



The Essence of *Mei* (冥)

An exploration of the inspiration behind *Mei*
through interviews with the composer

By Mihoko Watanabe

In 1962, a self-taught Japanese composer, Kazuo Fukushima, wrote the profoundly mysterious *Mei for solo flute*. This piece has been an important part of the standard repertoire for solo flute, a required piece in the national and international flute competitions, and the subject of countless performances around the world for more than four decades. In this article, drawing on material from my interviews with Fukushima in 1994 and 2004, I show that we have misunderstood the inspiration behind *Mei*. It has nothing to do with the well-known Japanese flute called the *shakuhachi*, but rather is steeped in the tradition of *Noh* drama and the *Noh* flute, *noh-kan*. I also enumerate errors in the published text of the work.

My belief that *Mei* reflects the essence of Japanese traditional musical idioms, beliefs, cultural philosophy, and aesthetics was confirmed during my interviews. To move beyond technicalities and understand *Mei* as a spiritually conceived piece, flutists need to understand how this music was influenced by Japanese culture and how the composer created the piece.

Fukushima and Western Music in Japan

The 1868 Meiji Restoration (明治維新) changed Japan's social and political structure. As depicted in the 2003 movie *The Last Samurai*, the modernization of Japan occurred because of the defeat of the Shogunate and Samurai systems by Emperor Meiji and the opening of exchange between Japan and the rest of the world. Westernization then spread very rapidly in Japan. The Meiji government introduced Western music instruction in schools in 1880, and established the Tokyo Music School to train professional musicians seven years later.

Musical development rapidly increased after the end of World War II in 1945. Kazuo Fukushima, born in 1930, was 15 years old when the war ended and recalls facing the fear of death for many months.¹ Japanese musicians were keen to begin recovering from the devastation and to catch up with the international standards of modern Western music. Orchestras and opera companies blossomed, and music colleges and schools were established.

Composer-musicians organized small new music groups to support their own activities; among them were the *Shinsei kai* (New Star Group) in 1946, the *Shin Sakkyokuka Kyokai* (New Composers' Society) in 1947, the *Jikken Kobo* (Experimental Workshop) in Tokyo in 1951, *Sannin no kai* (Group of Three) in 1953, the *Yagi no Kai* (Goat Group) in 1953, and *Shinshin Kai* (Profound New Group) in 1955.²

Fukushima's compositional career began around the time he joined the *Jikken Kobo* (実験工房) in 1953. Shuzo Takiguchi, a writer and critic, had assembled the group—artists in writing, painting, photography, film, stage lighting, dance, and music. Takiguchi was inspired by the crossover between different modes of expression, which he had seen in the avant-garde art movements in Europe before the war. The members of this music workshop included Toru Takemitsu, Joji Yuasa, Kuniharu Akiyama, Keijiro Sato, Hiroyoshi Suzuki, and Takahiro Sonoda.³

The purpose of the *Jikken Kobo* workshop was to experiment with combinations of traditional Japanese modalities and modernistic procedures. In 1955 the group presented Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, staged in the form of a Japanese Traditional *Noh* play, demonstrating the possibility and effectiveness of these collaborations. Ironically, the members of *Jikken Kobo* became so immersed individually in related music activities that the group disbanded in 1958.

Fukushima's *Mei* is an extension of the *Jikken Kobo*. Since 1960, composers of the Japanese avant-garde have been writing pieces for modern Western instruments that hark back to the traditional art forms of earlier Japanese culture. *Mei* was composed for a modern Western flute, but displays traditional Japanese musical characteristics. One of those is the Japanese title, indicating an association with Japanese culture.

Steps Toward *Mei*

The score's inscription states, in Italian,⁴ "Mei, the Chinese character of which is written (冥), signifies dark, dim, intangible. This music was composed for the late Dr. Wolfgang Steinecke of Darmstadt, who died in a tragic accident. According to ancient Japanese legend it is believed that the sound of the flute has power to reach the dead."

MEI, che con ideogrammi cinese si scrive 冥 significa oscuro - pallido - intangibile.

Questa musica è stata composta per consolare il fu Dottor Wolfgang Steinecke di Darmstadt che trapassò in un tragico incidente.

