

THE TOWNS

MUSIC

One-Stop Shopping on the Cultural Circuit

By LESLIE KANDELL

TALK about mixed media! Next Sunday's concert in the Capital Music Festival XI begins with an art lecture and slide show; continues with performances by the New Jersey Percussion Ensemble, assisted by a marimba-violin duo and a dance troupe, and is followed by a dance workshop for children. Not for nothing is it called "Feast for the Senses."

The impetus for this series, presented at the State Museum in Trenton by the Composers Guild of New Jersey, is a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, which underwrites free admission for interdisciplinary concerts. "It's an ambitious program for the guild," said Robert Pollock, its director. "We're pulling out all the stops to meet the goal."

At the center of the concert is the music, to be played by the much-acclaimed New Jersey Percussion Ensemble from William Paterson College in Wayne. One of the group's solos — that is to say, pieces untied to other media — is Charles Wuorinen's glittering, eloquent Percussion Quartet, which the group is soon to record for the Koch label. (Those who want to hear something now can try Mr. Wuorinen's Percussion Symphony, or "Time's Encomium," which won the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for music, on Nonesuch.)

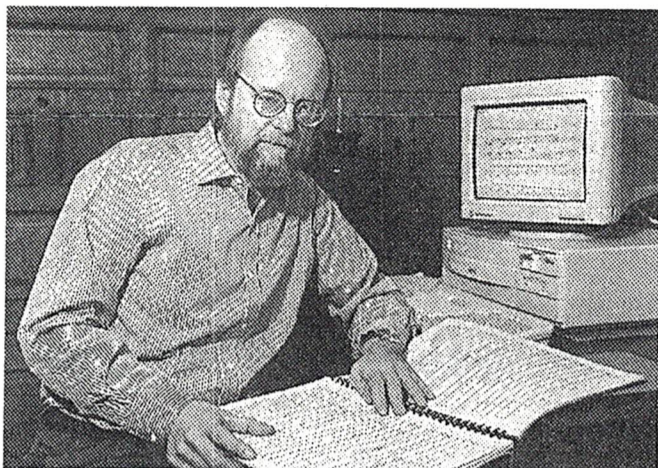
Of all the sections of the orchestra, percussion has the most visible activity. A single player might be responsible for a dozen instruments of different heights and shapes; large gestures and occasional scooting around add to the excitement of varied timbres.

The 18-minute quartet by Mr. Wuorinen, who is a professor of music at Rutgers University and has a home in Middle Valley, Morris County, is virtuosic, complex and in the words of the percussionist Peter Jarvis, "very, very much worth the effort."

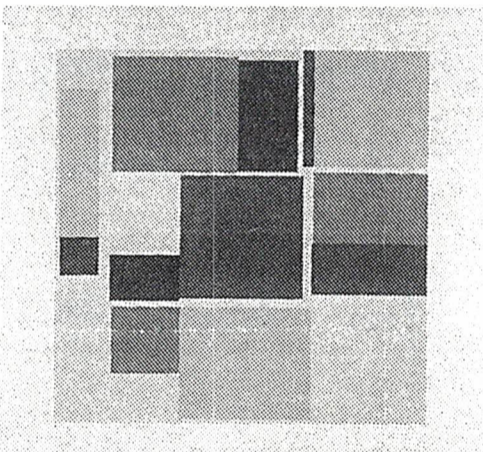
Encouraged to speak about its difficulty, Mr. Wuorinen said: "Everything's hard. Mozart is hard." But then he dived into the larger issue of whether music should be composed to ingratiate.

"It is not the responsibility of the composer to be an evangelist," he said. "There is implicit pressure to adjust the activity to a larger public. Popular music is rudimentary in the extreme. It's absorbed without effort; it's successful financially. If you can't go along, the price is a smaller public." And that has been his choice.

Uninformed audiences, he says, are the product of an educational system in which "directors of music institutions send out marketing surveys and don't make an effort to lead." His advice for intelligent listening is to "absorb in the way you absorb music, using it for background or concentrating on its dis-



