



SHAPIRA: VIOLIN CONCERTOS

The Old Man And The Sea
Concierto Latino

Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra
Neil Thomson

London Serenata
Krzysztof Chorzelski

THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

- | | | |
|-------|---------------|------|
| [1] | The Fisherman | 9'47 |
| [2] | At Sea | 8'15 |
| [3] | The Hero | 5'15 |

CONCIERTO LATINO

- | | | |
|-------|------------|------|
| [4] | The Attack | 9'50 |
| [5] | Lament | 8'28 |
| [6] | Party | 7'42 |

CAPRICE HABAÑERA

- | | | |
|-------|--|--------------|
| [7] | | 3'03 |
| | | 52'41 |

The Old Man and the Sea

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Neil Thomson
Produced by Chris Craker
Engineered by Andrew Mellor
Assisted by Claire Hay
Edited by Claire Hay
Mixed and mastered by Andrew Mellor
All for SIX Music Productions (www.sixmp.net)
Recorded at The Friary, Liverpool, January 5, 2012

Concierto Latino

London Serenata, Krzysztof Chorzelski
Produced by Michael Ponder
Engineered by Eleanor Walton
Edited and mastered by Eleanor Walton
Recorded at St Paul's, New Southgate, London, March 26, 2010

Caprice Habañera

Produced and engineered by Alexander Van Ingen
Edited and mastered by Alexander Van Ingen
For SIX Music Productions (www.sixmp.net)
Recorded in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, August 2010

SHAPIRA: VIOLIN CONCERTOS

When Ittai Shapira visited Key West, in the Straits of Florida, it was for the US premiere of his *Concierto Latino*. As so often happens, one artistic work engendered another, and it was during this trip that the seeds were sown for a new composition, based on Ernest Hemingway's great short novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. Shapira was struck by the unique hue of the ocean in this area, and by the unmistakable influence of Cuba, a mere 90 miles away. Both offered him an insight into the special appeal this region had for Hemingway, who wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* in Cuba in 1951.

Contemporary occurrences served to crystallise these ideas into more definite form. The BP oil spill was a chilling reminder of the fragility of life, and the extent to which livelihoods are at the mercy of such events. While the media gaze was turned towards the financial and environmental implications of the spill, Shapira recalled the friends he had made, many of them fishermen, dependant on the ocean for their income. Some had to leave the area altogether; others were, like the Old Man himself, compelled to struggle on in the face of adversity.

Hemingway's book is a vivid account of the old fisherman's dogged pursuit of an enormous fish across the ocean. In unflinching yet beautiful detail, Hemingway brings to life the experience of the fisherman, creating a kind of poetry out of the man's noble perseverance, and his humility when facing the forces of nature. Ittai Shapira's Concerto draws on different aspects of the tale. In the first movement, 'The Fisherman', Shapira imagines the central character, Santagio, as a young fisherman developing a deep and long-lasting love of the sea:

He always thought of the sea as la mar which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her.

Shapira uses sparkling and stormy orchestration to evoke the sea's power, while a secondary theme reflects the vibrant port of Havana and the special rhythm of life there, with boats moving to and fro, and the bustling market selling fresh catches.

'At Sea', the central movement, is the only movement which follows chronologically the unfolding story of the old man on his epic fishing trip. The solo violin plays soaring lines of serene beauty, reflecting both the poignancy of the man's tale, and the sea in all its vast loneliness:

The sea was very dark and the light made prisms in the water... it was only the great deep prisms in the blue water that the old man saw now with his lines going straight down into the water that was a mile deep.

After an opening passage meditating on the ocean itself, the music follows the story as Santiago hooks a huge marlin, which pulls him out to sea for several days and nights, until the man – who has developed great respect for the beast – succeeds in killing it, strapping it to the side of his boat. Yet his journey homeward is plagued by sharks; he fends them off, but they strip the fish of its flesh, and he returns, exhausted but philosophical, with just the marlin's skeleton.

The final movement, 'The Hero', captures one of the old man's memories, an incident he recalls to boost his confidence during this extraordinary trip. It is an occasion when, as a young man, he beats the strongest man in Morocco in an arm-wrestling match:

They had gone one day and one night with their elbows on a chalk line on the table and their forearms straight up and their hands gripped tight... Many of the bettors had asked for a draw because they had to go to work on the docks loading sacks of sugar or at the Havana Coal Company... But he had finished it anyway... For a long time after that everyone had called him The Champion...

'The Hero' opens with darting woodwind motifs, joined by piano and percussion before the entry of the solo violin. The movement is full of vigour and drama, reflecting Santiago's recollection of his youthful strength.

Although it is the old man's story which dominates the book, there is another character of great significance: a boy, Santiago's companion on some of his earlier

fishing trips, whose unwavering faith sustains the man on his journey. To the boy, the old man truly is a hero, hence the title of this final movement. Fittingly, Shapira chose to dedicate this Concerto to his own mentor, David Bowerman, who is both a musician and a fisherman. Shapira was struck by the parallels between the two vocations: both involve solitude, discipline, passion and the willingness to deal with life's unpredictable challenges. As the old man asserts: 'man is not made for defeat' – a philosophy which has proved vital in Shapira's own life, and especially during the events which led him to write his *Concierto Latino*.

As the work's title suggests, Latin music was the primary musical influence feeding into Shapira's *Concierto Latino*. Having amassed an expansive knowledge of the classical violin repertoire, including contemporary works, Shapira sought refreshment in the form of a musical style with which he was less familiar – Latino music from across the globe. There is, of course, an illustrious heritage of Latin-flavoured classical music, with composers such as Copland, Bernstein and their Mexican colleague Carlos Chávez championing the inclusion of South American idioms in a Western classical context.

However, it is intriguing to speculate whether any of them, had they been alive today, would have admitted to being influenced by Shakira. Ittai Shapira embraces the full spectrum of Latin music, asserting that there is no need to focus solely on the classical end of this spectrum. He has been influenced by musicians such as the composers Villa-Lobos and Manuel de Falla (Brazilian and Spanish respectively); Argentine-Jewish composer Osvaldo Golijov; Flamenco singer Camarón de la Isla; and by the Cuban music of Buena Vista Social Club. An additional influence has been the Columbian singer Shakira, who once said that writing music 'has a therapeutic effect' – words which would, in Ittai Shapira's case, prove prophetic. In New York City, on a freezing night in January 2005, Shapira was attacked by a gang of seven or eight men. Released from hospital the next day, he dismissed the incident and promptly went on tour.

Yet the attack left an unusual scar: daily 'zapping' headaches, accompanied by a hazy yet distinct series of sounds. When Shapira decided to write down these sounds, the neural response was fascinating: he saw a brief internal snapshot of himself falling on the ice. As the composition unfolded, so did the memories. The process of composing unlocked a series of events which Shapira had hitherto been unable to recall. Not only did the mugging prompt a musical response; that musical response in turn enabled a neural reaction which did, as Shakira put it, have a 'therapeutic effect.' By 2007, Ittai Shapira had pieced together the fragments of his experience, and, in the process, had written his *Concierto Latino*.

As one would expect from this combination of musical inspiration and real-life drama, the *Concierto* can be heard and understood on different levels. The opening movement, 'The Attack', stems from those initial bursts of sound heard by the composer shortly after the attack itself. Sombre, pensive music is juxtaposed with more rustic, rhythmically vigorous material, initiated by a vibrant and wide-ranging cadenza. The style includes Iberian and Ladino (Judaean-Spanish) idioms, with Jewish (Sephardic) elements reminiscent of Bloch. These modal inflections can be traced back to the Middle Ages, when the North African Moors conquered Iberia. The Moors influenced all aspects of Iberian culture, including music, to which they introduced the distinctive modes which still infuse Latin music today. Indeed, the Moorish influence on Afro-Caribbean music and culture, so much a part of life in Cuba and its environs, link this work to *The Old Man and the Sea*; in writing the latter Shapira felt a significant connection between the two works.

'Lament', the second movement of the *Concierto Latino*, opens with a wistful oboe solo, reflecting on the assault. Shapira uses material from the first movement in a mournful guise – based on the Flamenco style – as a way of expressing the anguish brought on by the attack and its ensuing confusion. There are shades of Shostakovich in the movement's dark-hued character and contemplative harmonies, but resignation and, ultimately, acceptance, are reached via a cathartic, brooding Tango theme.

Finally, 'Party' develops this material into a series of dances. Full of colourful orchestration, shapely melodies and rhythmic bombast, this music draws on several popular Latin styles: the Conga, named after the Afro-Cuban drums and the rhythms most commonly used when playing them; Salsa, a jaunty Cuban dance which represents the fusion of European and African styles; and that rhythmically syncopated Cuban dance, the Rhumba. In fact, *rumbo*, in Cuban Spanish, means 'party'. These dance styles exude the vitality one would expect from a musician who has been through an extraordinary experience, and emerged with a deeper appreciation of life.

Caprice Habañera is one of several encore pieces written by Ittai Shapira. The piece employs devices also used by the composer in his concerti: folk elements, particularly from Latin music, and techniques such as large extensions – stretching beyond the conventional interval of a tenth; fingerings outside the usual violin positions; and arpeggios on diminished and augmented chords. The work combines the polished virtuosity of a concert encore with an earthy depth of expression from its folk influences. Indeed, 'habañera' is another term for the Cuban *contradanza*, a dance characterised by its distinctive rhythm. Thus it is Cuba that unifies all three works on this disc, its infectious warmth and pulsating rhythms interwoven with the resonant words of Hemingway, and with Shapira's own musical language.

Joanna Wyld, 2012

BIOGRAPHIES

ITTAI SHAPIRA

In his dual role as violinist-composer, Ittai Shapira is a rarity in the 21st century, but follows a long line of musicians who, in writing and performing their own works, have relished both forms of creativity.

Ittai Shapira regularly performs with prestigious artists across the globe. Engagements include performances with the BBC Concert Orchestra, Belgrade Philharmonic under Sir Neville Marriner, Cape Town Philharmonic, Czech National Symphony under Libor Pešek, Detroit Symphony under Yoel Levi, English Chamber Orchestra with Yuri Bashmet at the Barbican, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Israeli Virtuosi at Alice Tully Hall hosted by Itzhak Perlman, the Philharmonia, Polish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic, Russian Philharmonic with Thomas Sanderling, and the Symphony Orchestras of Budapest, Harrisburg, Jerusalem, Omaha and Shanghai. Recent performances include a tour of Finland and Sweden with the Oulu Sinfonia, and a tour of Shapira's own composition, *Concierto Latino*, with the Key West Symphony.

In his role as a composer, Ittai Shapira continues to write a variety of works, including a Double Violin Concerto entitled *Magyar*, a Violin and Cello Concerto, 'Sephardic Journeys', and a set of Solo Violin Caprices.

Ittai Shapira made a critically acclaimed Carnegie Hall debut in 2003 with the Orchestra of St Luke's, performing the world premiere of the Violin Concerto written for him by compatriot Shulamit Ran. His recording of this concerto is featured in a compilation of Ms Ran's works performed by Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In 2006 Ittai Shapira reached an audience of 55 million playing on the Jerry Lewis Telethon, televised nationally in the US. In the same year, Shapira toured a concert piece written for him by Glen Roven, *The Runaway Bunny*, which he performed with Glenn Close, as well as recording the work with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Brooke Shields.



Carlos Gutiérrez

Ittai Shapira performs as recitalist and chamber musician throughout the US, Canada, Europe, Australia and China, at venues ranging from the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Louvre Auditorium to the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. He frequently performs as a chamber musician with the ensemble Concertante, and also appears at international festivals, recent examples including those at Aspen, Banff, Ravinia and Schleswig-Holstein.

Ittai Shapira's discography (for labels including Champs Hill, EMI, Meridian Records, Sanctuary Classics, Quartz and Sony/BMG) represents his interest in both standard and unusual repertoire: from Bruch to Berio. Shapira's playing is also featured in the soundtrack for a film made about Daniel Pearl, *The Journalist and the Jihadi*. Shapira is the dedicatee of no fewer than fourteen concertos, the most recent of which is the *Katrina Concerto* by Theodore Wiprud. Ittai Shapira continues to collaborate with some of today's most respected and communicative composers, enjoying particularly fruitful musical relationships with Avner Dorman and Dave Heath.

