

Contemporary Chamber Players

A Variety of Impressive, Accessible Modern Music

By Marilyn Tucker

New music in a variety of compositional voices, from student to established professional, was the menu served up by the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players Monday at Hertz Hall.

Robert Greenberg, a Cal graduate student, was represented with *Breaths, Voices and Cadenze*, a three-part piece for string quartet remarkable in this day and age for the beautiful string tone that was required.

Performed by violinists Ronald Erickson and Byron Tauchi, violist George Thomson and cellist Paul Hale, the forcefully written piece began in the whisper of instruments, as one might imagine from the title. Increasingly, the music became more agitated and rich, the cadenzas achieving a high note of dramatic intensity.

What was particularly impressive about the program was the large number of non-esoteric, accessible pieces of music.

Berio wasn't up to his usual fun and games in *Sequenza VIII* for solo violin, played by Erickson. The composer's exploitation of the instrument in his other *Sequenzas* is well and good, but here the violin works out a genuine musical idea, with an eye toward the aesthetic of beauty.

Joseph Schwantner's *Music for Amber*, combining two pieces called *Wind Willow, Whisper and Sanctuary*, and played by an ensemble conducted by Olly Wilson, had a stunning effect. Beginning with a searching lyric

melody as lovely as a gamelan, its delicate sonorities gradually piled up to an insistent percussive climax before retreating to the original statement.

Other works performed included music director Wilson's *Trio*, commissioned for the San Francisco Chamber Music Society in 1977. It was played Monday by violinist Lucy Stoltzman, cellist Peter Shelton and pianist Marilyn Thompson, whose musicality was a potent force in underlying the clarity and flow of Wilson's musical ideas.

Flutist Stephen Pitcher and pianist Elizabeth Davidson performed Chou Wen-Chung's *Cursive* with a sensitivity acute to the restraint and delicacy of the composer's mystical introspection.