Secondo l'antica credenza giapponese, si riteneva che il suono del flauto potesse giungere ai morti.

Above the title of the music, the following words appear in French: "Mei, which I dedicate to the spirit of Wolfgang Steinecke, thanks to the flute of Severino Gazzelloni."

MEI que je dédie à Wolfgang Steinecke grâce à la flûte de Severino Gazzelloni.

M E I
PER FLAUTO SOLO



Kazuo Fukushima, left, and author Mihoko Watanabe.



The author interviewed Fukushima at the Ueno Gakuen University in Tokyo.

A sequence of events led to the creation of *Mei*. In summer 1961, Fukushima was invited to give a lecture, “*Noh* Music and Modern Music in Japan,” at the Darmstadt International Music Institute (Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt), a summer school for contemporary classical music founded by Steinecke in 1946, where avant-garde composers, including Olivier Messiaen, Luciano Berio, Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, John Cage, György Ligeti, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, attended and had their works performed. Fukushima was impressed by Steinecke’s embrace of this new generation of composers, which inspired them to friendly competition.

Italian flutist Severino Gazzelloni (1919–1992) was an important and influential member of the 20th-century flute world. A champion of contemporary music, he was involved with new music at Darmstadt as a performer. Gazzelloni introduced many new flute compositions written from the 1950s onward, and gave the premiere of Pierre Boulez’s *Sonatine* for flute and piano. Hence, Gazzelloni’s involvement at the institute influenced many composers’ work at that time. According to the composer, Gazzelloni was fond of performing Fukushima’s *Requiem* and *Chū-u* outside of the institute, as well. While at Darmstadt, Fukushima received a commission from Gazzelloni to write a solo flute piece.

Between the summer and December of 1961, Fukushima stayed in Cambridge, England. At the end of that year, Fukushima learned from Gazzelloni that the flutist wanted to premiere the commissioned solo flute piece in April 1962 in Italy—and also that Steinecke had died on December 23, 1961. This news naturally led Fukushima to write *Mei* in memory of Steinecke.

Mei was composed in 1962, and Gazzelloni first performed it at the 25th Contemporary Music Festival in Venice, Italy, on April 23. At this event, the publisher Suvini Zerboni offered to publish Fukushima’s work: the edition we still use today. Fukushima recalls that in summer 1962, at the Darmstadt Institute, Gazzelloni performed *Mei* at Steinecke’s grave as an offering to the profound repose of his soul: “chinkon” (鎮魂) in Japanese. The composer believes that Steinecke’s soul can find chinkon if listeners and performers together pray for it while *Mei* is played.

Japanese Influences

Understanding Japanese traditional aesthetics can lead to a profound interpretation of *Mei*. One of the essential characteristics in Japanese art is the reflection of nature, in which nothing can be created that nature itself cannot create. Another is a Japanese art form principle called *Jo-Ha-Kyu*.

Nature

One concept of Japanese aesthetics can be seen in the art of the Japanese garden. Japanese and Western gardens have very different elements. The formal Western garden uses symmetrical design by having square ponds and fountains, whereas the Japanese garden follows the role of nature to create natural waterfalls and asymmetrical ponds. The Western garden employs all the space within these symmetrical designs, whereas the Japanese garden uses por-

tions of “emptiness/openness,” called *ma* (間), or space, in Japanese, the most intense reflection of nature. *Ma* and plants/trees/stones coexist in the Japanese garden to reflect nature.



Western gardens, such as those at Buckingham Palace or Versailles, manage space symmetrically.



Japanese gardens are shaped around the curves and twists of nature.

Ma. Japanese aesthetics can be perceived in *Mei* with the use of *ma*. While generally translated as “space,” *ma* can also mean “time.” It refers to the expressive space between musical phrases, which could be perceived by the performer as “silence.” Westerners usually consider *ma* to be emptiness, a space to be carefully measured or counted, whereas the Japanese know it as a keen, intuitive awareness containing some tension—a perceptual silence. This perceptual silence exists along with the sound to reflect a principle of nature.

