



*"... music might be called my  
life work finding fruition  
in the Shepherd School  
of Music."*

*Mrs. Sallie Shepherd Perkins*

Developing the philosophy of the  
Shepherd School of Music:

# Dreams and Translations

By SAMUEL JONES

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AS I HAVE SPOKEN with individuals both in Houston and on my visits this year throughout the country to some of the nation's outstanding music schools, I have sensed an extraordinary interest in the Shepherd School of Music, a great admiration for Rice's decision to take the time to prepare thoroughly for its music school, and a genuine interest in and, indeed, curiosity about the Shepherd School itself, how it will be organized, what will be its guiding philosophy.

As you can imagine, I have given a great deal of thought to those questions these last few months, and in looking for a way to share that thinking with you, I have focused on two words: *dreams* and *translations*. Before I discuss with you the philosophy of the Shepherd School, let me ask you to think with me a bit about those words.

There are of course different connotations, indeed different meanings for the word *dream*. It has always been our word for those sleep-dramas which our subconscious writes and in which we always seem to be the star. And men have had great admiration for one who could translate the meaning of those sleep-dramas, whether his name be David or C. G. Jung. In the earlier days of the Old Testament Jewish nation-state, the word *dream* carried an unpleasant connotation, that of an hallucination or a moment of craziness. (Compare, for instance, Ecclesiastes 5:2-3, "Be not rash with thy mouth . . . Therefore let thy words be few, for a dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words.") It is only in the later pages of the Old Testament that the word begins to approach its modern connotation, that of a vision of an ideal. This latter connotation is illustrated in one of the later prophets (Joel 2:28), "Thereafter the day shall come when I will pour out my spirit on all mankind; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."

*Your old people shall dream dreams . . .*

Two such dreams are of importance to all of us who have interest in and concern for Rice University. The first, of course, was the inspired vision of William Marsh Rice himself, which resulted in the creation of our university, the—as he then named it—William Marsh Rice Institute for the Advancement of Literature, Science, and Art. (It's interesting to me, parenthetically, that in the original conception of Mr. Rice's dream he staked out three large areas of thought and practice which he wanted his Institute to explore, as reflected in his original title. The Institute quickly achieved

greatness in science, it later achieved major stature in letters, and with the establishment of the Institute for the Arts a few years ago and the realization now of the Shepherd School of Music, Rice University stands ready to fulfill the final portion of William Marsh Rice's original dream.)

The second dream, although much less well known, has many parallels with the Rice dream. It was a vision in the mind of Mrs. Sallie Shepherd Perkins, a vision which she nurtured for years, as long ago as 1938. Like Mr. Rice, she wished to establish a school, but this school would be for the training of musicians in Houston as a memorial to her grandfather, Benjamin A. Shepherd. Shepherd was a pioneer Houston financier, a lover of music, and, evidently, a great encouragement to Mrs. Perkins in her musical studies. Mrs. Perkins, a pianist, graduated in music at Hollins College and became a leader in the National Federation of Music Clubs movement. She has written, "One of my greatest interests in life has been music . . . indeed, music might be called my life work finding fruition in the Shepherd School of Music." She thought often of the school, and wrote numerous notes and letters of her hopes and wishes for it. In 1950 she entered into an agreement with Rice whereby she would endow a foundation to support the school and Rice would, as soon as practicable, organize and administer it as one of the schools of the University. She established the foundation with a \$350,000 gift and added further gifts during her lifetime bringing the total to more than \$1 million. But Mrs. Perkins, again like William Marsh Rice, knew that she would never see the first brick laid for her school. For it would not be until after the \$4.5 million bequest which she planned to leave upon her death that it would become possible for Rice fully to translate Mrs. Perkins's dream into reality.

After Mrs. Perkins's death in 1968 Rice thoroughly reviewed the planning which had occurred up until then and made further studies of financial feasibility, of potential program, and of possible leaders to head the new school. It was determined to give the director great freedom in developing the philosophy and establishing the operation of the school, and a search was initiated for the person who would become the first director of the Shepherd School of Music.

To a Rice student of the last few years and to many in Houston, it seems a bit strange to think of the Shepherd School of Music as a new school. The title has been listed in the catalog for some time because Rice has used some of the income from the Shepherd Foundation to provide several courses in music for nonmusic majors and to finance lectures and a chamber music concert series. But though the school has existed in name, it has not been geared to training music students, and it has not been a degree-granting arm of the University. With the appointment of a director in July,

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*This article is adapted from an address Dr. Jones delivered before the Society of Rice University Women on February 18, 1974.*

1973, the University reaffirmed in full its sharing of Mrs. Perkins's dream, and it became my duty to translate that dream into reality.

