

CRI SD 355

Ralph Shapey: *Praise*

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An oratorio for bass-baritone, chorus, and chamber orchestra

Paul Geiger, bass-baritone

Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago and Chorus

Ralph Shapey, music director and conductor

“Ralph Shapey at fifty-five has established himself as one of America’s most gifted, vital, and dynamic composer-conductors.” (Eric Salzman, *The New York Times*). On May 26, 1966, George F. Kenyon, then president of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, wrote that Shapey was given the Institute’s Award “. . . because of his exciting and dynamic music, full of rugged power and high originality, developed over a number of years in response to an intensely personal vision, uninfluenced by changing fashion.”

Shapey was born March 12, 1921, in Philadelphia. Violin studies began at the age of seven. Later, he studied violin with Emmanuel Zetlin, and composition with Stefan Wolpe.

In addition to the National Institute of Arts and Letters award, he has received the Brandeis Creative Arts, the Frank Huntington Beebe, and the Copley Foundation and Stern Foundation awards; the Naumburg Foundation Recording Award and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Award, which made this recording possible. He has been commissioned by Dimitri Mitropoulos, Alma Morgenthau, the Aeolian Chamber Players, the American Brass Quintet, the Kindler Foundation, the Koussevitzky Foundation, and the Fromm Foundation.

At present (1976) he is a professor of music at the University of Chicago, and music director of the Contemporary Chamber Players where he continues his conducting career, presenting a series of concerts each year of new music. He also teaches composition, and guest conducts throughout America and Europe. His list of sixty-five compositions ranges and includes all forms.

In an article entitled “Enigma of Ralph Shapey” Bernard Jacobson, of the *Chicago Daily News* wrote, “. . . In his music every last detail is worked out with an almost ferocious intellectual power. But at the same time its emotional climate is of the most intense lyricism. It is this combination that has led Leonard B. Meyer to dub Shapey a ‘radical traditionalist.’ A critic can only write about such matters on the basis of his own judgment. And my judgment, drawn from acquaintance with eleven of Shapey’s works, is that his output forms the finest and most substantial body of music by any American composer of our times.”

Shapey began working on *Praise* while living in New York City.

He writes:

“I began writing Convocation, the first section, on January 26, 1961; it was performed in a church on Fifth Avenue shortly thereafter. As the title implies, it was just the beginning of a larger work that I had been planning, now known as *Praise*. Due to many interruptions, including my arrival at the University of Chicago in 1964, I was forced to lay the work aside. New duties plus other compositions kept *Praise* in the drawer until the summer of 1971. At that time, while vacationing in East Hampton, I decided that *Praise* must be finished. It was completed in August 1971.

“I wish to thank the University of Chicago and Paul Fromm for their generous support of the first performance, February 28, 1976; and praise for the University’s new president, John T. Wilson. Special thanks to Dean Karl J. Weintraub, the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund, Michael and Lillian Braude, and Edna Kraus for their generosity in helping to make this recording of *Praise* possible.

“And finally, special credit must be given to Roger Solie for his wonderful training of the chorus.”

- I. *Convocation*. (Instrumental)
- II. *Invocation*. Based on the ancient Hebrew prayer, ‘Shma Yisroel,’ (Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord Is One) the soloist intones the Invocation while backstage.
- III. *Processional*. The chorus and soloist are backstage; during the Processional, the chorus intones the chorale and assumes places on stage, while the soloist assumes his place singing the Invocation.
- IV. *Interlude*. (Instrumental)
- V. *How Manifold*. (How Manifold are thy works, O Lord, etc.) sung by sopranos.
- VI. *Praised Be*. (Praised be His glorious name unto all Eternity, etc.) Intoned by the chorus with the soloist singing the text.

This recording follows the format of the concert, in which the Convocation, Invocation, and Processional are repeated during the intermission, while the audience returns to its seats.
- VII. *Holy, Holy*. This section is an *a cappella* chorus (based on Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts) leading into
- VIII. *O Sing*. (O Sing unto the Lord a new song, etc.) sung by the men.
- IX. *Interlude*, (Instrumental)
- X. *Hallelujah*. (Hallelujah, praise God in his sanctuary, etc.)

In each instance, the soloist, using the melodic line of ‘Shma Yisroel,’ intones the new section and combines with the chorus and instruments in singing the text. The text is taken from the Old Testament, a new translation according to the Masoretic text; and the Union Prayer Book, Part II, High Holy Days Prayers.

The title page of the Oratorio bears the inscription: ‘So David and all the House of Israel played before the Lord. And David danced before the Lord with all his might.’ The work is dedicated ‘to all descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses: past, present and future, unto all eternity.’

In May 1973, *Praise* was sent to Israel in honor of its twenty-fifth Anniversary.

Paul Geiger, who received a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Iowa and a Master of Music degree from Northwestern University, has been awarded many national grants and scholarships. He has been heard in the productions of local opera companies and in a diverse number of roles with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Praise is the first new work by Ralph Shapey to appear since 1969, when he declared a moratorium on all performances of his music for “personal and religious reasons.” Most performers respected the composer’s wish, so that this recording becomes a special event. Shapey’s last previous recording was his *Rituals* for Symphony Orchestra and his String Quartet No. 6 (CRI SD 275).

