

# NOTES FROM A ROAD SHOW

by

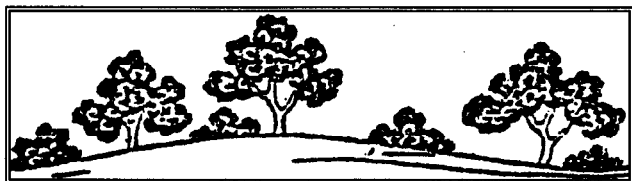
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## Notes from a Road Show

When Georg Solti became Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1969, he brought with him a lifetime contract to make opera and symphony recordings with the London-Decca Company. A scheduled project was the recording of Mahler's massive Eighth Symphony, called *The Symphony of a Thousand* because of the large forces required—eight solo singers, two choruses, and a very large orchestra. The recording was to be made in Vienna, and the producers engaged the Vienna State Opera Chorus, a Vienna Boys Choir, and eight soloists, expecting the maestro to also utilize the Vienna State Opera Orchestra. Mr. Solti had a different idea, and he was said to have told the producers that he would bring an orchestra that would not make a mistake. Subsequently, a legendary recording of the Mahler Eighth was made in Vienna during the Chicago Symphony's first European tour in 1971. Such was the confidence in his orchestra that Maestro Solti displayed throughout his twenty-two-year tenure as Music Director.

Georg Solti was born near Budapest in 1912 of Jewish parents, and during his youth he demonstrated prodigious musical talent. He studied at the Liszt Academy in Budapest with masters including Bela

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Bartok, and he excelled as a pianist. After completing his studies, he obtained a position with the Budapest National Opera, where he accompanied and coached singers. During this time, the relentless rise of the Nazis was disrupting the lives of Jewish musicians throughout Europe, and restrictions on the Jewish population in Hungary were increasing. In 1939, at the age of twenty-six, he left Budapest and traveled by train to the Lucerne Festival to see Toscanini, who was his mentor at the Salzburg Festival. He asked him to help find employment in America. After arriving, he received a telegram from his mother, which said, "Don't come home."<sup>1</sup> If he had, he surely would have been sent to a concentration camp. He lived in exile in Switzerland until the war ended, when he managed to secure a position under the Allied Command, which was attempting to restore cultural life in Germany. He was named director of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, and subsequently in 1952 he became director of the Frankfurt Opera. Although he began with limited experience conducting opera, he rapidly made an outstanding impression. In 1961 he achieved directorship of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, where his reputation soared and he stayed for ten years, culminating in the awarding of knighthood for his accomplishments. Having spent most of his career in the opera house, and wishing to perform more of the symphonic literature, he accepted an offer in 1969 to become Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Why did he come to Chicago? He was a strong admirer of the orchestra, having previously guest conducted at the Ravinia Festival. He was aware of the accomplishments of the orchestra under the demanding directorship of Fritz Reiner from 1953 to 1963. He felt that the orchestra could do more to establish its rightful place in the international world of music. Maestro Solti said in his book *Memoirs*, published in 1997:

To be in charge of the Chicago Symphony was the fulfillment of

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my dreams, but at the same time it was a new learning experience for me, a master class in music directorship. . . . The orchestra represented the height of professionalism; the players were always prepared and arrived at rehearsal having studied and practiced their parts well, and consequently I had to work at the same level, or indeed, beyond it. I had to prepare myself so that I knew every score in depth and had a very clear idea from the first rehearsal of what I wanted from the orchestra. The musicians of the Chicago Symphony in 1969 were masters of their profession, and, despite personnel changes in intervening decades, they still are today.<sup>2</sup>

Exemplary assessments such as this were not unfamiliar to this orchestra. Daniel Barenboim, who was to succeed Georg Solti as the twelfth Music Director in 1991, expresses his earliest impressions of the Chicago Symphony in his book, *A Life in Music*, as follows:

The first time I heard the Chicago Symphony was an artistic revelation to me—it was in 1958 with Fritz Reiner conducting. I had never before heard an orchestra of that caliber—at that time I had not yet heard the Berlin Philharmonic live. I had heard the Vienna Philharmonic in Salzburg as a child, but nothing I had heard in Europe or elsewhere had prepared me for the shock of the precision, the volume, and the intensity of the Chicago orchestra. It was like a perfect machine with a beating human heart. But it was not just a cold and perfect instrument, it had tremendous vitality. . . . Here was a combination of the highest possible musical standards with a very warm and touching personal relationship with the musicians that became increasingly important to me.<sup>3</sup>

