

Beyond the Haunting Melody

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7:00 p.m.

The Philoctetes Center

Levy: Francis Levy
Chase: Stephanie Chase
Applebaum: Edward Applebaum
A: Speaker from audience

Levy: I'm Francis Levy, Co-Director of the Philoctetes Center, and welcome to *Beyond the Haunting Melody*. I'd now like to introduce Stephanie Chase. Stephanie Chase is a violinist who has performed as a soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, and Hong Kong Philharmonic. She is also artistic director and co-founder of Music of the Spheres Society, which is dedicated to exploring the links between music, philosophy, and the sciences, and teaches violin at New York University's Steinhardt School. In her spare time, she writes music arrangements and studies Stradivari—

Chase: Yes, violins.

Levy: Stephanie Chase will host this evening's program and introduce our distinguished guest.

Chase: Thank you, Francis. This is a really wonderful opportunity for me as a performer to explore many aspects of music and how it retains the imagination. Over the course of the four presentations that I am making this year, I tried to choose different aspects and focus on them, and tonight I'm so pleased to have a composer and wonderful friend with me, Edward Applebaum. I just want to make a couple of comments about music, again from a performer's perspective. Like a book that sits unread on a shelf, a music score is realized by its interpreters and by musicians, and often we're working with compositions by people who are no longer with us. So we sometimes have to imagine what the genesis is for a composition: what were the ideas that led to its coming into existence?

Also, in terms of how we interpret a work, it sometimes helps us to know something about the person behind it, and the more research we do into the life of a composer, the more it aids us—I find anyway. Then also to do some research into the era of a composition, and sometimes the place of a composition makes a big difference in terms of how we come to realize the music and its interpretation. Working with a living composer offers a chance for greater insight into the composition, and finally I just wanted to say that great music bears repeated scrutiny—that the interpretation can only deepen as we return to it, and so that's always a kind of exploration for us as performers.

I want to introduce Edward Applebaum. I'm going to read your biography very briefly, as they did for me. Edward Applebaum is an American composer of contemporary classical music. He is on the faculty of the Honors College at the University of Houston, where he teaches the

Psychology and the Arts, and the Psychology of Humor—we might get into that later. He has taught composition at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University; the Edith Cowan University, which is in Australia, in Perth; at the University of California at Santa Barbara; Florida State University; and is a recipient of the Kennedy Center's Friedheim Award in Music Composition. Doctor Applebaum also holds a particular scholarly interest in the subject of Psychotherapy in the Arts and teaches at the Jung Center in Houston. Please join me in welcoming Edward Applebaum.

Applebaum: Thank you.

Chase: Is your cell phone off?

Applebaum: I'm worried about this, because I'm worried maybe Rudy Giuliani's wife will be calling me. I don't think she will; I hardly know her. I'm delighted to be here. What I'm proposing is I'm going to give you a few quotations that I find very meaningful in terms of what my presentation will be. Then I'm going to put a graph on the board, which I hope will be helpful in demonstrating what I feel the creative process is and how it works; slide into a little bit of Mahler and how he articulates the design that I'm going to put on the board; have Stephanie perform a couple of excerpts of pieces of mine, which I hope will illustrate; and then hopefully we can have a dialogue.

My part is probably shorter than my introduction. The quotations are four in number: first of all, Susanne Langer, who said "music is the symbolic analog of the emotional life." She wrote that in the early forties, in a book called *Philosophy in a New Key*. What she meant was music breathes, it expands, it contracts. It has all the processes of the human existence. The second one is by an analyst, Anthony Storr—British—who says, "Music is what occurs between the notes." Mahler said, "If you're looking for music, don't look at the notes." And then there's another one—Leonard Meyer, who said, "Emotion is created by the frustration of expectation." I can give you a demonstration of how that works.

But first I'd like to put this diagram on the board. This is a diagram I use, and within two or three minutes, one of my students will always say, "Is that what the mind looks like?" and I say, "It might be what your mind looks like. I'm not sure." But I'm going to put the conscious and the unconscious, and a line between them, in the central cortex. What happens in the creative process, as I live it and experience it, and tried this model out with a number of different people, is as follows. I always begin with 'x' and that's the inspiration. I haven't got a clue where it comes from. I do have a clue, but nonetheless, it's not digital. It's not something we're ever going to find scientifically, thank God. So whatever that inspiration is, something tweaks inside of me and other artists that I know, and a process begins.