Alan Zale for The New York Times, 1991



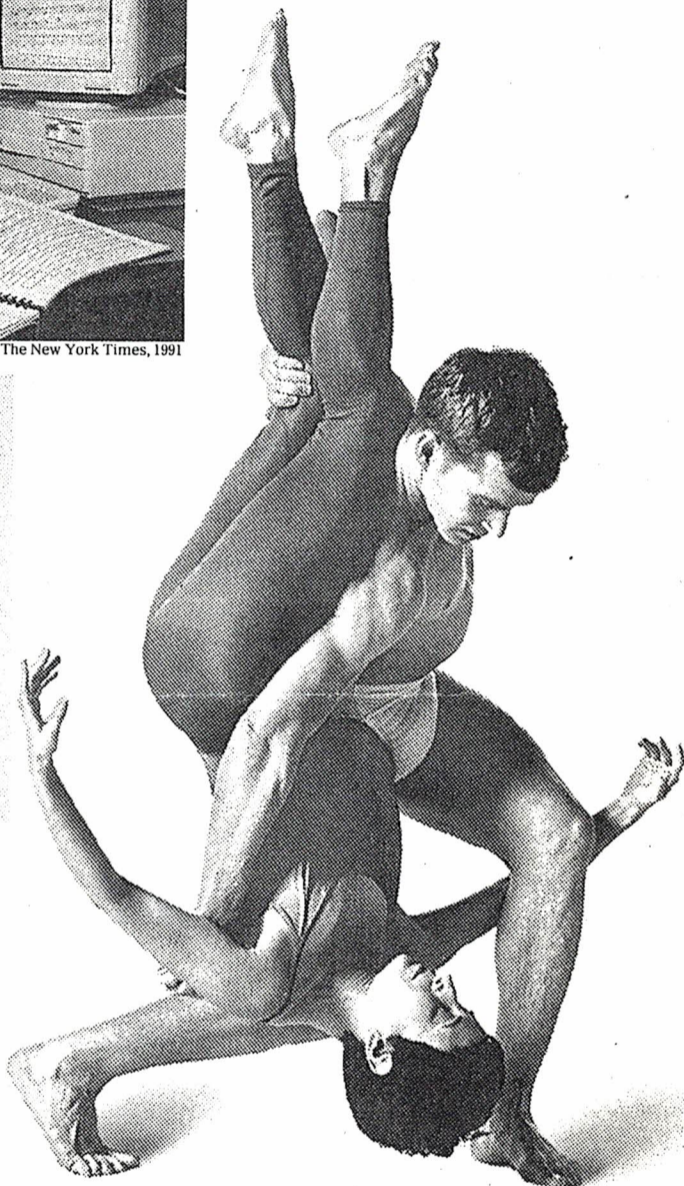
On the menu for "Feast for the Senses": music by Charles Wuorinen, above; paintings by Robert Slutzky, and dance by Robin Shevitz and Russell Aubrey of the Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company.

course, but don't worry about finding or hearing everything."

"It's an impossible task," he added.

ONE way to absorb sophisticated new music is to listen while watching a dance that has been created for it. At the New York City Ballet, Mr. Wuorinen has been conducting "Reliquary," which he composed in 1975 from unfinished musical fragments by Stravinsky. Peter Martins's choreography may not have put Stravinsky's late music on the hit parade, but "Reliquary" was the talk of the dance world this season, and Mr. Wuorinen is now at work on three more ballets for Mr. Martins.

The new dance piece at the Composers Guild concert, by the Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company, is choreographed to Tom Laughlin's percussion piece "The Story of Laughter," and percussionists will be onstage with the two dancers. Instead of using Mr. Laughlin's scenario, Ms. Dorfman created her



Lois Greenfield

FEAST FOR THE SENSES

Capital Music Festival XI
State Museum
205 West State Street, Trenton

With the New Jersey Percussion Ensemble, the Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company and Marimolin. Works of Charles Wuorinen, Tom Laughlin, Steven Mackey and Qu Xiao-Song. Next Sunday. Slide lecture, 2 P.M.; concert, 2:30 P.M.; children's dance workshop, 4 P.M.

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own, from her mother's theory that "love is not always a bed of roses, but that's all right." Ms. Dorfman says her dance story is a couple's argument: "Conflict builds, and the strength of the relationship is in the internal struggle, finding a way to sit together."

For Steven Mackey's "No Two Breaths," percussionists will be joined by the marimba-violin duo aptly named Marimolin. The title comes from a sentence told to Mr. Mackey by a wise Indian singer:

"No two breaths are the same." Mr. Mackey was fascinated by the imagery. "It's the most obsessive piece I've ever written," he said by hone from Princeton, adding, "There's nothing wrong with obsession."

The art lecture, "Point and Line to Plane, Note and Interval to Triad," will examine musical traits in the paintings of Robert Slutzky and others whose symmetrical shapes are consciously analogous to the strict organization of the 12-tone system in music.

Mr. Pollock says their contiguous colors, used as organizing elements, are related to classical music, and that Mr. Slutzky's recent paintings "are named things like Grand Fugue."

After the concert, Ms. Dorfman will give a dance workshop for children. Mr. Jarvis summed up the afternoon's artistic fullness: "There are various different things going on, that's for sure."