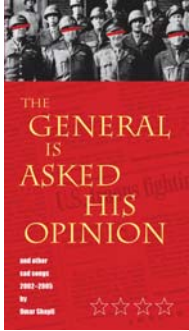


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**The General Is Asked His
Opinion
and other sad songs
2002–2005**
Omar Shapli

“I’ve always through these 40 years—here and faraway—thought Omar Shapli was a serious yet dryly witty poet. I’ll not compare him to others who may come to mind; it would not do him justice. He is an original—and of now. I shall now have a drink and toast Omar Shapli: poet.”
Studs Terkel

Omar Shapli is not a poet. A father, a husband, a veteran: yes. A former Second City member, certainly. A teacher, an actor, a theatre director. One of Massachusetts’ untapped natural treasures? Unquestionably.

Poets use words as tools or materials to attempt to delineate some aspect of their own experience or imaginings. Omar Shapli, on the other hand, sticks incisive questions to those who encounter his musings. He designs and deploys his own lingual scuds, sashes, and sarongs. When he writes about deciding what to order for lunch, he is as thoroughly absorbing as when he writes about an aching tooth or an Audubon sanctuary or his favorite watering hole. He demands, unforgivingly sometimes, that you strain a bit to figure out what he is trying to say; when his tricky trains of thought crystallize, gratification follows in a rush. He is a part-time philosopher whose medium just happens to be verse, rhyming or non-rhyming, formless or formed, punctuated or unmoored. His inquiries surround and jab the international War and Terror and the men who launched and persist in perpetuating it, sympathize with those who have to fight it, and empathize with the rest of us, watching civilization disintegrate before our very eyes on 24/7 television. All of this he does from a vantage point of septuagenarian experience we can only envy and, vicariously, benefit from; he doesn’t have all the answers, but the questions are a worthy starting point. Beckett, Ashbery, Shakespeare, Poe? No, no: *The General Is Asked His Opinion...* belongs on the bookshelf alongside Foucault, Socrates, Aristotle, Hume.

Alone Among the Whippoorwills

Think fast. Hold the
megaphone where it
shimmies least: no
foothold among the
dewy decibels. Raise
the angle and stay put.
Brace for jolts: they
are information. Be
pained by wrongsize
socks. Wheez. Doze.
Dish out the consequence.

Omar Shapli is not a poet, as we understand a writer of poetry to be: he is what every poet should aspire to be.

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