First of all, the process is whether you're going to listen to the inspiration inside. It's not always done; frequently it's not done. But assuming the creator does, there's a number of things that happen, and these are all almost instantaneous, and they're all part of the unconscious. Number one, you have to decide what mode you're going to create in. I personally think that kids who are creative are probably almost accidentally involved in a particular medium. You give a kid a lot of crayons with no music, chances are—to quote Johnny Mathis—you're going to have a kind of kid who will be visually-oriented. Nowadays most kids who are creative are creative in motion

pictures. You see more kids with cameras than with anything else. That's because they're watching a lot of television. That's actually immaterial to a large extent. You have to decide whether you're going to accept the challenge of whatever this inspiration is, and you go through a process of coding and deciding what it is, whatever medium you're creating in, how you formulate whatever this is into that medium. Those are all unconscious processes which go up through this and then they have to pass through this censor. This is the same censor that deals with fairy tales, with symptoms, the usual stuff we talk about—the creative arts being one of those, which are messages for us. I don't have to tell any of you this.

When we get to the conscious part, that's where our schooling comes in. What happens is, all the techniques we learned as creative students, in one art or another or through our own study or through the help of teachers, gets cooking, and whatever we want to do, we create it, leading to some sort of artifact: a piece of music, a novel, a painting, blah blah blah. Now what happens is that for some of the arts, it involves a performer to articulate that for us. For most music, for ballet, for opera, for plays, but the novelist and the painter escape that part. Nonetheless, it goes across some sort of audience. What happens to the member of the audience is that this process which began with an inspiration and goes through a series of encodings is processed by the listener or experience in reverse order. So you come to a situation where we hear, we experience, and then something really hits us. That's why I like to use Mahler. We descend into our own unconscious, and if it's going to work, this 'x' will come very close to that 'x.' If I sit down, can I still be seen? Or does it matter? Seinfeld is my hero, so in case I break into any of that, you'll understand—maybe.

Chase: What's the story with this lecture?

Applebaum: You'd be surprised how many of my students ask that same question. So this is the kind of creative model that I like to work with. I think it's very important, as I said at the beginning, the inspiration is not digital. I hear and deal with too much in the neuroscience area which purports to deal with music, and if there are people who want to talk about that, I'd be more than happy to. My bottom line on that is that among neuroscientists and music, the neuroscientific journals that you read and where they do musical examples about sciences, this stuff would never get into print, by and large. I have some examples that are doozies. That's why I really wanted to emphasize that I think 'x' is not digital. It's not a yes-or-no, on-or-off situation.

Now how this inspiration works, I'm going to use a couple of examples from Gustav Mahler. Do any of you know this book called *The Haunting Melody*? It's an absolutely astounding study on so many levels. Part of it deals with the Mahler Second Symphony, and how it was when Mahler had allegedly a composer's block, how he pulled out of it and what happened. But it's also a story of why Reik is writing this book in the first place, and it's fascinating as psychobiography. Mahler was suffering from an intense inability to finish a piece. Reik contends that it was for particular kinds of reasons. What happened was he couldn't finish it for several years. It was the Second Symphony, the ending of where the choir comes in, singing the hymn by Klopstock, which Mahler heard at the funeral of Hans Von Bulow. It's very complicated, but it's some of the best mystery writing you'll hear. I think it's a wonderful, wonderful book. The question is, what happened? What was it that changed Mahler into a person who couldn't finish this thing to

a person who finished? If you've heard the Resurrection Symphony, you know that when the choir comes in—Phew! There ain't no digital of that.

I don't want to dwell too much on that, because I want to get a little bit more into Mahler's life first, and talk about how it is that composers can write music which does not have a text, and which communicates emotionally, and to do that, I'd like to play something that I'm sure we've all heard, whether or not we've seen *Death in Venice*, and that's the Adagio of the Fifth Symphony. Something very important to hear in this particular theme—I'm just going to play the first—there are three utterances of the theme, but this is a theme that never comes to rest. The only person who had done this up to this time is Beethoven in the Ninth Symphony, the slow movement.

