

# Furtwängler Revived in Manhattan

by Dennis Speed

*The article is followed by two extended notes and a dialogue transcript—on the Radio Research Project, Furtwängler, and the teaching of voice placement, respectively—that amplify its thrust.*

May 9—The conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, though deceased since 1954, is about to begin a belated residency in Manhattan. The LaRouche Manhattan Project, through a series of discussions, “music-evenings,” and larger musical performances for New York City audiences numbering in the hundreds, intends to correct the crime against the American people committed by the

post-FDR Truman-era British Intelligence operation known as the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Through this institution, countless minds were destroyed, creativity was attacked and then abolished, and madness, in the form of arbitrary “taste” and “trends,” has come increasingly to dominate every aspect of American thought. Recently, however, the disgust for the sociopathic behavior on exhibit from a combination of Obama’s White House and the apparently inevitable alternative of either a Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump-led Presidency, has caused moral panic to register among even the most recalcitrant.

Rectification of the criminal injustice done by agencies including the FBI, in the collusion to mask from the American people the truth behind the murder of the



*Wilhelm Furtwängler was extensively vilified by the Nazi leadership, and in the United States, which resulted in the rejection of his 1936 appointment to head the New York Philharmonic.*

more than 3,000 Americans killed 15 years ago at the World Trade Center, requires a moral fortitude and courage to concentrate on the objective of Justice, that is identical with what it actually takes to perform a symphonic composition by Beethoven properly. The fact that Americans were denied the presence of Furtwängler in New York City both in 1936 and in 1951, as a conductor and teacher, contributed directly to the toleration of the Truman era, the McCarthy era, and the creation in that time of American Modernism in the arts.

Only by reversing the rule of the arbitrary in American musical practice—a mission that the Schiller Institute was induced by LaRouche to take up in the 1980s with the campaign for all Classical music to be per-

formed at the “Verdi tuning” of A=432—is it possible to return to a sense of proportion—of Justice—in any sector of American life. The moral illiteracy of the population can only be fought with a resurgence—a *Risorgimento*—of true, good singing as a widespread and coveted practice.

Furtwängler would have picked up the baton dropped, not by Arturo Toscanini in 1936, but by Antonin Dvorak in 1895 when, after a failed but glorious attempt to establish the Manhattan-based National Conservatory of Music with musician and philanthropist Jeanette Thurber, he returned to Czechoslovakia, defeated by the then dominant segregationists of the American South and their co-thinkers in the North. (Johannes Brahms had personally supported Dvorak in this effort, including Dvorak’s championing of the Negro Spiritual as the basis for “a great and noble school of music.”) Although Thurber lived until 1945, and would have been able to reactivate part of her project had Furtwängler been placed at the head of the New York Philharmonic in 1936-37, that was not to be. The mastery of the idea of motivic thorough-composition characteristic of Brahms, and his protege and collaborator Dvorak, still existed in the performance practice of Furtwängler, also a composer. This was the possibility that was stopped, and the CCF “Dark Age” substituted in the aftermath of Roosevelt’s death.

## Two Voices

We cannot competently discuss the idea of motivic thorough-composition here, but we can identify how Furtwängler thought about creativity in musical performance in his own words. “Let us consider the activity of artistic creation. When we look more closely at this process, we find we can distinguish two levels. On the first, each individual element combines with those adjacent to it to form larger elements, these larger elements then combining with others and so on, a logical outwards growth from the part to the whole. On the other level, the situation is the reverse: the given unity of the whole controls the behavior of the individual elements within it, down to the smallest detail. The essential thing to observe is that in any genuine work of art, these two levels complement each other, so that the one only becomes effective when put together with the other.”

In a conversation with colleagues, reflecting upon the quality of musicianship of his friend the late Norbert Brainin, principal violinist of the Amadeus Quartet, Lyndon LaRouche once remarked that “you have to

place the ideas, in the way you perform. Or how you hear them. and you have to place those ideas. Musical training will not do it. A more spiritual quality has to be added to it, or else it doesn’t work. It’s a failure. It’s very difficult, because the standard became more and more the standard of the mechanical performance, and that loses it, the person performing is losing the connection to the principle. Something must be caused to radiate *inside you*, in the relationship to an important performance. There has to be something inside you that’s controlling the way you respond. and the way you perform. That’s the most important thing. That’s why I don’t want any kind of popular music; I don’t want it! I don’t want it in my presence. I fear it will destroy my soul! That’s the way I feel about it. You have to approach everything that way. You have to,— by approaching yourself that way, you maintain and secure the quality of morals that you should have anyway. The pragmatist is always the damn fool, a nuisance.”

