

Warmth, enthusiasm flow at BAMA concert

By **NANCY RAABE**
News staff writer

In cities less well endowed with initiative than Birmingham, recognition and appreciation of new music lags hopelessly behind that of contemporary art and modern dance.

In academic isolation, composers compose primarily for each other without much hope of a wider audience. The gulf between composer and listener grows. Participation in the art and act of musical creation becomes an increasingly distant concern for the mainstream concertgoer.

Here, though, we have the energetic Birmingham Art Music Alliance to remind us of the vitality of today's new music scene. Tuesday night another such opportunity was afforded a full house at the Unitarian Church for a BAMA concert presented by Artburst.

True, it wasn't exactly the same as a sellout at the BJCC. Here "full house" meant perhaps 100 people. But there was no mistaking the warmth, enthusiasm and general goodwill that flowed through the sanctuary. And everyone was safe in coming away with his or her own point of view on every piece, something most people are too timid to do with mainstream repertory. (When did you last hear anyone admit, "Oh, Brahms — I can't *stand* his music," or "The Beethoven Eighth? Sorry, just don't care for it"?)

Several items on Tuesday's program met with hearty acclaim. Foremost was Dorothy Hindman's superbly crafted *Songs of Reminiscence*, premiered last year at Birmingham-Southern College by tenor David Smith. Author of the texts, Smith sang in this performance with accompaniment by pianist Kevin Grigsby.

MUSIC Review

★ ★ ★

THE BIRMINGHAM ART MUSIC ALLIANCE, in a concert of music by Donald Ashworth, Mark Chambers, Monroe Golden, Dorothy Hindman, Phillip Schuessler and Michael Angell, with guest composer Dennis Kam. Presented by Artburst at the Unitarian Church, Mountain Brook, Tuesday evening.

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

Lively, engaging and bursting with bravura, the cycle will find itself much in demand once word spreads.

Monroe Golden's String Quartet No. 2 and guest composer Dennis Kam's Sonata for Cello and Piano were warmly received as well. Golden explained that he sought to combine a floating asymmetrical rhythm and a simple pitch structure with the process of "phase shifting," in which phrase units overlap. The attractive result presented the aural image of a stable "pool" of sound whose surface danced and shimmered subtly.

And Kam's dark-hued work, played expertly by Grigsby and cellist Craig Hultgren, combined structural integrity with an ear for deep sonorities and luminous textures.

Also on the program, were "Asi Nsi Masa," a dazzling soundfile by UAB's technology master Michael Angell, Donald Ashworth's sure-handed "Solitude" for solo flute, the amiable "Short Sonata" by Mark Chambers and Philip Schuessler's pop-influenced "Infinity" for flute, cello and piano.