While Mother jingles sadly

Even allowing for some personal bias, since I know the composer pretty well, it seems quite safe to say that Jim Burton’s “Six Solos in the Form of a Pair,” which I heard at the Kitchen on October 17, is the most substantial piece Burton has done, that it is an extremely effective blend of musical ideas and theatrical ideas, and that it is one of the few chamber works around which holds up as a program by itself.

The “Six Solos” are tied together by “Mother’s Piano Solo,” which runs throughout the hour-and-20-minute program. This began as

pianist Don Gillespie attached six or eight vibrating mechanisms to the piano so that they would vibrate lightly on the piano strings, making an odd, rippling piano noise. He then sat down at the keyboard and played a sequence of white-note chords. While the vibrators jingled on, he repeated this same basic sequence over and over, ingeniously exploring every possible variation of rhythm and phrasing, so that it never came out quite the same way. While “Mother’s Piano Solo” was in progress, the other five performers came out, one by one, for their solos.

Soprano Judy Sherman sang “Free Offer Inside,” which utilizes match book phrases for its text and rather dramatic atonal lines for its music. It is nothing special musically, but it sustains itself well, thanks to its unlikely text.

Clarinettist Jan Coward played “Solo Melancholia.” This is also atonal, and utilizes many uncon-