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PARALLELS AND PARADOXES

EXPLORATIONS IN MUSIC AND SOCIETY

**DANIEL BARENBOIM  
AND EDWARD SAID**

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# *Daniel Barenboim and Edward W. Said*

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## *Parallels and Paradoxes*

Daniel Barenboim is Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and General Music Director of the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin. He gave his first public performance as a pianist at the age of seven. He celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of that milestone in the year 2000 with a series of concerts throughout the world, culminating in a complete cycle of Beethoven piano concertos and symphonies at Carnegie Hall in New York City. He has been associated with the Bayreuth Festival since 1981.

Edward W. Said was the author of more than twenty books, including *Orientalism*, which was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, *Culture and Imperialism*, *Representations of the Intellectual*; *The End of the Peace Process*; *Power, Politics, and Culture*; and *Out of Place: A Memoir*. His books have been published in thirty-six languages. Professor Said died in September 2003.

### *About the Editor*

Ara Guzelimian is Senior Director and Artistic Advisor at Carnegie Hall. He was previously Artistic Administrator of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Aspen Music Festival and School, as well as Artistic Director of the Ojai Festival in California. Active as a critic, writer, and radio producer, he has given lectures for the Cleveland Orchestra, at the Salzburg Festival, and at the Jerusalem Music Center. He is the host of the celebrated Carnegie Hall Talks, a series of conversations with great musicians.

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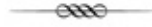
*Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*

*Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*

# *Parallels and Paradoxes*

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EXPLORATIONS IN MUSIC AND SOCIETY



*Daniel Barenboim and Edward W. Said*

*Edited and with a Preface by Ara Guzelimian*



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# Preface

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by Ara Guzelimian

“You *must* meet my friend Edward Said!”

Daniel Barenboim was most emphatic about that. He and I had just had the first substantial conversation of our acquaintance, working on various aspects of a Carnegie Hall *Perspectives* project that explored his multifaceted musical interests and collaborations. With his boundless curiosity about everything around him, he began to pepper me with questions on my personal history. The moment he discovered my own Middle Eastern origins, he insisted on introducing me immediately to Edward Said.

The friendship between Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim dates back a decade earlier to a chance meeting in a London hotel lobby in the early 1990s and has blossomed into an extraordinary collaboration. A passion for music and ideas is surely the binding force, but there is also the powerful underlying pull of parallel personal geographies. Both men come from a complex overlapping of cultures.

Edward Said was born in Jerusalem into a Palestinian family, but grew up largely in Cairo, once removed already from his origins. As a member of a rather anglicized Christian Arab family living in a predominantly Muslim society he was arguably displaced once more. And he was displaced yet again to the United States where, as a teenager, he attended boarding school. Even his father’s history is geographically complex. Prior to Edward’s birth, Wadie Said had lived for a time in the United States, had attained American citizenship, and had even fought in the United States Army before returning to Palestine and Egypt. That peripatetic nature is readily found in many Middle Eastern family histories.

Daniel Barenboim’s background is just as complex. He was born into a Russian Jewish family that immigrated during his grandparents’ generation to Buenos Aires, where there was a thriving Jewish population, the third largest of any city in the world at the time. He subsequently immigrated with his parents to the newly created state of Israel, and his homes since that time have included London, Paris, Jerusalem, Chicago, and Berlin.

In each case, music was a formative and defining passion, fueled by recordings and the surprisingly rich musical life to be found in Cairo and Buenos Aires in the years following World War II. When Daniel Barenboim drew me into their friendship it was partly in immediate recognition of striking parallels in my own background. I was born into an Armenian family in Cairo and many of my earliest memories are musical ones—my brother playing Bach Inventions for his piano lessons or the entire family going to a concert at the original Cairo Opera House (for which Verdi wrote *Aida*), where I remember seeing an ornate white piano reputed to have belonged to King Farouk. My parents attended some of the same memorable concerts and operas as the teenage Edward Said and, in fact, my mother remembers well the stationery store owned by Edward’s father.

Edward Said is now best known as an extraordinarily influential and innovative intellectual force, an astute commentator on literature and culture, on culture’s relationship to society, particularly in examining questions of Orientalism, a field of studies which he has pioneered. He is also a most forceful and impassioned commentator on the endlessly complex conflicts in the Middle East. But music still remains essential in his intellectual and personal life. He has written an enormous body of musical essays, and he remains an accomplished pianist.

As music director of both the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin, Daniel Barenboim is a central figure in the musical world. He is one of the most recorded artists in history, with a nearly fifty-year span of recordings dating back to his earliest discs made when he was in his teens. He has taken numerous highly public and courageous stands, becoming an outspoken advocate for the performance of Wagner’s music in Israel, fighting the lingering presence of anti-Semitism in Germany’s cultural politics, and becoming the first and most prominent Israeli musician ever to perform in the Palestinian West Bank (an invitation organized, not surprisingly, by Edward Said).

The Barenboim/Said friendship has had numerous fruitful public manifestations. In 1999, the two were central to a bold experiment in bringing together Israeli and Arab musicians to Weimar, Germany, as part of a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian Bach.

anniversary of Goethe's birth. That Weimar workshop has since been repeated both in Germany and in Chicago. Edward Said adapted and wrote a connective narrative for Daniel Barenboim's concert performances in Chicago of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, as well as the program essay for the subsequent Barenboim/Berlin recording of the opera. They have held numerous public dialogues on various musical topics, two of which were the starting point of this current book.

The conversations in this book took place over the span of five years. They are a selective and necessarily compressed distillation of an ongoing dialogue between two extraordinary creative minds.

