

Daniel Barenboim

Reith Lectures 2006: In the Beginning was Sound

Lecture 1: In the Beginning was Sound

Recorded at Cadogan Hall, London

SUE LAWLEY:

Hello and welcome to the Cadogan Hall in West London, where for the first time in the fifty-eight year history of this event our Reith lecturer is a conductor. He began his musical career as a pianist. This is how he sounded when he was making his debut here in London exactly half a century ago.

DANIEL BARENBOIM (AS A CHILD):

I gave a concert at the Royal Festival on Tuesday.

INTERVIEWER:

And what did you play then?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Mozart Concerto in A Major.

INTERVIEWER:

And then have you done anything else while you've been here?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Yes I gave also a recital at the Wigmore Hall.

INTERVIEWER:

Well there you are, here's a young man of thirteen who's come over, and we thought you'd like to meet him tonight. What are you going to play tonight for us? You're going to play some Chopin?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

..... Chopin.

INTERVIEWER:

So here is Chopin now, here is Daniel Barenboim.

(BRIEF EXTRACT FROM RECITAL)

SUE LAWLEY:

Thirteen-year-old Daniel Barenboim playing Chopin in London in 1956. He'd given his first concert in Buenos Aires at the age of seven, and at the age of eleven he'd been declared a phenomenon by the legendary conductor Wilhelm Furtwangler. His life has been and continues to be saturated with music. A virtuoso at the piano, he later became a supreme master of the podium. Currently he's Music Director of both the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Berlin State Opera. In these lectures he'll be drawing on a lifetime of musical experience to demonstrate that music, as he puts it, is

a way to make sense of the world - our politics, our history, our future, and our very essence. Daniel Barenboim doesn't shy from controversy. He's shown himself willing to take courageous public stands. Six years ago he founded, against the odds, an orchestra made up of equal numbers of Arab and Israeli young members, the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, not least to demonstrate that it's possible through music for people from warring factions to find peaceful co-existence.

Today he'll deliver the first in his series of lectures which, over the course over the next five weeks, will take us from here in London to Chicago, Berlin, Ramallah, and Jerusalem. Ladies and gentlemen, please will you welcome the BBC's Reith Lecturer 2006 - Daniel Barenboim.

(APPLAUSE)

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm perfectly aware of the great honour to be asked to deliver the Reith Lectures. It is with some slight trepidation that I do that, because I firmly believe that it is really impossible to speak really deeply about music. All we can do then is speak about our own reaction to the music. So maybe the honour is dubious, or maybe the BBC thought it would be very short.

(LAUGHTER)

In any case, the impossible has always attracted me more than the difficult. The impossible, if there is some sense behind it, has not only a feeling of adventure, but a feeling of activity which I do admit I enjoy very much. I will therefore attempt the impossible and maybe try and draw some connection between the inexpressible content of music and, maybe, the inexpressible content of life.

In Chicago I will try to discover why it is that we are neglecting our ears so much, and why we have become such a visual society, and why it is that the eye seems to have so much more power than the ear.

In Berlin I will try, always with connection to music obviously, to explain why I think that it is so difficult in today's world to grow up when we don't really give our children real education, but at best information, and that this is why words have lost their meaning and words that are full of content have become pejorative. This leads us very often to create or develop a society in which we don't dare make judgement and make a point of view - have a point of view - contradiction in terms when I've just said that the ear is more important than the eye, and here am I speaking about a point of view. But the mental point of view is no different from the point of view of the film director.

In Ramallah I will speak about the ability of music to integrate, and how it is that a musician is by the sheer nature of his profession in many ways, an integrating figure. If a musician is unable to integrate rhythm, melody, harmony, volume, speed, he cannot make music.

And to end in Jerusalem, I will try to explain what to me is a very major difference between power and strength - something which I learned very precisely from music,

that if you attack a chord with more power than you are going to sustain it, it has no strength.

So there we are at the first, if you want, connection between the inexpressible content of music and in many ways the inexpressible content of life. There have been many definitions of music which to my mind have only described a subjective reaction to it. The only really precise one to me is the one by Ferruccio Busoni, the great Italian pianist and composer, who said that music is sonorous air. It says everything and it says nothing. Of course, appropriate moment to quote Neitzsche, who said that life without music would be a mistake.

