

Michael Meeks

April 22, 1951 – May 7, 2022

Funeral Service
Minister: Guy Pontecorvo

May 28, 2022

Minister's Introduction:

Welcome friends. And a warm welcome to Michael's sister Angela and his nephews Christopher and Stewart and their children, as well as his friend John Young, who are watching with us from England.

We have come together today to honor the life of our beloved friend, Michael Meeks. We are here to hold Michael in our hearts for this brief period, and then release him, together transforming our sorrow into presence.

At the death of a friend, we can see their play as a whole. And we can see it—as we cannot yet fully see our own—as a perfect, complete, and realized destiny. Now we more clearly understand the payment and contribution that Michael made, and we are grateful for his steadfast cheerfulness, his enduring contribution to the musical life of Apollo, and the clarity and directness of his understanding.

In response to a question about his inner work, Michael recently said, “My personal aims are ongoing: To be open and receptive, and to keep things simple in my daily life. As the teacher says, “The big opportunity lies in the small opportunities.””

Now let us stand and remember Michael in silent presence.

(Silence)

Thank you.

The physical body is designed to produce presence and being, and then to be laid aside. Walt Whitman said, “The best of me then, when no longer visible, for toward that I have been incessantly striving.” Michael takes with him the presence that he has gained in this lifetime, and his connection with Influence C. Our teacher has said, “That is all we can take with us, but it is more than enough.”

[**Reading:** Edward Thomas, “The Trumpet”]
(Reader: Geoffrey Rowland)

Rise up, rise up,
And, as the trumpet blowing
Chases the dreams of men,
As the dawn glowing
The stars that left unlit
The land and water,
Rise up and scatter
The dew that covers
The print of last night’s lovers—
Scatter it, scatter it!

While you are listening
To the clear horn,
Forget, men, everything
On this earth newborn,
Except that it is lovelier
Than any mysteries.
Open your eyes to the air
That has washed the eyes of the stars
Through all the dewy night:
Up with the light,
To the old wars;
Arise, arise.

[**Music:** J.S. Bach, “Wir setzen uns,” from St. Matthew’s Passion]
(**Musicians:** Adam Zarookian, French horn; Paul da Silva, trombone; Justin McKay, piano)

[Eulogy: Stephen Rice]

Michael Ray Meeks was born in 1951 in Amersham near London. He passed away May 7, 2022 at Apollo due to a bicycle accident. Michael is survived by his sister, Angela Park, and his two nephews, Stewart Park, and Christopher Park, and their children—all living in England.

His sister Angela said about their childhood together: “Michael was the sweetest brother I could ever have wished for. Five years his senior, I watched him grow up, and was always protective, just as an elder sister would. I’d take him out for walks around our orchard, keeping a loving and watchful eye on him, seeing him develop into a naturally inquisitive boy with a love of the outdoors, animals and an active lifestyle. We both developed a keen interest in equestrianism during our youth and each owned a horse. Mine was called Maisie and Michael’s was Betsy. We spent many happy times riding together and were active members of our local pony club, taking part in numerous dressage events.”

Michael started playing the trumpet when he was 13 because, as he said, “one of my chums played.” In 1966 he was accepted into the Queen’s Household Cavalry, allowing him to combine his love of horses with his love of the trumpet. Michael graduated from the Royal College of Music in 1972, and subsequently became principal trumpet with the BBC Northern Ireland Orchestra. In 1983 he joined the City of London Sinfonia as principal trumpet, playing with them till 1995. During that time he also played with the London Symphony, the Philharmonia, the Royal Philharmonic, the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, among many others, including worldwide tours and festivals.

Michael played the trumpet exceedingly well. Whether it was the crystalline precision of Bach, the contemplative “Quiet City” of Copland, or the majestic grandeur of Dvorak’s “New World Symphony,” he had the perfect sound for the music. When Michael moved to California and asked Sir Neville Marriner for a letter of recommendation, Marriner wrote: “Michael Meeks has been a much valued player with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields for some years, and I can comfortably recommend both his performance and his personality to any musical organisation of high quality.” Michael’s close friend and fellow musician John Young said, “When he crossed the water, our music world lost a marvelous player, great musician and all-around fabulous person.”

