual material on the intermediate structural level of

gradually-evolving phrases, however, may point to the ultimate inappropriateness of attempting to create a single coherent statement from originally disparate media expressions. If the attempt at total integration is to be ultimately counted as a failure, however, it must be emphasized that several stunning visual-aural combinations occurred en route!

An entirely different set of compositional problems are explored in Luciano Berio's "Circles" for female voice, harp, and two percussionists.

Here interpretative questions center about the ritualistic and theatrical aspects of musical performance and about the reconciliation of musical content with literary content (i.e., three poems by e.e. cummings, which serve as the text for the piece).

Soprano Candace Natvig, percussionists William Parsons and Terry Applebaum, and harpist Motter Forman turned in virtuoso performances in the Center version of the work, which was conducted by William Hibbard, music director of the group.

In a strictly musical analysis

the performance can be faulted on only a few minor points. Occasional rhythmic inaccuracies and raggedness were more than overshadowed by a generally strong sense of ensemble. Natvig's pianissimo special effects were completely masked on a few occasions by the percussion, although this must be counted at least as much a compositional mistake by Berio as a problem of balances in the performance.

In general, Natvig's interpretation of the extremely demanding and complex voice part was superb. Her theatrical effectiveness, however, and that of the entire ensemble, was severely limited by the presence of a conductor. Berio's score assigns general responsibility for maintaining rhythmic ensemble to the singer, who is to actively conduct certain passages and otherwise serve as the rhythmic focal point for the other members of the ensemble simply by her performance of the voice part.

Ives' Sonata

The program closed with a performance of Charles Ives' monumental First Piano Sonata. Center pianist Joan

Purswell seemed to proceed somewhat stiffly through the initial Adagio movement, failing at first to convey the sense of long-range phrasing which is so necessary if one is to overcome the problems inherent in Ives' ostensibly schizoid harmonic language.

In the even more rapidly-changing scherzo second movement, this rhythmic stiffness made Ives' phrasing appear lurching and somewhat spastic, punctuated by artificial caesurae. Purswell seemed to warm up to the still-long task ahead of her

during the lyrical third movement. Dissonant embellishing tones were handled especially well in this movement and in subsequent movements. The audience seemed to remain unnecessarily decorous throughout Ms. Purswell's rousing statement of "Bringing in the Sheaves" in the fourth movement.

Perhaps some of Ives' audacities should have been dwelt upon slightly longer for the benefit of the uninitiated in attendance!

—Michael J. Kowalski

SPECIAL!

Tues - Weds - Thurs

Sept. 26-27-28

Double Cheeseburger

Two ground beef hamburgers broiled over an

ny tells
rotten

racism, sexism, hedonism and nihilism, those demons that are feeding on the world as a whole.