(LAUGHTER)

And now we come to the first question - why? Why is music so important? Why is music something more than something very agreeable or exciting to listen to? Something that, through its sheer power, and eloquence, gives us formidable weapons to forget our existence and the chores of daily life. My contention is that this is of course possible, and is practised by millions of people who like to come home after a long day at the office, put their feet up, if possible have the luxury of somebody giving them a drink while they do that, and put on the record and forget all the problems of the day. But my contention is that music has another weapon that it delivers to us, if we want to take it, and that is one through which we can learn a lot about ourselves, about our society, about the human being, about politics, about society, about anything that you choose to do. I can only speak from that point of view in a very personal way, because I learn more about living from music than about how to make a living out of music.

And so I propose to you, before we embark on this journey, that we look at the moment at this physical phenomenon, that is the only way through which music expresses itself, and that is sound. Now, when people speak about sound, they speak very often in terms of colours. This is a bright sound, this is a dark sound. This is very subjective - what is dark for one is light for the other and vice versa. But there are some elements of sound which are not subjective, and I think that if you allow me to I would like to spend a few minutes on that.

If sound is a physical phenomenon, which it obviously is, then one should be able to observe it as such in a very discerning and in a very rational way. The first thing we notice about sound of course is that it doesn't live in this world. Whatever concert took place in this hall earlier today or yesterday, the sounds have evaporated, they are ephemeral. So although sound is a very physical phenomenon, it has some inexplicable metaphysical hidden power. The physical aspect that we notice first is that sound does not exist by itself, but has a permanent constant and unavoidable relation with silence. And therefore the music does not start from the first note and goes onto the second note, etc., etc., but the first note already determines the music itself, because it comes out of the silence that precedes it. Added to that, some instruments, percussion instruments primarily - and the piano is one of them - have a real life duration. In other words...

(PLAYS ONE NOTE FOLLOWED BY SHORT SILENCE)

and it's over. Other instruments, like the violin, or the oboe, or a brass instrument, non-percussive instruments, one can, and one does, manage to sustain them longer than the real life duration of the sound as compared to a percussion instrument. And therefore the beginning, the first sound, is already in relation to the silence that precedes it.

You must forget for a moment, please, that there are such things as technologically developed devices which permit to maintain this sound artificially so, and this is no ungratefulness to the radio, to the recordings, to the CDs and all other means that we have to preserve the unpreservable, but the fact remains that when you, even in the old days when you had a gramophone recording and you put the needle on the record, the sound was suddenly there.

(IMITATES SOUND)

And then there was a sound. Now we go directly into the sound, but it gives us no idea whatsoever about how this is produced. And this is why many young conductors today think they can learn a score from listening to records. Fantastic lifting of the arms, bring them down, and the perfect C major chord with blazing trumpets and inaudible strings is heard.

(LAUGHTER)

But let's look at the different possibilities therefore, of the first note. If we achieve a total silence, and we start a piece of music that becomes rather than is there - it's not about being, but about becoming. It's obviously a different case from starting something loud and blazingly. The prelude to Tristan and Isolde is an obvious case.

(PLAYS 2 NOTES)

In other words the music is not from the A to the F, but from the silence to the A first of all, and this is of course the main difficulty. There are many ways - it doesn't have to be slow music. There's also Beethoven's sonata opus 109

(PLAYS FEW NOTES)

but suddenly the pianist has to create the feeling that the music has already been here, it's already going, and now much as you step on a train that is already in motion, you join it, and you cannot start

(PLAYS FEW NOTES)

with an accent on the first note, because by definition the first note will be an accent because it interrupt the silence.

The next observation about sound is if it has a relation with silence, what kind of relation is it? Does it dominate silence, and silence stop the sound when it wants? Can the sound go over the silences? Is that all a realistic possibility? And I think if we observe that clearly we notice that sound reacts to silence much like the law of gravity tells us, that if you lift an object from the ground you have to use a certain amount of

energy to keep it at the height to which you have brought it up to. You have to provide additional energy, otherwise the object will fall back to the law of gravitation on the ground. But this is exactly what sound does with silence. I play again the same note, I play it, I give a certain amount of energy, and if I do nothing more to it, it will die.