In 1969, when Maestro Solti arrived, the Chicago Symphony was widely regarded as one of the finest orchestras in the world. The orchestra was seldom turned down for guest appearances by renowned conductors and soloists, yet it had never left the shores of America. The orchestra's initial triumph outside the Chicago area with Maestro Solti as Music Director came with an appearance at Carnegie Hall in New

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York, where a spectacular performance of Mahler's Fifth Symphony amazed the audience. Solti describes the scene as follows:

When we finished the last movement, the audience stood up and screamed hysterically as if it were a rock concert. The applause seemed endless; they had fallen under the spell of our exceptional performance. I had never experienced such an overwhelming phenomenon in my life and probably never will again. From that time on, we enjoyed success in New York. Every time we went there, which was once or twice a year, and sometimes with the chorus, it was more than a concert, it became a musical happening.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the historic legend of the symphonic marriage of a virtuoso orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, and a masterful conductor, Sir Georg Solti, was formed.

The first international tour occurred in 1971 with four weeks of performances in several capitals of European music, which brought lavish critical and public acclaim. Mayor Richard J. Daley, who committed city funds for the tour, hosted a ticker-tape parade on return. Many more tours were to follow, which Maestro Solti relished. He says in his memoirs:

The most enjoyable times we had were on tour. We set off like a circus troupe or medieval army, with the orchestra members accompanied by their families, from small babies to grandparents, and some of the trustees and supporters. We would eat together, go sightseeing together, and laugh a great deal, as well as rehearse and perform.<sup>5</sup>

That was the spirit of the traveling troupe that I was fortunate to join as a tour physician in 1978. Dr. Bernard Levin of the University of Chicago, who was the tour physician at that time, invited me to cover the second half of a lengthy European tour. He was a veteran of these endeavors, having been on two previous European tours, and one to Japan. A few years later, he left Chicago to accept a professor-

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ship in Texas, and subsequently I have collaborated with Dr. Marshall Sparberg of Northwestern University, and more recently with my practice associate at Rush, Dr. Bruce Huck.

On the longer tours, because of limitations in the time we can be away from our practices, each physician covers one-half of the tour. For the Russian trip, Dr. Sparberg and I jointly did the entire tour. Since I started this adventure, the CSO has been to Europe over a dozen times, Japan three times, and to Australia, Russia, and South America. For my wife and me, these have been fascinating, dramatic, and exhilarating experiences. We have listened to this great orchestra in extraordinary venues, sampled the culture of major world cities, and traveled with truly remarkable people who are exquisitely devoted to their art and have marvelously diverse personalities and interests. We have made many wonderful friends.

Why should a symphony orchestra take a doctor on such a tour? The tour moves rapidly, and finding a readily available physician on short notice in a foreign city can be difficult. Our basic role is to "keep the show on the road." The show is big, about two hundred participants, including performers, administrative staff, stage hands, patrons, and accompanying spouses and friends, and seventeen tons of instruments and equipment, all transported to the great music halls of the world to meet the maestro's downbeat at a precise moment. The travel schedule is often strenuous, and not exactly how one would plan a vacation trip. Consider the tour during the record cold January of 1985, which began in Stockholm, traveled to five cities in Germany and Switzerland, then to Madrid, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, and London—fourteen concerts in twenty-one days in eleven cities and eight countries. The conclusion of the April 2000 tour in Europe featured eight concerts in nine days in three countries. Sometimes the pace is more leisurely, such as visits to the Berlin, Salzburg, Cologne, and Lucerne festivals, with two or three concerts in one location over a few days. These are welcome interludes with more time for rest and

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sightseeing.

My schedule on tour is to attend all rehearsals and concerts and whatever receptions, dinners, or other events are planned for the group, and to be available for urgent problems when needed. If it is a travel day, it is usually by charter flight or train in the morning, with a short period available for walking, rest, or practice at the hotel in the afternoon. Usually, there is a concert at night, which may begin anytime between 7:00 p.m. and, as in Spain, 10:30 p.m. Getting enough food and adequate sleep on these busy days can be a problem for everyone.

