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LIFE IN HUNGARY

Childhood and Early Life

Jarrell: Well to start at the beginning, when and where were you born?

Barati: I was born in Györ, a small town in Hungary exactly halfway between Vienna and Budapest, on the Danube, on April 3, 1913 . . . a long time ago. My father came from Porva, a tiny village in a hilly region of Hungary. My mother was born also in Györ.

My father was one of twelve children. He was a cattle dealer. He rented large farms from the local bishop but also owned small properties. My mother was one of seven children and came from a middle class family. We lived one street from the promenade in this small town, about the size of the central portion of Los Gatos. Some 20,000 people lived there and there were only a very few factories. The better families lived in the middle of the town, so our home, just a block from the promenade implied a certain style of living.

The two-story house was owned by Dr. Pfeiffer who lived upstairs. We lived on the main floor and I had my own small room. The large entrance to the house

was big enough to kick around a soccer ball, and the tiny garden, with a ficus tree, under which my grandfather sat, was behind the stall where our two horses and two coaches were stationed. The coachman, Uncle Mibaly, lived above the horses, in a small attic.

We lived comfortably. When I was 14 we moved to the end of town into an elegant house, with tile baths—two of them—and a white painted, wood-panelled day room which I loved and practically lived in. A beautiful smoking room, dining room, etc., made up the rest, with a pleasant garden in the court that separated our house from others. We were well-to-do during these few years but the tremendous recession that hit Hungary as the result of the breaking up of the country after the First World War, when Hungary lost its richest assets to the surrounding countries—Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia—resulted in the gradual loss of all we had. Even the assignment of my father with his brother to import thousands of cattle from the west to refresh the cattle herds of Hungary was only a temporary relief. While my childhood and early growing years were comfortable, now we experienced the low end of life. While there was no starvation, we had to give up our beautiful home for a small apartment. This was an example of the major ups and downs that occurred so many times in my life.

During that same period I was at first the best or one of the best students in my class. Now, with all these upheavals, I was failed in three subjects in school, one of which was German, even though I had a German governess and spoke a decent amount of German. When my father offered me a choice of becoming either an apprentice of a tailor, or a shoe maker, I begged him to allow me to return to school and promised to be a good student again. He borrowed enough money to pay the minimal expenses and from there on again I became the best of the class, graduating *cum laude*, another example of this strange up-down process.

My only brother, Imre—Emory in English—was six years older. In Central Europe in a middle class family every child studied a musical instrument, either piano, violin or cello. Other instruments were unacceptable, and the woodwind, brass or percussion instruments were used and taught mostly in the military bands, organized from the peasant enlistees. This went so far that, for instance, in our town symphony while the entire string orchestra was composed of city

men—no women—the complete wind group was "borrowed" from the very accomplished military band stationed in my home town.

Jarrell: And they started very young?

Barati: Very young indeed. At age six, brother Imre began his violin lessons with the director of the city music school, a private institution, which received major financial support from the city. I might add that every school had its school orchestra and chorus, but there was no individual instrumental education in the public schools. This director was a well trained violinist and conductor but was a terribly nervous man. When I followed in my brother's footsteps, six years later, I learned early that the violin and this violin teacher just were not for me. I hated the instrument to the extent that when I was assigned, in my third year of playing, to perform a beginner's piece, I refused to appear at the concert. I hid behind the big leather couch and with my current reading and a large piece of coffee cake stayed there until I heard my mother phoning the music school that I suddenly took ill and won't be able to perform. Then I left my hide-out to face the music!

But the same teacher also directed the town symphony and he may have been instrumental, unwittingly, to arouse me early to the idea of becoming a conductor. This occurred after a young cello teacher was engaged to the music school and all the bad students of other instruments were transferred to him. I think I must have been the first one, after five miserable years of violin studies. Early September, 1926, at age twelve and a half, I was given one of the cellos that were lined up in the music school in their stand-up cases that looked like so many coffins. I was the tallest; even in the kindergarten I carried the flag—and I got the largest cello.

From the first day it was a honeymoon! I loved the cello, right for the tall, lanky boy I was, and admired the teacher, a young, handsome blond man straight out of the Franz Liszt Conservatory. I became his star pupil. In March, 1927, the hundredth anniversary of the death of Beethoven was observed with a student concert. This was six months into my cello studies and I must add that customarily it takes 2 to 3 years for a beginner cello student to produce a reasonable tone and technique. I was given an extremely advanced, difficult piece, an arrangement of several country dances by Beethoven. I am still amazed

when I think of the piece, that I actually performed it, and with quite a reasonable sound.

When still a violin student, my teacher one day gave me the scores to put on the conductor's stand, prior to the concert which I attended. I never forgot the exciting feeling I experienced, standing at the conductor's podium, looking around at the very large space an orchestra occupies. My ticket was for the balcony, directly above the orchestra and the excitement increased by leaps and bounds as I first watched the large group getting ready for the concert, and then the first sounds of music. I think I was then captured to be a slave of music for the rest of my life!

At the end of my first year of cello playing I was allowed to play in the same orchestra, having the last stand, inside, the bottom of the ladder. My partner was an "old" man, who had been a member of the Vienna Philharmonic and returned, quite deaf, to be the town photographer. He played out of tune, not hearing himself, but the conductor, yes, the same violin teacher, kept shouting at me, "George, you are flat!" "George, you are sharp!" This was the opening passage of Schubert's *Unfinished* Symphony with all cello (and bass) playing pianissimo. Well, we almost finished it with all that shouting and my shaking!

Now I was a cellist. Four of us, young kids, played string quartet. We played the Grieg Quartet, Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* [Quartet], also the big G Major Quartet of Schubert and experienced a thrill beyond our age. I went twice a week to the symphony rehearsals and was allowed to stay out way beyond curfew or the accepted time for young kids to be on the streets. Life was exciting and beautiful, complete as it could be.

Well, almost. My school work suffered, not because of the cello, but because of the educational system that prevailed in Hungary. Teaching meant major assignments of home work, with many teachers demanding a word-by-word recitation of the text, be it math or geography, without any interest in making the students understand the material. We knew, for instance, all the rivers of Spain, or every stop of the Orient Express in a senseless mechanical way. Well, I didn't learn them, and, as already said, became a lost young man for about two years. Luckily, the discipline, inherent in learning a musical instrument, replaced in me what school never gave me, until years later.

Cello, soccer, ice skating, reading, and, mainly, swimming, were my activities, as well as chess and ping-pong. We trained as a swimming club in the deep industrial channel that was dug at the end of the first World War to accommodate shipping from the huge train and truck factory to the Danube. The war ended before it was finished and it was never connected to the Danube. But our swimming races were in town, in the river Raba, since we did not have a racing pool. Our beautiful town—which I discovered to be so only later on when Ruth and I planned to make our first trip to Europe after the war, with its five rivers and elegant very old buildings. (Napoleon slept in one of them.) The town originated in Roman times, its name was Arabona, but by my childhood the only remnant of that was the name of the funeral company: Arabona. The actual name of the town, Györ, came from the world *gyuru* that means ring or circle, indicating the fortifications that surrounded the town against the Turks and other invaders. I learned all that and more when I entered a national competition to write the history of one's home town and I won second prize. The bishopric was built around 1030, during or just after St. Stephen's rule as the first king of Hungary.

Jarrell: What composers, or writers, or poets influenced you in this earliest part of your life?

Barati: In the orchestra we played Weber, Rossini, Beethoven, Haydn, Scharwenka (Czech), Schubert. We loved playing the string quartets of Schubert, Grieg, as I already mentioned, but also tried early and middle Beethoven—with little success due to our lack of true technique, and Haydn, Mozart. During my third year of studying cello, my teacher and I were soloists in the *Holberg* Suite of Grieg. I can still feel the excitement; the members of the orchestra expressed amazement over my easy assurance during the difficult assignment.

I read voraciously and lived in and with books. My mother subscribed to a book club and I read all her books: Balzac, Maupassant, Dumas, Ingrid Undset, Isak Dineson, Mereschkovsky; I also read Galsworthy, Jules Verne, Wodehouse, Sir Walter Scott. The most excitement came from two special authors. There was a monthly issue of something called *Mister Hercules*, a young New York man, whose aunt established a challenge in her will. He had to solve major enigmas, or accomplish major feats, such as going down the Niagara with some homemade kayak. Upon achieving all, he would receive his large inheritance.

The other was the German author Karl May's series of American Indian stories from the Wild West. While May was never in America, he described elaborate geographic areas in great detail. His two main characters were Old Shatterhand and his blood brother, the Indian Winetou, not to forget Winetou's horse. Reading them in Hungarian, all these strange names became Hungarian sounding words: *mishter . . . Shutterhund*, not to forget Karlia Koplin (Charlie Chaplin) Booster Kayuton (Buster Keaton), my childhood loves, and adult joys.

Incidentally, I knew a good amount of German and we also studied French in school. At graduation time I was the valedictorian in both languages. Then there was theater. Our small town had a decent theater, on the small island the river Raba formed just before it emptied into the Danube. A good company played good plays by Hungarian and French authors. There was a large group of very talented Hungarian playwrights, a number of whom were later among the most successful Hollywood film writers. So, Saturday afternoon, my best friend and I were found at the standing room, rain or shine. Only the annual spring floods prevented us from that pleasure, when for some 4 to 5 weeks the two Raba rivers flooded the theatre.

I should mention that an uncle of mine, Oscar Beregi, was a famous actor in Germany before the Second World War. Ruth and I met him in a dramatic meeting in New York, where he settled with his daughter, who was married to the very well known Hungarian tenor of Salzburg and recording fame, Kalman Pataki. Strangely, the latter was unable to learn English enough to make contacts at the Met, in spite of his singing in three other languages! Beregi, a truly impressive Barrymore-like personality actually appeared later in some films, in minor characters, in Hollywood. Another family member, who lived in the middle of the 19th Century, was a painter of minor fame.

Finally, I will say a few words about the radio of my childhood. Around 1926 my brother built one of the first crystal radios in Györ, and I listened religiously—no pun intended—every Sunday to the matinee concerts of the Vienna Philharmonic. I learned to love the major works in their repertoire, Mahler, Bruckner, Beethoven—no small accomplishment for a 14-year-old. I also learned the names of the leading conductors, under many of whom I performed a very few years later. Bruno Walter, Weingartner, Furtwängler, Richard Strauss . . . to mention a few.

Yes, I composed by this time and, naturally, under the influence of the ones just mentioned. I wrote, and played, a small cello piece. I composed a cello concerto, copied out four parts, organized an "orchestra" of four among my classmates, and played-conducted the piece. I must have been the first conductor/performer, not a small feat for a cellist! I still remember the concerto opening passages: they were based on one of the Bruckner horn passages, fifths and octaves combined, also similar to one of the Mozart piano concerto ideas. Then I composed an overture, again copied out the score and parts, and with the enthusiastic permission of our school orchestra conductor, I rehearsed the piece, conducted it, at the age of about 16. I am not ashamed to admit that it was a variation of the main theme of *Oberon* Overture by Weber. I still love the piece, Weber, that is.

Jarrell: I was going to ask you what kind of cultural ambiance prevailed in your family. You said your father was rural and had six years of education and that your mother grew up in the city and had a different background.

Barati: The typical middle-class interests. My parents went to the theater and, very occasionally to movies or concerts. My mother read avidly; my father was interested in politics. His handwriting was extraordinarily beautiful, real calligraphy, in spite of his only six years of education. His addition and simple math were also remarkable. My mother entertained her friends for tea, and of course, the main treat was son Georgie. "Please play *Traumerei* of Schumann for Auntie Ethel and Rosie." Most unwillingly I took out my cello and began the piece. After about four bars the ladies started their chit-chat. I got angry and stopped. This happened every single time for about three years. Then I refused to play.

My father was very attentive to my playing and occasionally made a real attempt to make a suggestion or correction. His point, though expressed in a groping manner, usually hit the spot and I tried to carry it out. This went on later too, in Budapest, when I was much more accomplished.

He was the one who always bought my shoes. I was growing very fast and he always bought shoes two sizes larger than needed. I played violent soccer with those shoes and every time wore them out much before my feet grew into them.

My father maintained a major international cattle business. He travelled to Vienna, Milan, and Udine, a smaller Italian town, every month or two. He always brought me one or several Vita desserts, the famous Viennese chocolate cream specialty. Once he took me to Vienna with him, at the age of about five, just after World War I. It took our train some 12 hours from Györ to Vienna, total distance 67 miles. We were sidetracked, had to wait for fuel for the train, I guess, and the long border crossing, all that was a great tedium. Then my father found he was unable to return as planned, so he sent me back with a friend of his. On the train that man promptly disappeared and left me alone. Arriving at the border, the customs officials found no ticket or passport on me. Finally I took them through the train, until we found the gentleman, deeply in card playing about five coaches ahead of mine. I was desperately hungry, tired, scared, and very happy to get home.

I also remember when the Roumanian and Russian troops went through my home town. An announcement was made that nobody must be found on the streets and no window must be open. After they looted the entire town not even leaving the large screws built into the walls of the large coach-truck factory later we visited, they arrived on our street. We all collected upstairs and somebody opened a window to be able to see better. Promptly a shot came, just missing us. End of watching! Sometime later, after the short-lived communist government of Hungary, there was great excitement in town when the former communists were to be "punished." My father told us that we must stay at home. But my brother disappeared, just to come back mid-afternoon with some wooden hammers from a large piano's innards. He told us, and I later saw, that a well-known lawyer, a collaborator, owned a concert grand. The "people" threw it out from his second-story home and all picked some of the pieces. I accompanied him; I always cried when my father spanked or punished brother Imre. Sympathetic vibrations!

A joyous part of my early cello training were the after dinner "duets" with my brother who was an excellent violinist and violist, later also a jazz clarinet and saxophone player. We had a bunch of overtures and opera excerpts, reduced for a small group. Out of those we just used the first violin and cello parts, each full of cues for other instruments. We played all cues and just sight read these pieces,

many of which became later part of my conducting repertoire. My parents sat around listening, while reading newspapers, whatever.

These occasions, the Sunday concerts of the military band outdoors, sitting in the movie orchestra of six musicians and sight reading with them, where my brother for awhile was the leader on the violin, plus the string quartet, occasional sonata assignment from the music school and the symphony gave me a truly well-rounded musical background that served me remarkably well throughout my musical career.

Franz Liszt Conservatory

Barati: It was around 1930 that my teacher told me and my parents that he thought I had enough talent for the cello to seriously consider going to the conservatory in Budapest and to prepare for a musical career. He took me to his professor, Schiffer, who was the leading cello professor in the country, for him to give us a preliminary opinion. I played for him and his reply was that he would take me upon graduation from high school, a couple of years away.

In the meantime my brother, who was the head bookkeeper of a leather factory, was moved, with the factory, to Budapest. I visited him a couple of times and spent about a week, mostly sitting on a bench on the busy avenue a block from his apartment, reading Wodehouse, or other "light" books, while waiting for his return from work. My father by now lost his last penny and there was nothing to keep us in Györ, except one major problem. I was one of two, out of 80, graduating cum laude, and one of two, who received a job offer! The local bank offered me a job. Remember, this was the low point in the life of Hungary, and certainly, in our family existence. To this day I admire my mother and father, who without the slightest doubt said: "George, you choose what *you* want to do." And so, we moved to Budapest in summer of 1932. We went by train but our beautiful furniture, mostly made by Russian prisoners of war, was sent on a horse-drawn coach. It took about six weeks. During that time we lived in our new apartment Japanese style: slept on the floor.

Our home was about 10 minutes from the Conservatory. I walked over an average of twice a week to see if the announcement about the auditions was out yet. But I found the large bronze/wood door tightly shut. Finally, early September I saw that the cello auditions would be on September 19. I went and played the Saint-Saens Cello Concerto (the only one known at that time) to the committee of three. I learned soon that I was accepted by Professor Schiffer for the first "academy" class. How did I feel? Expectant but not worried and anxious.

Of course, I didn't know, didn't *begin* to understand the enormity of the situation. In small countries in Europe, such as Austria, Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Belgium, the one major city, usually the capital of the country, is the absolute center of all possibilities. University, art colleges, medical facilities, the outstanding professors, experts, specialists, all exist in that one city. Americans have no concept of this, except if they think in terms of film. For some fifty years there was only Hollywood, where young talent, actor, writer, director, could hope for the break. Even more exaggeratedly that was true in Hungary. So, for me, just to walk into the conservatory, the only fully accredited one in the entire country, was a miracle—of which I was not aware.

From the first day I was fully immersed in the activities. Cello, harmony, piano, chamber music (both string quartet and, separately ensemble with piano), orchestra were the major classes, mostly with famous professors; rehearsals, practice at home knowing that I'll have to play what I practiced in the various classes, all this was the basic work. But the incidental occurrences were probably even more significant. You could sneak into the concert hall and hear one of the two major orchestras—the Philharmonic and the Concert Orchestra—rehearsing or performing under famous conductors and with great soloists on a daily basis. You were among the cream of the crop of the whole country! For instance, Professor Schiffer had ten students. Divide that by four academy years of study, you get two or three students on each yearly level whom he has accepted. Only one other student joined his class when I was accepted. Half of the ten were girls, whom he preferred. He said: "girls work harder, they are prettier and then they get married and leave the field to the boys." If not completely true, the girls had no chance to join the orchestras but were most active in solo and chamber music. Hearing young talents, many of whom were to become world-wide stars, learning by comparison, hearing the newest compositions of the young, budding

composers, seeing, hearing, questioning the major leading figures of the whole country, all provided the young talent with an unbelievable amount of information, energy, new ideas—a steady glow in which he lives. That was the way I lived through my six years at the Franz Liszt Conservatory of Music, the beautiful, elegant building with its green marble and gold lobby, inspiring concert hall, and large studios.

Jarrell: Did you feel overwhelmed at first?

Barati: No. I didn't really know any better. I'll give you an example: Classes started at the end of September and there was an opening student recital in the middle of November. It was a special concert, this year, in 1932 it was an all-Liszt program. My teacher selected me to play a newly discovered Liszt piece for cello, organ, piano and harp. The concert took place in the large auditorium which was beautiful, very ornamented. There were two boxes, one the royal box, and a large platform without a stage house. Our performance was a great success with many good reviews from the newspapers. Well, it took me a year to realize that this was a rare opportunity; I was not to experience that for at least another two to three years. I was too naive to appreciate the importance of the moment! But I never really changed it; it turned out to be a great disadvantage, not to "play the game" but I never wanted to and frankly, I am happy never to have done it.

But the new experiences piled up very fast and life for those six years was wonderful, miraculous and highly successful. One day, as I walked by the closed doors of the auditorium, I heard some fabulous sounds. I looked through the glass window and saw a woman conducting the concert orchestra in a heroic, gorgeous slow movement. I did not ever hear it until that moment. It was the slow movement of the *Eroica* Symphony.

Before going on with Budapest, let me go back and fill in a couple of holes. One is that I bought a cello while still in my home town, for which I paid out of money I earned teaching cello. I had barely started to play myself and here I was, getting students. I saw the large pieces of wood at the maker's studio in Budapest, out of which he was to make my cello. He was just a fine craftsman we all dealt with. Since that time his reputation grew and today he, Janos Spiegel, is a well-known name in the books about musical instruments. I only sold that beloved cello recently.

The other point is to describe the road that led me to music, apart from the already described circumstances. I had another interest that was promising as an eventual "profession." Today we call it geopolitics. I was very good at it and my high school economics teacher thought I should study law and economics. Thank goodness I chose cello instead. But to this day, geopolitics is a major hobby of mine.

For awhile my swimming and excellent water polo playing was also a threat to cello. I was a district swimming champion and a highly promising polo player, enough for the great coach, who built the Hungarian water polo team into an Olympic champion several times, to come to our town to see me in action. This was 1931, one year before the Olympics, and I had a very good chance of being selected into the preliminary team. Well, I trained so hard that I caught a bad case of bronchitis and was forced to sit on dry land, next to the great coach, and watch my team badly flounder without me. But the two major swimming clubs of Budapest offered me scholarships if I joined them. I actually went to a couple of training sessions but discovered that it was a matter of choice: cello and serious polo playing did not go well together. Again, the wise choice of cello.

So, back to Budapest. My cello professor, Adolph Schiffer, was the student of the great cellist David Popper, who also had taught in the same studio, as the plaque on the wall indicated. At this time, Bartók, Kodály, Dohnányi, Leo Weiner, all taught at the Conservatory. It was a daily sight to greet them, to hear them perform or have their music be part of the day's experience. Apart from cello, I attended Weiner's piano chamber music classes. One class a week was required but I found that the more talented a student was, the more often he or she was there. This turned out to be almost a definitive measuring stick. Weiner was tough and uncompromising. Praise from him meant that you "arrived." You were good.

In Leo Weiner's chamber music class you learned *how* to listen. A cellist plays the low line in a string quartet but that line, those notes move in relation to the other voices. We learned early, at the insistence of Professor Weiner, that you are no good if you don't hear the totality of the music you are performing. If you think this is obvious, let me tell you that I have known hundreds of established musicians who only "count" but don't *hear*. A fatal shortcoming.

Another, equally crucial thing I learned was *agogics.* This Greek word refers to a certain internal freedom of rhythm when an accompanying line must move *with* the main voice, allowing it tiny moments of departure from the exact written rhythm. This requires two things: a basic musicality and a developed sense of "hearing" other voices.

One day, in Weiner's class we were playing the Piano Quartet of Dohnányi. In the slow movement the cello plays an extended passage of pizzicato accompaniment (similar to the slow movement of the Tchaikovsky String Quartet in D-Flat). Weiner stopped us and asked for my name. He asked us to repeat the passage. Stopped us again. "What was your name?" Then he burst out, not with his customary criticism of some detail, but with an overwhelming enthusiasm for my playing that passage. We had to repeat it probably five times. After that, each week, as we played the same work—that was the way it was done in class—the exact scene took place. Eventually, after a couple of more weeks, Weiner learned my name—and never forgot it. I was *in*! I was a Weiner "hero!" Boy, it felt good. I might add that these days this special way of playing, *agogics*, is an almost lost art. When I listen to young pianists who win major competitions and become famous, I always think of what Weiner would do to them, with their mechanical, senselessly fast, often inarticulate playing.

I took string quartet with Waldbauer, the exact opposite of Weiner. Weiner based his teaching strictly on stylistic musical principles; Waldbauer's was based on technique. "How" to achieve, in contrast with "what" to achieve. The two complemented each other to perfection. I might add that the hundreds of famous or well-known performers from Hungary who established themselves throughout the world as leading pianists, cellists, chamber music players, concertmasters of major orchestras, all came through this identical system: the Weiner-Waldbauer double oven! Schiffer represented a combination of these two, and among the leading students, Starker, Gabor Rejto and Laszlo Varga are well-known to U.S. audiences, especially in the West.

I also attended Kodály's composition classes as a performer of works by the student composers. Kodály was Bartók's initial partner in their research on folk music. He was the exact opposite of Bartók. While Bartók was very unassuming, very private, timid and shy, Kodály was the bombastic Hungarian with the beard and the pompousness and the pretensions. Kodály taught composition

while Bartók didn't. I used to go to his class as a performer so I absorbed some of his classes that way. Bartók only taught piano, not composition, but I heard him perform a number of times, and later played in the orchestra when he was soloist, several times.

A crucial point must be made regarding what "student" at the conservatory meant. We were considered young, budding artists and were trained to be excellent. The word excellent was never mentioned, it was understood. You worked to be better than you could be. The American expression "I am doing the best I can" was unknown and would have been considered a non-starter. You always did better than you could! When Professor Schiffer assigned the Saint-Saens Concerto for me to perform in a student recital, after that hiatus of two years I have spoken of already, and when a year later I was contracted to perform the Dohnányi Concerto with the Hungarian Symphony, I was up against standards that were established and maintained by the travelling, famous performers, or the cream of the students. Critics of all the newspapers heard these concerts, and the music lovers—the hundreds of musical experts who formed the major part of concert audiences in the major cities in Europe—attended these concerts.

So, when I played with great success, it was really far better than my best. This was the norm on which the major artistic centers functioned. Talent accepts challenge gladly and produces unexpected results. The same challenge, or pressure, produces new records at the Olympics, new scientific developments in war (not that it makes war more desirable) and new ideas during social upheavals.

I cannot tell you what an overwhelming experience and an exciting period of discovery those six years represent in my life. I heard the Waldbauer Quartet—my own teachers—perform all the Bartók string quartets, which they had performed upon completion. I attended a fantastic recital of Bartók and Feuermann, the great cellist, an all-Beethoven recital which was just glorious. I was present when the audience discovered a new, promising talent. Contrary to the current custom, in Europe, the audiences were so well informed that they made the distinction between greatness and routine. All the major stars were truly created by the audiences. Today's system of the public relations department of film studios and concert agencies is an abomination. They

replaced art and artist with sales and sold-out houses. Success is measured today only by the size of the budget and attendance.

So, the overwhelming result of that input was that you came out either a master or no good, you dropped out, you couldn't take it, the pressure was so enormous. For instance Weiner, we went as I mentioned twice a week from five to seven. He was in every day. But you were required to go only once a week. But he expected you to be there twice a week. (laugh) And after a while you realized that the same people were there every day. And these were the kings and queens. They were the ones who wanted to learn, who wanted to find out how and what happens. And Weiner gave it always to us.

With Waldbauer we had a class once a week, I think, I forget now, but when he prepared us for a performance we saw him sometimes every day. For instance our quartet played a string quartet by Leo Weiner, that he composed for us. That was his third quartet that he composed for our group which we performed . . . I will tell you in a few moments. At that time Waldbauer worked with us for performance a couple of times a week, but Leo Weiner, the composer worked with us at least twice a week in his home. We started out at eight or nine p.m. and went to two a.m. sometimes working on the piece. There was no heat; the heat stopped by midnight. Our hands were frozen. He would stop us and experiment with the first violinist for several minutes. Once, late at night, in the middle of one of those deadly serious moments I burst out laughing. Professor Weiner was not a laughing man and turned to me angrily. I said, "Professor, do you know how many times you have asked Misi (our first violinist) to play this phrase?" He looked intrigued and asked "How many times?" I calmly said, "Seventy-six times!" Weiner heartily laughed and repeated the number three or four times.

When I was a student at the conservatory, the president of the school first was the famous Hungarian violinist, Jenö Hubay. As a teacher he produced a generation of outstanding violinists. He also thought of himself as a composer—though few others did. His major composition was the *Kossuth* Symphony named after the hero of the 1848 revolutionary war. As president he was able to schedule the work each year with the large symphony of the conservatory which he then conducted. Hubay had a beautifully mellow baritone speaking

voice; he had white hair, a Van Dyke beard and mustache—a most impressive man.

At one rehearsal we played some twenty minutes when Hubay stopped and with his quiet voice said to the harpist, "Harpist, why didn't you come in?" She answered, "Your Excellency, I had 89 measures rest, I thought you'd call me in." Hubay said, "All right, I will. Let's start again from the beginning." So we suffered through another twenty minutes, deeply hating his not very exciting music when we got to the same spot. Again Hubay stopped and with a slightly more raised voice said, "*Now* why didn't you come in?" She answered, "Oh, Maestro, I thought you said you'll call me in." Then came the classic reply, "Well, don't you see I am busy CONDUCTING?"

This was a great lesson for me in conducting and I always call in those instruments that have long rests. (Laughter)

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: I practiced in the morning at home for an hour, an hour and a half at most. I never practiced enough. I never practiced more than that. I got bored, I guess. But I played all day. I went to the conservatory and I would have a theory class with a famous man who wrote many books, Antal Molnár. Or a theory or harmony class, later a counterpoint class. A piano class with a Czech teacher who told us later on, "You guys think Bartók is so great. Well wait a few years. The really important name will be a man of whom you've never heard." His name was Janácek. It was quite true, he actually became a very important opera composer, for instance, in our time. But then he was completely unknown. And of course in Hungary a Czech couldn't be important anyway! They were enemies.

So our classes . . . we probably had two classes a day, maybe three. But in between we had rehearsals. We had orchestra rehearsal, we had string quartet rehearsal, we had chamber music rehearsal. So we played music, instruments, practically all day long. You might go out to somebody's private home a few blocks away or stay at the conservatory in a room if you could get one, or have orchestra rehearsal. The teacher was Erno Unger, an excellent opera conductor and one who knew all about the technique of conducting. A number of today's

famous conductors were in the beginners classes and had done terribly. Unger was tough on them and always showed up their errors and their lack of talent, or so he said. Since I never studied officially this was an unofficial but important part of my education. So was my attendance in Kodály's composition classes where I performed regularly the compositions of the young student composers. In both classes I was in a perfect position to observe and learn.

Jarrell: It was seeping into you though.

Barati: Absolutely directly. Right down the mouth. At the same time I was earning a living. Remember that we moved to Budapest in July, school started in September, and my first big concert was November, the Liszt piece I mentioned. As a result, in a couple of months the better chamber music players asked me to join their groups in class. I got a job playing in a salon quintet in a cafe house an American violinist bought. Twice a week for a couple of hours we sight read "salon music": overtures, medleys of ballet, operetta, and opera, even jazz and popular music. Then came a similar engagement twice a month on the radio, which, contrary to the American system, is an independent monopoly in Europe and in Japan, with its own programming and its own orchestras. Occasionally I played a solo piece and my name would appear in the official, printed programs and newspapers.

All this added up to an enormous experience. I began to know the repertoire and developed my sight reading to a very high degree of reliability. Even now I remember how fast my heart was beating when we finished such pieces as two overtures by Suppé: *The Poet and the Peasant* and *Morning, Noon and Night*, each having a major cello solo.

Budapest Concert Orchestra

Barati: In Budapest, the number one orchestra was the Philharmonic, which was formed from members of the entire opera orchestra. Its music director was Erno Dohnányi, a great pianist, fairly interesting composer and a mediocre conductor. The second orchestra was called the Concert Orchestra and it had many of the great conductors as its guest conductors. This orchestra had an opening in the

cello section early 1933—still in my first year at the conservatory. When nobody was accepted, my teacher suggested that I try out. I did and got the job! This meant going with the orchestra to Vienna with Klemperer conducting Bartók's Second Piano Concerto. So my first concert with this orchestra happened in Budapest a few days before the Vienna concert. The program started with the Bach C Major Toccata and Fugue arranged by Leo Weiner for Klemperer and the Bartók Second Piano Concerto with Louis Kentner who is a very famous Hungarian pianist now living in England. The third piece was the Kodály *Háry János* Suite. Bartók was not liked by the government in Hungary at that time because he was a quasi-revolutionary, a progressive free thinker; he was not a communist, but he was accused of being a communist. He would not play with the orchestra. So Kentner, who was a friend his, played in Budapest and Bartók played in Vienna.

I remember distinctly . . . by that time I was quite deeply steeped in new music, our quartet tried to play some unknown Hungarian composers, one who had lived in Paris and came back and he paid us to play his piece, he was a remarkable man. I heard the Bartók quartets . . . hadn't played any yet, in performances of the Waldbauer Quartet, and they seeped into me but I didn't understand what was going on. This new music was something very challenging and demanding and exciting and a robust feeling of something new but I couldn't quite grasp it. I wasn't qualified. It was too advanced at the time. This was 1933. So when we played the Second Piano Concerto, I distinctly remember how excited I was, but I never quite understood what was going on. I didn't know why phrases would turn this way, or why there was terrible dissonance there, why this noise came in the percussion. But still it was such an exciting thing that I went with it. When I hear it now I wonder what was the problem? It's so simple. (Laughter) You know.

Bartók was a very withdrawn, pure, naive, small-sized man, very timid and shy. We arrived in Vienna for a seating rehearsal, we called it a *sitzprobe* in German, a seating rehearsal to check how convenient the stage is, how it feels. The great concert hall in Vienna was unheated. Klemperer started conducting the Bartók concerto. There was Bartók at the piano. Klemperer as you know, was about six feet five, or six, enormous. Taller than I am by a half foot. And Bartók was tiny. There was Bartók sitting and Klemperer standing, enormous.

We started out the Bartók concerto which has very early in the piece a novel use of the then new machine timpani, the tunable, pedal timpani. Until then timpani had to be tuned by hand, and each note was fixed. This was a major innovation and a novel use by Bartók. A crescendo glissando could be played. So very early in the first movement was a glissando by timpani. There were no timpani. So Klemperer stopped and a great shouting scandal developed. "*Where* are the timpani?" And nobody knew. "Who is responsible?" Nobody said anything. Finally, our orchestra director said, "I am the orchestra director. You know very well," nastily. He said, "Where are the timpani? How do I know, I just came from Budapest." And Klemperer said, "No timpani. No concert. Goodbye." And he left. And little Bartók just sat at the piano with his gloves on. There was no heat but he just sat for about twenty minutes. All of us got up and moved around or practiced or did something until the timpani arrived which had been used the previous night in a concert. Then a delegation had to go to Klemperer at his hotel to beg him to come back. And he came back. Then we rehearsed, and we went on with the concert. The concert was a great flop. The Bartók concerto had almost no applause. And the Kodály *Háry János* Suite was also a fairly new work, unknown in Vienna. It has a loud dance-like middle movement after which there are two more movements. But not for the Viennese! They simply got up at the end of the loud movement and left in droves. We finished the piece, and the concert, with very few people left in the audience. The Viennese never understood modern music. To this day they don't like it; they simply didn't want to bother with it. That was the concert.

So going back to my situation. From then on I was a member of the orchestra. I went on tour with them to Italy which was the first time that I'd seen the ocean and gone swimming in it. In April it was very cold, but having been a champion swimmer, it was easy for me. I saw much of Italy, including Rome. We had about a couple of hours between rehearsals and concerts. Four of us literally ran through the Vatican, barely had time to see the painter's names, peek into the Sistine Chapel and get a feeling of its monumental importance as a spiritual and artistic center. Then we ran back to the concert hall, a tremendous round building, since destroyed. As I was facing directly toward the audience, I looked directly into the royal box. In front sat Victor Emanuel, and the Queen, and behind them but clearly visible, sat Mussolini. As the concert finished, the royal family stayed and applauded but Mussolini promptly sneaked out.

After this tour I was called into the orchestra increasingly and played many rehearsals and concerts under many of the leading, famous maestri and accompanied many world-famous soloists. Let me mention a few.

Jarrell: I would like that very much. I was going to ask you.

Comparing European and American Classical Musical Culture

Barati: There were Italians: Molinari, who was considered a greater conductor than Toscanini, for instance. His precision and demand for tone quality were so exacting that our excellent string section loved him. We had the best in the world. The winds were less good. And there was de Sabata, another Italian. And many Germans who were the leading names—Bruno Walter, Klemperer, Erich Kleiber, the father of the now well-known [Carlos] Kleiber, Weingartner, and his wife Carmen Studer, who was not very good but was the first female conductor we ever saw. Her father was the famous violin teacher, Studer, in Zurich. And the Russians: Nicolai Malko and the Belgian Désiré Defauw, who became the Chicago Symphony's conductor for a few years. Ruth and I had lunch with him in Chicago. And soloists. And here's where the interesting thing begins, the distinction between American cultural life and European cultural life I would like to say a few things about. The major performers, soloists, instrumentalists, who were great in Europe almost never succeeded in America for they were emotional, expressive types, unreliable in performance, with good days and bad days.

Jarrell: They weren't automatons.

Barati: They were not the machines that the Columbia community concerts could engage to play seven concerts in ten days in seven towns, 2000 miles apart, playing the same program that was printed in New York City. This went on for about twenty years in my time until a revolt began to take shape in this country, and cities began not to accept these routine programs, and demanded special things like new music or different music. For instance, the greatest violinist was Bronislaw Huberman, who founded the Tel Aviv Philharmonic with Toscanini eventually. And the greatest cellist was Casals, who was never successful in

America until the very last years when the White House gave him honors and he conducted the Marlboro Festival. Another great cellist was Feuermann.

