

**PAUL CHIHARA (b. 1938)**  
**80597-2**

At the dawning of the third millennium of the Common Era, artists of every discipline find themselves in a brave new world of possibilities for diverse modes of artistic expression enhanced by the worldwide distribution of culture through the mass media. As a consequence of this trend, the cross-fertilization of a variety of cultural art forms that began in Paris at the close of the nineteenth century, consisting mostly of Japanese and African influences, has increased exponentially to include virtually every people on the planet. Perhaps the greatest carriers of this universal phenomenon are music, film, and dance.

Of course, before the advent of film, every high culture had some sort of theater. The origins of ancient theater stem largely from rites associated with religion, which dramatically depict the tensions and relationships between nature, the divine, and humankind. The dance, and above all music, have invariably infused or accompanied theater at least from the time of the fourth-century B.C. dramatists of Greece, to the fourteenth-century Noh plays of Japan, to the Asian shadow plays of unknown origin, to European opera since the seventeenth century. Film, or the cinema, it might be argued, represents the culmination of the tradition of the theater, and as such absorbs and transmits as many kinds of music as possible in its portrayal of human emotions, and in its tone painting of psychological portraits.

The works of Paul Seiko Chihara are informed by and continue steadfastly this rich tradition of the association of music with theater, dance, and film; for at the center of his music lie the conflictual actions of drama, and even the purifying cathartic power of ritual. Indeed, not only his music for film and stage, but much of his purely instrumental music reflects his concern for narrative and/or protagonist situations. This tendency is made manifest by such formal devices as pitting a single voice against a sound mass of fused instrumental groups in such works as *Wind Song* (1971), or by contrasting and interpenetrating distinct instrumental choirs in an agonistic exchange of timbral colors, as in *Forever Escher* (1993–94). Needless to say, the classical process of conflict and resolution permeates his musical structures and gives to them an organicism that is readily apprehended by the ear, mind, and heart of the alert listener.

In addition to the overriding dramatic aspects of his works, Chihara's music also demonstrates a fascination with and an affinity for the natural world, especially in the concert music he composed during the 1960s and '70s. Titles derived from natural phenomena and the oftentimes unique instrumental combinations attached to them, such as *Branches* for two bassoons and percussion (1968), *Willow Willow* for flute, tuba, and percussion (1968), and *Redwood* for viola and percussion (1971), bear this out.

Chihara's involvement with film began when he composed the music for Roger Corman's *Death Race 2000* (1974). This opportunity came at just the right moment. Chihara had been an associate professor of music at UCLA since 1966 and was eager for a change; he left academia in 1974 to pursue the precarious path of a composer for film, television, and the stage, though he continued to compose concert music. Since then he has composed scores for more than ninety motion pictures and television series and worked with such directors as Sidney Lumet, Louis Malle, Michael Ritchie, and Arthur Penn. His movie credits include *Prince of the City*, *The Morning After*, and *Crossing Delancey*. His television credits include *China Beach*, *Noble House*, and *100 Centre Street*.

With this career change came his rapprochement with the world of tonal music. Up to this point he had indulged in twelve-tone and free chromatic composition, typical of the then established avant garde. Along with this absorption of tonality came his utilization of borrowed materials, or “found objects,” that is, preexistent musics. (He had already integrated Japanese melodies and instrumentation for his 1974 ballet, *Shinju*.) As a result of these changes he broadened the emotional plane of his concert and stage music, enriching it with the property of poetic allusion, thus giving to it a sense of the archetypal play of time.

Throughout his career Chihara has demonstrated an acute sensitivity to the properties of sound in all its manifestations. From the unique combinations of diverse instruments in his chamber music, to the electronic manipulation of *musique concrète*, to full orchestra and choral arrangements, he uses the sensation of sound masterfully to move the emotions, whatever the musical context. His incorporation of such stylistically divergent music as jazz standards, folk song, and quotations from classical repertoire articulate the form of *Forever Escher*. The melding of his concern for contrasting colors and orchestral textures with the aforementioned “found objects” derived from Western and non-Western sources found full flower in his ballet *Shinju*.

In 1992 Chihara was commissioned by the Amherst Saxophone Quartet to compose an octet for saxophone quartet and traditional string quartet combined. The result, *Forever Escher (Double Quartet)*, is a tour de force of polyphonic writing and acoustical balance. From the beginning of its composition, Chihara was deeply aware of the incongruence between the distinct timbre of each instrumental choir. Perhaps more important, though, he was especially sensitive to the musico-historical legacies of each of these instrumental groups. His problem, then, was to balance the classical tradition of the string quartet (which, with the symphony, might be said to be the crowning achievement of the eighteenth century) with the tradition of the saxophone, the foremost sound symbol of jazz, not to mention its grainy associations with *film noir*.