(Music)

When you think it's ending, another part's beginning. There's an overlap. It hasn't finished. It's not going to line up. That's a really long time for one theme to be expanding. That was a love song he wrote for Alma. It was at the very beginning of their relationship, which was a very strange relationship, to say the least. By the way, I noticed in the bookstore downstairs, there's a book by Stuart Feder on Mahler. If you want to read a great book on a great person, that's a really fabulous book. In fact, it's on display.

I think if you don't get the 'x' in that, it isn't going to happen. I don't know any piece that's like that. I once gave a lecture in Australia to a group of analysts, and I played the entire movement, and when it was finished, I said, "I'd really be curious—just please write down one word that occurs to you that expresses your psychic response to the piece." There were fourteen people in the room. Thirteen wrote *water*. Now I wondered had they seen the movie, because it's used in *Death in Venice*. A couple of them had, but most of them hadn't, and so the subject of infinity just sort of, I hate to say it poured out, but it did. So here's Mahler making a very clear statement about his love for Alma. Symphony Number Five.

Symphony Number Six has something very strange that occurs. Whenever Mahler had an idea, he would finish the idea and the texture would thin out: a very nice transition, here comes the next idea. What you'll hear is that very thing in this, but something very strange happens. I'm going to play this part twice. Everything was going well in the marriage at this time, allegedly. The first theme.

(Music)

Aggressive, militaristic transition. He had his say. Transition. Now this grand love theme again for Alma.

(Music)

He doesn't finish the Alma theme. The aggressive, militaristic theme cuts in. There aren't many examples in Mahler where you don't find a clearly articulated theme. As we say in fairy-tale study, all is not well in the kingdom. If you read enough about Mahler and you know the craziness of this relationship—it's said that at the end of the Sixth Symphony, he was disappointed by several really horrible kinds of things that have happened in his life, or the

premonitions thereof. This says something different, something he wasn't even expressing at the time. I don't think he knew that this wasn't going to be a very good thing.. But there it was in the music. I'm just saying that there are things that happen in the unconscious that we don't even know ourselves, and in a certain sense, why should we? That's basically when I said the frustration of expectation—this thing should have worked, and it didn't work.

A: I'm shaking my head because if you carry the statement a bit further, up to the double bar, that glorious theme absolutely does that.

Applebaum: But not at this point.

A: It's just momentarily interrupted.

Applebaum: Yeah, momentarily interrupted. That's enough.

A: In a short space of time.

Applebaum: Yeah, but in the context of what I'm saying, is that here was something for those of you who know the situation between those two—egad! This was, I almost think, a projection of her rebellion that he was trying to work on, another issue. I'd like to now just conclude this part, and I hope we get to ask questions or answer some. I've written two pieces for Stephanie. The first one is based on *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Have any of you seen the movie yet?

A: Read the book.

Applebaum: Yeah, the movie is quite wonderful.

A: It got bad reviews.

Applebaum: Did it? That validates my point. Are a lot of you familiar with the story? It influenced me powerfully. It was so strong. One of the things I thought a good deal about was how the story continued on several time levels. There was the presence of the text, but there was this continuing, unrequited story, which I found so sad the whole time. They do it very well in the movie. There's one section here where I'm trying to talk about how you write two different times simultaneously. I call this section "Time Windows" because there's one kind of love song going on and there's also this very unhappy, gritty stuff that's going on.

Chase: So I should just play that section?

Applebaum: Yes, just that section please.

Chase: So it's two simultaneous narratives.

Applebaum: Yes, right.

(Music)

Applebaum: Thank you. Now for those of you who've read the book, there's this awful, sad thing where Florentino is playing his violin across the park and hoping that Fermina hears him.

There's one section, just a brief sentence, he says one time he did something rather special, a love waltz. This is that section. This is just briefly what the love waltz sounds like.

(Music)

Chase: Sound familiar?

Applebaum: Yeah, right. Finally is the section where they get on the boat and they're making this continuing journey. Throughout the piece I used a lot of my vision of Bach, and this happens here too, particularly from the solo violin works. It goes through a pretty long Bach section, and then it ends up with a final scream, in a certain sense—not Edvard Munch—but they're kind of like, god, why did this take so long? As he says, fifty-one years. He keeps repeating it, as you know, in the movie, too, those of you who've seen it. Then there are four measures at the very end, a little lullaby, because I had this vision of them being like little children lovers, at an age in the mid-seventies. I think that works very well in the movie. This is actually what's called "The Landscape of Dreams," which is how my vision of what this love story was about got there and how it ended.

