

CONCERT ON 'IMPROVISATION'

Improvisation and the New Age" was the theme of the latest Monday Evening Concert at the Bing Theatre of the County Museum of Art, but for some composers on this agenda the title proved redundant.

Christian Wolff, for instance, who follows in the non-tradition of John Cage, uses improvisation as the philosophical impetus for his "Burdocks" ("a messy weed that gets into everything"). Winds, piano, percussion and synthesizer filled the prescription for "any number of players/sound sources," dispensing an assortment of tweets, bloops and klonks, later augmented by finger-snaps and foot-stomps.

But the atmosphere became strictly visual when the pianist (Gary Bonner) turned into an arm-flapping bird and others took to flying paper airplanes, puppeteering, smoking, etc., finally getting back to their instruments for some anarchic noodling.

Call this an example of your terminally infantile but otherwise charming, avant-garde whimsy.

As was the case here, woodwinds dominated everything on the program but Richard Festinger's "Matin," which, with its quadriphonic tape (no human players) made intriguing, even sensual forays into the soundscape—despite the fact that the Stanford composer's program notes read like a physics text, notwithstanding the mention of "an artificial system of

temperament and its inharmonicity."

Nothing else Monday reached this level of thought complexity. To the contrary, Peter Davison's nature music offered soothing simplicity—first with "Grass Waving," a lyrically Reichian exercise that lacked rhythmic interest, and then "Leaves Shimmering," a bet for the pop record chart with its soft-core minimalism and lush symphonic backdrop.

Much-needed intensity came by way of "Improvisation," the virtuosic woodwind renderings of the ubiquitous David Ocker, Vinny Golia and Ann LaBerge, a fascinating interplay of lines and sonorities that ran the emotional gamut from delicate to aggressive.

—DONNA PERLMUTTER

FOR THE RECORD

"Of Colonels and Camouflage" and "1922" screen Sunday at the Nuart, not Thursday, as reported in the Special Screenings column in Monday's Calendar. They will also screen Tuesday at the Rialto in South Pasadena.

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The phone number for the annual conference of the California Theater Council, which begins next Wednesday, is (213) 622-6727. An incorrect number was given in Sunday's Stage Week column.