The solution Chihara struck was to allow each quartet its unique timbral identity (though from time to time they merge) while interchanging and metamorphosing much, but not all, of the melodic and harmonic material associated with each. Also, he quotes melodic and harmonic fragments from film, jazz, and classical repertoires as identifiable “found objects.” These techniques are very similar to those seen in the prints of the Dutch graphic artist M. C. Escher (1898–1972). Of the many techniques Escher employed (nearly all having to do with geometric-mathematic application, especially after 1936), Chihara found inspiration in the works that gradually metamorphose one recognizable image (such as a fish, bird, or reptile) into another, or that change by way of a foreground becoming a background, and vice versa.

Chihara achieves these same effects in *Forever Escher* by introducing fragments of “recognizable” musical images (found objects). Such sources as the song “Laura,” the *Tristan* chord with its ascending chromatic melody, sonorities from Debussy’s *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* are the most obvious; a riff from Artie Shaw and a self-referential melody from Chihara’s own Broadway musical *Shogun* are more esoteric. Most of these fragments appear in all four movements, oftentimes in counterpoint with each other as they transmigrate from one quartet to the other.

The last movement, with its rubric “*Quarendo invenientes*” (a clear reference to a canon in Bach’s *Musical Offering* meaning “seek and you shall find”) presents, near the end, an ingenious fusing of “Laura” into the *Tristan* chord into a fragment from the final section of *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. The fluidity with which this metamorphosis occurs is demonstrative of the flawless technique Chihara has honed over the past several decades. The last movement ends as the first began, on a sustained C in all the strings, creating an overall structure akin to Escher’s print *Metamorphose II* (1939–40).

*Shinju* (Lovers’ Suicide), Ballet in One Act for orchestra and tape, came into being as the result of a commission from the San Francisco Ballet in 1973, for which Chihara was composer-in-residence (1973–1986). He fashioned the “libretto” for the ballet in collaboration with the choreographer Michael Smuin, who, like Chihara, had just arrived in San Francisco after having been for several years a principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre. The Japanese word *shinju* literally means, “from the heart,” or “sincerity.” However, it also has the meaning “Lovers’ Suicide,” the expression that gives ground to the ballet.

Chihara based his original scenario on the suicide plays of the great Japanese dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725). Two plays in particular, *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (*Sonezaki Shinju*, 1703) and *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (*Shinju Ten no Amijima*, 1721), were most influential. Chikamatsu’s plays were usually written shortly after an actual event of a double suicide took place. Briefly stated, a typical suicide play revolved around the forbidden love of a married or engaged common townsman with a prostitute. Chikamatsu ennobles his characters of lower rank by making them capable of true feelings. Probably the most important structural device of these plays is the *michiyuki*, or “lovers’ journey,” in which these common folk are transformed into the Western equivalent of a hero and heroine.

The “libretto” Chihara and Smuin devised replaces the love between a married man and a prostitute with two young lovers (however, the “boy” is married) who make a vow of eternal love, but who are then separated by their two families. The boy then scornfully rejects his wife’s attempts to win him back. The girl, after having been consoled by butterflies, is abducted by bandits hired by the jealous wife. She is rescued by the boy and his companions; they are again united. There is another separation. The lovers then appear to dance their mournful “death dirge” in a kind of balletic *michiyuki*. They stab each other, causing the heavens to cry out in voices chanting “*Namu Amido Butsu*” (Praise to Amido Buddha) as they embrace for the last time. The ballet ends with butterflies alighting on their bodies.

The music of *Shinju* is most notable for its integration of electronically processed authentic ancient Japanese song and instrumental music into the orchestral fabric. For his sound source, Chihara recorded performances by Japanese master musicians Mitsuru Yuge, now deceased, and Suenobu Togi, presently a member of the Imperial Court Orchestra in Tokyo (both of whom were colleagues of Chihara at UCLA). He then transformed these ancient melodies and ensembles via the technique of tape manipulation known as *musique concrète*. The otherworldly atmosphere evoked by the *musique concrète* passages greatly enhances the shroud of doom that begins to spread from the first sounds of the orchestral prelude.

With the music for *Shinju*, Chihara anticipated (along with his distinguished colleagues George Crumb and Karlheinz Stockhausen, to name just two) the trend composers have followed for the past four decades in using music from non-Western cultures intertwined with ritualized staging to deepen their modes of artistic expression. *Shinju* is scored for two flutes (doubling piccolos), two oboes, one bassoon, one contrabassoon, three horns in F, three trumpets in B flat, two trombones, one bass trombone, timpani, percussion, harp, piano, strings, and tape.

