

Chapter Three

Said and Musical Margins

Said was introduced to the world of music by his mother Hilda. On the one hand he felt it to be a “dissatisfying boring drill of piano exercises,” while on the other, it introduced him to “an enormously rich and haphazardly organized world of magnificent sounds and sights” (*Music at the Limits* xi). His parents’ eclectic collection of records and the Sunday evening radio broadcasts of *Nights at the Opera* on the BBC helped him to delve deep into this magical world. Classical Western music was a daily presence in his life. He listened to music constantly during work and played the piano whenever in need of a break or relaxation. His leisurely readings were also largely about music (*Music* xi).

Death and illness were formative influences on Said’s musical endeavours. Said’s wife Mariam C. Said believes that it was the death in 1982 of Glenn Gould, the Canadian virtuoso pianist, that compelled Said to write seriously about music (*Music* xi). Said was unable to let go of his beloved genius. It became vital for him to seek out music whenever faced with the fear of death. He once went out for a concert, barely half an hour after their son Wadie was hospitalized after an accident in 1983 (*Music* xi).

While Wadie was in hospital, Said also came to know that his mother had been diagnosed with cancer and had to have an operation. He calmed himself by listening to huge collections of different recordings of the same

concertos, symphonies and other musical works. He attended many performances of operas and recitals on both sides of the Atlantic. “It was as though the deeply varied themes and the complexity of musical compositions were connected to his struggles to face the reality of his mother’s illness and death” (*Music* xii). His mother passed away in 1990. His book *Musical Elaborations* was published in 1991 and was dedicated to her memory.

Soon Said too was diagnosed with leukemia, and music became his constant companion. In 1998, he arranged his treatment days around Christopher Herrick’s performance of fourteen concerts of Bach’s organ works, attended all of them and even wrote a review of them (*Music* xii). In June 2003, three months before Said passed away, he remarked to Mariam that she would not know what music to play at his funeral (*Music* xiii). She was taken aback, and realized that he was dying, thinking of music.

Daniel Barenboim reminisces that, despite his illness, Said had once turned up at a rehearsal with a “volume of Schubert’s pieces for four hands,” and said: “Today I want us to play at least eight bars, not for the pleasure of playing, but because I need it to survive” (qtd. in “Maestro” 527). Barenboim attests that “those few minutes of a Schubert rondo,” which he had played with Said, had transformed that beautiful piece into something more “musically enriched in a completely unexpected way. That was Edward Said” (“Maestro” 528). The margins of existence produced wonderful music when they collaborated.

Said's writings on music dwell upon many margins. They do not treat music as an autonomous apolitical entity; instead there occurs the crisscrossing of various themes and fields. This is what makes Said's critique powerful and interesting. His 1989 Wellek Library Lectures at the University of California were compiled together as *Musical Elaborations* (1991). In it he tries to discuss three different aspects of Western classical music, titled suggestively as "Performance as an Extreme Occasion," "On the Transgressive Elements in Music" and "Melody, Solitude, and Affirmation."

Said tries to explicate music in its social and cultural setting, at the same time as "an art whose existence is premised undeniably on individual performance, reception, or production" (*Musical Elaborations* x). He finds that most of the times, modern musical performance emulates "an athletic event in its demand for the admiringly rapt attention of its spectators" (*Musical* 2). There has been extreme specialization, and the composer is very often dissociated from the performer. The "artist" is distanced from the "listener" who "is routinely made to feel the impossibility of attaining the packaged virtuosity of a professional performer" (*Musical* 3). He cites Maurizio Pollini's performance of Chopin's *Etudes* as an example. Chopin originally intended these pieces to allow "any pianist, an entry into the relative seclusion and reflectiveness of problems of technique" (*Musical* 4), but Pollini's brilliant and masterful execution of these pieces negates their original intent.

Said notes that though the performance occasion is born out of complex historical and social processes, it is “highly concentrated, rarified, and extreme” (*Musical* 11). Replete with “narcissistic,” “self-referential” and “self-constitutive qualities,” the performance occasion is the “most socially stressed musical experience in modern Western society” (*Musical* 12). It is an “unattainable actuality,” and an “extreme occasion” because what is seen on stage can only be aspired to be emulated, and is “something beyond the everyday, something irreducibly and temporally not repeatable, something whose core is precisely what can be experienced only under relatively severe and unyielding conditions” (*Musical* 17-18). Said comments that earlier the composer had occupied the centre-stage “as author and performer, now only the performer (star singer, pianist, violinist, trumpeter, or conductor) remains” (*Musical* 21).

Said is distressed by the fragmentary nature of musical experience where, for instance, “historical musicology, theory, ethnomusicology, composition,” have all become separate academic departments with different pursuits (*Musical* 16). Yet optimism prompts him to declare that musical performance can be instrumental in “bridging the gap between the social and cultural spheres on the one hand, and music’s reclusiveness on the other” (*Musical* 17).

The title of the book contains the seminal term “elaboration.” Said attests that music within a social context contributes to “the elaboration or production of civil society” in a Gramscian sense; it “keeps things going”

(*Musical 15*). He admires the music of Beethoven more than that of Mozart, Bach, and Handel, because it opens up a “new way of understanding the importance of elaboration, its working out and filling of time and social space” (*Musical 64*).

Music “elaborates” the “ideas of authority and social hierarchy directly connected to a dominant establishment” (*Musical 64*). This is in stark contrast with the common misconception that music is apolitical and asocial. Said cautions that the field of classical music is continuously challenged from the margins by “other cultures, other nonelite formations, alternative subcultures” and that this amounts to a kind of “social contest in which music is often involved” (*Musical 71*). Music is thus constantly refurbished, rejuvenated and made more relevant at the margins.

Said is fascinated by the idea of “transgression.” He defines it as an attempt to “cross over” (*Musical 55*). Throughout his critical *oeuvre* he tries to overstep set boundaries, and his forays into music criticism attempt to uncover instances of such “transgressions.” His greatest vision was that “no social system, no historical vision, no theoretical totalization, no matter how powerful, can exhaust all the alternatives or practices that exist within its domain. There is always the possibility to transgress” (*Musical 55*). Said elaborates that such “transgressions” are necessary to challenge, discover, experience and intermingle.

Said constantly reminds his readers that music is not just a private experience but completely enmeshed into a social fabric. He firmly believed

that the hard and rigid boundaries of nationalism could always be overstepped by “transgressions” and asserts that even Wagner’s music can rise above its ideological message: “Read and heard for the bristling, tremendously energetic power of the *alternatives* to its own affirmative proclamations about the greatness of German art and culture, *Die Meistersinger* cannot really be reduced to the nationalist ideology its final strophes stress. It has set forth too much in the way of contrapuntal action, character, invention” (*Musical* 61). Thus music transgresses the marginal limits ascribed to it.

