

# ROBERT SIROTA

COMPOSER

## PROGRAM NOTES

*PANGE LINGUA SONATA* (2012)

Program note by Robert Sirota:

The *Pange Lingua Sonata*, for violin and piano was commissioned by the superb violinist Hyeyung Julie Yoon in memory of her grandfather, Myung Il Paek. I have used the *Pange Lingua*, an epic hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas, as the generative material for this three-movement work. The text of the opening verse goes as follows:

*Pange Lingua gloriosi  
Corporis mysterium  
Sanguinisque pretiosi  
Quem in mundi pretium  
Fructus ventris generosi  
Rex effudit gentium*

*Now, my tongue, the mystery telling  
Of the glorious Body, sing,  
And the Blood, all price excelling,  
Which the gentiles' Lord and King  
In a Virgin's womb once dwelling,  
Shed for this world's ransoming.*

The first movement, “Apologia”, marked with intensity, explores fragments of ideas which ebb and flow as if searching for an anchoring statement of faith. The hymn melody finally appears towards the very end of the movement, first in four notes played by the piano with strings damped by the palm of the hand, answered by the violin *sul ponticello*, that is, playing with the bow near the bridge, sounding mysterious and far away.

The second movement, “Ballade”, marked Adagio, poco rubato, offers more full-throated melodic writing for the violin, with the *Pange Lingua* theme appearing in a counter-rhythm in the piano about halfway through the movement.

The final “Variations” movement is marked Allegro Molto. After initial contrapuntal flourishes between the violin and piano, the *Pange Lingua* theme is taken through eight variations, followed by a fairly extended and brilliant finale.