In the music of *Mei*, *ma* creates a special mood between musical sections. *Mei* is in a three-part form, ABA' (see Example 1, next page). Section A runs from the beginning to m. 15, section B between m. 16 and m. 51, and section A' from m. 52 to the end. Between each section, at m. 15 and m. 51, Fukushima uses a fermata over the rest, indicating perceptual silences that should be given adequate *ma* to prepare the performer mentally and physically for the following sections. However, the two instances of *ma* should not be interpreted the same way. In m. 15 the fermata is over a quarter rest, whereas m. 51 has a fermata over a half rest. At m. 15 there will be anxious *ma*, because section B follows with full-flowing movement. By contrast, at m. 51 there will be calm *ma*, in which the audience experiences peaceful feelings, like the quiet after a steady rainfall. Therefore, the performance should reflect the nature of time *emotionally*, with *ma* setting the mood for where the music came from and what follows. All the rests in *Mei*, not only those at the fermatas, should reflect the perceptual silence accordingly.

The length of *ma* can be determined using your own instinct. Fukushima explains in the Japanese magazine *Pipers* that “Japanese traditional sound is not against sounds, it becomes integrated into nature ... not just listening to your sounds, it becomes resonance within nature...”²⁵ Therefore, silence should be incorporated before and after the piece, to

show that the resonance starts to form from somewhere, then dies away at the end. This phenomenon can be symbolized with the first note in *Mei*, E^b (m. 1). Fukushima says that this note is the most important sound in the entire piece. If you are trying to count the beat or to analyze, the performance will be unsuccessful. Rather, it is essential that E^b show and encompass the emotionality of the whole composition.

Unstable pitch. Another identifiable reflection of nature's asymmetrical elements in *Mei* is its use of unstable timbre. Western music seeks tones with exact pitch and purity, no "noise." In contrast, the Japanese aesthetic considers noise and unstable pitch as beautiful and a true reflection of nature. The score (p. 23) uses *portamento* to indicate unstable pitch (mm. 5–6, 8, 10–11, and 13–14) and arrows to make quarter tones (mm. 7, 9, and 12) and to bend the pitch up or down from the printed notes. Fukushima mentioned that the notation is only a suggestion; to have a successful performance, the player needs to become one with nature, rather than striving to produce a perfect quarter tone. This reflects not only the Japanese aesthetic, but also the characteristics of Japanese bamboo flutes.

Timbral variety. Exploration of different timbres on flutes is also considered a reflection of nature. Performances on Japanese traditional instruments tend to incorporate a variety of natural sounds, such as the *shakuhachi*'s imitation of a crane's call or the *muraiki* technique, an explosion of air to imitate strong wind in winter. The vast variety of flutes in Japan, such as *ryuteki*, *komabue*, *kagurabue*, *shakuhachi*, and *noh-kan*, also display timbral variety. All are made of bamboo, and each has a distinctive timbre. Therefore, Fukushima used distinct timbral effects in *Mei*—a somewhat airy tone, pitch instability, grace notes—along with harmonics (mm. 25–26), flutter tonguing (m. 35 and 41), and key clicks (m. 36).

Jo-Ha-Kyu

The Japanese art form principle *Jo-Ha-Kyu* (序—破—急), a three-part form moving from slow to fast, can be seen in *Mei*. It is widespread in many Japanese traditional arts, such as *Noh* theatre, haiku, flower arrangement, the tea ceremony, landscape gardening, and calligraphy. Literally, "jo" means introduction, "ha" is the rapid acceleration of tempo, and "kyu" a continuing accelerando followed by an abrupt calmness at the end. The score and Example 1 (below) show three sections divided by *ma*: *Jo* (mm. 1–15), *Ha* (mm. 16–51), and *Kyu* (mm. 52–66). Tempo markings also delineate the principle's form: *Jo* starts with *Lento e rubato*; *Ha* is marked *Più mosso*; and *Kyu* becomes slower, or *Meno mosso*.

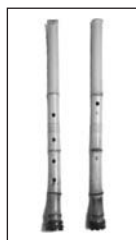
Measure	1-15		16-51		52-66	
Western Form	A		B		A'	
Tempo Marking	<i>Lento e rubato</i>		<i>Più mosso</i>		<i>Meno mosso</i>	
Japanese Form	Ma	Jo	Ma	Ha	Ma	Kyu

Example 1: Form of *Mei*.