Chihara filled the intervening twenty years between the composition of *Shinju* and *Forever Escher* with scores for film and television, as well as works for the concert stage. As mentioned above, one of the results of his work for film has been his increasing absorption and adaptation of techniques associated with key-centered or tonal music, in the quest to express the multifarious underlying emotional atmospheres suggested by the medium. If this phenomenon implies a shift in his compositional aesthetic or style, it may be on the surface level only. For besides the perennial dramatic aspects discussed previously, there is an intense lyricism that has equally persisted throughout his *oeuvre* from the beginning. *Wind Song*, an early work for cello and orchestra, presents a distillation of these two forces and, in this sense, is ancestral in its relation to both *Shinju* and *Forever Escher*.

Composed in 1971, the idea for *Wind Song* came to him while he was working on a re-composition of the *Cello Concerto in A Minor*, by the German composer Robert Volkmann (1815–1883), for a performance by Chihara's friend the cellist Jeffrey Solow, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. While reconstructing the concerto, he began to collate impressions emanating from his interaction with Volkmann's material, eventually forming a concept for a cello concerto of his own. At first, he conceived of a concerto of "heroic" proportions, like those formally typical of nineteenth-century Romanticism. What he settled on, however, was a music that is at times both penetratingly understated and vitally lyrical. Like the natural phenomenon of wind itself, this music undulates precariously from the subtlety of a spectral whisper to seemingly inconsolable melancholic howls, touching all the gradations between the two extremes.

The cello is the lyrical voice in this concerto; it in itself embodies the flow and pace of the musical events, delineating a form of three uninterrupted sections. The orchestra often functions as accompaniment through sustained tones with little rhythmic articulation, as the cello weaves rhapsodic melodies through its fabric. At other times it is rhythmically engaged with the cello in near-percussive writing for both, as in the middle of the second section, marked *Ben ritmico*. Chihara gives to the trombones the technique of speaking text fragments from the works of Shakespeare and Marvell in both the first and third sections of the concerto. This effect not only enriches the orchestral palette, it also enhances the threnody-like singing of the cello. The many passages in which the cello is unaccompanied project the pathos of the piece. As in all lyrical writing, the solo passages express a wide range of emotional outpouring, from the introspective and meditative to the ecstatic. Despite this kaleidoscope of changing emotions, *Wind Song* evokes a deep detachedness, an underlying loneliness whose sad song echoes the plaint of a wandering wind. The orchestration for *Wind Song* consists of two flutes, two oboes, two B-flat clarinets, two bassoons, three horns in F, two B-flat trumpets, two tenor trombones, one bass trombone, timpani, percussion, solo cello, and strings. — *Steven Lacoste*

Steven Lacoste is a lecturer in music theory at Cal State University at Long Beach and Archivist for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

**Paul Seiko Chihara** was born in Seattle, Washington, in 1938. He received his doctorate degree (D.M.A.) from Cornell University in 1965 as a student of Robert Palmer. Mr. Chihara also studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, Ernst Pepping in Berlin, and with Gunther Schuller at Tanglewood, summer home of the Boston Symphony. With Toru Takemitsu, Chihara was composer-in-residence at the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont in 1971. Chihara is currently on the faculty at UCLA and was also the first composer-in-residence of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Neville Marriner, conductor. Mr. Chihara's prize-winning concert works have been performed in most major cities and arts centers in the United States and Europe. His numerous commissions and awards include those from The Lili Boulanger Memorial Award, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New Japan Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Active on Broadway as well as in the ballet world, Mr. Chihara was composer-in-residence at the San Francisco Ballet from 1973 to 1986. Mr. Chihara's works have been widely recorded. His compositions appear on BMG Records, Reference Recordings, CRI, Music and Arts, Vox Candide, New World Records, and The Louisville Orchestra First Editions Records.

The **Amherst Saxophone Quartet** splits its time between touring and its residency at the State University of New York at Buffalo. It was formed in January of 1978, and is now celebrating its twenty-fifth full season of concert performances. The ensemble has performed in the United States from Maine to Hawaii as well as in Japan, Bermuda, and the British Virgin Islands. Concert highlights include appearances at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, the Chautauqua Institution, and broadcasts on *CBS Sunday Morning*, National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and *Performance Today*, Public Radio International's *St. Paul Sunday*, Voice of America, and NBC-TV's *Tonight Show*. The ASQ has recorded five albums for Innova Records, MCA Records, Musical Heritage Society, and Mark Records. In 1997 the ensemble released a videotape introducing children to chamber music, called *ASQKids*.

The Amherst Saxophone Quartet has been a performing member of Young Audiences since 1979. The group also worked with young persons' programs at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, the Aesthetic Education Institute (Rochester, N.Y.), and Arts in Education (Buffalo, N.Y.). The members of the ASQ are clinicians for the Selmer Company and Vandoren Reed Products. The ASQ maintains a comprehensive Web site—[amherstsaxophonequartet.buffalo.edu](http://amherstsaxophonequartet.buffalo.edu)—for anyone interested in the saxophone quartet art form.

