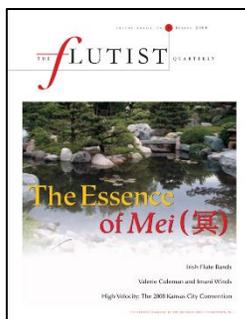




Introduction to the Article - *The Essence of Mei: An Exploration of the Inspiration Behind Mei through Interviews with the Composer* by Dr. Mihoko Watanabe

Includes some reflection from GPFS member Emily Stanek on her experience studying Mei with Dr. Watanabe and listening to the performance.



Link to Article

[*The Essence of Mei: An Exploration of the Inspiration Behind Mei through Interviews with the Composer*](#)

By Dr. Mihoko Watanabe. Originally published in Spring, 2008 NFA Quarterly



This article was originally published in the Spring, 2008 NFA Quarterly. It is published in this August, 2021 issue of the Greater Portland Flute Society's (GPFS) newsletter, *The Portland Piper*, because of the generous permission of our 2021 [Fall Guest Artist](#), the author Dr. Mihoko Watanabe, and the National Flute Association (NFA). **Access the article by clicking on the link above and join us for the GPFS fall event October, 23rd with registration opening in September.**

Further, GPFS continues to encourage our members to also join NFA. Please see a description of their member benefits below and visit their website. GPFS has routinely called attention to the activities and resources of NFA and will continue to do so. A recent example is our review of the Emmanuel Pahud *Play with a Pro* resource available through NFA for a very low cost of around \$40 for lifetime access.

****National Flute Association (NFA) Member Benefits:** There are so many reasons to become a member of The National Flute Association! You'll become part of a generous, supportive community of professionals, students, amateurs, educators, and performers from around the world, and be able to take advantage of the NFA's network of services that include mentorship and learning activities, special events, an annual convention, and a subscription to *The Flutist Quarterly*. You'll also receive an array of benefits including access to the NFA Music Library (the world's second largest collection of flute music), Grove Music Online, and the Naxos Music Library, as well as discounts for things like instrument insurance, SmartMusic for Students, and Oxford University Press. There's so

much more! Visit nfaonline.org/membership-benefits/benefits-of-membership for information and to join today!

Reflections on Studying Kazuo Fukushima's *Mei* with Dr. Mihoko Watanabe

By GPFS Board Member Dr. Emily Stanek



The first time I learned *Mei* by Kazuo Fukushima, I was a master's student (somewhere between 1999-2001). I struggled to learn the piece and I did not feel an immediate connection, as I do with other pieces. Fast forward ten years later (2011), I had the opportunity to study the piece again, now with Dr. Mihoko Watanabe.

Studying *Mei* with Dr. Mihoko Watanabe was eye opening to me and revealing into the deeper meaning of the piece. The experience expanded my knowledge of some Japanese concepts, which brought to life the piece in a new way for me. I found a deep connection and respect that continues today.

One concept that continues to come to my mind, is the concept of *Ma*. This word can be described as a “pause in time” yet it encompasses a deeper meaning, mindfulness. This concept can help a flutist to be more mindful of coming from sound into silence and from silence into sound. I believe that being tuned into the concept of *Ma* is more for the flutist than the audience.

There are many more concepts I learned, but I encourage you to read Dr. Watanabe's article on the piece to see for yourselves! Also, come hear her play this piece at her recital in the fall. I'm thrilled that she is [our 2021 fall guest artist](#).

While I had the fortunate opportunity to study *Mei* with Dr. Watanabe during my doctoral studies as well as hear her perform many pieces during my time at Ball State, I was never able to hear her perform *Mei*. The journey of reacquainting myself with the piece and Dr. Watanabe's article was both rich and exciting. Yet, hearing her perform the piece, made the pieces come together much more vividly.

Her full and rich sound breaks the barriers of color to connect the gap between the modern flute and the Nohkan flute. The second section was intense both rhythmically as well in regard to color and vibrato speed as she demonstrated how the modern flute can mimic Nohkan.

The moments of calm and quiet (“*Ma*”) throughout the piece caused me to realize how our mindfulness can tangibly come across in *Mei*. The last note, just a whisper, sent chills up and down my arms and I felt as if I am hearing the piece as it could and ought to be played.

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We see in this symbol not only the outline of a door but a door that is open to light, thus enabling growth, sparking creativity, permitting freedom. This is Ma – the space between the edges, between the beginning and the end, the space and time in which we experience life. Ma is filled with nothing but energy and feeling. It speaks of silence as opposed to sound, of lack as opposed to excess. It is the momentary pause in speech needed to convey meaningful words, the silence between the notes that make the music... There is a need for Ma in every aspect and every day of our lives. From [Unique Japan](#)

Index of Commercial Members

See these listings on this GPFS webpage – <https://gpfs.org/Commercial-Membership>

GPFS acknowledges with gratitude the many years of support from our Commercial Members. It is because of their excellence that the GPFS mission can excel and celebrate our 37th year of extraordinary programming for the greater Portland area, Oregon and Pacific Northwest region. Please find their business information on the [GPFS Commercial Member webpage](#) as well as on the [last pages of this event program](#).

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