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SCENE & HEARD

MUSIC REVIEW

Cello, saxophone pieces keep show in sound shape

By **MICHAEL HUEBNER**
News staff writer

Composers from Chicago and Birmingham unfurled some of their finest Sunday at an exchange concert sponsored by Birmingham Art Music Alliance.

The Chicago Composers Forum boasts 99 members, versus 31 for BAMA, but those numbers say nothing about quality. Each organization has award-winning composers in its midst, and the Birmingham scribes held up nicely against their Windy City counterparts.

Rome Prize winner and Birmingham-Southern College professor Charles Norman Mason revived "The Artist and His Model" (1992) for this concert. Mason has created a composition for cello and recorded sounds that have stood the test of time. Its seamless discourse, kinetic rhythms and pristine electronics evoked humor and humanness through lyricism and an array of pops, clicks and whistles. BSC's Dorothy Hindman's "drowningXnumbers" (1994) for electronic cello is grittier and more frantic with its string scratches and rhythmic strumming and plucking, but its progression from fast and furious to ethereal and reflective make for satisfying listening. Both were played with focused enthusiasm by cellist Craig Hultgren.

UAB professor William Price's moody saxophone piece, "Sans Titre II," starts with a plaintive cry before it explodes in flourishes of finger-twisting virtuosity. Lori Neprud-Ardovino was impressive, as she was on clarinet in "Exhibit A," a short abstraction by University of Chicago graduate student Simon Fink.

Chicagoan Robert Kritz's "Lyric Piece," for string quartet and clarinet, oozes post-romantic harmonies while traversing through impressionism and jazz. The Birmingham-based Amion String Quartet performed well, but clarinetist Robert Janssen, a new faculty member at Alabama School of Fine Arts, was the standout, playing with clarity and sensitivity.

Mason's presence in Chicago on Saturday was part of the exchange between the two cities,

★★★★☆

CHICAGO COMPOSERS FORUM EXCHANGE CONCERT

Presented by Artburst and Birmingham Art Music Alliance
Sunday
Unitarian Universalist Church

and composer Kyong Mee Choi, who teaches at Roosevelt University, returned the favor Sunday. Her "Slight Uncertainty is Very Attractive" is a delightful dialogue between flute and recorded sounds. In flutist Donald Ashworth's hands, the solo instrument never lost its integrity, and Choi's atmospheric accompaniment, which consisted of nicely balanced clouds of tingly percussive sounds mixed with ringings and rumblings, made sure of it.

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