

ROBERT SIROTA

COMPOSER

PROGRAM NOTES

HOLY GHOSTS (2012)

Program note by Robert Sirota:

holy ghosts was commissioned by the Department of Musical Instruments at The Metropolitan Museum of Art to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the installation of the 1830 Thomas Appleton Organ at the museum. The organ is a beautiful example of early 19th century American organ building. It reminds me of a number of historic instruments that my wife Vicki has performed on in New England.

The title *holy ghosts* comes from my sense that this instrument retains the spirits of the many Protestant hymns played on it over its life span. The three movements of this work are based upon three hymn tunes taken from a tattered and foxy 1832 edition of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society Collection of Church Music, edited by Lowell Mason, that Vicki and I bought at a used book store many years ago. The three hymns, "Semley", "Helmsley", and "From Greenland's Icy Mountains", are all icons of 19th century piety. It is my fantasy that the organ plays them itself, as it were by heart, and the twenty-first century organist comments on and embellishes the organ's performance.