Western formal analysis would indicate a clear ABA' based on whatever thematic, motivic, and rhythmic material is being used. Sections A and A' use similar motivic ideas and melodic contour, but they are rhythmically different. Section B uses different motivic materials.

Fukushima indicated that m. 61 in section A' is a misprint: the score should be a half-note B^b, not a half-note A, which is the same gesture as in m. 12 in section A.⁶ Therefore, it should have a downward glissando between a half-note B^b and A.

Main Influence from *Noh*



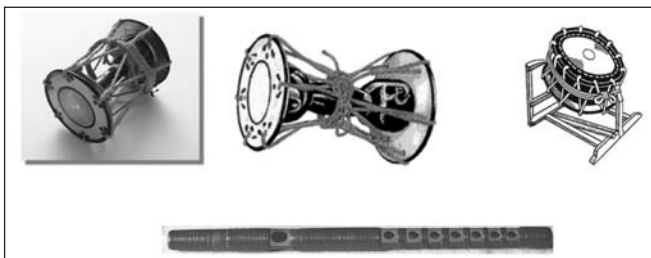
Shakuhachi.

Some writers have mistakenly assumed that Fukushima's *Mei* is meant to sound like the performance style of a *shakuhachi* (尺八).⁷ This type of Japanese traditional bamboo flute has become more popular since the appearance of Toru Takemitsu's *November Steps for Shakuhachi, Biwa, and Orchestra* (1967), composed for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's 125th anniversary. That work was sensational to Western ears, with its mixture of sounds from East and West. Although I believe the *shakuhachi* incorporates aspects of Japanese aesthetics, Fukushima pointed out that the *shakuhachi* is not a favorite instrument of his, and that he did not intend to employ its sounds in *Mei*. Rather, he stated that the main influence in *Mei* is the Japanese traditional theatre, *Noh*.

Noh (能) means "skill" or "to be able." It originated in the 14th century as an exhibition of talent combining elements of dance, drama, music, and poetry into one highly aesthetic art form, comparable to the Western musical. It uses five story categories: god plays, warrior plays, woman plays, miscellaneous plays, and demon plays. The music of *Noh* is created by an onstage instrumental orchestra, called *hayashi* (囃子), which consists of four instruments: *noh-kan* (transverse flute), *kotsuzumi* (shoulder drum), *otsuzumi* (side drum), and *taiko* (stick drum).



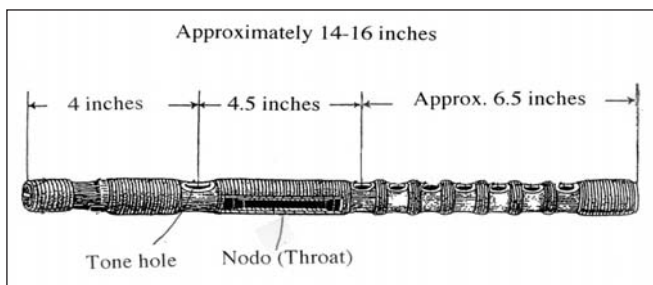
An onstage orchestra is among elements in traditional *Noh* theatre.



Hayashi instruments, clockwise from left, *kotsuzumi*, *otsuzumi*, *taiko*, and the bamboo transverse flute called *noh-kan*.