My thanks go, first of all, to Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim for the enormous pleasure of their company, both in person and on paper. All three of us also owe a debt of gratitude to our editor, Shelley Wanger, for her encouragement and tempering with a discerning critical eye. Our thanks also to Patrick Sharpe for his meticulous transcription of hours of conversation, as well as to Professor David Freedberg and Francesca Nespoli of Columbia University's Casa Italiana for providing a conducive setting for several of these conversations. Zaineb Istrabadi, Sandra Fahy, John Deverman, and Ann Werkmeister helped in countless ways, especially by keeping all of us in regular contact during the almost constant travels of Messrs. Said and Barenboim. Henry Fogel, Osvaldo Golijov, Alexa Nieschlag, and Matias Tarnopolsky all contributed helpful suggestions and corrections in various stages of the book. And finally, my enduring thanks to my wife, Jan, and to our son Alec, for their love and their willingness to turn over our dining table to innumerable piles of annotated manuscript pages.

*New York*

*February 6, 2002*



# Preface to the Vintage Edition

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by Ara Guzelimian

Edward Said had the gift of conversation. All of us who knew him always looked forward to our next encounter with Edward. The talk—whether on the phone, over a long dinner, or during a chance encounter in a hallway—would always be memorable. He was fully engaged, quick to express outrage at injustice or lazy thinking, argumentative, funny, and ultimately, compassionate and humane.

I will always be grateful to Daniel Barenboim for insisting that I *must* meet Edward. The friendship that resulted is one of the great gifts of a lifetime.

*New York*

*October 29, 2003*

# In Memoriam: Edward Said (1936–2003)

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by Daniel Barenboim

Edward Said did not fit into any single category. He was the very essence of human nature because he understood contradictions. He was both a fighter and a compassionate defender. A man of logic and passion. An artist and a critic. A visionary of the future with an understanding of tradition. He fought for Palestinian rights while understanding Jewish suffering, and did not see this position as a paradox.

Edward was not only at home in music, literature, philosophy, and the understanding of politics, but he was also one of those rare people who saw the connections and the parallels between different disciplines, because he had an unusual understanding of the human spirit, and of the human being.

He had the ability to see not only the different aspects of any thought or process, but their inevitable consequences as well—and also the combination of human, psychological, and historical, as the case may be, “pre-history” of such thoughts and processes. He was one of those rare people who was permanently aware of the fact that information is only the very first step toward understanding. And he always looked for the “beyond” in the idea, the “unseen” by the eye, the “unheard” by the ear.

This very curious mind, of course, allowed him privileged glimpses into the subconscious of people, of creators. He also had a very unrestrained courage of utterance, and this is what earned him the admiration, the jealousy, and the enmity of so many people.

Edward saw in music not just a combination of sounds, but he understood the fact that every musical masterpiece is, as it were, a conception of the world. And the difficulty lies in the fact that this conception of the world cannot be described in words—because were it possible to describe it in words, the music would be unnecessary. But he recognized that the fact that it is indescribable doesn't mean it has no meaning.

It was a combination of all these qualities that led us to found the West-Eastern Divan, which provides a forum for young Israeli and Arab musicians to study music and all its ramifications together.

I shall never forget his making a room full of young Arabs, Israelis, and Germans understand that the devil exists in all of us, that Weimar, where that first Divan took place, represented both the best and the worst of German history. It was the city of Goethe, yet it was only a few kilometers away from the Buchenwald concentration camp. He impressed on all the youngsters not only the importance of reading Goethe's *Faust*, but also the necessity of witnessing with their own eyes the remains of the brutality of the concentration camp. He did so in a way that did not offend the Israelis, did not distribute collective guilt to the Germans, and made the Arabs see the necessity of understanding that period in Jewish history.

Let us not forget that until May 15, 1948, we were all Palestinians—Jewish Palestinians, Muslim Palestinians, and Christian Palestinians. Some of us got a new identity with the independence of the state of Israel, but others did not. A lot has happened since then, and there has been a great deal of suffering—unnecessary and avoidable. But the time has come to move forward, and this is what Edward and I were working on together. The time has come, first of all, to accept all that has happened, and secondly, not to distribute guilt, even if it is only the guilt of having made mistakes, either to the Palestinian side in 1948 or to the Israeli government after that. The time has come to realize that we have a problem of human and social justice that we must solve, and the national aspect of this conflict is only one of its many dimensions. For me, this is the very essence of Edward, because in order to achieve all of these things and to have the courage to say and fight for them openly, one takes the erudition, the intelligence, the humor, and the humanity of Edward.

I was in constant touch with him. I think I spoke with him nearly every day, sometimes to the consternation of our wives because I would phone at times that were inconvenient for the household on Riverside Drive in New York, or because it was so late at night in Europe. I had promised him that I would go and visit him on Sunday, the 28th of September, because I had three free days and we had many, many things to discuss. We were in the process of planning our new book, and we were

especially concerned about the development of the West-Eastern Divan Workshop which had become the most important thing in his life—as he said not only to me—and which has become the most important thing in my life as well. And we were concerned about how our work was going to proceed, and how we were going to make an active contribution to move things along and emerge from all these half lies, complete lies, and colored truths that we hear about the Middle East.

And then he said to me, “But when you come on Sunday”—a day he would not live to see—“you must promise that you will play for me something out of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* of Bach,” which I had played for him the last time I was in New York in June. “You must promise me,” he said, “that you will play the E-flat minor prelude from the first book.” And in fact when I went to New York just before he died, the music on the piano was still open to the last page that I had played for him.