Discussing “melody,” Said identifies that there is a key role played by music in Marcel Proust’s novel *In Search of Lost Time*. It could be because the novel, just like music, is also “based on time, or rather on an experience of the passing of time” (*Musical* 74). Proust, in his various works, dwells not only “on tonal music for their force but also on the melodic element in that music” (*Musical* 93). “Melody” functions most of the time as “authorial signature,” and Said defines it as “a name both for an actual melody and for any other musical element that acts in or beneath the lines of a particular body of music to attach that music to the privacy of the listener’s, performer’s, or composer’s experience” (*Musical* 96). He also adds via Pierre Boulez that “serious musical thought occurs in conjunction with, not in separation from, other serious thought, both musical *and* nonmusical” (*Musical* 97).

Jim Merod opines that Said’s lectures at the University of Irvine [later the book *Musical Elaborations*] “open up a realm of intertextuality that participates in a world of ideas where the arts might be seen and felt to

encounter one another, to comment provocatively about their own condition (and thus the general condition) by means of sounds, words, and images that gather further life from the audacity of critical imagination” (140). Said’s world has been a “world of reflection,” which has followed the “miseries and redeeming truths of his experiences,” while living “productively in divergent worlds on several continents” (143).

Lindsay Waters points out that in *Musical Elaborations* “professional musicological analysis is not what Said wants to offer nor what he provides, for the same reasons that in literary studies he prefers the critic to the theorist. He means to give an exemplary reading not of music but of someone attending to music” (100). The role of the “rank outsider” is of paramount significance because “music is too important to us all to be left as the exclusive preserve of the musicologists” (Waters 100). Music, when cut off from popular forms, is one to which none can dance, “a music one has to listen to sitting rigidly in concert halls, all hushed and still as if his or her passions could never be aroused” (Waters 105).

Said was in the process of writing his book *On Late Style* when he passed away on 25 September, 2003. He had hoped to complete it by that December. The book is about “lateness.” Michael Wood points out in his Introduction to the book that “Lateness doesn’t name a single relation to time, but it always brings time in its wake. It is a way of remembering time, whether it is missed or met or gone” and observes that “the approaching death of the artist gets into the works all the same” (*Late* xi, xiii). He adds that “Lateness

for Said is ‘a form of exile’ . . . but even exiles live somewhere, and ‘late style is *in* but oddly *apart* from the present’” (*Late* xiv).

On Late Style is structured like a story with a beginning, middle, and end, “but instead of outlining a third period in which conflict is resolved into propitious synthesis, the category of late style rewrites the nearing-to-end as a period of tension, impasse, and irreconcilability. . . . Late style as a critical category is, in part, a question of reading death as a threat not only to life but to narrative and meaning” (Rosenthal 132). It is not an investigation of lateness as harmonious resolution, akin to the last works of Sophocles and Shakespeare, namely *Oedipus at Colonus*, *The Tempest*, and *The Winter’s Tale*, “but as intransigence, difficulty and unresolved contradiction” (*Late* xiii).

Stathis Gourgouris believes that Said conceptualized “late style,” “out of the disruptive experience of his illness, and the consequent confrontation with mortality” (37). Gourgouris defines “late style” as “precisely the form that defies the infirmities of the present, as well as the palliatives of the past, in order to seek out this future, to posit it and perform it, even if in words and images, gestures and representations, which now seem puzzling, untimely or impossible” (45).

It is interesting to note that Said starts his writing with *Beginnings*, and he closes it with *On Late Style*. “Did Said himself have a late style?” asks Michael Wood and answers that Said definitely “had the politics and morality he associated with late style, a devotion to the truth of unreconciled relations”

(*Late xvii*). Said points out that the last plays of Ibsen, instead of having a neat resolution, suggest “an angry and disturbed artist for whom the medium of drama provides an occasion to stir up more anxiety, tamper irrevocably with the possibility of closure, and leave the audience more perplexed and unsettled than before” (*Late 7*). The work and thought of great artists, towards the end of their lives, attain a new idiom, which involves “a non harmonious, non serene tension, and above all, a sort of deliberately unproductive productiveness going against . . .” (*Late 7*). This is what Said defines as “late style.”

Adorno uses the phrase “late style” in an essay titled “Spatstil Beethovens” (1937) to indicate that Beethoven’s last works belonging to his third period—the last five piano sonatas, the ninth Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, the last six string quartets, the seventeen bagatelles for piano—“constitute an event in the history of modern culture: a moment when the artist who is fully in command of his medium nevertheless abandons communication with the established social order of which he is a part and achieves a contradictory, alienated relationship with it” (*Late 7-8*).

In his *Essays on Music* (a book on Beethoven, posthumously published in 1993), Adorno speaks of Beethoven’s late works as alienated and alienating and that “difficult, forbidding works like the *Missa Solemnis* and the *Hammerklavier* Sonata are repellent to audiences and performers alike both because of their redoubtable technical challenges and because their disjointed, even distracted sense of internal continuity offers no very easy line to follow”

(*Late* 91). In the *Missa Solemnis* there also “disappeared a harmony of the musical subject and the musical forms . . .” (qtd. in *Late* 91). Adorno postulates the thesis that “like Kant, Beethoven was posing the question of ultimate ontology in terms of subjectivity, and practically the work asks the question of ‘what and how one may sing of the absolute without deceit’” (*Late* 91).

Said points out that “the masterpieces of Beethoven’s final decade are late to the extent that they are beyond their own time, ahead of it in terms of daring and startling newness, later than it in that they describe a return or homecoming to realms forgotten or left behind by the relentless advancement of history” (*Late* 135). It is similar to literary modernism, wherein artists such as Joyce and Eliot have been considered to be “out of their time,” and return to ancient myths and forms like epics or religious rituals for inspiration. Modernism in this sense is “not so much a movement of the new as a movement of aging and ending” (*Late* 135).

Music at the Limits: Three Decades of Essays and Articles on Music (2008) contain forty five essays written by Said from 1983 to 2003, when he served as music critic for *The Nation*, and those that appeared in *Raritan*, the *London Review of Books*, the *New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Harper’s*, the *Observer*, the *Washington Post Book World*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Times Book Review*, *Al Ahram Weekly*, *Al Hayat*, and *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Daniel Barenboim, in his foreword to the book, acknowledges Said as “one of those rare people who sought and recognized the connections

between different and seemingly disparate disciplines” (Said, *Music* vii). Said considered parallels between ideas, topics and cultures—even when paradoxical in nature—as not contradicting but enriching one another.

