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# Electronics Add Spark To Earplay Performance

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The contemporary music ensemble Earplay generally likes to focus on composers and performers local to the Bay Area. But the most interesting music on the group's Monday night concert at the First Unitarian Church was by an out-of-towner.

"Relations to Rigor" (1986) by New York-based composer Scott Lindroth is a vibrant, well-shaped work for six instrumentalists and electronic tape. The program notes indicate that the work also exists in versions for a 15-piece chamber ensemble and for tape alone. I wonder why, given that this version exploits so deftly the interplay between the structures laid down by the tape — the "rigor" of the title — and the surrounding instrumental writing.

The tape part, which shapes the direction of the nine-minute piece, is a loosely repeating quasi-ostinato line, whose wiry timbre makes it a solid but unobtrusive presence. The harmonic and melodic range is fairly circumscribed, but Lindroth supplies enough rhythmic variety to keep things moving. The live instrumental part consists largely of unison melodies and coordinated ensemble outbursts, supplemented with a discreet dose of attractive solo writing. Conductor J. Karla Lemon led a vigorous, engaging performance.

Electronics also figured in Eric Moe's "Songs and Dances of the Au-

tomobile," which was given its premiere hearing. These five short tape pieces make a joyful noise, trading heavily on the slightly cartoonish pings and burbles of basic digital synthesis. The overall effect is pleasant and occasionally witty, but not strongly memorable.

Peter Josheff's "Untended Variations II," for solo piano, also was premiered. The piece sets up a few winsome gestures — unassuming disjunct melodies, given a crystalline sheen by liberal use of the sustain pedal — and then proceeds to elaborate them at interminable length. At 19 minutes, the result is not so much untended as merely unkempt. Moe helped out a little with graceful, committed playing.

Two short pieces for solo flute, "Falling Forward" (1979) and "Antichambers" (1980) by Eric Chasalow, served as curtain-raisers. Both offer graceful, long-tone melodies, punctuated to good effect by delicate portamenti and occasional dramatics. Janet Kutulas was the skillful soloist.

David Froom's Quartet for Piano and Strings (1985), which was given its West Coast premiere, made little impression. The 13-minute piece is in four movements, played without pause. The two slow movements seemed to be reaching for a lyrical sweetness that they couldn't quite achieve. Part of the problem was a shaky ensemble sound from the strings and faltering pitch by violinist Ron Erickson.