(PLAYS ONE NOTE PLUS BRIEF SILENCE)

This is the length of the duration of the life of this C sharp produced by my finger on this piano. Now, there may be other fingers that can do it longer or shorter and other pianos that will do that, but basically this is it. And there we are at the first clear expression of content in music, the contact with silence, with gravitation. What did I say just now? The note dies. And this is the beginning of the tragic element in music, for me. You understand that all of what I'm telling you now is what I have learned to feel, and hope to have learned through all these years of, of making music. I'm in no way pretending to give you a fundamentalist theory that provides all the answers, even for those things where there are no questions about.

(LAUGHTER)

But for me this relation between sound and silence is imperative to understand, because it does produce the first tragic element of expression in music.

I pondered for a very long time on this subject, and I will not bore you with all the details, but it is obvious that if a sound has a beginning, we have already seen it also has a duration, and it has an end, whether it does, or whether the next note comes. And then you get one more other means of expression, of content if you want, of music, and that is that the notes in music cannot be allowed to develop their natural egos, so that they hide the preceding one, but the expression in music comes from the linkage, what we call in Italian legato - bound. When we play five notes that are bound, each note fights against the power of silence that wants to make it die, and is therefore in relation to the preceding note and to the note that comes after that. So when you play five notes,

(PLAYS 5 NOTES)

if each note had a big ego it would want to be louder than the note before. And therefore I learned from this very simple fact, that no matter how great an individual you are, music teaches you that the creativity only work in groups, and the expression of the group is very often larger than the sum of the parts. And you can draw whatever conclusions you want from this, but I think that this is a not unimportant factor.

And maybe in a strange way I've found some answers to all this, not in music but in philosophy, especially from reading regularly and for many years the ethics of Spinoza. Spinoza was a religious scholar, a political architect, a philosopher, who aspired to geometric demonstration of the universe and the human being in it, and he was a biological thinker who advanced the science of emotion. And there lies of course one of the great difficulties of making music, the science of emotion. How do you play with passion and with discipline? Having realised all of this, I saw that there was a need for knowledge, and these much abused words 'He is so musical' was

absolutely senseless because talent is certainly not enough. If music is sound with thought, then talent is a very poor weapon to have at one's disposal.

All this has brought me to the conclusion that I am very unhappy, and for a long time, about the place of music in society. This is the part that I will try to explore further in the next lectures. Music can and from my individual point of view should become something that is used not only to escape from the world but rather to understand it.

Thank you very much.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY:

Daniel Barenboim thank you very much indeed. Now it's question time, and here in the Cadogan Hall we have an eight hundred or so strong audience make up of artistes, scientists, politicians and others, some of them music lovers, some of them maybe not - who knows? Do they accept what you're saying, that music is a metaphor for life, that through music we can arrive at a better understanding of the human condition? Well let's um have some question from them to test you on that. So can I have some questions please? Gentleman here?

DAVID MELLOR:

Er Maestro Barenboim, David Mellor. I had the pleasure of interviewing you in Berlin when you started with the East West Divan(?) orchestra. Um, er music helps us to understand and interpret the world, but of course I think you see music as a way of changing the world do you not? And also you've spent a lot of time that you probably don't have founding an orchestra of young Israelis and young Arabs as a way of showing that people can not only co-exist together in a rather grudging way, they can actually make music, they can do something enthusiastically together. So music you obviously see as something that can bring about political change. How is that going, and how do you think we can measure the success or otherwise of this really rather extraordinary venture that you've embarked upon?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Well I hope we have time at least until tomorrow morning ...

(LAUGHTER)

... because you have raised at least ten questions in that one seemingly innocent question. First of all I thank you for your compliments, and it's very flattering, but I'm afraid I have to disappoint you, that this project is not a project for peace. The West-Eastern Divan answers one very important question, and that is that there is a tremendous amount of ignorance on both sides, and that there is very little that can be done to integrate the people from the different countries, because the initial condition for dialogue is not there - namely equality. The West-Eastern Divan is a forum which came out of the musical idea, because what do we do when we make music? We express ourselves, but we also listen. If we don't listen to the other voices, whether they are subversive, as sometimes in Bach fugues, when the subject comes a second point and the counterpoint has a completely different character. It's subversive. Unless we do that we cannot make music. And therefore in our Utopian republic, as I like to think of it, as the West-Eastern Divan, we have learned and we give everybody the opportunity to express himself, herself, to the enemy, and also to hear the version of

