

Herman Berlinski

Return

a song cycle for

baritone and piano (1950, revised 1985)

***The Listener* (Walter de la Mare)**

***Return* (Demetrios Capetanakis)**

***Travelogue for Exiles* (Karl Shapiro)**

***Portrait of a Girl* (Conrad Aiken)**

Donald Boothman, baritone

Herman Berlinski, piano

Le Violon de Chagall,

a sonata for violin and piano (1985)

Allegro, molto agitato

Andante con variazioni

Allegro giocoso

Eric Rosenblith, violin Gabriel Chodos, piano

Herman Berlinski, distinguished organist and composer, was born in Leipzig, Germany in 1910. His prolific output includes symphonic and chamber works, solo works for piano and organ, song cycles, and numerous liturgical choral works and oratorios. Among his recent large-scale works was one commissioned for performance at the Smithsonian Institution at the time of the "Precious Legacy" exhibit there. As organist, Dr. Berlinski has performed throughout Europe and America, including Notre Dame in Paris, and Temple Emanu-El in New York. In 1981, at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, he performed a recital for the surviving members of that city's Jewish community, as part of a memorial observance of the "Kristallnacht." Among his many works for the organ are *Eleven Sinfonias*, *The Burning Bush*, and *The Glass Bead Game* (which was premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1974 on the occasion of the dedication of the hall's new organ).

After leaving Germany in 1933, Herman Berlinski lived and studied in Paris and served in the French Foreign Legion before moving to the United States. In New York City he pursued advanced studies in liturgical music at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, receiving the degree of Doctor of Sacred Music, and was appointed organist at Temple Emanu-El, the largest Reform synagogue in the world. In 1963 he came to Washington, D.C., as Minister of Music to the Washington Hebrew Congregation. He has also served as visiting professor of Comparative History of Sacred Music at the Catholic University of America and is the artistic director of the National Jewish Musical Art Foundation's Shir Chadash Chorale. In 1984 Dr. Berlinski was the recipient of the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Currently, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York is compiling a complete archive of Berlinski's compositional works. His works have been recorded on the Musical Heritage label, and may be heard on CRI recording SD 115, *Symphonic Visions for Orchestra* (1949) performed by the Tokyo Asahi Orchestra, Richard Korn, conductor.

Notes on the Music

Return, a song cycle for baritone and piano

A few years ago I visited my hometown Leipzig for the first time in forty-eight years.

My wife and companion for over fifty years was with me.

We walked hand in hand through streets which were the streets of our childhood.

The houses looked smaller, the streets narrower and time had eaten into the walls of the houses a shade of gray, death and decay.

It was bitter cold and all windows were closed.

The snow muffled our steps as we walked in the middle of the street, for very few cars are circulating now in Leipzig.

These were the houses, once our homes.

Here lived our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, childhood playmates, school comrades, uncles, aunts, cousins and other relatives.

Nameplates of people we once knew, attached to the outside of houses, were removed and gaping holes had never been refilled.

In our minds we recalled the names which each house evoked.

There was an eery silence behind the windows.

Nobody knew us, nobody greeted us.

Who lives now behind these windows?

We saw the old churches and the empty spaces where once our synagogues stood.

Our old parochial school is still standing but there is not a single child of our faith there to attend it.

The school is now an institution for the blind.

Return is the music for this scenario, though written some thirty years ago.

We were "Travelers knocking at the moonlit doors," sailors from "The shores of darkness" and weary exiles without a home in the sky, the waters and the earth.

At the old cemetery there is only one tombstone with our name.

Most of the others have no tombstone, no cemetery.

Clasping our hands we knew that we had not returned.

We only visited as two of the "three beautiful pilgrims
who came here together
touch slightly the dust of the ground."

Return is only in the clasp of our hands.

No more, no less.

(These songs are dedicated to Dr. and Mrs. Sidney Friedman who believed when nobody else did.)

Le Violon de Chagall, a sonata for violin and piano

Why does Chagall's Fiddler play on the roof of his house?

Is it that he cannot find an audience in his own home?

The roof is a lonesome place, often cold and at times perilous.

Above, however, is the sky, the stars and the infinite horizons.

Many a fiddler on the roof waits for his rewards in a world to come—and yet—(do you blame him for that?) he hopes that someone down in the street, maybe just a passerby, is listening.

(This work is dedicated to Eugen and Inge Gollomb—fighters, survivors and lovers. It was commissioned by the McKim Fund of the Library of Congress.)

