

can singing Classical pieces in a chorus stop insane war hawks from making war?” The question was in reference to the Schiller Institute’s then just-released [Petition for Artists](#) soliciting signatures endorsing a campaign to revive the principles of classical thinking in our culture. With a smile and a bit of laughter, she replied:

Well, I don’t think it will do that, because these war hawks are war hawks.... But the purpose of Classical music is to uplift the general population. We are right now in a situation where the West as an entity, meaning the United States and Europe in particular, are in the biggest cultural crisis I can think of. It’s a plunge into decadence, which makes the end of the Roman Empire pale by comparison. If you look at what is allowed under the flag of democracy and freedom and whatnot, the violence—I think there were 500 mass shootings in the United States so far this year.... Look at the suicide rate, the drug addiction, the violence of the drug gangs in the cities, the decay of infrastructure, the barbarism which is portrayed in the way migrants are treated.... This is the downfall of the West! Don’t kid yourself.

My late husband, Lyndon LaRouche, always used to say that a society which is not capable of Classical thinking any more, will not make it. With Classical music, you are appealing to that in the inner soul of the human being which is human, which is beautiful, which is creative, which is uplifting, which is lofty, which has all the ideas of humanity. The only way ... to get back on a track of peace and decency in the world order, is to revive the Classical traditions in Western culture: Classical music is the absolute key, because it is the international language which is understood by everybody. Lifting up of the human spirit is the absolutely unavoidable precondition for us to get out of this.

So it’s not the war hawks, it’s the rest of the population which needs to be uplifted.

It is, therefore, in the spirit of peace, and with hope for a revival of classical thinking, that *EIR* reprints Maestro Barenboim’s Oct. 13 article.

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## Our Message Must Be Stronger Than Ever

*Opinion Article by Maestro Daniel Barenboim*

The current events in Israel and Gaza have deeply shocked us all. There is no justification for Hamas’ barbaric terrorist acts against civilians, including children and babies. We must acknowledge this, and pause. But then the next step is, of course, the question of: What now? Do we now surrender to this terrible violence and let our striving for peace “die”—or do we continue to insist that there must and can be peace?

I am convinced that we have to move on and keep the larger context of the conflict in mind. Our musicians of the West-Eastern Divan, our students in the Barenboim-Said Academy, they are almost all directly affected. Many of the musicians live in the region, and the others also have many ties to their homeland. This strengthens my conviction that there can only be one solution to this conflict: one on the basis of humanism, justice and equality—and without armed force and occupation.

Our message of peace must be louder than ever. The greatest danger is that all the people who so ardently desire peace will be drowned out by extremists and violence. But any analysis, any moral equation we might draw up, must have as its core this basic understanding: there are people on both sides. Humanity is universal and the recognition of this truth on both sides is the only way. The suffering of innocent people on either side is absolutely unbearable.

The images of the devastating terrorist attacks by Hamas break our hearts. Our reaction clearly shows: the willingness to empathize with the situation of others is essential. Of course, and especially now, one must also allow for emotions like fear, despair and anger—but the moment this leads us to deny each other humanity, we are lost. Every single person can make a difference and pass something on. This is how we change things on a small scale. On a large scale, it is up to politics.

We have to offer other perspectives to those who are attracted to extremism. After all, it is usually people who are completely without prospects, who are desperate, who devote themselves to murderous or extremist ideologies, who find a home there. Educa-

tion and information are equally essential, because there are so many positions based on absolute misinformation.

To reiterate quite clearly: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not a political conflict between two states over borders, water, oil or other resources. It is a deeply human conflict between two peoples who have known suffering and persecution. The persecution of the Jewish people over 20 centuries culminated in the Nazi ideology that murdered six million Jews.

The Jewish people cherished a dream; a land of their own, a homeland for all Jews in what is now Palestine. But from this dream followed a deeply problematic, because fundamentally false, assumption: a land without a people for a people without a land. In reality, however, the Jewish population of Palestine during the First World War was only 9%. 91% of the population was therefore not Jewish, but Palestinian, grown over centuries. The country could hardly be called a “land without a people” and the Palestinian population saw no reason to give up their own land. The conflict was thus inevitable, and since its beginning the fronts have only hardened further over generations. I am convinced: the Israelis will have security when the Palestinians can feel hope, that is, justice. Both sides must recognize their enemies as human beings and try to empathize with their point of view, their pain and their hardship. Israelis must also accept that the occupation of Palestine is incompatible with this.

For my understanding of this more than 70-year-old conflict, my friendship with Edward Said is the key experience. We found in each other a counterpart who can take us further and help us to see the supposed “other” more clearly and understand him better. We have recognized and found each other in our common humanity. For me, our joint work with the West-Eastern Divan, which finds its logical continuation and perhaps even its culmination in the Barenboim-Said Academy, is probably the most important activity of my life.



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*Daniel Barenboim conducts the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, Salzburg, May 20, 2013. The orchestra takes its name from a collection of lyrical poems by Goethe.*

In the current situation, we naturally ask ourselves about the significance of our joint work in both the orchestra and the academy. It may seem little—but the mere fact that Arab and Israeli musicians share a podium at every concert and make music together, that is of immense value to us. Over the years, through this commonality of music-making, but also through our countless, sometimes heated discussions, we have learned to better understand the supposed other, to approach them and to find common ground in our humanity and in music. We start and end all discussions, no matter how controversial, with the fundamental understanding that we are all equal human beings who deserve peace, freedom and happiness.

This may sound naïve, but it is not: for it is this understanding that seems to be completely lost in the conflict on both sides today. Our experience shows that this message has reached many people in the region and around the world. We must, want, and will continue to believe that music can bring us closer together in our humanity.

Daniel Barenboim  
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*This article is posted [here](#) on the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra website.*