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Earplay Opens Season With New Material

By Joshua Kosman
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The new music ensemble Earplay opened its seventh season Monday night with a concert at the Cowell Theatre. On the program were five newish chamber pieces, all but one of which proved eminently worth hearing.

The most satisfying offering came at the end, with the West Coast premiere of Peter Lieber-son's "Ziji" (1987). This one-movement sextet offers a wealth of melodic and rhythmic detail within its compact nine-minute span, and in a taut, focused performance conducted by J. Karla Lemon, it seemed a happy balance between traditional and more adventurous concerns.

The title is a Tibetan word which the composer's notes gloss as "the energy of confidence," and there is a skillfully controlled excitement that runs through the score as it pursues the facets of the two-note motive introduced at the outset. One of the score's pleasures is the way Lieber-son writes for chamber ensemble as a unified body of distinct voices, avoiding the common modernist error of letting each instrument hector the listener individually.