

## Dangerous Sounds

The Experimental Playground blasts classical-music cliches.

By **Kity Ironton** and **Ernie Tucker** *Thursday, May 5 2005*

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The avant-garde classical music of **The Experimental Playground Ensemble** saunters somewhere between the grit of punk rock and the order of a traditional orchestra. The Colorado composers clash cellos, electric guitars, accordions and video manipulation on music sheets that look so artistic and abstract they could be hung on gallery walls -- and, in fact, have been. TEPE describes itself as "the left wing of music."

TEPE was formed in 2001 with alumni from the University of Denver's **Lamont School** of Music. Faculty member **Conrad Kehn** decided that Denver needed a professional chamber ensemble dedicated to performing works from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The tunes of modern-day tone tweakers like **John Cage**, **Steve Reich** and **John Zorn** can sound as ambient as a rainstorm or as subtle as a train wreck. Unlike many classical composers, most of these contemporary creators are still alive.

TEPE prefers the experimental to the cliché, staging the strange soundscapes that have influenced artists such as **Frank Zappa**, **Philip Glass** and concept rockers **King Crimson**. But TEPE is also a showcase for its members' own creative compositions. "TEPE was formed to make sure that modern composers are being played," says Kehn. "We bring excitement, beauty and danger to the concert hall."

Experimental Playground takes the stage tonight at 7:30 p.m. at the **Newman Center for the Performing Arts**, 2344 Iliff Avenue. Tickets are \$16, free for students with ID; call 303-871-7720 or visit [www.du.edu/newmancenter](http://www.du.edu/newmancenter). -- **Kity Ironton**



The Experimental Playground Ensemble takes classical music in a new direction.