The identity in intention of the two voices should be clear.

At the center of the Schiller Institute’s Manhattan Project lies the rejoining of a battle that that organization had brought to New York City in the late 1980s. At that time the Institute, at the epistemological instigation of Lyndon LaRouche, issued the *Manual on Tuning and Registration*, a groundbreaking and still unsurpassed argument for the proper tuning of music, based on an accurate understanding of the unique role of the Italian *bel canto* method of voice placement that is the basis for all beautiful vocal production in all languages. The cultural relativists of a quarter century ago went wild; the battle was joined.

What was not realized by those unaware of the deeper issues, was that this was cultural warfare on the highest of levels. It was this battle that had been fought by conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, in fact, against the Nazi regime. It was a battle of truth against pragmatic adaptation to the “triumph of the arbitrary will” over science, culture, society, and man. For example, it had been the Nazi Joseph Goebbels who had decreed, at a conference that he had organized in 1939, that what was widely referred to as “the scientific pitch” of A=432 would be changed to A=440, ostensibly for radio broadcasting and other purposes. Beyond the apparent “technical” surface of that matter lay an attempt to deny the physical laws, not only of the human voice, but of the universe itself, and the consequences of ignoring the same.

## The Choral Principle

The *Manual on Tuning and Registration* exposed, in 1988, that “The influence of Marxist and kindred social theories among musicologists, and others, has produced the popularization of a doctrine to the effect, that modern composers belong to successive periods of musical mannerisms and tastes, such as the Baroque, Rococo, Classical, Romantic, and Modernist. The spread of this social theory has been perhaps the chief reason the majority of professional musicians no longer grasp some among the most rudimentary features of principles of Classical musical composition.”

The “tuning question” however, is no different than that of the destruction of science starting in about the year 1900 throughout Europe. It is the task of the LaRouche Manhattan Project to return to science, to the “scientific,” that is, proper tuning, and to thereby champion the actual spirit of the compositions to be presented. First, this means performing only at the proper tuning of C=256 cycles per second (cps). Second, this means going “beyond the notes,” “behind the notes,” and “in between the notes,” as Furtwängler instructed. Music is not contained in notes, just as ideas are not contained in words.

It is the imposition of the false belief that the opposite is true, that is the “first cause” of the woeful political choices and policy options that confront America’s citizens today. They are powerless, without music, to reverse these non-choices and evil, anti-human policies, in the wake of the “New Dark Age” culture that the Obama and Bush Administrations have embodied; they cannot hope to, and will not, find any “political” remedy, limited in this way, no matter what they do. That is because they believe that their pre-determined cultural choices are freely chosen by them, the way they believe that they pick a box of detergent at the not-so-supermarket. They at their best demand to fail to recognize, and at their worst vehemently reject, the ugly truth about their ugly culture: It was given to us to wear, and it is up to us to divest ourselves of it, to “un-slave” ourselves, to refuse to put the shackles on ourselves at night after a long day spent at the wage-slavery and debt-slavery that most people mistakenly call “employment,” or, even later, after the even more degrading, often borderline-criminal or actually criminal activity we un-ironically call “entertainment.”

Beyond the musical performances that the Manhattan project has conducted, and the choruses that are now meeting as part of that project, the central pedagogical activity devoted to the task of mental/musical

