

Fusion Music by List Fascinates

In Garrett List's music the expressive capacities of jazz and the formal emphases of contemporary concert music meet; the result is a sometimes shaky but often fascinating fusion. Often there are problems of language and problems of control-vs.-freedom, but several of the encounters engineered by Mr. List for his Friday night concert at the Kitchen were conspicuously successful and wholly satisfying.

The highlight of the evening was a performance of Mr. List's "Process No. 1," one of four orchestral etudes. The group the composer assembled included two violins, cello, flute, alto saxophone, two pianos, and a jazz bassist and trap drummer, with Mr. List doubling as conductor and trombonist. The players came from both jazz and classical backgrounds. For "Process No. 1" these forces were finely balanced, with most of the instruments following a series of long-lined overlapping unisons while Byard Lancaster, the saxophonist, improvised.

Two other orchestral etudes, performed using a quasi-improvisational process Mr. List calls "selective reading," lacked the passion of the piece that featured Mr. Lancaster, but in their more restrained, more European way they were equally successful. One, "Elevator Music," was especially lovely in its delicate blending of string, wind and keyboard textures. The fourth etude, "Slugging Rocks," was more improvisational, and it tended to ramble, though Mel Graves turned in a fine bass solo.

The second part of the program consisted of the premiere of a new suite, "Standard Existence," with texts by Mr. List, Jacki Apple, and Studs Terkel. The composer turned in a riveting trombone improvisation during a section of the suite describing the death of his father. The work presented greater variety than the etudes, and although parts of it drifted, overall Mr. List seems to be bringing his ambitious fusion attempts more and more firmly under control.

ROBERT PALMER