Jarrell: Oh yes.

Barati: He would have been famous, but he died very young in Philadelphia, bad operation, medical mistake. I knew him in Princeton. He wanted to engage me as his assistant six months before he died. He was thirty-six years old. These were the biggest names. Also Kubelik, the father of Rafael. And Francescatti, a great French violinist who actually was discovered in Budapest. I happened to have been playing a student recital at the conservatory the same evening he played a recital in the big hall. So when I finished I went over and heard this fantastic violinist, with only sixty, eighty people in the audience, totally unknown, a new violinist. His success was so great he was re-engaged, came back about two or three months later to sold-out houses.

This was the route to discovery. The well-informed audiences sensed and measured the talent of the performers and they reacted through their developed musical taste. In contrast to that, even these days in this country the "hype" is the thing. Managers sell the artist, they arrange TV appearances, newspaper articles, invent half truths that build the personality of the artist. Those terrible rock singers, without a speck of talent! When the bust-cult of Madonna replaces genuine artistic judgement, theater and music go down the drain. The great names of times past, Chaliapin, Schumann-Heinck, Paderewski, all got famous in Europe before they were brought to this country by commercial managers.

Somehow this connects to the norm that existed at the major conservatories, such as the Franz Liszt in Budapest, that each student was taught, guided to think of himself or herself as a budding great artist. Nobody was trained to be "second violin" as the saying went. So there was no such thing as "I am doing my best." Our model was that there was always something to improve or replace: intonation, fingering, a phrase, or tempo. Anything else would be anathema in Budapest.

Jarrell: But at the same time that this standard of excellence was always being emphasized, are you saying also that each student was instilled with this idea that he or she was capable of being a great artist . . .

Barati: Absolutely.

Jarrell: . . . an individualist, but what about playing second chair? The idea that you are not going to all be virtuosi?

Barati: Well it *was* marvelous. For the moment I was the tenth (and last) cellist in the Concert Orchestra but I was learning each week rehearsing and performing under the great conductors of the world. Professor Schiffer transferred me from Academy class one into two, as he found me more advanced than expected and a quick student. I gained a crucial year. Several talented students searched me out and asked me to play with them. The professors noticed me and assigned me to good partners in chamber music, Waldbauer even engaged me to assist as cellist at another school of music. This was a paid job, small hourly wages, but a certain prestige went with it.

Touring America with the Hungarian Gypsy Orchestra

Barati: In 1935 I received my graduate diploma and in the fall started working toward my state teacher's diploma, a two-year course. Soon a major interruption took place, when the beautiful, but aging Hungarian violinist, Edith Lorand, returned to Budapest from Germany where she had lived as the infamous mistress of the German Crown Prince, to form an all-Gypsy orchestra for a tour to the United States. She auditioned all the available leading cellists to no avail. Again, as two years earlier, my teacher, Professor Schiffer, suggested that I try out. Once again, I got the job. It was to be a two-month stint. I was to be paid $36—that was a very large sum in Hungary. I had to pay room and board out of that.

We had several weeks of rehearsals at Miss Lorand's villa in the mountains of Buda. Sixteen young men—none Gypsy—and a dark beauty of a violinist; the combination could only be a winner, except that soon I realized that she had no idea how to rehearse. I began to say, "Madam Artist, we have to rehearse this passage. We are not together." Or, "The trombone is much too loud; in a small orchestra it should sound like a second bassoon, that's the part he is really playing, you know." Gradually I became sort of an assistant conductor.

After weeks of hard work, we left for Paris and Le Havre where we boarded the *Ile De France*; a true luxury trip except for the heavy ocean. We played a concert aboard ship. We arrived in New York on a Wednesday and Thursday night was our debut concert on the famous Kraft Cheese Hour. In Studio H of NBC, on one end sat the Paul Whiteman Band, on the other our all "Gypsy" orchestra and we alternated. Of course, Whiteman had Gershwin as his pianist and Ferde Grofe as his arranger. This was a distinguished group and an honor for us to be associated with them. Then came our Carnegie Hall concert with many famous musical personalities in the audience. Joseph Szigeti, the great Hungarian violinist was one. I had several major solos and cadenzas in the program and I played well. Of course, once again, I had no idea of the importance of Carnegie Hall in the musical life of this country. Had I known, probably I'd have been very nervous.

We had a bus with a native-born Hungarian, and we had a manager who spoke English. Lorand was paid by NBC Management for each concert but she paid *us* by the *week*. The original itinerary started as follows: Monday, New York; Wednesday, Washington; Friday, Wheeling, West Virginia. So she rearranged the tour by throwing in between whatever town she could. Tuesday became Chicago, between New York and Washington. Thursday some other distant city. The result was that, as our bus always left at midnight after supper, it arrived at 5 or 6 o'clock, or even later, just in time to dress for the next concert. This resulted in several major developments: 1) total fatigue; 2) saving much money on not having to sleep in hotels; 3) since we ate hurriedly, the manager had to order food for us and we never learned a single word of English; and 4) Edith Lorand made a small fortune on her mishandling the contract. But then, at the end of the tour, in the Midwest somewhere after a concert, she announced that she extended our contract since we were successfully reengaged. Not so said our bassoon player, who was a law student. The extension of the contract had to be done by *noon* that day, not midnight, according to our written contract. This turned into a battle with the Hungarian consulates in Chicago and New York. They threatened us with arrest if we didn't give in. We held our ground, shaky as it was due to fatigue and frustration, and on Christmas Sunday, the day I had planned to hear the New York Philharmonic with Toscanini and Feuerman, at 4 p.m. we sailed back home on the *Ile De France*! What a sweet victory! All the way, until the Hungarian border and the behavior of the border customs

officials. The bassoonist gingerly carried a brand new glass coffee maker. It was a Silex and it was the gift of the century to his fiancée. The customs official took one look at it and threw it on the ground; it broke into fragments. This was our homecoming but a similar thing happened to me upon disembarking from the ship at Le Havre. The French customs official, seeing my Hungarian passport, threw my beautiful, custom-made evening shirts into the mud. France was against Hungary in both world wars and this was just a casual expression of his feelings.

To sum up my first American experience: I knew well and loved New York. I roamed the streets, walking twenty, thirty blocks for pleasure. But I hated America. I wrote a couple of short articles for my home town paper in which I declared that I'd never live in a country that used Greek temples as banks, covered its nature with huge posters on the highways, to mention just two facts. Little did I know . . .

A Blossoming Career in Budapest

Barati: We got back to Hungary in December 1935. My musical activities picked up immediately and without my being aware of it, my career blossomed out. I stepped right back into the Concert Orchestra, my playing was fast developing. I was engaged to be acting first cellist of the symphony in Szeged, the second largest city in Hungary. There a highly promising young conductor was the musical director. Ferenc Fricsay was the son of Hungary's "Sousa." Once a month I travelled to his town and was their house guest. Two rehearsals and a concert allowed me to get used to playing first chair. Soon Fricsay asked me to play a concert with him. The Boccherini B-Flat Cello Concerto was selected. The night before my concert Francescatti played a recital and we all attended. Afterwards, he and Fricsay and I went out for a bite to eat. They began to discuss musical matters and these two guys kept discussing all the major disasters of their lives. And after about an hour and a half of more and more worry . . . I was a young boy, I was twenty years old or so, I said, "Please stop talking about bad things. I have to play the Boccherini tomorrow evening." And Francescatti came to the dress rehearsal in the morning. He left for Budapest . . . he had a recital that

night, and said, "You are okay. Don't worry. You play beautifully. You are a very talented boy." But at the concert, when I finished the concerto, coming off the stage, Fricsay said, "George, do you know you skipped four bars?" And I said, "I didn't know." But I'm sure to this day that I skipped that because these two talked me into the possibility of major mistakes in a concert. Fricsay later became famous. He founded an orchestra in Berlin. Unfortunately, he died young.

Finally, about Bartók, I wanted to mention his incredible piano technique. He played with our orchestra once a year, the same piece, about three times or four times in my period there. Beethoven's First Piano Concerto once each year, but I also heard him in the other concerts as I mentioned already. And he had this fantastic technique of . . . weight technique. He was a very small man. He jumped up and zoomed down at the piano with a forte chord. Accent was very important in Bartók's performance and his music as well. And to achieve that accent he had to use his whole body. It was an amazing sight, this jump each minute twice. But it was very important to see and to understand how Bartók played piano. He had a beautiful technique, beautiful. Not so much beautiful sound, the best sound in the world on piano was Dohnányi's piano playing, like Backhaus, or Gieseking. Bartók's was a very powerful sound but the expression was enormous.

At the same time four of us young students formed our own string quartet and named it Pro Ideale String Quartet. This quartet became immediately successful. Leo Weiner, who worked regularly with us, wrote his third quartet for us; and when soon we were invited to play a concert in Vienna, we scheduled it there too. The well-known European correspondent of the *New York Times*, Herbert Peyser, wrote in the *Times* that we were the up and coming leadng quartet of Europe!

Jarrell: What kind of a repertoire did you have?

Barati: We played Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Haydn, Leo Weiner and Kodály. . . that's about it. Debussy quartet, Ravel quartet later on. That was roughly the repertoire. We played string quartets with Erica Morini who was already very famous. She used to come to Hungary to work with Leo Weiner, and so our Pro Ideale Quartet played with her all summer long. At one point she also brought her accompanist Adolph Baller, who is now of course very famous in our area.

He is still teaching. I saw him last week. He still teaches privately, and through Stanford. He lives in Palo Alto.

But we were students still, working, studying, learning. And then I must go back because in my first year at the conservatory one more major event occurred, that was that in my home town they had a new concert series and invited me to go back and play a half recital with one of those famous young Hungarian pianists, Ungar, who was blind and played just beautifully. I was overwhelmed. And I was a great success as a young kid coming back from Budapest.

He played the *Appassionata* Sonata . . . I remember how impressed I was. I played the Saint-Saens Concerto and small pieces. This was six months after my having left my home town and then they engaged the Roth Quartet which was then one of the leading string quartets of Europe, four Hungarians, to play in Györ. They engaged me to play the Schubert Two Cello Quintet with them. We rehearsed in Budapest. They said come to our hotel and we'll see what we do. And three of them were there and I sat down to play string quartets with them. The second piece I'd never heard of, it was the Verdi String Quartet, which nobody ever performed. So I had to sight read with them. We finished the piece and Feri Roth, the leader said, "OK. You're great. You're talented. We engage you. You can play with us in Györ." We rehearsed the Schubert Quintet, which was a major problem for a young cellist, a very difficult second part, much more difficult than the first part. The slow movement, all those rhythms. And we played in Györ, with great success. Imagine! It was the first time for me to play with a major quartet, sitting down as a kid. I was nineteen at that time. And Feri Roth said to me, "You are a very talented young man. I'm going to take you to America." He was famous for being a unreliable Hungarian. He borrowed money and didn't pay it back. Small amounts. Borrowed music and never gave it back. Things like that. So I said, "Great, thank you very much. Lovely." And promptly forgot about it.

Our quartet was also engaged as section leaders in the newly formed Hungarian Symphony in Budapest. While the orchestra was only about the third orchestra in Budapest, this was a major promotion for me, and soon we also became the official orchestra of the Municipal Opera House, the second opera in Budapest. As first cellist I played many important orchestral solos which led to other engagements and to an increasing prestige.

There was one crucial moment at the opera when *Tosca* was scheduled for several performances. Customarily, the big cello solo in the last act was played by the excellent Kerperly, the cellist of the Waldbauer Quartet and a professor at the conservatory. He was not available and I was given an audition. There was this great moment in the huge, empty Municipal Opera, seating over three thousand, just before the "letter aria" there is this total silence, more intense than the loudest fortissimo. Then the solo cello plays an extended singing passage, very high and totally exposed. The committee of a dozen important musicians listened and I got the job. The solo passage paid a bonus; it was larger than my pay for the whole evening. After this, I was regularly engaged to play other orchestral solos when our orchestra played on the radio.

There were other conductors and soloists. I didn't mention Charles Munch, who was a young man, later the Boston Symphony conductor. He was discovered at once and he was reengaged. Casadesus . . . and Freccia who was Italian and conducted us on a tour to Italy, and Monteux came, and we laughed him off the stage, he did such a bad Mozart. He did MO-zart. And I told him after I became a member of the orchestra in San Francisco under him, years later, I told him one day that I remember when he did MO-zart and now he does Mozart and . . . meaning the French way, not in the proper German style which of course later he'd learned so beautifully.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: And Piatagorsky, Rubinstein, and our young conductor, my friend who became world famous and died young, Fricsay. With my own orchestra I played the Dohnányi Concerto for which I had to get permission from Dohnányi so he had to hear me first, to allow me, because he was a great master, a majesty you know. The majestic Dohnányi. And he said, "You can play the concerto." And it was recorded and transmitted to America on shortwave.

Jarrell: One thing I want to ask you also, you talked about the radio and the symphony broadcasts. How much influence did that have on you and other young musicians? Did you listen to recordings of other artists from Europe or from America?

Barati: We heard recordings . . . from America, yes, Richard Crooks was one of the opera singers we loved. And there was a famous thing that became a great hit in Europe, a laughing recording. A guy begins to sing and then breaks down laughing and laughing and then laughs more and more and more. We all laughed. Recordings were not important to us. First of all, recordings were very poor at that time, in the twenties, thirties. But all the great recording artists came to play for us every week. I mean Cortot, Thibaud, Heifetz, Szigeti, Schnabel, Backhaus, Gieseking, Kreisler, Horowitz—they came regularly to Budapest. We accompanied most of them. So they were right there. We also had free tickets, conservatory students. All the concerts were in the conservatory hall. There was a small balcony over the organ with thirty seats. Very narrow, very tight. If you applied in time and you got it and we were sitting directly above the podium twenty feet from these great artists. So we didn't have to have recordings. They were beginning to be important. And only the great ones made recordings.

Jarrell: Many of the people you've mentioned made recordings.

Barati: Well, but you see they were the cream. The first recordings were made in the early twentieth century, but the good ones weren't made until much later. But before I forget, may I go on because there are two other points. I also performed under Richard Strauss, who was then of course, a great name as a composer, and conductor. And under Mascagni we performed his opera *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Szeged, the second Hungarian town, outdoors under his direction, the full opera. And I was first cellist. So these were direct impressions again under all these great conductors I performed, and great composers, you know. Mascagni wasn't great but he was marvelous. This was a very vital influence. Recordings . . . you can learn, you can copy. But when you observe, when you see what happens, how it's put together . . .

Jarrell: When you experience . . .

Barati: When you experience, do it yourself, right there when a Toscanini tells you, "Neglect this line. Favor that line." You know, if he tells you why and how and if you hear the difference as it comes out. On the recording you hear one version and that's it. And you can copy it as today all the competition winners are the ones who copied Horowitz's performance. (Laughter)

Jarrell: Well you see this is something that's sort of underlying my question, that at that time what you are saying is that you had direct experience with all of the luminaries. Today in this country and in Europe young musicians are seemingly obsessed with recordings.

Barati: Well because they can copy. They can sit down and play with it. If they stick with it then they are good.

Jarrell: But this has nothing to do with music-making, in my opinion. What do you think?

Barati: Of course not.

Jarrell: But this is a phenomenon that is extant now. And you're saying this had no importance at all, that it's just totally peripheral.

Barati: Well put it this way, there were certain musical centers in Europe. There were London and Paris and certainly Vienna and Berlin and Prague and Budapest and Milan and Rome . . . that's about it. Zurich, maybe.

And these were the centers. So the great artists performed in these places. And we were . . . those of us who were in an orchestra or part of performance units, string quartets . . . we were doing it with them. The big concert orchestra consisting of 110 players, maybe 60 were students. The cream of the conservatory made a living secretly, because we were not allowed to do it really.

Jarrell: Oh really.

Barati: Officially no. But it was overlooked. Turn away. But we were part of it. I mean when the new performers came, we were there doing it. We were the performers with this great master, soloists or conductor or composer and this was the way the standards of performance style were set. We formulated it while we were doing it. That's the way to cook, you know. That's the way to become a real chef. By doing it! Today it is different. The level of performance has increased tremendously. Technically, today's musicians are way above the average of fifty years ago. But musically? . . . That is the rub. We have standardized style, ensemble, the entire concert business. Yes, it has become business. We gained technique and lost some parts of music making. This is a

difficult subject to discuss as there are many outstanding results and many below average. Take again the case of listening to and copying recordings. A truly great recording artist will be first to tell you, "Tomorrow I'll do it differently." But by that time whole classes of budding musicians listened to those records as if they were the last word on the subject.

Then there are the second-rate musicians who retired from a large orchestra and become the leading light at a university (not to mention those who never had the experience of performance under top conditions.) They pass on to their students only their limited understanding of their art, or instrument.

Another crucial issue is the commerical concert life in this country. It requires the touring artist to play well day after day. Even the programs used to be printed in New York; and Columbia Concerts allowed only the one identical program to be performed on a given tour, just to save on the expenses of printing. What happens to the artist, doing the same routine for 60 times in three months? He or she becomes like a fully squeezed lemon! That is one reason why some of the greatest artists have never been successful in this country.

I was in the orchestra when Hubermann, one of the great violinists of the first half of the century, performed the Tchaikovsky Concerto on a Tuesday and Thursday in the same hall and same orchestra. On Tuesday he performed magnificently. On Thursday he played like a beginner! He forgot, he played wrong notes, he sounded out of tune and scratchy. Or take Casals. He was not successful in this country until late in his life, especially after his recital in the White House. So, the question is: Who is a great artist? The one who plays decently and very dependably but never, or almost never with that fire and insight and excitement, or the one who does? And recordings have no emotion anyway. Recordings are on the level. They are straightened out. The lows and the highs get to the middle.

An important music lover, who was a wealthy bank director, decided to form a sponsoring group that would subscribe to six concerts each year by our quartet. Soon we began the series in his elegant, spacious villa, situated above the Royal Palace in Buda. His villa contained a two-story concert hall, with a balcony; it seated 60 to 80 people comfortably. Furthermore, he gave before each concert a

dinner party with sumptuous food. Our quartet had to take a short siesta before we were able to start the concert.

Feri Roth was invited, and other artists would be there, as well as the cream of Budapest society, a countess who played a very good piano, and the couple who owned the Tungstram company which is now advertised on American TV. After we played Feri Roth came to me, "You might remember. I told you two years ago I would take you to America with me. I tell you now I'll take the whole quartet. Because you are great."

THE PRINCETON YEARS

Settling in America: Princeton, New Jersey

Barati: A year later in April 1938, a letter arrived, which I still remember because the address still doesn't make much sense to me—"to whom it may concern." In Hungarian terms it makes no sense. It was written to each of us that we were hereby invited to Westminster College in Princeton for one year as assistants to Feri Roth who had just been engaged to form a string department. April 1938. Everybody knew in Central Europe that the war was inevitable. Americans hadn't heard of it yet. Hitler. But we all knew what was coming. I was by that time in the Hungarian army getting each year a postponement of duty to finish my conservatory years. I already had my teacher's diploma and I was working toward my State Artist's Diploma, the highest accreditation you could get in Hungary at that time. So this would be my last year and I would have to report for duty on September 1, 1938. There was a big red stamp—no more delays. And this thing came in April.

Four of us were successful but we had no money. We had to buy tickets. Two were well-to-do in the string quartet; two of us were quite poor. I earned good money but it was virtually nothing. I lived at home. And the well-to-do kids' families would not give money to us. They would give only to their own children. So I went around and tried to borrow money. Finally I found somebody from my home town who was leaving Hungary to go to Peru to escape, as he was a Jew. He loaned me the money to pay him back when I could.

He was a friend of my brother and a well-to-do man. Eventually I paid him back every penny in Peru from America. Anyway, I borrowed money for the other guy also, who couldn't get a loan.

Everything was going smoothly; our professor Waldbauer who had influence said, "I'll get you guys a permit to leave Hungary. Except George, you have trouble. The army won't let you go." He knew somebody in the ministry and he came back to me one day and said, "Barati, it's all arranged. Let me show you. Come down with me to the avenue." He took me to a silverware store. He said, "You buy that silver set for this ministry official and you'll get a permit." It cost 130 Hungarian dollars which was a fortune. I got the money, bought the set and got my permit.

On September 1, the day I was to report to military duty we left Hungary for the *Ile de France* again. By this time it was very close to war. I mean, it was days away from the war. And we had to avoid Germany. You had to take the southern route, through Italy to get to Paris and Le Havre. We played two concerts on the *Ile de France*, first class. And we ate at the captain's table. The captain not only had Hungarian champagne for us but the one with the Hungarian label. I spoke some French; my friends didn't know a word. So I became immediately the leader of the group.

We arrived in New York about September 14 and the business manager of Westminster College met us. He took us up to Princeton and the school was not in session yet. So there was this completely closed place and there were four Hungarians not knowing a word of English. That's the way our life in America started.

When I arrived in this country in 1938 I was a very well-prepared cellist. I was composing but with not much knowledge yet. And I had no conducting experience except for school a little bit.

Jarrell: And with the Hungarian Gypsy Orchestra, you were like an assistant. (Laughter)

Barati: Well, even in the string quartet I became the leader sort of. But we all were leaders. But I was the loudest leader.

We arrived in Princeton on a Wednesday September, 1938, and school was not in session yet. Everything from here on was completely brand new, unexperienced by me. I had to digest each step. It was an incredible experience because there was no reference to anything. It was all new. From the way one lived, the way one ate, the way one dressed, the way one talked. (laughter) I didn't know a word of English. I didn't know how to say "I am." So there we were in this college . . .

Jarrell: And this was Westminster College.

Barati: Westminster College in Princeton, New Jersey. By Sunday morning I had three students. Two millionaires who lived in Princeton and a Princeton University professor. And each paid me four dollars an hour, which was a very large amount of money. One was a Long Island boat builder; his name was Sturgis. The other was a patent lawyer in Philadelphia who lived in Princeton and the third was Louis Rahm, professor of physics. His wife was a wonderful concert violinist. And the patent lawyer from the very first day insisted that I speak English. He didn't want me to *show* how to play. He wanted me to tell. He was a fairly accomplished cellist. So by the second week, I had learned from my dictionary words such as pronation and supination . . .

Jarrell: (Laughter) Highly technical terms.

Barati: (Laughter) I knew what it meant. Down bow was pronation, up was supination. Before I knew "bread" or "how do you do." Soon I had two more students who paid less, the college janitor and a piano teacher at Westminster College, so I earned a very serious amount of money beginning in the first week. This led to a major disaster with my quartet colleagues because we agreed on the way to America that we were going to be a completely unified entity and whoever earned money individually would share it with the others. So for the rest of the whole year I shared every week. I kept only one fourth of the money I earned. But unbeknownst to me these guys also earned money which they never told me about. So the alienation with the quartet began in our first year in America. Because I couldn't bear dishonesty from best friends or strangers. It was always a problem of mine.

Jarrell: Were you the youngest?

Barati: I was the second oldest. I also began to learn English immediately. At meals I sat with Americans, girls and boys. They sat three of them together, either alone or with one American who dared to sit down with these three strangers. So they learned English very slowly.

Jarrell: And they kept speaking Hungarian.

Barati: Yes. Exactly. The other thing that happened . . . two things happened, there was a very strange, I don't know how to call it, a language alienation, a trauma as one began to lose one's native language. We spoke about the same things, the same jokes, the same subject matter when we spoke Hungarian. So we all began to lose a sense of Hungarian. Not badly. But just had less interest, less new information. English was taking over, at least in my case. In their case too, but much less so. At the same time the new experiences of the English language did not replace my native tongue.

At the same time, from the very first day I felt at home in America. All the things I always complained about in Hungary, the lack of availability of simple things. I could walk into Woolworth's and buy anything I needed from glue to envelopes. In Hungary you had to search for things or wait for things. Here in a restaurant they served you immediately. I used to go out in Princeton on Sunday evenings; I paid 75 cents for a very decent dinner. You walked in, you ordered, soup came. In Hungary you had to wait 45 minutes just to be noticed. And to get water was impossible. Here the water arrives with the waiter. And all these minute things just felt completely at home for me. The other three remained foreigners for years and years and years. And I felt I was an American. This went on increasingly for me and very fast. So I was in Princeton, teaching, learning English; there was one Hungarian family, he was a professor of chemistry at the university and his wife a concert pianist who took a liking to us. She arranged for me very early to meet Roger Sessions who was teaching music composition at the university. And so Roger and I met, three or four months into my first year.

Meeting Roger Sessions

Jarrell: Now where was Sessions teaching?

Barati: At Princeton University where we arranged to meet and walked together to his home. I brought my music and he said, "I'll look at your music, you look at mine, what I'm working on now." And he gave me this huge pile of loose music papers, probably two feet high. This was his opera, *Montezuma*, that he was composing in 1938. It wasn't finished until about 1975. It was performed in Boston about six, eight years ago. In 1938 it was a total confusion. I said to him, the orchestra parts were for some three hundred players, I said, to him, "Mr. Professor, Mr. Sessions. Don't you want to reduce this three hundred piece orchestra to a normal size?" "Absolutely not. It has to be this way." And he kept it that way. A monumental piece that is almost unplayable because of the amount of technical demand upon staging the number of performers and so on. Anyway, he accepted me as his student.

He allowed me to come to university classes but I somewhat foolishly didn't apply for admission. I was just allowed by him as a personal friend or acquaintance to attend the classes. This was Sessions' first year teaching composition at Princeton and the class eventually became a group of well known people. Milton Babbitt was a classmate. Edward T. Cone was a member. Andrew Imbrie was born in Princeton but he was not at the university. Our quartet played his string trio, a world premiere.

Then Sessions decided to play sonatas with me. We had become friends. I was 2 or 3 years older than the rest of the class and he took to me. He had lived in foreign countries, spoke German and Italian and some Russian and he took to me personally. So we became quite close, and he even openly discussed his personal problems with me. One day he said, "Let's play a concert. I want to practice my piano, George. Let's play a Beethoven sonata recital." Now Roger was a heavily built New Englander, spoke very slowly. His writings were absolutely phenomenally beautiful and articulate. His lectures were informative but slow; and his piano playing was awkward and heavy. Ponderous. His limbs just fell on the piano without much control. He decided, "I'm going to practice piano." From there on he took the metronome, he practiced two, three, four hours a day, and learned a great deal but still remained quite clumsy. So he said "George, let's go to New York. I'm going to call [Artur] Schnabel. Let's go in and play for him. Let him give me a lesson. He is a good friend." I'd met Artur

Schnabel by that time. Sessions and I went to concerts in New York occasionally and I met Alfred Einstein, the famous Mozart expert and others.

So we went in to Schnabel who lived in the Hotel Stuyvesant, and we had lunch, Mrs. Schnabel, and Schnabel and Roger and I. Here I must give you an example of where I learned humility. Schnabel was a very small stocky man. At the table, at one point of our discussion he referred to a pianist as an accomplished pianist, whom I considered kind of mediocre. And I said, "But Mr. Schnabel why do you mention him? He is only a mediocre pianist." Schnabel pushed himself away from the table and put one hand at the table's level. Then he raised it six inches, then another six inches. He gave me a grave look and said, "Look, every inch amounts to years of work. To get to the top (he shook his hand still at the higher level) takes many years of work. Mediocre is halfway—but look at how far *that* is from where the table is!" He was right, I had never thought of the distance an instrumentalist had to travel to become mediocre! Halfway is a tremendous distance from the bottom!

Jarrell: Yes, it is.

Barati: And how far the top is! So I learned a little humility from Schnabel. Then he continued: "Before we play I want you to meet a very, very talented pupil of mine, who is going to be very famous, very great." And in comes this little boy, short pants, his name was Leon Fleisher. Short pants. [He was] maybe 11 or 12 years old. He sat down with us and talked for a couple of minutes.

Then we played. There was an upright piano in Schnabel's living room. Sessions sat down and we began to play the Beethoven A Major Cello Sonata. (Barati sings) After about six or eight bars, Schnabel, who was much shorter, standing next to him, very roughly nudged him away from the piano, moved him over, and without sitting down picked up and continued playing standing up, we played the whole movement, showing Sessions how to play ensemble, how to play pianissimo, how to play with the proper balance with the cello. He said, "Roger you have a long way to go. But try." So we played the recital. About three or four months later. Quite decent it wasn't. But musically it was solid. Sessions was a great musician, but technically it was, let's say, mediocre. (Laughter) But we played throughout the whole period a great deal.

Jarrell: Just the two of you playing sonatas.

Barati: Cello sonatas. So I attended three and a half years of his classes without getting credit. But the experience was enormous because I learned much more from Sessions about the structure of music, the texture of music, of analysis of music, than I learned at the famous Franz Liszt Conservatory of music in Budapest. So this was a tremendous addition to my experience as a musician. Having had everything imaginable as a performer, as a cellist, now I came to composition, and the understanding of music, the way it's built, the structure. And this went on, as I said, for three and a half years.

But in the meantime life also went on. I met all these girls, and realized how American women behaved, a new experience because I grew up in a boys school; boys and girls were separate. We saw girls only on the promenade. We didn't know how to talk to girls. So as the year went on my language grew fast but my mental abilities were kind of slowing down and going downhill very much. This alienation took place. This kind of a trauma, and by the end of the year I was invited to this girl's home in West Virginia whose parents and sister came to visit her at the school, and I was very happy to go there and I married her at the end of the summer. I hardly spoke enough English to understand what life was about on a simple level and there I was, married to a stranger. So I'm just giving you these bits, but these were the avenues on which my life moved: that marriage, which turned out to be just impossible eventually; meeting Sessions, which was the growing awareness of music; the English language and my pupils, and coincidentally the kind of strange things that happened to musicians. There was one more Hungarian at the university, the famous mathematics professor John Von Neumann who later became a member of the Atomic Energy Commission. When he got married he invited our quartet to perform in his new house.

Playing String Quartets With Albert Einstein

Barati: And in the front row, as I was facing the audience, something disturbed my eyes, and I didn't have time to see what it was because I was busy playing,

but as I looked just above the music there was some strange thing hovering. When we finished and took a bow I could see that there was this man wearing a tuxedo, formal attire, black shoes but no socks. It was the missing socks that had bothered my eyes. It was Einstein. A few weeks later Mrs. Rahm, the wife of the professor who was my pupil, said, "Let's play string quartets. Einstein would like to play quartets. So we'll pick you up first, then Mr. Einstein, on Nassau Street, then we'll go to our house and play quartets."

It was a snowy evening and Louis Rahm honked the horn and I came out with a cello, and there was Einstein in the back of the car. That's the way I met him formally, in a car. We started talking, and went to the Rahms and played. From then on every three or four weeks we played, for two or three years. And just quickly, Einstein is very well known as an unusual man, but it is true that he also played good violin. It is true that he couldn't count to four. When he had two and a half bars rest I had to count him in because he was unable to count. He got lost. He only liked to play Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, and early Beethoven. When I said "Let's play *Rasoumovsky* Quartets, "Aah, that's too *schwei*, too difficult for me." Also true that he always wore informal clothing when we came on winter nights. He had a pullover, or a cardigan or a heavy jacket and he would say, "Aah, it's nice and varm here." He always said "warm" in the German way, "varm," but he spoke very good English of course. "Aah. Nice and *schön* varm! I take off my cardigan." He took it off. Another one was underneath. The same kind, different color. In the course of the evening sometimes he would take off two or three cardigans. There was always one more underneath because he believed in layering against cold weather. So we had a wonderful time and played regularly and very well. The first violinist was excellent, Mrs. Rahm, and the violist was a Swiss scientist. Occasionally we also played in the home of a German professor from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, his name was Wolff. I have a letter from his wife in the archive. She was also a very good pianist. We had an accomplished group playing together.

One occasion I think was very unique, where my English let me down completely, this was probably two years into my American life. A group of young scientists arrived at the Rahms and apologized to Einstein saying they had to talk to him.

We always stopped to eat a bite. Einstein and I sat together. And we were talking about things in English. And these young men arrived and Einstein said, "Please don't bother me. I told you when I play music I don't want to be disturbed. Leave me alone." "But this is very important Mr. Einstein, we must talk to you. Just two minutes, please. Give us two minutes of your time." So he agreed. They went into this private study, very narrow, very small, one half of it was a couch. These men stood there and talked about what sounded to me like nonsense, because they'd said, "Well, the light travels. We know the speed of light. But we can't account for a discrepancy of some millimeters." Then Einstein said, "But you forget the curvature of light." Well, I studied physics for three years in high school and was told countless times that light travels in a straight direction. This made no sense to me for years until I've read somewhere that as the beam of light hits the stars it bounces back and, yes, there is a slight curve. So, I guess Einstein must have been right! I also realized years later that this whole discussion must have been in connection with building the atom bomb. Evidently, I had been very close at this moment to people making history. Did I then help build the atom bomb? Also I played piano trio concerts for the university [with] Mrs. Rahm, who was a wonderful violinist, and with a local piano teacher, Ruth McLean, with great success. We played Dvorák, *The Dumky*, the Schubert B-Flat Major . . . many major works. It was a wonderful sense of achievement.

Then I also composed by this time. Sessions was kind and helpful to me. We first started with harmony, all the things I should have been properly taught at the conservatory in Budapest, but I wasn't. I had been too busy so it was only partly my fault. So harmony and counterpoint; we started counterpoint and went through all of the species [with] Sessions correcting my papers. Foolishly I threw them away about a year ago, I didn't realize the value of them.

I began to compose and I wrote a cello piece titled *Lamentoso,* which I promptly performed. I wrote a string quartet which our string quartet actually performed at an inter-collegiate music festival at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, where [the composer] William Schumann taught. Maybe I met him then, I don't remember. My piece was quite successful. I've not [given it an opus number] because it was a student piece. It's based on some influences from Beethoven. I also arrived in this country with a composition in progress that I

called eventually *Fever Dreams*, a large orchestral work, but I didn't [yet] have any technique or any real knowledge of composition [so] I composed this piece mainly based on augmented chords. It was performed in Philadelphia by the W. P. A. Orchestra which was renamed the Pennsylvania Symphony with which I performed the Haydn Cello Concerto a year or so later.

So I was a very active musician in the whole area by that time. I also composed a work for choral and string orchestra which was played at Westminster College in their annual spring festival; [the work was] based on American texts.

So this all was going on at the same time that the Westminster Choir College [numbering about] 400 singers, sang with the New York Philharmonic, the NBC symphony and the Philadelphia Orchestra. So I, who knew pitch, and knew both German and English, I sang second tenor, to help them keep the pitch and help them with the German language. We sang the Ninth Symphony with Toscanini a number of times. We sang with Barbirolli, conducting the New York Philharmonic . We sang with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Rachmaninoff in *The Bells Symphonic Poem* which was the Edgar Allen Poe poem, "The Bells" translated into Russian and re-translated into English. We sang that very awkward version of English with Rachmaninoff conducting. He had no baton, [but wore] white gloves I think on his enormous hands. He had a beautiful baritone bass voice; and we sang very well for him.

We had regular visits from all of the conductors who used the Westminster Choir with their orchestras—Toscanini, Bruno Walter, others. When Barbirolli came to rehearse we had lunch first. Our quarter was to play for him after lunch. When we finished the little concert, he came to me and said: "You are a very good cellist. I like your playing and I know because I am also a cellist." I said, "Mr. Barbirolli, if you want to play in our quartet, I'll be glad to change positions with you." (At that time he was the Music Director of the New York Philharmonic.) I really said that to him.

Tanglewood Music Festival

Jarrell: You said you wanted to talk about Tanglewood.