He writes:

An Artist:

is perhaps the mirror of his times, on an heightened (hallucinatory) level, giving expressions to mankind’s basic search for the meaning of its being, other than existence.

A Composer:

is an architect in (of) sound, in time, space and flux.

A Great Work of Art:

is a work which transcends the immediate moment and that moment becomes a moment of eternity; as one seems to live in a space of timelessness . . .

Because music is sound moving in time and space, then this (above) must be achieved through a series of such moments resulting in a dynamic unforgettable experience.

Each Work of Art:

is a world of infinity, complete and finite within itself.

Every Great Work of Art:

has its own stamp of inevitability; of rightness; of oneness.

Humankind:

is in constant everlasting search to know itself and to discover its own creative Godhead. In this search its totality is its accumulation of knowledge, experience, understanding and its need to realize its relationship to nature and to society—past, present, future and to eternity.

The Chorus

Left Soprano

Elsa Charlston

Karen Knudstrup

Phyllis Kirian

Ann Feldman

Left Alto

Mignon Hickman

Maureen Mullally

Evelyn Wagner

Jennifer Lane

Left Tenor

John Burke

Clayton Hochhalter

Daniel Kane

Gerald Honigsblum

Left Bass

Jeff Strauss
Samuel Sheffer
Earle Atwater
Arwin Schweig

Right Soprano

Ida Levine
Jane Green
Kathy Terbeck
Doris Kirschner

Right Alto

Diane McCullough
Phyllis Unosawa
Nadine Asher
Margaret Mann

Right Tenor

Edward Budzilowicz
Charles Rhodes
Donald Baumgartner
Wayne Kennedy

Right Bass

James Di Loretto
James Mack
Patrick Ormos
Gene Johnson

The Contemporary Chamber Players

Jane Marvine, oboe
Robert Morgan, oboe
Brian Perry, trumpet
Robert Rushford, trumpet
James Mattern, trombone
Edward Kocher, trombone
Robert Bauchens, bass trombone
Edward Poremba, tympani
Terry Applebaum, percussion
James Ross, percussion
Michael Green, percussion
Benedict Sedivy, percussion
Elliott Golub, violin
Everett Zlatoff-Mirsky, violin
Linda Bolle, viola
Jill Brindel, cello
Michael Geller, bass

This record was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc.; the University of Chicago; Michael and Lillian Braude; Edna Kraus; Visiting Committee to the Department of Music of the University of Chicago, and WFMT.

Recorded by Murray Allen, March 1, 1976

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)

To Israel on its 25th Anniversary

May 1973

PRAISE

f o r

Baritone, Chorus

Chamber Orchestra

by Ralph Shapey

So David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord.

And David danced before the Lord with all his might.

Dedicated to all descendants

of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses;

Past, present and future unto all

eternity.

I – Convocation

II – Invocation

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One

Praised be thou O Lord, O Lord our God is One

III – Processional

Praised be thou O Lord, O Lord Our God is One

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One

Praised be thou O Lord, Praised be thou Lord our God

Praised be thou O Lord, O Lord our God be Praised

IV – Interlude

How manifold are thy works, O Lord

V – How Manifold

*How manifold are thy works, O Lord
In wisdom hast thou made them all
The heavens declare thy glory
The earth reveals thy creative power
Thy years shall have no end
Praised be thou, O Lord, creator of light*

VI – Praised be

*Praised be His glorious name unto all Eternity
The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty
The Lord is girded with strength
His throne is established of old
O Lord, from everlasting to everlasting*

*Shout unto the Lord, all the earth; break forth and
sing for joy, yea, sing praises*

*Sing praises unto God, sing praises; sing praises unto
our King, sing praises*

*Exalted is God amidst joyous shouting
Praised be the Lord to whom all Praise is due forever and ever
O magnify the Lord and let us exalt His name together
Praised be His glorious name unto all Eternity
Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One*

VII – Holy, Holy

*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts
The whole earth is full of His Glory
Praised be the glory of God in all the world
Praised be His name whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever
Lord, we stand in awe before thy deeds
Praised be the Lord*

VIII – *O Sing*

O sing unto the Lord a new song
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth
Shout all the praises and break forth and sing for joy;
yea, sing praises
Shout before the king, the Lord
Exalt ye the Lord our God
Shout unto the Lord
Shout all the earth, break forth and sing for joy
Shout ye before the king
Exalt ye the Lord
Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One

IX – Interlude

X – Hallelujah

Praise God in His Sanctuary
Praise Him in the firmament of His power
Praise Him for His mighty acts
Praise Him according to His abundant greatness
Praise Him with the blast of the horn
Praise Him with the psaltery and harp
Praise Him with stringed instruments and the pipe
Praise Him with the timbrel and dance
Praise Him with loud-sounding cymbals
Praise Him with clanging cymbals
Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord
Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One
Hallelujah

Taken from the Old Testament, a new translation according to the Masoretic text; and the Union Prayer Book, Part II, High Holy Days Prayers.