Michael joined the Fellowship of Friends in 1992 in London. He described his first reading of Ouspensky's books as "life-changing," and said, "This in itself was an awakening: The beginning of the rest of my life." He visited Apollo several times, then moved to Oregon House in 1995. John Young remembers: "In the period before he made the big decision to pack his bags for the USA, it was fairly obvious that he was going through a transition. I sensed that he had moved on to a more serious level, and the name "Twinkle" seemed less appropriate. I gently moved over to calling him Mike, and although he never said as much, I think he preferred it. He never really explained his reasons for moving, or elaborated on his lifestyle in the Fellowship, but over the 28 years that he lived in California, I felt that he had found an inner happiness and contentment. He never lost that charm and frivolous sense of humour, but evolved into a more thoughtful being."

Once at Apollo, Michael worked at the Winery, and told the story of walking through the vineyard after lunch and opening a card from his parents that was made by a company called Renaissance. He said, "It stopped me in my tracks with the state it produced: I looked around to see where C Influence were. These shocks are always occurring and being there for them is such a gift."

He had much to contribute to music here, bringing professionalism and musicality to the Apollo Orchestra. Since performing in an orchestra was a new experience for many of the players, Michael's role was often to lead by example, yet he also gave direct instruction about the way things should be done as professional musicians. He contributed substantially to Susan Willoughby's Bach Society, founded for the musical education of local youth. Many students of the Lewis Carroll School at that time have fond memories of him playing for them and demonstrating the trumpet.

Orchestra directors in Northern California eagerly took advantage of Michael's skill and experience. He became principal trumpet with the Sacramento Philharmonic, the Sacramento Opera, and the Sacramento Choral Society, and also played with many other local ensembles.

Linda Preo and Michael married in the late '90s. Although their marriage lasted but a few years, he and Linda remained close friends. Linda said: "Michael was a very happy person, and knew how to enjoy life to the fullest."

Michael's friends loved him dearly, often describing him as "sunny" and "cheerful." He was consistently positive. We all have to work hard to avoid expressing negative emotions, but Michael made it look easy. Always happy to see his friends, he had a joyful twinkle in his eyes. John Young said, regarding Michael's time in the Household Cavalry—"He was the shortest trooper in the regiment. But because he was the best trumpeter, he was a little star. The nickname 'Twink' came from 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star.'"

Michael had wide-ranging interests. He grew much of his own food at his home in Dobbins. Plums, apples, oranges, figs, tomatoes, squash, beans and so much more came from his nurturing hands. He didn't stop with the harvest, though. Pickling and fermenting were great hobbies for him. Arthur Craigmill said Michael created so many interesting tidbits in the kitchen that he was a "chemist in disguise." He would have friends over for dinner frequently and always included his latest fermented concoction, fresh vegetables from his garden, and desserts that included frozen fruit from his orchard. He would take oranges and pulp the whole of them, including the rind, to make a sort of frozen dessert he called "orange cake," which, layered with other flavors, became surprisingly delicious.

He would mix up his dinner guests, having one set of friends over along with another. Stimulating conversation and warm fellowship came from this. After dinner, we would sometimes pick recordings to listen to, and we'd enjoy and comment on the pieces and particular performances.

Michael was the consummate good householder. His house and gardens, his orchard, his vegetables, even his pet cats were taken care of and in good order. I was quite impressed with the organization of his tools. Once when he opened his garage door, I saw a large backboard on which every sort of tool was hanging in perfect order.

His enjoyment of outdoor activities in California led him to take up skiing, and he would go with Grant and Marie Ramey and Marlyss Berkan up in the mountains to ski. Marie says that at the last part of every run, he would go as fast as he could go!

A few thoughts from Michael's friends:

Charles Rodkoff wrote: "Michael's friendship was evergreen, generous, and profound."

From Bonnie Lohmann: “When he barbequed food he would call it his ‘burnt offering.’ It wasn’t about the food, though—it was a way to get together with friends.”

Gernot and Guinevere thanked him after a dinner party: “It is always such a special experience to come to your home and taste your latest experiments and combinations. Besides, it’s always nice to just be with you and share whatever the moment brings.”