Barati: Oh yes. The Tanglewood Music Festival was being formed. I applied for a fellowship because [my] summers were open. This was the first summer, 1939. I applied for a fellowship; [I applied to be] in [Aaron] Copland's composition class. I was not accepted to be a composer in the class but I was accepted as a cellist to play in the Tanglewood Orchestra, and as an auditor in Copland's class. Again with my belief in certain principals, I turned it down. I didn't try to go and be an auditor and befriend Copland and Koussevitzky and Leonard Bernstein. The whole American musical life of our period started in the first [few] years at Tanglewood, through Koussevitzky, Virgil Thomson, Copland and Lenny and others. And I turned it down, didn't go. So it was, I think, my loss, thinking back, but I'm not sure. . . I might not be married to Ruth for example!

Establishing the RCA Labs Orchestra

Barati: Then about 1941, the RCA laboratories moved into Princeton Junction, which was about three miles outside of Princeton. And this meant an invasion of major scientists, physicists and chemists into Princeton's life. Among these scientists a very large number played musical instruments and they approached me to organize an orchestra. And I did. We formed the RCA Labs Orchestra. We rehearsed in the basement of one of the members, the clarinet player's house. We rehearsed once a week. At their insistence we only played classical music. So we played the Beethoven First Symphony and two or three other works. And the first time I said to them, "But please. The first violins are more important. Sing more." They said, "Why?"

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: And from this time on there were these enormous debates. I had to explain to them in objective terms why one line was more important than another. Not just that. "Look," I'd say, "This is the main theme, it's higher up, or it's more expressive, or more elaborate or more continuous, or whatever it was." But I had to insist. And we had major battles which sometimes we never resolved except at the end of the rehearsals we went and played ping-pong.

They all played wonderful ping-pong. And if I beat them I was right. If I didn't beat them I wasn't right. So this was the decision-making process.

Jarrell: Now you were conducting.

Barati: I was conducting a string orchestra of about 22 quite accomplished players. So this was a real experience and by this time I had also formed the Princeton String Ensemble. That was about 1940, two years into my American life. I couldn't speak much English, but I went to the lady who ran the Princeton community concerts, a society lady, and consulted her if she thought I could, or should start an orchestra. She said, "Absolutely not. There's no money and not enough players. Not enough interest. We are too close to New York. People go to big concerts. Don't bother. It's just a waste of time." So I promptly formed the orchestra. And it was very successful. We had amateurs who came from as far as Navesink which I thought meant *Never think*. It was Navesink. My English was not quite proper at that time. Sink and think, you know so close in Hungarian. (Laughter) They paid a small stipend. We all had to pitch in working, organizing, cleaning, collecting music. We played mostly Baroque music. Now I conducted two orchestras.

Also, during the Princeton years I met Leonard Bernstein for the first time. We used to go in to New York City to play chamber music. There was a private home where a group of us young musicians got together and we played for each other. Maybe sixteen, twenty musicians. And at one point somebody said, "I want to play a piano trio. Who wants to play with me?" And a fiddler said, "I will play" and I said, "I will play cello." So we sat down and played a Mozart trio and the pianist played so loudly with the left hand that I couldn't be heard. And I got angrier and angrier, more and more upset. At the end I said, "Who is this son of a bitch, anyway? Can't play Mozart." And the person next to me said, "Oh, it's Leonard Bernstein, don't you know him? He's a very fine musician." And the violinist was Joseph Silverstein, who became the Boston Symphony's concertmaster, and is now a well-known conductor of the Utah Symphony. So, the beginning was rather inauspicious.

Jarrell: And your English was getting much better.

Barati: (Laughter) I may have said that in Hungarian, I'm not sure.

On another occasion in New York we used to go to the very famous music patron's home, the Leventritt's, the Foundation is very famous today. Mrs. Leventritt was a great patron of music. She gave soirées in her glorious apartment on either Fifth or Park, I'm not sure right now. One evening Mrs. Leventritt asked this very fine gentleman, "Why don't you play something, George?" And George said, "OK, let's play the Mozart G Minor Piano Quartet." He was George Szell. Szell played piano; the first violin was Erica Morini; the violist, was Lillian Fuchs, a very famous woman violist in New York; and I played cello. Szell played without music. He knew the Mozart G Minor Piano Quartet by heart. Beautiful. He was a truly great chamber player. By the way, Alexander Schneider, cellist of the Budapest String Quartet was also there.

And then there was the unique occasion when Bartók was invited to Princeton to play. Bartók was starving in New York. He accepted no help unless he worked for it. So they arranged for him somewhat secretly, various grants to work on collections for Columbia University, the famous folk music collection. He got a commission from Boston University and wrote the Concerto for Orchestra. Friends arranged a violin, piano sonata evening at Princeton University. He called the head of the Music department, Professor Welch, and asked him to be sure to have a good page turner. And Dr. Welch said, "Not only do I have a good one but it's a Hungarian who was a student at the Liszt Conservatory." I was told to meet Bartók when he arrived; he was coming by car at 3 p.m. for rehearsal. I got there and he was sitting way down in the car and I was towering over him like Klemperer in Vienna. I opened the door for him and said, in Hungarian, "Professor, nice to see you again after all these years." He looked up—he had beautiful, penetrating blue eyes, stunningly beautiful blue eyes—and he looked at me and said to me with utter naiveté, "Oh you speak Hungarian . . ." Well, having been told at least twice a Hungarian student will be meeting him, who used to know him in Budapest, "And you speak Hungarian." This was the seventh miracle for Bartók. (Laughter)

I also should mention that my early compositions of that period were the two *Preludes for Piano* in 1943, which I consider my first official compositions. I also composed two symphonic movements for orchestra, which have never been copied out; I only have the one original copy of the score. Before I go on I also want to mention that I befriended a very wonderful, important, old American

composer, a real gentleman of the old school, Daniel Gregory Mason, who was by then a retired professor emeritus at Columbia. He took a liking to me and invited me to his wonderful home up in Stamford, Connecticut. He had a wonderful all-stone study separate from the house, so he wouldn't bother his wife with the noise he made. He wrote a cello piece for me, which I performed a number of times and tried to get Schirmer to publish it but they turned it down. I helped him later on to edit one of his orchestra pieces which was a little bit, I can't say amateurish, but a little bit less than perfect. I edited it, made changes, all of which he accepted. We were very good friends. He was one of my first really close American friends.

Conducting the Princeton Choral Union

Barati: Then when the War broke out and men began to be called up, the Princeton Choral Union, which was a well-established solid organization, began to lose its singers, and lost its conductor.

So they asked me to take over the Choral Union, which I was very happy to do. My experience as a choral man was entirely from Westminster Choir College, where I learned something about singing. Dr. Williamson, the president, was a marvelous organizer, an excellent businessman, but not an important musician. But he led the chorus and his technique, his mechanical approach was so skilled that in spite of his lack of musical understanding he really taught them how to sing beautifully. So I learned enough to be able to at least begin to handle the Choral Union. And my first suggestion, since we had so few members, was to bring in the black singers who lived on the wrong side of Princeton, where Paul Robeson was born. At the time I suggested this, we rehearsed at the first Presbyterian Church. Reverend Niles and the Choral leaders sat down with me and had a very elaborate discussion for me to explain what I meant. I said to them that these people are wonderful singers. By that time I'd heard black singers, and why not let's have them, let's unite with them. And they accepted it! There was no resistance. One man resigned, a very good singer, who came to me and said, "Look, I don't object to your idea. It's wonderful but I come from

the South. I can't handle the idea of working, of associating with blacks as equals." So he resigned.

Then I suggested that the first occasion should be a social occasion, a dinner party. I said, "Let's have a potluck dinner. Let's invite the black singers and let's be sure that they don't sit together." And I assigned these people, with whom I'd only rehearsed once or twice, to take a black man or woman to sit between them, so there would be an immediate association with the blacks. And this turned out to be a real accomplishment, a great success. We collaborated for the remainder of my Princeton time, maybe another year and a half, without any problems. And this, looking back, I realize what an enormous step it must have been. The Choral Union performed once or twice a year. We did the Haydn *Creation*. We did the Mendelssohn *Elijah*. One or two more works. And my string ensemble formed the orchestra for this group. So we were a complete performing group. We got some wind players.

In this period, beginning with 1939, I conducted the orchestra at Lawrenceville School for Boys, in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, 15 minutes from Princeton. I also taught cello and doublebass. This was a unique private school for the richest boys in this country, the cream of the crop, a prep school for the "big three" universities. The orchestra consisted of some 30 kids, most of them with recognizable names from well-known families.

Once I sat in the dean's office and a young boy was at the desk writing a check. As he wrote I followed his hand, which spelled out "Charles Chaplin, Jr." Yes, he was the pianist in the orchestra.

At the same time I also taught cello at the Trenton State Teachers' College, another 15 minutes away. It was always amazing for me to compare the two schools: the boys at Lawrenceville did as little as they could get away with. At Trenton State, where the students came from the lower middle classes, there was evidence of harder work, more honest achievements.

It so happened that on Pearl Harbor Day we had a concert at Lawrenceville. Around lunch time, when the news of the attack came, my first reaction was that we must start the concert with the National Anthem. Well, nobody knew the National Anthem and we couldn't find a single sheet of music of it. Finally, I said

to Charlie Chaplin, "Charlie, you'll have to play it alone on the piano." And rather poorly, he did.

Coming from a country of intense nationalism it was amazing to note that while individually the Americans reacted with full fury, there was little awareness of a nationalistic or chauvinistic reaction until much later. It took this country many months to organize a "national effort" for the war. I know because when I offered my services immediately after December 7 for the "war effort," nobody knew what I was talking about. Eventually, the following spring I had a phone call from the unemployment agency, offering me a milk-delivery job.

In the meantime, I got married. Helen was a very nice girl and came from a good family. Her father owned a coal mine, they lived in West Virginia but also had a home in Kentucky. The circumstances of this marriage read like a novel. After a year in this country, my language was primitive and my understanding of the American family life or attitude was nil. Add to that the fact that this was a truly Southern family, with both the good and bad that implies. Without much preparation for marriage and without any comprehension of the well-established forms of American family life, overnight I found myself married to this stranger with whom I had absolutely no intellectual exchange. The results were dire and immediate. She kept going back home to mother and sister and staying away from Princeton for longer and longer periods. She also got pregnant right away, as newly wed decent American girls used to do. Stephen George was born in September, 1940 and I had much fun with my little son!

But as I began to understand more and more English, the disparity between Helen and me became more obvious. Sessions and other professors became my friends and they'd come to our apartment across from the university for a talk. I managed but my wife was more and more silent. I read at the time *The Decline of the West* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, the latter, strangely proceeding exactly in the same geographic and time terms as the German army of Hitler. Reading a few pages ahead of the actual daily events I could predict when and where Hitler would be stopped.

None of this could we discuss. I became increasingly frustrated even though life was full of developments. This was an increasingly lonely life; and when the war broke out, I decided to offer my services for the war effort.

Well, there was no war effort for a long time. The university sent my papers to the just then formed OSS, the predecessor of the CIA. It was my choice. I assumed that since I knew parts of Europe, spoke languages, I would singlehandedly win the war. But I was turned down as an enemy alien! The same thing happened at other services as well, even at the band leader school which was my last choice. When they told me the news on campus, I walked straight down on Nassau Street to the enlistment office and enlisted. It's funny but nobody told me I was an enemy alien there.

I had felt more like an enemy alien when I visited Nazi Germany in 1936 with the Hungarian Opera, performing at the Bayreuth Festival. We were the guests of the State of Germany, special train and special luxury treatment as to housing and food. I could see first hand the tensions and the food shortages at the private home we were assigned to, and the fear of our hostess when I offered to share our lavish breakfast she had to prepare for us. I also saw the entire Nazi leadership, with the exception of Hitler, lined up on the balcony directly facing me, with the two-story long flags . . . but now I was just to be a simple soldier in the U.S Army with an unknown future ahead of me.

This was 1942. And I was not called for quite a while. You know there was this "no war" situation for a long time. But in 1943 I was called. And by the way, the day after I enlisted I had a very serious offer from William and Mary College. I guess they'd lost their teachers too. I had enlisted, so I had to turn it down.

Life in the U.S. Army

Barati: So at the end of November 1943 I was to report for duty. By this time I had worked with Sessions for about three and a half years. My marriage was obviously not working. So I went into the Army. The Army took me to Fort Dix where I promptly learned basic English. You know the four cuss words that could express everything.

From there I was taken to Alexandria, to Fort Belvoir, headquarters of the Corps of Engineers, which was really forced labor. There I was, a musician, a cellist who never touched anything sharp or hot, never cooked in my life, never washed a

dish, suddenly I found myself a combat engineer building roads and bridges. They taught us how to defuse enemy mines at night; how to shoot weapons. I became the best shot in the platoon, in fact one of the two best in the whole battalion. Life was certainly very different. From five o'clock in the morning, all day working in the fields in mud and rain and carrying heavy equipment, building pontoon bridges and destroying them—destroying meant to take back every piece where you found it. Every nail had to be put back. It was really . . . hard labor, because they didn't teach us the real knowledge of how to build a pontoon bridge. The units consisted of electricians, bricklayers, and carpenters who already knew most of it, but those of us who didn't know, were not taught how to do it. We were providing hard labor.

So after basic training which ended in March, we were transferred out on the train. We didn't know where we were going. Troop movements were secret. On the train there was a *Reader's Digest* on the floor. A guy picked it up and said, "Ha ha ha. I know where we are going." One of the articles was titled "The Army's Worst Camp: Camp Claiborne." And that's where we were going. He was absolutely right. Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. We arrived there in the middle of March. At 4 o'clock in the morning this enormous red thing came up. It was the sun. The swamps began about fifty miles from us. One single tree was there, under which I composed my String Quartet in my off hours. We trained there to go overseas. It was a misery, just a hard, horrible misery, everyday.

But there was a group of intelligentsia—a professor from Columbia who taught Chinese who had suffered the same fate as I did, no good with his hands, you know. And the son of the biggest bridge builder from Buffalo, New York was one of us. So about six or eight of us had a wonderful private life. A very good violinist and painter, Louis Tavelli, became my very close friend. And we did several things. We began to form an orchestra. We formed at the USO a discussion group.

Now by this time I had been in this country five years. And my English was still very, very uneven, but fluent. I was still groping but I spoke well. At the orientation lectures of the troops which we had to have once a week, Washington gave out the most miserable uninformed pamphlets, which had to be discussed. I said, "Lieutenant, I'm sorry, this is no good. It's uninformative. I can do much better." "You can? Okay, you are in charge." The next week I began

to give orientation lectures to my own platoon about the enemy. At Alexandria we formed this U. S. O. group . . . they appointed me as master of ceremonies, coordinator. I had to introduce and discuss subjects and lead the discussion.

Then the U.S.O. brought an official from New York who organized our orchestra and he stayed there for two months . . . I was first cellist. When at the end of two months he left, I was appointed conductor of the orchestra. So there I was, Private George Barati, a totally uniformed U.S. Army private who conducted an army orchestra . . . they gave me very soon half time for it and privileges. I had a paper in my pocket, which entitled me to use any communication up to two hundred dollars to order music or arrange concerts. . . to telephone long distance and so on. I was a lecturer in the Army . . . I played ping-pong violently with the guys, all of whom were trained by my predecessor, the Hungarian world champion who happened to have been in the same unit (laughter) . . . We played, the orchestra was good.

There were all these young musicians who were . . . brought into the Army from major symphony orchestras and we played first-class concerts which I organized at my own Camp Claiborne, in Alexandria, at the Alexandria Air Base and at Camp Livingston.

General Louis F. Guerre, commanding general of Camp Claiborne, by maybe the third round of concerts invited all the officers and wives to a concert at our post. At intermission when I came off, I heard him talk about Private George Barati. So I stopped and heard what he said. I am quoting, "Wherever Private Barati goes, our gratitude goes with him for these wonderful cultural events in our areas. We all are so grateful to him." There was laughter in the audience. And General Guerre, who was a very conceited little man, got very angry. What was this? How did they dare to laugh at him? It turned out that they laughed because if Private Barati was such an important man why is he still a private? The next morning he called me in at 6 a.m. and he said, "Private, I'm going to make you a corporal this week and a sergeant next month. You are doing well for us." I became a corporal the next day but I was transferred out of Alexandria the following month to headquarters, Eighth Service Command in Dallas, so I never got to be sergeant until about a year later. But it was true that they appreciated my work. It was at this time that Schnabel sent me a manuscript, his Cello Sonata with an inscription, something like . . . "Our hero who is doing his work for our

country, with sincere appreciation, Artur Schnabel." I had no idea how he found out I was at this place except maybe either Einstein or Sessions must have told him.

Jarrell: He tracked you down.

Barati: He tracked me down. On VE day I was transferred to Dallas where I had several incredible experiences. Very soon I became very active in musical matters there. The Dallas Symphony was the first one to collapse when the war broke out. There was an enormous amount of wealth, the Niemann Marcus's etc. It so happened that I befriended a girl who was the director of the Federation of Dallas organization, a very influential young woman, we became close friends. In fact we were going to get married. By this time I was divorced. She, with her connections arranged for me to make a presentation for the board of directors of the Dallas Symphony and I made a proposal to them to reorganize the orchestra as soon as the war finished. This was 1945.

Jarrell: So you never made it to Europe?

Barati: I never made it to Europe. I had requested a transfer to Europe, not knowing any better frankly. Many of my buddies were transferred. This was the time of the Battle of the Bulge. Half of our unit was transferred overseas and I was kept because I was station complement; I was an orientation lecturer and conductor of the orchestra . . . they wouldn't let me go overseas. I might have gone overseas.

So in Dallas, the symphony accepted my suggestion and I wrote up a very elaborate proposal, not just for the reorganization of the Dallas Symphony, but to reorganize the whole musical and cultural life, really, of Dallas, including music schools for the poverty-stricken areas, utilizing the musicians in the orchestra. This was a very substantial document which was accepted by the board to reorganize the musical life of Dallas.

But when the time came to start the orchestra, I was completely unknown, I didn't have any reputation, but Anatal Dorati, who was very famous as a ballet conductor, had conducted in Dallas, and the critic Rosenfield of the *Dallas Morning News*, simply pushed him in. They announced that he happened to fly to Dallas en route to Cuba to conduct, and they brought the plane down for a

meeting with the Dallas Symphony Board and Dorati and the next day he was elected conductor of the orchestra. I found on Rosenfield's desk a copy of my proposal which was then carried out page by page, subsequently. Dorati turned around and nicely offered me the first cello position. But I was in the Army; I couldn't get out, though they tried very hard, all the key top people even went to Washington to get me out. The discharges had began, but I didn't have enough credits. Each time they got close to me to have enough credits they postponed it by changing the method, more and more points were demanded.

In the meantime my mother sent me a message through the Red Cross that she was alive, but my father and brother had died in the war. She needed help. So I began to send Care packages to her right away. She was all right back in our home in Budapest. This was a very good reason for me to get out of the Army and they tried again to get me out. But they still wouldn't let me go. So Dorati, very fairly said, "I can't wait anymore. I have to fill your position. I'm sorry."

He became very successful. His opening concert was with Menuhin playing the Bartók Violin Concerto which they recorded the following month. I was in the orchestra playing once in a while in uniform but I lost out.

Another incredible experience occurred at a recital by Fritz Kreisler, where a young man came to me. He said, "Mr. Barati, Mr. Kreisler wants to see you." I said, "He doesn't know me. Why would he want to see me?" "Please come back stage." So I went back to Kreisler, "Aah, Mr. Barati!" He put his violin down, sat down with me and talked with me until they called him to the stage, never warmed up, never tuned his fiddle, just chatted with me . . . I had never met him. And he said, "Oh yes, the reason I called you. Would you mind turning the pages for my pianist?" I said, "No, I'd be glad to."

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: So the pianist, an old gentleman, gave me the music. On stage I opened the music. It was an absolute disaster. It was a Paganini concerto, not the famous one, not the D major one, something in G major, never heard of it, partly printed, partly handwritten, corrections, red arrows and blue ink . . .

Jarrell: Go over to here. Follow this. Skip here. Repeat. Go back. Like that?

Barati: Absolutely. I said, "My God!" He said, "Don't worry. Just follow me." So they started playing and I followed line one, line two, in the middle of a line . . ."Turn!" "Turn?" I said, there was half a page left. "Turn!" So I turned. He played twenty seconds. "Back!" And this went on. I was absolutely wet at intermission. I was completely done in. During the applause I said to the pianist, "What's this Paganini G Major Concerto? I never heard of it." He said, "Never heard of it? Ask Kreisler." So in the intermission Kreisler again put his fiddle down, again got me to sit with him and chat. Like father and son, that's the way it felt, most wonderfully. And I said, "Mr. Kreisler, I've never heard of this Paganini G Major." "Oh, you never heard of it? I found it in the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris." Well, it may have been partly that but he certainly rewrote the piece.

Jarrell: He might have found a fragment.

Barati: A fragment. He used all sorts of fake names and this was one of them. He became a friend of mine. Next day he was on the streetcar. Both of us were to judge a competition at the same Federation. He got off the streetcar when he saw me and walked with me about eight blocks just to chat.

Back to Camp Claiborne. I mentioned earlier, there was one tree in this terrible, ugly, horrifying camp where I was stationed and under this one tree I wrote my string quartet which became my first seriously successful piece and I will get to that subject later on. This was 1944. And I wrote it without ever hearing a single note of it until I completed it. Eventually in Dallas we played it with friends from the Dallas Symphony. Then, there was the Dallas situation, which was a very wonderful moment in my rather dry, military life, when I began to play cello again after two and a half years of not having touched it. Just when the situation with the Dallas Symphony was a total loss for me, that I was not able to get, first the conducting job, then the first cello job, I was offered an assistant professorship at SMU, Southern Methodist University, which I accepted. The same time an orchestra was formed for me by a man whose name I don't remember, who was a local celebrity; a German-born man who made a fortune as a chocolate manufacturer. He felt that he owed something to Dallas which had made him a celebrity and a rich man; he loved music and he wanted to form an all-teachers orchestra with me as conductor. So this SMU position and this orchestra would have been a marvelous situation for me, except that at the last

moment the Army decided to transfer our band, with which I was stationed, to San Francisco.

So the opening concert of this orchestra, a radio concert with an audience invited, occurred the night of the troop movement, which of course was secret during those years during the war, and no military man was allowed off camp, but they gave me two MP's to take me to the concert and the MP's took me straight to the train, which left at midnight after the concert . . . I was allowed to have a couple of bites at the reception after the concert before going to the train which left for San Francisco. This was January, 1946.

THE SAN FRANCISCO YEARS

Arriving in San Francisco

Barati: We arrived in San Francisco about four or five days later, just about midnight. I stepped out, I'll never forget the feeling, having been for three miserable years in the hottest country, so much so that I hated sun, I hated the heat, I hated the perspiration 24 hours a day, and I stepped out in the gates of the railroad station in San Francisco, to this fantastic cool weather. It didn't take me long, more than just that, to fall in love with San Francisco. We were taken to Letterman Hospital, where we were stationed at the Presidio, and arrived about 2 o'clock in the morning.

The next evening, having seen in the morning paper that the San Francisco Symphony was performing in the Opera House under Stravinksy's conducting, I went to the concert with a free ticket as a soldier in uniform, and experienced the first occasion of seeing Stravinsky in action, and I was most disappointed. Conducting the massive, superhuman sounds of *Rite of Spring*, that contrast between this and the little man with his head in the score, never looking up, beating above his head, just beating rhythm, not concerned with dynamics, or phrasing . . . that was a really disappointing feeling because I loved his music and I appreciated his music and somehow the achievement versus the man as

conductor, was an enormous disparity. It took me a long time to recover from that feeling about Stravinsky.

Well so this was now the beginning of 1946, and San Francisco and life really began after this very dry, yet not unsuccessful period. For I conducted an orchestra, I learned the technique, but the military life was a dread to me. I enlisted to save the world, to win the war single-handedly. I didn't know what I was getting into. After that I hated every minute of it. In two and a half years by that time, maybe three years, in the Army anybody who came to me, I could tell them at what point we were in the Army life, how many hours, how many days, how many weeks we spent together in the Army. I could tell it to the last second, really.

Jarrell: You were counting.

Barati: I counted and hated it. So then barely did I arrive in San Francisco when I met one of my old colleagues, Ferenc Molnár, not the playwright but the violist, who had been member of the Roth Quartet that brought me to America. He was in the San Francisco Symphony playing first viola. He said, "You must stay in San Francisco and must join the Symphony. I can ask for an appointment for you. That's all there is to it." In the meantime Roger Sessions, my professor and friend from Princeton was teaching in Berkeley at the University of California. So I came direct to the most beautiful situation with close friends who supported me, who felt they owed me something for my Army life, and Molnár knocked himself out, invited me to their parties. His wife wrote a successful novel, titled *Paprika*, gave wonderful parties where I met many people in San Francisco.

Auditioning for the San Francisco Symphony

Barati: He arranged an audition with Pierre Monteux who was then conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, and parallel with that Roger Sessions wanted to get me [an appointment] on campus . . .

Jarrell: At UC Berkeley?

Barati: . . . at Berkeley, and he began to work for that cause. There was no opening and I wasn't fully qualified to teach composition or whatever. It could have been—chamber music or cello or whatever they might have. Time went on and I was to be discharged finally. Believe me, that was a major moment in my life. Now this was a strange coincidence. Having hoped to be out of the Army for three and a half years, when the time came, I caught a bad cold in Marysville, north of San Francisco, where the discharge center was. So having been waiting for this moment, when I came back the only thing I could do, was with a very high fever go back to the Letterman Hospital to my bunk and hide there, stay in bed. My colleagues stole food for me from the kitchen; I was there three or four days, practically dying. I must have had pneumonia, a very high fever. Finally they took me to the hospital out of town, not Letterman but somewhere else, and they gave me treatment. I eventually got better but I missed my audition date with Monteux. I called him at the Fairmont Hotel where he lived, and talked to Mrs. Monteux, who was very disagreeable and I lost the date. Again Molnár, I guess, talked to Monteux and explained to him that I was really sick and so he gave me a second audition.

I arrived at the Fairmont Hotel, the symphony pianist accompanied me without rehearsal. First he wanted to hear me play solo. I said I can play either the Saint-Saens Concerto or the Haydn Concerto. Monteux said, "Why one or the other? You will play both." And he proceeded to hear a page or so out of each concerto. Then he gave me something to sight read, it was Wagner. He said that he will think about it. Then the word came to me that he wanted to hear me again. I should go to the Opera House, after the Sunday evening Standard Hour Broadcast Symphony.

In the meantime, Roger Sessions found that Henry Schnitzler, the son of Arthur Schnitzler, lived in Berkeley and taught in the drama department, at UC. He had a very large home with an apartment in the basement, on Stonewall Road in Berkeley, opposite the Claremont Hotel. The most glorious place in the world and they would love to invite me to stay there for a while as their house guest. So after military life, the horror of Camp Claiborne style, I found myself invited to live in this fantastic, lovely, cool elegant house with good food and Roger Sessions looking after me.

I found that Monteux wanted me to play on the Opera House stage without accompaniment. Now . . . if you've ever seen that stage, it's enormous . . .

Jarrell: It's huge.

Barati: As large as the rest of the opera house. The orchestra was finished and all these musicians were hanging around there, twenty of them listening to me, and Monteux said to me, "Now do you play the Dvorák Concerto?" Which I also offered to him. So alone I had to play the most difficult cello concerto without accompaniment, with all the scratches, all the worries, all the nervousness, in this fantastic hall. So Monteux next day offered me a contract to the second stand of the orchestra. I must tell you, if you don't know, that orchestras usually engage new players for the last position, and they are moved eventually forward if they are good enough. The only way to be promoted is to hang on long enough. So I was promoted immediately; accepted as a fourth cello and a leader of the lower cello section. Monteux had Boris Blinder as first cello, the brother of the concertmaster. He called the concertmaster, Mr. Blinder, and he called Boris, whom he knew from Paris, Monsieur Blinder. I sat behind Boris, so I was a lower section leader and glory began, because I loved every minute of playing with this fantastic orchestra.

The orchestra was excellent at that time and I found about twenty or thirty really good friends, even to this day, although I don't see them often. But for many years after I felt much closer to that group of musicians than anyone else in the world. They are good colleagues and took a liking to me. The Italian section of the orchestra never believed I was not an Italian. "*Hallo Barratti! Come stai oggi*?" And I would say, "*Molto bene.*" (Laughter)

The symphony programs were varied. Monteux was a great conductor. He knew his music inside out and he was a master orchestra builder and leader. We played good concerts and the ambiance of the orchestra was beautiful. We weren't paid much. At first we had a twenty-six week season, and they grew to a thirty-two week season. I was paid 82 dollars a week, which was to me a fortune. Life was wonderful. I lived in the Schnitzlers' home, I paid no rent, and it was just great. Sessions arranged two or three piano and cello recitals. He had improved a great deal but was still heavy. We played the same programs and added some to an invited audience in his home, which included the leading professors in the

English department, in philosophy (some were Ruth's teachers later on, it turned out) and in the music department. We got to know each other, and all these connections with faculty were, in Roger's eyes, helping me to get on campus as an important professional musician. It never worked out for a number of reasons. Maybe in part it was that I gave up on the idea, since when Monteux gave me a contract I accepted a job with the symphony and once that was settled there was no chance to be at the same time on campus.

California String Quartet and the Barati Chamber Orchestra

Barati: Then with the symphony many things happened. My first engagement with the symphony was a Standard Oil Broadcast with Fiedler. Then Bruno Walter came to the symphony in the fall of 1946, for a series of three concerts. Having played under him in Budapest many years prior to that, it was a kind of quasi-reunion. Anyway, it was a wonderful beginning for me to play in this glorious orchestra, my first three concerts with Bruno Walter conducting Mahler and Mozart.

I got some cello students. I continued composing, working with Sessions. I revised the *String Quartet* which Roger liked very much and I added an opening slow section because the piece began too abruptly.

We began to play chamber music with the cream of the symphony and formed the California String Quartet with Felix Khuner, who had been the second violin of the Kolisch Quartet, the great Viennese quartet that played all the Schoenberg and Alban Berg and Webern . . . premiere performances and two local musicians, Olshausen, who has just retired, as the first viola of the orchestra, and David Schneider, who wrote the definitive book on the symphony's life, as second violin. So we formed the California String Quartet. I also played recitals and I began to conduct.

Having learned who were the best players in the orchestra, I began to select them to play chamber orchestra concerts. There was a major neglect, not just in San Francisco but all around the world at the time, of the works that fall between the symphony repertoire and the chamber music repertoire. Anything beyond

nine players, let's say. There are master works of enormous importance that have been written throughout the centuries, but nobody ever played them, nobody ever heard them. So I contacted Betty Connors, who ran the University Extension Division, and she arranged funds for me to have a concert. We played the Mozart Little G Minor Symphony and the Bartók *Divertimento* for String Orchestra, which was then a first performance, probably on the West Coast. This was 1946, 47.

It was an instant success of major proportions, so that it was a natural thing to continue the orchestra which officially became the Barati Chamber Orchestra of San Francisco. I met a number of important San Francisco music patrons, the Levi Strauss family, primarily, the Haas family (Mrs. Haas just died and gave a fortune, millions of dollars worth of paintings to the Museum) and she was one of my patrons, and Walter Haas, and Ruth Lilienthal, and Dr. Ephraim Engelman . . .

Jarrell: Oh yes.

Barati: Great doctor, excellent violinist and we played string quartets often. All music lovers and all patrons of music, and Dr. Morton Meyer of Berkeley who knew them, raised enough money for me to organize my own chamber orchestra. It was no problem whatsoever.

Meeting Ruth Barati

Barati: In the meantime the most unique occasion occurred, of course, I met Ruth, at a concert, in Wheeler Hall on the U.C. campus. The Gordon Quartet performed and I was with Sessions. Afterwards Ruth and I met, and it was an instant close friendship and eventually marriage. I must say that Ruth was the first woman in my life who established a real "relationship" with me. I was a European man, and hadn't had the opportunity to know women in that manner. Woman was a strange . . . the other sex. The unknown sex, or the strange sex, or *only* sex. And so Ruth really led me to that feeling, to that sense of feeling where there was a wonderful exchange or ideas, not just sensuous, not just going to bed, but ideas of literature, of discussion, of politics—she was a partner, became

an instant partner to me. I remember I read Goethe in German at the first July 4th outing that we had in the Berkeley hills, and she read to me American poetry I'd never heard of before. Never heard of. So there was an instant wonderful relationship that kept growing and it is still with us.

So this was 1946. Now going into 1947. I finished the String Quartet, which our newly formed California String Quartet began to play immediately. The quartet members liked it enough to want to perform it publicly. Then I composed a Scherzo for Orchestra, the score of which I dared to give to Monteux. A few weeks later he said to me, "Mr. Barati, I liked your Scherzo. We are going to perform it." And I said, "Maître, before you decide, though I appreciate it, I am just finishing another piece. Could I show you that one which I consider a much more important work?" He said, "Yes, of course." He was very open and very willing to see music.

Jarrell: I'm very surprised.

Barati: Why are you surprised?

Jarrell: Because I think always of that period of conductors focusing on classic literature and not being very adventurous with contemporary work.

Barati: Monteux was different. Don't forget that it was in 1913 that he conducted the world premiere of *Sacre du Printemps* in Paris, Stravinsky's masterpiece. It was then that the audience revolted against the novel sounds and broke up the theater! Let me quickly add that exactly 50 years later, when the same performance with Monteux was repeated and with Stravinsky standing next to him on stage afterwards, the Paris audience gave them a twenty minute ovation! Yes, it takes many years for new and advanced ideas to permeate the average mentality.

Of course Monteux did *Sacre* in San Francisco too. He was a close friend of Stravinsky who also came to guest conduct the Symphony, as did Darius Milhaud, who taught composition at Mills College. So, Monteux was a most adventurous conductor. We played Roger Sessions' Second Symphony world premiere which came in 1947, I'll come to it in a minute. So Monteux was by far the most adventurous conductor in this country apart from Dimitri Mitropoulos, and that's about it . . . there was Toscanini but he didn't play anything advanced.

He was basically a Puccini man. Martucci was about the most advanced composer he performed.

Jarrell: That's where he stopped.

Barati: He stopped his growth about 1920, maybe. Monteux never did. Well, Monteux was afraid of *very* progressive music but he did the Sessions Symphony which was a vast enterprise at that time. So . . .

Jarrell: You gave Monteux your second composition.

Barati: I gave Monteux my piece which was to be called *Configuration*. And this was 1947 now and the Symphony was going on its transcontinental tour. We had our own train. This was in March, or April, 1947. We left San Francisco; went south through Texas; came up north to New York and Boston; and came back through Canada and came down to Sacramento. Several things happened. Khuner knew Mrs. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, the famous patron of string quartet literature in this country. Many composers were commissioned by her. He wrote Mrs. Coolidge who promptly engaged us to perform my quartet dedicated to her in Washington D.C. and also at Harvard University during our orchestra concert tour.

But first we played the String Quartet in a private home in San Francisco in Pacific Heights where there was an invited audience of thirty or forty people, some quite important. I found that my chair was too low. So I went to the piano where there were some very large scores. I opened one, it was George Antheil Symphony Number 2 or 3. I said, "Oh, that's just the right thing to sit on." After we played the piece a woman came to me, "Mr. Barati, I'm Mrs. George Antheil. And I don't think it was very nice of you." And I was deeply embarrassed. Deeply embarrassed. Well, we played the quartet successfully.