the enemy, to listen and to hear it. And therefore not necessarily to agree with it, but to understand the other narrative. And therefore there is automatically a common terrain on the music, because in front of the Beethoven symphony they are all equals. In real life they are not. The work with the West-Eastern Divan is not to give each other comfort, but to understand how music is structured and how music can only exist when all the different elements, whether they are rhythm, melody, harmony - let's stop at those three - are connected. And nothing in music is independent.

SUE LAWLEY:

But you want them to take the metaphor from that for life, is that what you're saying?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Yes, so that they have to listen to the other. It's nothing to do with comfort, it's to try to understand the other.

SUE LAWLEY:

Okay. I'm going to take a question here.

STEVE MARTLAND:

Steve Steve Martland - I'm a composer. I wondered what you thought the role of living composers was in terms of what you're suggesting. What can composers contribute?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Well composers can contribute by writing good music,

(LAUGHTER)

obviously. Obviously. I mean, I make no distinctions. I'm not talking about the music of the eighteenth century. You know I am playing tomorrow the second book of The Well Tempered Klavier in London. Let me tell you something, I have played it yesterday evening in Paris, and I had the feeling when I finished it that all music that was written since then is actually unnecessary.

(LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE)

Bec ... No, no no I'm not, I'm not being funny - because everything is already there in embryo. When you think that you write with the same twelve notes, that every piece of music that was written before Bach already, including the Levitas, including Schonberg, Puccini, and all other unlikely bedmates, all this was written with the same twelve notes. And therefore the question, the power of music has nothing to do with being contemporary or not being contemporary. The task of the composer today is made so much more difficult than it was before because very few people practise music. And they think that if they love music and they go home and play a record, that this is music appreciation. But I, I maintain that if I sat down, as I will, and played the first three bars of Schonberg Opus 11, nobody here will have a feeling, oh this is modern music, you know. And Schonberg is already a hundred years ago, but when you put them in the concert, these pieces, people have difficulty going to it. This is the beginning of Schonberg Opus 11.

(PLAYS FEW BARS)

Don't tell me that this purely an intellectual exercise. The relation between the harmonies - I didn't get to that, I will do that in the next lecture in Berlin probably.

SUE LAWLEY:

Okay, I'm going to take a question here.

JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER:

Julian Lloyd Webber, cellist. Maestro, from all the recent work you've been doing it seems obvious that you believe, as I do, that music is for all people, whatever their race, religion or colour. Do you think there's a danger of some educationalists assuming that because children are from certain ethnic backgrounds - and I'm thinking particularly here of our inner city schools - that somehow classical music is not for these children?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

I think nothing could be further away from the truth. And in fact we have seen that, we have started um music education programme in Ramallah which has now spread to other cities er in the West Bank, in a society which is not known for its practice of classical music. And yet in a very short time the music education programme has given them a, er a wonderful ability to express themselves, and has given them a dignity which they were unable to get only through words. When one is able to share a passion with somebody else, a bond is created which is very very strong.

SUE LAWLEY:

There's a very famous voice sitting just in front of you sir - Willard White I see there. Willard, would you like to put a point?

WILLARD WHITE:

Well I'm a singer myself, and um my life has been transformed by music, and I recognise the importance and significance of music in, in life. But sometimes I think that, you know people have asked me why is it that more black people aren't in classical performances for example, and I think what right have we to push music on them? There is this free will um that we have. Of course music education should be um, could be enhanced, but um it's like... you know you talk about the subversive quality music - there is a subversion in the reluctance maybe of some people to join in music making.

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Yes but I think er, Willard first of all I'm very glad that you are here, and I know you are speaking the truth because I had the pleasure to make music with you so I know how much it means to you too. Having said that, I don't think that it has to do with free will. It has to do with a necessity to accept that music is an essential part of education, or not. If it is that, and you get the education, then out of your free will you choose not, not to exercise it, but ignorance has not yet for me acquired the category er of free will decision. First you have to know about it.

WILLARD WHITE (DURING APPLAUSE): Yes.