un-enslavement, is the *solfège* class being conducted by Diane Sare, founder and co-leader of the Schiller Institute New York Community Chorus. Prior to each Saturday dialogue with LaRouche, Sare invites the audience to investigate Wilhelm Furtwängler’s idea of musical performance and comprehension. This is done not by merely *listening* to Furtwängler’s 1953 recorded performance of the Schubert Ninth Symphony; instead the audience is required to *sing* the piece, as a chorus, and to work through it, using *solfège*. Further, the *solfège* system used is that of a “fixed *do*,” where the syllable “*do*” always falls at the musical tone C, instead of the “movable *do*,” a much more generally taught and relatively arbitrary system in which the key of the piece—A Flat, D Minor, F Sharp—is taken as the “*do*” starting point. In this approach, instead of the banal “music appreciation” that rendered people defenseless in the 1960s against the onslaught of noise, the audience/chorus participates in a musical laboratory intended not to convince them that “Classical music is good for you,” but that the idea of composition, according to Classical principles, is both accessible to their minds, and at the same time is *not* the way that they generally choose to think. It is the ability of the participants to increasingly appreciate the tragic nature of their generally wrong pathway of choice in what is mistakenly called “the real world” which is the goal of this spiritual exercise. And from this standpoint, real deliberation begins.

## American Romanticism

Rescuing the American mind from the disease of Romanticism, as the poet Heinrich Heine so scathingly characterized it in his book-length study, *The Romantic School*, may be the only means left, in the short term, to reverse the descent into babbling obscenity, tinged with lunacy, that has threatened to become the norm in American political discourse with the advent of the nearlyunbelievable Donald Trump campaign. This were most efficiently done by reacquainting American children and young adults with the vocal practices of *bel canto* singing. Yet, this cannot be presented, truthfully, as a “thing in itself.” The political reason for the suppression of this knowledge must also be communicated.

The fraud of “periods of European musical history” must be exposed to the student as well. The *Manual* states: “It is usually assumed that the ‘Romantic Period’ erupted on the European continent during the period of the 1815 Treaty of Vienna and the anti-Classical Carls-

bad Decrees. For that reason, all leading composers after 1827-28 (the years of the deaths of Beethoven and Schubert, respectively) are not only classed as representatives of the Romantic Period; in most instances of what passes for standards of performance of the musical repertoire today, the works of strictly 'Bachian' composers such as Schubert, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, and Brahms are interpreted in a way more or less appropriate for Hector Berlioz (1803-1869), Liszt, Wagner, and Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)."

In today's high school and lower classrooms in America, there is little danger of the student having to be weaned from this mistaken idea, since "classical," if it means anything at all, usually refers to the Beatles and their musical kin, or if the student is a true archaeologist, the "big band" era of the 1930s and 1940s.

It must be pointed out that American conductor Leonard Bernstein didn't help matters much; he contributed mightily to this state of affairs. Though he performed an important, self-redemptive service after the November 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall in his December performance of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony, Lenny's Romanticism was the Trojan Horse upon whose back the FBI-CIA "thought-police" rode the 1960s counter-culture through the music departments of every university, and through every conservatory in the United States. This is approximately the 50th anniversary of Bernstein's 1967 "Heart of Darkness" television broadcast calling for the Classical music world to embrace T.W. Adorno's Princeton-based Radio Research Project and the transition of the CCF (just then being exposed as CIA) from its State Department sponsored 1950s/1960s advocacy of "jazz" to the new British Intelligence branch-project called "rock."

Bernstein, to be fair, had himself been targeted by the CCF, including in its first intervention, at the "Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace," held at the Waldorf Astoria on March 25, 1949. The disruption was led the CIA-funded Sidney Hook, who in the 1970s was a major enemy of Lyndon LaRouche personally, and LaRouche's campaign against what LaRouche then called the "quackademics" in American economics, history, and political science departments, including Hook's University Center for Rational Alternatives (UCRA). Bernstein and 49 others were featured in Henry Luce's *Life* magazine, with large passport-style photographs. Along with Leonard Bernstein, Albert Einstein, Clifford Odets, Frank Lloyd Wright, Aaron Copland, and Henry Wallace were some of the others characterized by the magazine as "dupes of the Kremlin."

Bernstein often repeated the phrase, "But I like it," in the 1967 "Inside the Rock Revolution" program, in which he even refers to several of the Beatles records as "important compositions," calling to mind the chilling last sentence of George Orwell's *1984*: "He loved Big Brother." Terrorized ever since the late 1940s, and in the New York City that was terrorized into rejecting Furtwängler, Lenny clearly not only knew better, but had chosen to embrace the worse.