Then we went to Los Angeles and were invited to Schoenberg's home. Felix Khuner knew Schoenberg from Vienna, and had played all these works. This was a great moment for this totally unknown beginner composer, George Barati, when Schoenberg said, "I want to hear Mr. Barati's quartet." So we sat down in Schoenberg's home and we played my quartet to Schoenberg. I must tell you it was a very exciting moment. Schoenberg was a nervous little man who was never still. He came to me afterwards (he was famous for not praising

people directly). He had always analytical points to make. He said, "I appreciated very much your last movement beginning where you augmented in the cello the main theme. Then he said the famous classic statement, "And I appreciate that the piece is in twelve tone technique." I said to Schoenberg, "Mr. Schoenberg, it really isn't." He said, "It isn't? Well, but it *almost* is, isn't it?" Which was kind of . . . (laughter) you know, you can't be almost pregnant.

Jarrell: Yes, it's either/or.

Barati: Either/or. Well, it was close enough. He was right. Because I was very close to the style, but I did not write in twelve-tone ever. But I learned many of the characteristics of the technique so that occasionally it might have sounded as if it were in twelve tone.

The orchestra played in Washington, D.C. and we played my string quartet. Our performance was very successful; it got good reviews. We went to Harvard and played. After the performance, which was very well received, I was told, still taking a bow, that Mrs. Coolidge wanted to meet me; that she would be on my left when we came down from the podium. As we walked down into the hall a man stopped me and shook my hand, didn't say a word, bowed to me and I walked away. Then I went up to Mrs. Coolidge, and we talked; she liked my piece, and I thanked her for the wonderful gesture she made, and she said, "As I understand Walter Piston liked your music." I said, "He's here? I didn't know." "You shook hands with him." I said, "Oh, this gentleman just walked up to me, he didn't say a word; I didn't know who he was." So I went right back to Piston and I told him that I didn't know who he was, please forgive me. And we had a very nice chat and he did like the piece. So on this one trip, Schoenberg, Mrs. Coolidge and Piston . . . plus all the people in the audience heard my new music, which was a major moment for me.

Then as we got back home and Ruth met me at Sacramento. Monteux was very pleased to meet her, he liked her . . . we got back and I continued this exciting period of all these enormously intense musical activities—the String Quartet, the solo, the teaching, the composition—I finished *Configuration*, and I felt very happy with it. I gave it to Monteux and he said to me, "I like your music *Configuration*. We are going to perform it. Can you conduct?" I said, "Yes Maître, I can conduct." "You will conduct." That was all the contract. You never signed a

contract, it was so simple, so natural. This was how life was in 1947! In the fall in San Francisco we played the work, which was my first major composition for large orchestra, really, a ripe piece of music, I'm still very fond of it. I conducted the orchestra, the orchestra played very well for me. They liked me and the then personnel manager, Haug, said to me, "Barati, I don't know what you have but you've got something." That was the highest praise possible!

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: So my [Barati] Chamber Orchestra began to perform. The Symphony's best musicians were my chamber orchestra members. Wolsky, who was assistant concertmaster was my concertmaster. Frank Hauser was next to him. He died young but he became the orchestra's concertmaster and eventually our concertmaster. And of course Felix Khuner, David Schneider, Detlev Olshausen— my string quartet members.

Jarrell: In the archive, do you have programs and listings of the members?

Barati: I have programs. I have members. I have pictures.

Jarrell: Good.

Barati: I have pretty complete things. I must say that we performed the most progressive programs that you can imagine in San Francisco. Music that you [then] couldn't hear anywhere else. First performances, a number of first performances on the West Coast, and possibly in America, we played *Ode to Napoleon* of Schoenberg, which was the first twelve-tone piece, it turned out, that was performed in San Francisco. The Bartók *Divertimento* we played a number of times, the *Metamorphosis* of Strauss for 23 strings, a brand new piece, probably the first performance in America. No, I think it was the second performance, I think somebody played it before me, maybe George Szell. The Michael Tippett Concerto for Double String Orchestra; the Hindemith viola piece that our first violist, Molnár, played. My Chamber Concerto which I composed for that purpose, the first two movements were played, and in the audience were, Louis Kaufmann, for whom Berg wrote the Violin Concerto, Roger [Sessions] and his students: Andrew Imbrie, Leon Kirchner, who became Dean of Harvard Music Publishing, etc.

The orchestra became an instant success, with wonderful reviews, great promises, not sold-out houses, but there was enough enthusiasm that a board was formed to sponsor the orchestra, to continue its activities, and we played really very well. This was at the point where you couldn't make recordings yet. Recordings were made only by a few of the major orchestras. There was no grant support yet. If I had stayed in San Francisco for another year, and not gone to Honolulu . . . grants began to come. In fact my group maintained itself under a different aegis, with a different conductor, and they promptly got a large grant.

Monteux liked *Configuration* so much that he scheduled it again. Now this Monteux had never done. He was in San Francisco for 18 years and I think the only modern piece that Monteux scheduled for two consecutive seasons was my *Configuration*. Having played it in San Francisco under my direction, he now scheduled it in concerts at Stanford University and at [U.C.] Berkeley, and again I conducted it.

The Sessions Second Symphony was played, I think, early in 1947. Monteux conducted. It was a major, major contemporary work, a world premiere, of course. There were so many mistakes in the music prior to the first rehearsal that we, Sessions' students, stayed up half the night correcting them. Leon Kirchner, Andy Imbrie, Earl Kim and three or four others and I did this, and finally I told them I had to go so that I could be alert the next morning to rehearse. But they stayed up all night and many mistakes remained in it. But the concert went off very well. The work was not a major success. (It was just played two weeks ago by the San Francisco Symphony with Herbert Blomstedt and it was amazing how simple it sounded compared to 1947. It was a major performance, Monteux was very proud of himself, that he did the world premiere of the Sessions Second Symphony.

Then, also in 1947, I was approached, I think for the first time, by a publisher, Peer International, that they would publish my music. Eventually three works of mine, *Cantabile e Ritmico*, *Two Dances for Violin and Piano*, and *Prisma for Harp*, were published. I was very, very pleased. I was overwhelmed when I first saw the unusual color proof sheets. The *Prisma* got the second prize of the Northern California Harp Association. When a performance took place all the harpists came to me excited by the piece, but the first prize was given to a typical harp

piece, about all the redwoods of California, nothing to do with contemporary sounds.

The *Two Dances* I composed completely under the impression that I received from the famous performance of the Bartók Violin Concerto by the Symphony, Monteux, and Tossy Spivakovsky. And I was overwhelmed by Tossy's incredible tone and depth of understanding of the Bartók Concerto. It was a colossal success. *Time* Magazine gave it an enormous write up. Tossy was made. I went back stage to see him and we became friends.

I saw him in New York two months later on my way to the MacDowell Colony, where I was accepted as a member, a great honor in those years. We agreed that I would compose a piece for him. The *Two Dances* were the result that summer but I was so impressed with Bartók, that probably it was the closest work I've ever composed under Bartók's influence. Tossy loved the pieces, played them coast to coast, and even though I composed them entirely for his particular tone, and bowings, when he eventually came to Honolulu and played them for me, when he played the Bartók with us in Hawaii, also a great performance, he played them all, contrary to my expectations, so the bowing and the phrasing were really very different. I was quite disappointed but he played wonderfully. The Bartók Concerto in our performance was also an overwhelming success, so much so that we signed a contract with the Bellock Company which was just starting a major recording firm. It still exists, I think, under different control. They wanted to record the Bartók, but it never took place. They kept postponing and debating things. At that time to record the Bartók Concerto would have been a major economic enterprise. They didn't dare, especially because at the same time Dorati and Menuhin brought out a very successful first recording in which I took part as a cellist in the orchestra in Dallas. I was still a soldier there. I wasn't as happy with Menuhin's playing as Tossy's, in this particular piece.

The Composers' Forum

Barati: A year later, in 1948 or so, we formed the Composers' Forum in San Francisco, a group of young composers around Sessions and Milhaud. We played each year about six concerts. I performed quite a few times with our California String Quartet, and other groups. We played a tremendous number of

novel performances, even first performances sometimes. Then when my Chamber Orchestra started I found that the musicians union had never heard of chamber orchestra [as such] as a defined performance group falling between chamber music and orchestra, and they insisted on paying so much for the players that we couldn't afford it. So I went to them and eventually they assigned me to write the rules, union rules, for chamber orchestras. I think probably to this day, these might still be functioning as work rules for musicians. I might say that at that time the Barati Chamber Orchestra was the very first such organization in San Francisco.

I played a couple of seasons in the San Francisco Opera orchestra, and also joined the small secondary opera company, the Pacific Opera, which was a casual outfit. It was run by Casiglia who was very well known in the outlying towns. He took this so-called opera company on tour, and the company was an orchestra of about, 14, with one cello. So when I was playing solo cello, in big opera scenes like *Carmen* or other works where the cello section had to be played, the single bass player, Phil Karp, the Symphony's first player, sat behind me and we kind of shared the bass and cello parts and he turned the pages for me while I played the solo cello.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: Modesto, even San Jose, were villages at that time, up north, I don't know how far we went, but we played quite a few of these one night stands, sometimes without rehearsal. Imagine an opera, *Rigoletto, Carmen, Traviata*—with no rehearsal.

To know Monteux's wonderful simplicity—at Stanford he came to me and said, "Monsieur Barati, I can't hear your music today." (He had heard every rehearsal. And he heard the performance in San Francisco.) "I can't hear your music today. I have to study my scores." This sounded like a typical cheap excuse. He didn't have to excuse himself. He had heard it already. But the concertmaster came to me, Blinder, and said, "Barati, you don't believe him, do you? Let me show you something." He took me to Monteux's dressing room. The door was open. There was this enormous dressing room mirror, in front of which was a large score, the Sibelius Second Symphony, which he was to conduct after my playing *Configuration*, and there was Monteux standing, studying the score. So he didn't

fake it. He really meant it. He would have heard my piece except for the fact that he had to study the score. He always studied his scores. He knew them by heart, better than any conductor except Toscanini, that I've experienced working under. Well, then this was now the end of '47, and into '48.

When the Schoenberg *Ode to Napoleon* performance by the Chamber Orchestra came, this was now in 1948, the speaker in the piece didn't accept my instructions. Schoenberg's instructions are very carefully explained, a *sprech stimme,* a quasi-sing song, where the rising and falling pitch have to be independent from the music. It's not notated, except in very rough terms. It sounds like, "and then he said to him (high pitch) that he's going to die (low pitch) and did he die, no he didn't die (high pitch)." This was kind of a general manner, I'm exaggerating but my speaker didn't believe me. So I said, "OK, let's go see Schoenberg." I went to the phone, called Schoenberg, said, "Could we come down and have you show us?" "He said, "Yes, come down." So the next day we flew to Schoenberg's home. We sat down and talked a little bit. Then I asked Schoenberg would he please show my friend how he intended the speaker's part. So he began to do it, and after two minutes my friend said, "Well this is just the way you, George, said it, isn't it?" I said, "Yes, it is." So in a sense we wasted our trip, but in another sense we had direct instructions from Schoenberg who explained how to seat the group, and what to do, so there was a very marvelous . . . direct personal touch in our performance. We played the work twice and those who didn't wish to stay . . . I announced it from the stage, that we were going to play it [again] after intermission and those who didn't wish to hear it were welcome to leave, we wouldn't be offended.

Jarrell: Why did you play it twice?

Barati: Because it's so difficult. People had no experience with twelve tone music in live performances and hearing it a second time had a much better, much more complete, much richer experience. It actually worked out very well. It really helped us, too, to play the hard parts. . . The speaker's name was Rider Thorsen, wonderful Scandinavian name.

Well . . . I have to think where I am. So . . . '48 came . . . the great moment that Ruth and I decided that we should get married. In the meantime I moved out of the Schnitzler house, having lived there for six glorious months, where we

played music, performed for friends in the wonderful large living room. Ruth came to hear chamber music.

Another connection between Ruth and me was the fact that she knew all the musical situations that meant so much to me. She loved chamber music; she loved string quartets. She grew up in Los Angeles when Klemperer was the conductor of the orchestra, who was my great god from Budapest, and so there were these great musical ties between us. But first we decided to celebrate before we got married. And that was at the opening of the Aspen Goethe Centennial the summer I moved down first to the same apartment house that Ruth lived in . . . on Channing Way in Berkeley and I took a larger apartment than Ruth had because I was now a celebrity . . . you know, I made 82 dollars a week, and I was engaged by the San Francisco Opera. The second year, I was very successful, I was really an accomplished cellist in those years and my orchestra colleagues thought highly of me, my conducting and everything. So the opera asked me to join; the opera was the great plum of West Coast musical life. The San Francisco Opera played a season of, I don't know, eight weeks in San Francisco, and then went down to Los Angeles for four weeks. And I got paid $92.50 a week, so this was a very large amount of money I earned.

Jarrell: I didn't realize that would be a plum.

Barati: Oh, it was a plum, it was a tremendous plum both financially and musically. I mean the musicians who were in the Symphony and the Opera were the absolute top of the heap. So we went down to Los Angeles. We had a wonderful time. But I paid a toll. I should mention it now. I paid the toll because not having played cello for over two years in the Army, and suddenly finding myself in every imaginable musical activity in San Francisco, I played cello six, eight, ten hours a day. I hurt my shoulder. I developed a muscle tension of some sort in the left shoulder, or left back. I began to feel discomfort playing cello. So this was at the moment when my career was going way up; I was one of the most successful musicians in San Francisco, coming up from the orchestra which was very highly thought of in those years in the community. I guess as it is now, but differently, it was more social.

So . . . I will interrupt this now and go back to the trip. I bought my first car. Our friend was the police chief of Berkeley, who said that if I bought a secondhand

car I would be swindled, but if he bought it, we could trust it. So we got a good car and I got my license, which was a great major problem because Lili Schnitzler, who taught me, always told me to put the car in gear on an uphill and said, "Okay George, now start it." And I could never start the car. It always died on me. They were leaving on vacation and they said, "George you are going to be here alone, what are you going to do?" I said "I'm going to go down and get a driver's license." She said, "But you could never do it. You can't drive a car." So I went to the test and passed it. When I came home they really didn't believe me. Well, I passed it because once I got on the flat level I could manage quite well enough. So I was alone then.

I had a license and Ruth and I started out to Aspen, Colorado for the Goethe Centennial. We had a wonderful week or ten days, not only Albert Schweitzer was a lecturer, whom we saw daily there, but a number of major international literary figures. Borghese, the husband of one of the Thomas Mann daughters. Her brother, Michael Mann was a friend of ours. I had met Thomas Mann at Princeton, and had heard his lectures there. Thornton Wilder was also there lecturing. He'd had the same room at the MacDowell Colony, which I was a member of by that time. We had each been assigned a room; as Thornton Wilder moved out, I moved in. So when he finished his lecture and he sat alone at the dining room, I went to him. I said, "I am a MacDowell colleague of yours, and loved your lecture." We talked for a couple of minutes. Staggering. Probably one of the best of the international crowd of eight, ten, fifteen great speakers and minds in the field of Goethe literature and science, because Goethe was a major figure in science in many ways. It was a marvelous experience for us.

At the same time Molnár performed my new piece *Cantabile e Ritmico for Viola and Piano* in 1947 at the Colorado Springs Music Festival. So we drove down to Colorado Springs, heard the rehearsal, Nicolas Slonimsky, famous musicologist, was his pianist. He played it very well. Coming back from Colorado Springs the great car that the Berkeley police chief bought for me broke down. So Ruth had to go up to Aspen and get a tow truck and I sat there in this place called Lovelock, Nevada, where I composed music for a performance in San Francisco of *The Love of Don Perlimplin*—a play by Lorca, which was to be played the following season. So then we drove back to Aspen where I also met with

Mitropoulos who had been always a quasi-friend of mine from San Francisco Symphony days.

There was a tremendous rainstorm which started in mid-afternoon as they began the concert in the wonderful new tent, the tent that is still there and was first used at the Saarinen occasion. So there was Mitropoulos down in the front and the rain interrupted the Minneapolis Symphony performance. So while everyone waited I went down and said hello to Mitropoulos; I walked down to the conductor's podium in sight of this whole audience of some ten thousand people. I had a marvelous chat with him on stage. Pictures were taken which appeared in every music magazine in the following months. When the rain stopped they continued the concert.

Marriage to Ruth Barati

Barati: Then we came back to San Francisco and got married. The marriage was of course the major moment for me of the opera season, because we decided that having finished the opera season in Los Angeles, where Ruth's parents lived, on Halloween Day, October 31, 1948, we should run out and get married. After a Wagner *Die Meistersinger* performance on Sunday afternoon which Ruth stood through, we got a bus and went down to Laguna Beach, where we were married. Ruth and I agreed that we didn't want any fancy, typical marriage of the traditional kind, so she tried to find somebody who would do it the right way. One of her classmates and close friends, Jack Pyle, was an Episcopalian minister in Chicago. He couldn't make it but he said, "I know what you want—no formality, no dogma, no junk, no idiocy. I know just the right person for you who is in Laguna Beach." So we went down and in his private home he performed the ceremony. His wife was the witness. And he did exactly everything we did not want. The most saccharine, most Christian, most sticky ceremony, with all the God's promises you can imagine were given to us and Ruth and I got more and more worried that this marriage wouldn't work out with such a start. Ruth crossed her fingers. Then when he finished he turned to me and said, "Now we know you are an important conductor and my wife is an organist and a pianist and she would like to have an audition."

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: And we had to sit down and listen to her amateur performance for a good 45 minutes!

Recording Barati's String Quartet

Barati: Then I think I should also speak now of the event that started me out in various directions, the repeat performance of *Configuration* by the San Francisco Symphony, the second season, when we played in Stanford and Berkeley. The Berkeley performance was attended by a bunch of our good friends, partly from the Big Sur artists, partly from our Berkeley friends. They came to our house for a reception. We had still separate apartments, Ruth and I, in the same apartment building. The reception was held in mine, since it was a larger one, with a lovely Bay window. They asked me questions. They were overwhelmed by the piece. They wanted to record *Configuration*. Some asked questions about the work—what I tried to express, and how to record it.

So I made my first stand-up speech about my own composition. I made a twenty minute speech to them about the fact that musical expression cannot be defined in terms that Richard Strauss tried to define, which was that every gesture can be expressed in music. I said it depended on the audience, on the listener; each listener hears in his or her terms the music and approximates it in literary or visual terms. But it can't be directly conveyed. I can't convey a love scene of a man kissing a girl. Strauss claimed that he could. He was wrong.

The other question was how to record the piece. I said it was impossible that we, this group of poor artists and budding doctors could collect enough money for such a major enterprise, but since we had already played my String Quartet previously on tour, at Schoenberg's house and in Washington, [D.C.], at Harvard and in San Francisco, we could record that work. So they decided to make it an official venture: that they would organize the finances and I would be in charge of making a recording and they would get the money for it. So this started out and it was an enormous, wonderful excitement for all of us. Very soon, we were able to find a recording company in San Francisco with connections in Hollywood. Our quartet recorded the piece. The Big Sur crowd, including Benny

Bufano, San Francisco sculptor, Henry Miller, Lilik Schatz, the Israeli painter, his sister Zahara Schatz, a jewelry maker, Dr. Mort Meyer from Berkeley who was then Ruth's employer and a close friend of both of us, and Emil White, the painter began to collect subscriptions, which eventually totalled around 130, enough for the expenses of the cost of recording.

The big moment came when the recording arrived from Hollywood, beautiful red vinyl, the first vinyl material used for recordings. Dr. Meyer, Ruth and I drove down to Big Sur, to Nepenthé, which was then a meeting place for artists and local people, not for tourists like it is today. They arranged a morning coffee with the purpose of listening to the new recording of the piece. There were probably 20 people or so, I would think.

They put on the recording and it wasn't loud enough, so somebody said, "Stop it. Put it higher, much higher." They tried again, again there was not enough sound. It turned out there was no sound on the recording. The plastic material was so new that they failed to check it. I don't know what happened, but there was simply no sound, the recordings were a total loss. The whole project was a complete disaster.

We had to renegotiate the whole thing. The company refused to make new copies, so Ruth and I decided we had to pay for it. I paid small amounts of money for probably three years, until I said to them, "No more. It was your fault and I paid enough for it." But anyway, the new recording finally came, arrived maybe six months later, and were distributed to the subscribers. A friendship started with the Big Sur artists, and my first professional, commercial recording was made. The recording which was privately issued with my signature on every copy, included a cover with beautiful artwork by Lilik Schatz, and program notes by Alfred Frankenstein, then the number one critic of the whole area. The Firehouse Five record company later decided to re-record and re-issue the record commercially. At my suggestion they renamed the company Contemporary Records. Their first recording was my String Quartet, in their new serious music series. Until then they had only recorded jazz.

Then out of these concerts we had met a wonderful couple, a well-known local painter, Hamilton Wolff, a professor at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland. His wife, Laura Jane, was the head of the art department of Gumps in

San Francisco. Two wonderful, charming lovely older people. We became very good friends. Hamilton suggested that I give a lecture at his college on music. So I was now, having given lectures to the troops for a year about knowing the enemy, and having given a small lecture on my own music to my friends, now I was prepared to give lectures on music. With great excitement I wrote out part of my lecture, I remember, and I gave my first serious lecture at the College of Arts and Crafts. This was in 1948.

In Berkeley, among our friends was a novelist, Gilbert Nieman and his wife Margaret. He published his first novel while we were friends. He belonged to the Big Sur group, was friends with Henry Miller. We used to go to Big Sur; Dr. Mort Meyer, Ruth and I picked up bottles of wine on the way to Big Sur, in country vineyards that were unknown at that time. Now they are very famous. They were all beginning to produce wine. We arrived in Big Sur and stayed over on the weekends with these artist friends. We went abalone fishing and the girls cooked them and we had a wonderful, enchanted time. Some great moons. Abalone hunting. Swimming in the nude out in the creek there. And great discussions with Henry Miller and the others. I remember my visit to Henry Miller's house up, high up . . .

Jarrell: On Partington Ridge.

Barati: I had a real lesson from Henry in one minute because the windows were tiny and I said to Henry, "Why it's too bad you can't look out. You hardly can see." He said, "Look around. That's dull. The ocean never changes from this height but nature always changes," and he showed the greens on the side, the moonlight, sunlight hitting them, always changing their shades and shadows. And the play of colors, the many greens. Subsequently we lived in Hawaii in a very similar house on a mountaintop and I never forgot my lesson because we almost never looked out to the ocean. We were up 1700 feet. The ocean was the same from that height. But the greens and nature always changed. It was a real lesson from Henry. He said, "You have to frame nature." He's right.

I also should mention just in passing that I used to visit Darius Milhaud at Mills College. He heard my String Quartet and felt that I did very well but I should still watch not to interrupt main themes. Then Leon Kirchner suggested that he wanted to play for me his just finished piano concerto that was to be played by

the New York Philharmonic with Mitropoulos. Leon got a very big prize, I forgot what prize it was. Since I was a budding conductor, and a colleague he came to my house and on a small upright piano played the whole piece. I said to him, I think I shocked him, "Leon, it's wonderful but you're not playing what's written." Because Leon was a wonderful pianist, he played with such freedom that for a very tightly controlled rhythmic piece it would have been very hard if not impossible to really be together with the orchestra. So I think he restudied it and he played it with the New York Philharmonic within a year or so and recorded it. To this day that's a well known recording of that piano concerto.

We also met Earl Kim who was then a budding composer, Sessions' pupil. He's now very well known at Princeton. So life was very complete and these three and a half years in San Francisco were comparable to my six years in Budapest. Very intensely musical, discovering new things, moving forward all the time, building, developing, learning and producing with much excitement.

Resignation from the San Francisco Symphony

Barati: And I think I've come here to the dark side of the moon, you know, the part of the moon that you never can see. I think in one's life, in one's personality there are always the hidden parts, the moments that one hates to mention, wants to avoid even remembering because they are the "bad parts," the shadow parts. Well, it started, as I mentioned, that my back, my shoulder, gave me trouble when I played cello. There was a certain tight spot below my left shoulder blade that didn't allow me to have free vibrato on the cello. I was a very good cellist, so much so that Monteux when he took me in paid me more than the minimum that musicians got usually at first. I was a special member of the symphony from the beginning. I also, by the way, became a member of the negotiating team for the union, five of us I think, went to the symphony board to negotiate a new contract each year or two. All of this was threatened by my shoulder problem.

Jarrell: And this was your livelihood.

Barati: My livelihood. In fact I had somewhere added up that in my first year, 1946, I earned about $1700 apart from my Army pay, which was a very large amount of money. With the opera I earned probably twice as much, very big money for those years. But suddenly here I was. The opera playing, that was one or two rehearsals a day, long opera performances that amounted to about six, eight hours of playing. Then I had the string quartet, solos . . . I was teaching too. The chamber orchestra had started already but it was the exception because that was a hobby. The problem was cello playing, which was more and more difficult.

I felt, as I said, disturbed. I said to Monteux that I had this problem and I felt that if it didn't improve I would have to resign. I didn't feel it was fair to him or the symphony to pay me more than the minimum that I was getting. And Monteux said, "Mr. Barati you play very well for me. Well enough, don't worry." But I worried. And so my first step was to have my doctor friends examine me. One was Dr. Engelman. He was a specialist. After he examined me, he said, "George the only thing I can see is a little ripple on your muscles, a little muscle tension." That was a symptom but he didn't realize it. So then I resigned from the opera. I just couldn't sit in that pit every day for I don't know how many hours.

Jarrell: Were you in pain, George?

Barati: I was not in pain. I had discomfort.

Jarrell: And you were tense?

Barati: Well, I was tense. I was uncomfortable, I wasn't happy with it. And here in the peak of my growing period, and achievement, suddenly this thing hit me. It was not major but could have become major. As I said I resigned from the opera. William Steinberg, one of the opera guest conductors, didn't believe that I'd resigned. He said, "Barati why did Merola kick you out? Let me help you. We need you. You are a good cellist. Let me talk to Merola." I said, "Mr. Steinberg, you ask him at the reception after the opera performance. I did resign." And Steinberg went to Merola and I went with him, and Merola said, "Aah Barati, bad boy. Barati bad boy resigned. Won't play opera." Then Steinberg believed me. But it didn't help.

Then came a crucial moment, one of those lightnings in one's life that happens maybe once or twice in a lifetime. In early December a telegram arrived from

Honolulu. It offered me a guest conducting stint for two months, mentioned the amount of money, and I would have to be there from January 21, to the end of March. Here I was in this difficult situation. This was the perfect solution. I visualized sunshine; I had never been in Hawaii, I didn't know a single soul there, the only thing I knew about it was that it was warm, sunny.

It would be the ideal thing. But, I had to get released from Monteux for the two month period. I had a contract from November to May.

Monteux was away on vacation in Hancock, Maine, his wife's home town, where he had a summer school. So I went to Howard Skinner, the symphony manager and told him I would like to have a release for two months and I told him why, that I had a health problem and a wonderful chance to rest up. Skinner said, "Well, all I can do is talk to Monteux. I will call him tomorrow anyway and we'll tell you." He came back and said that Monteux said, "No, he couldn't release me."

In the meantime I was having Barati Chamber Orchestra rehearsals just prior to Christmas and the concert was probably the day after Christmas. I wrote to Monteux and went back to Skinner, and said, "Look, please explain to him this is a lifesaver for me. I beg him to give me a chance." Monteux was very known for disliking those who left him. The famous case was his first flutist, I don't know his name, who went to Hollywood in the years when Hollywood was growing madly and enormous monies were earned by musicians. He left Monteux years before I came. The orchestra still remembered how angry Monteux was at him. So here I was asking Monteux to let me go. Monteux again said no. Then he said I could go but I couldn't come back.

Jarrell: You couldn't come back?

Barati: So here I was. My need was to have a rest. My chance was to conduct a two-month guest conducting stint, with no promise, no hope of a longer engagement. But Monteux said no. So my livelihood was truly threatened. I had to go so I resigned from the symphony and the deadline for me to answer Honolulu was our dress rehearsal. We were rehearsing in the Veterans Auditorium, which is now called Herbst Hall, which I discovered. Nobody used it for concerts. I was the first. And soon after Monteux began to use it for the symphony's small chamber orchestra. We were rehearsing there, so I made

arrangements to go out at exactly 11:30 to call Honolulu to accept the engagement. I continued playing until the middle of January, 1950. The following event occurred during these final weeks when Mitropoulos was the guest conductor. The program included the Alban Berg Violin Concerto with Joseph Szigeti and Honegger's *King David.* Because of the large choir on stage, Mitropoulos stood on a extra high podium so that his shoes were exactly on level with my eyes, only some eight feet away. At one point in the choral work Mitropoulos stopped and said, "Can't you follow me better, chorus? Can't you see my beat?" Now, he did not use a baton, instead he used his ten fingers somewhat like playing piano, with separate motions. And I, without thinking said to his question, "Which one?" He heard me and gave me an angry look.

Twenty minutes later, during intermission, a group of us musicians argued about the merits of the complex Berg Concerto. Khuner and I favored it; three to four others opposed it. At the point of the loudest argument, one of the group said, "But look, Barati . . . !" and at that point Mitropoulos walked by us. He stopped and asked me point blank, "Are *you* Barati?" I said, "yes," knowing that he must have complained to the personnel manager about my remark and here was the pay-off to come. He said, "*George* Barati?" "Yes," I said. Mitropoulos added, "Please, come into my dressing room." This was the end of my career, I thought, as I followed him. In his room he said, "I just received your score, the *Configuration*, from a mutual friend of ours. I really like the piece. When I return here for my re-engagement in a year or so, I'll play it both here and in New York." (He was then the Music Director of the New York Philharmonic.)

I was stunned. Instead of punishment, I got the greatest possible praise as an unknown, budding composer: a promise of discovery, through this world-famous conductor! I didn't quite believe it and promptly asked him a question. The composition had two endings because Monteux didn't like the first one. It was too quiet for him and he said to me, "Do you want the audience to fall asleep? You better wake them up with a loud ending!" So, I wrote a second ending.

But old Dimitri said the right thing, "I must prefer the second ending. The first is too quiet!" Boy, I was really excited. Unfortunately, before he could carry out his promise he died.

SETTLING IN HAWAII

The Honolulu Symphony

Barati: On January 19, 1950 I left for Hawaii for two months of recovery. Ruth couldn't come yet. She followed about two or three weeks later. Arriving in Hawaii, was very peculiar. Having come from Central Europe, my only experience with heat apart from one tour of Italy with the orchestra from Hungary, was my Army life in Louisiana where I learned to hate sunshine. So when I was going to Honolulu I made very careful inquiries about what to wear, what to take. Do I need an overcoat? And they told me, "Well it gets chilly in the evenings. You may need an overcoat." (Laughter)

When the plane landed I put my overcoat on. I wore it, and my hat, because I had two pieces of luggage to carry. They opened the door and this enormous heat wave attacked me. The plane arrived in the late afternoon. I realized that I made my first mistake with Hawaii. I didn't need an overcoat or hat or jacket or heavy shirt. I needed nothing. Just a swim suit. I was met by the orchestra manager and his wife, and the personnel manager and his wife. My first symphony meeting took place in Waikiki at a restaurant called The Tropics, a well-known restaurant, where they ate and drank and I just had a few bites. I realized that probably they'd charged the whole meal to the symphony, which was my first insight where to start saving money for the symphony. When I went to his house for afternoon meetings during the first few days as guest conductor, there was a large pitcher prepared and he and his wife each drank about six, eight martinis. I may have had one. So life in Hawaii was complete.

Jarrell: It was island life.

Barati: It was island life. I discovered very early what to do. I was in a fine hotel; I swam everyday in the morning, took my scores down to the water and met people at various meetings arranged at the beach. It was just wonderful. Very soon I met many people, even before first rehearsals, among them the president

of Punahou School, John Fox, who was a sportsman, a famous coach. He arranged volleyball at the Punahou summer camp.

There I hurt my back. I strained my back and I was obliged to go to two very famous two women doctors, both osteopaths. They massaged and worked on me and I was well immediately. I told them in passing that I had this problem with my shoulder, could they also check that. They were of American Indian descent. The lady, who was a medical doctor, put her finger right on the spot and nobody could find it until then. She said, "Here, isn't it?" I said, "Yes." They cured me in two weeks of my cello problem. I played cello quite well for years after that.

Then the orchestra rehearsals started. At that time the symphony was an amateur orchestra in poor shape. The Honolulu Symphony was started about 1900 by a group of amateurs, missionary families, local people—they all played musical instruments. They started out playing and organizing an orchestra of maybe twenty or thirty players. Sunday afternoon rehearsals were followed by a beer party. But slowly it grew, to the point where they engaged a very fine English conductor, Fritz Hart, a classmate of Elgar, and Vaughan-Williams.

[tape breakage, inaudible voices for approximately one-half minute—Editor.]

He stayed for 18 years during which he performed Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, interspersed with short pieces of Elgar, Debussy, and Delius. One of the saddest events of Fritz Hart's life in Hawaii—and one that should have been a warning to me—was that he read in the *newspaper* without previous notice from the symphony board that he was dismissed from his position.

At my first rehearsal, after a few remarks of greeting, I called on Mr. Sato, the first oboist, for an "A" for the customary tuning up. I saw many startled expressions and learned a few days later that Maestro Hart never bothered to learn the names of even the key players of the orchestra! But when I looked through the programs of the symphony on the plane, I was intrigued to find names such as Iwanaga, Chang, Sato, as first winds or strings. The timpanist was Mr. Wong. I was used to names ranging from Jones to Schneider. This inadvertent gesture of interest produced an instant atmosphere of warmth.

On the other hand, I soon learned of the total schism that existed in the orchestra. The concertmaster and the excellent first cellist headed two parties of about equal strength among the players, the board, and even the community. They did not even speak to each other. The consequence of this fact was that I had to spend my first few weeks befriending *both* sides, then acting as a peacemaker. In the process I also persuaded several key musicians to return to the orchestra. They had dropped out due to the controversy but soon I had a new realignment and our first concert was a stunning success.

During the guest-conducting period I arranged the first youth concert with the help of several mothers who had been trying unsuccessfully for years to establish musical education in the schools. We had about 15,000 youngsters in the largest available hall, the wrestling auditorium; every fire truck and ambulance was stationed outside, I had the complete responsibility for all these lives. There is no way I would accept such a burden today!

At the end of the two months period the board engaged me unanimously. All this happened within three months' time from my initial problems with my shoulder to finding myself the music director of an orchestra with some real potential. We all wondered how this happened.

Jarrell: How did your name get referred to the Honolulu Symphony?

Barati: This manager, whose name escapes me was a concert manager in Hawaii. He engaged touring soloists and produced concerts in towns and special series. He had four or five concerts a year like that. He and the symphony had the same kind of a fight as the symphony had within itself. There are always fights in Hawaii. When he was in San Francisco he read reviews of my Chamber Orchestra concert. The reviews were always excellent; I got from the very beginning, very, very good reviews from everybody. There was Frankenstein from *The Chronicle* . . . there was Fried, critic for *The Examiner*. There was Joe Biskind of the monthly magazine in San Francisco; Margaret Schubert, at another magazine in Marin County. I got absolutely high praise for my programming, for my performance. I was a great success.

So he must have read these, I found out. For some reason, he maybe tried to prevent somebody else from getting the job and mentioned my name to them.

Somehow they got the reviews maybe, and they sent this telegram. That's the only thing I've ever found out. There are other people who claim that they "got me to Hawaii." But you know how it is after the fact.

Jarrell: Another question I'd like to ask you. It's one thing to accept a two-month stint on a lovely tropical island. But considering that you'd come from the cream of Central European musical life, I'm interested, why did you accept?