I offer daily office hours in my hotel room for an hour in the afternoon, visit the rooms of those who so request, and take the first bus to the hall about two hours before the concert, where I am provided with a backstage rehearsal room to see the musicians and other members of the entourage. I carry a black doctor's bag with the usual equipment, and an aliquot of commonly needed medications. At the hall, transported with the orchestral equipment, is a bright red steamer trunk filled with about fifty medications, bandages, a portable EKG machine, intravenous fluids, and everything needed to practice in a general internist's office.

Each day, I see three or four people during hotel office hours, and perhaps a half-dozen musicians at the hall. There are often minor situations, such as blood-pressure checks or abrasions to be attended to at airports, hotel lobbies, and on planes. I prepare for more serious problems before the tour by arranging physician contacts who are connected with the best hospitals in each city we visit. The promise of two tickets for the usually sold-out concerts works wonders! I may need X-rays or specialty consultation—for example, to set a minor fracture, obtain a blood analysis or a culture, or, rarely, to arrange for a hospitalization. I have made some wonderful friends this way. For example, Dr. Koichi Fujii supervises a large English-speaking clinic in Tokyo, across from the Tokyo Tower near the



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American Embassy. He received his medical training in the United States at Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, and he and his colleagues are a valuable resource for travelers and expatriates. He has entertained my wife, our daughter Betsy, and me in the Japanese style, an experience to be treasured.

The medical problems that arise on tour are usually routine and common for travelers, such as upper-respiratory infections, gastrointestinal disturbances, and minor rashes. Many hard-working professional musicians have chronic ailments that are common to their art, usually muscular pains or dysfunctions related to the repetitive motions or the positions required to play their instruments. They become accustomed to playing through these symptoms, although on tour medical attention is sometimes needed.

Some unknowing but well-meaning people told me when I began this experience that I would be confronted with neurotic, temperamental, and demanding artists. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are highly motivated professionals at the very top of their field, and they want to be on the stage for every performance and rehearsal. They spend much of their time on tour practicing their instruments, at the hotels and backstage. To quote a phrase usually used to describe athletes, "They play hurt." For example, an oboe player worked the entire Australian tour with a fracture of the upper arm sustained a few days prior to leaving. A cello player performed with bronchitis and a fever because two other members of the section were even more ill and could not leave our hotel in Madrid. A violinist painfully dragged a recovering fractured leg through Russia because "My parents walked out of Russia in the 1930s, and I have to go back."

I am constantly amazed at the resilience and stamina of the maestros and their musicians. At the beginning of the 1986 tour of Japan, the first concert was held just fifty hours after our arrival from Chicago. At the start of the concert I looked at my watch,

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which was still set on Chicago time, and it read 4 a.m. What we call "jet lag," which is when your brain arrives at a destination several days after your body, must still have been present, yet the performers gave a superb account of Mahler's Fifth Symphony. This was an example of agile and focused minds overcoming fatigue to accomplish a common goal.

Fortunately, medical emergencies on tour are rare. A few hospitalizations have been necessary and can be an adventure in a foreign country, but have always worked out satisfactorily. Usually the cities we visit have excellent medical facilities. However, for the Russian trip avoiding hospitalization was a must because of the unsatisfactory condition of even the best health-care facilities. Before the tour we arranged a contract with an airborne medical evacuation team located in Geneva guaranteeing immediate transfer to Geneva or Helsinki, which fortunately we did not have to call upon. Over the years, I have had to leave hospitalized patients behind to recover from an appendectomy, a heart condition, a kidney stone, a detached retina, and a leg infection. When appropriate, the orchestra leaves a staff person to be with the stricken individual, and I stay in touch by phone.

Occasionally, improvisation is necessary. On my first trip, encountering a musician with a late-night lower bowel dysfunction, I found that we did not carry enemas. To describe what I needed, I had to do a pantomime for a concierge in the Brussels hotel lobby. Moments later, an elegant attendant in full formal dress arrived at the room door with a huge, covered silver tray. He ceremoniously removed the cover, and I have not before or since seen such a beautiful display of a Fleets enema! I had an immediately grateful patient, and now I never leave home on these trips without one.

I have become an expert at examining buffets. Besides playing their instruments, musicians love to eat. As a group, they can demolish a buffet with amazing rapidity. The orchestra is often entertained

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on the road, and while these are delightful occasions, I cringe every time I see a lavish gustatory display. We have fortunately had only one mini-epidemic on the road—following a typical European whipped-cream and mayonnaise extravaganza in Budapest, and it was a challenge to pull the group together for the next night's work in Vienna. I warned the orchestra about tropical water precautions for our recent South American trip, but when we arrived at our first stop in Rio, the hotel provided cooling drinks with ice cubes, which were promptly consumed. I worried, but fortunately nothing untoward happened.

The reward for me on these tours is the privilege of hearing great music performed in famous venues, feeling the tension and drama of one big performance after another, and observing the fantastic response this orchestra elicits from knowledgeable and sophisticated audiences. When we leave the hall, crowds often wait at the stage door for a glimpse of the performers, or an autograph from Bud Herseth, Dale Clevenger, Maestro Barenboim, and their colleagues. If I am asked what instrument I play, I reply, "The stethoscope." I decline all autographs. These are Chicago's greatest and most successful ambassadors, and it is a joy to be part of a magnificently planned and executed endeavor, which reflects so highly on our city and culture.

Sir Georg Solti was certainly correct when he compared the touring venture to a circus troupe or a medieval army. This is a business—show business—and to be successful it requires meticulous planning and precise execution. All efforts must be directed to delivering the music-makers in their best possible spirits to their scheduled places. A year or more before the tour a small advance party of orchestra administrators and musicians sets forth on a reconnaissance mission to check the hotels, concert halls, and other details, and to recommend necessary changes in plans. A few weeks before the tour an agenda book is composed with detailed daily schedules, and armed with this it is very rare

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that a member of the party misses a bus, plane, or train. Air travel across the oceans is by regularly scheduled flights, within the continents usually by charter flights. German trains, and bullet trains in Japan, are very comfortable and precisely on time. Instruments, music, and wardrobe trunks are usually transported separately by designated airlines, or overland by special trucking companies, which are accustomed to the care needed to handle such a cargo. Small instruments, such as the extremely valuable Stradivarius violins, are usually carried by the musicians.

Assuring timely arrival of the equipment and instruments can be a problem. The stagehands from Orchestra Hall are extremely busy during the tour. They must unload the trucks at each performance hall, and with the help of local haulers set up the seventeen tons of equipment backstage and on the stage. After the concert they spend several hours packing and loading the trucks to go on the road to the next stop, or to the airport. They work under a tight time schedule, and they may have sleepless nights. Sometimes delays occur. For example, a broken axle held up the arrival of trucks for several hours on a wintry overnight trip from Leningrad to Moscow. In 2001, following an evening concert in London, the cargo arrived at the Philharmonie Hall in Berlin just one and one-half hours before an afternoon concert commemorating the opening of the new Holocaust Museum. Many members of the traveling troupe helped the stagehands unload and set up, and the concert started on time. On a domestic trip to California in 1987, a truck broke down at the California-Nevada border, and the cargo did not arrive in time for a Saturday afternoon concert at the Davies Hall in San Francisco. Members of the orchestra played an impromptu concert of chamber music, which included the unscheduled North American debut of Sir Georg Solti as a pianist. Two hours later, when the trucks had still not arrived, the orchestra presented a complete concert, including Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, using instruments and music borrowed from the San Francisco Orchestra, and wearing their travel

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clothes. The audience was thrilled with the extended concert, and the occasion made front-page news in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on Sunday morning.

There are of course many other unpredictable events that can occur on the road, and on the trip to the Soviet Union in November 1990 we were challenged by several. This was politically and economically a chaotic time in Russia. The Mikhail Gorbachev regime was collapsing, and catastrophic civil unrest was a threat. The experiences of two other American orchestras that had recently toured the Soviet Union were replete with logistics horrors, so that many precautions needed to be taken. For this trip, the musicians, support party, accompanying family members and patrons, and all of the instruments and cargo were transported together to Russia on a 747 Swissair plane. It was the first aircraft of that size to land at the Leningrad airport. Security was a concern, so we were accompanied on the tour by a representative of a private international security organization to supplement the orchestra's own security chief, Captain Willie Yates. Mr. Thom Shanker, then the Moscow bureau chief for the *Chicago Tribune*, accompanied us in Russia, and he captured the environment with the following perceptive dispatch from Moscow:

When the Red Arrow express train carrying the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from Leningrad arrived here two hours late, the city's air was full of coal smoke, its sidewalks were full of gypsy beggar children and the whole scene harkened back to a simpler time when great musicians toured the capitals of Europe by rail. But this, the CSO's first tour of the Soviet Union, has been marked by all the logistical complexities of a modern military campaign, its blue-chip artistic troupe trying to play its music well after moving 15 tons of gear around a nation that can't even feed itself. Accompanying the orchestra is a squad of medics with enough drugs to open a pharmacy. Thousands of gallons of bottled water have been flown in from Germany. The entourage included even a food adviser—she's really more like the

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King's Taster. All of it's designed to make certain that this invading army of musicians will not be driven into retreat by the Russian climate or Soviet cuisine. "I knew this was going to be our toughest trip," said Bill Hogan, the CSO stage manager for the last 15 years. "The halls are beautiful, but the logistics are terrible. Last Monday was the worst day of my entire career as a stage manager." The 19th Century concert halls in Moscow and Leningrad were built in an age when musicians wearing white tie and tails carried their instruments into performances. But in Leningrad the problem was how to get 235 crates weighing 30,000 pounds up six flights of steps without an elevator. Planks helped stage hands push the trunks up some stairways, but mostly it was 12 hours of heavy lifting. Soviet customs didn't lighten the load. Some inspections lasted more than eight hours.<sup>6</sup>

The hunger for music in Russia was palpable and touching. Large crowds held back by police barriers congregated outside the concert halls, hoping to get tickets or to be part of a standing-room throng let in at the last minute. Dignitaries occupied most of the seats. During our stay, an open rehearsal was held for students from the Moscow Conservatory, and they filled the hall. They were excited and noisy, so Maestro Solti asked a Russian-speaking member of the violin section of the orchestra to address them. After a few Russian words, which surprised the students, they listened in reverent silence. With us were orchestra members who had immigrated to Chicago from the Soviet Union, and they had family members and friends who lived there, so emotional reunions became part of the trip. The orchestra overcame the hardships of the Russian tour to give magnificent performances, and the work was leavened by visits to the Hermitage Museum, the Kremlin, and the Moscow Circus.

Unexpected incidents occurring on tour can provide diversions from the routine. For example, at the conclusion of a concert in Japan, Sir Georg Solti bent over from the podium to accept a large bouquet of flowers presented by a darling little girl. Suddenly, his

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formal black trousers split open from the groin to the ankle, and his entire leg was exposed. I was standing in the wings next to Associate Conductor Ken Jean and Stage Manager Bill Hogan. "The maestro is showing a little leg tonight," said Mr. Jean. The Maestro, realizing his plight, used the full length of the bouquet to cover the split in his pants and limped off the stage. Here was our most elegant Maestro, the veteran of thousands of concerts throughout the world, confronted with an entirely novel performance situation. "What do I do with this?" he pleaded. Mr. Hogan grabbed a roll of black electrical tape fortuitously lying nearby, and rapidly patched the trousers. The Maestro returned without delay to the applauding audience and conducted the encores. That's show business!

One of the most fascinating aspects of these tours is to observe the performance halls. Backstage accommodations for the musicians vary greatly, and it is apparent that in the older halls the needs and comfort of the musicians were not considered when the halls were built. In Moscow, the CSO musicians dressed behind curtains in the main lobby. This caused a security problem, and my seventeen-year-old son, Carl, helped our security people guard the trunks and instruments. At the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, trunks and performers were cramped into narrow aisles of an area that looked as if it had not been dusted since the hall was built at the turn of the last century. At the venerable Royal Albert Hall in London, built by Queen Victoria to honor her husband Albert, performers are crowded into a few small rooms in the basement. Arriving to set up at many of the halls, the stagehands often have to struggle to find adequate backstage space, labeling the corridors and stairs with signs telling everyone where they should be, including the doctor. By contrast, the newer halls in Japan, Australia, and Lucerne have extensive backstage areas with large, modern dressing rooms and abundant rehearsal space.

There is an amazing variation in the appearance of the per-

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formance spaces of the halls, and each has its own distinctive architecture. For example, the small jewel-like ornate baroque hall in Hamburg which seats fifteen hundred people; the cavernous red-draped Victorian Royal Albert Hall in London holding six thousand; the small, in-the-round dark plaster and marble modern hall in Osaka; the Philharmonic in Berlin with angular asymmetric corners and balconies; Barcelona's Palau Hall with its wood interior that has carved faces and carved flowers protruding from the walls; and the classic and elegant spare rectangular Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. The all-white interior of the beautiful new Festival Hall in Lucerne has adjustable acoustic panels on the sidewalls, a feature of many new halls.