SUE LAWLEY:

I'm going to take... Thank you, thank you very much Willard White for that. I'm going to take a question up there.

ALINKA GREASLEY: Hi, my name's Alinka Greasley and I'm researching everyday uses of music, er with Alex Lamont and John Sloboda at Keele University. And my question relates to something you said sort of earlier on in your lecture. My research shows that people talk about very ordinary everyday music listening experiences as having great personal significance for them. For example one woman described an epiphany experience while sitting in her lounge listening to a, a pop group, Hanson. And my question to you is, how far down do you feel musical value extends?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

I think this is not only related to music, it's related to knowledge. Some people believe that if they have knowledge about a thing they will lose the freshness of their approach to it. I believe that if you have knowledge about something you have a better chance to, not only to understand it but to live it, and therefore to enjoy it. It is obvious that if you listen to a pop group, or even let's take one stage inbetween, if you listen to er a Strauss waltz, um ...

(LAUGHTER)

... er on the 1st January, beautifully played, er, you do need less shall we say knowledge - yes, knowledge of what is this power of music, what comes out of music in the sense of structuring, emotions and feeling forwards with emotion, and doing all those things - than if you are er listening to the Suite Opus 23 of Schonberg. You obviously need more knowledge.

SUE LAWLEY:

But do you, do... Do you accept then, Daniel Barenboim, that, that, that pop music can have that same transcendental power that you were describing that Western classical music has?

(LAUGHTER)

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

If you feel it, how wonderful for you!

(LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY:

There must, there must, must be some jazz musicians here. Any, any jazz lovers? What about the ... ? Jazz lover here.

JULIAN JOSEPH: Er, yes er I'm Julian Joseph, jazz musician, and er my question that um I agree with you about learning about life from music, and the way that relationships between harmony and unity and working with different musicians and being open and, and all of those aspects, and my question to you is just um where do you see improvisation in that um whole area of learning from music?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Improvisation is the highest form of art for me, because when you see a score for the first time, and you don't know it and therefore you don't understand it, you have only a gut reaction to it. The first reaction is gut, instinct. NO matter how talented you are, the most talented person in the world will not at first sight be able to analyse. So this is your first reaction. Then we take the music and we analyse it and we work it and we think about it and we turn it upside down and everything, and we acquire a lot more knowledge than we had at the first encounter. And at that stage of the proceedings we have lost a lot of the freshness. We have forgotten the gut completely, and we're only thinking, and here the subject comes twice as fast and this is fast as slow, and the modulation comes here, etc., etc., etc., etc. But if we play it like this we are not doing any art. We only get to this possible stage of making music - possible - the moment we have digested all that and we achieve a kind of conscious naivete which allows us to improvise it, which allows us to play it at that moment as if it is on the spur of the moment. And very often, very often, when you have worked in, in depth, and you then play it at the spur of the moment, something, something tells you and makes you go in a direction that you didn't go in the two hundred times that you played it at home, and you worked at it, but it will not have been possible without the two hundred times. And this is why improvisation, that means the state of just sitting at the piano and suddenly in a completely unpremeditated way your fingers, your heart, your brain, your gut, everything, pushes you in a direction that you improvise, and you literally then create music. It's a very blessed er state in the life of a human being.

SUE LAWLEY:

I'm going to take a few different points from the audience and ask you Daniel for a compendium answer. Let's take the lady there. Yes?

LESLEY GARRETT:

My name's Lesley Garrett, I'm a singer. When I was a child...

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Well I know you!

(LAUGHTER)

LESLEY GARRETT:

Hello Daniel! When er, when I was a child I understood immediately that through music and through singing could I express how I felt, and only through music and through singing. My concern is, and my question to you is, that society seems now to be much more concerned with the visual. my children are now constantly bombarded with imagery from television, from DVD, from computers, from electric games and so forth. How do we, first of all how do we teach our children to listen in the way that it seemed to be effortless for me? And then if there isn't this possibility for our children to, to listen and to understand this connection, which I believe is visceral and common to all of us, between what we hear and the innermost feelings and the expression of these feelings, how then are we going to look after our children's emotions...

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Well I come...