Barati: Well, it's very interesting, because, I had talked to managers in New York in the previous years; I always said to them, "Give me a chance. Let me conduct anywhere. I'll go anywhere to conduct. I will build a musical life." In Dallas I was very close to being engaged. In San Francisco I built my own orchestra, my own situation. In the Army I built an orchestra. In Princeton I built an amateur string orchestra. I knew I could do it. I was always a builder.

It didn't occur to me that Hawaii wouldn't be the right place. The only doubts I had throughout were that by getting away from musical centers, having to deal with inferior musicians, I would slip, too, that I would lose touch with the elite of musical life. But once I started I realized that it's either within me or it's not in me; it has to originate in me.

Once they offered me the job, by that time I'd conducted the orchestra several times, and a big youth concert. The whole town was behind me. My success was of major proportions. Again, I have to remind you, Hawaii builds its favorites into superhuman beings. Later on I used to say, "I have to leave Hawaii quite often to be cut down to size." Because very soon I was a phenomenon in Hawaii. I couldn't go anywhere where I wouldn't be recognized. I mean, the outermost spots of any island. In a gas station we'd stop for gas and kids would say, "Hey, there's Barati!" They knew I was Barati and I was the Music Man. If they didn't know my name . . . "Oh, you are the guy, the music man . . ." They would imitate conducting.

The board consisted of civic leaders, all but three Republicans. The exceptions were Gregg Sinclair, the President of the University of Hawaii, J. Russell Cades, lawyer for the symphony and his elegant wife; and Judge Jerry Corbett, who played triangle in the orchestra. Cades played viola, and later Nancy Corbett, after her husband's death was another most able person. Most of the board

members were of the Big Five families of the Islands, originally missionaries, later the most successful corporate achievers. I was an arch-Democrat, a progressive, which produced also some tensions in the very first year.

Integrating the Honolulu Symphony

Barati: For instance, one of my early proposals was that the symphony must grow, that the audience cannot be limited to two or three hundred. McKinley Auditorium seated 1700, so we had to have at least half a house. The only way to do it was to begin to bring in Asians. So from the very beginning, the first year on, I pushed the board to accept Asians as board members. There were some very well-to-do Chinese and Japanese, who didn't "belong" to the upper classes. Life was a hundred percent white, and for instance the Pacific Club didn't accept Asian members, which became later an issue with James Michener and Barati. After much resistance at the end of the first season they said, "All right George, why don't you prepare a list for us and let's discuss whom you suggest."

So Ruth, dear Ruth, started inviting people to our house for dinner—invited young Asian lawyers, doctors, important businessmen. We had very hard evenings, making conversation with timid Asians who wouldn't quite dare to come out of their skin yet. Even though we were totally open and friendly, not condescending. I sound now condescending. I didn't mean to imply that. To us these were just young people we wanted to know.

As a matter of fact, one of the leading Chinese families was the Chun Hoon family, and daughter Karen was married to Judge Chuck Mau; she played in the orchestra and they became close friends.

Jarrell: You were trying to get to know this other part of Honolulu society . . .

Barati: Trying to grow. We were excited by meeting Asians. We were invited to Asian homes of enormous wealth, with beautiful Oriental artwork, and wonderful cooking. So eventually I organized, with Ruth's help, about six people. One of them was Ralph Yamaguchi, a young lawyer. I went to the board and the board said, "Who is this Yamaguchi?" And I said, "Well, he's a young lawyer, a Harvard *cum laude* graduate. He's going to be an important person in the community; give it five or ten years and I think it will be very helpful to have him or people like him on the board." Finally the wife of one of the bank

presidents, who was from a missionary family said, "Oh, I know who you mean. He is the son of my gardener. Oh sure, we helped him go to school." I said, "I don't know whose son he is but he's a *cum laude* lawyer, he's going to be in ten years' time a civic leader, while the missionaries won't be anymore." I got this startled reaction from the missionary families. I turned out to be absolutely right, Ralph Yamaguchi today, is a civic leader, a very important established lawyer, and still a friend of mine. The missionaries are not.

Jarrell: What a radical direction you proposed in 1950.

Barati: Right, eventually, after a year, the Board decided that they would agree. And you know what happened? The twenty-one member board expanded itself to, I think a fifty-four member board. But, they allowed about four or five Asians to come on the board, while expanding the numbers so large with more Caucasians, *haoles* we call them, that the proportion was worse. They had no influence. But they were able to bring money in, provide money of their own and an enlarged audience began to trickle in.

I have to make a statement here first. The symphony managers were always amateur, local people, either wives or some business person with only a limited notion of bookkeeping, but we never had a professional manager for years and years. But the orchestra grew enormously under my managerial as well as musical guidance. This became an important issue six or eight years later.

So one of my suggestions, for instance, was to have a certain kind of soloist, supported by certain kind of people, say a Filipino artist. We had thousands of Filipino workers, out in the pine and sugar fields. Let the sugar company and the pineapple company officially bring them in, buy tickets for them, bring them in. And they did. So we had a Filipino artist and we had four hundred Filipino workers for a partly Filipino, partly American pop concert. Not rock music, but popular stuff. Operettas. Broadway musicals. The known things. It was a great success. A Filipino song, I had them sing. We went to Pearl Harbor. The military would pay for youth concerts and evening concerts. I organized also some Chinese community concerts and Narcissus Festival concerts. These were my ideas. They paid for themselves. So when Grant Johannesen, a Mormon, came, the Mormons came to the first concert and we had a sold-out house during the end of either the first or second year. Until then the orchestra had played for

limited audiences. Each year our statistics showed growth; we had more concerts each year; we had larger audiences.

We were in the black every year because I never allowed the budget to go beyond our ability. As we grew, the budget grew. But I kept it within control. For instance, my first trouble in my first year was with the concertmaster. I must expound on this a little bit. He was paid, I think, $1700 for the year, which was good pay, but not by any means enough to make a living. But his wife earned $600 as a violist. I said, "You'll get the same pay as symphony members who were making $200 a year, if that much. You won't lose money, but we'll require you to work more so that the others won't feel this tremendous disparity." To make it palatable, I said to him reasonably, "You will play a couple of solo recitals. So you'll work two hours a week more but you'll get the same money. Eventually you'll get more money as we grow." Well, it was unacceptable to him, so a big battle ensued. He had very powerful support in the audience. So he just resigned at the end of the first year, and left with great disgust with me. Many of my close friends were supporting him.

These things always happened in Hawaii. Every year there were some major disasters of this kind. Usually because of this peculiar feeling, and I don't know how to explain it to you except as a side-effect of the island mentality. It is the same to this day. People just up and leave; you can call it island fever or feeling rock-bound as a side-effect of a ingrown, insular life. People can't take it any more, get angry. Or the other way around. People that didn't talk to you for years suddenly become good friends of yours. It's irrational many times.

So the concertmaster left and there was a problem because we had to replace him. He was an important person there. He had great support. But he was in the wrong and I don't think I could have explained to his friends what I was trying to do. But anyway, we went on, and we grew. Our programs increasingly included new music. Every concert always included an unusual piece of music, from say, the Bartók Violin Concerto, or the Piano Concerto, to Stravinsky, or major American works. I played native American composers. I played Wallingford Riegger, Henry Cowell, Bernstein, the Virgil Thomson Cello Concerto. We played a world premiere of Hovhannes' Sixteenth Symphony, which also caused me some trouble in New York. My own publisher, Peters, sent me a telegram that I should postpone the first performance because Stokowski

had scheduled it for the same time. And I said, "Well, that's too bad. This was commissioned from a Hawaiian family, and I was assigned to conduct it, and it's our piece and I'm playing it." And Stokowski insisted on his playing it first. I didn't give in, so what happened? He postponed it, I think a week or two, played it after me, but Peters published the score saying "first performance Stokowski," because that was more important even though they were my publishers too. A side issue of the musical jungle.

On March 7, 1951, Lorna, our first daughter, was born. I was giving my first lecture series at the University of Hawaii. Each year I gave a series, actually all year 'round more or less, where townsfolks came. I had the biggest class ever, seventy, eighty people in attendance. During one of my evening classes, unexpectedly a phone call came that Lorna was just born at 7:01 p.m. So we were very happy parents. At my next concert the audience gave us a standing ovation for Lorna being the first child of the music director of the orchestra. Lorna became a very charming and graceful girl and a kind of a hostess for guests, and the guests loved her. She took part in our social activities increasingly and became very musical, came to rehearsals with Ruth, and to concerts, and very soon I wrote a couple of piano pieces for her. She learned to play piano at about age five.

Building a Musical Life in Hawaii

Barati: While I was head of the Honolulu Symphony I went to the mainland every year, to New York, to negotiate contracts with soloists, and I held auditions every year in San Francisco, in Los Angeles, in Chicago and in New York. This was an annual trip for me. It was an enormous amount of work. I did it all by myself. I had no help from the mainland. I negotiated everything. Later on I found someone in Los Angeles who would help me as well as in New York.

But I built up an interest in Hawaii and very soon articles appeared about me, and this new musical life in Hawaii. I got major artists to come, including the pianists Gary Graffman, Leon Fleisher, Van Cliburn and Grant Johannesen; Joseph Szigeti came; Tossy Spivakovsky, Isaac Stern later on. Starker later on. Gina Bachauer from Europe. I could add an amazing list. But they came for very little money because I negotiated every contract. Gina Bachauer I engaged from my eventual London manager and paid less than half of what she would have

had from a New York manager. Because European prices for soloists were so much lower, and Americans didn't know it at that time. They overpaid on everything. Americans going to Europe overtipped by hundreds; people expected ten cents; they gave a dollar tip. They destroyed the whole world by that method. If I learned somebody was going to Japan I would make them stop in Hawaii. Later the reverse was also true; such as Toshiya Eto, the violinist. So I negotiated to the extent that we saved thousands of dollars. Another example, for instance, that to this day Hawaii can be grateful to me for, even though they are not. The orchestra owned a library of arrangements which had no value, say, a Beethoven symphony arranged for school orchestra, which is not a Beethoven symphony. From the very first day I bought the music instead of renting. In the meantime the cost of music went up three, four, five times. So the Honolulu Symphony when I left had an incredibly beautiful library at very low cost.

Jarrell: The whole repertoire.

Barati: The whole classical repertoire. You couldn't buy contemporary music. You had to rent it. But even then . . .

Jarrell: Oh you couldn't buy it?

Barati: No.

Jarrell: I didn't know that.

Barati: You had to rent or they charged so much that you couldn't afford it. The French for instance would never allow you to buy music. They screwed up the rental fees each year more and more and more. They were the real wheeler-dealers in the business, to this day. So, the repertoire grew and the possibilities grew. The Ninth Symphony—we performed a first performance the fourth season. I went to the board and I said to them, "We are going to sell out the Ninth Symphony twice; we need a third date." They laughed at me. The symphony president that year was the Secretary of the State of Hawaii, Farrant Turner. He was the leader of the famous Hawaiian outfit [the 42nd Battallion] that so successfully fought in the Second World War. Senator Daniel Inouye was also a member of it. Turner fell off the chair laughing. I said, "Farrant, don't laugh. I'll bet you." We did sell out three concerts. I have a letter from Turner thanking me for the idea. It was a major artistic and financial success.

I might also say that I conducted the Ninth Symphony without score. I learned it by heart. During the first half of the performance I went on stage having been fed intravenously by my doctor because I caught the flu from our daughter. The doctor said to us, that if she didn't get better by Saturday midnight, she had to go to the hospital. She was three years old. I couldn't imagine, Lorna going to the hospital, so I played with her all evening, 'til midnight, made her laugh, so she was able to breathe, because she had trouble breathing. She was well but I became sick. The doctor said, "George, you can't conduct. You are very ill." I said, "No way I can't conduct the Ninth Symphony. Nobody can replace me. I must be there." So eventually at noon he said, "OK, we'll feed you intravenously . . ."

Jarrell: You were so dehydrated.

Barati: I was. I was. High fever and stomach. He said, "I'll be on the stage and you motion to me. Right side is vitamin B shot. Left side is penicillin." The first piece was the Liszt E-Flat Piano Concerto. I sat behind the piano. Then the piano was removed and I had to stand. I started the Ninth Symphony and within two minutes I forgot sickness; I stood and conducted; I came off the stage completely healthy. The doctor couldn't believe it. I was absolutely without symptoms. The next day I conducted without score again and I was well. To conduct the Ninth Symphony without score to this day is a major achievement.

One of the pieces I performed in Hawaii was a piece by Richard Gump, the wonderful Gump store owner. Dick was a very good musician and had a German band in Marin County. He used to come to Hawaii where he also had a store. We became very good friends. Dick brought me a piece of music that I performed in a Pops concert and he was very pleased and proud of it.

But in the meantime of course, as I mentioned, I auditioned on the mainland every year. I also continued the Barati Chamber Orchestra concerts in San Francisco. When I was appointed to Hawaii, friends, supporters of the Chamber Orchestra in San Francisco formed a society to maintain the orchestra, and for two years after that they helped organize the concerts. So I came back after the symphony season was over in April in Honolulu, and we had our four concerts in San Francisco, as before. Unfortunately the president of the society was a man who tried to bite off too much and he antagonized some of the board members.

So things kind of died; the Chamber Orchestra was disbanded after 1952, or rather the orchestra continued with somebody else, under a different name.

The MacDowell Colony

Barati: Then I must also mention that I went for the first time to MacDowell Colony in 1949. I made very good friends with several very fine artists of all sorts. In my first year, Lukas Foss was there, a young budding composer, a wonderful pianist. Also the fine composer, Lopatnikou. A very fine man, he was married to Sarah Henderson Hayes, a well-known poet, who wrote for the *New Yorker* at that time, a lovely woman. We became very close friends, Lopatnikou and I. Later on also with Abe Ratner, an excellent painter as well as with Milton Avery, the great painter from Oregon. I met Mrs. MacDowell in the first year I was there. Mrs. MacDowell was the widow of the famous composer who established the colony in New Hampshire. She was ninety years old and almost totally blind. I called on her and she said to me, "Now you sit right into the sunlight, so I can see you. I see your profile quite well then." She took a liking to me, so much so that when I went to Hawaii her secretary brought a gift, a photograph of, Artur Nikisch, the great conductor. Also there was the famous Welsh poet, Padraic Colum, who was a close friend of Yeats, and his wife Mary. I always used to say she looked like an Irish washerwoman. But a wonderful female, a lovable old lady . . . big, huge and heavy. Padraic Colum in the evenings at the MacDowell Colony would sit down at the fireplace and recite Yeats, the way Yeats used to read his own poetry. So it was a direct . . .

Jarrell: Transmission?

Barati: Direct transmission. Padraic always spoke with his hands, as Yeats did. He emphasized the rhythm of the line and he waited just enough for you to get the rhythm. Also there was Chard Smith, a poet who gave me a number of poems to write music to. I never managed because they didn't fit.

I went once more to MacDowell in 1953 and a major event there happened. Up until that time practically every composer at MacDowell was a Stravinsky follower. I was the only "leftist" composer" with Schoenberg, Sessions, the quasi-12 tone group, though I didn't use the 12-tone technique. But one Sunday morning, suddenly, all these composers who would barely talk to me normally,

hardly would say hello to me, all came to me, "Hi George, how are you today? Nice to see you. We must talk, you know. I expected to have lunch with you by now. Can you . . . would you be free tomorrow to have lunch?" And I didn't understand it. I said, "Something's happening here, what's happening? That's very strange. They wouldn't talk to me before." So after the third or fourth one went by, somebody noticed this, one of the painters. He said, "George, you don't know what's happening, do you? Have you seen this?" He showed me the Sunday *New York Times,* which had a full page article on Stravinsky, saying in effect, "*Mea culpa. Mea culpa.* I was wrong all my life. I'm going to change. From now on I'm going to follow the only great composer of our time, Schoenberg. From now on I'm going to write every piece with twelve-tone technique." So these epigons, followers of Stravinsky suddenly belonged to what I belonged to. I was now the king (laughter) of this . . .

Jarrell: Of this other school. Oh, how funny.

Barati: They all became friends and we talked. This was . . .

Jarrell: Had they really shunned you before?

Barati: Absolutely.

Jarrell: Really.

Barati: We would have performances, our own music, and Lukas Foss would play my music because he was a wonderful pianist. I couldn't play. I am a very bad pianist. Up until then some of them wouldn't stay, they would be suddenly busy or some didn't show up or came late, or made obvious excuses. I played croquet all the time with painters and writers but seldom with them.

Jarrell: Other composers.

Barati: They were just . . . not enemies, I just was an undesirable, untouchable. I became very touchable after that.

The American Symphony League

Barati: In 1954 the American Symphony League was founded by some of us leading conductors. Congress passed a law organizing this and my name is

among the founders. The first meeting of the American Symphony League was . . . near Chicago, in Elkhart, Indiana. I was the first conductor of the newly formed American Symphony League orchestra.

Jarrell: Now what was the purpose of this league?

Barati: The purpose of the League was to establish principles of organization, maintenance, growth, and advice for American symphony orchestras. By this time there were probably over a thousand orchestras functioning, without any kind of a central . . .

Jarrell: Clearinghouse or resources or . . .

Barati: Clearinghouse or advice or information to exchange. And the lady who organized it, Helen Thompson, she died in Carmel. She did a great deal of work for American music. They established an office near Washington and began to advise orchestras on organizing fundraising methods . . . an exchange of information, of soloist lists, of price lists, of music availability, library availability, musician availability, of management and managerial information. They had annual meetings advising volunteers on how to support an orchestra; how to raise funds in the community; what type of music director should you have. What are the qualifications for a music director? Qualifications for management? How to deal with managers at concert agencies in New York and Europe. How to organize tours. How to support contemporary music, which was . . . non-existent. It was very helpful, though not always. They became somewhat chauvinistic, some foreign-born conductors like me began to feel kind of neglected.

Jarrell: How do you mean chauvinistic? In terms of . . .

Barati: American.

Jarrell: Anti-European?

Barati: Native American and anti-European.

Jarrell: I see.

Barati: But more native American, favoring them. Not so much anti-European.

Jarrell: More pro-American.

Barati: More pro native American. There was a distinction made silently or unspoken of these things. But it was noticeable occasionally. I can't say it was ever any crucial thing but there were moments.

Jarrell: But I had no idea that there were that many symphonies scattered throughout the entire country. Of wildly varying standards and . . .

Barati: Well the Symphony League also established standards. There were major symphonies . . . metropolitan orchestras . . . community orchestras, university orchestras. There were four classifications entirely based on budget sizes, so as inflation grew and the budgets grew the size of the definition popped up always. For instance when I left Hawaii, one million dollars made a major symphony. We just about reached it. Now, it's about five million that defines a major symphony. So the same fifteen to twenty orchestras of that period remain major today, but their budget is about eight times larger. It's New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, San Francisco, Seattle. Those are the major symphonies. And Honolulu, by the way. I guess Cincinnati. I may have left out two, three. Then the metropolitan symphonies are the next group.

Jarrell: Next tier.

Barati: Next group. Maybe Portland is also by now a major symphony. But today there must be over 2000 symphony orchestras in the country. We have no idea how many there are. I saw on television yesterday, the Fort Worth orchestra playing like a major symphony used to play 25 years ago, impeccably. So it goes on. Growth is inevitable.

Jarrell: And the standards have gotten higher?

Barati: The standards have gotten much higher. American-trained musicians are now the world's best by far. Wind players are remarkable—not just one or two, but dozens and dozens of oboists, for instance, who can't find suitable orchestras because they are so numerous. That's why there are chamber groups forming all over the world. Many Americans are now playing in Europe, Japan has now . . . Japan always had some key Americans, and key Germans. When I conducted

first in Japan, which I will discuss later, there were Americans and Germans in key positions.

Jarrell: Residing in Japan and playing there.

Barati: Yes. But now European orchestras have a very large number of American players too.

Jarrell: I didn't know that.

Barati: Amazing, it's quite amazing. Many times they are key players.

In the meantime I also composed. My Chamber Concerto, which I started in San Francisco, the first two movements were played by my chamber orchestra in 1948, I finally finished it in Hawaii in 1952.

Also, one of my earliest major choral orchestra performances was *The Belshazzar Feast* of William Walton, a very important English composer. Soon after the performance in Honolulu I met him in New York at a reception for him and we became kind of interested in each other. I told him I'd just performed his piece. He invited me to hear his performance of the same work in the Hollywood Bowl when I would be coming back to Hawaii about two weeks later. I went to the dress rehearsal and it so happened they gave me a score, the same score that I had my own markings in, that I'd used two or three months prior to that, and there's a very important moment in the work. He uses a big piece of iron, an unusual instrument that has to be hit with a piece of metal and makes an enormous sound. It's in a section where they sing about the iron. At the dress rehearsal, which is usually the third or fourth rehearsal, I heard no iron. I was really debating what to do. Now here's this well known composer. Did he not miss the iron? Does he know it wasn't there? Do I tell him? Do I remind him? So I went at intermission to him and I said, "You know Mr. Walton," he was not "sir" yet, "you asked me to give you some ideas about balance . . . at one point I couldn't hear enough of the iron," which was enough for him to notice there was no iron. I didn't have to embarrass him. But anyway, it was a marvelous way for me to recognize, to meet the composer of this major work completely unknown in this country then but very famous in Europe.

I also should mention that at the same time I went to conduct the first American Symphony League Orchestra performances, I also conducted in Washington, D.C. the famous Air Force Symphony Orchestra, a very successful concert. We played a piece of mine, the Scherzo.

So, we have come to 1954 and to the moment where my local successes produced several major moments for me and for us. One was that the University of Hawaii gave me an honorary doctor's degree. Another one was that the then newly formed World Brotherhood, an international organization honored me as the Man of the Year in Hawaii. And subsequently I was requested to go to Brussels, to make a big presentation at the World Brotherhood meeting a few months later.

The Honolulu Symphony Grows

Barati: From 1954 on the Honolulu Symphony grew by leaps and bounds. Each year the budget was substantially increased, the number of concerts was increased and I kept the orchestra very much as close to the black as I could. If we went into the red in the budget it was a minimal amount that we could take care of. So the growth was large but we remained always within the boundaries of financial possibility which was and is today a major problem for American symphony orchestras.

Symphonies have become monumental in their planning, in their management, and have neglected the artistic sides and the financial balancing. Art institutions—museums, orchestras, opera companies, theater, should be based on artistic considerations. Finances must be planned in support of the arts. Naturally, proper financial arrangements must be carefully established; that was always true but the moment finances get the upper hand an imbalance occurs where crucial artistic values begin to be neglected. Just two examples: the star system and repertoire. Every manager wants superstars, very few accept the idea of a young local soloist with no reputation. So, superstars are produced by PR means: false angles, hype at any cost. The fastest pianists win the competitions and they become not only the superstars but they receive an increasingly ridiculous fee for their performances. A major by-product is that audiences get used to accepting these false, fake pseudo-artistic results and soon these become the norm. The problem of repertoire, though obvious, is also an increasing one.

There must be sold-out houses, so music directors are pressured into playing the most known, the most easy-to-take sounds. Their repertoire is narrow and mindless. You can't live on Mozart alone—as they do this year of his bicentennial—anymore than you can live on chocolate cakes alone! So they are now in real turmoil. Orchestras are collapsing left and right and will do so more in the near future. Also, naturally the soloists, the quality of soloists or the name of the soloists also became emphasized as I engaged increasingly, more and more, important artists who were up-and-coming, or very well known in Europe, lesser known in America. I was always one wave ahead of the typical . . .

Jarrell: Of the mainland?

Barati: Of the mainland. For instance, the famous harpist Zabaleta played with us. Ricci, the violinist, who was then quite young, but well known played with us. Nan Merriman, a mezzo-soprano sang. Dorothy Kirston was at the peak of her powers, and other Metropolitan Opera singers came. Also, Gina Bachauer, the great pianist; Itzhak Perlman, before he became a "superstar" and Dorothy Maynor, who couldn't find a hotel in Hawaii because she was black! The number of concerts was increased also by the method of increasing the concerts on the neighboring islands. We flew two planes at least once, sometimes twice a season, and played on every island. So that by the time I left we played, roughly speaking, thirty concerts on the other islands, including youth concerts, each season. We played on every island, coast to coast, covered the ground outdoors, indoors, wherever we could play.

Another aspect of the growth was that we began to build better halls, or available sound resources. The Waikiki Shell was built. We began to really negotiate for a new concert hall in Honolulu. On the neighboring islands, on Kauai, they asked me to help them design a hall. So the growth was so evident that I became a major cultural ambassador in the state of Hawaii. The orchestra grew with me and I grew with the orchestra.

As I mentioned earlier, an important point that comes up very soon is that I was the one in charge of planning, of management. The managers really worked under me very directly. Another point of growth was that as we became more important we were able to attract to the board of directors, more and more important people. The top echelon of the local financial giants became members

of the board. Bank presidents, vice-presidents of Castle and Cooke . . . all the Big Five companies. This also brought with it the eventual change that as these business-minded people took over the control of the board, they began to install more and more business-like practices to control the orchestra. This was also simultaneously happening on the mainland.

This was a new trend. Until this time the music director was the absolute king of the situation. Toscanini, or whoever it was, was the boss. During the middle fifties, management began to take over, controlling more and more of the business end, which also meant that the music director's powers and control began to be diminished, and the artistic qualities began to be lost, in favor of commercial gains. Managers wanted to have more Tchaikovsky and Beethoven, because audiences loved Tchaikovsky and Beethoven, and less contemporary music, less unusual music. Operas performed more *Traviata* and less unusual music, in fact contemporary music was dropped completely for awhile.

Jarrell: So programming decisions were increasingly based on commercial considerations?

Barati: On board decisions. The boards began to assume the control. At one point my board told me to engage [the pianist] Van Cliburn. I said, "I don't want to engage him. He charges $9000 for a pair of concerts," at the very moment when we had a strike among schoolteachers in Hawaii who were making annually, $9,000. But they simply engaged him over my objection. They paid him $9000. Van Cliburn came and didn't play very well, wasn't very successful. But of course the audiences knew who he was. He was then the great new miracle in America. This kind of thing increasingly developed.

Music Composition

Barati: Now I also would like to stop here and talk about my own music. By 1954, I had composed at least three major works: my String Quartet, which I wrote during the army years was revised after the war; the Chamber Concerto which I completed in Hawaii in 1954 (although I'd already played the first two movements with my chamber orchestra in San Francisco with excellent reactions); and then the Cello Concerto in 1953, which I composed in one month

at the MacDowell Colony during my second trip there. These were my first really major works.

My attitude at that time was very much based on traditional concepts. I was a product of a Central European, very strict musical education, but I was also a product of Roger Sessions' schooling from Princeton. So my attitude already began to be, really marvelously combined, and I think quite balanced, from the classical, from the traditional, toward the forward-looking. I wrote music which I considered dissonant, but I always kept it within measure, the balances, the proportions, of the traditional approach to music. My music was called several times by critics after recordings, "neo-classic" which I always objected to because neo-classic really meant the Stravinsky approach of that previous period, of the 1920s, when he switched from his enormously creative, forward-looking period, *Le Sacre du Printemps*, things like that, to looking back, utilizing increasingly Classical or Baroque form, formulas . . . his Baroque approach, even using thematic materials and techniques, which I never did. But this term originated, I guess, from the avant-garde, who, like the communists in that period, always called any other activity, even the more socially progressive, "reactionary."

Jarrell: Yes.

Barati: That was their method of putting themselves in the front. The same way those avant-gardes who have disappeared by now, or changed from one bad style to another bad style, but for the moment who control the music industry. For instance, the minimalists for about ten years completely controlled publishing, performance, recording. Then they began to evaporate. The composers changed their style. The same name, same people, changed the color of their suits, you know. The same people remained in the suits. But I wrote progressive music and I, to this day, I write progressive music that doesn't belong to any given school, which for me is both very good and very bad. It's good because it's independent music. It's bad because nobody wants it. Because they want, as for many years they wanted, Stravinsky followers, or Schoenberg followers, Webern followers, like Boulez or Stockhausen, then they wanted some other follower. Today it's the late minimalists, you know, the stuff that sells.

Jarrell: Something with a label that's easily recognizable?

Barati: Precisely. I didn't belong to a particular school of thought, didn't belong to a teacher's pet subject . . . Sessions was my teacher but I wasn't officially a Princeton graduate, so I wasn't getting the benefits of that. So to this day it's a minus which I'm very happy to have, because I'd rather be independent than be somebody's follower. So since my style was the result of having grown up with the Beethoven, Brahms construction, it was very hard to throw off that very major achievement in the world of creative art. But eventually I managed to.

But at that time still, the form was basically traditional, the sound was dissonant, and the use of the instruments was quite modern. Having grown up in the symphony orchestra and conducted, I learned repertoire and I realized that the possibilities were not fully exploited.

So on my own without necessarily following these current trends, I evolved, I developed a major use of percussion instruments, for instance, a structural use of percussion instruments, not as they used them, for color. Later I used color too, but at that time I didn't. I was able to perform all the works which I composed, which was a benefit to me which normally should have happened to me or to other composers, and did happen ten, twenty years earlier in their lives. I was running about ten or fifteen years late, due to my delayed settling into America. I arrived at age 22. I began to conduct seriously at age 37 in Honolulu, by which time I did conduct many concerts, but that was the first major symphonic assignment where I was able to build programs and make a major contribution to music. So all this was later in my life than it was customary for a career in conducting. However, at the same time, I remember in 1954, let's see I was 42 years old, ready for the international world, I was told, "Oh yeah, you're much too young." Managers would tell me that, "Oh, conducting . . . importance starts at 55 or over. You have to just work and work and wait. Your time will come too." Until Leonard Bernstein at the age of 29 or so, became world-famous overnight, and switched the whole damn thing around. Then I found myself among the "too old" conductors, and the young ones were now 25. By this time I was 42, 45. Young ones were 25, 20, 18, if they could manage it. The younger the better. So I lost out on that trend.

An International Career

Barati: But this came later. Before that trend developed my international career began. I was given a large amount of money by a very close friend, a very wealthy woman, to engage an international manager. I was able to get a manager who got me two engagements in Europe in 1955, in London and in Berlin. So 1955 started with a tremendous bang. I was preparing for my European debut. The London concert was a very elaborate wonderful program, I had a wonderful cello soloist, André Navarra, who was famous in Europe by that time, and I performed the major Bartók work, the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta,* which is a very difficult piece, and at that time was fairly new. That was the center of my program. And the concert came off with tremendous success.

Jarrell: This was in London. With what orchestra?

Barati: The Philharmonia, in Festival Hall, April 1955. Tremendous success. I had probably sixteen bows, I eventually had to ask the orchestra to get off the stage, go home. They just sat there taking bows with me and sitting down again. This went on for fifteen, twenty minutes. So I sent them off the stage. They were still calling me back. It was very funny because a Honolulu critic happened to be there. I asked her later and she told me she'd left after the first three bows. So she wrote in her review in Honolulu that I took four bows. She assumed I took one more after she left. Incredible. However, this enormous success, which meant, really, a breakthrough for me at least in England, became overnight an enormous *débacle* because there was a newspaper strike. I didn't know at that time the importance of reviews. I mentioned already that I was naive and pure and clean; I assumed that my success was going to develop. If it's a success, next day they'll say, "Oh please come and conduct us, too. Come to the the BBC, or to Birmingham," or who knows what. Instead, there was nothing.

Jarrell: Silence.

Barati: If there was no review it was as if you didn't do anything. I asked the local manager, Van Wyck was his name. I said, "Now, what happens next?" He said, "What happens next? You have to come back and try it again." I said, "What

do you mean? I had a great success." "You had a wonderful success. If you had reviews you would be now a much wanted conductor."

Jarrell: Then you'd have quotations excerpted and you could . . .

Barati: I didn't realize, and this caused me eventually much suffering, that newspapers and managements made the artists, not the artist. The artist had to produce pretty well, you know. Like Van Cliburn was a good pianist, first class. But he had to win the competition in Moscow. He had to be kissed by Krushchev to become what he had become.

Jarrell: Or what he became for a while.

Barati: Well, yes.

Jarrell: It was a short-lived career.

Barati: He didn't live up to it. That's the point.

Jarrell: He had stunning publicity.

Barati: Stunning publicity and it made him. The kiss of Krushchev. For me the kiss of the newspaper strike was the kiss of death. (laugh) So from there I went to Berlin, had a great success, very good reviews. I was engaged immediately to do two concerts within a month, which was very unusual, even at that time when planning was not like today. Today orchestras plan five years ahead. At that time they planned a year ahead. But the following month I had a concert in Hanover and one at a German-American Festival in Heidelberg, a summer concert.

By the way, in Hanover our soloist was Irene Dallas, who is now the head of the San Jose Opera Company. She was then a budding young artist, just engaged by the Berlin Opera. She became very famous in subsequent years, and came to the Metropolitan Opera and the San Francisco Opera, and she swears that I was the best accompanist she ever had. We met on the street, I don't know, twenty years later. She said she talked to Rudolph Bing at the Metropolitan Opera, that they should engage me. They actually came to hear a performance of mine but they didn't engage me.

The five months long trip Ruth and I made that year changed my whole life. After the London concert we crisscrossed Europe. We rented a used Volkswagen in Paris and between my concerts became spectators. We drove through the horrible rubble that was left of Berlin and Hanover, we discovered the incredible theater and opera life of London and Paris; we drove through Frankfurt five times, visited Vienna four times, attended concerts in Florence, Vienna, Salzburg, Brussels.

But the really devastating experience was the discovery of the newly revitalized musical life of Europe. We attended the International Contemporary Music Festival in Darmstadt and met already famed composers Nono, Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez. I called on Dallapiccola, the most important Italian composer, in his home in Florence. We exchanged scores and after his reading through mine, he gave me high praise and a few suggestions, all most welcome. We met the leading German critic, Stuckenschmidt and the leading Japanese critic, Yamane, with both of whom I continued a long professional contact. There was the amazing British composer, Reisenstein, of Hoffnung Festival fame. We heard Bernstein's Florence concert, a triumph, and Solti's not so great *Rosenkavalier*. We renewed my friendship with the famed conductor, Ferenc Fricsay, who founded the RIAS orchestra in Berlin, and George Sandor, playing together in Vienna. Our two lunches became a rehashing of our many years together from Hungary.

I should round out this report with the more "spectacular even bizarre" moments. Lunch with the famed soprano De La Casa in her Swiss castle with the slanting walls; our visit to the San Francisco-famed sculptor, Ralph Stackpole in their ancient village from the Roman period; several days in Fiesole, as house guests of a couple of Thomas Mann's children; our amazing lunch with Mr. Steinway in New York.

But none of this produced the devastation I mentioned. That came when we heard the new works of these composers, most of whom were unknown, or almost unknown in the U.S. and certainly unplayed. Instead of the expected stylistic continuity that existed in the U.S. after the War, of music by Stravinsky, Copland, we got the hard-edged, violently dissonant music based on Webern, one of two pupils of Schoenberg. This was a shock that was hard to grasp. The entire musical thinking moved as far away from the U.S. as possible and for the

following 20 years became the focus of all new music. They certainly caught up with the lost years of artistic isolation.

There was also Rosbaud, the new type of conductor, an expert in the most advanced musical idiom. Henze drove us to the radio in Frankfurt to hear his tapes on deposit there, a new idea at that time, especially compared to the lack of interest in this country in new music. In Frankfurt we had lunch at Solti's apartment; he conducted the opera there.

In London, Ruth and I were invited to the home of an important patron of the arts. There was only a young man there, besides our host. As we were leaving, this young, poorly dressed man timidly asked us if he might have a ride with us. He had hardly spoken, maybe his English was primitive. In the taxi we tried conversation and as we stopped to let him out, I asked what his name was. He said, "Franco Zefirelli." We continued to the Convent Garden's opening performance of Michael Tippett's *King Priam*, as the guests of its Music Director, Georg Solti, completely unaware that we were touched by a major figure of the next period.