There are a number of possible ways to effect that translation. The Shepherd School of Music could be made a school of theoretical and musicological study, in which little or no practical musical training is offered, but in which the school concentrates on the study of the theory and history of music, not on music making itself. This is the Harvard approach, and it was the original desire of the administration back in the 1950s that it also be Rice's approach. But this approach never bore fruit for Rice, and all the early planning ran aground. I personally believe, at this stage in Houston's artistic development, that the first need is for high-quality musical training, then the advanced theoretical pursuits can follow. Besides, to insist upon musical training with no opportunity for music making would be roughly equivalent to telling, for example, the Chemistry Department that it could do no research.

Or the new school of music could be a school which emphasizes music education, the training of teachers of music. But the present administration decided early that Rice should not go into the music-education business, and that is a decision with which I heartily concur. There are already a number of institutions close at hand which do this job quite well, and there is no need to create yet another such institution.

Another possible approach which the school could adopt would be to become a center for the study of electronic and computerized music. After all, so the reasoning goes, Rice divided by Houston times computers plus NASA times electronics squared equals a center for new music. But I feel strongly such an approach would never win the support, much less the heart of Houston. And since it doesn't have my own heart, I could never be an apologist for that cause. Not that we won't study new compositional resources and utilize them; we will. But they will not be our *raison d'être*.

Another approach is simply to create a *music* school, a school for the training of musicians who are performing artists. This would be not so different, after all, from training first-rate engineers, chemists, or architects (which, of course, Rice already does and does well), in that students must learn a body of theoretical language, but they must also be able to practice, to perform, if you will, with this knowledge. As I see it, this last approach should be the Shepherd School's approach.

There are some 900 music schools and college or university music departments in the United States and Canada. We do not need another university music department turning out more music teachers to train yet more music teachers. But there are, as I see them, several real needs in the music world to which a new

school of music might consider addressing itself.

There are very few schools which give all-out professional training in music. As Peter Mennin, president of the Juilliard School, told me, "You can count on the fingers of one hand the number of schools turning out professional performing artists." And those schools are concentrated on the east coast and to a lesser degree on the west coast. With one or two possible exceptions, one looks in vain for such an institution in America's heartland. We do not need just another university music department, but there is a real need for more institutions devoted to the highest artistic standards.

As one studies the catalogs and curricula of the nation's music schools and as one sits on the audition committees of a major symphony orchestra, another need becomes apparent. There is no school in the country which offers a truly comprehensive curriculum in orchestral studies, with string orchestral instruction being a particular deficiency. Most schools have a student orchestra which performs a small portion of the repertoire in four years, some have a reading orchestra which skims over a bit more of the repertoire, but none devote major amounts of thought, energy, or curricular time to the creation of the special awarenesses and ensemble techniques which make a fine orchestra player, taught in an orchestral setting in which the entire repertoire is systematically studied. Many individual instrumental teachers work with their students on some of the more difficult excerpts from orchestral literature, but this cannot give the student the experience of playing it with an orchestra.

Another major need in the field of music education is what I call "de-cubbyholing" the curriculum. In the typical music department there is very little correlation between the teaching of theory and the teaching of performance, even between the teaching of music theory and music literature. Many schools are trying to solve this problem, and the various "comprehensive musicianship" programs around the country represent attempts—with varying degrees of success—to recognize musical training as training in a single, unified art rather than in a series of seemingly unrelated, certainly uncoordinated subjects. It is especially difficult for established schools, many with tenured faculties and predetermined divisions of academic territory, successfully to effect curricular reform. As I see it, there is a real need for genuinely creative approaches to structuring the music curriculum.

Finally, I see a major need for an institution which successfully blends artistic training with a liberal education. Usually, either one or the other suffers. If a student diverts from his practice the time necessary to acquire a liberal education, he has seriously diluted his artistic training; if, on the other hand, practically every course he takes in four years is a music course, then he has acquired very little in the way of a liberal edu-



*Jones is shown here with the score of his composition, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. Commissioned for the bicentennial celebration of Shenandoah County, Virginia, the work is scheduled for bicentennial performances throughout the country.*

cation. There is a real need for a place where the brilliant young musician/student can go and know that his potential in both areas will be fully developed.

Balanced with these needs are some prerequisites posed by the nature of Rice itself. The first is size. Rice is a small university, and the Shepherd School must be proportional to it. Will this pose a problem for us? I think not. On the contrary, a smaller school will allow greater freedom in scheduling and more individual attention to student development. Administrators of some of the larger schools of music have confided to me that they wish their schools were smaller.

