One of the things that I always remember, and I tell my friends or my students, is that the most memorable concert I ever went to, when I first started composing in New York, was a concert where the audience was very small - but the concert was very important in my life. I feel that if I have an epitaph, it's that I began with a small audience and I am going to end up with one.

Another thing about writing a large piece or a long piece, and this piece is long, is that you find that if you want to talk about it, or even write about it, it has to be very short, very concise and very clear. I do feel that the piece requires a little knowledge of some of the literary or...the references...what used to be called 'more involved with life than with art', although they are very interconnected in this piece. But it is a literary piece, in the sense that I was re-visiting my life with this extraordinarily gifted artist, who I think was the most important person in my life, besides my mother of course. I don't think I would have become an artist if I didn't have that luck in meeting Philip Guston.

It begins with a very famous show now, historically, in late '49 or early '50, the first abstract expressionist show at the Museum of Modern Art. I went there with John Cage, who I had just met, and we came across a painting of Philip's. Unlike the abstract expressionists, he did have a kind of notoriety...pages in Life Magazine for much more representational work than was in this show. He got a Guggenheim, went to Europe, and when he came back his work started to become abstract, but there was still an aspect of the representational in the work. It was the early red paintings.

The piece begins with looking at this painting with Cage, and the tune

(Feldman plays C G Ab Eb on piano)

spells out C A G E, but not in that order. We were discussing it today; if I really spelt it C A G E the tune would sound Indonesian (audience laughs). You hear that throughout the piece in many manifestations; that is, changing keys. So, essentially this is the idea of the piece. It's varying degrees of representation treated abstractly, and abstraction treated as varying degrees of representation. That is, abstraction that seems to be almost a thing in itself...has the mood of a thing...almost a figuration of a thing. But it's not discernible; it's difficult to read.

Essentially that was the piece, and it kept me very busy with...what essentially I would refer to as a literary idea, then translated into musical equivalents.

As I say, the piece is long. Don't feel that you're a captive audience, and don't be embarrassed if you have to leave. A lot of good friends might have to pick up a daughter from a birthday party. Other friends who are here have to pick up someone from the airport...so it's perfectly OK.