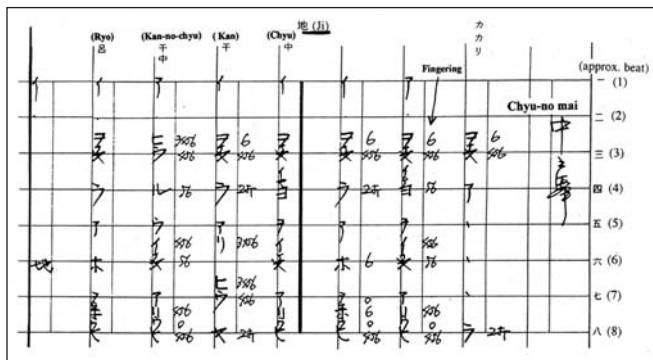
Noh-kan influences

Fukushima stated that he had the *noh-kan* (bamboo transverse flute) in his mind for the sound of *Mei*. The construction of this instrument creates an otherworldly sound. The *noh-kan*, one of the most remarkable flutes in the Japanese flute family, is a transverse flute made of 100-year-old smoked bamboo (*susudake*), with seven finger holes and a mouth hole. Generally, flutes produce an octave above the normal pitch when overblown, but the *noh-kan* overblows flat, at a different degree of flatness depending on the fingering. It has neither a definite scale nor definite tonal relationships among its individual pitches. This phenomenon comes from the insertion of a thin bamboo pipe, called *nodo* (literally “throat”), between the mouth hole and the finger holes, upsetting normal acoustical properties. (See Example 2.) The construction of the *noh-kan* thus creates unstable scales, which Fukushima indicated in Western notation as quarter tones and *portamento* to produce an “otherworldly” sound in *Mei*.

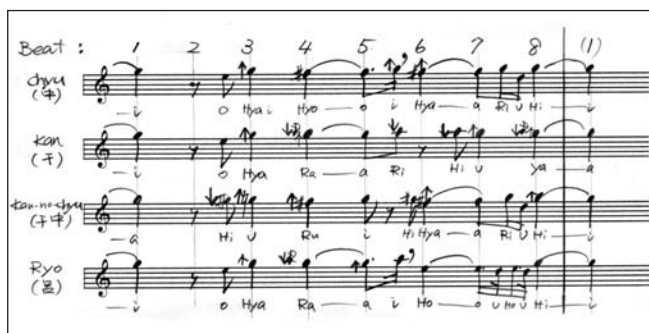


Example 2: *Noh-kan* construction.

Fukushima also used the unstable pitch quality of the *noh-kan* to enhance the distinctive sound world in *Mei*. Example 3 shows *noh-kan* notation, a repeating series of patterns called *ji* (地). It reads from right to left and top to bottom, and consists of four different patterns: *chyu* (中), *kan* (干), *kan-no-chyu* (干中), and *ryo* (呂). Example 4 shows my transcription of *noh-kan* patterns from Example 3 on my own *noh-kan*, with the unstable pitches in various places indicated by up and down arrows. There are similarities in the use of quarter notes between the patterns and the first page of *Mei*. An example of this is the fourth beat of m. 7 in *Mei* and the fourth beat of the *kan* pattern. Both use grace notes as timbral gestures, which is characteristic of the *noh-kan*.



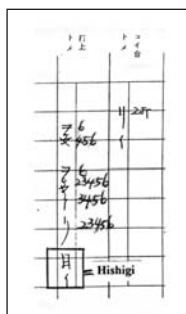
Example 3: *Noh-kan* notation.



Example 4: Transcription of *Noh-kan* patterns.

Noh-kan Hishigi and Iwabue

Hishigi is a special *noh-kan* sound or gesture: the highest, shrillest note on the *noh-kan* (see Example 5). It is used generally at the beginning and end of *Noh* plays, and otherwise to punctuate dramatic high points. Fukushima hears a close timbral resemblance between *hishigi* and high B, C, and D on the modern flute. This reflection of *hishigi* can be heard in *Mei* in the high B, mm. 24–25, and mm. 48–51.



Example 5: *Hishigi* in *noh-kan* notation.

Fukushima agreed with many scholars that there is a similarity of timbre and content between *hishigi* on *noh-kan* and *iwabue* (石笛).⁸ *Iwabue*, literally “stone flute” in English, was a type of flute used in Japan in the Jomon period (縄文時代), 13,000 BCE to 300 BCE. The *iwabue* is created by nature in various stones 1–1.5 cm in diameter that contain a single hole. Although many *iwabue* have been excavated at ancient tomb sites in Japan, others can be found by rivers or beaches. Nio or gull shellfish dissolve the surface of the stone to live inside of it, creating the hole.⁹



Iwabue, or stone flute

The *iwabue* produces a very pure and lively high-frequency sound, which resembles the *hishigi* on the *noh-kan*. The Japanese employed it for a shamanistic ceremony that attempts to contact ancient spirits in the other world. Some shrines in Japan still use *iwabue* for the divine spirit ceremony called *Kami Oroshi* (神卸し).

