

## For the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Hiroaki

In October of last year, I was visiting a friend of mine in Tokyo. She had lost her husband a few months previously, and as she told me her story, it reminded me of my own experience 20 years ago. She said, "I keep going because there are so many things I have to sort out, but once everything is done, I wish.....". She didn't finish but I understood exactly what she wanted to say. **She wanted to be with him, where he was.** I felt exactly the same when Hiroaki died.....

I came back to London on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, still remembering our conversation. It echoed in my mind, and made me hope that she will be able to recover from her loss, and she will be all right. Simultaneously, I recalled the loss of my own husband many years before.

Two days later, I opened an e-mail from another friend of mine (who had no link with my previous life with Hiroaki). Attached to it was an article entitled '**Addressed to Hiroaki Zakoji from "Ma chaise" by Katsuhiko Okada**'. It arrived completely out of the blue - it was shocking.... and incredible! As I started to read the old article, a vivid memory of Hiroaki (which I had tried hard to forget in the past), came flooding back. As I continued reading, tears began to stream down my face, though due to an appointment I had in central London, I had to leave. When the day was over I went to bed, but was unable to sleep at all as so many memories and thoughts of Hiroaki enveloped my mind.

I asked myself "Why is this all happening now?" These separate incidents did not seem to me to be mere coincidence. It really felt like it was something that Hiroaki's soul was doing, as if there was an energy passing between this world and the next. It seemed as though Hiroaki was telling me "Whatever you are doing, I am happy as long as you are happy but it is now 20 years since I passed away - Please try to remember me a little bit...!"

Come to think of it, **20 years is a long time.** It would cover one third or a quarter of a lifetime for most people; a milestone. The message from Hiroaki seemed to say that in this particular moment, I should not let the time pass without contemplation, for the sake of his soul, and for mine.

After this, my life has changed. In his lifetime, the existence of Hiroaki was overwhelming. He was somebody who would not take 'no' for an answer, when he really wanted something. Even now I feel the same, as if he were still immersed in my mind. My interest in my work and hobbies has been pushed to one side, and there is not a single day I spend without thinking about Hiroaki or doing something for him.

I picked up an old file containing a list of Hiroaki's works, concert reviews, essays and articles, which I have kept with me these 20 years. I also gathered some old tapes of his music which I seldom listen to, as it was too painful.

I sent a 'Thank You' letter to Katsuhiko Okada for writing the article who in turn replied with a very kind, polite response. Additionally, I contacted several old friends who had known Hiroaki; all were very kind to me, and I was very happy to have found them again, in particular [James Stevens](#). James was incredibly kind and visited my home where we spent time together, talking about Hiroaki. He advised me to translate the article which was written by Katsuhiko Okada, which developed into the project behind creating this site, a tribute to Hiroaki, in memory of Hiroaki Zakoji.

Hiroaki was a very special person; he was extremely hard-working, very talented and very advanced in his thoughts. One hand, his nature was contemplative, as reflected in many of his works. His premature interest in death, philosophy and Buddhism was uncommon in men of his age. On the other hand, he was quite a sportsman who loved skiing, a joyful fellow who loved joking. Contradiction was his character; he was introvert and extrovert at the same time. He was international yet patriotic, he was innocent yet mature. Hiroaki had love and compassion for other people, with his sense of humour and unique character winning many friends - Almost 300 people arrived to pay their respects at his funeral. This was sheer proof of his beloved character. It also demonstrated that not only was Hiroaki a beloved person in his private life but also in his public persona in the world of contemporary music.

**He was a tremendous prodigy ... His sudden death was incomparable tragedy over which many people lamented and wept for the loss of his young rare talent, just as it was reaching its zenith...**

After the funeral, [Roh Ogura](#), who had been a teacher of Hiroaki, approached me and said, "Send all of his scores to this library - Hiroaki's work should be preserved. A person in charge there is waiting to hear from you." He handed me a piece of paper upon which the address of Documentation Centre for Modern Japanese Music was written. I did what he had suggested.

Hiroaki's death was a death of great artist. Art is cruel and merciless...! Art demands sacrifice...! A talented young man's life was snatched by death, but Hiroaki's music is eternal and he continues to live in the minds those who loved him...even after these long years.

I dedicate this tribute to Hiroaki with all my love and wish that  
**Hiroaki's music  
may live forever!**

(Jan. 7<sup>th</sup> 2007 Etsuko Zakoji)

Note:

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