(Music)

In my mind I'm always making direct translations, but I think I'd like to throw it open to questions now. Yes?

A: I've been interviewing American composers for about thirty years on inspiration. I'm surprised we haven't come across each other. I've gotten all kind of descriptions, one of which, from Roger Sessions, was exactly what you said. He said the audience, in order to understand a piece, must go through the exact same steps that the composer did writing it. So really it fits head-on with what you've said.

Applebaum: Well, that's really interesting. Wow, thank you for that. Did you have a question?

A: Yes, I have no training in the technical aspects, so can I get from the upper right corner to the lower right corner without all the training you have?

Applebaum: I don't think an audience generally does have the training. I think the only training we really need is to have an open soul. And I find that most audiences don't.

Chase: Don't have training, or don't have a soul?

Applebaum: Don't have an open soul. It's very interesting, because I used to teach a lot of composition, and the most important thing I could ever do for a student was to give them the permission to be him or herself, because they were so bound up in—I don't know what kind of word to use, I think I'll use crap—that we teach in schools, especially in music schools. It just takes forever to tell them, "No, you can be yourself. You can do what you want to do." If they have to go through this process, I don't think it matters whether your 'x' is the same as the composer's 'x.' I'm sorry, but I think what's important is that you have an 'x.'

A: There's a wonderful British book called *An Affinity with Mahler*, which has different people responding to different symphonies, and represents a wide array of proficiency. It's raising how much impact it makes on people with varying training in music. British publisher—I can't remember, but it's *An Affinity with Mahler*.

Applebaum: Thank you. That's why Amazon exists.

A: The second thing I wanted to say is that in your diagram—the conscious and the unconscious—I'm sure there's a circle where it comes back to the unconscious, and the most dramatic illustration of that is this mathematician who was working on a formula, and had worked on it and worked on it and worked on it and got stuck. Then he got interrupted in order to go to a picnic, and when he went to the picnic, he put his foot on the bus and he knew he had the answer, but it didn't come through as an articulate thing. It was just unconscious. When he got home, he wrote it out.

Chase: Actually, if I could interject a comment—you were talking about technique and training sometimes being a blocking force in composition. As a performer and interpreter, we're of course trying to deal with playing things accurately and in tune and not having memory slips and all the other things that go into it, but ideally we're letting go of that as our foremost thought, and I feel literally like we get into a train, like it's the sense of narrative. If we know the piece well enough and are well-rehearsed and feeling comfortable, there's a sense of narrative that's almost a physical sense of walking through something. I think that might be what the audience picks up on intuitively, that there's a sense of a journey that's taking place, and you could talk about it in terms of compositional structures and cadences and modulations and things like that, but you also have this emotional journey that takes place. That's something we try to key into also when we're performing music, and to let go of being so consciously, but we need to have that foundation in order to do it. I think you're probably feeling that to be a good composer you need to have a foundation and that you understand the structures of music before you then say okay, I'm not going to follow these rules now.

Applebaum: Yeah, a big moment came for me. I studied with a composer named Henri Lazarov. He was God's gift to teaching—a wonderful composer, great teacher. Finally I wrote a piece that was extremely jazzy, which was my background. He looked at it, and he said, "I just don't like this piece." And I said, "I really do." So I dedicated it to him, and never took another lesson. It worked out very well. We were great friends and whatnot, but there comes a time. It's like kids: they need to be let go, and that's just what happens. Yes?

A: I was listening to those three selections that Stephanie was playing, and while I was listening I found the best way I could accept what she was playing was to block out completely your pre-description, but just to listen to this as I receive it through my mind and my ears. I didn't want to know what this was all about because I form my own individual—and I found it was much more powerful that way, and I could make something out of it. Maybe eventually I could reach a point on my own.

Applebaum: I think that brings up a really good point about program notes. I'm a great believer in program notes. I want people to know what it was I was feeling, and then they can take it or leave it, but I think in order to be valid—because I think so graphically about human emotion,

and that's the most important thing to me. I composed a symphony, an elegy for a friend of mine, Stephen Albert, who died horribly in '93, and it was really important for that audience to know what that piece was about. At the end of it, I said, "Actually, I would really prefer if you didn't applaud—if you just went home and thought about it." I'm so glad they ignored that part. They did applaud, and I felt very good, but I really meant that, too. I thought, this is an elegy.