Noh Play and Tomurai-bue

Spirits are evoked in *Noh* plays in the same way that Fukushima's *Mei* evokes Steinecke's spirit. The *Noh* play *Kiyotsune* is a good example. The story is about the family of Taira no Kiyotsune (Heike), who run away to the western Sea of Japan and are eventually defeated by the Genji family. With little chance to win, Kiyotsune, leader of the Heike, throws himself into the sea. Awatsu no Saburo, a servant of Kiyotsune, brings a memento to Kiyotsune's wife, and she mourns his death. When she falls into a daze after crying intensely, Kiyotsune's spirit comes to her in a dream. She begs him not to leave her alone. Kiyotsune tells her how much he suffered from the bloodbath of battle, but he is now saved by the teachings of Buddha and can set his mind at ease. Then he disappears into the dream.

When Kiyotsune's wife seeks to find some solace in her dream and Kiyotsune's spirit comes to the stage, the *noh-kan* begins to play, as if its sound can reach his spirit in the other world. This particular piece is called *Koi-no-Netori* (恋の音取) (Tuning for Love) in the *Noh* play: the wife reaching out to her dead husband and wishing for his spirit to be in peace.

Fukushima said that he believes the *Tomurai-bue* (弔い笛) legend. In Japanese culture, *tomurai* means to give solace and consolation to the spirit, and *bue* means flute. Therefore, Steinecke's spirit is being consoled each time *Mei* is performed, as inscribed in the music: "according to ancient Japanese legend it is believed that the sound of the flute can reach the other world in the beyond, when played with faithful intensity."¹⁰

Noh-kan Gestural Grace Notes

Mei incorporates many gestural grace notes. The *noh-kan* notation illustration (Example 3) shows only mnemonic syllables with fingering numbers and an approximate beat (eight beats) for the *noh-kan*. When you start learning the *noh-kan*, you must learn the *shoga* (唱歌), a special Japanese traditional method by which the sound of the *noh-kan* can be pronounced phonetically. You go to lessons to learn these four patterns (*ji*) first. The teacher sings one pattern, and the student repeats until it is memorized. In this process, the flutist also learns the approximate pitches and rhythms.

Example 4 is the Western transcription of how I sing the pattern, including approximate pitch, rhythms, and mnemonic syllables, with approximate beat, which I learned from my teacher, Takanori Fujita, in Japan. Once you can sing and play the patterns perfectly from memory, you start to feel the pattern in your own way and play additional gestural grace notes. My teacher's demonstration, in Example 6, shows how grace notes may be added. Other recordings may have many more grace notes. In *Mei*, Fukushima notated *glissando/portamento* in the first beat in m. 16 (B–C#) and the second beat in m. 17 (B–C#) to create *noh-kan* gestural effects. Other grace notes, such as the accented ones on the first and third beats of m. 20, also reflect *noh-kan* gestural effects and should be treated in this manner.

Example 6: *Noh-kan* pattern transcription with grace notes.

Within the *noh-kan* gestural manner, several grace notes confuse the Western ear. My general recommendation is to listen to *Noh* theatre music, especially performances in the *noh-kan*. Fukushima provided grace note clarifications as well.

In m. 7, the grace note to the quarter note on the fourth beat should read one quarter tone above F natural; I suggest fingering F# and adding R1 rim.

In m. 9, the grace note to the dotted eighth note on the first beat should read one quarter tone below F natural; I suggest fingering F#, then adding R1 while lipping or blowing the air down to flatten the grace note.

In m. 17, the grace note to the eighth note (C#) on the third beat should read C natural.

In m. 30, all of the tied notes after the grace note should read C sharp.

In m. 32, the grace note to the sixteenth note on the second beat should read B natural.

In m. 36, the key-click sound effect (key slap) should not include any actual tone; I suggest popping L3 and L4 on A^b and L3 on F#.

In m. 38, the sixteenth note after the grace notes on the third beat should read F natural.



In m. 38, the dotted eighth note after the grace note on the fourth beat should read B natural.

In m. 59, the grace note on the third beat should read one quarter tone above F natural.