Sometimes, even many times, the Good appears to be defeated by its opposite. It need not be so. After the rejection of his 1936 appointment to head the New York Philharmonic upon Arturo Toscanini's departure, and after Furtwängler's extensive vilification during the Second World War, a final attempt to bring Furtwängler to New York City in 1951 on the part of Rudolf Bing and others, failed in turn. The terror atmosphere of that time proved to be too much. But there is more than one way to defy the Inquisition, the FBI, and British (Un-) Intelligence. Furtwängler will now, in 2016, take up residence in Manhattan among those who care about, and are prepared to defend truth. The Manhattan project can succeed in this. Musical and Classical artistic truth, once crushed to the earth, can and will rise again.

## The Radio Research Project

The war against Classical culture in music in the United States escalated dramatically in the 1930s. The Radio Research Project, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation—starting in 1937 as a national venture to study the effect of what was about to be termed "mass media," and headquartered at Princeton University—developed what was called "Top 40 Radio." After Orson Welles' 1938 "War of the Worlds" Halloween broadcast successfully convinced 25% of its audience that an invasion of the United States was being carried out in New Jersey, either by "Martian-style" aliens or by Germans, there was unbridled interest in radio's propagandistic potential.

"Top 40" was a "quantitative popular survey," based on the theories of project members Paul Lazarsfeld and T.W. Adorno, of what Americans could most easily be induced to believe they had independently and merely "by popular demand" decided they wanted to hear broadcast several times a day on their radio sets. There

was one ironclad uniformity in 1950s and 1960s “Top 40” radio: No musical selection, under nearly any circumstances, played for longer than four minutes. That prohibition structurally eliminated nearly all Classical music from radio play, except through the Saturday broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera or other forms of “special programming.”

This meant that under the guise of an ostensibly potentially infinite variety, a rigid and arbitrary formalism, dedicated primarily to shortening the attention span of attentive listeners, was imposed for decades. This shifted only in the late 1960s, when the “boomer generation,” whose tastes had been behaviorally modified and shifted by the project throughout childhood and adolescence, became the commercial powerhouse for recordings purchases. (Recordings replaced, and essentially killed, the American practice of making music in the home, many of which had pianos, for example.)

Under the guise of “the democratic expression of contemporary popular taste,” the ulterior purpose was to do exactly what Joseph Goebbels was doing in Nazi Germany as its Minister of Propaganda: harness the powerful and still very new tool of radio for propagandistic purposes, including “immoral support” for the propagation of bizarre behavior, including madness, as “trends,” much as we see done on the Internet today.

Members of the Princeton Radio Research Project included:

- Frank Stanton, President of CBS from 1946 until 1971, and chairman of the Rand Corporation from 1961 until 1967

- Gordon Allport, leading representative of Great Britain’s Tavistock Institute in the United States

- T.W. Adorno, leading member of the Frankfurt School, former asset of the Communist International (Comintern), and leading proponent of the dead-end “twelve tone system” of the now largely forgotten Arnold Schoenberg

- Paul Lazarsfeld, chairman of the project, often referred to as the “father of American sociology,” known for his use of quantitative methods of analysis, a precursor of systems analysis as later practiced at the Rand Corporation and elsewhere. He once was quoted as saying that his goal in sociology was “to produce more Paul Lazarsfelds.” He unfortunately succeeded.

T.W. Adorno, who headed the project’s Music Department, wrote in his book, *The Philosophy of Modern Music*:

What radical music perceives is the untransfigured suffering of man... The seismographic registration of traumatic shock becomes, at the same time, the technical structural law of music. It forbids continuity and development. Musical language is polarized according to its extreme; towards gestures of shock resembling bodily convulsions on the one hand, and on the other towards a crystalline standstill of a human being whom anxiety causes to freeze in her tracks... Modern music sees absolute oblivion as its goal. It is the surviving message of despair from the shipwrecked.

Adorno’s “radio research” papers particularly noted the “atomized listening” that could result. The purpose was to create a new form of authoritarian society—not the “Big Brother” warned of by George Orwell’s *1984*, but millions of “Little Brothers,” a “Lord of the Flies” form of dictatorship—the dictatorship of conformity. “The authoritarian character of today is, without exception, conformist. . . . In the final analysis, this music tends to become the style for everyone, because it coincides with the man-in-the-street style.” The use of rhythm, for example, as an externally imposed, “militaristic” constant, heard in all forms of “popular music” through various forms of pounding, through percussion, bass lines, or drill instructor/cheerleader style screaming in “hip hop,” is the clearest expression of the dominance of this dictatorial, authoritarian process.