LESLEY GARRETT:

...when they become older?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Yeah. I think Lesley that er the situation is even worse than you describe it, because not only has the eye taken over, but we have anaesthetised the ears through all the muzak that we hear all the time.

LESLEY GARRETT:

Yes.

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

You know I have been for the last I don't know how many years, er, in, in Chicago, and I stay in the hotel in Chicago, and every day and I go in the lift and I hear bits of the Brahms violin concerto,

(LAUGHTER)

or the Mozart Symphonia Concertante, and I, not only I hate it but I know that every one of the people that goes in that lift and comes in the evening to the concert, and God forbid we should be playing the Men ... the Brahms violin concerto,

(LAUGHTER)

he will not hear it, because he will not listen. And in English you have this wonderful difference between listening and hearing, and that you can hear without listening, and you can listen and not hear. Not every language has that. And I think that we have done everything to anaesthetise the ear. And this is why the eye has so much importance. And in fact the ear ... Actually I don't want to talk too much about that because it's suppose ... I, I've made up my mind to talk about it in another lecture. But maybe...

LESLEY GARRETT:

Well in the...

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Maybe you'd like to come with us to Chicago where I'll talk about that.

LESLEY GARRETT:

Yeah I'd be delighted!

SUE LAWLEY:

Let me get you a...

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

I'll talk about that in Chicago. But it is, it is really true, and the eye, the eye is an imperative necessity. When a child learns to cross the street for the first time the parents say look to the right - excuse me, in England look to the left,

(LAUGHTER) - look to the right, to make sure that a car doesn't come. In other words in order to survive you need your eyes.

LESLEY GARRETT:

Perhaps you might agree that opera is perhaps the ultimate art form as it's the perfect...

(LAUGHTER)

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Nonsense, in opera people don't look and don't listen!

(LAUGHTER, APPLAUSE & CHEERS)

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

They only watch the conductor. He's sitting right there. They only watch the conductor!

(LAUGHTER)

SUE LAWLEY:

Let, let me get this off this, because somewhere in this hall we have a neuro-scientist I think who's tested what it does to the brain. There he is. Give us your name and tell us what you've done, and does music going into the brain harm it or excite it.

PROFESSOR PARSONS:

Hi, I'm er Professor Lawrence Parsons, and I, I'm a brain scientist, and what we do is we put musicians in brain scanners and monitor the blood flow in the brain while they perform on an electric piano for example - or singers in other cases - but on an electric piano. And two of the things we noticed are that the brain areas that would normally be excited and represent the emotional responses to music are not active for the musicians who's performing, relative to playing scales for example. And we also noticed that large other regions of the brain are also de-activated, they're not engaged, and those are regions that allow you to plan the future, to think about what's going on in the environment, and for salient events. So my two findings about brains of musicians who are performing suggests that the performance of the music allows us to get to some sort of inner peaceful place in which our emotional worries and our attention to the world are detached. And you refer to this, as many of us do, as heart and brain, but as a brain scientist it all happens in the brain.

SUE LAWLEY:

You didn't say what... you didn't say what sort of music you were playing to this...

PROFESSOR PARSONS:

This was Bach.

SUE LAWLEY:

Bach? Okay.

PROFESSOR PARSONS:

Bach. So one thing I might ask you is whether your own intuitions, as you play The Well Tempered Klavier for example, fit this scientific view of what's happening in the brain of a musician like yourself.

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

You know I won't be able to play tomorrow!

(LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE)

No no. No. I know, I think I know what, I know what er you are talking about. You know, when you play music, you get this peaceful quality I believe also because you are in control of something, or at least you are attempting to control something that you cannot do in the real world. You can control life and death of the sound, and if you imbue every note with a human quality, when that note dies it is exactly that, it is a feeling of death. And therefore through that experience you transcend any emotions that you can have in their life, and in a way you control time. I mean, we all know that when we are born, two minutes seem like two hours. And when we're interested, two hours are two seconds. But when you do that - and I'm especially conscious of that now because I'm been playing the, both books of The Well Tempered Klavier on several occasions in the last er few weeks, er in Europe - you have a feeling of a, of a journey through, through history. In other words a journey that is much longer than the life of a human being. When I finish playing one of the books of 'The Well Tempered Klavier' I have a feeling that this is actually much longer than my real life.