Said always listened to music with open ears and a deep musical knowledge which enabled him to hear and understand the intention of the performer and his approach to music (*Music* viii). He was well-versed in the art of composition and orchestration. His worldview made it impossible for him to “see only the obvious, the literal, the readily graspable: in his writing and in his life he continually discovered and brought forth evidence of the interconnected nature of all things, a notion he most probably derived from music” (*Music* ix). To him, all aspects of being human were interrelated. He firmly believed that logic and rational thought could not be separated from intuition and emotion.

Music cannot be produced with reason or emotion alone. Said valued the precept of inclusion as opposed to exclusion, which derived directly from his perception of music. “Just as it violates the principle of counterpoint in music to emphasize one voice while excluding all the others, so he believed it impossible to settle a conflict, political or otherwise, without involving all parties concerned in the discussion of a solution” (*Music* ix). Said applied this principle of incorporation in addressing all varied problems ranging from “acoustic balance in an orchestra to peace talks in the Middle East” (*Music* ix). It is these radiant and unlikely connections that foreground him as a great thinker.

Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society (2004)

contain conversations between Said and Daniel Barenboim, over a span of five years, from 1995 to 2000. One of them was arranged and moderated by Ara Guzelimian at the “Carnegie Weill Recital Hall during a break in a series of concerts by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra,” conducted by Barenboim (*Parallels* xiii). All of these dialogues show two fervent creative minds, engaged in scintillating discussions about art, history, literature, politics and life.

The title itself is suggestive and evocative about the tenor of their discussions. Both Said and Barenboim had encountered plenty of “parallels and paradoxes” in their lives, and it almost became the motif of their creative and critical enterprises. The collaboration between Said, a Palestinian American, and Barenboim, an Argentine Israeli, in creating the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra has been an example of overcoming “established boundaries” and “crossing the margins.” “Parallels and paradoxes” have been an empowering factor, rather than a defeating one, in their lives, especially when Barenboim, despite being a Jew, attempted to perform Wagner’s music in Israel. This is an intersection of two close friends, whose busy lives illuminate the ways of each other in the most unexpected ways. Both Barenboim and Said differ in their views about the Palestinian problem, but Said affirms that “we must have respect for each other’s views and tolerate each other’s histories” (*Parallels* 26). Guzelimian joyfully proclaims that the dialogue

between these two powerful minds is a pleasure because it wrestles with “parallels and paradoxes” (*Parallels* 27).

Music helps in two diametrically opposite ways; on the one hand it helps you to “forget everything and run away from your problems and difficulties,” while on the other it “is one of the best ways to learn about human nature” (*Parallels* 24). Barenboim laments the fact that music education is virtually absent from educational institutions, thereby depriving children of a wonderful opportunity “to strike a balance between your head, your heart, and your stomach,” and to learn how to become human (*Parallels* 24).

To Barenboim, music is both “everything and nothing” at the same time (*Parallels* 173). He says, “If you wish to learn how to live in a democratic society, then you would do well to play in an orchestra. For when you do so, you know when to lead and when to follow. You leave space for others and at the same time you have no inhibitions about claiming a place for yourself” (*Parallels* 173).

Said employs several critical terms in his articles on music. They serve as signposts to his concerns. “Counterpoint” is one such term. Said had a deep fascination for the Canadian virtuoso pianist Glenn Gould. In the eighty records made by Gould, his piano tone is immediately recognizable. It allows one to think that, by playing the piano Gould was proposing some complex, deeply interesting ideas (*Music* 3). Said notes that:

The essence of counterpoint is simultaneity of voices, preternatural control of resources, apparently endless inventiveness. In counterpoint a melody is always in the process of being repeated by one or another voice: the result is horizontal, rather than vertical music. . . . Instead of the melody at the top being supported by a thicker harmonic mass beneath (as in largely vertical nineteenth-century music), Bach's contrapuntal music is regularly composed of several equal lines, sinuously interwoven, working themselves out according to stringent rules. (*Music 5*)

Gould created a terrain of his own—anomalous, eccentric and unmistakable—beginning his career in 1955, with the recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Said points out that as one listens to his music, one feels like “watching a tightly packed, dense work being unfolded, resolved almost, into a set of intertwined lines held together not by two hands but by ten fingers, each responsive to all the others, as well as to the two hands and the one mind really back of everything” (*Music 4*). Gould's choice of Bach was central, since Bach's music was preeminently contrapuntal or polyphonic.

Colin Symes points out that for Said the contrapuntal method was “a metaphor for democracy, which permitted different voices to be heard, and represented, as opposed to the concerto, in which one voice attempts to dominate others” (317). Mustapha Marrouchi describes “polyphony” as a

special illness of Said's ear which conditioned his thinking and psyche ("Variation" 102).

Rokus de Groot defines polyphony as "the simultaneous unfolding of two or more different voices, each with its own identity, and at the same time each with a 'responsibility' to the other and for the *ensemble* of voices" (221). He elaborates that "responsibility in counterpoint" carries the literal sense of "ability to respond" (222):

A consequence of this 'ability to respond' is that the voices may be perceived as transforming each other continuously. Because of their harmonic interference, they elicit sonorous aspects in each other that cannot be observed if the voices were sung or played separately. Even *new* voices may be heard which are not performed as such. This is due to the interference between overtones, and may also be effected when voices are crossing each other in pitch position . . . thereby partly losing their identity (at least in comparison with the situation in which they were considered separately). In the latter instance, possibilities arise of perceiving fresh melodic formations out of fragments of these crossing voices. (Groot 223)

Katherine Fry points out that Said's forays into music advocate the "convergence of social and aesthetic approaches to musical analysis and criticism" (265). Yet "within Said's music criticism, there is an implicit tension between the criticism of art as part of a specific context or social

structure and the analysis of art as a more independent or aesthetic phenomenon” (Fry 266). The terms “transgression,” “elaboration,” and “counterpoint” acquire layered significance within Said’s critical *oeuvre*. Said’s notion of the aesthetic is a model of critical thinking “that can itself transgress theoretical categorization or closure,” and can, “in a utopian sense,” challenge “conventions concerning narrative, identity and structures of meaning” (Fry 266).

Fry suggests that Said discusses “a recording of Gould playing and discussing the Liszt transcription of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony” in *Musical Elaborations*, as “an aesthetic of mediation within space, allowing for complex and multiple engagements between an artwork and the world” (268). Said felt a conflict between the views of Gramsci and Adorno, on history—“one in which the dialectic of historical materialism is central, the other in which this dialectic has become a dominating and ideological apparatus from which the authentic artwork must necessarily escape. Thus the role of the aesthetic becomes contradictory in Said’s criticism, as it exists in a state of simultaneous immunity to and mediation with the mode of production” (Fry 271).