Then there was a moment very similar to that on 9/12. Leonard Slatkin was performing in London and he played the Adagio for Strings. Incidentally, I owe my career to that man. He was a supporter of mine, a very important part of my life. He talked about that being the official mourning piece for America, the Adagio. He says, "Just like your official mourning piece is the Nimrod of Enigma Variations." It's true, and it was very powerful. So you do know, you don't know. I think what matters is that we do know that we have feelings. Yes?

A: Without going into what I think this means, I just want to tell you about this, and then perhaps you can comment on it. I went to a show at the Jewish Museum several years ago: it was Schoenberg and Kandinsky. I have never liked Schoenberg. I'm looking at Kandinsky, and all of a sudden I hear [sings notes], which I don't enjoy at all. German was my first language. I wasn't born there, but it's a very familiar song to everybody. From that moment on, I've liked Schoenberg.

I then came back. I was studying piano for a third round in my life. We started with folk songs, and my piano teacher tells me I'm improvising a la Schoenberg because I'm using a twelve-tone scale. All of a sudden I'm improvising in that mode to which I could never relate before. I could go on and on about what I think that means, but I was wondering if you have any comments about it.

Applebaum: Well, in my practice, when somebody recites a dream to me, I say, "So what do you think it means?" I've heard stories like that. I also don't like Schoenberg, but I've remained not liking him. But I do understand that feeling of a sudden shift occurring. I think it seems like there was some identification—and Theodor Reik talks about this—with something else that was in service to that particular experience.

A: Just as an aside to this, in Stuart Feder's book he talks about Mahler witnessing a fight between his parents and going out into the town square and the band was playing awfully loud this night and he relates this to the contrasts in his music, the sudden mood changes.

Applebaum: The thing that's so wonderful about Feder's book, unlike a lot of other books, is he doesn't focus entirely on textural things to get psychological meaning. He gets it out of music per se, because he is a musician. So that's a pretty well known thing. Where the hell did this militaristic music come from?

Chase: I'm going to get in trouble now, but since Schoenberg's name was brought up, I have a question that I think would be fun to discuss with people present here. Second Viennese School comes out of Vienna, of course—First Viennese School representing the school of Mozart and Beethoven. Vienna also saw the birth of psychoanalysis. Now do you think atonality and the twelve-tone scale represents perhaps the repression of tonality? Talk amongst yourselves.

A: Well, of course the possibly apocryphal story about Freud is that he hated music. He didn't really hate music, but as a child his sister wanted to play the piano, and his studies were so important that the other people in the family were shushed, so there's something about music and Freud.

Chase: I was just struck by this earlier today, because I was thinking about Prokofiev, for instance, and you know the incidental music for the ballet *The Steel Step*, which is a wonderful quintet for winds and strings. He's trying to represent the Industrial Revolution and the effect that it had, and also this idea of the heroic worker in the midst of these big steel structures, and the flash, the arc of the lights as they're welding things together, so the music actually has a very stiff structure to it. It's very effective, it's very powerful, but it's an interesting cultural juxtaposition, I find, that his music was directly influenced by that. He was trying to present that idea to the listener, so I was wondering about the Second Viennese School and deconstructing things.

Applebaum: My response is as a performer. I really loved performing some Schoenberg—Webern, in particular. I think Berg really shouldn't be a part of that group. My aesthetics don't go in that direction.

Chase: Let me ask you, though, because you work with consonance and dissonance, and when you were talking about the fact that the Mahler melody was an ending, it meant that we didn't have a resolution, a cadence that could be really recognized as a cadence to end that idea. How do you work with consonance and dissonance? Is it something that's deliberate, or is it something that just strikes you—I'm going to express this with this interval?

Applebaum: I can honestly say I start at note one and go through, and I really don't think about that. It just doesn't occur to me. People frequently ask what music do I listen to. I listen to Bill Evans, Dave Brubeck. That's where I come from. That's my background. It's a really unsatisfactory answer.

Chase: No, no. It's a good one.

Applebaum: Also when I lecture at schools of music it's interesting because there are students listening who are going, "Really?" and also there's the faculty saying, "Who let this son of a bitch in?" They don't want to hear that I don't plan things. I don't plan things.