Marlyss Berkan wrote: “I trusted him with personal conversation, and he listened carefully and responded sincerely. He was fun, funny, gentle, caring and intelligent.”

Michael was straightforward and unpretentious in his approach to his personal work. A few months ago, he wrote: “I still feel like a novice in my work, but there is this invisible little man on my shoulder trying to keep me on my game. When I wake up from imagination, it brings with it gratefulness, humility, and acceptance.”

He loved his teacher and the school. You could see it in his actions and the choices he made. He wrote, “Robert’s events are always amazing, not least because of his unwavering teaching and inspiration. Before the meetings begin, there is that silent moment of collective presence with other students, and then Robert enters the room. This in itself is quite magical.”

When summing up his inner experience of life in the school, he ended by saying, “Be here, now. What else is there?”

Michael Meeks showed us by example what it means to be an excellent musician, a true friend, and a real student.

[Music: J.S. Bach, “Wachet Auf,” from Cantata 140]

(Musicians: Adam Zarookian, French horn; Noah Horstock, violin; Bruce Helft, bass; Justin Mckay, piano)

[Reading: Kabir, “Are You Looking for Me?”]

(Reader: JoAnna Mortensen)

Are you looking for me? I am in the next seat. My shoulder is against yours.

You will not find me in the stupas, not in Indian shrine rooms, nor in synagogues, nor in cathedrals:

not in masses, nor kirtans, not in legs winding around your own neck, nor in eating nothing but vegetables.

When you really look for me, you will see me instantly — you will find me in the tiniest house of time.

Kabir says: Student, tell me, what is God?

He is the breath inside the breath.

Minister's Conclusion:

The death of a friend reminds us that we each inhabit a fragile and temporary vessel, from which presence emerges and connects us.

May Michael's wholehearted enjoyment of his life help us to treasure the fleeting moments of our own lives;

May the valuation which led him to gladly exchange a flourishing international career for his life at Apollo increase our own valuation for the gift we have been given; and

May we be heartened by remembering the cheerfulness and love he brought to his pursuit of presence, and to his school, his teacher, his family, and his friends.

Dearest Michael, we thank thee.

Minister:

The task of this lifetime has been fulfilled. The role of Michael is complete. The shell of the body falls away, and the soul that inhabited that body is released to continue its divine journey.

Candle Ceremony

Minister signals urn bearer (Arthur Craigmill).

Minister: Please stand.

Funeral party leaves.

At the Cemetery

[**Music:** Bagpipe recording, played by Michael’s nephew Chris]

Announcement (Curtis):

The musical tribute you have heard is a recording of bagpipe music played by Michael’s nephew, Chris Park.

After the interment, you are all invited to gather and raise a glass to Michael.

Minister’s Introduction:

Dear friends, here in this sacred place, we gather to release Michael to his, and our, true home.

[**Reading:** From “The Mystic Trumpeter” by Walt Whitman]
(Reader: Charles Rodkoff)

HARK! some wild trumpeter—some strange musician,
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.
I hear thee, trumpeter—listening, alert, I catch thy notes,
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,
Now low, subdued—now in the distance lost.

Blow again, trumpeter! and for thy theme,
Take now the enclosing theme of all—the solvent and the setting; Love,
that is pulse of all—the sustenance and the pang;
The heart of man and woman all for love;
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love.
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—Love, that mocks time and space;
Love, that is day and night—Love, that is sun and moon and stars;
No other words or thought, but Love — No other music, but Love.

Minister:

We return Michael’s ashes to the ground: from earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Words fade in the face of a great reality. We, too, arrive at this simplest of moments—our friend, Michael, showing us the way.

Urn is placed in the grave [Grant Ramey].

Minister:

Rumi wrote, “Uncover in silence your soul’s own rose garden.” Let these rose petals remind us of the sweetness of our departed friend, and of the rose garden of his soul.

Minister and participants scatter rose petals into the grave.

Minister’s Conclusion:

The earth returns to the earth, and a divine spark returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. Now let us join in raising a glass to Michael, and then depart, with a renewed and vivid appreciation for the gift of life allotted to each of us.

[**Music:** Bagpipe recording, played by Michael’s nephew Chris]

Attendees gather for the toast.

[**Toast:** Robert MacIsaac]