*Fukuoka, Japan*

*October 29, 2003*

# Introduction

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by Edward W. Said

Two of the conversations in this book took place in front of audiences in New York and therefore have the character of trying to keep a large audience interested. The earliest was held at Columbia University's Miller Theater in October 1995, as an evening in an academic weekend conference about Richard Wagner. The idea was to take advantage of Daniel Barenboim's brief presence in the city and to use it to draw him out in public about his many years of conducting Wagner in Bayreuth, Berlin, Chicago, Salzburg, and several other places. What added value to the conversation was that Daniel was the only musician participating in the conference, and therefore brought an essential and certainly a practical perspective to what would otherwise have been a purely academic occasion.

The other public dialogue we had five years later was arranged for and moderated by our mutual friend Ara Guzelimian, Artistic Advisor of Carnegie Hall, who brought us together on the stage of Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall during a break in a series of concerts by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Daniel.

Partly because we had both enjoyed and benefited from our initial Wagner dialogue in 1995, we continued to meet in the intervening years and record a series of more conversations about music, culture, and politics during those rare periods when we were together for long enough in the same place. (All of these conversations took place before September 11.) At first we started our conversations by ourselves, with only a tape-recorder turning silently in the background. Although they were intermittent and took place both in New York and during August 1999 in Weimar, we found that a number of themes kept recurring that reflected our own professional interests, Daniel as a performing pianist and conductor, myself as a teacher and writer for whom music has been an important part of my life. We therefore had many more tapes than we ultimately used for this book, for the simple reason that repetition, hesitation, the sometimes slow process of exploring a new subject tentatively and painstakingly, as well as just long-windedness necessarily appeared in what we said to each other in the privacy of our company. There was no audience to capture or amuse. After all, we reasoned, as close friends with all sorts of overlapping concerns (not the least of them being the fact that each of us—Daniel the Israeli, myself the Palestinian—had his eye on the unfolding Oslo peace process, with different expectations and, in the beginning at least, with different perspectives), we were together exploring the parallels as well as the paradoxes of our lives saying, in effect, what's wrong with doing it in our own unself-conscious way? Later, as the idea of publishing our conversations drew the attention of friends and editors, we thought it would be wonderful if we could persuade a mutual friend who knew a great deal about music and our part of the world to join us, so that we could give shape and discipline to the unfolding discussions.

Everything changed for the better when Ara Guzelimian joined us in December 2000. I was in the throes of treatment while also trying to continue with my teaching at Columbia, Daniel was performing all the Beethoven symphonies and concerti for piano (he was the soloist) with his German orchestra, the Berlin Staatskapelle, in Carnegie Hall. We found time on successive days to schedule several hours of discussion (sensitively and intuitively guided by Ara), much of it about Beethoven. I found that it was a rare and wonderful thing to elicit reflections about music from a great musician at the very height of his power during a week when he was traversing a major oeuvre (some would say *the* major oeuvre) of Western music. Being so informal and un pompous individual, Daniel responded generously to the needs of the discussion, which was fed all the time, I think, by the steady flow of Beethoven's music, in all its drama, complexity, and intensity, that kept sounding in our collective ears in the background.

What the reader now holds in her/his hands has been culled from these lengthy and charged exchanges by Ara Guzelimian. It is therefore imperative that our remarks be read and understood not as ex cathedra musicological and aesthetic statements about music generally, Beethoven's in particular, but rather as a record of the kind of concerns and subjects stimulated by hearing (Ara and myself) and performing (Daniel) most of Beethoven's great orchestral and concerted works each evening for a week and a half.

About eight years ago I clearly remember asking Daniel, who had just finished conducting a blazing performance of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, whether the music continued sounding in his ears (as it did in mine) while we sat chatting over dinner after the performance. "In fact," I added, "I can't stop hearing that searingly romantic and audacious sound constantly: it's almost driving me crazy." "No," he responded definitively, "I just cut it off, and now I am talking and having dinner with you." And indeed that's exactly what he seemed to be doing, even though for me the mystery of performance memory, and extraordinary sustained sound gripped my attention for quite a long time. I wasn't at all persuaded that for him *Tristan* had just ended, although of course we did have a coherent and rational conversation on subjects about as far from *Tristan's* almost suffocatingly cloistral world as one could be. What I found myself doing in our sometimes bantering, sometimes very serious conversation, however, were two things: one, I was trying to understand what and how *he* had done what he had with *Tristan*, which I had just witnessed and could remember, even if I was trying to do so indirectly through conversation; and two, I was also trying to find analogies in my work that would help me better grasp his. I should say also that having been a serious amateur musician and pianist all of my life, this kind of protracted encounter, which turned into a great friendship for both of us, became a very rich thing.

I hope that the written and distilled record of some of our conversations here will prove enjoyable to the reader. In no way is what follows intended as an academic or professional contribution to discussions about the nature of art and life, or to the immense amount of gossip that already exists about the world of performers and the music business. Our hope is to provide our readers with an account of spontaneous face-to-face interactions between two active individuals who are close friends and have full and busy lives that intersect in all sorts of unexpected and, we think, illuminating ways. Our whole aim was to share our thoughts amiably and energetically with each other, and with others for whom music, culture, and politics today form a unique whole. What that whole is, I am happy to say, neither of us can fully state, but we ask our readers, our friends to join us in trying to find out. After all, these are conversations not treatises, and it is the nature of conversation at its best to be engrossing for everyone involved, as well as from time to time to take even the speaker by surprise.

*New York*

*March 2002*

# Chapter One

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*Ara Guzelimian:* I want to begin by asking each of you: Where are you at home? Or do you ever feel at home? Do you feel yourself in perpetual motion?