Noh-kan Rhythm

Section A in *Mei* and the basic *noh-kan* pattern are rhythmically similar. Example 4 (page 20) shows that each phrase begins with a rest on beat 2, which creates great intensity to the first sounding note. Similarly, the phrases starting in mm. 2, 4, 6, and 8 in *Mei* begin with a rest, to gather power for the sounding notes. One could think of these rests as small levels of *ma*, before the intensity picks up toward the sounding notes. Also, the use of syncopation in Example 4 finds parallels in *Mei*.

All these reasons show the appropriateness of employing the “otherworldly” sound of the *noh-kan* when performing *Mei*. It expresses Fukushima’s mourning of Steinecke, as if the flute were calling his spirit to appear on stage.

Japanese Titles

Below is Fukushima’s flute composition list,¹⁴ showing his tendency to use Japanese titles for most of his flute compositions. For example, *Chū-u* (中有) is a term from Buddhism meaning the duration, about 49 days, of a deceased person’s journey to the other world.

- *Requiem* (鎮魂歌) for solo flute (1956)
- *Ekāgura* (エカーグラ) for flute and piano (1957)
- *Kadha Karuna* (伽陀迦廬那) Poem of Compassion for two flutes, piano, and drum (1960); [revised for flute and piano (1961)]
- *Shizu-uta* (志都歌) for female chorus, two flutes, and harp (1961)
- *Three pieces from “Chū-u”* (中有) for flute and piano (1961)
- *Hi-Kyō* (飛鏡 The Flying Mirror) for flute solo, strings, and percussion (1962); second movement is *Mei*.
- *Mei* (冥) for solo flute (1962)
- *Shun-san* (春讚 A Hymn to Spring) for solo flute (1969)
- *Rai* (籟) for flute and piano (1971)

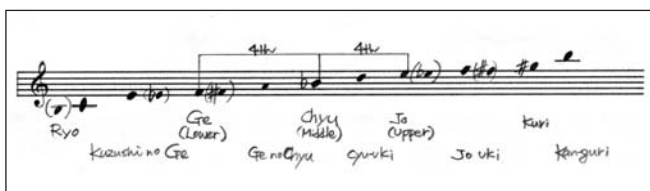
Other Noh Musical influences

Other characteristics of *Noh* music can be seen in *Mei*, such as influences from *Utai* (謡) and the use of *kakegoe* (掛声).

Utai

The main actor, second actor, and chorus participate in *Utai* (*Noh* chant), the vocal part in *Noh*. With its special modality, quality of voice, and melody, *Utai* is fundamental to evoking the distinctive mood of *Noh*. There are two general types of reciting style, based on the type of story: *tsuyo-gin* (strong reciting), a way of vocalizing with a solemn and vibrant tone, and *yowa-gin* (weak reciting), which is more melodic and sentimental.

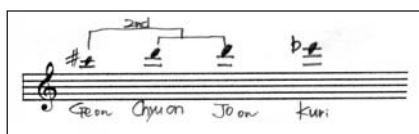
Sections A and A' in *Mei* reflect the *yowa-gin* style from *utai*. *Yowa-gin* uses three different scales: the *yowa* scale, based on three fundamental pitches (upper, middle, low), as shown in Example 6; *sashi* scale, *Chyu* (B^b)–*Jo* (E–E^b area)–*Jo Uki* (F–F[#] area), used for recitative segments in the *Noh* play; and *kuzushi* scale, *Ge no Chyu* (A)–*Ge* (F–F[#] area)–*Kuzushi no Ge* (D–E^b area)–*Ryo* (C–B area). Both sections of *Mei* use a small portion of a modified *yowa* scale.¹¹ All of the scales have rules for how notes may move.



Example 6: *Yowa-gin* scale in *Mei*

In general, *yowa-gin* has an approximate span of two octaves. Example 6 is a scale adaptation from sections A and A' of *Mei*, including three fundamental pitches: F–F[#] area, B^b, E–E^b area, a perfect fourth apart. The score shows that section A consists of approximately two octaves, low C to middle B. Within this range, one *yowa-gin* characteristic is to use *portamento*, sliding note to note, when the singer and story want to create a quiet atmosphere. Fukushima employs a quiet *portamento* masterfully in mm. 5–6, 8, 10–11, and 13–14 in section A, and mm. 55 and 57 in section A'.

