

PROGRAM NOTE:

*Epigrams, Epitaphs* was commissioned in 1986 by the Grand Rapids [MN] Area Community Chorus, which wanted a new work for a program that also included the *Liebeslieder Waltzes*. This was the impetus for the four-hand piano accompaniment as well as the inspiration for the fourth song, stylistically an homage to Brahms. Looking for texts, I found Ben Jonson's "On My First Son" and fell in love with it. The poem set the tone for the entire work; all of the texts deal in some way with death (of beauty, of the poet, of two dickey-birds), which in turn inspired the occasional use of the piano as a great tolling bell. The first three poems are also brief enough to be epigrams, hence the title.