## Furtwängler Was Defending the Truth

Violinist Yehudi Menuhin, born in New York City one hundred years ago, in April 1916, was a unique witness to a decisive moment in the decline of Western culture in the 20th Century, and of Classical music in particular. Menuhin, to his everlasting credit, refused to be part of the Nazi-orchestrated defamation of conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, which began in 1936 and in fact continued until well after Furtwängler’s death in 1953. Menuhin recounts in his autobiography: “Furtwängler’s fault, like my own perhaps, was to overestimate the power of music. If he did not expect it to ab-

solve original sin, he did believe it proof against contamination . . . As director of the Berlin State Opera, he decided, again in 1934, to stage *Mathis der Maler*, knowing that (Paul] Hindemith, a ‘decadent’ composer, did not officially exist; when Göring cancelled the performance, he resigned. . . . In 1936 Richard Wagner’s daughter Friedelind, who fled Nazi Germany three years later, witnessed a meeting between Hitler and Furtwängler at her mother’s Bayreuth home.

“I remember Hitler turning to Furtwängler and telling him that he would have to allow himself to be used by the party for propaganda purposes, and I remember Furtwängler refusing. Hitler got angry and told Furtwängler that in that case there would be a concentration camp ready for him. Furtwängler was silent for a moment and then said: ‘In that case, Herr Reichschancellor, I will be in very good company.’ Apparently Hitler was taken aback by the conductor’s defiance, because he went into none of his usual rantings but simply walked away.”

Hermann Göring, the second in command of the Third Reich, directly orchestrated a campaign to prevent Furtwängler from succeeding Arturo Toscanini at the New York Philharmonic in 1936. In this campaign Göring maliciously instigated a stampede of defamation and cowardice, manipulating international press and influentials, including several Jewish institutions and organizations in New York City, in order to deny Furtwängler that position. The campaign was successful, and Furtwängler was forced to withdraw from the appointment in 1937.

As in a recent, similar act of courage in the facade of barbarism, that of the martyred Syrian archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad, “one of the most important pioneers in Syrian archeology in the 20th Century,” Furtwängler defied Hitler to his face, at risk of death, and thereby personified the true Germany, rather than



*Violinist Yehudi Menuhin refused to be part of the Nazi-orchestrated defamation of Wilhelm Furtwängler.*

Hitler, at a time when no one else could have done so, and precisely because no one else then living, understood the soul-elevating power of the inner life of music as Furtwängler did.

Music, like science under the dictatorship of Bertrand Russell, had been killed at the beginning of the 20th Century. It was not naivety that characterized Furtwängler’s decisions, but a higher ideal of a society, culture, and music, that did not exist—Germany had been killed—but which Furtwängler preserved for future resurrection, by embodying the truth of, rather than the desecration of Classical culture, as only he was exceptionally equipped to do. Having been denied the American appointment by a Nazi intelligence operation that worked, he stayed in Germany

for the same reason that Socrates stayed in Athens and Thomas More stayed in England—under risk of the death that came to both of them, but not to him. His decision was correct.

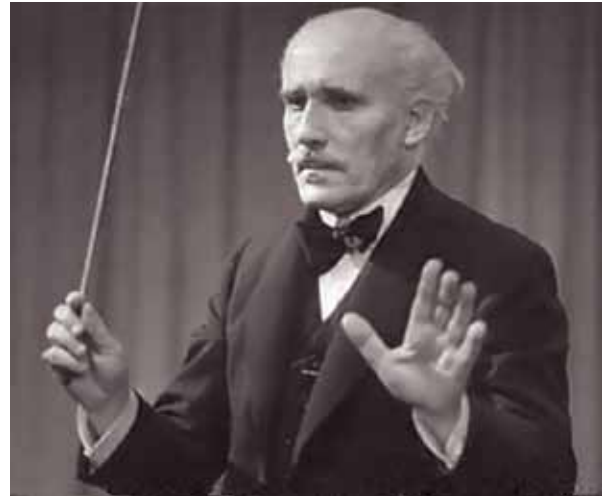
Toscanini, who, though he had said in 1936 that the only conductor “worthy to replace him” was Furtwängler, denounced Furtwängler as a Nazi sympathizer afterwards. Yet Furtwängler had never committed the mistake in judgement that Toscanini had made in 1919, when he became a Fascist candidate, although he opposed Mussolini later.

