

ROBERT SIROTA

COMPOSER

PROGRAM NOTES

A CALL FOR THE BATTLE TO CEASE (2017)

Program note by Robert Sirota:

I have generally had good experiences with my orchestral music - multiple performances of most works by fine orchestras. Of all my works for orchestra *A Call for the Battle To Cease* is the only orphaned child. Let me explain.

In 2016 I received a commission from the venerable Concert Artists of Baltimore to compose a work for solo piano, choir and orchestra, using the same instrumentation as the Beethoven Choral Fantasy (2fl doubling picc-2-2-2; 2-2-0-0; timp; pno; choir SATB; strings). It was to be on a concert celebrating the organization's 30th Anniversary. My wife and frequent librettist, Victoria Sirota, was tasked with composing a text which would address, in Beethovenian terms, the need for us to transcend the divisions of race, nationality, class and politics that tear at the fabric of our common humanity. What Vicki came up with is stunning in its straightforward simplicity:

A Call for the Battle to Cease

How can we love, when love is drowned? When hatred screams so loud? When mindless fear takes hold and rules the land, And anger grips the crowd?

May we have the courage to be the ones Who make the battle cease. We'll sing the songs of love and hope throughout the world, And stand as one for peace.

Rejoice in the gift of our differences! And see in the eyes of each other The spark of revelation, the joy of God's creation! O gift of life! O wonder!

Victoria Sirota

The commission fee was received. The piece was composed, a date set for the gala concert at which it would be premiered, a stellar soloist engaged... at which point, after three decades, Concert Artists of Baltimore declared insolvency and ceased to exist!

So this is an orphaned piece in search of a premiere. It is already paid for and ready to go. It's theme is achingly relevant to our current moment:

Rejoice in the gift of our differences!

This is not a call for mere tolerance or for peaceful coexistence, but rather the triumphant assertion that it is our very diversity that gives joy and meaning to our lives together.

O gift of life! O wonder!