The acoustics of halls are much discussed on tour, most importantly by the musicians, but also by those of us listening in the audience. Musicians are concerned about how well they can hear each other on the stage, about the reflected echoes, and how bright or dull the reflected sound is, and the audience members compare the listening experience from their perspectives in the hall. Perhaps the most famed and revered for its superb acoustics is the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Sometimes musicians are surprised by a hall that has unexpectedly fine acoustics, such as a mammoth stone train-station lobby converted into a concert hall in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Acousticians may accompany the orchestra on tour to study the halls, as happened frequently during the recent Orchestra Hall renovation. They bring instruments that check sound transmission to various parts of the hall, and they stand on the stage in an empty hall and clap their hands to check echoes. The only conclusion I have drawn from watching this activity, and listening to the results of their work, is that acoustics is a complicated and elusive science.

Observing audiences is another of my tour interests. Musicians love the Japanese audiences, which are very knowledgeable and bring rapt attention to the concerts. They are silent and motionless through-



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out the performance, but at the time for applause they explode with enthusiasm. They are familiar with the performers from recordings, and form large crowds to see their favorites at the stage door after concerts. European audiences are very attentive and knowledgeable, and their concert manners are instinctive. At the Salzburg Festival Hall, dress is usually formal, befitting the huge price of the tickets. They are certainly the royalty of concert attendees. Chicago audiences are known for their musical knowledge, but have the reputation of being world-class coughers, and for running to the exits immediately after the last note of the concert. About coughing, Sir Georg Solti taught me a lesson in post-graduate medical physiology. His opinion was that both performers and audiences can suppress the cough reflex if they are fully concentrating on the music. Surprisingly, I have seen musicians with respiratory infections perform without coughing for long periods of time, so I think he had a point.

While serving as physician for these orchestral tours, I have witnessed many occasions that reflect the universality of music and its effect on culture and people. Great music has the power to enter the soul, and to survive humanity's gravest times. On my first tour in 1978, I was struck by the occasion of an American orchestra playing German music in West Berlin, led by a Jewish conductor who had been exiled from his Hungarian homeland by the Nazis. Present also were at least two members of the CSO who are survivors of Nazi concentration camps. Writing about his background in his *Memoirs*, Georg Solti says,

As a Jew who has lived under the Hapsburg's Austro-Hungarian Empire and then through early Hungarian communism, fascism, the division of Europe during World War II, military government in postwar Germany, and onto the democratic regimes of Western Europe and the United States, and who has worked with colleagues of all nations, races, and creeds, I firmly believe that racial perse-

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cution and discrimination are evil forces that hamper the progress of the human race. The only way forward is for all citizens of the world to learn to respect and live alongside each other, embracing democratic principles such as freedom of speech and equal rights.<sup>7</sup>

When Maestro Solti conducted a movement of the Shostakovich Eighth Symphony in Russia, a work whose thematic material emphatically and tragically portrays the Russian-German conflict during the Second World War, it was a poignant statement for the Russians who had lived through that time.

After performing in Russia, the tour moved to Budapest, and for the first time since leaving his homeland, Maestro Solti returned to his native city with his own orchestra. Although he had been a guest conductor there on previous occasions, this was regarded as his major homecoming, and it was declared a national day of recognition. Television interviews were held, at which Maestro Solti emphasized the failures of tyranny and the importance of freedom, and the concert was nationally televised. *Chicago Tribune* reporter Thom Shanker wrote as follows:

The evening was heavy with symbolism and irony: Hungarian-born Solti, forced into exile by the Nazis and kept away by the communists, conducted a program of music by Bella Bartok, the native son whose compositions found inspiration in Hungarian folk melodies but who spent his final years in America.<sup>8</sup>

The last concert I heard Maestro Solti conduct was at the Royal Albert Hall in London in September 1996, twelve months before he died. He had retired in 1991 as Music Director and was returning to the orchestra he had led for twenty-two years. It was during the fall Promenade series of concerts, when a standing crowd of music enthusiasts jammed the main floor, below the elegant red-draped tiers of seats and boxes rising high above the Victorian auditorium. Sir Georg Solti, a great favorite of British audiences,

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conducted Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its "Ode to Joy" before six thousand people, and it was a memorable occasion.

