

# Ari Shapiro lends his voice to ‘Oedipus Rex’ at the Washington Chorus

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By **Kristen Page-Kirby** May 11

If you’re looking for Ari Shapiro, odds are he’s behind a microphone. The co-host of NPR’s “All Things Considered” and occasional guest singer with the band Pink Martini will be behind another mic this weekend, narrating Igor Stravinsky’s “Oedipus Rex” in The Washington Chorus’ season-finale concert. In addition to the opera-oratorio based on the classic Sophocles play, the chorus — joined by other local choirs — will perform Carl Orff’s “Carmina Burana.” Shapiro stepped out from behind all the mics to talk to Express about the show.

*Kennedy Center, 2700 F St. NW; Sun., 5 p.m., \$18-\$72.*

## **So you’re doing “Oedipus Rex” on Mother’s Day.**

Interesting programming choice. I confess I had not realized. I guess there are all different types of families.

## **How do your backgrounds in music and radio inform one another?**

Both involve connecting with an audience, both involve telling stories. They use different skills, but fundamentally they are about telling people a story that they will remember and might even change the way they look at the world.

## **Do you get nervous when it’s a live audience?**

It’s always nerve-racking to go up in front of a live audience. No matter how many people are listening to the radio at any given moment, in the studio it’s just me and a guest, perhaps a director, engineer and a couple other people. There might be millions of people listening, but I’m not aware those people are out there. In a room with an audience, you can see and hear and respond to each and every one of them.

## **What do you get out of that experience that you don’t get from radio?**

When you’re on the radio, whatever role the audience plays is more receptive. Our listeners might react in real time to whatever we’re doing on NPR, but we’re not aware of that reaction. So there’s an energy that goes back and forth between the live performer and the audience. There is that energy that you don’t get when you’re watching a movie or TV show or listening to the radio.

Kristen Page-Kirby covers film, arts and events for Express.  Follow @kpagekirby