Said locates “criticism” outside “theory” ‘leaving it, like the transgressive in music, resistant to totalization, and continually open to possibility and multiplicity” (Fry 278). Fry iterates that “the elaboration, counterpoint and transgression inherent in these [Said’s] musical ideals suggest a disruption and traversal of dominative identities, boundaries and

histories. It is through these specific relations between musical form and critical consciousness that Said comes closest to a ‘worldly, possible, attainable, knowable’ cast for utopian thought” (279).

The concept of “late style” was cardinal to Said and he was influenced by Adorno’s concepts about the same. Interestingly, Said finds out that there is a “late style” in Adorno too, critically modeled on the third period Beethoven, with whom Adorno had an “extremely intense lifelong fixation” (*Late* 21). Adorno was a musician who never had a career as one, a philosopher whose main subject was music. He never pretended to don apolitical neutrality, and his work, like a contrapuntal voice, intertwined with fascism, bourgeois mass society, and communism (*Late* 21). He was both a philosopher and cultural critic “in an enforced exile from the society that made him possible,” and “to be late meant therefore to be late for (and refuse) many of the rewards offered up by being comfortable inside society, not the least of which was to be read and understood easily by a large group of people” (*Late* 21-22).

Said considers Adorno to be a “late figure” because his work was mostly against the grain of his own time (*Late* 22). He opposed “the very notion of productivity by being himself the author of an overabundance of material, none of it really compressible into an Adornian system or method” (*Late* 22). Said’s fascination for him continues as he presents Adorno as an anti-specialist, who was “unashamedly mandarin. There are no concessions to his readers, no summaries, small talk, helpful road signs, or convenient

simplifying. And there is never any kind of solace or false optimism” (*Late* 23). Said points out:

As Adorno said about Beethoven, late style does not admit the definitive cadences of death; instead, death appears in a refracted mode, as irony. But with the kind of opulent, fractured, and somehow inconsistent solemnity of a work such as the *Missa Solemnis*, or in Adorno’s own essays, the irony is how often lateness as theme and as style keeps reminding us of death. (*Late* 24)

Lecia Rosenthal points out that Said “extends and reformulates lateness as a critical term,” and “does not frame the late work’s discordant elements through an explanatory or diagnostic psychological narrative; whatever connection lateness might have to experience and the life of its creator, that experience is itself refracted rather than reflected in the work, a distinction that finds its most extreme articulation in the approach to death” (127).

Said was concerned about the intersection of music criticism and feminism. His essay “Music and Feminism,” published in *The Nation* on 7 February, 1987 tries to open up and chart the female role in the creation and presentation of music. Though women play prominent roles in the artistic sphere, mainstream classical music is dominated by men in almost every aspect. Some of the roles have been as follows:

The most traditional is that of inspirational muse, and later helpmeet, adjunct, adoring (but lesser) partner, to some prominent male composer: Clara and Robert Schumann, Cosima and Richard Wagner. The figure of woman as unattainable ideal preoccupied Beethoven; its obverse, woman as destructive seductress, is more frequently to be found in representations of women in music (Berg's *Lulu* for instance, or Strauss's *Salome*) than in the lives of famous musicians. The rise of women performers from the ranks of a socially unacceptable underclass (dancing girl, actress, courtesan, etc.) to luminous fame as divas, star instrumentalists and teachers in the nineteenth century is of paramount importance in the history of music. . . . (*Music* 43)

Said observes that music criticism and musicology are far estranged from the main fields of cultural criticism and refers to Michel Foucault's remark that "except for a passing but idle interest in jazz or rock, most intellectuals who care about Heidegger or Nietzsche, about history, literature and philosophy, regard music as too elitist, irrelevant or difficult for their attention" (*Music* 43). Though feminism has interrogated almost all the humanities and sciences, it has performed only minor interventions in music criticism. It has tried to identify women musicians of the past who spoke with a voice of their own, but beyond that, feminism in music plunges into a void. Said observes: "the problem is that music today is as massively organized a

masculine domain as it was in the past. Without significant exception, women play a crucial but subaltern role” (*Music* 44). Said posits the query whether there is, a “feminine” musical style that emerges when female instrumentalists perform? Mozart was considered to be a “feminine” composer, while Beethoven “masculine” (*Music* 44). The motifs of gender and sexuality in music have also to be investigated.

Said was a fierce anti-specialist, and was disturbed by trends in musical education which produced “competent instrumentalists who possess little knowledge of theory and musicology but are highly advanced in the technical execution essential for a professional musician” (*Music* viii).

Barenboim in his foreword to *Music at the Limits* points out that

. . . the humanity of music, the value of musical contemplation and thought, and the transcendence of the idea as expressed through sound are all concepts that regrettably continue to decline further in the modern world. Music has become isolated from other areas of life; it is no longer considered a necessary aspect of intellectual development. Just as in medicine, the music world has evolved into a society of specialists who know more and more about less and less. (*Music* vii)

Musical education has ceased to explore the essence and substance of music and instead focuses on cultivating the “physical dexterity needed to produce sound on an instrument and the sterile science of dissecting music structurally

and harmonically without any active participation or experience of its power” (*Music* viii). This antipathy is evident in Said’s concert reviews.

While discussing pianists and pianism, Said asks why is it that we are interested in pianists at all, given that they are a product of nineteenth century European culture (*Music* 11). “Although there is an immense piano repertory, there is little in it that can be called new; the world of the piano is really a world of mirrors, repetitions, imitations. . . . Despite the energetic immediacy of their presentation, pianists are conservative, essentially curatorial figures” (*Music* 11-12). A pianist like Maurizio Pollini is an “interesting” pianist because his technique allows one to forget technique entirely and what he presents instead is a “totally unfussy *reading* of the piano literature” (*Music* 12). Unlike other pianists who merely wish to remain in power, Pollini’s career communicates a feeling of growth, purpose and forming, a career unfolding in time (*Music* 13).

There seems to be not much hope in today’s world that “composer, performer, and listener will once again work together—without the distraction of recording deals and prizes—in a real community” (*Music* 18). Said points out that Glenn Gould “in everything he did, expressed dissatisfaction with piano playing as such: his project was an attempt to connect pianism with the larger society” (*Music* 19).

Said points out that the “two-hour classical concert performance has solidified into an unchangeable commodity bought and sold by managers, performers and audiences alike. One reason for this development is that the

performance and composition of music have been severed from each other almost completely” (*Music* 82). The most unusual musicians battle against the tyrannical limits of the performance occasion. Sergei Celibidache (1912-1996), the Rumanian musician, had refused to make recordings because he believed that “mechanical reproduction bears no significant resemblance to the act of interpreting music. This, he contends, occurs with an inevitability and metaphysical rightness—the music, he has said, is there—only possible once, in the concert hall” (*Music* 83).

