

I composed four of the five movements of my fourth string quartet during the month of June, 1997, when I was resident at the Villa Serbelloni in Bellagio, Italy, overlooking Lake Como. My wife and I were indeed enjoying the splendors of the region and of our accommodations. But in writing the quartet I kept thinking of our dear friend and colleague Bette Snapp. Bette had been my “representative” for a number of years and had shared with us the ups and downs of a career in music composition. But she could not share that particularly glorious Italian “up”--because she had died of cancer earlier in April, 1997. Bette was a person of great spirit and lively humor. As this quartet was the first work I embarked upon since her death, I wanted it in some way to bear her imprint. In the end, I decided to dedicate the movement indicated “sadly” to her memory. But the quirkiness, and what I hope is zest, of the other movements may reflect her influence as well. The first movement is a scherzo. The second movement, which I composed during December of 2000, is a lyrical interlude before the third movement, which is another scherzo, sterner in tone than the first movement.. The fourth movement is the lament for Bette. The fifth movement was inspired by the long legato lines of certain Brahms and Dvorak finales about which had I lectured at the American Symphony, and which continued play in my inner ear while we were at Bellagio.

This work was commissioned for The Chicago String Quartet by the Prince Charitable Trusts and the Chicago Chamber Musicians. The world premiere of the four-movement version took place at the 92nd Street Y, NYC, on January 17, 1998. The five-movement version was premiered at Vassar College on February 17, 2001. In both instances, The Chicago String Quartet performed.

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