Mitropoulos Conducting Competition

Barati: So the international life began and went on for many years. By that time I was also a member of the jury of the Mitropoulos International Competition for Conductors in New York. Leonard Bernstein was chairman of the jury, and the members were very famous conductors from the Vienna opera, *La Scala*, one from Tokyo, one other maybe from Rome, and one or two Americans. Menotti was one or Vladimir Golschman . . . people of good reputation. It was a great honor and it meant also very good contacts for me. Every year I spent two or three weeks in January in New York sitting there hearing all these incredibly talented young conductors. Osawa won and Abbado, who is now very famous.

Then also I should mention that I performed in Hawaii increasingly major contemporary composers, which gave me also a position in American musical life, or international musical life, as a progressive conductor. I performed Mayuzumi for the first time in America, who became a famous Japanese composer. I performed Ginastera who was, I think, completely unknown at that

time and Bartók, Copland, Bernstein, and many others. This gave me the opportunity that when eventually I went to their countries I had some kind of a direct connection. Then came the first invitation . . . well I should say in 1955, that Brussels meeting of the World Brotherhood took place, and I made an elaborate speech on the importance of music in the international world. I was quite pleased when I arrived at the hall that they had tables outside and my speech was printed up already in English and German and French. I have copies of them. I delivered my speech in English which was very well received. The whole feeling was a wonderful international feeling.

The head of the organization was the then Prime Minister of Belgium, Paul Henri Spock and there were some very important international people there—scientists, authors, politicians. I had my first insight into the problems of international diplomacy when our final statement was unanimously agreed upon by the group of probably a hundred persons there, except the French, a Catholic priest refused to accept one word, which had a slightly different connotation in French than in English. So the debate went on for probably three days before the final word was chosen.

Also at the International Conference of World Brotherhood, the film director John Huston happened to sit next to me on the bus, going from one event to another. At that time I had developed an idea that I considered potent, and this was my chance. I described the Hawaiian melting pot idea as represented by our orchestra. Musicians of all races living in Hawaii worked together most harmoniously. I wanted to profile three or four on stage, then take the camera back to their home environment and to their other jobs—most of them were forced to earn more than they could from the symphony—and provide the mainland folks with a major example of entertainment/sociological study/incentive for tourism. The latter was just being developed. John Huston seemed most interested and promised to consider it.

I was re-engaged in Europe and went back each year at least once for concerts. I did it on my own. I had local managers but again I didn't realize until much later that the way to do it is to have a central manager who gets much of the money but he also is in charge of organizing your tours.

Jarrell: And coordinating it.

Barati: Coordinating and having the local contacts. Instead I would write letters, or send a telegram to London to the BBC—"Available in April for six days. Let me know." And a telegram would come back—"Two engagements, BBC Glasgow." Which was wonderful. I was one of maybe five American conductors, if that many, who went to Europe every year to conduct. I began to make recordings soon after.

Flying home from one of these trips, I brought back my son Steve to Hawaii and we had a wonderful summer together, establishing a firm family love among us all.

Conducting in Japan

Barati: Then came an invitation to conduct in Japan and that produced enormous successes. The Tokyo Philharmonic offered me a job after the first year and I'm sorry I didn't take it. I should have taken it then but we visited a private home and saw how cold it was in winter time, the hibachi didn't heat the house enough, we had two young daughters . . . so Ruth and I said it's too soon. Besides it was too soon after the War.

Remember, I went to Japan, as to Europe very soon after the War, when things were not organized yet. We saw the devastation in Berlin, in Hanover, in Hamburg . . . terrifying sights. In Japan the orchestra still played very primitively. They had at that time seven orchestras in Tokyo alone. I was the only American to conduct all of them because the habit was that if one orchestra engaged a foreign conductor, the others were the enemies, they wouldn't talk to that person, he was an outcast for them. The competition was so great. I was so successful I conducted within two months, in my first shift, every orchestra in Tokyo, on each radio station. So I conducted probably, I don't know, thirty or forty concerts in two months, every day two rehearsals and a concert, or one rehearsal and a concert, day after day after day.

Jarrell: Now how was it that you went to Japan?

Barati: The invitation . . . I have to think back. The invitation came from several sources. I got an American cultural exchange fellowship which sent me to Japan through the American embassy, the cultural attaché arranged some engagements for me. At the same time I had a very important Japanese artist, a

soloist, Chieko Hara, whose husband was in the Royal Court, in a high position and she recommended me highly. So there was a contact, a very good connection between local important Japanese people in Hawaii and Japan. They all spoke highly of me to the extent for instance that several years later I was invited to have a meeting with the President of the RCA Victor Company of Japan, which they called the "Vic-tah" company. The president came in and spoke in decent English, had a big book under his arm and said, "You see, Mr. Barati, we know all about you." He opened this book and said, "Here, we have articles about you in the *Honolulu Advertiser*; here are reviews from the English newspapers; here are your German reviews." They knew everything about me. The Japanese worked like that. So I had an easy entré after my initial arrival, which was through the American embassy, and knowing Chieko Hara and her different contacts in Hawaii. Her second husband was a very famous cellist, Cassado.

In 1959, I think, when Hawaii became a state, the celebrations included a major musical event which I was assigned to organize. I gathered all the local musical groups, including the Honolulu Symphony, for a concert for the Japanese Crown prince, Akihito and wife, Michiko. They came and we performed the concert, and they sent me a beautiful gift two weeks later, a pair of cuff links with the chrysanthemum, the Japanese royal emblem. So there was an entré there too. One's reputation spreads around in a country where it's so tightly controlled by royal families. Mikimoto was the pearl king of Japan and we became personal friends from our meeting in Hawaii. So it was an easy time for me and also a very successful musical time. I had probably sixty concerts in Tokyo alone in those subsequent years.

Then on tour I had interesting experiences. In Osaka, Japan I was invited by the owner of the Takaratsuka Dance Company. I was in the town as their guest for the performance. We sat in the front row and it was very funny that I noticed this huge orchestra directly in front of us and people kept bouncing up there, jumping up and taking these deep Japanese bows to some unseen God, or Goddess behind us. And next to the sixth or seventh bow jumping out of this huge pit, the owner, a lady, turns to me and says, "Mr. Barati, don't you want to accept the greetings from the orchestra? They are bowing to you." I had

conducted them the previous night of the Osaka Philharmonic, but I didn't know this was the same orchestra and that they were bowing to me.

Also on one of those trips I met with some of the outstanding Japanese National Treasures. Arrangements were made for me to go to their homes, like the famous ceramicist, Kawaii, in Kyoto. And I met and visited with other important Japanese ceramics artists such as the great Hamada.

Jarrell: So during your Hawaii off-season you would travel, say from '55 on. It doesn't sound like it was a *débacle* because . . .

Barati: The *débacle* was the newspaper strike in England.

Jarrell: Did you continue conducting in Germany?

Barati: I conducted all over Europe, yes.

Jarrell: And also in Japan. So during those off seasons you were engaged . . .

Barati: Well, I . . . the off seasons were actually during the season. I hopped over for two or three weeks and came back. I would like to spell out to you one year.

A Year in the Life of George Barati

Barati: A year in the life of George Barati as far as geography and chronology are concerned. This is 1958. This is my third or fourth year in the international world. January/February—concerts in Honolulu, Maui, Kona. Many speeches. March—concerts in Honolulu. April—San Francisco, New York, London, Barcelona, Majorca, Paris. May—Paris, Berlin, Bath, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Madrid, back to Majorca, re-engagement. I spent time with Robert Graves there, by the way. June—Vienna, I saw Schnitzler's son, Henry; Dorati, Fellner, the famous manager; Margaretha, President of the Austrian National Bank, who turned out to be a family member of mine. I was invited to Karajan's rehearsal. Then I went from Vienna, still in June, to Bangkok; I spent time with the man who owned the Star of Siam, the silk house where I bought Ruth some material. Also there was a cholera epidemic in Bangkok. I went to Hong Kong; Jimmy Chen was my tailor at that time; then to Tokyo and more concerts with the Tokyo Philharmonic, ABC Symphony; Nippon Philharmonic, NHK Broadcast. Then the Tokyo Philharmonic again and the Asahi Junior Orchestra. Then the

Tokyo Symphony, ABC Recordings, then to Yokohama, Kobe, Osaka, also broadcasts with the Tokyo Philharmonic, concerts on the coast-to-coast tour. July—Osaka, ABC Symphony, Kyoto, Tokyo, Tokyo Symphony. July 9, the last day was an extra concert thrown in so that on July 9th I conducted late evening in Tokyo; on the same day July 9th I had a big speech upon arrival in Honolulu without time to shave, exhausted. I gave a big report about Japan on the same day. This is still July. Then concerts at Waikiki Shell. August—San Francisco, Chicago, Grant Park, Portland, Honolulu concerts, including the annual board meeting. September/October—concerts in Honolulu. November—speeches, more concerts, new season opening. Concerts in Kona, Hilo, and Honolulu. This was one year.

People die living this way but I didn't realize it. Ten years later I began to be killed by it too. The travelling time on planes and tall man that I am, I couldn't stretch out to sleep. Arriving in Germany from New York, for instance, in the morning at 9:30 in Frankfurt one day . . . I was under contract to begin recording that night. At 10:00 p.m. So I was on the way to the hotel. But they said to me, "I'm glad you came early because we record an hour from now." I said, "What do you mean? 10 pm." "No, no it's at 10:30 a.m. We changed it." So I recorded, having not even slept a wink. Once I left Zurich, I flew all night and got to Santiago, Chile in the morning. They took me straight from the airport to a rehearsal. I didn't know what I was conducting. To this day I only remember that it was a very low ceilinged rehearsal hall with a bouncing sound. I don't know what I did. I was half asleep. So this went on.

Social Life in Hawaii

Barati: Then there was the intense social life in Hawaii. We saw and met everybody. We met famous politicians, creative artists, playwrights, musicians—they came to our house for dinner or lunch or we met them at parties, which in Hawaii were very formal. The social life in Hawaii was really like the old English life. I mean, tuxedos were a must, and long dresses for women . . . and dinner seating in Pearl Harbor . . . each chair had a butler. We were assigned some important personage as a dinner partner, whom you took care of . . . mine was Rosalind Russell.

Jarrell: It sounds like the tail-end of a real colonial era.

Barati: It was the colonial era's tail-end, but it was gloriously exciting. I talked to Aldous Huxley one afternoon, had a personal chat with him. The next day I talked with [William] Bill Lederer about his new book. Or Lenny [Leonard] Bernstein came to the house for Ruth's dinner. Or Jascha Heifetz, we took Heifetz out to lunch at the old Royal Hawaiian hotel and all the kids who were there with their teachers ran to me, "Hey, Barati. There is Barati." I said to the teacher, "Tell them that I am Barati but this gentleman is . . .

Jarrell: Heifetz. *The* Heifetz.

Barati: And they didn't know who Heifetz was. But Barati they knew. (Laughter) Another time on the beach Professor Szentgyorgyi, the discoverer of Vitamin D, joined me for a delightful visit. We also learned to know Professor Linus Pauling, who spent much time in Hawaii with his family.

Our home became an important link with the cultural life away from the islands. To avoid losing touch with new developments in music and the arts, Ruth began an active role as hostess, with Lorna as junior hostess and soon with Donna as acting junior hostess. The list of dinner guests now, looking back, is truly unbelievable but we did succeed in keeping up with the world. Here is a most incomplete list of those who came once or a number of times: Vienna Philharmonic string leaders; Borodin Quartet of Moscow; the original Hungarian String Quartet; Stokowski and sons; Arthur Rubinstein and sons; almost all of the soloists of the Symphony throughout the years! Takemitsu, Krenek, Starker, Henry Cowell and wife; Rosemary Clooney and husband José Ferrer; Eartha Kitt, Sir Malcolm Sargeant, Max Ernst, Margaret Harshaw and other Met[ropolitan Opera] singers, Arthur Fiedler and wife, Ambassador Mansfield and daughter, famed architect of the Hiroshima Memorial and of the Tokyo Post Office and Mrs. Tange, André Kostelanetz and wife. Well, the list is unending . . . Henryk Szerying, Lenny Bernstein and friends; Jack Benny, who became another great friend of ours. Finally, the private musicales at lovely homes such as Russell Cades' with symphony soloists where Cades played acceptable viola. Parties for Osbert and Edith Sitwell, for Aldous Huxley, many visits with Joseph Szigeti.

Speaking of Jack Benny, a lasting *bon mot* came into being when just before our major fundraising concert with Benny—when his opening entrance was to start

playing without his bow, left-behind-daughter Lorna, age 9 admonished Jack, "And Mr. Benny, don't forget to *forget* your bow!" Jack used that joke in many places, including in Las Vegas, where he flew Ruth and me later as his guests for a weekend visit.

Socially, Ruth and I became more and more prominent. We were really among the first, I don't know, five to ten people who were invited to any important social activity. If the Governor had the President of Argentina for dinner, for eight, Ruth and I represented the culture. We met President Eisenhower, Nixon, Lyndon Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, Hubert Humphrey, ambassadors, admirals and generals, on a one-to-one basis, talking personally with them. So our prestige grew and my ability to attract money and important people and audiences grew. We had sold-out houses and major success throughout the years as it went on.

In Hawaii I met William Lederer who wrote *The Ugly American,* a personal friend. He gave us the actual stories as they were written up as he came back from his trips accompanying Cinpac, Admiral Commander of the Pacific Naval Area; he was his assistant. And he came back and told us at dinner parties time and time again what was to become *The Ugly American.*

We had dinner with Pablo Casals and his young wife Marta, and the famous Russian violinist Mischa Elman. Casals travelled to Japan and stopped at the Halekulani Hotel in Hawaii en route and we were called that he was there. So I called him up and he remembered that as a young student I was taken to his concert in Budapest with my professor and Casals told me, "Go and play on my cello. His cello was the famous "Gagliano," the possession of the Spanish state. But I didn't play. In awe, I just touched the strings.

My interests were always parallel with music, geopolitics and international relations. Many times when Hawaii had famous visitors, journalists or authors or politicians I would meet with them quite often. I was also a member of the board of the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, which was a very famous institute in the Pacific dealing with political events on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

So on this level we had a glorious life. At parties these days Ruth and I look at each other and say, "We couldn't tell them what we have lived like because they

wouldn't believe us." The formalities, the generosities and the parties. Edith and Osbert Sitwell attended a concert. After the concert at a private reception we played an ad hoc trio concert. Grant Johannesen, the concert soloist, played piano. I played cello. The Sitwells, of course were great music lovers. So this social life went on, and on that level life was so incredible that even today Ruth and I say, "Did it really happen? How to believe it?"

On the level of international conducting I was a very successful up-and-coming conductor, and began to make recordings. I made twenty-eight recordings in about ten or twelve years. I was probably the second or third most recorded conductor in America recording in Europe. American conductors like Bernstein or George Szell, or Fritz Reiner made recordings with their own orchestras—New York, Chicago, Cleveland. Petrillo, the head of the musicians union at that time, established only one level of pay scale. Although I personally asked him several times to allow orchestras of lesser importance like my Honolulu orchestra, to record cheaper; he refused to allow it. So conductors went to Europe to record and I was one of the very few who made many recordings. I recorded in Vienna, Oslo, London, Nurnberg, every year, four, five recordings coming out. We used to have a family habit of putting them up on our mantel and the girls came home from school and they would say, "Oh, Daddy a new recording! Let's hear it."

I also conducted opera apart from Hawaii, where I founded the Symphony's opera company. I conducted the Brooklyn Opera and Washington D.C with very good reviews, by the way, in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* and others.

I also should mention by now that Donna was born in 1956, five years after Lorna. So these girls grew up in the milieu of dinner parties in our home. Claire Booth Luce would come on the spur of the moment, would call up Ruth in the morning, "Ruth, coming up for dinner tonight." Ruth couldn't say no. And didn't want to. So Claire arrived and Ruth cooked wonderful meals and there was this glorious mind of Claire Booth Luce entertaining our daughters. And then three days later Stokowski came with his two sons for dinner. Jack Benny came later on, became a personal friend until his death. And this life went on on the international level. We went to London . . . Lord Thurso, who was a member of the cabinet, gave a luncheon for us. Or in Vienna, some countess, I don't remember her name anymore, gave a party for me. I had dinner with Roger

Sessions at the International Music Festival. One evening Messiaen and Sessions and I met. Or we were at an international festival concert, hearing the world premiere of Boulez' major work.

This was *Le Marteau Sans Maître*. I sat with the famous young composer, Luigi Nono, Schoenberg's son-in-law, and we had the full score, an enormous sized one. The music was so complex that I kept getting lost, a very rare experience for me. When I asked Nono if he found it hard to follow, he gave me his classic answer, "It is like an open book for me." This is just an example of how advanced the new music of Europe was at that given moment.

The Berlioz Society

Barati: During these years, I helped form the Berlioz Society of America. An example of where I stood—when I starting conducting, Berlioz was a very famous name but nobody played his music. At best they played the *Simphonie Fantastique*, and a couple of other overtures, like *Roman Carnival*. So Charles Munch and Jacques Barzun, a professor at Columbia, and two or three others and I decided to form a society. For the next ten or fifteen years, we were active in promoting the idea that Berlioz was a major composer. Today his major works such as *Te Deum* or the *Requiem*, are played regularly. Previously the *Requiem* was unknown in this country. We got the tape from Paris after the World War II years. In Berkeley, Sessions and his students and I listened it, maybe ten to twelve times. I went to Monteux at that time when I was in the orchestra, and suggested that he should conduct it. He said, "No, no. That's a major work; it belongs to the Eastern orchestras." "But Maître, it belongs to you!" The following season he performed it.

Also I was elected as honorary member of the Bruckner Society. At that time, Bruckner was nowhere, and Mahler was almost nowhere. That was before Leonard Bernstein started conducting Mahler's works.

Innovations with the Honolulu Symphony

Barati: I made many innovations. For instance, I innovated youth concerts on the huge stage of Waikiki Shell. The children sat on the floor around the orchestra. We allowed them to come as close to the orchestra as possible. In fact we allowed them to play on the instruments, like the harp, or percussion

instruments, after the concert. I put some of them on my shoulders, helping me conduct. These concerts were a novel departure, allowing kids to have a game with symphonic music. I was really a P.R. source for Hawaii. I initiated concerts in outdoor settings . . . I found a beautiful little park with lagoons that we dressed up for the evening with lanterns. We had beautiful, outdoor concerts; we built concert halls. I initiated a dinner concert series at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, which became a major success to the extent that the *Saturday Review* had an article on it entitled . . . "If Music Be the Food of Love, Let Music Be the Love Of Food," after Shakespeare. Each concert in the series was based on the food and music of a different locale: An evening in Paris, in Rome, Vienna, etc. Dinner was followed by a formal concert. Obviously, such concerts represented novel ideas and became known nationally. I became known as an innovator. So all of these novel ideas that are now common, but I was one of the first to do them, even sometimes nationally.

Henry Kaiser built his geodesic dome and I helped him design the whole facility. We inaugurated the dome with a new kind of a concert, where we united the two cultural bases of the area—the western culture with the symphony orchestra on the central stage; then we built a second stage for a Hawaiian group, doing Polynesian music. As the climax, the Hawaiian singer, Alfred Apaka, joined us, walked over very ritualistically and sang Hawaiian music re-arranged for symphony orchestra. We actually recorded it. So many, many things were achieved in that period.

I also should say, before I forget, that 1954 I also engaged a very lovely, wonderful Indian couple who were dancers, for pop concerts, Sujata and Asoka. Apart from the concerts they taught a yoga series which we both attended. I began and dropped it soon, but Ruth continued and that was the beginning of Ruth's awareness of yoga and eventual tremendous successes. It began with Sujata and Asoka who were her first teachers.

Well, and so this was going on with every guarantee of my moving on from Honolulu to a major post. I was already offered New Orleans, which again naively and foolishly I turned down for only partly very good reasons. I had been stationed there nearby as a soldier. I hated the sun and the sticky, humid weather. I turned down New Orleans also because they didn't have a good concert hall. And the Mardi Gras interrupted the season. So there was just no

promise. So I kept saying, even though they offered me the job, "I haven't finished Hawaii yet." And I was offered other positions . . . Kalamazoo, which I considered too small after Hawaii. I wanted to go to at least a place of the rank of Cincinnati. I didn't know what was coming.

Conflicts with Honolulu Symphony

Barati: So at this point I would like to go back to discussing the changing structure of American orchestras. Boards began to assume more financial and artistic control and managers were their babies. Well it so happened I brought a symphony manager to Hawaii who was turned down when he applied, I think in 1959, because they didn't think he was qualified enough. I was in New York trying to find our first professional manager . . .

Jarrell: For the Honolulu Symphony?

Barati: Yes. I had a phone call from a friend in Honolulu that this man was turned down although he was quite qualified. So I called back to my board president and I said, "Look I want to engage him . . . I can't find anybody else whom I really want and he's seems to be qualified enough." I had his resumé with me. So they hired him which turned out to be I think the single biggest mistake of my career. Because this man was a highly unreliable human being and I had to guide him, control him, teach him. We all had to teach him. We had to teach him how to speak proper English. Because of the vast consequences of this relationship I have to repeat the fact that during the first nine years of my tenure the tremendous growth of the Honolulu Symphony, all major ideas and their implementation, depended on my person. The managers worked under my direct control; the board accepted my proposals and leadership without the slightest hesitation. So, when this new manager, the fifth in nine years, arrived, the board and I continued functioning in the identical manner. This manager had to be guided, instructed, and carefully supervised, just as I had to do before he arrived. When the first larger errors and shortcomings of his surfaced, I began to write memos as reminders, since I fast learned that the spoken word, without proof, did not carry very far with him.

Slowly tensions developed and soon I was obliged to make copies for the president. After the third such memo, the manager got very upset and told me,

what became an important statement later on, "George at this point I can tell you, one of us will have to go—either you or I. It will be you."

I was at the peak of my career. I went to the Hollywood Bowl and had a great success. Benny Goodman was my soloist. We had wonderful reviews. I was making recordings; I was conducting internationally; I thought I would be coming to a big job somewhere on the mainland when the time would come.

Then I took a sabbatical because I was commissioned to write a symphony. I got a large commission for the University of Denver Centennial. Also we thought that the girls, having been born in Hawaii, needed to get away from the limitations of Hawaii, from the schools, where the English language was rather misused, you know. So we decided to go to Switzerland for a year. We rented a chalet after much battle.

I must describe in a few words our life during our sojourn in the small Swiss village we chose for our sabbatical. I composed my Symphony in this most tranquil hide-out. The girls went to a French school and very soon fluently conversed in French. Of course Ruth and I spoke some and improved daily during an intense social life among these friendly, open and delightful Swiss friends we fast made. As a matter of fact, one episode is enough to prove the verity of my statement.

I was engaged several times to conduct the great Orchestre de la Suisse Romande of Geneva. Its music director, [Ernest] Ansermet soon invited me to his home and we became friends. Once, when there was a concert on the radio, my village friends decided to attend. The *entire village* of 63 people came in to Geneva and were present! Now I challenge anybody to name an American village where such a thing could happen! (I might add that Ansermet heard it on the radio and phoned me immediately after my last bow.)

Maybe here is a good place to try to explain that my purpose of listing so many famous names in these pages is not "name dropping," nor self-serving. It is to show where so many of the new influences in my life came from. One's belief system is, I think, influenced daily by such impressions, new thoughts and ideas and it is to complete and clarify my development these names are crucial.

Anyway, we went to Switzerland in 1962 having said goodbye to Hawaii for six to eight months in 1962 to 1963 during my sabbatical. I would come back and guest conduct once or twice, replace myself from my own pocket, which was not done anywhere else, with guest conductors. By this time we had André Kostolanez conducting summer concerts, and Stokowski . . . but these were winter concerts now for the first time. I would come back only once or twice. My farewell was totally public. At the final concert an incredible amount of *leis* were put around my neck. The Governor of Hawaii took pictures with the family, Donna on his lap; both these pictures and the ones from the concert with the *leis* appeared prominently in all newspapers. In spite of all this, the manager was able to begin to build up a case against me in my absence to such an extent that the symphony president, visiting Europe, came to our chalet and said to me that I'd left Hawaii without permission. I said to him, "How can you say that? The public is aware of it. There were pictures in the paper and you have in your files our agreement, our contract as to what's going to happen." But he did turn the board against me. At this time I was still sort of a hero in Hawaii.

When I got back in 1963, I found that I was a *persona non grata*, practically, that the board was ready to dismiss me. The same president asked me for a meeting, exactly one week after the assassination of President Kennedy. It so happened that he and I were both Democrats. The evening of the assassination we were invited to a dinner party by the symphony's women's committee president, where we discussed with great sadness, embracing each other, what was going on.

So he asked me for a meeting with a committee from the board, and stated that obviously I preferred to be elsewhere, obviously I don't want to work in Hawaii any more and that I should consider leaving Hawaii. I said, "What's going on?" I was horrified. I was shaken out of my boots with all my purity and all my naiveté, and all my hard work for the cause of music in Hawaii. Unexpected, completely out of the blue this came. So much so that I had a phone call for instance from [U.S.] Senator Inouye, who was a personal friend of mine. He said, "George, what's going on? I understand that you did something terrible to the board, that you left without permission, and I want to . . . " I said, "Dan, it's absolutely not true. There are proofs." He said, "I'm going to be in Honolulu day after tomorrow. I want you to pick the absolutely most exposed table at the

Alexander Young Hotel Restaurant," which was at that time the hub for the downtown businessmen's luncheons, "I'm going to meet you at 12 o'clock and you better give me proof of what's happening."

We sat in the absolute middle of this place, Dan and I, and had lunch. He pulled out a sheet of graph paper, January 1, absent. January 2, absent for every day of the year. I was absent for ninety days, then I was there for six days for a concert, then again, "Absent, absent, absent." "George, is it true?" I said, "Yes, of course it's true." He said, "What do you mean? Then why do you object to it?" I said, "Well, I had a much publicized contract, an agreement for a sabbatical leave. I replaced myself with guest conductors, the concerts went on. I retained control. I had correspondence." And he said, after much thought, "If this is true I am going to get ahold of the symphony president," (his highly paid position on the Campbell Estate's board could be influenced by Senator Inouye), "and I'll take care of him if this is true." Well, it turned out not only to be true but the symphony president admitted that he had found the original agreement in his files. But the damage was done because the beautifully organized campaign the manager instituted against me, once it gained momentum, could not be stopped.

Anyway the outcome was an enormous upheaval in Hawaii and nationally. *The New York Times* had articles about it. On the front page every day in the local papers was, "The Battle of Barati." An organization was formed, "The Friends of George Barati." The audience, the people were always ninety percent in favor of me. Every music director has a vocal minority that demands something else than he or she schedules. The amazing thing is that even though I was was firmly committed to performing "unusual" music, our audience understood and accepted that program policy. These days, when I hear from so many orchestras that they must perform conservative programs as demanded by the ticket holders, my reply is always that the music director *must* stand firm in favor of a carefully balanced policy, otherwise the vitality of the entire musical scene suffers and eventually withers.

Jarrell: But in this opposition to you, did the board have someone in mind as your replacement?

Barati: No, nothing. This was just against me, to get me out before I would get this manager out.

Jarrell: I see.

Barati: They succeeded. Eventually I was forced to resign. This was 1963, but due to the overwhelming support of the community, the battle went on for a long time. So my eventual departure was 1968, but 1967 was my final conducting year with one year of separation pay when I was composing my opera in 1968. The eventual outcome was on several levels. In the field of art when a person is damaged that damage cannot be erased. Remember the McCarthy era? Important pure good artists, who were not communists, once they were labeled . . .

Jarrell: They were destroyed.

Barati: Once they were labeled as communists they were destroyed. No orchestra wants to engage a conductor who left his town with such an enormous statewide debate, battle. There was no way. I was heartbroken. I was so damaged I didn't want to go near an orchestra, or face an orchestra. A hundred piece orchestra is essentially an anti-conductor clique against the man who demands, "Play now. Play louder. Play higher. Play sharper."

Jarrell: So psychologically . . .

Barati: Psychologically it's like a school, like a class and a teacher.

Jarrell: You have to have this authority?

Barati: Well, at best . . . let's see, Monteux was a wonderfully sweet, lovely man who was kind to everybody, didn't know how not to be kind. But in the San Francisco Symphony when I was in the orchestra, there were probably about ten musicians who simply couldn't look at him, they hated him so. Or Dennis Russell Davies, who is so successful a psychologist in handling the Cabrillo Music Festival orchestra. He engages his own orchestra musicians for the Cabrillo Music Festival. I know personally at least six who have very strong complaints against him. There are probably six others at least. This is inevitable.

As I mentioned to you already, I grew up in the old style. So there were enough, seemingly enough justifications like, "He's tough or he's rough or he's hard," although I never was. I allowed to remain in the orchestra those whom I knew

hated me, although I had the power to say, "goodbye." So I was kind at heart but firm in my musical convictions. I wanted perfection. And that was held against me. So I was heartbroken. And then the question was what do I do next?

It was 1967, actually, when my last season ended with the Honolulu Symphony. I already have covered pretty much what I had achieved, except for a couple of things. First, I received a number of major awards. First I got the Naumburg Award in composition, which resulted in the recording of my Chamber Concerto. Eugene Ormandy recorded it with great success with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Then I got a Guggenheim which tided me over beautifully into a new project to which I will return in a minute. I also got a Ditson Award for conducting.

Jarrell: Now what is that?

Barati: It's an annual award which was given out to an orchestra and its music director for programming, for achievement, for growth.

James Michener

Barati: By that time I had also met and became friends with James Michener, who was living in Hawaii for two or three years writing the book *Hawaii.* Jim and I decided to write an opera together. He was a major expert on opera; he knew more operas and he could sing more operas than I'd ever heard of. And he once told me that he could conduct a number of operas, he knew them so well. I believed him.

We started out working . . . our first meeting took place in a restaurant in Waikiki during the afternoon. We sat there and planned out an entire opera based on the ethnic situation in Hawaii where many ethnic peoples live together in reasonable harmony. The hidden conflicts were a most suitable subject for an opera. It was to be a comic opera. Very soon after, Jim left Hawaii, and the book *Hawaii* came out. So our opera project fell apart.

In the meantime, I decided to study Hawaiian lore so that we could write another opera together which we had also discussed. I got a one year fellowship to the Bishop Museum, which is probably the most important museum and location for Polynesian craft and art. I spent a year studying ancient Hawaiian

music, all the old tapes, and talked to some of the experts. So by the end of the year I wasn't an expert on Hawaiian music but I knew what Hawaiian music would be available for me as a resource. During this year I continued to receive offers for conducting positions. I already mentioned that I turned New Orleans down.

Then I was offered the Portland Junior Symphony for one year, which was not suitable at that time, although I loved the orchestra and returned to them eventually for a season. Duluth, Minnesota offered its position with great insistence. The most unique offer came from Sonny Burk, the great recording expert in Hollywood, the head of several major enterprises, including the record company of Frank Sinatra. Sonny (a friend since our recording together for Decca) phoned that he'd heard I was leaving Hawaii, would I come to see him. A couple of weeks later I was in Los Angeles and took a cab to Burbank, Sonny's office. He, without any preparation, offered me a job as a composer. I was flabbergasted and said that I didn't have the faintest idea how to write for film. Burk said, "What elementary things you'll need I'll teach you myself in a couple of hours. We'll give you a script of some Viennese schmalzy love scenes to which you can write music in your sleep." I asked questions, mostly of a technical nature. At one point he added, "Look, George, you can live in your beloved Hawaii; we'll give you a phone call, maybe twice a year. You fly over for nine weeks, which is the customary contract. You'll compose about 2 minutes of "net" (finished) music for eight weeks, during the ninth you record—then back to Hawaii until the next call. You'll earn easily enough to live happily." He pulled out about eight large recordings, commercial issues of the best known films of the previous period, "Take these home. Listen to them. You'll see that there is nothing to it." Then he sent me to one of the best known management offices. The well-known chap explained to me what the contract would contain. I think I was reeling all the way home.

Upon arrival I sat my three lovely women of the family down and told them the whole story, trying to suppress both my doubts and my excitement. Lorna, age 15 and Donna, age 9, wanted to hear the records. I put them on, each for 2-3 minutes. There was a great silence. Then both girls exclaimed. Lorna, "Daddy, is this is the kind of junk you plan to write?" Donna, "Yeah, Daddy, that's not music!" There was absolutely no more discussion. The offer was turned down.

RETURNING TO CALIFORNIA

Villa Montalvo

Barati: So then I was offered, unexpectedly the directorship of an art center in Saratoga, California, at Villa Montalvo.

I was invited for an interview and the directors explained what they needed. I went home excitedly to Ruth because that was a wonderful location in many ways. It brought us back, I thought, to the San Francisco area. Also it gave us a wonderful way of living, very similar to what we had in Hawaii, a mountaintop, no neighbors, ample space around us. And they flew Ruth in and she also fell in love with the area. [inaudible] . . . Villa Montalvo was built by Senator James Phelan, a Democrat from California who later became Mayor of San Francisco. He was Mayor during the Great Earthquake. It was his summer home used for private cultural activities. He left it in his will for the city to use for cultural purposes. I don't think he thought too carefully about what that meant. They used the Villa without the benefit of a central plan. From the first days I established two goals: to improve and coordinate the existing programs and to raise income. I found that the delightful theater was hardly used. New programs, many new activities soon invigorated the place and brought in new blood. We established several new committees for our many new ideas. All this improved the financial picture immediately.

I discovered that Phelan's foundation included a small fund handled by one person very casually. So I organized an investment committee, which gave me two lessons. One was that the fund's income within two or three years doubled and quadrupled because the committee began to be active. Secondly it taught me about finances, about which I was very uninformed. This helped me very much in subsequent years.

Jarrell: So you learned a great deal.

Barati: I learned a great deal and I enjoyed very much living there. I did not enjoy dealing with some of the committees. Also this was a period when the drug culture hit California, and Montalvo, which is 200 acres of beautiful property, became the playground of the drug addicts. Many evenings when the

gates were closed at 5:00 I had to call the police and get the ambulances to collect several bodies that were just drugged out. So this was an inconvenience. Also, since we lived in the Villa upstairs, whatever problem came up . . . if somebody left their pocketbook there, or a handkerchief, they called me at 10 p.m., could you please find it for me. I need it tomorrow morning. Then this wonderful president of the board died. The board actually consisted of mainly conservative arch-Republicans. The president was the only Democrat in fact. One of the first attacks on me was when I arranged an event there for Senator Alan Cranston. He was then newly elected, and to celebrate his first year the Cranston supporters wanted to rent Montalvo. We also rented out Montalvo facilities for weddings, and occasions such as Cranston's party, which was guaranteed to be sold out. But I got such hell from my all-Republican board, they almost kicked me out for it.

Jarrell: Although it generated income.

Barati: Major income. So after a while it became very inconvenient, very tedious, and increasingly uncomfortable to be director there.

Now, also another problem that came up was that I had assumed somehow that this location would be much closer to San Francisco than it was. So I found I couldn't go up as easily and I didn't have as much contact as I had hoped I would have with my beloved San Francisco musical life, which was disappointing.