Chase: I think it's great actually, because there have been some contemporary pieces that I've played where it's very predictable what dissonances you're going to hear next. They're using the seconds and the ninths and the sevenths and the automated fourths and fifths and it just sort of becomes almost predictable and not rewarding because it seems like it's sort of calculated.

Applebaum: In order for it to be a bona fide journey, and I use journey in the sense that Joseph Campbell uses it—in order for it to be valid, I think it can't be planned in that way. I don't think there's an aesthetic in the planning.

A: I just wanted to go back to the 'x' for a minute and the inspiration and the idea of an open soul. Can you talk about how you discovered yourself having this talent for being able to write music, and what journey you took from childhood to finding this inspiration?

Applebaum: It seems that most important musical events in my life were when I did what I wasn't supposed to do. My parents tell me that when I was three years old they took me to a concert and I came home and although my feet didn't reach the floor of the piano, I sat down and played the concert. I have no idea. It was probably a pretty crappy concert anyway, so I didn't know what to do with it. Music was in my house, and the point is no one else in my family is a musician. I have a son who's a filmmaker, but he wasn't in my family at that time. I was precocious, but at three? Gee.

I rebelled against everything that I could. Jazz was my first big rebellion, because Jewish kids didn't go into jazz because they were all dope addicts. I mean the jazzers, not the Jews. Now it's the other way around, I think, for my students. It was "a series of incredible events"—what is that, Lemony Snicket?

A: Unfortunate Events.

Applebaum: Unfortunate. But they turned out to be fortunate. To give you an example, I had a student who was at Florida State. Florida State at that time was trying to build a university of which the football team could be proud. This guy would come to lessons and he would sit down and smile all the time, and I thought, "Why are you smiling?" He said, "Life is just really good." I said, "That's really nice." He's writing just drivel, and he'd smile through the whole lesson, and drivel on the page.

One day he came in and he looked like hell. His favorite uncle had died. He said, "I don't know what to do." I said, "Now you can begin being a composer. Go and write a piece about it." That's 'x.' And you know, he's really very good, and he doesn't smile very much anymore. Was it Freud who said, "What's the purpose of psychoanalysis? To take people who are neurotic and help them to lead a generally unhappy life?" Something to that effect?

A: Is it possible that in the atonal music we have difficulty grabbing onto the 'x' that's behind it? That it's very hard to get to the underlying emotion and feeling that's behind it?

Applebaum: I will go out on a limb and say sometimes that 'x' isn't there. I will go further out on a limb and say maybe that 'x' isn't there because that person can't touch that part of him or herself. I'm not proselytizing for the tonal system that we've been given because I certainly don't use it. But there is a way of creating which will keep your audience away from you, which will prevent them from knowing you, and I don't know why the hell people create. They do it from the neck up, or from this point up. Music school stuff, you know, sounds academic. It's interesting because in this country we are forced to do something that you don't have in European countries, which is that we have to align ourselves with academic institutions, because there is no culture of supporting the arts. Here, if you say you're a composer, they say, "Yes, but what do you do for a living?" In Europe, you're a composer. There are too darn many people calling themselves composers. There's a reason why they're still holed up in their offices in Southern Louisiana. Anybody here from Louisiana? Or Wyoming? Oh, that's where Cheney's from. I don't know what they do. There are probably fifty times as many composers in this country as there is room for their music.

A: I was very interested in what you're saying at the very beginning of this hour about the 'x' in the lower left-hand corner. I was just wondering if you think that the original inspiration, the one which we have no logical explanation for, have you ever found that that comes from any other source aside from the emotions—say, the desire to score musical artifice or the desire simply to be charming, musically-speaking, or is always a result of your own personal emotions?

Applebaum: That's a really super question. I think there's a hell of a lot of compensatory stuff that goes on among creative artists. Alice Miller's *The Drama of the Gifted Child* comes to mind. My answer is I really, really don't know. I just know there are certain things that get to me. There's a particular kind of thing that gets to me—*Love in the Time of Cholera*. Then the next piece I wrote for Stephanie called "Dirt Music." I just read a book that's called *Away* by Amy Bloom. I don't know if you've heard of this. I wanted to do an opera on *East of Eden*, just so I could say "Timshel" at the end. I was so excited, but somebody had already gotten the rights for it. One of the things that Mahler said, among many others, was he felt that he was a sort of a vehicle, that the music came from some place, went through him, and came out. I think that's true. Except in the clinical setting, I'm not sure it's necessary to know, to answer your question. I'm not trying to evade it. I think it has clinical uses with creative artists, who are really hard to deal with.