Said explores the links between music, silence and mourning. He ruminates that musicians are generally silent, as their audiences are there to “witness their virtuosity and interpretive skills, not their ideas or brilliant conversation. . . . A silent performer is somehow a guarantee of musical seriousness and commitment, as if only the music counted, only its sound was important” (*Music* 128). “The most silent of the arts, music is also the most directly affecting and expressive as well as the most esoteric and difficult to discuss” (*Music* 307). But there have been performers like Glenn Gould, Charles Rosen, and Alfred Brendel who have also made intellectual contributions in prose.

He notes that “music and mourning are frequently allied, but it was during the nineteenth century that the art of mortuary music really became an important and independent genre” (*Music* 149). The uncanny partnership between sorrow and musical genius heightens the paradox that “music is an art of expression without the capacity to say denotatively and concretely what is

being expressed. In a sense, therefore, all music is only about music. . . . The sadder the music, then the closer it comes to metamusic, music confined to itself, meditating on itself, mourning the loss of its object” (*Music* 149-50).

The concept of time is very important in music. Said’s childhood encounter, in 1940’s, with a concert of the then foremost “exponent of classical Arabic song,” Umm Kalthoum, was instrumental in developing his sense of time (*Musical* 98). The performance was something which he later understood as one of “exfoliating variation” (*Musical* 98). Instead of trying to get to the end of a structure, this performance tried to meander through varied digressions. The “forward march” was missing, and the throe to overcome obstacles was not there; instead, there was only languorous luxuriance all over.

Said offers a “private perspective” of music, which does not try to get “through time” but tries to be “in time,” “experiencing it together, rather than in competition, with other musics, experiences, temporalities” (*Musical* 100). This is the crux of Said’s musical imaginings. A democratic spirit of co-operation is what he strives to create, through the performance and criticism of music, for that is what he believes to be the pressing need in a society, torn apart with strife and riddled with tensions. He points out that Western classical music has two “organizational tendencies”: one the horizontal and linear one, which tries to master time, through melody, and the second vertical or nonlinear model, that indulges in all sorts of variations (*Musical* 101).

Groot is perspicacious in pointing out that “art of Umm Kalthoum, even though apparently suppressed by Edward Said during decades, has played an important role for him as an *alternative*, as a contrapuntal voice to Western classical music” (231). Musical polyphony is a model for humanist systems, as there is “no tyranny of the majority or a minority, and there are always dissident voices, as well as alternative manners to listen to the ever alternative ways the voices are musically interrelated” (Groot 232).

Said developed an “alternative time concept” in relation to “counter traditions to Western classical music, both Western and non-Western” and it involved “a sense of leisure, commensurate with a certain slowness in the unfolding of sound textures and processes” (Groot 233). Groot points out that, it is a strategy of economic corporate power “to inspire a constant sense of time shortage” in order to control and make people into slaves (233).

The concept of “home” is discussed by Said and Barenboim in *Parallels and Paradoxes*. Barenboim toys with the idea of “home” and points out that “wherever I can play the piano—preferably with a reasonably good instrument—or wherever I travel with the orchestras I lead, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra or the Staatskapelle from Berlin, I feel at home” (*Parallels* 3). He adds that Said is a close “soul mate” with whom he feels at home. Barenboim admits that he cares very little about possessions; thus, his “feeling of being at home somewhere is really a feeling of transition,” just as “music is transition too” (*Parallels* 4).

Said also admits to similar experiences and states that he likes to wander around (*Parallels* 4). He is extremely fond of New York because it is “a chameleon city. You can be anywhere *in* it and still not be *of* it” (*Parallels* 4). Cairo is more home to Said, than Ramallah, because he had spent most of his formative years there (*Parallels* 5). Identity is a sense of “constantly flowing currents” rather than fixity and stasis, and both he and Barenboim have “a fixation on the ear rather than on the eye” (*Parallels* 5).

Discussing the aim of composers during the history of music, Said points out that for Bach (1685-1750) it was “to glorify God,” for Beethoven (1770-1827) and Haydn (1732-1809), it was “aimed at their aristocratic patrons,” while by the time one reaches Brahms (1883-1897), it is “more about music internally” (*Parallels* 37). Music thus gradually becomes self-sufficient and “removed from the other pursuits of life . . . religious or philosophical, and so on” (*Parallels* 37). Barenboim adds that the development of music is parallel with its political and social climate; during the time of Bach, the glory of God was primary, while during Haydn’s and Mozart’s, revolution was imminent. The funeral march in Beethoven’s “*Eroica* is the second movement in and not the last movement,” signifying the transitory nature of grief itself (*Parallels* 38). Interestingly, Barenboim also elucidates that the history of music reflects changing perceptions of God; for example “you could rely on God in Bach’s time, and in Beethoven’s time, you couldn’t rely on God anymore. You had to rely on mere mortals. And Wagner says you can’t even do that; we have to create a new kind of human being” (*Parallels* 39).

Comparing the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one finds that the church reigned supreme in the eighteenth century and people adhered to faith blindly. The revolutionary spirit got embedded in the music of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart through chromaticism, and the sonata form which, though full of tension, strife and development, still contains a “positive outlook—with a belief in the healthiness of the society and the humanitarian ideas” (*Parallels* 41). By the time of Wagner, Balzac and Dickens, the sonata form became insufficient and Liszt and Strauss invented the “tone poem,” and Wagner created his “music dramas” (*Parallels* 41). The “hierarchy of tonality” was severed, in tandem with the dissection of the “hierarchy of God” and the “hierarchy of classes” (*Parallels* 41). Barenboim aptly phrases it: “Now, you have a republic, with tonic, dominant, subdominant, and all these musical terminologies, which show order and hierarchy, until you end with the atonality, where all twelve tones are equal” (*Parallels* 41).

Nevertheless, both Said and Barenboim admit that it is much harder to listen to twelve-tone serialistic music, by Schoenberg or others, with the harmonic progressions gone, with no building up and release of tension, with no tonal consonance. There is no drama or development or negation. It creates a world of “isolation and removal from the world,” which is akin to the feeling evoked by some of Beethoven’s “late” works (*Parallels* 42). And there remains the question whether music has a social purpose, and if so what it is (*Parallels* 44). A “performance of Beethoven under the Nazis or under any

kind of totalitarian regime, whether left or right, suddenly assumes the call for freedom, even becomes a very direct criticism of the policies of the regime and, therefore, is actually a much more disturbing and, at the same time uplifting thing” (*Parallels* 44). This is in stark contrast to the entertainment provided by the music of Mozart or Johann Strauss (*Parallels* 44).

