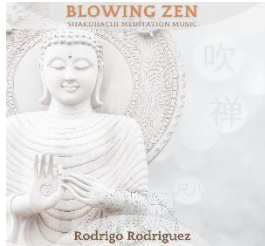


Rodrigo Rodriguez

Blowing Zen



Water, wind, breath, rustling leaves, emotions, and music. They are all components of Rodrigo Rodriguez's new album *Blowing Zen*. Two words come to mind to describe this lavish eighteen track collection, traditional and timeless. Shakuhachi flute has a depth and tone like no other instrument and Rodriguez' craftsmanship brings a sonic wealth to the traditional songs as well as the original material on *Blowing Zen*. Rodrigo Rodriguez has nine albums to date, most of them calling upon Japanese or Asian traditional themes, but not always. Some of his song poems describe a single activity or a particular experience, but they all seem to coalesce into hauntingly beautiful music.

Most of the tunes on *Blowing Zen* are solitary melodies, but there are also natural elements in the mix. On the first cut *Autumn Moon*, you can barely hear the wind in the background, but the song holds up to the silver light. It is a quiet time of shadows and of pale blue perfection in this homage to the Children of the Moon.

There is something very old, but very animate about the tune *Buddha's Flute*. Rodrigo's prayer like soliloquy reminds us that music is but a gift. Only the winds, the birds, and man make music with an intentional purpose. Making the sounds of the earth, finding love, and praising one's God are all found in the music. If you listen closely, you can hear all three in this song.

A modern day folk tune is brought to life in *Fantasy of Oiwake*. High toned and melodious, the music is very animate and very bright. Although most Japanese folk songs are work songs, some of them are for boisterous gatherings and religious events. Rodrigo's *Fantasy of Oiwake* is a song of vivid day dreams and colorful musings. Come celebrate with me.

Ikkyu Soäjün or "Crazy Cloud" is the epitome of what most would think that Japanese flute song should sound like, myself included. It is a hauntingly rarified melody that echoes off deep canyons spiraling along and eventually making a home in your soul. It is gift from the heavens.

My Eyes Pour Out Tears bears a sweet sadness as it defines not sorrow, but a melodic bliss. A kind of rapture of the soul as it encounters the ultimate beauty. The bluest sky, the perfect blossom, or the music from one's heart. The tune is very delicate, but carries a hidden strength.

Asian cultures share thousands of similarities, but each one is defined by the result. Rodrigo finds beauty in the Teaching of Linji Yixian, a Chinese Buddhist scholar that was born around 800 CE and created the Chan Buddhist School. This musical reverence, like Linji's teachings, is not linear, but suggest a circumgyric journey of strife and anger. This song for me had an avant garde motif and it became a favorite for its uniqueness.

The Path to Liberation begins with Tibetan bowls and then the flute fades in like an unexpected visitor to take hold and draw you into a wonderful peacefulness. Soothing tones flow from the

tune like ripples in a pond. Each tiny distortion becomes part of the picture, amplifying and multiplying the reflections.

Each of the eighteen tracks creates its own phenomenal scenario. For quietude, for meditation, or just for a mellow background for other activities, *Blowing Zen* will do you well. All the songs are as light as they are soothing. Highly Listenable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews