

Elyakum Shapirra

Elyakum Shapirra is an Israeli conductor. He studied with Leonard Bernstein and became one of his assistant conductors at the New York Philharmonic. He also studied at Tanglewood and at the Juilliard School with Sergei Koussevitzky.

Elyakum Shapirra was the Assistant Conductor for the San Francisco Symphony but at the same time led the New York Philharmonic on tours to Japan and Canada in 1960 and 1961. In 1961 he was also a guest conductor with the University of the Pacific. Elyakum Shapirra became Associate Conductor with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1962 and held the position until 1967.

He was appointed Chief Conductor of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra in Sweden in 1969 but then left in 1974 to be the first person to conduct Alexander Scriabin's *Prometheus: The Poem of Fire* in England with the coloured lighting that the composer intended there to be. It was played by the London Symphony Orchestra and Shapirra conducted it in the Royal Albert Hall.

While still at the Malmö Symphony Orchestra in 1973, Shapirra conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Soloist George Pludermacher in the world premiere of Toccata for Piano and Orchestra, composed in 1962 by Giannic Christou, in April 1973 in Oxford.

Elyakum Shapirra's extensive recorded collection includes the first commercial recording of Anton Bruckner's Symphony in F minor with the London Symphony Orchestra. It also includes Bruckner's Overture in G minor, also with the London Symphony Orchestra. He has recorded the 1st and 2nd symphonies by Leonard Bernstein, a collection of other standard orchestral repertoire with various orchestras, as well as a number of Israeli, Yemeni and Yiddish songs with popular singers.

Elyakum Shapirra began his 5 year position as Chief Conductor of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra in 1975. Shapirra received very positive reactions from audiences, players and the press. Maria Prerauer (*The Australian*) wrote: "Elyakum Shapirra's baton draws fire... Like his discoverer, Leonard Bernstein, Shapirra whirls like a human dynamo, occasionally getting carried away with a dizzily rotating circular beat, punctuated with a clenched fist here and there. But he is no abominable showman. He is an inspired musician."

Elyakum Shapirra has also been associated with the Arnhem Philharmonic Orchestra in the Netherlands.

Robert Hall Lewis, the American composer, dedicated his *Three Pieces for Orchestra* which he wrote in 1966 to Shapirra to conduct the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.