Said comments that, in a society where music is just luxury and routine, where one purchases concert tickets for an hour of diversion, the question of challenging the social order does not arise, as it does in societies which face extreme censorship (*Parallels* 45). Barenboim, on the other hand, points out that pieces like the *Eroica* are still performed not because it was “thought of as a critique of society or a regime; nor was it written for the glory of the French Revolution,” but because it has “a personal message” which illuminates how a human being deals “with his problems of existence” (*Parallels* 45-46).

The “psychology of tonality” encountered in music establishes the “home/foreign” dyad during its listening. Said adds that it is the same pattern that one finds in great myths in literature “of home, discovery, and return: the odyssey” (*Parallels* 47). The sonata form, in Barenboim’s opinion, illustrates that the “recapitulation is not the same as the exposition, although the notes are the same” (*Parallels* 48).

Barenboim notes that a musician should always treat each detail as if it were a great discovery, not losing sight of the whole piece, and while performing, one should have digested the piece to a point that makes it feel

inseparable from oneself (*Parallels* 54, 57). Certain ideas and concepts require sufficient time to be expressed; they cannot be compressed. This is the case with political processes too. Sometimes, too much or too little momentum may tear them apart. Barenboim cites the Oslo Accord as an example, where its speed “did not go hand in hand with its content” (*Parallels* 59). Music too falls apart if the right tempo is not maintained. Said, on the other hand, was critical of the Oslo Accord because it did not “conform adequately to the reality of the situation” (*Parallels* 59).

Barenboim points out that what differentiates the success of the politician and the artist is the “art of compromise”—the politician succeeds only when he compromises, while the artist, when he refuses to compromise (*Parallels* 60). The phrase “politically correct” would thus ring as “philosophically incorrect” in the artist’s ear (*Parallels* 61). The act of music-making is a courageous one, and it is a similar kind of courage that is required for solving humanitarian problems (*Parallels* 62).

Said, while being an exemplary teacher, had also been immensely involved in the social processes of the world around him. Barenboim points out that a true teacher does not just pass information but educates and awakens thinking capabilities. This is what a composer or musician should also aim at; this is what musical institutions should strive for (*Parallels* 64). Musical awareness is not just biographical information about composers, “but how a piece was written, and what it was inspired by” (*Parallels* 65). Commenting on his teachers, Said says that he has not had any inspiring teachers, because

he felt that “independence from one’s teachers is very important.” Barenboim, on the contrary, recalls Nadia Boulanger who taught him “to look at structure as an emotional means of expression and what was emotional as structure” (*Parallels* 66-67).

Barenboim cautions that it would be almost criminal to play music mechanically: “when one plays two notes, they should tell a story” (*Parallels* 69). Orchestral musicians are sometimes highly dissatisfied with their jobs, because they are “always doing what the conductor tells them” (*Parallels* 71). Instead, individual musicians should also be given the creative space, and the ego of the conductor should be kept in bounds, producing music in an organic whole (*Parallels* 71).

The “fluidity of life” and the “fluidity of thought” are vital to Barenboim (*Parallels* 72-73). When one decides to become a conductor, or “have something individual to say, . . . it will strike consonance in some and dissonance in others” (*Parallels* 77). Said adds that writing to please others is unnecessary, and that “there are certain questions to be raised; there are certain attitudes to be addressed; in the end, there are certain clichés that you want to dismantle” (*Parallels* 78).

Said describes the achievements of Glenn Gould, whose “wonderfully intelligent exercise of his fingers in polyphonic music” separated him from every other pianist (*Musical* 25). He was not just a performer but also a critic, whose lectures arose out of his pianistic feats. But what Gould craved for was “an escape from everything that determined or conditioned his reality as a

human being,” and he was especially fond of the state of “ecstasy,” “incorporeal” music, and words like “repose, detachment, isolation” (*Musical* 29). What Said finds most interesting about Gould is that he “constantly oversteps boundaries and bursts confining restraints” (*Musical* 32). This could be said very well about Said himself too. Gould completely redefined the concept of “performance” itself, with his “predilection for contrapuntal or variational forms,” which Said took as model for many of his theoretical enterprises (*Musical* 33)

Richard Wagner’s music and politics has always been the site of heated controversies. Said and Barenboim have definite critical positions regarding Wagner. Wagner’s opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* made him one of the most influential figures in European culture by 1874. He was dedicated towards restoring ancient Greek culture and beginning the world anew. Though he worshipped Beethoven, he constantly tried to overstep the limits of Beethoven, and tried to create novel harmonic and dramatic structures, which dismantled most of the musical conventions of his time. He was an egomaniac, who was in an inspirational relationship with Cosima (daughter of Liszt and wife of Hans von Bulow), but had chaotic relationships with many other people. Said notes that he was a clairvoyant psychologist, who was “able to understand the darkest intimacy as well as the largest scale-forces in human history,” and was “Hitler’s favourite composer (partly because, like Hitler, the older Wagner had become a perfervid anti-Semite and German chauvinist) but

also the greatest single influence on advanced music in the twentieth century” (*Music* 107).

Wagner had accumulated onto the music drama his “hopes, talents and interests as a musician, librettist, stage designer, financier, historian, politician and philosophical visionary” (*Music* 107). The *Ring* was his biggest work, requiring “not only an unusually competent conductor and large orchestra but also a cast of thirty soloists capable of managing complex, daring music produced not as a series of set arias and recitatives but in the form of what Wagner called ‘endless melody’” (*Music* 107). It is Wagner’s personal version of history and it cannot be merely seen or enjoyed like other music dramas; one must be engrossed in it completely over the four days of its cycle (*Music* 108).

Wagner had properly internalized the connection between the development of symphonic music and that of a competitive bourgeois society. He considered his greatest work as “deeds of music made visible,” signifying that “his was historically the most sustained effort to chart the competitive ethos his time both psychologically and symphonically, in ways scarcely dreamed of by sonata form or classical rondos” (*Music* 111).

Though Wagner’s music is rich, complex, and influential, it has also come to symbolize, to some people, the atrocities of German anti-semitism. Said points out that

. . . his work is overbearing and so deeply concerned with the Germanic past, myths, traditions and achievements . . . he was such a tireless, verbose, pompous prose expounder of his mostly dubious ideas about inferior races and sublime (Germanic) heroes. . . . Nevertheless, he was an unquestionably great genius when it came to the theater and to music. He revolutionized our whole conception of opera; he totally transformed the tonal musical system; and he contributed ten great masterpieces, ten operas that remain among the very great summits of Western music. (*Music* 291)

It was in June 1993 that Said arrived in London to give the BBC Reith Lectures. He had a ticket to hear Daniel Barenboim play with Pierre Boulez and the London Symphony Orchestra. Barenboim was identified as an Israeli musician, which Said—being an Arab—thought, would be a barrier difficult to overcome. But interestingly, a profound recognition passed between the two, and they indulged in incessant talk about music, politics, art and life. This later led to a wonderful collaboration between them in founding the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. It was in August 1999 that Barenboim, Said and Yo-Yo Ma brought together a group of seventy eight Arab and Israeli musicians aged eighteen to twenty five in Weimar. There were eight Syrians, plus Palestinians, Egyptians, Israeli Arabs and Jews, Lebanese, etc., in addition to twelve Germans. During the three weeks of rehearsal, heated arguments about

identity and politics melted into a wonderful ensemble playing (*Music* 261-62).

Wagner's works had been unperformed in Israel until July 7, 2001. Barenboim, who was on tour in Israel with the Berlin State Opera, had originally arranged a performance of Act One of Wagner's opera *Die Walkure* for the July 7 concert, but the director of the Israeli festival had asked him to change it. He substituted it with Schumann and Stravinsky, and after the playing, proposed to the audience a short extract from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* as an encore. The floor was thrown open to a discussion, and there were people for and against it. In the end, Barenboim declared that "he would play the piece but suggested that those who were offended could leave, which some in fact did" (*Music* 291). There were attempts to boycott the conductor "for performing music by Hitler's favourite composer at Israel's premier cultural event until he apologizes" (*Music* 292). Nevertheless, Barenboim continues as a "gifted, extremely unusual figure who crossed too many lines and violated too many of the many taboos that bind Israeli society" (*Music* 292).

While discussing Wagner, Barenboim points out that Wagner pushed music to its extremes, shedding the "golden path" with no risks, and stripped music of its superficiality (*Parallels* 80). He was highly critical of music performances of his own time, like Mendelssohn's, for instance, which compensated superficial content with an increased tempo (*Parallels* 80). Wagner, on the other hand, was "diametrically opposed to a metronomic way of interpreting music" (*Parallels* 81). Certain movements and passages had to

be slowed down to express their content in full, and this he did imperceptibly and unnoticeably (*Parallels* 82).

Both Said and Barenboim accept the association of Wagner's music with the Nazi brutality. Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* does have a xenophobic quality, tending to see "the outside as threatening" (*Parallels* 102). Barenboim describes a lady who asked to him in Tel Aviv, "How can you want to play that? I saw my family taken to the gas chambers to the sound of the *Meistersinger* overture. Why should I listen to that?" (*Parallels* 104). It is true that no one should be forced to listen to Wagner, but Barenboim adds that anyone who wants to listen to Wagner must be able to (*Parallels* 104).

Barenboim is one of "the leading Jewish Wagnerite, conducting in Bayreuth," and one who believes that "I don't think that we have any right to have a sort of generalized criticism, if not hatred, of the people who hated us, because then we only descend to the level of those people who persecuted us for so many years" (*Parallels* 108, 109-110). Discussing "Germans, Jews, and Music," Barenboim comments that "certain matters require the generosity of forgetfulness, and others demand the honesty of remembrance" (*Parallels* 169). He quotes from the speech of November 9, 2000, by the German president Johannes Rau: "Patriotism can flourish only where racism and nationalism are given no quarter. We should never mistake patriotism for nationalism. A patriot is one who loves his homeland. A nationalist is one who scorns the homelands of others" (*Parallels* 172).

Bach and Beethoven are two important figures in Said's music criticism. Comparing Bach and Beethoven, Said notes that "Bach is Beethoven's exact opposite;" while Beethoven is dramatic, pulsing forward, conquering every territory, Bach is "consolidating and encircling in an ever-widening arc" (*Music* 287). "Bach is epic; Beethoven drama . . . unlike Beethoven, whose third-period works tear apart the genre and leave a set of broken, unfinished, fragmentary forms, Bach seems intent on incorporating every nuance, every twist, every harmony and rhythm" (*Music* 287).

Said saw "amusement" as a form of resistance, because "it does not require reconciliation with a status quo or a dominant regime" (*Late* xiv). Michael Wood in the Introduction to *On Late Style* says that "every artist who is late in Said's sense of the word will be unreconciled. Adorno writes of Beethoven's refusal to 'reconcile into a single image what is not reconciled' and this is the note we hear again and again in Said's remarks about music and about the world" (xv). Why does this become important? Ground realities attest to the fact that many differences are never reconciled. "It's true that dreams of reconciliation in music or in Middle East are often merely a means of failing to think about difficulty and difference. But that doesn't mean such thinking isn't possible, and reconciliation may in any case not be exactly what we need" (*Late* xv).

The writings of Said have been praised in musical terms as "complete harmonies" that have become a "symphonic edifice" (Merod 117). Said consistently stood for deeper analysis of texts and their surroundings and

advocated the use of the intellect to counter the “general encumbrance of idiocy in a culture advanced by cynical popular entertainment logic” (Merod 118). The search for a utopia remained as an undercurrent in his enterprise, without the “overt celebration of the sentimental” (Merod 118).

Jim Merod points out that cultural moments have come to be “defined by exchange value and that alone,” and “music as an aspiring transgressive energy now and for some time has succumbed to a global negative dialectic: emotional hyperventilation, imaginative gadgetry, and intellectual (as well as lyrical) evaporation” (121). Yet, music still has the capacity to be “an affirmation of life, of songful creativity, and of earth’s expressive mysteries” (122). In an age of digital reproduction, “the illusory quality of a ‘whole’ event, a ‘single performance,’” is unimportant and “the concept of an ‘origin’ is essentially irrelevant,” as Gould’s recordings of the *Goldberg Variations* prove: “the magic of analogue editing, tape spliced and transferred as a virtual performance without prosthetic assistance” (124).

Said’s insights on music “reveal a writer in the trajectory of his own performance—rigorous, informed, probing, and in control of his terms of critical elucidation” (Merod 128). Merod is full of praise for Said when he counts him as one “among only four or five critical writers of his generation” who has “minimized the baggage of predictable utterance, predetermined understanding, and theoretical closure. His work ceaselessly comes across revelations, small and large, of intellectual discovery: things found in the process of reading, thinking, writing, and sorting among the crisscrossing of

entanglements of personal inspection” (128-129). The art form of Said has been the critical essay, which has benefitted from “his playing of Chopin and Bach,” and his essays mean “less to exert an ultimate statement or final well-considered intellectual position . . . than to pose the logistics of hypothesis making as a reasonable, necessary, humane, and, finally, creative operation of passionate intelligence” (Merod 129).

