

Versione Italiana

A citizen of the world, interpreter of a “global musical brotherhood” and ambassador of peace for the eternal Middle Eastern conflict. Daniel Barenboim, who will be 81 in a week, is considered one of the best pianists in the world and, although with some reservations, one of the greatest conductors still working today. An Argentinian from Buenos Aires, like his friend, the great pianist Martha Argerich (82 years old), Barenboim was born to a couple of Russian Jewish exiles and began his incredible career in Argentina. He then continued working as a musician in Europe and the United States, thus offering a contribution and an example of great spiritual value and making music an instrument of peace. He did so not only with the establishment, together with Palestinian writer Edward Said, of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (made up of young Israeli and Palestinian musicians) with which he performed in the main European, American and Japanese concert halls, but also (and this could seem paradoxical) with his pressing past appeal to the Israeli authorities to lift the ban on Richard Wagner’s music being played in their (and his) country.

It is certainly true that, during the Third Reich’s twelve years of existence, Hitler and his faithful Fascist party officials intended to start a cultural revolution which included banning so-called degenerate art (Entartete Kunst) in painting and literature, and at the same time the glorification of Richard Wagner’s music, which was often inspired by paleo-Germanic myths, which became a genuine obsession for the Fuehrer and his most faithful and undoubtedly brilliant propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels.

There was resistance from the Israeli government, but the formal ban was later lifted – even though to listen to Wagner it is still worth going to the Bayreuth Festival in Bavaria.

Barenboim has Israeli (in addition to Argentine) and also Palestinian citizenship. Some time ago he received honorary Spanish citizenship from the King of Spain. At the same time, we can recall that his lifelong friend, Marta Argerich, also has Swiss nationality in addition to Argentine, and after her marriage to the American pianist Stephen Kovacevich, is also a citizen of the United States.



Barenboim conducting

However, we believe that it is not so much or only the merit of these or other international recognitions that has made Barenboim, as well as Argerich, two great ambassadors of peace. Music, played at the highest level, makes other, invisible strings that everyone has within themselves vibrate along with the strings of violins or a piano.

Music, especially if performed by great soloists like the ones we are talking about, awakens positive feelings, even if sometimes melancholic, which in turn (as with the resonances of some instruments) help to develop other emotions. In fact, we are convinced that listening to Bartok, for example, makes us understand Hungary more than a two-day visit to Budapest. Popular, folk music (from the German Volk, people) may also bring the people of this poor planet closer together.

In his beautiful book *Music Awakens Time* (Feltrinelli), Barenboim writes:

As I have already said, the use and abuse of Wagner's ideas and music were an integral part of the final years of the Third Reich...[adding however]...that music is neither moral nor immoral. It is our reaction (perception) that makes it become one or the other thing in our mind.

As regards the emotions aroused in us by the current conflict in the Middle East (which is more

violent and dangerous than ever before), it is interesting to remember the words Barenboim wrote a few years ago:

If the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue could be translated into a great musical work, it would acquire the 'status' and distance necessary for both parties to evaluate, understand and perceive it objectively.

We could add that music, which can neither be seen nor touched like a painting or a book, lives on vibrations (every sound is caused by a vibration of the air; think of the wind, which in turn produces the "sweet rustling" of the leaves...) and therefore has an invisible, poetic and neutral dimension. It is the magical vehicle that transmits emotions and prayers, love and understanding and is incapable of transmitting hate. Saying music is equivalent to saying peace. We all remember the great Russian cellist Mstislav Rostropovich in Berlin among the people who watched in silence, after the cries of joy at the fall of the Wall, and listened, absorbed and happy.

As Barenboim pointed out

You need to not only learn music, but 'from' music – a lifelong commitment.

Translation by [Paul Rosenberg](#)

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