

# Impressive performances showcase Earplay's new music

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Another new-music group introduced itself Tuesday night in San Francisco's First Unitarian Church. We used to go weeks without a concert of contemporary music; now there seem to be two or three a week.

Earplay is a composers' collective, similar to Composers Inc., a group that appeared last season. It offered four pieces of varying interest but unvaryingly impressive performance.

Most impressive — for its strikingly individual profile — was David Lang's 1985 "Frag" for flute, oboe and cello. The title refers to fragmentation bombs, and the composer's program notes describe the piece perfectly: "A unison melody is under so much pressure that individual notes become squeezed out of the unison fabric . . . a fierce counterpoint devolves from the competition between the independent fragments

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## CONCERT REVIEW

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and the unison melody."

This takes the form of sputtered, nervous notes played by the woodwinds and the plucked cello, the latter lending a quasi-Asian sound. After five or six minutes a short, quietly phrased epilogue rounds off the piece.

David Meckstroth's 1980 "Music for Clarinet, Viola and Piano" was equally polished but more conventional in form and method, a poised, detailed, three-sectioned piece of quietly elegant expression whose balanced and contrasting gestures recall such 12-tone music as Anton Webern's.

Eric Moe's 1985 "Variations" for cello and piano contrasted a rich, rather orchestral-sounding opening section with more extroverted and single-minded music in its

concluding two parts. All eight variations were not equally successful, the finale being particularly unconvincing, but the slower movements were affecting, the scurrying third variation well imagined and achieved.

The concert opened academically with Richard Festinger's 1985 "Impromptu," an oddly titled, clearly researched duet for clarinet and piano.

The supple, virtuosic and sympathetically accurate performers were Janet Kutulas, flute; Margot Golding, oboe; Peter Josheff, clarinet; Karen Rosenak, piano (except Eric Moe, piano in the Meckstroth); George Thomson, viola; and cellists Maureen McSharry (in the Lang) and Laszlo Varga (marvelously assured in the Moe).

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*Earplay, First Unitarian Church, San Francisco.  
Next concert: Nov. 3, Tresidder Lounge, Stanford University; repeated Nov. 4, First Unitarian Church, S.F.; both at 8 p.m.; tickets at the door.*