Lindsay Waters points out that Said, “unlike some other great critics of the twentieth century, such as George Lukacs, has never made the aesthetic experience serve ideology” (97). Waters quotes Said’s reply in 1994 to those who thought he was placing politics above all other concerns during a discussion of *Culture and Imperialism*, at a meeting of the Modern Language Association: “I have heard that there are some philosophers who think that the age of grand narratives such as the narrative of liberation is over. I disagree. That narrative still holds great power for me. But if that narrative does not have room for all the small narratives of liberation such as those I feel when reading a novel or listening to a work of music, then I want no part of it” (97).

Said’s real theoretical work lies in resisting the devaluing of the sensual in front of the intellectual, as akin to Proust’s dictum: “the truths of intellect are less precious than those secrets of feeling” (qtd. in Waters 98). Waters tries to “enlist Said in an effort to revive aesthetics after a hiatus for several centuries in the inquiry into aesthetics, despite the efforts of people such as Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Paul de Man to resituate the field back on earth by shifting attention back to feelings” (100).

During his last twenty years, Said wrote regularly about music. Derek B. Scott points out that musicologists were unfamiliar with much of this work as it appeared mostly in reviews and non-musicology journals (104). He also notes that the first international conference on music and gender was held only in 1992, at King's College, London, a year after Said's book *Musical Elaborations* came out (112). The lack of interest in social and cultural context by musicologists has been criticized by Said. In 1993, the U. K. Critical Musicology Forum was formed to champion "a socially engaged musicology that the founder members believed to be still marginalized in academic institutions" (113). A significant intervention in this field was Richard Leppert's and Susan McClary's *Music and Society* (1987), of which Said is aware, while the first book with essays on postmodernism in music was *The Last Post* (1993) edited by Simon Miller (Scott 113).

Reviewers like Nick Cook criticize Said for "neglecting popular music and for failing to offer a theoretical framework for discussing the popular" (Scott 113). The impression that Said gives is that "we are at the end of the line for Western music, confronted with arid experimentalism at one extreme and commodified junk at the other" (Scott 113). Scott also suggests that "it was only when postcolonial criticism and theory were well under way in the 1990s" that musicologists engaged with Said's ideas and its implications for music (114).

Scott brilliantly sums up that Said began writing about music at a time when most musicologists treated social context "either in theatrical terms, as a

backcloth against which composers and performers carried out their activities, or as something that was ‘reflected’ in the work of artists. Said replaced these simple metaphors with an emphasis on how artists mediated rather than mirrored the ideas of the social world within which they produced their work” (119).

Peter Tregear describes Said as a “true polymath intellectual, one who consciously defied the isolation that accompanies academic specialization” (205). Tregear remarks that Said’s expeditions into diverse fields such as

. . . literary and music criticism, comparative history, philosophy and political science . . . was not just a reflection of an unusually perspicacious mind, it also bore witness to Said’s wish to enmesh the academic reception of cultural objects with their broader political significance. Interdisciplinarity was a deliberate strategy with political intent, and in this respect his passion for music is especially significant. (205)

Said was one of the handful of academics who had argued for ending the “cloistral,” “reverential,” and “deeply insular, habits in writing about music,” and wanted to open it up to the “very real world of politics and ideas” (Tregear 206). He had thus initiated a founding principle of what later became “New Musicology,” which “could not pretend that the musical work existed in some kind of rarefied aesthetic sphere removed from historical and contemporary contexts” (Tregear 206). Said always wanted to pursue a broad range of interests, and being “conscious of his political and cultural status as

an exile,” he was more inclined “towards reflection than execution and thus ultimately to the work of the critic rather than the performer” (Tregear 207).

The 1960 Arab/Israeli war forced Said to “confront directly his own Arab identity as an American citizen,” and drew him towards rejecting “a specialised, rarefied, intellectual endeavour of the kind undertaken by Adorno” (Tregear 209). Adorno was of much praise for the high modernist musical tradition, which he thought “had steadfastly resisted the trap of ‘usefulness; of easy consumption, and thus the false consciousness proffered by false art. But in doing so, this music had also made itself functionally impotent, silent to all but a tiny minority of initiates” (Tregear 209). He later revealed that his aesthetic theory was incompatible “with the demands of political praxis” (Tregear 209). Said was forced to “find ways to become a practical advocate for active political movements, to help give a voice, in particular, for the dispossessed of his homeland” (Tregear 210).

Tregear believes that Adorno was right after all, in that the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra also seems to be devoured by the culture industry (217). “This was the fate that Adorno saw as awaiting any artistic endeavour that dallied with mass appeal, however noble its intentions. Certainly, for an ensemble with ambitions to be politically ‘atonal,’ the orchestra conspicuously does not perform modern atonal music, the very music Adorno thought was best able to reflect the ‘darkness and guilt of the world’” (217).

Said believed that “some unique aesthetic quality he discerned in music, particularly contrapuntal music, could play a defining role in

developing a criticism that would move beyond the ethical ambivalences he identified in discourse analysis and deconstruction” (Etherington 221).

Barenboim pays glowing tribute to Said when he says: “Edward Said was many things for many people, but in reality his was a musician’s soul in the deepest sense of the word. . . . he actually formulated ideas and reached conclusions through music; and along the same lines, he saw music as a reflection of the ideas that he had regarding other issues” (“Maestro” 526).

Barenboim praises Said’s attention to detail, his distinguishing between power and force, the idea of interconnection, the impossibility of separating reason and emotion, concept of inclusion as opposed to exclusion, the integration principle, “the idea of Oriental seduction versus Western production,” all derived from music (“Maestro” 528-529).

In an interview given to Rashid Khalidi, Barenboim compliments that Said was multidimensional in his thought process and could see a thing and its opposite at the same time: “It is hard to be both mainstream and counterculture, both active and contemplative, to be both masculine and feminine, and to see all that at once. Edward was a living example of the existence of contrast and contradiction in every human being and in everything that human beings do in whatever field” (94). Linda Hutcheon describes Said as one of those “impassioned and uncompromising thinkers whom you want to treasure, from whom you want to continue to learn, and by whom you want to continue to be inspired” (27).

The world of music interrogated by Said reveals that no field of culture is unmediated, and that efforts to reduce political and social hostility via art is of paramount importance. Said always stood for border crossing at the limits, and he believed in “transgressing” historical or cultural givens. Reaching out to the other side and breaking the shells of bitterness is essential for bridge building. This was what he tried to do throughout his life. He created a lot of enemies for sure, but is still warmly and fondly remembered by the champions of humanism. The harmony he left lingers.