



Concerts on the Slope presents *American Quartets*

Featuring Composer Robert Sirota's String Quartet No. 3 "Wave Upon Wave"

Sunday, December 1, 2019 at 3pm
St. John's Episcopal Church
139 St. John's Place | Brooklyn, NY

Admission is free; Suggested donation \$20 with proceeds going directly to the artists. More information at www.concertsontheslope.org

"a compelling musical voice of our time" – *The American Organist*

www.robertsirota.com

Photo by Ryuhei Shindo available in high-resolution at www.jensenartists.com/robert-sirota

Brooklyn, NY – On **Sunday, December 1, 2019 at 3pm**, composer **Robert Sirota's String Quartet No. 3, "Wave Upon Wave"** is presented by **Concerts on the Slope** at **St. John's Episcopal Church** (139 St. John's Place). This concert is part of **Sirota @ 70**, a celebration throughout the 2019-2020 concert season featuring residencies, performances, and premieres in honor of the composer's 70th birthday.

Sirota's *Wave Upon Wave* was commissioned by The Walter W. Naumburg Foundation for the competition winners and premiered by the Telegraph Quartet on February 6, 2018 at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. *Wave Upon Wave* is the third string quartet in a trilogy spanning fifteen years, which Sirota began in 2002 with *Triptych*, an extended meditation on 9/11. Sirota's second string quartet, *American Pilgrimage*, celebrates the rich diversity of the American landscape and the American spirit, and was completed in spring 2016.

Sirota says, "Each of the string quartets in my trilogy is in essence a long journal entry reflecting a response to our times. Now, given the uncertainty of this moment in our history, rife with threats of tyranny, environmental catastrophe, and the human potential for evil, I find myself turning inward to examine the topography of the human heart: our vast potential for creative energy, idealism and altruism. *Wave Upon Wave* is about our fears, our hopes, and our prayers that we will triumph over the forces of darkness which threaten to overwhelm us."

This program, entitled *American Quartets*, also includes Composer in Residence **Natalie Dietterich's** Three pieces for string quartet and **Samuel Barber's** String Quartet in B minor, Op. 11. Performers are Concerts on the Slope's Artistic Director and cellist Benjamin Larsen; violinists Jennifer Gersten and Jungwon Yoon; and violist Nick Pauly.

About Robert Sirota: Over five decades, composer Robert Sirota has developed a distinctive voice, clearly discernible in all of his work – whether symphonic, choral, stage, or chamber music. Writing in the *Portland Press Herald*, Allan Kozinn asserts: "Sirota's musical language is personal and undogmatic, in the sense that instead of aligning himself with any of the competing contemporary styles, he follows his own internal musical compass."

Robert Sirota's works have been performed by orchestras across the US and Europe; ensembles such as Alarm Will Sound, Sequitur, yMusic, Chameleon Arts, and Dinosaur Annex; the Chiara, American, Telegraph, Ethel, Elmyr, and Blair String Quartets; the Peabody, Concord, and Webster Trios; and at festivals including Tanglewood, Aspen, Yellow Barn, and

Cooperstown music festivals; Bowdoin Gamper and Bowdoin International Music Festival; and Mizzou International Composers Festival. Recent commissions include Jeffrey Kahane and the Sarasota Music Festival, Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Palladium Musicum, American Guild of Organists, the American String Quartet, Alarm Will Sound, the Naumburg Foundation, yMusic, and arrangements for Paul Simon. Commissions for Sirota@70 in honor of his 70th birthday include works for Thomas Pellaton, Carol Wincenc, Linda Chesis & the Cooperstown Summer Music Festival, and Sierra Chamber Society.

Recipient of grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, United States Information Agency, National Endowment for the Arts, Meet the Composer, and the American Music Center, Sirota's works are recorded on Legacy Recordings, National Sawdust Tracks, and the Capstone, Albany, New Voice, Gasparo and Crystal labels. His music is published by Muzzy Ridge Music, Schott, Music Associates of New York, MorningStar, Theodore Presser, and To the Fore.

A native New Yorker, Sirota studied at Juilliard, Oberlin, and Harvard and divides his time between New York and Searsport, Maine with his wife, Episcopal priest and organist Victoria Sirota. They frequently collaborate on new works, with Victoria as librettist and performer, at times also working with their children, Jonah and Nadia, both world-class violists. For complete information, visit www.robertsirota.com.

About Benjamin Larsen: Known for the energy he brings to the stage, cellist Benjamin Larsen has forged a reputation as an avid chamber musician in the New York City area. His knack for adventurous programming comes through in his work as Artistic Director of the series, Concerts on the Slope, and in the projects that he spearheads, working with some of today's most notable composers, including Robert Sirota, Reena Esmail, Tania Leon, Ke-Chia Chen and many others. In 2016, Larsen launched a project with flutist Martha Cargo, "Pieces of Eight," which is comprised of eight commissioned works by eight different composers for Flute-Cello duo. The project promotes the genre, and provides the opportunity to work closely with composers of various generational and cultural backgrounds. He has also performed alongside members of the Emerson, American, Chiara and Tokyo quartets, as well as Daniel Epstein, Vicky Chow, Ian Rosenbaum, Eriko Sato and Linda Chesis.

Larsen is a graduate of Manhattan School of Music, where he was the recipient of the Hans and Klara Bauer Scholarship, as well as the 2011 Pablo Casals Award. His past mentors have included Julia Lichten, David Finckel and Eric Dahlin, as well as lessons with Marta Istomin and Bonnie Hampton. He spent a year playing with the band, The Left Banke, and attended summer festivals including Pacific Music Festival, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Music@Menlo, and Castleman's Quartet Program. Along with his wife, pianist Hyungjin Choi, he actively performs in the Larsen-Choi Duo, which champions new music, original compositions and sonata literature. In addition to his busy performance schedule, he holds a private teaching studio in addition to a faculty position at Music School of Westchester. He plays on a 19th century anonymous cello.

About Concerts on the Slope: Led by Artistic Director and Cellist Benjamin Larsen, Concerts on the Slope has presented talented musicians, a wide variety of repertoire, and remarkably diverse musical styles to historic St. John's Church, located in one of the most scenic and culturally active neighborhoods in the city—Park Slope, Brooklyn. Since its beginning in March 2012, the monthly series aims to enrich the classical music culture in Brooklyn by presenting top-quality chamber music concerts with accomplished and emerging young artists from New York and around the world. Admission is free; Suggested donation \$20 with proceeds going directly to the artists. More information at www.concertsontheslope.org.

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