*Daniel Barenboim:* The used and abused cliché “I am at home wherever I make music” is true. I say “used and abused” because many of my colleagues and I have used this cliché on occasions when we didn’t know exactly how to answer this very question or didn’t want to be rude in places that were very hospitable to us yet didn’t make us feel at home. Wherever I can play the piano—preferably with a reasonably good instrument—or wherever I travel with the orchestras that I lead, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or the Staatskapelle from Berlin, I feel at home.

I feel at home in a certain way in Jerusalem, but I think this is a little bit unreal, a poet’s idea with which I grew up. We moved to Israel when I was ten years old and lived in Tel Aviv, which is a city without any history to speak of, a very modern city not particularly interesting, but bustling and bubbling with life. Whereas Jerusalem, of course, means everything to so many different people, and this is why its politics have always been so problematic. And in the 1950s, Tel Aviv-ians looked to Jerusalem for everything that they couldn’t find in their own city: spirituality, intellectual and cultural curiosity. All those things now unfortunately seem to be disappearing due to the lack of tolerance shown by some of the extreme populations in Jerusalem.

So what I mean to say is that I feel at home in the *idea* of Jerusalem. Otherwise, I feel at home in the company of a very few close friends. And, I must say, Edward to me has become the one friend with whom I can share so many things, a soul mate. I feel very at home whenever I am with him.

I am not a person who cares very much for possessions. I don’t care much about furniture or reminiscences from the past. I don’t collect memorabilia—so my feeling of being at home somewhere is really a feeling of transition, as everything is in life. Music is transition, too. I am happiest when I can be at peace with the idea of fluidity. And I’m unhappy when I cannot really let myself go and give myself over completely to the idea that things change, evolve, and not necessarily for the best.

*Edward W. Said:* One of my earliest memories is of homesickness, of wishing that I was somewhere else. But over time, I’ve come to view the idea of home as being overrated. There’s a lot of sentimentality about “homelands” that I don’t really care for. And wandering around is really what I like to do most. But the reason I find myself so happy in New York is that New York is a chameleon city. You can be anywhere *in* it and still not be *of* it. In some ways I appreciate that.

When I travel, particularly when I return to where I grew up in the Middle East, I find myself thinking about all the resistance I feel to going back. When I went back, for example, to Jerusalem in 1992 with my family I found it a completely different place. I hadn’t been

there for nearly forty-five years, and it's just not the same place I recall, and of course the Palestine where I spent part of my youth became Israel. I didn't grow up in the West Bank and so a place like Ramallah, a wonderful location where Daniel played his recital at the Palestinian conservatory a year or so ago, is really not home to me. I feel very much at home in a place like Cairo, where I spent most of my formative years. Cairo has something of the eternal about it. It's a fantastically complicated and sophisticated city, and its particular dialect is what profoundly appeals to me in the end.

I think one of the things that Daniel and I have in common is a fixation on the ear rather than on the eye. Like Daniel, I'm not attached to physical objects as such, except I collect certain things. I have a good-sized collection of fountain pens for reasons that have to do with my father's profession. As a follower of Kant, I hate computers. I collect pipes and clothes but that's about it. Possessions don't inspire the same feelings in me that they would in a collector of art or houses or cars. I've read about people who have fifty cars. That's incomprehensible to me.

Daniel mentioned—and I ended my memoir *Out of Place* with a similar thought, which I think is quite important—the sense that identity is a set of currents, flowing currents, rather than a fixed place or a stable set of objects. I certainly feel that about myself.

*DB:* This idea of “currents” must be related to the way you've lived your life. You were born in Jerusalem, which was British at the time; you grew up in Cairo, which was British at the time. Then it became Egyptian, and you immigrated to America. A very high percentage of your interests are European. The things that matter to you the most—what you think, what you teach, what you know, not only in literature, in philosophy, in history, but in music—most of these are European in origin. If one is active in a profession which is more than a profession, which is a way of life, as it is for us—beyond nine to five—then geographic location is less important. I'm sure that when you read Goethe, you feel, in a funny way, German, as I do when conducting Beethoven or Bruckner. This was one of the lessons of our workshop in Weimar. Precisely that it's not only possible to have multiple identities, but also I would say, something to aspire toward. The sense of belonging to different cultures can only be enriching.

*AG:* Let's talk about the Weimar workshop. In 1999, the two of you collaborated in Weimar, Germany, which had been named the Culture Capital of Europe, a rotating honor given to different cities. On the 250th anniversary of Goethe's birth and in a city closely associated with Goethe, you brought together Arab and Israeli musicians, and a smaller group of German musicians as well, to play as one orchestra. I'd like to ask both of you what you hoped to achieve in doing this and, in the end, what you felt was achieved.

*EWS:* In a way it was a quite daring experiment. There have been attempts in the past—well, I know in this country they've brought musicians from Arab countries and Israel to play together in music camps and give concerts—but the novelty of Weimar was, first of all, the level of participation at the top: it included Daniel and Yo-Yo Ma. You can't find any better

musicians to lead a group like this. Most of the participants were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, although I do remember that there was a cellist who was fourteen or fifteen, a Kurdish boy from Syria.

It took quite a long time to prepare for the event. Of course it required auditions. And it was not surprising that, at least in some Arab countries, there was a question of whether the governments would allow the students to attend. They all did come in the end, including a group from Syria, a group from Jordan, one from the Palestinian territories, and others from Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, and maybe one or two other countries.