PROFESSOR PARSONS:

I think what you say fits with what the subjects in my experiments, yeah, told me.

SUE LAWLEY:

The artiste and the scientist are at one. I'm going to leave you there at one and take a question over here, thank you.

JAMES McMILLAN: Hello my name is James McMillan, I'm another composer. Recently the English musicologist Julian Johnson produced a fascinating book called Who Needs Classical Music? He implies that serious music has suffered in the face of the apparent triumph of the visual and the verbal, but also of what he would say as the banal and even the populist. And therefore my question is this - what is it about serious music that baffles and indeed in some cases offends the advocates of an ever increasingly ubiquitous, narrow, some might say debased popular culture? Is it its very ability to rise from the mundane? Is it the suggestion that there may be such a thing as a secret inner life which cannot be reduced to a rigorously enforced commonality, that there may be no such thing indeed as a closed universe?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Wow! Well, I think I might be the wrong person ...

(LAUGHTER)

... for you to talk to, because I don't believe in all these things. I believe that things, creations, objects, are neither moral nor immoral. It's when the human being makes

use of it that he, this is the free will, he decides whether it is moral or whether it is immoral. What is a knife? Is that an instrument with which you can murder someone, therefore an instrument of violence, or is it something with which you cut the bread and feed your neighbour? The knife in itself is perfectly innocent. The music is innocent - it is what the human being makes of it. Only the human being is not courageous by nature, and the human being always likes to blame something else - somebody else or something else - and therefore it says classical music is elitist, classical music is transcendent. I'm sorry, classical is none of that, classical music is nothing until it comes into contact with a human being. I can plead exactly the opposite of that. I can tell you that making music and playing it in an orchestra is the best way to understand democracy. Elitist? What do you mean, elitist? The oboe plays the most wonderful tune in a slow movement of a Brahms symphony, and the whole orchestra, all ninety or ninety-five of them, and the conductor with the big ego, is following him.

(LAUGHTER)

Everybody's following him, everybody supporting him, adjusting everything for him to be able to express this thing. He's the king of the world - and that lasts for eight bars!

(LAUGHTER & APPLAUSE)

I'll just finish that, I'll just finish that. And then, on the ninth bar, he hold... goes back in the society, in the collective, and he has to do what ninety-five people have been doing for him for eighty-five bars, he has to do maybe for the double basses or for the clarinet or whatever the case may be. I'm sorry, music is not democratic, music is not elitist, music is not transcendental, it is what the human being does with it that it becomes moral, immoral, amoral, transcendental, or sheer nonsense.

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY:

I'm going to take some quick points if I can. The lady up there - quick points if you will.

DR ALISON LEVINE:

Dr Alison Levine, I'm a music therapist and I work with people who have no technical skill in music, have no perhaps ability to actually appreciate music in the traditional sense of the word, but we are all musical beings, there's something musical about us all. And I wondered if you had any thoughts about that really early state of how we are in music, that our musical beings are born very early in, in the broadest sense of the word.

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Yes. You know I was a child prodigy, so, so to speak - I mean there is so such a thing a child prodigy. Somebody asked me not long ago: 'Since you became an adult have you met a child prodigy?' I said, 'No never, but many parents' you know.

(LAUGHTER)

I mean, what I'm, what... the reason I'm telling you this is because I think that children find it, and I would find it much more fun if I were able to three years old again, er to learn about discipline from rhythm, than from my mother telling me, and don't do that, and now is the time to eat, and you eat and don't do that, and you will learn one day this kind of discipline. But you can really learn that in the kindergarten through rhythms, and you know that you cannot mess around with them, that there is a certain order to it. Then I think you learn about life through the music at a very early age. And then you grow a little bit older and you come into the puberty, and you have your first er, er associations with sensuality and passion and all that, and er if you remember your experiences in music at three years old and you have a connection with music you will know that in order to make music you have to somehow combine passion and discipline. But I'm sorry I don't know about you but this is always a bit of a subject that I've had to battle with all my life, and I think every human being does that.

DR ALISON LEVINE:

But if you want, as you've said, us to put music in a, in a, er give it a greater precedence in our lives, then we have to make music more and not just receive it.

