

Program Note for *Variations on Mel's Song*

Variations on Mel's Song are dedicated to the memory of my late Zen teacher, Sojun Mel Weitsman Roshi, one of the most eminent Zen masters of the last fifty years, usually addressed as "Mel" by his many friends and students. Mel was an avid recorder player, and for many years we enjoyed playing chamber music together. Sometimes we played with a second player, Rick, and *Variations on Mel's Song* began as a duet for Mel and our friend. Recently, I have revised it into a piece for two flutes. The theme, "Mel's song", is a gentle, lilting melody. The variations gradually become livelier, only to be interrupted by a very slow variation. The quick variations then resume and accelerate into a sudden climax--then silence. The second flute takes up the alto flute for a final quiet variation. The long silences that had featured in the middle slow variation are resumed, and the piece comes to a quiet end.