The second prerequisite posed by Rice is that of maintaining Rice's academic standards, which means that we will lose the opportunity to work with some gifted music students who just can't produce academically. But, contrary to what one might think, brilliant music students are in many instances academic leaders of their class as well. In Cincinnati, the Conservatory students lead the rest of the University in verbal SAT scores, providing yet another example that musical and academic achievement are not mutually exclusive.

As I see it, these needs and opportunities provide a profile of the kind of institution the Shepherd School

of Music can and should become. And these considerations have led me in shaping the philosophy which will guide us as we bring the Shepherd School into existence. To ask again the earlier question, what kind of school will the Shepherd School be?

First, it will be a small school, comprising some 200 to 250 students and some 30 to 35 faculty members, including a dozen or so part-time instructors. The students will be selected according to the most rigorous musical standards. Musical ability will be the major determinant of their admission, although high academic achievement will also be expected. The faculty will be versatile, flexible, performers themselves, deeply interested in students and willing to experiment to find new ways to ensure full realization of the students' musical potential. At the same time, the School will give its faculty members every encouragement for continued professional growth and achievement. In short, we intend to create a community of artist/scholars through whose mutual accomplishment and interaction all members of the community grow to become the finest artists of which they are capable.

Second, the Shepherd School will embrace only the highest standards. Its aim will be to produce artists, both creative and re-creative. It will endeavor to train artists who are intelligent and fully accomplished performers, who are deeply feeling and sensitive musicians and human beings, and who are knowledgeable of their society, of music's place in it, and of the contribution they can make.

Third, the Shepherd School must not lose the opportunity it has as a new institution to create a more coordinated curriculum, one which is as individually tailored as possible to students' needs. I will shortly announce the appointments of three distinguished faculty members who will join me in 1974-75 in creating the Shepherd School's core curriculum, a coordinated approach to the teaching of theory, literature, and ensemble instruction. This curriculum will then be put into operation in 1975-76 when the school formally opens its doors for students.

Fourth, the Shepherd School will institute comprehensive training in orchestral studies. The school will create a unique orchestra laboratory for the study of ensemble techniques, theory, and style, as well as the study of repertoire. Emphasis will also be given to the training of conductors and to composition for the symphony orchestra. The school will enjoy a close collaboration with the Houston Symphony and its members as it pursues this goal.

Fifth, the Shepherd School will be a place where a performing artist can also receive a liberal education. The only way I can presently see to make possible high achievement in artistic training as well as allowing the time for a liberal education is to stop regarding as divinely inspired the four-year mold into which most

education is poured. We are giving serious consideration to instituting a five-year curriculum for our professional degree in music.

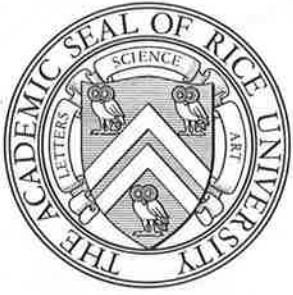
These, then, are some of the hallmarks of the philosophy which will guide the Shepherd School of Music. There are many other things to consider, things about which we have begun to develop specific plans, such as our Inaugural Festival (which will open the school in September, 1975), the expansion of the music library, the institution of graduate studies, planning for a new building, the institution of training in opera and possibly ballet. Some of these projects will come later, but I will have announcements in the coming months on the others.

Dreams. At the moment that is what they are. And I've been talking about translating these dreams into reality.

But there is another meaning to the word *translate*, and in that meaning is a key to music itself, to what makes all this effort important and significant.

This other meaning is used in St. Paul's great discourse on faith in his letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 11:5): "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him." This other kind of translation, a translation from the physical to the spiritual, tells us something of the importance and the mystery of music itself. For music takes physical vibrations and translates them into spiritual vibrations. It takes the highest intellectual preoccupations and translates them into the deepest feelings of emotion. It takes imperfect human beings—composers and artists—and through nothing but the sounds they make translates them into bearers of a message which gives us a glimpse of perfection itself.

For music seems to be a kind of parable, it provides us with perhaps the closest parallel to the nature of Reality. Music exists in time, yet it is timeless. The substance of music is vibration, and the deeper our physicists probe into the atom, the more we realize that the substance of matter also is vibration. Music builds complex patterns of consonance and dissonance, of tension and release, just like the seasonal flow, the yin and yang of the universe. And we sense out of music's vibrations some undeniable meaning, a meaning which transcends the physics of the occasion. This is what we pursue, this is what we dedicate our school and ourselves to—a school of which Rice, Houston, and Texas will be proud, a school which will call forth the highest dedication from its faculty, the highest achievement of its students, the highest support of its parent university, and the highest loyalty and philanthropy of its community. In return, the Shepherd School of Music will provide an immeasurable enrichment in the lives of all of us, as we pass on to young people and share with the community something of the greatness and beauty of Music itself. □



# The Shepherd School of Music

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