—Herman Berlinski

Notes on the Performers

Bass-baritone **Donald Boothman**, a graduate of Oberlin College and later a student of Todd Duncan, has been heard throughout the world in live performance and through Voice of America broadcasts. He first performed in Washington as announcer and soloist with the United States Air Force Band and the Singing Sergeants. He has also been leading baritone with the Washington Civic Opera and the Northern Virginia Opera and has been on the part-time faculty at American University. In 1963, upon becoming the cantorial soloist at the Washington Hebrew Congregation, Mr. Boothman began his association with Herman Berlinski, which has included solo parts in *Job*, the *Sacred Service*, and numerous cantatas. He also collaborated closely with the late composer John Duke in recitals, master classes, and recordings. Mr. Boothman moved to rural Massachusetts in 1983 but continues to teach privately in the Washington area.

Violinist **Eric Rosenblith**, a native of Vienna, studied with Jacques Thibaud in Paris and made his debut there at the age of fifteen. He subsequently studied with Carl Flesch in London and Bronislaw Huberman in New York and made his debut in that city in 1941. His career has included performances of the solo and chamber music literature throughout the world; he has also been concertmaster of the

San Antonio Symphony and the Indianapolis Symphony and first violinist of the Philadelphia Composer's Forum. Mr. Rosenblith has been on the faculties of Butler University and Bennington College; he currently teaches at the Hartt School of Music and at the New England Conservatory, where he is chairman of the String Department.

Pianist **Gabriel Chodos** has concertized worldwide and has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony, the Radio Philharmonic Orchestra of Holland, and the Jerusalem Symphony. He has been awarded Fulbright and Martha Baird Rockefeller grants and was a winner of the Concert Artists Guild Auditions and the Michaels Competition. In 1984 he was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Solo Recitalists Grant. Currently, he is chairman of the piano department of the New England Conservatory, and for the past several years he has also given master classes and lecture-demonstrations at the Toho Conservatory and other music schools in Japan. Mr. Chodos' principal teacher was Aube Tzerko; he has also worked with Leonard Shure, Josef Dichler, and Carlo Zecchi. He was graduated Phi Beta Kappa in philosophy at the University of California at Los Angeles, and holds a master of arts in music from UCLA and a Diploma in piano from the Akademie fur Musik in Vienna.

This recording honors Herman Berlinski's receipt of the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1984. Additional funds were generously provided by the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University.

The Listeners

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of a turret,
Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
"Is there anybody there?" he said,
But no one descended to the Traveller;
No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
That in the lone house then dwelt
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
Louder, and lifted his head:—
"Tell them I came, and no one answered,

That I kept my word," he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Aye, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

—Walter de la Mare

Words printed by permission of The Society of Authors as the literary representatives of the Estate of
Waiter de la Mare

Return

The traveller returned with empty eyes.
"That is not you!" wept the forsaken friend.
"You promised me the fire that never dies,
And what you bring can only be the end,"

The absentee looked at his empty hands
And said: "I give you things you cannot see;
The treasures of the land beyond all lands,
The secrets spied in seas beyond all seas.

Our souls have limits, and our love is bound
To strand where all begins. The silent border
Is strewn with wrecks. My soul was sent back drowned
Because its dream defied the human order.

You see me here, but I have not returned.
Things which are not destined to confound
The things which are, the fortunes we have earned.
When all is lost, the Infinite is found."

—Demetrios Capetanakis

From *The Shores of Darkness*.

Reprinted by permission of Devin-Adair Publishers.

Travelogue for Exiles

Look and remember. Look upon this sky;
Look deep and deep into the sea-clean air,
The unconfined, the terminus of prayer.
Speak now and speak into the hallowed dome.
What do you hear? What does the sky reply?
The heavens are taken: this is not your home.

Look and remember. Look upon this sea;
Look down and down into the tireless tide.
What of a life below, a life inside,
A tomb, a cradle in the curly foam?
The waves arise; sea-wind and sea agree
The waters are taken: this is not your home.

Look and remember. Look upon this land,
Far, far across the factories and the grass.
Surely, there, surely, they will let you pass.
Speak then and ask the forest and the loam.
What do you hear? What does the land command?
The earth is taken: this is not your home.

—Karl Shapiro

Copyright 1942 and renewed 1970 by Karl J. Shapiro.

From *Collected Poems 1940-1978* by Karl Shapiro.

Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)