

## IN MEMORIAM

### *Leith Stevens*

(1909-1970)

In the many years that I have known Leith Stevens, I found him to be consistently honest, decent, and honorable.

He never wavered from these qualities.

The man's genuineness and integrity, his warmth and sincerity were felt by all who knew him.

When you first encounter Leith Stevens, you immediately felt you were in the presence of a good man, in the very best sense of that word.

He was free of any jealous feelings and I have never known him to utter any derogatory remarks concerning his peers; on the contrary, he would quite often make exemplary and commendable remarks about the character and the works of his fellow colleagues.

He was fastidious in his work, exact and never careless.

He was consistent, and the wealth of musical ideas that sprang from his mind was phenomenal.

The most difficult aspect of film composing is the diversity of styles and periods that a composer is asked to write; not to mention the timings, deadlines and pressures that go with that job.

Yet with Leith Stevens, it seemed effortless.

He worked diligently, with care and precision, and I was constantly awe and enthralled at his inventiveness and the musical applicability of his scores.

He was a versatile, meticulous, sensitive and prolific composer.

Despite his very heavy schedule he maintained as film composer, he felt it his responsibility to take the time to teach film composing to newcomers in the profession. His classes at UCLA were both stimulating and informative; and he was a concerned and dedicated teacher with the ability to effectively communicate and clearly convey the subject matter that he taught.

No matter how busy he was, he was always ready to receive me and to offer suggestions to improve my compositions.

He worked indefatigably, both as composer and teacher.

Many composers today owe a deep debt of gratitude to Leith Stevens – I, among them.

The elements that went to make up this profoundly gifted composer and teacher were coupled with an understanding, warmth, and concern that gave elegant meaning to the term – humanness.

My reverence and fondness for him was—and is—considerable.

We miss him.

—John G. Gordon, 1983<sup>†</sup>

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<sup>†</sup> John G. Gordon was a student in the course on film scoring taught by Leith Stevens at UCLA Extension School in the 1960s.