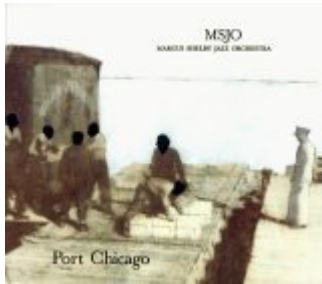


"Port Chicago"

To buy "PORT CHICAGO" CD, please contact kate@marcusshelby.com



The Marcus Shelby Jazz Orchestra celebrated the release of their new CD "Port Chicago" at Yoshi's on February 21st and February 22nd, 2006. "Port Chicago" was composed by Marcus Shelby and commissioned by the Equal Justice Society. This recording is a 14-part suite for Jazz Orchestra, which pays tribute to the U.S. Naval soldiers who perished in the single worst disaster on U.S. soil during World War II.

Port Chicago is remembered as the northern California naval base where a devastating explosion in July 1944 killed more than 320 men, predominantly African American sailors, and injured 400 others. The sailors objected to the racial discrimination and manifestly unsafe working conditions at the base where only blacks were assigned to loading ammunition on ships. When 258 of the sailors protested in a work stoppage the Navy called it mutiny, setting in motion the largest mutiny trial in U.S. Navy history. In a sensational court martial 50 young black sailors were unjustly convicted. Thurgood Marshall, then special counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, flew to San Francisco to investigate the case. He charged that the young sailors were being made scapegoats for the conditions the Navy allowed at the base. Following the military trial, Marshall filed a strong appeal brief on behalf of the sailors, highlighting the racial discrimination at the base and in the trial. Although his appeal was rejected by the Navy Judge Advocate General, the public pressure generated by a nationwide campaign in support of the sailors compelled the Navy to revamp its policies and begin the process of desegregation—a major civil rights victory. Although the imprisoned sailors were later released under a general amnesty after the war, their mutiny convictions have never been overturned. The injustice of their convictions cries out for redress, and reminds us of the price paid by many unsung heroes in the struggle for civil rights and justice.

According to Marcus Shelby, "The black sailors who lost their lives on July 17th, 1947 in a massive explosion at the Port Chicago Naval Weapon's Base were true, if unwitting, American heroes. The explosion drew investigation, which revealed Jim Crow-like racial segregation in the naval forces, involving disadvantaged, dangerous, and ultimately deadly working conditions for black sailors. In response to the public exposure of these truths, the Navy quietly desegregated its ranks; in 1948, Harry Truman desegregated all U.S. armed forces. Ironically, the Port Chicago tragedy revealed and corrected a grave injustice, and brought America closer to equal justice for all, the very foundation of true democracy. Indeed, these sailors' lives were not lost in vain. 'Port Chicago' the composition is an abstract representation that chronicles the story of these African

American sailors. It pays homage to the men and to the sacrifices they made for the moral development of their country. It also honors the survivors-those who have had to bear the burden of history's continuing injustice. 'Port Chicago' hopes to again shed light on those injustices, and to join the efforts to exonerate the survivors."

Marcus Shelby was honored with a Congressional Certificate for Community Service from Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi for his work on "Port Chicago". The music is recorded by the Marcus Shelby Jazz Orchestra, which is comprised of 15 of the San Francisco Bay Area's finest jazz musicians including Rob Barics (tenor/clarinet) who also regularly performs with Wynton Marsalis. "Port Chicago" is a collection of both straight-ahead big band jazz in the spirit of Duke Ellington and Count Basie and also compositions incorporating Afro-Cuban and neo-classic influences. The CD booklet for "Port Chicago" contains commentary from Robert Allen, author of the book "The Port Chicago Mutiny", famous Civil Rights Attorney Eva Paterson who heads the Equal Justice Society, and dramaturg Val Hendrickson who wrote the libretto for the music. There are also several historical photos included from the Naval Archives about Port Chicago. This will be the 5th release for bassist/composer Marcus Shelby on Noir Records (Un Faux Pas!, The Sophisticate, Midtown Sunset, The Lights).