Another stereotypical note movement in *yowa-gin* is to leap from the lowest note of the three so-called fundamental notes (*Ge*) down to the lowest note (*Ryo*), using the *kuzushi* scale.¹² The score in m. 14 illustrates use of the *kuzushi* scale, part of the *yowa* scale, to create an unstable mood. In *Mei*, Fukushima uses the lower note slightly sharper (between F and F[#]) to create an unstable mood and move down to the lowest note (low C) in the scale. In short, he adopts the characteristics of *yowa-gin* style in sections A and A' to create a quiet, unstable mood, evoking the spirit of Steinecke.



Example 7: *Tsuyo-gin* scale in *Mei*

Within about five minutes, *Mei* for solo flute reveals many Japanese beliefs and aesthetics, elements of *Noh* theatre, and Fukushima's own life reflections molded by his memory of death in the war, his interactions within the *Jikken Kobo*, his relationships with Steinecke and Gazzelloni, and his mourning of Steinecke.

By contrast, the beginning of section B (mm. 16–23) in *Mei* adopts the *tsuyo-gin*. *Tsuyo-gin* consists of a set of three fundamental notes, the first two a half step apart, the second two almost the same pitch: C#, D, D. *Tsuyo-gin* is characteristically performed with a strong, wide vibrato, so the intonation becomes vague and the intervals even narrower. The beginning of section B in *Mei* therefore requires a player to employ a strong and wider vibrato as well as to think of narrower intervals.

Kakegoe

Kakegoe, a distinctive feature of *Noh* music, also can be heard in *Mei*. This vocal cue is made by *kotsuzumi*, *otsuzumi*, and *taiko* drummers, who signal the singers or the flutist (*noh-kan*) to keep everyone together. They also signal changes in tempo or dynamics.

There are four vocal cues or calls: *yo*, *ho*, *iya*, and *yoi*. *Yo* and *ho* occur regularly in *ji* patterns and are usually written *ya* and *ha* in *Noh* scores. *Yo* is delivered before the first and fifth beats; *ho*, before the third and seventh beats.¹³ *Iya* is used at the end of a section and the beginning of a new section in *Noh*. Listening to *Noh* CDs shows that the “i” in the *iya* pattern usually has a short accent, whereas the “ya” is on a lower pitch than the “i,” takes a longer accent, and is made with a crescendo.

To my ear, the sound effect of the *iya* pattern can be heard in *Mei*. A good example is in m. 19. It displays an accent on the first note, D, which would be considered “i,” then a long C# as “ya-” with crescendo. As the score shows, that it is the end of the phrase, and in m. 20 the new phrase begins. Measure 24 shows a similar effect: C with an accent as “i” and a long B as “ya.”

Seize the Moment

Mei is like a short biography of Fukushima himself. Within about five minutes, *Mei* for solo flute reveals many Japanese beliefs and aesthetics, elements of *Noh* theatre, and Fukushima's own life reflections molded by his memory of death in the war, his interactions within the *Jikken Kobo*, his relationships with Steinecke and Gazzelloni, and his mourning of Steinecke.

In the end, Fukushima said, “Once you have internalized the music, please do not think about the bar lines or counting beats, as if you are looking at a diagram... . The performance should be unique every time, with the performer's own intensity, because performers and listeners are interacting at the moment... . If every performance is the same, the music becomes boring.” He believes that music gets its life through performance.

Score of *Mei*

The composer also said that performance is 一期一会 (*ichigo ichie*). *Ichigo ichie* is a term from the Japanese tea ceremony, meaning that when you attend, whether as guest or server, you must faithfully perform your role as if it were the last opportunity of your life. You act as if it were your only opportunity. You should make your performance different each time, and seize the moment to play at your best. *

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Author's Note: Many thanks to Dr. David Lasocki, Indiana University, for spending so much time on editing the final drafts of this article, and to Professor Leone Buyse, Rice University, for supporting this project.

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Bonita Boyd, Leone Buyse, Ervin Monroe, Takao Saeki, and Fenwick Smith.

Editor's Note: This article is adapted from a presentation given at the 35th NFA Convention in August 2007.

Endnotes

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