

Music Review

New and Valid Music

By LISA TATE

NORTH BENNINGTON — There were no big names on Wednesday night's program of music at the Bennington College Carriage Barn, but despite that and perhaps because of that, it turned out to be an important evening.

Bertram Turetsky, a young and able player of the bass viol as well as a teacher of music at the University of Hartford, has an active conviction that new and valid music deserves to be heard in public performance. Further than that, he and his wife Nancy, an accomplished flutist, are walking, playing, talking, examples of the encouragement that performers can give to composers. There should be more of it in the world of music.

On Wednesday night the Turetskys had with them good percussionist, Tele Lesbines of the Hartford Conservatory. Also present were three of the young composers whose works were being performed at this concert.

A first performance of "Playground" by Robert Stern, who teaches at the University of Massachusetts and the Hartford Conservatory, was the opening work on the program, and an effective one at that. It had a playful quality about it, along with some less gentle moments in the last two of its six movements. It would be fun to see what a choreographer could do with its hops, skips, jumps, its running, seesawing, bickering and bullying.

Stern was also represented on the program by a piece for percussion alone, "Adventures for One," which gave Mr. Lesbines full opportunity to display his prowess on a barrage of percussion instruments. Mr. Lesbines was not only nimble on his feet but also extremely subtle of wrist in a piece that is more memorable for its startlingly melodic quality than for any profoundly sophisticated rhythms.

Flute, percussion and bass were joined by a speaker, Robert Lombardo, who spoke the lines of three Italian poems which he

himself had set not to, but with music. The rise and fall of the spoken lines fit into the construction of the piece almost as a fourth instrument. Clusters of overtones hung like clouds over much of the piece, which surely was romantic in mood though composed in the contemporary idiom. (Mr. Stern has held Guggenheim and Fulbright fellowships for composing and will teach next year at the Chicago College of Music.)

Alvin Epstein's Duo for flute and double bass was a tightly constructed work in which the sound of the instruments wove closely in and out, with certain textures that made the breathiness of the flute sound similar to the breath of the bass viol's bow. Epstein, too, teaches at the University of Hartford, and was present to take his bow.

Mr. Turetsky played three solos for double bass alone, by Vivian Fine, Ivan Weiner and Thomas Fredrickson. The first two of these were rather lyric pieces. Fredrickson's composition was for me the highlight of the program, giving as it did an immense range of expression to an instrument that is too often subordinated to an entire orchestra, as though it had no life of its own. It does, and Fredrickson's composition as played by Mr. Turetsky abundantly demonstrated the point. Fredrickson is a bass player himself — which made me wonder when and if Mr. Turetsky will turn to composing.

Mrs. Turetsky gave sensitive performance to a gentle but compelling piece by Barney Childs "Stanzas for Flute and Silence." Silence is endemic to music in the form of rests, but Mr. Childs uses it more inventively and urgently than that to give structure to fragile but haunting lines. Mr. Childs' music is not new to the Carriage Barn, since he participated in last summer's Composers Conference.

The final piece on the program was written by William Sydeman and will have its big city premiere this Sunday on Max Pollakoff's series in New York City. It had considerably more musical tension than most of the pieces on the program, but also considerably less affection. To my ear its biggest flaw is a heavy-handed scoring for drums at moments that disrupt the essential unity and texture of the piece.

The hearing of new music written for an unusual set of instruments was an exciting experience. And it is reassuring to know that new music is getting performed, not just in New York City, not only in Hartford, but in