There was an assumption that this program might be an alternative way of making peace. The peace process, as I have said at great and turgid length elsewhere, doesn't seem to be bringing results. But I don't think saving the peace process was our main intention. From my point of view, the idea was to see what would happen if you brought these people together to play in an orchestra in Weimar, in the spirit of Goethe, who wrote a fantastic collection of poems based on his enthusiasm for Islam. Goethe discovered Islam through Arabic and Persian sources—a German soldier who had been fighting in one of the Spanish campaigns in the early part of the nineteenth century brought back a page of the Koran for him. Goethe was transfixed. He started to learn Arabic, although he didn't get very far. Then he discovered Persian poetry and produced this extraordinary set of poems about the "other," really, *Westöstlicher Diwan (The West-Eastern Divan)*, which is, I think, unique in the history of European culture.

And that was the idea behind the experiment. And then, under that aegis, to bring the musicians together at Weimar, which is very close to Buchenwald, the terrible death camp. In fact, Buchenwald was *designed* to be near Weimar, which had been romanticized as the city at the very pinnacle of German culture: Goethe, Schiller, Wagner, Liszt, Bach all had lived there. Nobody could fully comprehend the proximity of such sublimity to such horror.

There was an orchestra rehearsal every day, in the morning and in the afternoon, led by Daniel of course. There were chamber music groups and master classes—all of them taking place simultaneously. Here were all these students, who had never seen each other before, and at night, several days a week, we would have discussions led by me about music, culture, politics, all sorts of things came up; no one felt under any pressure to hold back anything. And since the groups were so miscellaneous, both animosity and cordiality were almost always in evidence. The one thing that didn't happen was straight-out political fighting; there was an unwritten rule about that, at least so far as our evening discussions were concerned.

I remember the first discussion in particular because it immediately crystallized all the tensions that were in everybody's heart and mind. The conversation started by someone asking the group, "What do people feel about this whole thing?" One kid put up his hand and said, "I feel that I'm being discriminated against because I tried to join a group of improvisers and they wouldn't let me." So I asked, "What exactly happened?" A Lebanese violinist explained, "The problem is that after the program is over at night, usually around eleven o'clock, a group of us get together and improvise Arabic music." I turned to the first kid and asked him to explain the problem. He told me, "I'm an Albanian. I'm from Israel, but I'm originally from Albania and I'm Jewish, and they said to me 'You can't play Arabic music. Only Arabs can play Arabic music.'" It was quite an extraordinary moment. And there was



this whole question about who could play Arabic music and who couldn't.

So that was one problem. And then, of course, the next question was, "Well, what gives you the right to play Beethoven? You're not German." So that discussion was going nowhere. There was an Israeli cellist in the audience who was also a soldier, and he was having trouble speaking in English, so Daniel asked him to speak in Hebrew. He more or less said, "I'm here to play music. I'm really not interested in all the other stuff that you guys are trying to push on us in these discussions about culture. I'm here to play music and I'm not interested in anything else and I feel very uncomfortable because, who knows, I might be sent to Lebanon and I'll have to fight some of these people." Daniel told him, "If you feel that uncomfortable, why don't you leave? Nobody's forcing you to stay." And he ended up staying.

So there was a very tentative atmosphere in the beginning. However, ten days later, the same kid who had claimed that only Arabs can play Arabic music was teaching Yo-Yo Ma how to tune his cello to the Arabic scale. So obviously he thought Chinese people could play Arabic music. Gradually the circle extended and they were all playing the Beethoven Seventh. It was quite an extraordinary event.

It was also amazing to watch Daniel drill this basically resistant group into shape. It wasn't only the Israelis and the Arabs who didn't care for each other. There were some Arabs who didn't care for other Arabs as well as Israelis who cordially disliked other Israelis. And it was remarkable to witness the group, despite the tensions of the first week or ten days, turn themselves into a real orchestra. In my opinion, what you saw had no political overtones at all. One set of identities was superseded by another set. There was an Israeli group, and a Russian group, and a Syrian group, a Lebanese group, a Palestinian group, and a group of Palestinian Israelis. All of them suddenly became cellists and violinists playing the same piece in the same orchestra under the same conductor.

I will never forget the look of amazement on the part of the Israeli musicians during the first movement of Beethoven's Seventh where the oboist plays a very exposed A major scale. They all turned around to watch an Egyptian student play a perfect A major scale on the oboe—which Daniel had elicited out of him. The transformation of these kids from one thing to another was basically unstoppable.

*DB:* What seemed extraordinary to me was how much ignorance there was about the "other." The Israeli kids couldn't imagine that there are people in Damascus and Amman and Cairo who can actually play violin and viola. And I think the Arab musicians knew that there is musical life in Israel, but they didn't know very much about it. One of the Syrian kids told me that he'd never met an Israeli before and, for him, an Israeli is somebody who represents a negative example of what can happen to his country and what can happen to the Arab world.

This same boy found himself sharing a music stand with an Israeli cellist. They were trying to play the same note, to play with the same dynamic, with the same stroke of the bow, with the same sound, with the same expression. They were trying to do something together. It's as simple as that. They were trying to do something together, something about which they both cared, about which they were both passionate. Well, having achieved that one note, they already can't look at each other the same way, because they have shared a common

experience. And this is what was really, for me, the important thing about the encounter.

In the political world today, especially in Europe—I don't want to say anything about American politics because I don't know enough about it—the leaders still behave as if they control the world, whereas in fact they hardly control anything. The world is controlled by big business and money. It seems to me that politicians are ultimately ineffectual and overcompensate with a public show of self-assurance. Obviously money can buy a lot of things and, on occasion, at least for a short while, some goodwill. But the fact remains that if conflicts are one day to be solved, they are only going to be solved by contact between the warring parties.