Could a faithful and profound lover of the truth contained in the inner life of Classical music have made that mistake? Furtwängler’s *musical* criticism of Toscanini, reveals the moral problem at the root of the past 125 years of collapse in Classical culture and science.

“In contrast to, say Nikisch, [Toscanini] has no innate musical talent, and what he does have has been fought for and worked upon. But certain striking shortcomings have remained, above all the enormous waste of space in the forte. The size of his beat in the ‘f’ is such that it makes any differentiation impossible. As a result, these tuttis are all the same, they sound noisy and



*Herman Göring, the second in command of the Third Reich, directly orchestrated a campaign to prevent Furtwängler from succeeding Arturo Toscanini at the New York Philharmonic in 1936.*



United States Office of War Information

*Arturo Toscanini, who had said in 1936 that Furtwängler was the only conductor qualified to replace him, later denounced Furtwängler as a Nazi sympathizer, despite the fact that Toscanini himself had been a Fascist candidate in 1919 who later rejected Mussolini.*

are always at the same volume, and the conductor's ability to bring out differences within the forte, in the lower or middle range or even in important major parts, is quite minimal.

"Toscanini believes what he says, that he plays, as far as possible, literally and in a disciplined manner—not superior and not rational—but still himself and the orchestra.

"His greatness lies in his character. This helps him in the eyes of the world, but it does not, unfortunately, help art. One can say with certainty that if he were a greater artist, if he had deeper insights, a livelier imagination, greater warmth, and devotion to the work, he would not have become so disciplined. And that is why his success is disastrous.

"Those of us who hold great music close to our hearts can never replace true artists with prima donnas and others who are just as disciplined, even if they appear in the sheep's clothing of literal rendering. The view, previously held unconsciously in Germany, that inspiration and understanding in art are more important than discipline and autocratic behavior, is still correct."

The late Yehudi Menuhin can rest assured: neither he, nor Furtwängler, overestimated the power of music. It is simply necessary, and militantly so, to properly estimate the "barbarians at the gate" who seek to subju-

gate humanity through "treasons, stratagems and spoils" by denying children, such as the young prodigy Menuhin, the music that arms them to free humanity from its persistent proclivity to revert to dark ages, including today.

## Achieving the Power of Music

The following dialogue addresses concretely this question of the power of music. It identifies the necessity of, and method for the instruction of young people in the art of *bel canto* voice placement, to achieve that power. It is an excerpt of a conversation between Lynn Yen, Executive Director of the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture, and Carmela Altamura, soprano, vocal coach, and co-founder of Inter-Cities Performing Arts, Inc., and the Altamura/Caruso International Voice Competition.

**Lynn Yen:** The collapse in the speaking of the English language that has occurred . . .

**Carmela Altamura:** It's all in the speaking! The art starts with the speaking . . .

**Yen:** That is easily heard if you even play the



*Lynn Yen, Executive Director of the Foundation for the Revival of Classical Culture.*

*Carmela Altamura, soprano, vocal coach, and co-founder of Inter-Cities Performing Arts, Inc., and the Altamura/Caruso International Voice Competition.*

Schiller Institute

speeches of John F. Kennedy, and compare them to any speech you hear [today].

**Altamura:** I am constantly ... [she then describes a student who is taking acting lessons]. And he's quite good. He's using me as a sounding board. And I say, "No, no, no—your diction. Your *diction*. You do too much work. And then, your jaw is too tight. I cannot understand. Speak on the vowels, speak on the vowels! Follow the accents! Follow the accents where they normally fall." My God, it takes me forever.

