

NewEar's second season promises to be an eclectic mix

Programs include minimalism and works by local composers.

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It was one of the most auspicious debuts of 1994: the first season of NewEar, a Kansas City-based contemporary-music cooperative.

NewEar will open its second season with a concert at 3 p.m. Sunday — and four others will follow. And the concerts — all at 3 p.m. at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 13th and Holmes streets — promise no shortage of stimulation.

The opening concert, titled "The Minimal Touch," will explore the influence of minimalism, with its hypnotic, repetitive rhythms and simplified harmonic schemes. By design, the program is avoiding the predictable names of Philip Glass, Steve Reich and Terry Riley — largely because NewEar's musicians aren't especially fond of playing endless repetitions of the same little motifs. (It's murder to keep track of the repeats.)

So Sunday's concert will explore not the mainstream of minimalism, but some of its tributaries and offshoots. One of the latter is "She Is a

Phantom," by Harold Budd, scored for soprano saxophone, clarinets, percussion, piano, synthesizer and narrator. Composed in 1991, it incorporates the composer's own poetry.

"It's very confident, very calm, nondramatic," says NewEar clarinetist Tom Aber. "It's very soothing, and has the kind of open, almost static harmonies that were popular in minimalism."

At the other end of the spectrum, according to Aber, is "Time Sequence," by the Japanese composer Toshi Ichiyonagi.

"This is very frantic, energetic, motoric — like a computer gone crazy. It was written in the '70s in Japan, at about the same time that minimalism was getting started in America."

"Music for Carillon," No. 4, by the late John Cage, is minimalist "only in the sense that it's nondramatic," Aber says. "It doesn't have a climax or a peak to it."

"Cage created the score by placing a transparency over a map of the constellations, and used that to determine where the notes would be."

Rounding out the program will be works by two local composers: Three Pieces for clarinet and violin by Merton Shatzkin, professor of music at the UMKC Conservatory

of Music; and "Ovipositor," by Phil DeWalt, who holds two degrees from the Conservatory.

Next on the NewEar schedule is a Feb. 26 program called "Sound & Word," exploring different ways to line words and music. "Dwight Frizzell is creating a sort of catalog of sounds in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," Aber says. "In another piece we'll use Martin Luther King's famous 'I have a dream' speech, and the sounds, rhythms and inflections of that speech will be the source of instrumental parts."

A March 19 program, "New Eye, New Ear," will explore connections between music and the visual arts — including the participation of local artist Rita Blitt. Then, on April 2, NewEar will host Synchronia, a similar ensemble based in St. Louis and now in its 10th season.

Rounding out the series will be an April 30 "Eccentric Spaces" program, exploring spatial aspects of contemporary music with pieces by György Ligeti, Iannis Xenakis and Pat Conway.

Season tickets for all five concerts cost \$34. Individual tickets cost \$8 in advance, or \$10 at the door; student tickets cost \$6. For information, call 235-2700.