Ittai Shapira, who now lives in New York, grew up in Israel, where he studied with the renowned pedagogue Ilona Feher. He continued his studies at the Juilliard School with Dorothy DeLay and Robert Mann. A recipient of the prestigious Clairmont Award, Ittai Shapira co-founded the Ilona Feher Foundation with esteemed colleague Hagai Shaham, dedicated to the nurturing and promotion of young Israeli violinists.

Ittai Shapira plays a 1745 Guadagnini Violin.

Ittai Shapira would like to thank Stephen Cabell, Avner Dorman, Dave Heath and Theodore Wiprud for their musical influence and advice during the composition of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

NEIL THOMSON

Neil Thomson is one of the most widely respected and versatile British conductors of his generation. Born in 1966, he studied with Norman Del Mar at the Royal College of Music in London and later at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein and Kurt Sanderling.

He has conducted and recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia (in a broadcast with Steven Isserlis) and in the past five years has worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra in Denmark, Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Teatro Massimo, Palermo, Orquesta Sinfónica de Yucatán in Mexico, Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. In May 2005 he was invited to conduct the 50th Anniversary Memorial Concert for George Enescu with the Romanian National Orchestra and soloists David Geringas and Carmen Oprisanu.

Since 2008 he has made successful débuts (and immediate re-invitations) with the Israel Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, the Orquestra Nacional do Porto and the WDR Rundfunkorchester, Köln.

He has performed with many distinguished soloists including Sir James Galway, Dame Moura Lympany, Sir Thomas Allen, Dame Felicity Lott, Philip Langridge, Sarah Chang, Steven Isserlis, Julian Lloyd Webber, David Geringas, Natalie Clein, György Pauk, Brett Dean, Jean-Philippe Collard, Peter Jablonski, and Sir Richard Rodney Bennett.

Recent collaborations include Schumann Cello Concerto with Steven Isserlis, Liszt Second Piano Concerto with Stephen Hough and the premiere of Joseph Pibbs' new Percussion Concerto with Dame Evelyn Glennie at the Cheltenham Festival.

From 1992 until 2006 he was Head of Conducting at the Royal College of Music, the youngest-ever incumbent of this post (first held by Sir Adrian Boult in 1916 and thereafter by conductors such as Sir Malcolm Sargent, Constant Lambert, Vernon Handley and Norman Del Mar).

He was made an Honorary Member of the RCM in 1994 for his services to the institution and has established an enviable reputation as an orchestral trainer.

His skills as a natural communicator have enhanced an already growing reputation as a teacher throughout Europe. He was invited twice to the EU-sponsored masterclasses in Vilnius, Lithuania and has been a Guest Professor at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, the Krakow Academy of Music and the Conservatoire "Arrigo Boito" in Parma. In 2002 he was invited by Lorin Maazel to be on the jury for the European rounds of the Maazel Conducting Competition. In 2007 Neil was on the jury, alongside Gunther Schuller, for the Eduardo Mata International Conducting Competition in Mexico City and in May 2012 for the Prokofiev Conducting Competition in St. Petersburg.



Ittai Shapira and Neil Thomson recording with the RLPO

KRZYSZTOF CHORZELSKI CONCIERTO LATINO

Born in Warsaw, Krzysztof Chorzelski enjoys a diverse career as a chamber musician, recitalist and conductor. He is the violist in the Belcea Quartet – a leading chamber ensemble of the younger generation. The quartet's activities have taken him all over the world, with regular appearances on all major stages including London's Wigmore Hall, New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and Vienna's Konzerthaus. Their recordings for EMI have received critical praise and awards such as the *Gramophone*, *Midem Classical Award* and *Diapason d'Or*. He appears regularly as a chamber music partner with musicians such as Piotr Anderszewski, Stephen Kovacevich, Imogen Cooper, Katya Apekisheva, Andrew Zolinsky, Natalie Clein, the Alban Berg, Ysaÿe, Jerusalem and Pavel Haas quartets. He is currently viola and chamber music professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Having studied conducting with Neil Thomson at the Royal College of Music and with Diego Masson at the Dartington Summer School, Krzysztof is further pursuing his interest in this field. He has founded the Metamorphosen Ensemble – a London-based chamber orchestra, with which he appeared at St. John's, Smith Square in London.



Giorgia Bertazzi