

ROBERT SIROTA

COMPOSER

PROGRAM NOTES

MERIDIANS (2006)

Program note by Robert Sirota:

My love affair with Singapore began about seven years ago, when as Director of the Peabody Institute, I was invited by Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan to come to Singapore and explore the possibility of assisting in the creation of a new conservatory. The resulting collaboration to create the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory has been one of the great experiences of my life. This is why I was especially touched and honored when conservatory Governing Board Chairman Goh Yew Lin proposed that I compose a celebratory piece for the opening of the new conservatory building and concert hall.

The title *Meridians* came out of the happy discovery that Singapore and Baltimore, while situated on opposite sides of the world, lie virtually along the same meridian of longitude; Singapore on 105.44 east and Baltimore on 75.66 west. You can follow this line over the poles, and it will bisect the earth into two equal hemispheres. The term "meridian" has a second meaning relevant to this piece: it is used in acupuncture to refer to the major paths of Chi.

Meridians is a piece about the flow of energy over long distances. It is a conceptual journey between Baltimore and Singapore. It celebrates the excitement and promise of global collaboration.

The piece is also composed to showcase the wonderful Yong Siew Toh Conservatory orchestra in its beautiful new hall. The percussion section is prominently featured, with the four percussionists and the timpanist arrayed across the entire back of the orchestra. The string section is seated with the first violins stage right and the second violins stage left, so that these sections respond to each other across the stage. Throughout the work, I want the listener to think about how ideas can bridge time and space.

Meridians is an extended Allegro movement some eleven minutes in length. In it I have tried to express a number of things: the tremendous hope and idealism which contributed to the creation of this new conservatory, the technological miracles that enable us to bridge the distance between Baltimore and Singapore in a single day - or in the case of digital communication, in a millisecond - and the power of great ideas, and particularly great music, to bring us together.