

CD Program Notes by Stephen Truelove  
for

**MUSIC MEMORIUM FOR KOBUN CHINO OTOGAWA ROSHI**

The calligraphy on the inside cover of the CD entitled **MUSIC MEMORIUM FOR KOBUN CHINO OTOGAWA ROSHI** was done by Kobun Chino in the summer of 1991 at Woodside, California, where he was living at the time. When I arrived for a visit, Kobun was in a kitchen, happily mixing something in a bowl. I didn't know at the time, but he was mixing the paint for a calligraphy. Kobun requested that I play on the Bosendorfer grand piano in the ball room of the Spanish style mansion he was living in at the time, while he went up stairs. He was ill with "shingles" at the time, and I assumed he was resting. He returned 3 ½ hours later, and when I was leaving we had the photo taken which is on the front cover of the CD. You can see in the photo he is holding a rolled up paper, in which the calligraphy is contained. At the time the photo was taken, I still didn't know he had done a calligraphy to surprise me with as a going away present. When he gave it to me soon after the photo, he said, "Hang this near your piano, and when your students ask what it means, tell them that it has to do with the importance of practice." I opened it later that evening, and only recently, many years later, found someone who knew someone who could partially translate it. This is the translation I was given: "Academic accomplishment is from an accomplished master. Practice begins with belief. Training occurs from exercise. Excellence (Honor) occurs from training. Miraculous change is from excellence. Gracefulness is from miracles. There is a saying, "A thousand accomplishments always start from one step, even a master's step."

Tamuke means "An Offering". It is a traditional Zen shakuhachi flute piece that is played at Buddhist memorials. The implication of the title is "Safe Journey to the Other Shore."

In 1982 my wife told me we were separating. I called Kobun to talk with him about my situation. During the conversation he requested me to write a piece of music with "long breaths which can bring peace to people's minds." It was to be for a ceremony for everyone who had ever passed away from incurable diseases. When I thought of this ceremony, I thought of Shostakovich, who died of an incurable disease that progressively debilitated his muscular system, and his book "Testimony of an Eyewitness", in which he expressed regret that Soviet Science had been unable to conquer disease and aging. When considering the dedication for my work entitled **REQUIEM**, I thought not only of Shostakovich, but of all people who have passed away.

The physical gestures, long silences without visible motion from the performers, and tranquil demeanor they should cultivate during performance, are very important expressive aspects of performing **REQUIEM**. The generally tranquil character of the long melodic "lines" (lengthy in time as well as space in the musical score) is another important aspect, as are the chords in perfect fifths which emerge from the gradually decaying dynamic that ends the piece. This is balanced by tension at the beginning of the work expressed in contrary chromatic motion and never equaled throughout the remainder of the piece. **REQUIEM** can thus be perceived as a "response" to the knowledge of aging, disease, and death, by moving into varied modes of tranquility and acceptance without emotional defeat, but rather by expanding one's spirit.

**REQUIEM** was originally begun as a work for 3 violins in a triangular seating arrangement, surrounded by 12 temple bells with different pitches. After composing the first few bars of this work I learned that 12 such differently pitched temple bells were not available. I then retained the music for 3 violins up to that point and finished the work without temple bells. I have just recently completed a new version of **Requiem** with bells added, through the acquisition of computer software that allows sampled temple bells to be combined with the previous strings only recording of this work. Both versions, **REQUIEM**, and **REQUIEM WITH BELLS**, are included on the CD.

My piece for soprano and piano entitled **SONG CYCLE II: THE GLORIOUS MOMENT** uses a text based upon 3 poems by Kobun:

"The sound of falling, leaves...  
Is it a silver deer  
along this moonlight ridge?"

"In the moon's shadow  
I play with many ancient spirits."

"A song of crickets...  
my large bed  
upon a flower field."

**KOBUN'S MUSIC FROM FLOWERS AND BUTTERFLIES** for solo clarinet comes from my opera called **FLOWERS AND BUTTERFLIES**. The text for this work comes from the poetry of Angie Boissevain, a long time student and friend of Kobun. Her instrument is the clarinet, so during the course of the opera the clarinet player is a "wise man/spiritual teacher" who represents Kobun. The music and message of this work are for the spiritual enlightenment of all who experience it. The "plot" of the opera is the transmission of enlightened consciousness from one mind to another, and the transformative relationship with Mother Nature that goes along with this process. Setting: Center stage is a sacred pole supported by 7 ropes. The stage background is a nature scene with a meadow between two hillsides. It is a multi-media work, with the flow of images projected upon 2 large screens (which for the stage backdrop) being precisely coordinated with the choreography of the musician/actors: The Pianist/Composer/Creator who must both conceive and participate in the creation and performance of his own work; The Clarinet Player, a Wise Man/Spiritual Teacher; The Singer, a Woman who has transformative experiences; and The Speaker, the Woman's friend and helper, all of whom wear attire of Native American design.

The concluding text at the end of the work reads as follows: "With newborn grace your hands, butterfly-size and delicate as breath, copy out gestures of redemption, mudras of peace, of truth, of random tiny blessings."

My new work **CAMPANOLOGY IN MEMORIUM KOBUN CHINO OTOGAWA ROSHI** is for temple bells realized in Electronic Media. In addition to being created for Kobun and in his memory, this piece was also composed for all the people who asked me for a recording of my **REQUIEM** because they heard it was composed at Kobun Chino's request. It is dedicated to Kobun, everyone who knew him, and everyone whom he said he has "known, from the endless past through the limitless future".

Campanology means "the art of bell ringing". When composing this piece, I have continually remembered and attempted to create in the spirit of Kobun Chino's vibrant and spontaneous approach to every aspect of his life and art, where every moment appears coming from a realm of timelessness, where moments and movements, from the sudden and brief, to those extended towards eternity, are all infused with a unique and universal quality, one through which Kobun's radiant and wonderful smile could appear at any time.

You may listen to this piece with eyes open or closed, and if you wish you may visualize with the sounds a celestial pantheon of Bodhisattvas, each with his or her particular bell, each ringing again and again in celebration of Kobun's recent life on earth and welcoming him to his new home on the other shore.