The area that we're talking about—the Middle East—is very small. Contact is inevitable. It's not only dollars and political solutions about borders that are going to be the real test of whether a peaceful settlement will work or not. The real test is how productive this contact will be in the long run.

I believe that in cultural matters—with literature and, even better, with music, because it doesn't have to do with explicit ideas—if we foster this kind of a contact, it can only help people feel nearer to each other, and this is all.

*EWS:* One of the striking things about the kind of work you do is that you act as an interpreter, as a performer—an artist concerned not so much with the articulation of the self but rather with the articulation of other selves. That's a challenge. The interesting thing about Goethe—and also about our experience in Weimar—was that art, for Goethe especially, was all about a voyage to the “other,” and not concentrating on oneself, which is very much a minority view today. There is more of a concentration today on the affirmation of identity, on the need for roots, on the values of one's culture and one's sense of belonging. It's become quite rare to project one's self outward, to have a broader perspective.

In your work as a performer, Daniel, and in my work as an interpreter—an interpreter of literature and literary criticism—one has to accept the idea that one is putting one's own identity to the side in order to explore the “other.”

*DB:* I feel very much today—especially in the world of music, but not exclusively—that the choices are incorrect as presented. Let's go to the nerve of the question: the sound of the orchestra. Very often you hear, “Well, it's a pity that French orchestras have lost the nasal sound of the French bassoons. This is because they now play German bassoons. And the American orchestras sometimes play with German trumpets or trombones. And the Czech Philharmonic sounds very similar to the Sydney Symphony in sound, etc. What a terrible thing globalization is,” people say. As if you have to be *French* to produce a nasal sound or *German* to produce the German sound.

This is absolutely the beginning of a lack of cultural tolerance. Yes, there is a difference between a feeling for national heritage and fascistic ideas about a nation-state. There was nothing wrong with the Germans in 1920 feeling that there was something very cultural about *German* about Beethoven and Brahms. I have absolutely no problem with that. I begin to have a problem when they claim that only Aryans can appreciate Beethoven. And I think that the

is where we're heading again.

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The United States has proven the opposite, because the best American musicians don't relate to music on the level of culture. In other words, the great German musician will always have a visceral reaction to the Beethoven and Brahms that he or she grew up with, almost something atavistic from the stomach—which he or she will not have with *La Mer* by Debussy, even if the musician plays it marvelously. Whereas for the American musician, Beethoven and *La Mer* are equally distant or near, according to his talent and knowledge. Therefore, it is possible that each of us has the capacity to be many things.

*EWS:* One thing that is going around in this country, unfortunately, is a sort of amnesia about the fact that the United States is really an immigrant society, and always has been. And the attempts made recently to declare that America is one thing and not another, and the quarrel over what is the American tradition, and what is the canon, and what are the unifying aspects of America is a conversation that makes me deeply uncomfortable, because it can turn into a kind of imported sense of nationalism (what is “German,” what is “English”). It has very little to do with the quite volatile and turbulent and finally to me, deeply attractive aspects of America, which are that it's a society continually in a state of flux, continually in a state of unsettlement, rather than something that is given and formed once and for all. And, it seems to me, therefore, that places like the university or the orchestra—those places in the arts and sciences where one's life is given over to an ideal—should be places of exploration rather than places of simple affirmation and consolidation, which is really not at all, in my opinion, in conformity with the history of this society and this country.

*DB:* This is very much in your area, Edward. How do you explain that, on the one hand, the market globalization makes everything the same. You can eat—

*EWS:* McDonald's. You can eat a Big Mac on the Champs-Élysées and in Cairo.

*DB:* And you don't have to go to Japan to eat sushi. And yet political conflicts and national conflicts are deeper and pettier than ever before. Why is that?

*EWS:* Well, there are two reasons. The first is the reaction *against* global homogenization. One way to defend yourself against the sense of an all-encompassing global atmosphere—represented by America, to most people—is to return to comfortable symbols of the past. In the Islamic world, for example, more people are wearing traditional dress, not necessarily as a form of piety, but as a way of affirming an identity that resists this global wave.

Second is the legacy of empires. In the case of the British, whenever they were forced to leave a place, they divided it up. It happened in India. It happened in Palestine. It happened in Cyprus. It happened in Ireland. The idea of *partition* as a quick way of solving the problem of multiple nationalities. It's like someone telling you, “Okay, the way to learn a musical piece is to divide it into tinier and tinier units, and then suddenly you can put it all together

It doesn't work that way. When you divide something up, it's not so easy to put it all back together.

Both of these factors have produced xenophobia and identity conflict which are endemic to modernity and very dangerous.

AG: I want to turn the subject to a musical figure who is formative and central to both of you—Wilhelm Furtwängler. That may seem like a radical right turn from where we just were, but it's related to our discussion of cultural influences. Growing up in Buenos Aires, Daniel saw a veritable parade of the greatest imaginable European musicians. It was the same in Cairo during the 1940s, 1950s, and a year or two in the 1960s. A thriving colonial European culture in Egypt dates much further back, to the establishment of the Cairo Opera House and the premiere of Verdi's *Aida*. It was quite possible to see Beniamino Gigli, Gino Bechi, and Maria Caniglia perform in Cairo in the 1940s. There were regular visits of out-of-season Italian and French opera troupes—

EWS: Out of shape too!

