

Septet Gives Direction to New Music Concert

By Marilyn Tucker

Earplay, the Bay Area ensemble of composers and performers promoting "music in the making," brought out six newish pieces for a concert at the First Unitarian Church Monday, including a premiere.

The latter was board member Richard Festinger's Septet, conducted by the composer, whose varied timbral color was brought about by the careful juxtaposition of flute, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, piano and other keyboard percussion instruments.

Aside from color effects, what distinguishes Festinger's Septet from many pieces of new music, including Arthur Berger's Trio, which immediately preceded it, is its continuing sense of momentum, the feeling for musical line having a beginning, middle and end.

Mood, dynamics and energy all had a part in the well played Septet, but the fact that this was music actually going someplace, and not just a puzzle to be solved, was heartening.

Berger's Trio, which played around with sound coming from a guitar, violin and piano, seemed to be little more than academic doodling, serial music with the notes carefully laid out like clothing on a bed, and just about as interesting.

Guitarist Douglas Hensley, featured in the Berger Trio, had a much better time of it performing as full and equal soloist with lyric baritone Allen Shearer in Charles Wuorinen's "Psalm 39," in which liturgical chant and highly decorative chromaticism are the unlikely but effective partners in composition. With diction nigh on to being perfect, Shearer sang the lamentation to moving effect, and Hensley's guitar interludes became provoca-

tive and philosophical comments on the psalmist's prayer.

J. Karla Lemon conducted two works, Joan Tower's lively "Petroushskates," a work for five instrumentalists that the composer would have us believe was jointly inspired by the wit of Stravinsky rhythms as well as the smooth gliding of championship ice skating, and Lee Hyla's "In Double Light."

The Hyla piece featured violist George Thomson and clarinetist Josheff, whose insistent and penetrating melodic line was countered by the flamboyant rhythmic interference of piano and percussion. Good piece.