Noelani

Barati: But by that time Jim Michener and I had met again, reestablished our friendship. I went to visit them . . . once I was in New York auditioning and doing musical work, conducting and annually judging the Mitropoulos Conducting Competition which I did for ten years. I was so busy in New York at the St. Moritz Hotel, where I stayed for twenty years when I was there, that they established a special telephone operator, called the Barati operator. I had so many phone calls that this operator did nothing but my calls. One day I arrived about five p.m. I said to her, "Look, I'm exhausted. Please I accept no calls. No calls until 6:30. I must take a little nap." And at 6:00 the phone rings. And I said, "What's happening? I thought I told you not to wake me up." "Mr. Barati I thought you would want to know that James Michener just called, they are

coming into town to take you out for dinner. I thought it would be important for you to know it and change plans," which I promptly did. I cancelled my plans and Jim and Mari, his lovely wife, and I had dinner, which resulted in his invitation to their place in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where he had built a beautiful house. I spent a weekend to discuss plans for the opera. He picked me up at the bus station. It was snowing, terrible weather, very hard driving. He said, "George, how's Ruth? How are the children?" I said, "Fine . . . they send their love." "Okay. Let's talk about the opera." From that time on Saturday morning 9:30 till Sunday evening 7:30 we didn't stop working on the opera.

But he said this, "I don't want to say anything specific. Let's start out at the extreme outside line and let's work ourselves in step-by-step." In this way Jim writes his books: "Let's not mention anything more than just generalities, no names, no specifics and then find ourselves, once we establish what we want to do then we work it in." Then he said, "What do you want to do George, a comic opera or a tragedy?" I said a tragedy. "Then what period shall we pick?" I said, "Well what do you think, Jim?" "Well how about the moment when the missionaries were there already but the Hawaiian culture was still prevalent?" I said, "Excellent. Shall we have any white people in it?" "Well maybe not. Maybe we'll have only Hawaiians." So we started out thinking in those terms. But very soon we found we needed a scapegoat . . . we only had one trespasser, a white man, a *haole*, who was a con-man. So we established relationships. There was the *Kahuna*, who is a very important person in Hawaiian lore, the sacred man, the advisor, the wise man, the priest who has all the mystery, all the strange Polynesian mystique around him. Then there were a mother and a young daughter, a white man who would become involved in intrigue with the women. The plot developed and we worked on and on, all day Saturday, all day Sunday. On Sunday evening about 7:00 Jim says, "George I have enough material. I'm going to go into my studio. Don't come in. I've invited over my neighbor who is the finance editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* who is a chess player. He's going to play chess with you." So we played three games of chess. He beat me bitterly and bloodily in about ten minutes each. He was a master player. I was a very average player. Then Jim came out with three pages of writing and said, "Here it is. It's yours."

This was the scenario for the opera. Eventually he wrote a letter giving me all the rights to it. We decided to continue. I was very excited. But then he got the idea for the *Iberia* book, and left the area, went to live in Spain. He always did that; he could not work without really being there and experiencing things at first hand. His mind went from the general, to the specific, beautifully organized. It was just a masterpiece, a study for me during our two days together. The opera became very serious. But then he dropped it.

Jarrell: What was the title of the opera?

Barati: The title at that time was originally *The Feather Cloak.* The title became *Noelani*, the mother's name, and what happened actually was that in the course of composition the personalities seemed to take over the writing of the opera. One day I realized that we hadn't quite formulated the basic ideas. The *Kahuna's* character had been minor. Suddenly I realized that the *Kahuna* was really the major moving force in the opera. He was like Mephistopheles, you know, the good and the bad both. One afternoon I was alone in the house and there was absolutely no wind. There was an enormous bang in the house and all the doors with all their might snapped shut. There was nothing moving at all so it couldn't have been the wind. It scared me to death. I realized that the *Kahuna* was telling me he was more powerful than we allowed him to be in the opera. I believe in the *Kahuna* to this day.

So we changed the size of his role. I finished the first draft and then I restarted again, revised it, changed it a great deal because there is much interest around for its possible use. I finished that version at Montalvo. But it really wasn't to my liking. I felt that I'd misunderstood the possibilities of Hawaiian music. There was too much chanting, not enough western use of the voice. So I began to rewrite it; in fact right now I've finished two scenes in a much revised form, probably quite good.

We had a beloved friend in Hawaii, Reuel Denney, who was the co-author of *The Lonely Crowd* with David Riesman. Reuel, besides being a sociologist, is also a major poet and a brilliant man, a genius. I mean the I.Q. buzzes out of him like lightning. So Reuel and Ruth and I wrote the libretto while we were still in Hawaii.

By the time I left Hawaii, of course I had been composing throughout the years. But since I was a successful music director and a touring conductor, I neglected composition except for the periods of the year when I was free or could make myself free. So now I could reverse this and could compose at four or five o'clock every morning, and do research, so that became much more important to me. I want to make two important points. One is, to remember that I was a very successful, accomplished, internationally known conductor. I was making recordings. I played concerts on five continents. I was on the inside. So I know the feeling of what it means to be a successful conductor. So what happened after that, when I was no longer a music director with the power and the glory? I was allowed to have more time to become a better human being. I think what started during the Montalvo years and subsequently was that I was able to develop much better as a richly living person, and a better composer too, and with more achievements as a composer, but essentially as a human being.

That Jungle Called Musical Life

Barati: Conducting, that jungle called musical life is a terrible, terrible imposition on a human being. If you know well any famous people you know how terribly self-centered and egotistical they can become. They have to maintain their level. They have to always compete with the newcomers. They always have to be the great human, the great number one on the social scene, they have to always shine and be brilliant.

Jarrell: Very single-minded.

Barati: Very single-minded. But it doesn't pay; eventually it begins to attack your own real self, your totality of a self. I think luckily, hopefully, I got out of that in time. The twice a year departure from Hawaii was really essential to me, as I said, to be cut down to size. Because sometimes I really lost myself in this enormous adulation I received all the time for my successes. It was deserved from one point of view. On the other hand, Hawaii always overdoes that to people, overdoes the good and the bad both. So you become deformed somewhere eventually. I know very well how many famous people are now deformed.

Jarrell: And also in addition to the Honolulu Symphony you said that always you were conducting during your breaks, that you were traveling all over.

Barati: Well I traveled on five continents. I conducted in South America once or twice; in Asia many times; Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines; in Europe regularly; in Australia and New Zealand. These trips you know, they are big trips. My tall body suffered on planes and in hotels.

Jarrell: So that must have really disrupted your life with Ruth and . . .

Barati: . . . and the children. Of course. I didn't ever think that I neglected the children. I tried not to, but essentially I wasn't there much of the time. But I wrote and phoned often and kept in touch . . . It's not necessarily the ideal way of life. It has fantastic . . .

Jarrell: Rewards?

Barati: Rewards but also fantastic minuses.

Jarrell: Yes, I think that the jet age, touring of major artists, conductors, opera singers, that lifestyle . . . I've thought about it and how detrimental it would be to one's, not only one's physical health, and the stress, but the mental health.

Barati: The mental health I think suffers.

Jarrell: Because how do you restore yourself if you are just flying around giving concerts?

Barati: Exactly. Well not just giving concerts but after concerts there are parties. People recognize you on the street, on the bus. You are always the great, great man. I mean, Ruth was with me in Japan on the train once. Little kids came to me, "Ahh, you are Barati. Barati." And showed my face on their tickets from the previous night's concert in Tokyo. This was 150 miles north of Tokyo. And this goes on and on and on. And so, I'm an expert on fame, what they call greatness. But I'm also expert on the misery of it.

Let me speak briefly about the profession of the symphony conductor in our time. In most cities, the music director of the local orchestra has become a major personality in the social life. This is inevitable as today's success depends on

public relations. Nobody can escape the steady pressures he or she must endure if he or she wants to advance in the professions, just as this is true in business and politics. The more the name is known the better the person becomes. The anomaly in the arts is that fame equals PR, not talent or achievement. Conductors can fake it. Seemingly, it calls for no major doing to move your hand up and down, and, there, the whole orchestra plays just beautifully, or so the average person in the audience thinks.

This calls for real vigilance when boards select their new conductor. Instead, usually or at least often, they fall into the traps that were set for them by the managements, their PR persons and, mainly, by the aspiring conductors. There is no trick that has not been successfully utilized by conductors. In this country, a foreign accent is more crucial in the make up of the personality of the candidate than his ability to distinguish between oboe and clarinet. He must have wit, charm, ready conversation, excellent coiffure. Even a shiny baton will help. He must be an excellent public speaker, easy and funny with the orchestra, not too demanding at rehearsals but move and jump on the podium during concerts so that nobody will fall asleep. The sad result is that many of today's greats are nothing more than cheats, fakes. There are so-called superstars who destroyed orchestras in 3-4 years. There are those who remain on top, maybe not famous but established in smaller situations for many years who stay there by using techniques Machiavelli never heard of. There are occasions when enough facts known about an up-and-coming conductor indicate "danger" on all levels, and one can watch them arrive as stars a few years later. What to look for? When an unknown youngster suddenly becomes a famous maestro's assistant; a week later the maestro takes ill just before the concert, and the assistant, just barely settled in town, conducts the orchestra without rehearsals. Glorious reviews next day lead to an enormous position or project a month later. The new giant makes one recording: of course, that wins the biggest recording prize of the decade. Now the young giant is demanded all around the world as guest conductor. Well, what's wrong with a young talent succeeding like a great quarterback? What's wrong is that he did not succeed because of his *talent* but because of publicity, a smooth PR deal, either bought with big money or big influence or some other means for *quid pro quo.* Sometimes that young man has been known actually to have talent. Even then, it was the hype, not the preparation and talent that brought the "superstar" nomination.

On the other side of the coin are the results of this hype: this young tiger is only interested in his own career. He'll leave for a bigger job at the first opportunity, or, even worse, accept another position and hold both. Today's fashion, no, demand, that a conductor *must* have two or three orchestras under his belt or he is no good, brought the whole idea of the music director to the point of crisis; how serious is the interest of a man who lives in three cities, sometimes in three countries, in any one of them? Furthermore, past events clearly indicate that the conductor who got to his position not with his strength of talent, but with his cunning or PR tricks or money, does more damage than realized by boards and audiences. The music director must build orchestras and audience, he must spend time with the young people and interest the bored, find new ways to present old and new music.

Santa Cruz Symphony

Jarrell: How did you become conductor of the Santa Cruz Symphony? You are an insider and can chronicle that really important period in terms of local culture.

Barati: It was 1970 or so I think that I heard that Santa Cruz was looking for a conductor. I forget now what happened. Who was before me? Oh, Masonson. He didn't have much success. And there was no organization. I met some people from Santa Cruz at Montalvo, among them the Liddicoats; Dr. Douglas Liddicoat was then president of the symphony. He invited me to sit down with him, offered me the job, which was perfect for me because Montalvo didn't keep me so busy. I should say first I had continued my international conducting, from Montalvo. I went to Europe, to Australia, to New Zealand, to Japan, to the Philippines. But at Montalvo . . . I built up my own position so I had less and less time to go away. I got tired of it. So the job offer was perfect for me. I could just keep my hand in conducting, enjoy music, stay at Montalvo where our two growing daughters were nearing college age. I accepted the job.

Now at that time, I went to a concert, the Santa Cruz orchestra played in Watsonville and they had about 34 on stage and about 18 in the audience, literally speaking.

Jarrell: Two to one. Orchestra to audience.

Barati: Oh yes, twice the size. And they played really very primitively, very badly. So I began by pulling things together. We had to strengthen the board. The board was a very willing, likeable group, but they didn't know anything about how to manage an orchestra. There was no involvement with the University [of California, Santa Cruz], except very slightly.

So I started from the bottom up and tried to develop things. Fundraising was impossible. They had only one annual fundraising, an auction and some sort of an outing . . . and they raised about four or five hundred dollars. They only had really one major person, [Ernest T.] Bud Kretschmer. Dr. Liddicoat was a fine president but he pulled out after the first year. Board presidents were elected for one year; they came in and barely began to learn when their term ended. There were not enough assets on which to build. There was very little money in town. There was no industry or corporate base.

A symphony orchestra usually needs some large corporations or large donors whether it's five thousand or fifty thousand but you start out . . . the largest single gifts are either from corporations or from a family who can afford it. So Bud [Kretschmer] was one of the few who underwrote the cost. I was paid a small amount and I gave back the money each year because they couldn't afford it. So Marilyn Liddicoat, who was my lawyer and negotiated my contracts called me up and said, "George you can't afford that. You can't give money back." I said, "But they can't afford to pay me." Marilyn said, "But you are a professional. You have to be paid for it." I said, "Look, you are right, but I can't do that." So I turned the money back.

So we had a low budget and very low pay for the musicians. One immediate result of the latter fact was that there was a continuous "brain-drain," call it "sound-drain": our better players moved a few miles down to the Monterey Symphony, well-to-do and willing to pay.

Each March we had made plans for the season and before the last two concerts came up around next March, we had no money so I changed the program, reduced the orchestra to a chamber orchestra size; instead of 48 players we had 29 players. Less money. The pay scale was ridiculous. The players were really amateurs. There was no real central spirit. There were only a few University kids but they were neither well enough trained nor had any serious interest in our

orchestra. There was only one outstanding instrumental teacher, Heiichiro Ohyama, who taught viola. He's a wonderful violist. He had some good students. But he didn't make an effort to get them to play in the orchestra because he wanted to have his chamber group. So he didn't collaborate with us. And many of the others at the University, if I may be so bold as to say, were between second and fourth rate musicians. They were scared to death of anything or anybody who tried to do anything larger than just what was safe.

Dean McHenry, who was then Chancellor, called me up one day and said, "Could you possibly teach, help us out?" This was a Wednesday. A teacher had refused to teach the following semester, which started next Monday. He wanted to know if I could take over. I asked, "What's the subject?" It was Nineteenth Century Classical/Romantic music. I told him I'd be glad to. So I taught the class. Dean McHenry said, "This is the chance I had hoped for to get you on campus." I taught for one semester very successfully. The official judgment went out that I was the best organized lecturer in the department. In the meantime, the two Eds, Houghton and Dirks, began to work up the idea along with Bud Kretschmer to try to have a collaboration between the University and the symphony. If the University would dissolve its orchestra then the Santa Cruz Symphony would become the official orchestra, with the University given credit. They were very much for it except the music board of studies voted it out; they didn't want me to be part of it. My job would have been mainly conducting the orchestra, but nothing on campus. (Laughter) Maybe one lecture, I don't know. So it didn't happen.

Now in the meantime we had these symphony board presidents come and go. One was Max Walden who created the Cooper House. A very ambitious man, clever with good ideas. Well Max dreamed up fundraising events. And every year, it seemed our largest contributions were either $7.22 or $14.99. I said, "But Max we are supposed to raise money." "Don't worry about it. We are building good will. People will come to hear us." Well we were growing. We got a bit better players. A women's committee got organized. It began to raise some money. But it was just pennies, piddling stuff.

Jarrell: Hundreds of dollars?

Barati: Yes, exactly. I was faced with this problem. I was doing everything I could, making speeches, selling unusual programming, (things that they couldn't hear in San Francisco) we played quite well. We played a symphony by the Swedish composer, Berwald, just before he was rediscovered by the major orchestras. But there was always a problem.

At one Sunday afternoon concert which was to start at 3:00 p.m., four or five players were missing. So I said," What's happening?" Nobody knew. So about 3:20 they arrived. "I said, "What happened to you? Where were you?" "Oh we watched a football game and it didn't finish on time." That was the mentality. So we start a few minutes late? The people aren't here anyway, and the few who are here, who cares? So . . . an example included a professor at UCSC who played well. But one day he didn't show up. I said, "Where is he?" and was told that he was playing in the Monterey Symphony, that, as I said, paid always a few dollars more. So I called him up. I said, "Look, you are one of the founders of the symphony. You are a well-paid professor who stands for culture. You waste more time coming and going than the two dollar difference that you get each time." "Oh, but they are a better orchestra." I said, "But better orchestra because you guys don't stay with us. We can't build an orchestra that way." He came back. He played for two months. Again he dropped out. They all dropped out. So eventually I got sick and tired of it.

One evening we did the Saint-Saens Symphony No. 3 which calls for the organ, which was held at the University in the big Performing Arts Theater. The organ wasn't loud enough so we stayed over Friday night to work on it. So the manager and I stayed there experimenting to get it louder. We established a signal system to regulate the volume and it was fine. The other thing was that the chorus had to stand. There was no room for them to sit down. I said, "The chorus can't stand for two hours. Don't bring them in until the last second." So when I arrived the chorus was already on stage, standing, waiting. The concert was a sell-out so the audience was very late coming, with a big line outside. We started about forty minutes late. One person in the chorus collapsed very soon after, fainted from standing so long. When we came to the organ part I still couldn't hear the organ; they simply didn't bother to do any of the things I had discussed with them the night before. So I said to myself as I was conducting, "I am going to resign. Tomorrow morning." I came home Saturday night. I said to

Ruth, "Ruth, don't say a word, I'm resigning." I wrote a letter of resignation Sunday morning. I took it with me. The board president was Dr. Bernard Hilberman, who was singing in the chorus. I said to him, "Bernie, this is a letter of importance. Please don't open it until the end of the concert." I resigned, finished, but I conducted to the end of the season.

Jarrell: This was what year?

Barati: This was 1979.

Jarrell: This was the straw that broke George's back?

Barati: Yes. And the moment I finished I was very happy. Things began to happen. I got a commission from the Cabrillo Festival in the first year.

But momentum was gained in my years. Musically, program-wise, definitely. I tried to give a structure to the orchestra and its programs. I battled vehemently for a stronger board and more activities and more county-wide activities. But the county was divided, and still is; south county was neglected, as it is now. The concert hall was miserable, and still is. The Cabrillo College Concert Hall is not suitable for music. It may be fairly good for the spoken word. The University did not have a hall, still doesn't have a hall for orchestra. I discovered that the best hall was at College Five, Porter College [at UCSC] now, which has a dining room which is all wood and I think it's quite usable. But of course it's limited otherwise. So the symphony was not slated for a major development. Now since then, it's grown a great deal, mainly because Santa Cruz County has grown. It grew enough to be accepted by several large foundations, the Hewlett-Packard Foundation especially, has opened up its finances to support educational and artistic activities. The Cultural Council was formed in my time. I was part of its formation. All these developments naturally started a larger growth that made itself felt, not only for the Santa Cruz Symphony but for the Cabrillo Music Festival as well.

Jarrell: Were the contributions from the Packard Foundation taking place during your tenure?

Barati: I don't think so. We may have gotten one small gift. But very soon after I left, by sheer coincidence things started happening a little bit better. This was a

time when the national attitude changed. Grant writing became a major activity for cultural groups in my last two or three years. At first, I think the best grant writers didn't work for music necessarily. But then as I left, very soon after that, the orchestra began to connect, began to be associated with grant writing and succeeded. At first very small amounts each year, and just by the nature of the inflation the contributions increased. During the Reagan years less and less money was given by the National Endowment for the Arts; it was replaced by private foundations and big corporate donations. Symphonies around the country, operas, museums, got more and more money from private corporations, and families.

During my tenure I was influential in two major financial successes. Having collaborated with Jack Benny in fund raising concerts elsewhere, I knew that if we could engage him to do the same for us that would guarantee a dramatic beginning. By this time Jack became a close friend of Ruth and me. He accepted the date after I proved to him that between Montalvo, where I was executive director, and Santa Cruz, we could attract a large enough crowd to achieve his customary minimum. After some painfully hard work by both Ruth and myself the results were excellent and the Santa Cruz Symphony started its first season with me on a secure financial basis.

Then I met Barbara Zollinger, and her then husband Jack Lingafelter. Gradually I was able to interest Barbara mainly, but her husband too, in the purposes of the symphony. After a long period a very large grant was given the symphony by these two patrons, the income from which still greatly benefits the Symphony.

This grant was given the orchestra just as I was to resign. Strangely, it was almost a repetition of what happened in Hawaii where the Ford Foundation gave 1.2 million dollars to the Honolulu Symphony partly because of the results of my tenure and programming. In both instances, the grant came too late to benefit my work. There are people in every walk of life, who are ahead of their time, who dream up an idea, don't get the credit they might deserve, but the achievement goes on and becomes concrete. I don't claim to have a messianic mission but I certainly had ideas and produced them and presented them in written and documentable form, and realized them.

The few musicians, students and others, who were talented realized that, while I was a demanding conductor, I had high principles and a great deal of quality knowledge; they could benefit a great deal from working with me. But there were too few of those. Still, my nine years as Music Director of the Santa Cruz County Symphony were crucial in the development of both the orchestra and the musical life of the entire county. By the time I left, the fundamentals for a serious orchestral life were firmly established. It was easier to collect more funds, pay the players better and find better musicians, better informed board members, and, mostly, more audiences. So, my years were far from wasted; they were constructive. The proof is that as years pass by, the appreciation for my work in the county has steadily grown.

Ernest T. "Bud" Kretschmer

Barati: I should talk about Bud Kretschmer at this point. Bud was I think the single most important person that I met in this area. He's a very unique man. He loves music, especially piano music.

It took me a long time to begin to understand Bud Kretschmer. Even while he was President of the Santa Cruz Symphony, and did the management, I was having difficulty grasping what made Bud tick. He was very quiet, very self-effacing; his ego didn't show. Even now, when concert halls and scholarships are named after him, he takes it remarkably well, with great simplicity and calm. Bud devotes all his time to helping others. This has many venues: he calls me with an idea, just in passing, not pushing it or claiming credit for himself. They are usually excellent and it is amazing how many can be realized.

From the beginning of our friendship, he was a great initiator for my composing. He suggested, and arranged payment, for me to compose my Piano Concerto; then came *Branches of Time*, a concerto for two pianos and orchestra. This was followed by the commission of the *B.U.D.* Piano Sonata. The title indicates that I wanted to give lasting proof of my appreciation for Bud's standing by me, through utilizing his nickname as the basis of this large composition. This work had its first performance by Barbara Nissman at the opening of Kretschmer Hall at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I heard her play it in Fresno, where, after our detailed rehearsal, Barbara played it to my utmost satisfaction, a rare statement from any composer.

Bud also persuaded Dennis Russell Davies to commission me to write an orchestral piece for the Cabrillo Festival and I am sure that, once again, it was he who collected donations for the commission and for the enormous copying costs. Bud is a unique figure, a rare combination of ideas, energy, generosity and total devotion. These are qualities that made the Medicis, the Rothschilds, the popes, the Rockefellers and many others, the motivating powers in the history of the arts that produced so many masterpieces and, what may be more crucial the openings for creative artists to function. This is no exaggeration because his direct influence has been felt in this county—and elsewhere—on every level: sponsorship of pianists in concerts and with scholarships, at the symphony, the Cabrillo Festival, the University (Crown College chamber concerts, for instance) helping to buy organs at the church, buying pianos for colleges and the symphony. The list is infinite. Bud has established a single person's support system for music in this county. Not just for me. I mean this goes on and on.

Jarrell: Isn't he also very active in the Cabrillo Festival?

Barati: He's active in everything. The Santa Cruz Symphony. Cabrillo College, the University. The series that collapsed he's trying to reestablish.

Jarrell: The Crown Chamber Players?

Barati: Yes.

Jarrell: He's trying to help to reestablish them?

Barati: Oh absolutely. He's president of the group that raised money. The whole George Barati Archive is his idea. It was not mine. He went to the University. He came to me and asked what did I think? "It's a wonderful idea." He went and sold the idea to them. He's now in charge of raising money that it needs. He spends hours on collecting names and talking to people to raise money. He raised money for the Catholic Church; for Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan—he's raised huge amounts of money for them. He went to school there.

Jarrell: Does he play piano?

Barati: He used to play. He gave it up some time ago and he doesn't hear so well now, so he has trouble with it. I used to play string quartets with a colleague, whose wife used to collect anything connected with the violin. Her husband played violin. So every single item in the house had something to do with violin design, the cuff links, the neckties, the lamps . . . Now Bud is that way, but the right way. She was the wrong way. Bud loves pianos, he loves pianists, he loves piano music. He helps all that.

I must say, with due respect, I don't think we would live here if Bud weren't here. I have no close friends here and I have nobody with whom to discuss musical matters or my interests which are geopolitics and international affairs. If Bud hadn't been this much of an involvement for me I might have suggested to Ruth, I don't know how many years ago, that we move somewhere closer to San Francisco.

Then I want to mention the two very strange occasions, which were the negative side of my life, which I think also accompanied me throughout. I've always had a very deep sense of, not good luck, but a kind of a mission, kind of a promise that I can do something special. And I never had any doubt in my mind that I would do something, such as founding orchestras, always being a few steps ahead of the current events so that my achievements many, many times were not quite appreciated but looking back I realize how much I have done, but also the bad luck . . . and two examples. There are many others but these two are typical of what transpired.

One was the number one national manager, the retired president of the NCAC, came to Hawaii to vacation every winter. He came to a concert and came back stage and said, "I am Mr. Hearst and I am very much impressed with the Mozart symphony you performed, the way you did Mozart." A month later he came back and said, "Wonderful Beethoven symphony. Thank you for a wonderful concert." Then he came to my Debussy performances, or an opera performance. After about five or six months he said, "I want to talk to you. I am a retired manager. I only have one artist that I now manage, Zubin Mehta. If you don't believe me I have his next contract in my pocket here," and he showed it to me. "And when I'm leaving here I go to Los Angeles to meet with Mehta and with Buffy Chandler," who was then the president and the power behind the throne of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Hollywood Bowl, "and I'm going to talk

to them about you. I have no question that you are going to be engaged and your career will be set if you would like me to manage you." So we agreed that he was going to do this. And I was very pleased, very happy. This was, I don't know, maybe 1964, 65, at a crucial moment in my career. He left on the plane. I helped him with his luggage. Then I didn't hear from him. And about two weeks later we called his home to find out that he died on the plane. So that wonderful dream just fell apart.

Another incident, quite similar, was that I had a very good friend, Burt Martinson who was the heir to the Martinson coffee wealth and president of the New York City Ballet. Burt came to my concerts and liked my music, liked my compositions. One evening at the Halukulani Hotel, said to me, "George, I want to commission you to write a ballet for the New York City Ballet." We discussed this and he said, "I want to give you a check. He held out his checkbook and said, "Would ten thousand dollars be enough for a down payment?" I said "Burt, don't bother now. This is a social occasion, dinner. I'll be in New York anyway in a couple of months and we can finalize it then." I went to New York and he took me to Balanchine, and to the ballet rehearsal and Balanchine said that he was interested but at the time he was involved in an all-Stravinsky ballet series. But he said if I had time I should go ahead and compose it. So we agreed on everything and Burt said "I'll be in Hawaii in a few months and we can finalize." Burt never showed up. He had gone to Bali where he disappeared. He was murdered in Bali. So that dream fell apart too. These were two momentous situations at the right time of my life. There are others similar. But this seems to have gone through my life that I had always a tremendous amount of luck when luck was needed. Like being invited to this country at the moment the World War II was in preparation, and Hitler was in power. But there were moments fate intervened negatively.

Cabrillo Music Festival

Barati: The Cabrillo Music Festival has had its ups and downs. You mentioned Carlos Chávez who was the music director some years ago, one of the major names. I believe that his big reputation may have helped the prestige of the Festival.

We served together as judges at the Mitropoulos International Competition for conductors. The auditions were very elaborate, very systematic, and you only knew the candidates by the numbers; the conductor candidates were sent by their national government in many instances, so they represented whole nations. Each of them was an important agent of culture in their native countries. We had forty, fifty countries involved and the finals dealt with about twenty, twenty-five finalists. So it was a major situation. And we heard them repeatedly doing various ways of conducting. Either sight reading . . . they were given one evening to study a new score, or their own choice for accompaniment, whatever it was.

Gerhard Samuels, the founding conductor who preceded Carlos Chávez had much greater impact on the development of the Cabrillo Festival. Samuels built highly challenging programs and established the format that his successor perfected.

Barati: After Chávez came Dennis Russell Davies and you asked me to talk about him. I must tell you that he is one of the very, very few conductors today that I admire. Dennis has several major factors in his makeup that are crucial. One is his very wide understanding of music; he plays contemporary music as very few others. His heart is in it; he wants to do it; he's excited by it. He has a large enough palate of tastes that he plays all sorts of contemporary music. He doesn't just like one kind. Now I must also add, that for reasons I don't understand he prefers some styles that I find rather not deserving the amount of interest he bestows on them. But it doesn't mean he favors them especially. In some instances he might. I wouldn't put that too firmly down.

Jarrell: Now . . . I'm a little confused.

Barati: Contemporary music has many styles.

Jarrell: Can you be more specific?

Barati: Well, there are certain styles that are not necessarily the most important, or may not remain the most important, but Dennis plays more compositions of that kind than of some other, obviously more important contemporary styles. One example, for instance, the populists, the American populist composers. They are easy to take and so the audiences prefer them to some more "serious"

contemporary music. The populist movement really started with the Copland ballets during the Thirties and Forties, which became very successful and in a sense they ruined Copland's career because eventually Copland realized himself that he was selling out his greater talents, selling it short by producing these immediately successful "American-style" ballets, which are populist. Jazzy or bouncy or whatever. Obvious. Many composers maintain that there's no such thing as American nationalist music of any one kind. Whose style is the nationalistic style?

Jarrell: So that you saw this in terms of Davies' programming?

Barati: Relative to Dennis's depth of understanding of truly major classical works. Dennis does Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and Brahms very well, very clearly, with complete understanding. But sometimes I wonder if he's too young yet to have the philosophical depth for a truly profound performance. There's such a thing as a major Beethoven performance or a good one. He certainly has clarity, has understanding; I'm just questioning whether he's going to grow enough to become a major conductor, truly major conductor. He has all the qualifications to be. Also the question here, if Dennis will get a major post in this country. If he doesn't it may be because his name is associated too much with contemporary music. American orchestras are still at the point where the repertoire is about eighty percent the known and the true. All the way from Tchaikovsky to Rimsky-Korsakov, you know. All the way from Mozart to Haydn. But otherwise I have nothing but great admiration for Dennis. And also by the way he's a wonderful pianist, an absolutely first-class pianist.

Jarrell: What has been your participation in the Cabrillo Music Festival over the years in terms of your association with it, or their programming of your compositions?

Barati: Well, it began when I was appointed music director of the Santa Cruz County Symphony. I had a meeting with the then Dean of Cabrillo College, Tim Welch, who was one of the co-founders of the Cabrillo Festival. At that time in 1980-81 he was one of the leading lights. Tim said to me, "Yes we would be interested in engaging you as music director for the Cabrillo Festival after you start with the symphony." After I accepted the position with the Santa Cruz Symphony, I reopened the conversation with Tim Welch, who was a still a major

power at the Cabrillo Festival. His classic reply was, "Unfortunately, that is impossible, George, because you are considered a local musician and we only consider people from a major place." They had to have an outsider; again the snob appeal of having players and conductors and soloists from as far away as possible. If they came from Iraq it would be better than if they came from Soquel, you know.

Actually I was invited to give a presentation to the board of the Cabrillo Festival where I pinpointed certain basic issues. I said that it's crucial to develop the musical life of the county producing enough good musicians to settle here so there would be a source of players for the symphony and the Festival. There was no reason in my mind why there couldn't be enough excellent players eventually. So the symphony could produce players for the Festival as well.

Jarrell: Most of the musicians for the Festival are always from outside.

Barati: They had almost all the musicians from other parts of the country. Now they probably have three or four local, still the same way exactly. There's no attempt made at developing local musicians . . .

Jarrell: Is that reasonable, though, given our economic situation and . . . to have a critical mass of symphony-quality musicians who reside here?

Barati: Well at the moment there are no more than three or four who are suitable. There's no question about it. But let me tell you the story of Norman Fromm. Norman Fromm is from the family of four brothers, one the psychologist. Norman was president of the Paul Masson Winery. Norman Fromm called me up for a meeting once. We went to San Francisco to his club and discussed his dream. His dream was to found a West Coast festival, a Central California Festival that could incorporate all these minor activities that took money away from very small sources without producing something substantial. Beginning with the Bach Festival in Carmel, which has not not really been a major cultural achievement, to the Cabrillo Festival which has had its ups and downs, to the Santa Cruz Symphony which was mostly down, to the University of California, Santa Cruz, which was just beginning to do things but didn't know what it wanted to do.

He proposed that we explore the idea of the space on the UCSC campus, the quarry that would be built into an amphitheater and join . . . all these forces. Maybe Saratoga, maybe Montalvo. The reason he came to me was that I was at Montalvo at that time. He wanted to form one major festival that would divide itself geographically and calendar-wise and go from one area to the other; the same orchestra—using maybe the San Francisco Symphony too—as well as local groups of available resources, and build a major festival. We had an in-depth discussion. He had an expert coming from New York to discuss the financial possibilities, how to raise the right monies and all the other activities, space and whatever. I called back Monday to tell him that I appreciated this Thursday or Friday lunch and he was in the hospital and he died about two days later. So the whole thing again fell apart. This was not my dream, this was somebody else's dream. But this might have become the real basis for a true development here.

So going back to the point, there are not enough musicians here. But when I went to Hawaii there were just a handful of musicians there too. So what did I do? I united the basic possible sources. I approached the schools, the large corporations, and they accepted the idea of bringing in musicians who also could work part time as teachers, as sugar scientists, as engineers, whatever. It worked. Here we have the University. They have probably now maybe a half a dozen first class musicians who teach geography or biochemistry, or who knows what? There could be combination activities. There could be all sorts of ways of developing resources. Also the county is growing, the orchestra pays more. The Cabrillo Festival could pay more. So there would be enough income to guarantee. This is a slow process.

Jarrell: It's very slow.

Barati: But it has to be produced by a central source, the music director of something, or a manager. It didn't happen and won't happen so long as there's competition. Each four or five years the symphony gets the upper hand and then the Cabrillo Festival gets the upper hand. Right now the Festival has gone kind of down because they did that tent business the last few years which was a major mistake. They had a tent on campus because there was no concert hall, and that cost too much money, and so they got into debt, which they had to pull themselves out from. Meantime the symphony did okay for a couple of years, slowly got enough money.

The Festival used me as a composer, as they use other composers. First Dennis gave me a commission in 1981 to write an orchestra piece, which I delivered and it was performed with a reasonable success. It wasn't a major success but it was well accepted. Then Dennis played a piano piece of mine, *Night Spectrum* which became very successful. He played it magnificently. Then he scheduled a chamber music piece . . . these are two years apart, roughly speaking.

Jarrell: And this would have been what year?

Barati: In 1982 the orchestra piece was played and the same year also *The Night Spectrum. Hawaiian Forests* was played about 1989. At the last minute they got stuck . . . the players found that they couldn't handle it without a conductor. It's quite elaborate, seven players. So they asked me if I would conduct the piece, and I conducted it at the Festival with great success. It is an interesting work. And I will come back to the style of it in a few minutes talking about my own music.

You also mentioned Lou Harrison in this connection and I want to tell you that Lou Harrison, I think is a very excellent composer. He is a very talented composer. One always wonders about the eventual appraisal of an artist. And I am not in a position yet to appraise Lou's final position in the world. But I can tell you this, that he has changed his style several times. We all do. Stravinsky did. Picasso did, you know, why wouldn't Lou Harrison do it, or George Barati? But I think the current style is a kind of similar escape in a sense of finding a niche for himself that I mentioned about Copland earlier. Copland after a very broad, wonderful experimental beginning became a quasi-commercial composer, who sold out to the immediate success. Lou is now composing in a style that he swears by, the influence of Southeast Asia. It is okay. That's his privilege. But I think his talent could do more important works. Now, maybe he found his niche and he became well known through this specific style. So there you are. Who knows what is better, I don't know. He is successful. He is played. And so he is justified. But maybe other works of his from previous periods might be more important. Maybe eventually 25 or 50 years from now the final decision will be made.

Jarrell: Can you tell me, in terms of assessing festivals in the West, let's say, or even nationally, where would you place the Cabrillo Music Festival if you were going to look at a hierarchy, or just in terms of its influence? Evaluate it for me.