AG: Yes, and out of shape. Wilhelm Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic came to Cairo in 1951. My parents were at those concerts, as was a teenage Edward Said. The broadcasts of a couple of Furtwängler's performances on Radio Cairo have survived—the Tchaikovsky Sixth Symphony and Bruckner Seventh Symphony—and there's a wonderful photograph of Wilhelm Furtwängler sitting on a camel, wearing a fez in front of the pyramids, which speaks volume.

There's another photograph, reproduced in Daniel's book, *A Life in Music*, which shows Daniel, his back to the camera, wearing white shorts, framed by his parents, talking to Wilhelm Furtwängler. This was in Salzburg in 1954, when he was eleven or twelve years old. Furtwängler was so taken by Daniel's talent that he wrote a now famous letter inviting him to perform with the Berlin Philharmonic. Daniel's family, for reasons that maybe he will explain, declined. And, sadly, several months later, Furtwängler was dead.

I'd love to ask each of you just to begin with a personal account of your relationship with Furtwängler.

EWS: You mention the cultural life of Cairo in the 1940s and 1950s—well, I grew up hearing stories of Cairo in the 1930s as well, when it was a great venue for concerts, and many wonderful musicians passed through. A teacher of mine in Cairo named Ignace Tiegerman used to tell the story that Arthur Rubinstein gave a concert and enjoyed it so much that he wanted to give another in order to stay in Cairo a little longer. But they couldn't fit him on the concert calendar. It was so crowded, there was simply no place for him to play. So there was the sense of bustle that one had in those days. And I recall that when Furtwängler appeared, I had never seen what was, in effect, a great foreign orchestra. There were local groups playing and I would occasionally go to them, but they couldn't compare.

DB: Did you ever hear the Palestine Philharmonic?

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EWS: Never. My parents heard them, however, and often spoke of the experience especially when Toscanini conducted them in Cairo. But I was considered too young for a concert when Toscanini visited in the forties.

Furtwängler's appearance in Cairo had been preceded the year before by the Vienna Philharmonic with Clemens Krauss, who came and played in the same cinema. And that was for me, a wonderful experience, because although I'd been to the opera in Cairo and had experienced these overweight and out-of-shape singers—who were, in their own day very great singers—going through the Italian repertory, the appearance of Krauss was extremely exciting.

But that experience was completely overshadowed by the appearance of Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic. I had never in my life seen such concentration as was present on that stage. Furtwängler played a very conventional program, which duplicated standard works on some of the recordings we had at home. To hear the recordings come to life, as they were, was, for me, a tremendous thing. And this rather gaunt and unprepossessing figure on the podium was something very different from Clemens Krauss, who was almost like a businessman who just happened to be conducting. Furtwängler transfixed me with his frenetically waving arms and his tall, angular frame. And the thing that I remember, in particular, was his feeling for time. It was a new concept of time, because, for me, time had always been connected to duty and chores and things I was supposed to do. Here, all of a sudden, time was transformed into all the possibilities of organized musical sound and beautiful plasticity, which I'd never before experienced in quite that way and with such a large number of people all at once.

Later, of course, I discovered Furtwängler again through writing and recordings, but in the Egyptian culture of that time, there wasn't really a place where I could look for anything about him. It was as if he were an *emanation*. Furtwängler existed in the European context. Here was a great figure from another culture transplanted into Cairo—a culture in transition—making this tremendous impression on individuals, and perhaps collectively on a whole audience, but there was no resonance beyond that. I remember feeling deprived because his performance had been a one-time experience. Perhaps it's given me a taste for the actuality of performance. When you play, there's something rare about it because of its evanescence. It happens and it's over, and then you have to carry it around in your mind.

DB: I understand what you mean about performance from the other side: playing in the surroundings where there's no follow-up. I remember playing once in Calcutta with the Calcutta Symphony Orchestra. First of all, it was terribly hot. Rehearsals started at seven o'clock in the morning, and I'm not a morning person. When I was told exactly when I had to wake up for rehearsal, I thought, "It must be because of the heat." But actually it wasn't the heat. It was simply that most of the musicians were amateurs and they worked in shops and other places and had to go to work at ten o'clock. In instances like this, one remembers the feeling of giving a performance.

As for not going to Berlin and giving a concert with Furtwängler—what he represented was fraught with many difficulties. My musical education had come mostly from my father, which I consider to be extremely beneficial in that I don't think I've really changed anything of what I learned from him. I didn't have the problem of different teachers. I didn't have to adapt to different methods. But I was not taught the kind of music-making that I heard with Furtwängler.

In the summer of 1952, when I was nine years old, I was invited to Salzburg by Igor Markevitch, who was giving the conductors' class. It was there that I played my first concert in Europe. At the end of the conductors' class, I played as a piano soloist with the orchestra. I remember quite well that I didn't admire Markevitch the same way I admired Furtwängler. He was much more interested in so-called clarity and in other repertory, in other ways of making music.

It was Edwin Fischer who said, "You must go and play for Furtwängler." So I was summoned to the old Festspielhaus to play an audition.

*EWS:* What did you play?

*DB:* I remember playing the Bach Italian Concerto. I remember playing the second movement of a Beethoven sonata. I remember playing Prokofiev's Second Sonata and a couple of Chopin Études. I was eleven years old.

*EWS:* No one's perfect.

*DB:* On the contrary the imperfections have been growing ever since. Being fifty-seven years old myself now, I imagine that if an eleven-year-old child came and played all those things, I would be impressed. It would be ridiculous to pretend false modesty and say, "No, no." Somehow, I think Furtwängler really was quite taken. And then he asked me to improvise, which I did, and he tested my hearing. I mean, at the risk of sounding terribly cynical, I thought it was extraordinary from somebody who had great difficulties in hearing himself. He was unable to deal with this affliction. Hearing aids in those days were obviously not as developed as they are today, and he threw his away because it made him hear everything in one color.