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Of course, we have to make music and we have to teach our children from the beginning the connection between music and real life. I have learned a lot of things, I said it earlier only half in jest that I learn more from music about living than you know about making a living in music. I did, I really, I really did, I learned many things. I remember I... - in fact if you want I can demonstrate it, it's, it's rather silly but I will do that. No, I... I remember, I remember my great and, and admired friend Edward Said and I having very passionate discussions at the time of the beginning of the Oslo process, and he being from the very first moment absolutely against it, and I still hoping that somehow some things will happen. And then as time went by I said to him - and we had really very, I wouldn't say disagreeable but very hefty arguments about that, until one day I said to him, I said, 'You know Edward' I said, 'it doesn't really matter if Oslo is right or wrong, it will never work because the relation between content and time is erroneous.' I said, 'This I have learned from music.' And he looked at me and said, 'What are you talking about?' And I said to him, 'The preparation for the beginning of the Oslo discussions was practically non-existent, much too quick.' And the process itself, once the discussion started, was very slow, and then it was interrupted, and then they said they would meet next Tuesday, and then it was cancelled on Monday, and then they met again a month later, and everything. It had no chance. And I sat down at the piano and I showed to him what I meant, which I will do for you now. I'm sure many of you know the Pathetique sonata of Beethoven, which has a very majestic, slow introduction.

(PLAYS FEW BARS OF SONATA)

Etc. And this introduction goes on for whatever number of bars it does, and then there is the main movement - Allegro.

(PLAYS FEW BARS OF ALLEGRO)

Etc. And I said to him, 'Oslo, the equivalent of Oslo would be if I would play the introduction very fast and without any preparation of anything' - in other words,

(PLAYS FEW BARS VERY FAST)

You would not understand anything what I am doing. And then I would get to the main allegro and I will play,

(PLAYS ONE NOTE)

(LAUGHTER)

(PLAYS FEW MORE NOTES - FEW AT A TIME WITH PAUSES)

(APPLAUSE)

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

And our discussion stopped from that moment on about Oslo because we both agreed it wouldn't work,

(LAUGHTER)

for different reasons. But it's true. In other words it's a permanent relation between content and time.

SUE LAWLEY:

Question here, then we must wrap up.

SUSAN BLACKMORE:

Susan Blackmore, I'm a psychologist from Bristol. Um Sue Lawley ought to ask this really, not me, but suppose you only had one minute left to live, what would you play, and would you play it for us now?

(LAUGHTER)

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

Would I play what?

(APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY:

What would you play if you had one minute left to live and would you play it for us now?

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

You only want me to have one minute left?

SUE LAWLEY:

One minute.

(LAUGHTER)

SUE LAWLEY:

I have to tell you before we began that Daniel Barenboim that someone would ask him to play, so...

DANIEL BARENBOIM:

This is why I refuse to sit at the piano to answer the questions. No I don't really feel ... But I nev ... I don't know, you know I don't, I never think in those er terms. The most wonderful thing, the most wonderful thing about playing music - two most wonderful things about playing music - is that no matter how much you learn, and how much you open your brain and get addit... additional knowledge, with understanding, since you deal with sound, the next morning you start from scratch. And you get a wonderful combination of more knowledge and nothing materially there to show for it. Only the ability to find the courage in itself to start again from scratch with more knowledge than the day before. I think this is a very positive thing in that people play music, that's why I, one of the reasons why I think people would be happier playing music. And I don't want to think about the last er minute of my life to play, because I am rather happy, I would say almost proud of the fact that I attempt - I don't achieve - attempt to play every concert as if it was both the first and the last.

SUE LAWLEY:

That's it.

(APPLAUSE & CHEERS)

SUE LAWLEY:

Next week he'll be in Chicago, where for the past seventeen years Daniel Barenboim has been Music Director of the city's great symphony orchestra, as he closes the piano lid behind him. But he's unlikely to be constrained by the familiarity of these surroundings. On the contrary he's going to be railing against the nation that he argues has relegated music to aural - as in A U R A L - wallpaper. Muzak is more dangerous to health than smoking, says the maestro - there'll be more of that. That's Daniel Barenboim, the Reith lecturer, next week, same time, different place. For now, Mr Barenboim, thank you very much indeed.

(APPLAUSE & CHEERS)