

Four Elegies in Memoriam Renee Longy Program Note

Four Elegies in Memoriam Renee Longy were written in memory of my ear-training teacher at Juilliard, Renee Longy (1897-1979). Although she was unknown to the musical public, Mme. Longy's students filled the major American orchestras and chamber ensembles. During her long teaching career at Curtis, Peabody, Florida State and Juilliard, her students included many well-known musicians including Leonard Bernstein, whom she taught how to read orchestral scores.

I was fortunate enough to become a friend of Mme. Longy, and did my best to help her as she struggled with cancer. The *Elegies* that I wrote in her memory feature the pitches D and A derived from her nickname, "Mme. Re-LA", and referring to the traditional solfege syllables that name those pitches. The last piece opens with an evocation of the guitar-playing of a young Juilliard custodian who was befriended and taught by Mme. Longy during those years. Later, when I played the *Elegies* for Leonard Bernstein at Tanglewood, he said, "this piece is in D minor." I had thought of it as atonal: perhaps he was responding to the implications of the nickname "Re-La". Nevertheless, his reaction and obvious implication that I needed to be true to my own inner voice has been very important for me ever since; but not nearly as important as the severe and terrifying training which Mme. Longy offered to her students out of her love for music and young musicians.