

BAMA produces contemporary fun

By Nancy Raabe
News staff writer

The Birmingham Art Music Alliance has done the seemingly impossible: It has made it cool to do contemporary music.

On a Tuesday night, no less, BAMA packed 'em in at Samford University's Wright Center Recital Hall. OK, so the recital hall only holds 250 or so people. But it was significant nonetheless that, when the hour came for the show to begin, there wasn't a seat to be had.

Part of the fun is that we're dealing with fresh material that hasn't yet had a chance to stand or succumb to the test of time, so quality as we might perceive it tends to be uneven. Opinions will differ, but for this writer Tuesday's program offered one perfect 10 in the form of Joe L. Alexander's "Infamy ... for Tuba and Tape."

MUSIC Review

★ ★ 1/2

THE BIRMINGHAM ART MUSIC ALLIANCE, in a program of new and recent music. At the Wright Center Recital Hall at Samford University Tuesday night.

(Key to rating: ★★★★★, excellent; ★★★, good; ★★, fair; ★, poor.)

Premiered last December in Tuscaloosa, the piece is based on a startlingly percussive computer-generated manipulation of the first line of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Dec. 8, 1941, radio speech. This is overlaid with a darkly mournful line intoned with just the right shadings of vibrato by UA faculty tubist Michael Dunn.

Persuasive as well was Dorothy Hindman's "I Have Heard ..." a

creative and sure-handed treatment of excerpts from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself."

James A. Jensen's "Three Choruses from 'A Lincoln-Whitman Duologue'" showed great firmness of compositional purpose, but one longed for the entire work in its larger original scoring rather than the pared-down version presented rather raggedly here by The Cantors and pianist Brent McWilliams.

Presented by The Cantors, ASFA student Robert Stanton's rhythmic, tightly constructed "Alleluia" revealed an intriguing undercurrent of musical tension, while Rebecca Remley's "From All That Dwell Below the Sky" proved a nicely gauged contemporary realization of Isaac Watts' hymn. To close, cellist Craig Hultgren fearlessly ventured a vivid enactment of Robert Paredes' theatrical "Small Writing."