Anyway, Furtwängler tested my ear by playing some chords, and with my back to the piano, I had to tell him the notes. And he was very impressed and asked me to play with the Berlin Philharmonic. I was eleven, and I hardly spoke any German, in any case, and my English was rather poor. My father told him that it was the greatest honor that he could have bestowed upon me, but we were a Jewish family living in Israel—this was just nine years after the end of the war and the Holocaust—and he didn't feel it was the right time. And he hoped that Furtwängler would understand.

Not only did Furtwängler understand but, without anybody asking, he wrote the famous letter, which opened innumerable doors in my professional life. It was Furtwängler who se-

me to play for George Szell, who was conducting in Salzburg, and Karl Böhm. This has become folkloric. I was then allowed to sit in at the rehearsals of *Don Giovanni*, the production conducted by Furtwängler that was the basis of the famous 1954 film.

I really got to know everything about Furtwängler and his philosophy of music through his writings and his recordings and, of course, through people that I've met who have known him and worked with him—old musicians from both the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestras. And I came to realize that Furtwängler had been unfairly criticized in the United States for political reasons, and some other matters that were totally untrue.

As you may know, he was supposed to have been music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1948, but a whole list of Jewish artists—practically a Who's Who of musicians in America—signed a letter saying that they would no longer play with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra if he were engaged there. I think they all signed it, with the exception of Yehudi Menuhin. Obviously Furtwängler didn't come.

Furtwängler was also criticized for his music. Every great artist has a personal way of making music, of course. But Furtwängler had his own *philosophy* of music based on paradoxes and extremes being a necessity in order to achieve an equilibrium—on extremes being essential to achieve a musical equivalent of the Greek "catharsis." Extremes as a necessity in starting the path from chaos to order. Extremes as an absolute necessity in achieving unity in music. All this was not only out of fashion, in the same way that it's out of fashion today—in that respect, nothing has changed—but also the idea behind his method was much too intellectual and much too complicated for many people to understand.

And the outward manifestations of Furtwängler's kind of music-making were, shall we say, more disturbing than the outward manifestations of more orderly musicians. In other words, it was obvious that, in Furtwängler's Beethoven and Brahms, there was a certain fluctuation in tempo. In Wagner it was tolerated, but in Beethoven and Brahms? If you don't understand the reason for this fluctuation and the reasons for the extremes, you notice only the outward manifestations—extreme dynamics, extreme tempos, and fluctuations of tempo. And that's very disturbing to some listeners.

He was criticized in the same way that Wagner had been criticized for his conducting and that Liszt had been criticized for his playing. You've seen this kind of criticism throughout the history of music. After Furtwängler came Sergiu Celibidache, another highly individualistic conductor. The same criticism was leveled at Claudio Arrau. And, I must say, in my small and modest way, I am very proud to belong to that small, elite group that has been criticized for these things.

Furtwängler understood the music philosophically. He understood that music is not about statements or about being. It's about becoming. It's not the statement of a phrase that's really important, but how you get there and how you leave it and how you make the transition to the next phrase.

*EWS:* Don't you think that what you're saying about Furtwängler relies on a deeper level of awareness and reception than what is being put forward in the music itself? There doesn't seem to be a prearranged method when you listen to Furtwängler. The impression his music

gives me is that it's being worked out in the performance itself, and these extremes, as you call them, are really part of an ongoing process that takes you through the piece from the opening silence to the final silence at the end, in a way that you can't abstract from the performance and say, "This is the formula. It's clear. And it can be repeated in the same way."

You and I have disagreed about Glenn Gould in the past. In a certain way, Glenn Gould is predictable. You know how much I admire him. But there is a Glenn Gould *manner* which can't be reproduced, not by others, but by him. The thing about Furtwängler that has always impressed me tremendously, and I even recall it dimly from fifty years ago, is a sense of a highly plastic process, or what you call *transition*, which seems to be working itself out right then and there. There's no prior statement. There's no program. It's all contained in the actual performance, which is, I think, very difficult for some audiences to accept.

*DB:* Furtwängler was not only spontaneous and flexible, you know.

*EWS:* No, it's not about spontaneity. I don't mean that.

*DB:* Furtwängler rehearsed sometimes very painstakingly and thoroughly, but he rehearsed in a different way. This is very well defined by Celibidache. He says that Furtwängler rehearsed two hundred ways of saying "no" in the hope that on the evening of the concert you can only say "yes." In other words, you rehearse to make sure that certain things don't happen. That the music doesn't sound hollow here, or drag there, that there's no accent in another place, whereas most people rehearse so that they can put it together in the morning and then repeat it in the evening. But the most extraordinary thing about music is its unrepeatability if one can use that word.

*EWS:* That quality I mentioned earlier: something very rare.

*DB:* Sound is ephemeral. It goes by. One of the reasons why sound is so expressive is that it's not here at your beck and call. You can't draw the curtain and see it again like a painting or open it like a book. This quality is what Furtwängler understood and articulated. Some of his writings are very much tied to the *Zeitgeist* of his time, and some of his contentions about atonal music are very naïve. But his understanding of the nature of music is to my mind unique.

*AG:* Isn't this part of the perpetual Apollonian/Dionysian battle that has gone on for centuries in the arts? The quantifiable and ordered versus the irrational?

*EWS:* It's a common misunderstanding to pose this battle as an either/or—either you're Dionysian or you're Apollonian. Whereas Nietzsche argues that one requires the other. That



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