Barati: Well, there are several major approaches to this subject. Essentially the East Coast controls the artistic life still, in this country. To begin with, whatever is "out west" is considered secondary. On the other hand, while Dennis Russell Davies was music director here there is no question in my mind that the Cabrillo Festival assumed an increasingly international importance. It was called by *Time* Magazine "The best of the small festivals," or something like that, which is not far from the truth. It was functioning on a very high level, with very serious major programming and beautifully done. If you compare it to the Bach Festival in Carmel, which has no major accomplishments, no quality growth, Cabrillo, under Dennis's direction has grown in quality programming, importance, achievement, everything. Now he's gone. I don't think he will return.

Jarrell: I thought he was going to be visiting or associate or . . . there's still a definite connection.

Barati: Yes, there is a definite connection but let's wait a year or two. I think if Dennis gets something somewhere else it is problematic that he will come back.

Jarrell: Yes, and he's so busy. He's at Stuttgart and he's . . .

Barati: He's in Stuttgart and . . . He's in Bonn now, which is the former capital of Germany. Anyway, Dennis is an up-and-coming name. So it's a question now what will happen here, and it remains to be seen. One year won't make much difference but two or three years may, we'll see. But for the moment Cabrillo is at a very high point of achievement.

You asked about Laszlo Varga and Anaïs Nin. I wondered what you wanted to know about Varga, who is a very good cellist. Is there anything special you wanted to know?

Laszlo Varga

Jarrell: Did you know him in Hungary?

Barati: I taught him. He was my student for a couple of years. He was a kid in Budapest and my teacher, Schiffer assigned him to me. I was a student teacher. I was getting my degree in teaching and he was assigned to me for I think two years. Varga was a budding kid who became a very, very good cellist, far better than I was. So it's . . . he is not my achievement. I'm not saying that when I mention that I taught him. He learned, incredibly, my Cello Concerto in four days when the cellist who was slated in Hawaii, Michelin, from Paris, broke an arm and couldn't make it. I called Varga in San Francisco on a Monday. He arrived Thursday and he had learned the Cello Concerto and played it quite remarkably. He did use music. I have a tape of it. The truth is there. I don't know if anybody in the whole world could have done that. And he did it. So that shows what his qualities are.

Anaïs Nin

Barati: Anaïs Nin was a friend of Ruth's. They had met in Berkeley through Jean Varda, the unique painter and legend, and became instant close friends. I met her later in Berkeley before we went to Hawaii in 1950. So Ruth could talk about her more intensely. I just met her then. But when we came back to Montalvo we re-united our friendship and the idea came up for me to write a piece of music to writings of Anaïs, which she and Ruth collected and collated from Anaïs's writing. It was a special arrangement from her writings that became *Cities of the Interior.* I wrote a portion but, never completed it. But this fragment was performed by the Santa Cruz Symphony and Anaïs and her husband, a wonderful man, came up to Montalvo. We rehearsed together. We discussed it. She was not too happy about the singer. She thought the singer's voice wasn't suitable for her more intimate, sensitive feelings. But we did that with quite a serious success here in Santa Cruz. And then we saw her a few more times before she died . . . she had cancer.

I knew her brother too, . . . Joaquín Nin-Culmell was teaching composition at Berkeley. Anaïs was very close to him. Liked him very much. We talked about music. Anaïs knew music very well. Her father, Joaquín (y Castellanos) Nin, was a famous composer. So she grew up in a milieu of very intense music-making.

Her taste was excellent, and by liking my music, my style, was a great indirect praise for me.

Ruth Barati: I might just add that this also sort of reunited the times from before Hawaii, when Benny Bufano and all of that group gathered to make George's String Quartet possible and have it recorded. Once again we became very close with Jean Varda and with Henry Miller, with all of the Big Sur connections.

Barati: Yes, we went to Varda's boat in the harbor at Sausalito. He shared his boat with Alan Watts, so when Varda died, we went to his colorful funeral celebration on the water, and Alan Watts was one of the speakers. It was a sad moment, but a great occasion. Varda was an absolutely wonderful, unique human being. I think he influenced greatly, not only Ruth and me but our daughters, Lorna and Donna.

That reminds me, I wanted to mention to you also that our daughters grew up in a very fantastic milieu of music-making and social life. They both got used to dealing with these enormously famous artists with great ease and also Lorna got attracted to the French language very early and went to Punahou school where she won every year the national award for French. For about five or six years she was the number one in the country in the French language, among students of that age. So when we took them to Europe, Lorna took to French like native food, and became impeccable. To this day she speaks better French than many French do because she learned legal French and ancient French. Maurice Chevalier thought that she was French when she talked to him. So did Nureyev when he and Dame Margot Fonteyn danced in Hawaii and had dinner with us afterwards. The front page of the newspaper carried a photo of Lorna chatting with Nureyev. Donna by now took to visual art. On my sabbatical to Switzerland we stopped in New York and London each for a few days. One of our visits was to the British Museum. At this time Donna was about five years old. So when she suddenly disappeared we started a frantic search for her. Eventually we found her peacefully drawing stunning pictures of Egyptian pieces. She showed early a definite talent for drawing and painting which she kept up for years, doing it alternatively with writing poetry. To this day I am convinced that her poetry is outstanding and of true quality.

Asian/Pacific Influences on Barati's Composing Style

Jarrell: What I'd like to do is move on to your own writing and composing now, in terms of the styles that you have worked in. How would you characterize your niche?

Barati: Well, I don't know yet since I'm still writing and changing. I spoke about my music up to about 1956, I think, when I was more under traditional influences, when Brahms, Beethoven, Berlioz, and Bartók were my most important, most crucial influences.

Then I moved on . . . I had a marvelous period in Hawaii where I received major commissions. One was to write my Symphony for the Denver University Centennial Celebration. It was performed in several countries. *The Dragon and the Phoenix, Polarization,* and Chamber Concerto I've already discussed. Those major works were in that period where I began to experiment with styles and began to change to less traditional, let's say, less control of the bar line, less control of the Central European attitudes, with more influences from America. My influences came from Hawaii, from the Orient.

Jarrell: Could you describe for instance, if you want to characterize an Asian or a Pacific influence, what would the nature of that influence be on you. How would that shape . . .

Barati: Well, let me say that Bartók has not just a Hungarian influence in him, but he had all the various resources—Roumanian folk music, Bulgarian folk music, Arab music, Turkish music, and these suddenly became to me more evident as I began to understand Bartók better. Bartók died in 1946. At that moment he was still an enigma to many. And as time goes on he becomes more and more clear. At the same time, Debussy became more important to me. I discovered his hidden values, and remember Debussy had major influences from Japanese and Chinese music.

Jarrell: Yes. And that whole aesthetic.

Barati: That whole aesthetic. Yes. The French painters of course, as well, got the whole idea of space and light, light and space and form and structure and loosening up through surrealism and cubism, which is the same exactly in music

through Stravinsky, Debussy and Bartók, the same development occurs. These became more important to me—the stylistic value, the loosening up, the color differences, the dynamic differences, instrumental colors, asymmetric rhythms, the use of percussion instruments. All became to me more and more crucial as exemplified in my *Hawaiian Forests.* Actually a commission was given to me to walk through a major forest, completely unknown, on the top of the mountain above Honolulu where we lived, Tantalus Mountain. High above the city and uninhabited, it's an almost impenetrable forest. Only the sun penetrates it occasionally. It's the top level going to the *pali* area, it's probably, I don't know, ten miles long. There are no roads and no houses and we walked into it. The impressions, the feelings, the color schemes, the shades and sunlight . . . and the materials, different trees and stones, all these influenced me in writing that. Another piece of mine, *The Chant to Pele* which shows the real influence of Debussy, but entirely through Hawaiian sounds and Hawaiian feeling, the space, the openness, again the colors, the sun and shades, an enormous value in Polynesian life, much more so than anywhere else in the world, I think.

Japanese and Chinese art work were a fantastic novelty to me with my Central Europe background. Shapes and designs, combinations of shapes and ornaments and the kind of materials that were used were very novel. All that allowed me an attitude that was unknown to me before. In my music, I cannot tell you where you can find these influences. But they are there and can easily be found on a recording of mine, *Chant to Pele*, for solo instrument. You might say it's influenced by Debussy. In one way yes, but in another way it's completely Hawaiian in attitude. It's the freedom of expression, the looseness, and yet still a tight form. All these are in . . . if I may read you a bit?

Jarrell: Yes. Now what are you reading from?

Barati: I'm reading from a statement I made, I don't know for what, it may be on that recording. But this expresses my feelings as well as I can say them today. And maybe I can add something to it.

> I originally learned my musical disciplines in the traditional manner, but quickly began to alter them in an emerging way as I began to understand their full implications. Creativity, for me, is allowing the inner ear its full range of invention, from the organic

> to the impulsive, from repose to exuberance. From the subtle to the daring. From the emotional to the reflective. Though I have retained as much of past techniques as I've found necessary, and I have been labeled everything from neo-classicist to atonalist, I've never belonged to any school, perhaps because I remember that "to be current today is to be obsolete tomorrow." But even more because I prefer freedom to boundaries, flexibility to restriction, mobility to rigidity. The living spirit attracts me more than set patterns. But I respect order and structure, the centering discipline that curbs excess. These are some of the inner inclinations but there are as well outer circumstances and influences that make their mark on one's creative output. In my case, a Hungarian upbringing and basic musical education, chamber music activities, string quartet, the Roger Sessions years in Princeton, plus 18 years in Hawaii, produced indelible impressions on my musical thinking. From the latter, not so much in terms of "Hawaiian music," as the climate of Polynesian attitudes, and of Oriental awareness, far removed from any previous experiences. Finally, the values of the conductor's ear versus the composer's as if hearing music from outside in, versus inside out. And my many years of conducting tours in the Orient and elsewhere complete my musical persona.

I also want to add one example where an influence was really surprising. There is a famous Belgian scientist, Prigogine, of Russian descent. A great pianist, incidentally, who, (to say it in my own way, loosely and perhaps not quite accurately) stated that the more complex level of thinking, of development becomes the basis of the next development. So complexity itself in time clarifies itself. And we see this in the history of musical development. I mentioned a minute ago that Bartók, when he died was an enigma and twenty years later became quite natural. Today he sounds like a late Brahms or Debussy.

Jarrell: Well, he's heard in a context whereas he was *sui generis* at that time.

Barati: Exactly. If we connect those dots that make history, time, a straight line. Stravinsky is now very playable, but was unplayable when he first wrote *The Rite of Spring* for instance. So was Wagner. So these things naturally take one forward. The new complexity becomes the old basis. And I notice in my own

music that I can handle complexity differently. So while I may write more complex music, although I strive for simplicity, the complexity becomes fairly simple after a while. If I hear music of mine that I composed twenty years ago I'm amazed at the struggle I had at that time of understanding what I was writing down, or why I wrote it that way. Friends of mine who complain that I didn't write melodies, or that others didn't write melodies have to be laughed at today. My music is full of melodies. Only different melodies, novel, at that time novel melodies. So all this is very important in my composition. And today I think the world has once again changed. There's no question that around the Second World War and after the First World War artistic expression was mainly in terms of struggle, of breaking down the old images, the non-hero in literature or the no rhyme in poetry, or the surrealists and abstract artists. So now the world has changed back again and its more toward the romantic, the acceptable, the pleasurable, the enjoyable, the easier. So it's novel because the neo-romanticism today *seems* new. So I find myself once again not following current thinking.

Jarrell: Well, you have a kind of mastery too now, a craft, and a fluency.

Barati: Well, maybe. Of course I think I find, like many other creative artists, that each new piece is a new struggle and it doesn't become easier. I love that Balzac story. Balzac went away for the weekend and he wrote for three days and Sunday evening some society lady said to him, "Monsieur Balzac, I notice you wrote all day long yesterday and the day before. What did you achieve?" He said, "Madame, on Friday I wrote a whole story. On Saturday I began to re-read it and make revisions. On Sunday I tore it up." And I think that's the way it goes. The new work is always a new beginning and you can't apply the achievements fully of previous experiences.

Jarrell: No, but the experience of the struggle . . .

Barati: The struggle . . .

Jarrell: There's that experience and it's certainly different than when you wrote twenty or thirty years ago, you were saying, that you look at something or listen to something you wrote then . . .

Barati: And it's become much simpler.

Jarrell: Yes.

Barati: In retrospect. Yes. It was a struggle then. It's now very simple. But also we get used to it. One of the crucial phenomena that we don't realize is that we hear a piece of music and people say, "Mozart. It's perfect. That's the way it has to be." Well hell, if he wrote it differently that would have been the perfect way. In Beethoven's case you can see that. Beethoven had major, major revisions; you can see all the versions; or in Brahms in some instances. The original, if he had left it as it was, today would be the absolute final perfection. So there's no perfection except in retrospect. I think it's very important to realize that.

There's a piece of music I wrote for a film, *The Ugly Duckling*. I was requested to write the music first on a story. Then they would film it according to the music. It didn't work out that way. They didn't quite use my sequences. But it gave me a tremendous insight into something that I didn't know I could do. That I could do an interesting piece of music in traditional style. It's a harmonic piece. It's not all good. Some is quite good. Some is quite interesting. Some is just routine film music, filler. But I was absolutely amazed that some of the style has remained with me, not the harmonic simplicity, but the available resources. The available turns of phrases, connections, possibilities that one reuses, that became part of one's vocabulary.

Now I am composing a piece for three students and it's without definition of what instrument. Just a treble clef instrument, a bass clef instrument, and piano. It allows me to write simplified but in my style. It's absolutely authentic Barati music, but somewhat simplified, easier to play. It allows me to write a treble sound that could be saxophone or flute or oboe or violin or whatever. And a bass sound could be cello, or bassoon or tuba or trombone, and maybe I couldn't have done that twenty years ago, I'm not sure. But it leads me on. Each composition leads me to the next style. Now I'm planning to write a string quartet that I would like to have performed at the opening of the Barati Archive, if I get everything into proper shape in time.

Evolution as a Composer

Jarrell: We're focusing today, George, on your evolution as a composer. You've spoken about some of your work in passing; about how Roger Sessions influenced you in terms of your craft. Before we focus on particular works, you said that you started composing as an adolescent. As you came to America and matured as a musician, besides Sessions, what kind of important influences are significant in the way you've approached your work?

Barati: As an adolescent I wrote just from what I'd heard, without any kind of organization. When I worked with Sessions after that, the whole picture changed. Very early, already in Hungary, I was very much under the influence of Bartók, without understanding him. He was then, of course, the unsung hero of Hungary. Only us progressives, without much knowledge about what he achieved, were for him. There was no major support for Bartók in Hungary. There was much more for Kodály; he was much less important. So when I worked with Sessions and slowly discovered layer by layer these influences, the major figures were, after Bartók, Stravinsky and then Mahler and Berlioz, and I think, finally, Debussy.

I discovered Debussy's qualities very late as many of us did. Because at first he was kind of a pseudo-sound. Nobody understood what he intended to say. But only after . . . I guess after Boulez kind of began to play him and discuss him, right after the war, was a time when people began to discover the hidden qualities of Debussy. The same as the Impressionist painters of his period, who also changed the whole technique of painting, discovering light, using light differently. I saw that Debussy used atmosphere and sound and sound relations differently. This was eventually a major influence on me. But this came much later.

But initially I had to fight my way through, had to work my way through the basic influences from my youth, which was the nineteenth century of Beethoven, Brahms . . . romantic, Germanic style of writing with tight construction, tight structure, and thematic materials and a formalistic approach. As I threw it off step by step, I had new influences.

I already mentioned to you . . . one was of course the American influence. The wit and the humor and the easy-goingness. I was in the Army and I experienced this first hand for a few years, and then later the Pacific life in Hawaii and influences from the Far East. The Japanese, Chinese, Korean influences. Then kind of connecting it all, the new ideas that seeped into all the arts, the things I didn't accept such as the non-hero, or the . . . completely disorganized approach to the arts. This I never accepted, but the influence was still there. In a sense I fought that by my writing the other way. So I would find myself the outsider who didn't fit into any of the styles existent, even though I kind of paralleled them for awhile or crossed them for awhile.

In fact it's very interesting to see now that for about fifteen or twenty years some of my colleagues back east considered me neo-classic. They were playing with all these faddist styles that then became obsolete and they have switched back to kind of a traditionalist, romantic style and now I find myself again outside because I'm again more progressive than they are, in a sense, of using to some extent traditional approaches, to some extent superimposed over their new approaches, but with my always maintaining a connection to my past.

I am always the outsider and the ones who have been inside with the post-twelve tone techniques are now again insiders with all the non-tonality people, or the minimalist people are now inside again with the reverse approaches. In the meantime I remain more or less with a kind of a central style, around which, in a sense, they were moving in and out, in a sense this is the way I feel myself.

But also, there's another issue here which I don't know if I can express. I thought about it this morning—where does one stand? What does one believe in? It's very hard to connect my belief system to my musical thinking system. I've thought of two examples—both natural forces—that are influential in my thinking and also represent kind of a later influence. One is the Haleakala volcano in Hawaii an enormous entity that consists of many, many small details all of which add up to this single entity, but within themselves they have an enormous contrast in them. The small volcanoes, if you've ever seen it . . .

Jarrell: I have. On Maui.

Barati: Yes . . . Small volcanoes and the alternation of nature with completely arid land.

Jarrell: A moonscape almost.

Barati: A moonscape exactly. The materials, the substance, the whole . . . the textures. They are all different but they all add up to this one enormous volcano.

The other example is the ocean, that in one sense it's threatening, in another sense it's very friendly, under the surface there is a darkness and danger and above the surface there is exhilaration and joy of swimming and these again add up very strangely to these contrasting influences. In trying to explain my music, I feel that it's exactly that way.

My main belief in my own life has been I think best summarized in the famous Hungarian play, the *Tragedy of Man* by Imre Madach, that human life is a struggle. Well, I felt my life, or life in general, is always a struggle, there's always an in and out, a balance or a lack of balance, or a fight for a cause and the opposition to it, but at the same time I've maintained always what I call a long-term optimism, and I certainly am a short-term pessimist. So these balancing forces are the basis of my whole thinking. I think in terms of music that I have many details, elaborate details, and they add up to a very careful structure. But the structure is not always obvious. Looking back to my music, I've found to my amazement, that certain pieces fall into certain groupings.

Jarrell: Into periods?

Barati: Not so much periods. They return, they overlap, but they contain the same essentials, in the sense of balance and concern with dissonances to some degree, or with color instrumentation to some degrees, or with a certain thematic development or lack of thematic development, this kind of an alternation from left to right, of positive, negative continues throughout. For instance, my first major work was *Configuration* which the San Francisco Symphony played. It is based on one theme. Just a single theme but in many, many different variations, different positions, different formulas. It deals with basically two components, expressive content and patterns. Another early chamber concerto of mine is a piece for virtuoso soloists, juxtaposed with a chamber orchestra. Now the next group of large compositions, more than

twenty years apart, concertos, are based on the same principle, the intimate, the personal juxtaposed to a massive reply where the musical material may be less developed than the solo instrument. These are the Cello Concerto and the Piano Concerto, Guitar Concerto, the Baroque Chamber Concerto and then the last is a Violin Concerto. All these really represent the same kind of thinking, but have a major, tremendous development of technique, or of approach, in the size of the problem to be solved.

Then there was the Symphony, commissioned for the hundredth anniversary of Denver University in which I thought of some regional ideas, such as the early Americans crossing the country, going through Colorado. In fact when the first performance came there was a discussion group and a colleague asked why I had written a horse and buggy scene in the slow movement. I said, well it happened that way exactly, so if you discover that, it's a plus for my music. I didn't intend to say it in so many words, but there was a certain sense of a specialized sound or thinking.

Jarrell: In the sense of a sort of a resonance of American folk music or . . .

Barati: Yes, to some extent it sounds like an open air sound, an open air vast expanse of American . . .

Jarrell: The plains, the prairie and then coming to the . . .

Barati: Getting through to Colorado and the Rocky Mountains. There's a playful element in that music in some sections, and it was a passing thought. It's not detectable.

Jarrell: It's not contrived, it just sort of came to you.

Barati: Neither contrived nor planned. It just is a passing element in the construction of a large work. There are many influences.

The next group of compositions was where the Hawaiian and Polynesian and Oriental influences started in my music. *The Dragon and the Phoenix*, which was around 1962 or 1961 and then in *Polarization*, a couple of years later. Then *Confluence* was commissioned for the Cabrillo Music Festival. These all have certain connections, diverse cultural ideas, sounds which are consciously

contrasted. *Dragon and the Phoenix* had some very definite Chinese and Japanese sounds. The piece has bells and percussion sounds versus a European singing sound or string sounds. *Polarization* for orchestra is somewhat the same basic approach. In *Confluence* I more consciously tried to do East and West in the sense of philosophy. Actually I think what I did was not successful there; I had too many of these ideas contrasting; I didn't allow enough time for them to really fully evolve themselves. Hearing it now I realize that I would love to rewrite it with just that one idea in mind, to integrate them differently and to minimize certain other sounds. But it's too late in the game.

Then of course there are the chamber music and or solo pieces that are crucial and of course they are based on more intimate, meditative, more introverted ideas. It's a natural for chamber music. The *B. U. D.* Piano Sonata is a good example of that. It has a very large scope and I feel I achieved in this work what I tried to say, but I don't know if other people do. It's complex. But complexity is part of my thinking too.

The *Indiana Triptych* I consider one of my major works. The Violin Sonata is also fairly early but represents this intimate expression. I'm very fond of the later works. The Violin Concerto I think is a good piece and I only wish it could be played enough for some people, at least, to get familiar with my style. The *Serenata Capricciosa*, which is one of the last works, I consider a good piece representing my later symphonies.

Then there are also some of the Hawaiian specialities that of course are unique in my style, because nobody else has written that way, using sounds which somehow express my overall feeling of Hawaii, of Polynesia. These works include *A Chant to Pele*, *Hawaiian Forest*s, a chamber work for seven instruments, and part of the opera *Noelani*, which I am still working on, off and on. I'm revising it completely but still it contains a sense of tribal thinking.

Jarrell: In terms of electronic instruments and synthesizers and the whole new range of sounds that have become available, have you been at all interested in that realm?

Barati: I have not done anything whatsoever and don't intend to. It's outside of my abilities or interests or knowledge. You have to deal with the techniques and

mechanics. Also because during the earliest years of this experiment I never found anything that was promising for a new style, for me personally. I'm not debating that there might or may have been already some major achievements, although I haven't found anything that is important, in my estimation. But that's outside of my interests and I don't intend to use them and I don't know how to use them.

Jarrell: You are talking about Eastern influences, and the incorporation into the orchestra of say, Eastern musical instruments. But you are grounded in the European instrumental tradition. Have you tried to achieve sounds that are somewhat Eastern, but with traditional instruments?

Barati: There are two points here. One is that I have used some of the Eastern instruments, bells mainly and percussion instruments which are the major characteristics of the Oriental sound. The other point is that if you are a good composer, a good orchestrator, and I am a good orchestrator, you are able to produce any sound out of the synthetic use of Western orchestra instruments. I think any good composer has done it in the past, and can do it and it's not even a major achievement. But you have to know instrumentation. I must say that one of the things I take issue with in contemporary music is the lack of imagination in the use of the instruments. They make it a routine, almost a predictable kind of use of the instruments.

Jarrell: Without really exploiting, you mean, what the instruments are capable of?

Barati: Without the sensitivity that orchestral balances can produce. Now remember that Rimsky-Korsakov suggested a synthetic sound, doubling instruments, which became Hollywood, lock, stock and barrel. His wonderful rich sounds which doubled all the winds, all the strings, and got the lushest sounds for about fifty years, that's the result of that particular approach. But then Mahler began to break down this synthetic sound into individual components, and put them together differently. And Berlioz too, by the way. That was a major influence on many composers in this country, in this century.

I think that's a crucial separation between many of the faddists, who want to always follow the immediate success line, and those who don't really care about that because they think in different terms. I claim to think in different terms.

Jarrell: But I think that the faddists, as you call them . . .

Barati: Yes.

Jarrell: Or the schools, as you've referred to them. It doesn't seem to me that there are clearly delineated "schools" in the last ten years or so.

Barati: There may be some, but they always change. I should say it this way, that the lasting value of a style these days is getting shorter and shorter. What was in the last century thirty years or fifty years before some stylistic changes occurred, now it's about three years.

Jarrell: Oh I see what you mean. The duration of the stylistic period is becoming shorter?

Barati: Yes, shrinking. What may have been a recognizable school ten years ago, that same school sounds the opposite today. Or maybe it has changed twice in ten years. But there are recognizable styles and schools and influences. Not so much schools as influences. I mean a man like Stockhausen has influenced many composers for the past fifty years, and I don't think he has changed very much. Or Boulez, or Messiaen, who have become landmarks without necessarily deserving their particular posts. I think it's debatable if Stockhausen or Boulez or Messiaen are really as great or important as they are claimed to be today. Now, I don't know. I'm not stating. I'm just questioning it. So by sticking with them or not sticking with them, you establish two possibilities right there. Many of the composers who stayed with them eventually left and changed or they didn't change. So these styles overlap. But there are also conspicuous examples where composers have jumped completely to the other end . . .

Jarrell: Who would that be, for instance?

Barati: For commercial reasons. One of them, I can't think of his name . . . who composed very advanced twelve tone music for about twenty years. He was a very important name but one day he said I'm tired of this. I'm now going to

compose romantic music, and he began to write successful romantic pieces. Another one is John Adams, who was here last week at the Cabrillo Festival and he used to be a minimalist and now he's a maximalist.

Jarrell: (Laughter)

Barati: He writes like Tchaikovsky plus.

Jarrell: Well we are sort of in a neo-romantic . . .

Barati: But that's a fad!

Jarrell: Yes.

Barati: There's no . . .

Jarrell: Of course it's a fad and it's pushed by the record companies.

Barati: Right. And look at the symphony programs, they play now again only Beethoven, Mozart, Tchaikovsky . . . right back to 1850, you know. Even Brahms is difficult to hear. Brahms was thrown away as a completely open book about forty years ago. Now again he's difficult. So that's a faddism. And that's dishonest. I maintain that if art is art it's independent; it does what it has to believe in. Whatever price you pay for it, you pay the price and you do your own thing. That's art. Otherwise it's commercial business. Or commercial art, which is something else.

I certainly paid for doing what I believe, because all through my life I always lost out on those issues because I wasn't with it, I wasn't in the group. I was an outsider, and loneliness is I think characteristic of the creative artist. Certainly I have been alone all my life on that level.

Jarrell: It seems, if you see the larger perspective, that the tradition that you are working out of is the least financially remunerative of all of the arts, musical composition.

Barati: Absolutely.

Jarrell: If you compare it to painting or to performing as an art, then commissions are, I would imagine, few and far between. The whole structure for

supporting musical composition, in terms of the National Endowment and the various foundations, schools, and commemorative kinds of commissions, I would imagine it's very narrow, compared say, to what's available to a young painter, or a young performing artist. What do you think?

Barati: Well I'm not sure of the proportions, but the choice I think is much more important there. The National Endowment or any of the American institutions where commissions are given out on an official basis, the same few people control it. So you are up against the same issue. If you're not with me you are against me.

Jarrell: In terms of painting, a young painter can go to so many places and have his or her work hung in a gallery, in a private gallery or in a show. But there are few music festivals in this country which make an effort to play new music; it's nothing compared to the other arts. That's the point I'm making.

Barati: Well, it's correct. Also in actual money, I've been very lucky having received so many commissions and if I was going to live on those commissions I would be starving.

Jarrell: Yes.

Barati: There are enormous costs involved in producing compositions, copying and reprinting, and sending them out, letters and telephone costs, bringing one's music to the attention of conductors, etc. There used to be a composer who lived somewhere in Minnesota, Gene Gutchë . . . this happened in the 1950s. He sent out the most beautiful manuscripts to conductors all over the country. I received annually three or four times music from him, asking me to look at the music as a conductor and choose it for performance. He had done this with everybody. He became actually quite well played for awhile. I don't know what happened to him. But it must have cost him a large fortune. Now the eventual rewards very, very seldom are equal to that. I mean a Copland or Bernstein or Stravinksy . . . they are the only ones in this period who really made large monies. Of the serious composers, I don't mean faddists.

Jarrell: Yes, but remember, for instance that Copland was writing ballet music.

Barati: Popular music.

Jarrell: It was serious, but it was also performed on the stage on Broadway and so that created an audience for his more serious music. The same with Bernstein. He had popular exposure with *Fancy Free* and *West Side Story*.

Barati: Yes, absolutely. It's a very important point. But beyond that, also. You can add beyond that Copland sort of sold out at the beginning, consciously. Bernstein didn't; Bernstein's talent was in that direction. He was a natural Broadway musical composer.

But composition, I think, is really a dangerous business. Because composers have to become teachers to support themselves. They go to colleges. That's the danger. Bartók for instance never taught composition. He said a composer has to produce on his own and he can't explain the very secret points which motivate him to do what he is doing. Because you don't know why he writes those notes. In a sense I've had my two hats all the time too, conducting and composing. I couldn't do two. When I was conducting I couldn't compose. I had to learn other composers.

Jarrell: The scores?

Barati: Other scores, and styles—they overlapped; those scores got into my system, and I couldn't think my own way until I got myself purified again.

Jarrell: Since a composer depends on other people to realize his or her compositions, what are your thoughts on this aspect of your work, getting your music heard?

Barati: It's a very elaborate process to get from the beginning of writing a piece to hearing it.

Jarrell: It's an immense social collaboration, except for the chamber pieces where you are working with small ensembles.

Barati: Or yourself performing. But you know there is an issue there that is very important to me, which is that for a composer to become played, to become better known, there is a certain time lag. Music has to be heard for people to begin to know the style, to know what to expect. Now Stravinsky was totally unsuccessful at first as we know, or Bartók, or anybody. Or Mahler. But once

people hear enough of their music, they begin to remember a style, to react to it and expect a kind of similarity. They begin to know how to hear it, how to perform it . . .

Jarrell: Right, and what the language is.

Barati: What the language is and how to appreciate it. Now I have not had this pleasure. My music has not been played enough through my own lack of pushing it again, early enough, to establish a large audience. Those who like my music, a number of people, they appreciate it. But I just wish there would be opportunities for a select audience, let's say, to hear two or three or four pieces of mine within six months or three months, and make a study of their reaction. There is no question in my mind that once they get used to it, they would appreciate the qualities that are not typical from other sources, that are special in my case, that are good, possibly, or individual, possibly, or both. That's the case in every composer. The ones who are similar to others are not originals.

Earlier I've spoken about the philosophical dimension of my music. There's this aspect in quite a few of my compositions, in the Symphony for instance, I remember distinctly right now, and in other works . . . in *The Dragon*, where there is a sudden change of scene, as if you had arrived on the mountain, on a landscape somewhere and you suddenly see a new area. In my Woodwind Trio there is a section like that. And I've been very pleased each time I've hit on something like this. This was accidental each time. It wasn't planned. I didn't know how I did it.

Jarrell: But it seems to have just organically just emerged out of the material?

Barati: Yes, there was a need for some kind of a contrast. A moment of truth. A moment of a new vista. The philosophical. A new vista that gave me a feeling of reassurance. It was not the central point of the composition. It was a central point of an idea somewhere. Then from there I went on and it became a separate entity in itself. I don't know if I may have used it later on or not, if I took it in the context of the entire work. But it was crucial and it was unique and always worked. Sure, everything I do is philosophical. I like to think both ends of an issue and I usually see the larger picture first before I see the detail. Sometimes I neglect the details because I see the larger picture first. So that's the way I am. I

talk fast, I think fast. I have so many ideas there's really not enough time to express all of them. So I stumble from one idea to the other, hitting both at the same time, and what comes out is sometimes not a complete statement of my intentions. But since both are there and both are expressed, both can be understood if one takes the time to separate them. In music too, I think there are many times and moments when it's not confusing but it's elaborate and complex. I'm very proud of that; I think it's a good trait to be that way.

Jarrell: You were remarking, a few moments ago, that it's sort of frustrating that you haven't had the opportunity to have your music played as much as you'd like so that people could be familiar with your musical language and vision. Can you tell me, what is the significance for you of this George Barati Archive with all of your manuscripts, compositions, your revisions, and your in-process works?

Barati: Well, several meanings. One is that I've lived a very full life. I've had access to information and to influences that very few other people might have had. I think if I'm able to leave behind some material that verifies these influences, it might be a real contribution. I think when one lives a long time it's good to know that there is a place that represents one's total thinking. I mean, family certainly is, but our children are not with us. They certainly remember many, many things, but they won't be there forever. So there is an immediate personal issue there, that what I have done is available to be found, to be discovered, to be understood, to be analyzed, and used.

Then there is the question of availability. Maybe if my music is any good, and if somebody discovers it in the future they might play it. I had hoped the University might say let's once a year play regularly, some pieces of George Barati after the archive is established. It would be a natural thing. Because there is music that might be of some importance, I don't know.

Jarrell: Also, I would imagine, that the purpose of an archive might be not only that some young student could discover in the future your piano sonata or your music. But perhaps in terms of music history, since it's a very eclectic, fragmented scene in contemporary music today, your archive documents a particular life in music, as well as the tradition which you worked out of.

Barati: Well that's what I meant exactly when I said universal. Don't forget, there's a major break that has not been healed yet, and probably never will be healed, the Hitler break of Europe. Europe was at an incredibly high artistic level at the point Hitler broke it up.

Thomas Mann, one of the greatest German authors, came to Princeton for a lecture series and spoke of the fact that he found that the German language itself deteriorated in Germany because most of the major creative artists, Jewish or otherwise, left Germany and those who remained in Germany were not allowed to think and express themselves. Like in Soviet Russia, they were unable to express themselves fully. So there was this enormous break. It took them twenty years to begin to create new major literary figures. The same is true in Soviet Russia, where Shostakovich and Prokofiev were not allowed to write what they wanted to write. Their most important works were "not acceptable" and that was the end of that.

So in that sense my relationship to Europe, before I came to America, and my having performed with all these conductors and having experienced all the new music at that time, if it's expressed properly in my words, or letters or discussion or music, that's a source, as you said, for research. It might be an important source, I don't know.

Jarrell: An entire generation of creative artists, intellectuals and scholars emigrated to the United States to escape Nazism, and transplanted, enriched our whole cultural life. What are your thoughts on this vis-à-vís American music and culture?

Barati: In America musical life had a definite point of departure from that development. Until then MacDowell was a major name in American music, totally German influence. Very good composer. But that was it. As an example, I remember distinctly, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, that the *New York Times* called Bruno Walter a "noted conductor." When Feuermann, the great German cellist played a concert in New York and they described him as a "noted cellist." I always called up the *Times* from Princeton to say, "How can you call this great artist a "noted cellist?" The second edition was corrected, I think with "celebrated cellist" instead. Bruno Walter took a long time to get established in America. This gives you an idea . . . So there was a break, a beginning, and you can measure it

as musical programming changed; orchestra programs were very primitive when I first came to America in the 1930s.

Jarrell: So you can say that the arrival of that whole group of composers, musicians, great soloists . . .

Barati: Artists. In the musical realm it was a major development.

Jarrell: Yes. Since this is our final interview, is there anything else you'd like to include.

Barati: Well, I'm sure there are many points I should raise, I don't know what's missing. Once I read the book probably I'll give you an epilogue.

So life goes on. We live and work happily in this community where several honors were bestowed upon me and for all of it I am most grateful. One was the "Artist of the Year" given me a couple of years ago by the County Arts Council. Another occasion was the series of concerts and celebrations at the time of my 75th birthday with the Barati Ensemble. I am now looking forward to a whole string of performances of my music, well into 1992.

Jarrell: Well thank you very much George.

Barati: Thank you for all your help.

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