A: To switch art forms, I'm thinking for example of an artist like Escher, whose work is clever, certainly—his play on dimension, space, and so forth. I love Escher's work, but I don't find his work primarily emotional, it's about something else. My personal belief is that music does do things other than express emotions, and makes it possible for the original inspiration to come from a different source, like the desire for artifice to define at the end of *East of Eden* and so forth.

Applebaum: I think that's spot-on. Yes?

A: When I was in college I knew a lot of people in the conservatory—

Applebaum: Which conservatory?

A: University of Missouri in Kansas City. One of them was a piano student and she was talking about a friend of mine who was a composition student. She said he writes with a lot of humor. It was non-lyrical—just music. I've always thought about that statement and sort of understood it, but not completely, and it may have to do with what this gentleman was saying about something beyond emotion. With your involvement in humor and music, maybe you can bring it to light.

Applebaum: Well, there are different kinds of humor in music. There's the obvious kind, by the expert of experts, P.D.Q. Bach. He's just hilariously funny. But if you go back to the Mozart musical joke—you know something's wrong, and it's off balance, it's not working. Then when the horns come in in the wrong key, you think, "Something really is wrong here." It's kind of humorous. It's not funny anymore, because we have the 20th century, and some of it sounds like that, but it's not humorous, just tragic. There's a wonderful treatment of the whole issue of humor by Arthur Koestler in *The Act of Creation*, where he talks about science, creativity—somebody help me: what's the third thing? It's the clash. Humor itself is the clash of two known quantities. A man comes home, and he goes upstairs and he sees his wife is in bed with the

bishop. So he looks up for a minute, then he looks at the scene for a minute, then he goes to the window, opens the window, and starts blessing all the people in the street below. The bishop says, “What are you doing?” And the guy turns to him and says, “You’re doing my job; I’m doing yours.” Koestler calls that “by association,” where you have something entirely logical and they clash and it’s crazy. Freud has an interesting take—the whole book on what humor is. I think I’m not answering your question, but I got a chance to slip in a joke, for which I thank you.

Chase: If I could bring a comment into this regarding humor and music, recently at a Music of the Spheres Society concert I performed the “Sonata for Violin and Piano” by Poulenc. Poulenc can be very manic and very energetic, and the sonata actually had a rather serious source of inspiration, which was the death of Lorca, so essentially that was at the core of the work: this very beautiful intermezzo movement, which recalled a poem by Lorca about the guitar and how it is weeping. It’s very beautiful, a sort of serious and sensitive middle movement, but the opening was the usual sort of Poulenc, very manic, and the last movement literally reminded me of circus music. There are sections where literally he would have the violin playing *triple forte*, as loudly as possible, and it would say “*tres violent*,” very violent, and the piano is going in *piano* dynamic and it was the strangest thing. There would be other times that it was the reverse, and I’m not sure that the listeners got the humor. I think they thought that the piano was too loud sometimes and the violin was too loud sometimes, but to me it was really crazy, because you had these amazing juxtapositions, and the material actually was united in a way that one part had nothing to do with another, and yet he chose to put these elements together. Then we would go out suddenly—I don’t know whether composers use this a lot—but it was like switching scenes in a movie, that you would go from one extreme mood into something else, and there’d be no transition whatsoever, and to me also the sheer perversity of this was very entertaining, because you had to stop on a dime.

On the other hand, that’s almost a tradition that goes back to Beethoven and his extreme dynamics, whatever you want to make of that. He’ll have you play something very strongly and in the next split second you’re supposed to be playing piano in a very lyrical kind of phrase. I don’t think he was doing it for humorous purposes, whereas Poulenc was doing it here, but it’s interesting to see these things where it’s deliberately meant to jerk the listener around, to cause you to feel different emotions and not know how to deal with them. They sort of pile up after a while and you’re left sorting this out, not knowing what you’ve heard.

Applebaum: It is really difficult to think of Beethoven doing anything funny.

Chase: Oh, his scherzos—come on, Ed. The C-minor sonatas, the scherzo movement. (She sings). Yes, because he’s taking the 3-meter—. I’m sorry, this is your night, but I disagree with you, my friend.

