

MUSIC REVIEW

Multiplicity of styles highlights concert

By NANCY RAABE
News staff writer

The Birmingham Art Music Alliance brought two truths to bear with Tuesday night's enterprising concert in Birmingham-Southern College's Hill Recital Hall.

Most immediate was the reality that people over-commit: Time pressures forced Cellist Craig Hultgren to postpone the performance of Ezra Sims' *Solo in Four Movements* that was to serve as the concert's center of gravity. The audience heard instead a recording of the piece played by its dedicatee, Boston cellist Ted Mook.

The second truth was the diversity of art music at the end of the 20th century. The concert featured a staggering multiplicity of styles.

Charles Norman Mason's *Pipeline* for solo flute (Donald Ashworth) explored the notion of a constant stream of sound whose intensity sparked varied concurrent streams. James Jensen's *Two Traversals for Organ* — the second an elegy for the late Fred Stearns, former road manager for the U.S. Army Field Band and the resurrected Alabama Symphony Orchestra's second employee — applied traditional concepts of form and motivic development to an idiom of dissonance.

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THE BIRMINGHAM ART MUSIC ALLIANCE

Featuring guest composer
Ezra Sims

Hill Hall, Birmingham-Southern College
Concert was Tuesday night

Dorothy Hindman's *Setting Century* for chamber ensemble, played crisply by Ashworth, Hultgren, clarinetist Lori Ardivino, violinist Serghei Tanas and pianist Kevin Grigsby, had a visceral impact.

And Patrick Schulz's *Tuba Quartet No. 1*, tossed off nimbly by the crack Alabama Tuba Quartet, was a showpiece for a bevy of surprisingly lyrical horns whose antics turned out to be anything but elephantine.

Sims, a native Birminghamian turned Bostonian, was on hand for the nonperformance of his work after having spent the day with Birmingham-Southern students. Like others with more than a passing acquaintance with Sims, they would probably agree his music — structured on an asymmetrical scale of up to 19 microtones — is difficult to assimilate. But those who invest some effort find that it inhabits its own rarefied world.