**Yen:** This has created a circumstance where the culture's degeneration is accelerating at an accelerating rate.

**Altamura:** Everything has accelerated in degenerating at an accelerating rate. I'm so glad you pick it up.

**Yen:** It's our view that the only efficient means to address this at this point ...

**Altamura:** Is the *bel canto* singing.

**Yen:** That's right. It's the only possible way.

**Altamura:** The *only* way.

**Yen:** So we don't find resistance among young people ...

**Altamura:** But the teachers! They're *ignorant!*

**Yen:** Yes, yes.



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

**Altamura:** They're very ignorant.

**Yen:** So the bad *good* situation that you have now, is that because there is so much chaos in the educational system, they let anyone walk in who has any semblance of a good idea, and has a positive rapport with the students ... What we need, I believe, is a cer-



tain kind of proof of principle, taking a selection of young students and demonstrating that we can essentially, in a relatively short period of time, bring them to a higher level of enunciation of an idea . . .

**Altamura:** The *articulation* of it, yes.

**Yen:** And so to accomplish this, what we first did was we began the process of people studying the Handel *Messiah*, but not because it was an English text, but that *since* it was an English text, people could not complain that they could not understand what it meant. But the English that they speak . . .

**Altamura:** The *vowel formation* in the speaking range, is Italian, no matter what you are singing.

**Yen:** Right!

**Altamura:** No matter *what* language. Whether it's Chinese, whether it's Japanese, whether it's Russian. The vowel formation . . . The great singers always have that formation. It involves the passage and the registers. Once you pass the registers, you can no longer make it—you can *think* it.

**Yen:** Aha! I see . . .

**Altamura:** The mind is the one that tells the vocal chords how much tension to have. Everything is done by the . . . And it has to look effortless, no effort at all. And the mind commands the vocal chords, which are very tiny, to tense up, just sufficient to . . . Imagine how magnificent God made us to do this. And this mind that hears that note, and is why I make everyone study *slowly*, so that their heart in gets refined and developed. Everybody wants to sing fast, “fast food.” I say, “Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You know, give your muscles a chance.”

If you're doing an interval from C to D, that's a short distance. but if you're doing an interval C to A, the sixth, it's longer. It takes more time. The brain is . . . It takes time to enunciate. Everything is longer. [Sings the interval twice, differently.] That's why [contemporary singers] don't space well. They don't space the melodies well. And you can always know when someone is really professional [that way]. The singers have to become instrumental, and the instrumentalists have to become singers.

**Yen:** Exactly.

**Altamura:** Please forgive me if I am boring you with all this but I see that you are on the right road.

**Yen:** No, this is it. We are, you see, we are sneaking up on people. We don't want to simply say, because it's not exactly true, that “You are hopelessly illiterate.”

What we want people to experience is, “We can do this much better.” And if you do it much better, if you *sound* better . . .

**Altamura:** It's quality! It's quality! And every voice, no matter what God created, *has its inherent quality, if it is trained properly*. Whether it is chamber, whether it is oratorio, whether it is opera, operetta, we look for the highest quality that you can produce. And most people today, it's all *approximate pitch*. They sing, but it's never *on pitch*. It's approximate. It drives me insane. [Sings several inexact intervals]. I mean, please! It drives me insane! Everything is approximate. No, it's *not* approximate! The axis that hold the world together spins mathematically. Everything is order.

**Yen:** And this notion of resonance at the proper tuning, which is why Verdi fought for it. So, if you can establish this as a principle in the mind of a student, then, and *only* then, can the student actually understand the concept of the truth.

**Altamura:** But you know . . . we have to expose them to the highest excellence. Because they demand so little of themselves. We have to raise the bar. We have accepted such garbage as art today. I mean, it's an excuse to get attention.

**Yen:** It's horrible. You see it at Carnegie Hall, at Lincoln Center . . . In fact, that's where it's the worst!

**Altamura:** And that is shocking!

**Yen:** There, they keep on *lowering* the bar. And the audience is ignorant.

**Altamura:** They cannot distinguish between amusement, entertainment, and art. There are three distinctions. You may fall into that, but be excellent even in *that!* And then there is the narrow highway of the excellence of the true art. It takes a lot of time and longer preparation. Many are called but few are chosen. Because it takes extraordinary love to do it. And you have to forget about being comfortable and having money, and all this business. It will come to you. God gives us the means to accomplish that for which he called us. As long as we seek. . . “Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and all things will be added unto you.” The kingdom is excellence. . . We cannot give [the students] to make them afraid either, but raise the bar day by day—a little bit higher, a little bit higher. They climb the mountain without even knowing it! And then, all of a sudden, they look back: “Is that *me?*?”