Founded in 1993 in New York City, the **Arcata String Quartet** (Marjorie Bagley, violin; Christopher Takeda, violin; Brant Bayless, viola; Michael Carrera, cello) have amassed in their repertoire four concertos for string quartet and orchestra, the entire Beethoven Quartet cycle, five world premieres, and many standard works. They have given concerts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, Brooklyn Friends of Chamber Music, the Rheingau Music Festival, Mecklenburg's Vopermern Festival, BargeMusic, and the Concert Solo Series in Paris. In March 1998 they gave their critically acclaimed New York City debut in Town Hall. Other engagements include Trinity Church in New York City, Classical Music Oasis in Birmingham, Alabama, Utah State University as faculty quartet-in-residence in Logan, Utah, and the Slee Beethoven cycle at SUNY Buffalo. They have been heard on MDR Radio in Germany performing the Spohr Quartet Concerto, WMNR in Connecticut, WQXR in New York, Radio France, France 3 Television, Radio Monte Carlo, and NPR's *Performance Today*, and have been seen on a nationally broadcast special on ABC Sports featuring the lives of three prominent female figure skaters. The Arcata String Quartet has released three CDs on the VOX label.

Cellist **Jeffrey Solow** maintains a busy schedule traveling throughout the United States and Canada, Europe, Latin America, and the Orient as recitalist, soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. His concerto appearances include performances of more than twenty works with the Los Angeles Philharmonic (including at the Hollywood Bowl), the Japan Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, the Milwaukee Symphony, the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and the American Symphony (with whom he also recorded). Mr. Solow has been guest artist at many national and international chamber music festivals and, as a member of the Amadeus Trio, he performs regularly to great critical and audience acclaim. Two of his numerous recordings were nominated for Grammy Awards and *Strad* magazine and *Strings* magazine have published many of his articles. Mr. Solow was born and raised in Los Angeles where he studied for many years with Gabor Rejto. Later, he earned a degree magna cum laude in philosophy from UCLA while he studied with and assisted cellist Gregor Piatigorsky at USC. Recognized as an authority on healthy and efficient cello playing, Mr. Solow is a professor of cello at Temple University in Philadelphia.

### **SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

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*Driftwood*. Philadelphia String Quartet. CRI 815.

*Ellington Fantasy*. Sequoia String Quartet. Music and Arts 4740.

*Forest Music*. Louisville Orchestra, A. Endo conducting. CRI 815.

*Redwood*. Kim Kashkashian, viola; Robyn Schulkowsky, percussion. ECM Records 1425.

*Sequoia*. Sequoia String Quartet. Music and Arts 4740.

*The Tempest*. Performing Arts Orchestra, J. LeRoux conducting. Reference Recordings 10.

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## **PRODUCTION CREDITS**

Producer: Paul Chihara

Engineer: Joel Iwataki (*Shinju*); Joanna Nickrenz and Marc Aubort (*Forever Escher*)

Remastering: Bill Comer, The Bakery, Burbank, California (*Shinju*)

Digital mastering: Joanna Nickrenz and Marc Aubort, Elite Recordings, Inc., NYC

*Forever Escher* was recorded April 26, 2001 at St. Peter's Church in New York City. *Shinju* was recorded in June 1989 at The Enterprise Studio, Burbank, California. *Wind Song* was originally released on Everest LP 3327.

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<i>Forever Escher</i> (1993–94)	<b>20:06</b>
1. Molto moderato	3:47
2. Allegro vivace: Ben ritmico	5:52
3. Calmo	3:40
4. Andante cantabile: “ <i>Quarendo invenientes</i> ”	6:47

Amherst Saxophone Quartet, Arcata String Quartet

<i>Shinju</i> (Ballet in One Act) (1973)	<b>22:27</b>
5. Prelude	1:10
6. Azuma asobi	1:49
7. Boy’s solo	1:37
8. Butterflies	1:18
9. Girl’s solo	2:34
10. Abduction	1:52
11. Fight	2:34
12. Pas de six	2:12
13. Separation	2:36
14. Scene change	:37
15. Preparation	2:38
16. Death scene	1:30

The Ballet Arts Orchestra, Paul Chihara, conductor; Suenobu Togi, vocal soloist (tape)

<i>Wind Song</i> (Cello Concerto) (1971)	<b>18:45</b>
17. Calmo	4:02
18. Liberamente	7:15
19. Con fantasia	7:28

Jeffrey Solow, cello; American Symphony Orchestra; Gerhard Samuel, conductor

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