



Elegies and Ecstasies: The Music of Robert and Jonah Sirota



Photos of Robert and Jonah Sirota available in high resolution upon request

Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 8pm

Glendale City Church | 610 E. California Ave | Glendale, CA

Tickets (\$20 suggested donation) available through [Eventbrite](#).

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

www.robertsirota.com | www.jonahsirota.com

Glendale, CA – On **Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 8pm**, New York-based composer/pianist **Robert Sirota** and Los Angeles-based composer/violist **Jonah Sirota** present individual works and the **West Coast Premiere** of a new collaboration at **Glendale City Church** (610 E. California Ave). This concert is part of the **Sirota @ 70** season, marking Robert Sirota's 70th birthday with concerts, commissions, and residencies across the country.

Jonah Sirota says, “I’m excited that my dad and I are creating a new work for this program by sending musical ideas back and forth to each other across the country, building on them, and creating a framework for a partly improvised, partly through-composed piece of music. I’m getting to know him and his process in a new way!”

In addition to the new collaboration between the two composers, the concert will include Robert Sirota’s *Elegy for a Lost World* and *Compendium de Lumine*, both composed for Jonah Sirota, as well as Jonah Sirota’s Viola Sonata *Flutter Fingers*, and Jonah Sirota/Kurt Knecht’s *CURRENTly*.

Elegy for a Lost World for viola and piano represents the fifth work that composer Robert Sirota has written with his son Jonah Sirota’s playing in mind. Robert Sirota says, “In our conversations about the creation of this work, he asked me for a piece evoking a sense of the innocence of youth. I have tried to create a vehicle that reflects Jonah’s broad expressive range as well as the remarkable generosity of spirit he displays in his performing.”

Elegy for a Lost World was recorded on Jonah’s debut album, *Strong Sad* (National Sawdust Tracks) along with the piece *CURRENTly*, co-written by Jonah Sirota and Kurt Knecht (the duo Mondegreen), improvised and recorded on location at St. Marks on the Campus Episcopal Church in Lincoln, NE, using the Bedient Op. 11 tracker-action Italian-style organ. Jonah notes, “It has a repeating rhythmic pattern with set chord changes, like in a jazz chart, but the melodic material in the viola is created new for each performance. Our version will be for viola and piano.”

Of *Compendium de Lumine* for solo viola, Robert writes, “Jonah wanted something that was ‘not elegiac’ – no problem. Since he is truly a master of his instrument, I took this as an opportunity to push the boundaries of my technical expertise, seeking maximum variety of color and expression. The somewhat encyclopedic title posits a cataloguing of various kinds and qualities of

light, which the movement titles enumerate: Mane (Morning), Meridies (Noon) Aqua (Water), Luna (Moon), Stellae (Stars), and Sol (Sun).

Jonah composed *Flutter Fingers* for solo viola at the Greenwood Music Camp in the summer of 2017 and explains, “The piece began as an exploration of extended viola techniques, but ended up being about various kinds of distortion, specifically about the dramatic ways that distortion in sound and visual media has changed over the course of my lifetime.”

About Robert Sirota: Over five decades, composer/pianist 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. In addition to *Job Fragments*, commissions for Sirota@70, in honor of his 70th birthday, include works for 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 Jonah Sirota: Composer and violist Jonah Sirota is a new breed of multi-talented musician. Equally at home writing concert music, performing as a soloist and chamber musician, scoring soundtracks for TV, film, and videogames, and collaborating in improv and new music ensembles, Jonah creates and recreates vivid music for a wide variety of audiences. His debut solo recording *STRONG SAD*, a 2018 National Sawdust Tracks release, features premiere recordings of new elegies for the viola by Nico Muhly, Paola Prestini, Arthur Joseph McCaffrey, Valgeir Sigurðsson, Robert Sirota, Kurt Knecht, and Jonah himself. Recent compositions include *Grounded*, an orchestral work written for the Greenwood Music Camp Orchestra and premiered in the summer of 2018, and the viola sonata *Flutter Fingers*.

Jonah was the violist of the recently-disbanded Chiara String Quartet for all of its 18 years. With the Chiara Quartet, he toured internationally, recorded seven albums and played in numerous major venues worldwide. The Chiara Quartet performed much of the string quartet repertoire from memory ("By Heart"), including the complete string quartets of Béla Bartók, a recording of which was released in 2016 on Azica Records. The group was honored with a Grammy nomination (2011, Best Contemporary Classical Composition for Jefferson Friedman's 3rd String Quartet on the New Amsterdam label), the ASCAP/CMA Adventurous Programming Award, the Guarneri Quartet Award, top prizes at the Paolo Borciani Competition and the Astral Artistic Services Audition, and a Gold Medal at the Fischhoff Competition. Their albums have been featured on N.P.R., and in "Best of the Year" lists from the Boston Globe, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal. In the 2015-2016 season, the group was in residence at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, a venue to which the group returned for their farewell New York concert in May of 2018. As a concert violist, Jonah performs with pianist Molly Morkoski, with organist Kurt Knecht as the improv duo *Mondegreen*, and as a member of the revived California String Quartet. He is sought after as a session player and regularly plays with major orchestras, including the Long Beach Symphony, where he is Assistant Principal Viola.

Jonah is also known as a pedagogue. He coaches chamber music at the Colburn School, teaches viola at Cal State University Fullerton, and gives viola and composition masterclasses and residencies across the country. His "practice self-audit" has been used by many viola students to facilitate the self-evolution of their own improvement and creativity in the practice room, while his Practice Tune-Up for professional and adult amateur violists has given many the chance to reconnect with their own inner passion on the instrument. Mr. Sirota has taught at the Juilliard School, at Harvard University, and at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Glenn Korff School of Music (where he helped build a world-class chamber music program), as well as at Greenwood Music Camp. He resides in South Pasadena, CA. For complete information, visit www.jonahsirota.com.

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