

Lisa Bielawa

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Note

Premiere: May 5, 2009, St. Bartholomew's Church, NYC. Commissioned by Premiere Commission, Inc.

Duration: 15'
Instrumentation: solo piano

Commissioned in honor of Bruce Levingston's mother, Barbara, and dedicated to the memory of Alexandra Montano, a beautifully gifted mezzo-soprano and friend, *Elegy-Portrait* was built from the materials for a song that was never completed. It was originally to have been part of my song cycle "The Lay of the Love and Death," which had its world premiere on the same Premiere Commission concert at Lincoln Center in 2006 that brought Bruce Levingston, Alexandra and me together for our one transcendent evening of music-making together, an evening that I will always remember as one of the most spiritually gratifying musical experiences of my life. Two years later, after we had lost Alexandra, the fragments of this unfinished song invited me back to the feeling we all shared that night. The piece grew and grew – it took on a much broader, wordless form and kept opening itself up to new directions and emotional terrains.

Intending to write a proper elegy – in memory of a friend – I discovered that, while an elegy is all about our own feelings of loss, therefore always cycling back to ourselves, a portrait in memoriam can bring us out of ourselves and into a clearer appreciation of those we loved (and still love). So – the piece started out as an elegy and ended up being a portrait of Alexandra's unique musical spirit.

– Lisa Bielawa

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