

richard johnson

Musashi



for solo flute, digital audio, and video

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Program Notes

Miyamoto Musashi, a seventeenth century *ronin* of legendary renown, is the founder of the *Niten-ryu* school of swordsmanship. He devoted his life to honing his skills in the Way of the sword, winning dozens of duels. So great was the perfection of his skill that his late duels were fought only with a *boken*, or wooden sword, regardless of his opponent's weapon. In 1645, lying ill and near death in a cave where he had taken to a hermit's existence, he dictated the key concepts of his Way to a disciple. This document, *Go Rin No Sho* ("*Book of Five Rings*"), is still read today as a guide to strategy in any discipline.

Musashi for solo flute, digital audio, and video is guided by excerpts from this work. Musical material is inspired by *Honshirabe*, a prominent work in *shakubachi* repertoire. Throughout the piece, the fixed part is derived from samples of *taiko* and *shakubachi*, the metallic clash and scrape of swords, and a reading of the Fudō-myōō sutra. Elements of *taiko* performance are also featured in both parts, particularly the concept of *oroshi*, a gesture in which the interval (or *ma*) between sonic events is reduced over time.

In its earliest form, *Musashi* was commissioned by Dark Matter Kansas City. Rebecca Ashe performed the Dark Matter version under the title *Orbs of Galileo*.

Maria Harman performed the world premiere as part of KC Fringe Fest's Experimental Music Showcase.

Text from A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS by Miyamoto Musashi, translated by Victor Harris. Copyright © 1974 by Victor Harris. Used by permission of The Overlook Press, New York, NY. All rights reserved.



Performance Notes

Notation and Stylistic Notes

In order to give a sense of temporal freedom to the performer, a large portion of *Musashi* is notated spatially, without a rhythmic pulse. In these sections, durations are held to the next breath mark. Articulation and spacing between adjacent notes is at the performer's discretion, though slurs should be acknowledged. The performer's timing with the fixed media part does not need to be precise.

Entire systems of spatially notated music represent approximately twenty seconds. Barlines on these systems are placed approximately every five seconds, with corresponding clicks on the click track. Again, timing does not need to be precise.

Stylistically, the performer should feel free to emulate the qualities of *shakubachi* performance to whatever degree he or she sees fit.

For listening, I strongly recommend:

Honshirabe, performed by Kohachiro Miyata, from *Shakubachi – The Japanese Flute: Nonesuch Explorer Series*.

Toru Takemitsu: "Opening Credits – Main Title" from the score to Akira Kurosawa's film, *Ran*.

Technical Notes

Musashi is ideally performed with the performer amplified with reverb added.

Musashi is performed with an accompanying video.

The video (available at www.composerjohnson.com/musashi.html or by contacting richard) includes 5.1 audio that is organized thusly: 1 & 2 are Stereo L/R; 5 is a click track for the performer.

If you have any questions, please contact richard via email at richard@composerjohnson.com

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Flute

♩ = 112 (tongue pizz) (diamond notehead denotes airy/breathy)

fp < *ff* *p* < *f* *fp* *mp* ord. → air

Audio

METALLIC - Swords

TAIKO

out of time...

imprecise pitch...

... becoming a dull rumble

5

~ 6" **A** ♩ = 60 8" 6.5" 12.5"

p

TAIKO HARMONIC

FLUTE

TAIKO HARMONIC

11

7.5" **B** (in spatially-notated passages, durations are held until breath marks)

♩ = 60 accel. ----- ♩ = 120

RESONANCE

Musashi

16

cresc. *ff* *mf*

$\text{♩} = 60$ *accel.* $\text{♩} = 120$

5"

20"

mp

WITH METAL

RESONANCE

20"

26

pp *fp* *mf* *pp*

air *ord.* *air*

8va *8va*

20"

D *8va* ----- , (chromatic scale) air → ord. ,

ff *p* *f* *p* *p*

20"

34 *8va* ----- , *b2* → , *e* , *b2* *fr* -----

pp *mp* *mf* *ppp*

SHAKUHACHI TAIKO RIM AND CHANT

20"

E *Improvise percussive rhythms within a quarter step of the given note* -----

ff *p* *p-mf*

RESONANCE

Musashi

20"

Repeat four-note patterns with increasing speed

42

p *f*

FLUTE

20"

F

mp *mp*

ICY METALLIC
RESONANCE

20"

50

SHAKUHACHI

20"

G

p

SHAKUHACHI

20"

58

f *mp* *fp* *mf*

SHAKUHACHI

20"

H

pp *mp*

SHAKUHACHI

METALLIC BIWA

TAIKO, distant

ICY METALLIC RESONANCE

20"

Repeat three-note patterns with increasing speed and intensity

66

f *pp* *ff*

RESONANCE

I ♩ = 60 *accel.*

f *pp* *mp* *mp*

METALLIC - Swords
METALLIC - Gong
TAIKO

imprecise pitch...

76 (*accel.*) ♩ = 140

f *p* *mf* *pp*

82 ♩ = 47 *accel.*

ff *p* *f* *pp* *mp* *mf*³

air → *ord.*

(*accel.*) -----

88 *ff*

Improvise brief gestures of furious activity using this scale...

"TEMPLE BELL" 4

(*accel.*) ----- $\text{♩} = 80$

93 (cont. improv)

Increase intensity, becoming more aggressive, slicing -----

SWORDS

20"

J *8va* -----

ff

RESONANCE

"TEMPLE BELL"

Musashi
20"

102

mf

20"

K

p < mf

p *mf*

ord.

20"

110

air

pp

p

Musashi
20"

L

mp

20"

118

mf

20"

M

p

126

Musical score for measures 126-129. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a whole note G4 (marked *pp*), followed by a half note A4 (marked *p*), and then a whole note G4. The piano accompaniment features a sustained chord of Bb3 and G3 in the right hand, and a bass line with notes Bb2 and G2 in the left hand.

20"

N

Musical score for measures 130-133. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a whole note G4 (marked *pp*), followed by a half note A4 (marked *mp*), a half note Bb4 (marked *f*), and a whole note G4 (marked *p*). The final measure features a whole note G4 (marked *pp*) with the instruction "air". The piano accompaniment has a sustained chord of Bb3 and G3 in the right hand, and a bass line with notes Bb2 and G2 in the left hand.

134

Musical score for measure 134. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line consists of a single whole note G4 (marked *f*). The piano accompaniment features a sustained chord of Bb3 and G3 in the right hand, and a bass line with notes Bb2 and G2 in the left hand.



About the Composer

Richard Johnson is a multimedia artist and composer whose interest in music was piqued during a childhood heavily impacted by film. Equal parts Kurosawa and Spielberg combined to create his ongoing interest in culture and history, the music of Takemitsu and Williams, and an obsession with mystery, adventure, and storytelling. This blend of interests is most clearly present in his set of pieces for soloists, electronics, and video entitled *Quaerere Sententias*.

Richard's music has been performed throughout the United States and internationally, and has been presented at events such as SEAMUS, Electronic Music Midwest, Electro-Acoustic Barn Dance, SCI conferences, and the *Festival Internacional Punto de Encuentro* in Spain.

In 2012, Richard received his DMA from the University of Missouri-Kansas City where he studied with Chen Yi, James Mobberley, Paul Rudy, and Zhou Long. He also holds degrees from the Hartt School at University of Hartford (MM) and West Chester University of Pennsylvania (BM).

For more information, please visit www.composerjohnson.com.