



*presents*

*A GEORGE BURT RETROSPECTIVE*  
*1957-1978*

*Tuesday, December 5, 1989*  
*8:00 p.m. in Hamman Hall*

RICE UNIVERSITY

the  
Shepherd  
School  
of Music

**PROGRAM**

**Four Short Pieces** for piano (1957)

Brian Connelly, piano

**Improvisation II** (1972)

A dedication to Lester Young

George Burt, synthesizer  
Paul English, electric piano

**HBGB** \* . . . . . Richard Lavenda

**Quodlibet (What Pleases)** \* . . . . . Paul Cooper

Lynn Griebing, soprano  
Pierrot Plus Ensemble

**String Trio** (1978)

Kevin Kelly, violin  
Rifat Qureshi, viola  
James Denton, cello

**INTERMISSION**

**The New York Hat** (1972)

Music with the silent film

George Burt, synthesizer  
Paul English, electric piano

**What Are You Doing ...** \* . . . . . Arthur Gottschalk

**A Hocket for George** \* . . . . . Samuel Jones

Lynn Griebing, soprano    Virginia Babikian, soprano  
Pierrot Plus Ensemble

**Exit Music I** (1968)

Pierrot Plus Ensemble

\* Composed in 1989 especially for George Burt's 60th birthday.

## PROGRAM NOTES

*Four Short Pieces* for piano were written when I was studying with Darius Milhaud. He somewhat resisted the serial tendencies in my thinking at that time, and our discussions left me with questions about true musicality, a genuine buffer to the temptations of academic process. He was a kind man and we all loved him.

*Improvisation II* is dedicated to the memory of Lester Young, a gifted tenor saxophonist who had a decisive impact on jazz in the 1940's and 50's. When I was growing up he was a hero of mine. His laid-back style seemed to say it all. But because of the terrible situation that confronted all black musicians at that time, I often have wondered if Young, and so many others, ever had the chance to reach the peak of their talent.

*Improvisation II* is not a jazz piece, but an homage to the feeling and respect I had for his work — what he was up against and what he did about it.

*String Trio* was finished during a difficult time of my life, the accidental and tragic death of my wife. My friend Leonard Rosenman urged me to keep working on this piece for therapeutic reasons if nothing else and I'm glad I took his advice. In any case, *String Trio* is for me a serious piece having many meanings.

*The New York Hat* is a silent film made in 1912, written by Anita Loos and directed by D.W. Griffith, starring Mary Pickford (the "Sweetheart of America") and Lionel Barrymore. Barrymore, unlike his brother John, never wanted to be an actor, preferring instead to live in Paris as a painter. Because of his theatrical name he was able to subsidize this goal initially by appearing in one-reeler dramas.

The story of *The New York Hat* is unshakably sentimental and able to survive any musical treatment. Thus I felt no compunction about introducing the electronic medium as a concept. For me it was like seeing the past through a scrim of the present.

Film cues are ordinarily limited to one or two minutes in length and then recorded. If anything goes wrong the cues can be re-recorded. This film lasts ten minutes and nineteen seconds. Anything can happen. Further, we will be working with an Arp synthesizer, an archival museum instrument at best. The odds against finishing at the same time the film finishes are slight. We wish to take the chance.

*Exit Music* was written during the summer of 1968, at the same time of the Chicago riots and the chaotic Democratic National Convention. It was obvious that this country was on the brink of horrendous change.

Lyndon Johnson's immortal words rang through: "accordingly I shall not seek, and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term." And then there was the shouting and uproar in the convention hall dramatically expressive of both hope and hopelessness.

I tried to place myself in that hall when writing the piece.

— Notes by George Burt

## PIERROT PLUS ENSEMBLE

*David Colson, conductor*

*Aralee Dorough, flutes*  
*Richard Nunemaker, clarinets*  
*Margaret Beard, bass clarinet*  
*Martha Thompson, horn*  
*Reynaldo Ochoa, trumpet*  
*Aubrey Tucker, trombone*  
*Philip Burke, tuba*  
*David Murray, percussion*  
*Christopher Rose, percussion*  
*Gabriel Dionne, percussion*

*Neal Kurz, piano*  
*Paul English, piano*  
*Kevin Kelly, violin*  
*Dagny Wenk-Wolff, violin*  
*Rifat Qureshi, viola*  
*James Denton, cello*  
*Mary Beth Melvyn, cello*  
*Tracy Rowell, double bass*  
*Martin Merritt, double bass*

## BIOGRAPHY

*GEORGE BURT, who was born in 1929 in San Francisco, received degrees in composition from the University of California in Berkeley, Mills College, and Princeton. His teachers have included Darius Milhaud, Andrew Imbrie, and Milton Babbitt. However, he worked most extensively with Roger Sessions. In addition, a grant from the University of California enabled him to live in Vienna for one year where he composed and studied with Gyorgy Ligeti. He has taught at Smith College and the University of Michigan. George Burt is currently a professor of theory and composition at The Shepherd School of Music.*

*George Burt composes film music as well as concert music. He has scored six feature-length films, including two scores for Robert Altman: **Secret Honor** (1984) which received outstanding awards in film festivals throughout Europe, and **Fool for Love** (1986) written by Sam Shepard and starring both Shepard and Kim Basinger. Both films are currently in worldwide release. George Burt's chamber, orchestral and choral works have been published and performed in the U.S. and Europe.*