

ROBERT SIROTA

COMPOSER

PROGRAM NOTES

***TRIPTYCH* for String Quartet (2002)**

Program note by Robert Sirota:

Triptych was written to commemorate the victims of September 11, 2001. It had an emotional first performance by the Chiara String Quartet on September 26, 2002, at Trinity Church on Wall Street, one of the churches on the periphery of Ground Zero.

The musical composition was created in tandem with a painting of the same name by Deborah Patterson; the three panels of the painting bear the same subtitles: "Desecration," "Lamentation," and "Prayer." While there was no overt attempt between Deborah and me to carefully align the music and the painting, and each can exist independently, they are intended to have a reinforcing effect on each other.

The first movement is an explicit evocation of an horrific event. I imagine that when the twin towers went down, every car alarm in lower Manhattan went off simultaneously, so I have incorporated the sound of sirens, as well as a dying car horn, into the end of the movement.

The second and third movements are a kind of meditation on the tragedy, first a grieving and then a consolation. Similarly, in the painting, the center panel shows the body of Father Mychal Judge, the priest who died in the World Trade Center, being carried by a group of firefighters. This realistic depiction of an actual event is flanked by two rather more abstract panels. The panel on the left shows the smoke and dust of the towers collapsing, and then the panel on the other end is a kind of reverse image as light ascends to heaven. These images are analogous to my music, which is also a mixture of the "abstract" and "real," a blend of atonality and tonality. Just as Deborah layers her paints and colors, I try to layer sound in a sonic technique similar to the painter's use of sfumato and chiaroscuro.