Another homecoming that I witnessed on tour was the return of Daniel Barenboim to Argentina in 2000. He was born in Buenos Aires in 1942, where as a child prodigy he performed his first public piano recital at the age of eight. When he was ten, his family emigrated to Israel, and subsequently he spent several years studying both piano and conducting in Germany, Austria, and France while launching his international career. Having achieved worldwide eminence as a piano soloist and as a conductor of symphony and opera, he brought his prized instrument, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, to his hometown, Buenos Aires, to celebrate his fiftieth year of performing. He played a Mozart piano concerto, and conducted Bruckner's Fourth Symphony. It was a glorious occasion at the elegant nineteenth-century opera house, the Teatro Colon.

Daniel Barenboim is in great demand as a musician, he travels widely, speaks at least six languages, and enjoys absorbing the culture where he is working. His memory for music is legendary. He usually conducts without a score. Once, in the course of a one-month residency in Chicago, he performed the seven concerts which encompass Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas, flying back and forth to New York where he was giving the same cycle, and also conducted weekend subscription concerts with the CSO. At the performances which I attended, I did not see a printed note of music in front of him. I asked him how he was able to remember all this material. "Doctor," he replied, "I have known these pieces since I was sixteen years old." This, of course, is not an explanation—this is genius. I said that this must be like memorizing Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, including paragraphs and punctuation. "No," he replied. "Music is much more logical." What explains this phenomenon, this incredible refinement of talent? Brain physiologists study the anatomical and biochemical basis of music learning and performance, and there are many theories

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but no definitive answers. The mystery is for us to hold in wonder, and enjoy as listeners.

Maestro Barenboim, as did Georg Solti, sees music as intimately connected to the human condition. As an Israeli citizen, he has promoted peace by bringing together young musicians from Israel and the Arab states to perform together in an orchestra that he founded, the East-West Divan Orchestra. Each summer for two weeks these musicians gather to work and learn together. The first two summers were in Leipzig, Germany, and in 2001 Evanston, Illinois. Their teachers are an international group of prominent orchestral musicians from places where Maestro Barenboim conducts, including Chicago. The barriers separating these young musicians are bridged, at least for a time, by the common experience of learning and playing great music.

On September 11, 2001, the CSO was in Lucerne, Switzerland. It was close to 3:00 p.m. in Europe when the tragic events of that day occurred, and we witnessed them live on CNN television. The musicians met to discuss whether the tour, which had one more week of concerts in Lucerne and Vienna, should continue. They decided to carry on, and that night before the concert, Maestro Barenboim addressed the audience in German and English at the Lucerne Festival Hall as follows:

The events of today are so shocking that no words can express what every one of us feels. We have all had many discussions—long discussions—and I want to express my gratitude to my colleagues for deciding to play this evening. Somehow without saying so directly, I think we feel that music is what we can express ourselves best with; maybe, when words are inadequate, music can express the feelings that we all have. I must again express my special gratitude to my colleagues because I can only imagine what a group of American musicians—far away from home—are feeling right now. Several of my colleagues have asked that we begin the concert tonight with the

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American national anthem and that is what we will do, for tonight we are all of us Americans.<sup>9</sup>

At that time and place, music was for all of us a healing and sustaining force, and as the Maestro said, a unique language that can sometimes express our emotions better than words. The tour continued, and we were moved by the support and sympathies of our European hosts.

My experiences as a symphony physician have illustrated to me that the fields of music and medicine have much in common. They are both hard-earned endeavors that require dedication, life-long study, and continuous practice. Both are arts that probe deeply into the human condition. Many doctors are excellent musicians, and many more are devoted listeners. My life has been enriched by the opportunity to serve wonderful musicians, to listen to great music played by a superb orchestra, in many different venues, before a variety of peoples, and to see the positive effects on the human spirit. It has been a splendid journey. Besides, I always dreamed I had a little show business in me, and what can top being on the road with a show like this?

## Notes

1. Georg Solti, *Memoirs* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997), 47.
2. Ibid., 157.
3. Daniel Barenboim, *A Life in Music* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1991), 126-27.
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