Applebaum: This is just like in class.

Chase: Yes, teacher. Traditional form has been the dance movement, and in this movement that I’m referring to, Beethoven takes something in a very strong 3-meter and instead of putting the strong beat on the downbeat—neutral second beat, lifting third beat—he’s making the middle beat the strong thing, and so he’s taking away your sense of where you ought to be, and then

finally brings it back when he goes (she sings). So then you're brought back into it. "Oh yes, here we are again." I think that's a sense of humor at work.

Applebaum: Will we still be friends if I don't agree with you?

Chase: You don't find that humorous? You don't find that funny?

Applebaum: No. The only other composer I put in this category down here besides Mahler is Beethoven, and something very interesting about Beethoven—the American composer Roy Harris, who was one of my teachers and just a really great person, one day we were talking about Beethoven, and he said, "You know, what I really love about Beethoven was he was so human. He made mistakes." I thought that was really interesting. I didn't bother to ask him which ones because it didn't matter—it was just a feeling he had. That would have been in the 1960s. In the 1990s I was sitting in a concert hall in Australia with Australia's leading composer, a man named Peter Sculthorpe—fabulous composer—and we were sitting and listening. They were rehearsing Beethoven yet again, and he turns to me, just out of the blue, and he says, "Don't you just love that he sometimes does the wrong thing?" and I thought, I've heard this before. I was really surprised to hear that, but I think it's true. I think there's a humanity in Beethoven. There's a perfection in Mozart. There's humor in Haydn, I think, but Beethoven—that one doesn't work for me. Yes?

A: The notion that you mentioned at the beginning about emotion resulting from frustration of expectation is a notion that can be applied not only to Mozart with his much more expectation, as well as Prokofiev or even to Schoenberg. When it comes to Schoenberg, I think we face a certain problem. We don't have much expectation yet, until we've heard the piece many, many times. We don't often have the chance to do that with much music these days.

Applebaum: The reason is because we're caught in the regular tonality in which we grew up. These things called scales have a polarity. There are differentiations between the intervals. But in the technique that Schoenberg used and the technique that Debussy used, there's no polarity. It's not an absolute necessity. I want to give an illustration. Leonard B. Meyer was—is he still alive? He writes about music; it's wonderful. The book is called *Emotion and Meaning in Music* and it was his PhD dissertation from the University of Chicago, and they didn't know what to do with such a great thing so they made him chair of the department two years after he graduated. Here's how it works. Could you give us a D?

(Chase plays.)

Okay, so there's a D, and I ask the question, "What comes next?" That's a really stupid question. No! The answer is—I do this on a piano, I can't count notes on a violin—you have eighty-eight choices—how many keys are on a piano? Eighty-eight?

A: Eighty.

Applebaum: Anyway, a lot. So I don't know what to say. Expectation, I've got none. Now she plays the first two notes of the scale together.

(Chase plays)

What comes next? Still it's pretty much open. Now as she adds just very slowly to go up the scale, stop at C-sharp.

(Chase plays)

You can predict with one hundred percent accuracy the probability of the next note.

(Chase plays)

That's getting back at my Beethoven remark. I understand that perfectly well. We'll discuss this at our next session. The point being, it's a gestalt principle with no closure. You have increased tension. The thing about Mahler, the Fifth Symphony, it just keeps going and going and going like an Eveready battery, but the point being that it just never comes to rest and it keeps regenerating itself. I love gestalt psychology in the sense that you can do something like this (He draws) and say, what is this? Everybody says it's a circle, but somewhere along the way we said, "No, you didn't finish it." California students get that quickly. Texas students—sorry, whoops. So that's an incomplete circle. We assume it really looks like that, whatever that is, but it didn't. That wasn't there. Leonard Meyer says that until you can complete the statement, you're frustrated in your expectation and that creates emotional response.

A: I'm really interested in two 'x's and how they come together. When you put the model on the board, of course it looks like Freud's topographic model, except that you have to create a repression barrier to the pre-conscious, but pre-conscious must have something to do with this.

There's a really wonderful book that I read on psychoanalytic criticism in the arts, and it's by Elizabeth Wright. The original one was called *Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory and Practice*, but now it's the second edition, so it's called *A Reappraisal*. She has a very interesting definition of psychoanalytic criticism. The reason I'm mentioning it is because it's not only about a psychoanalyst who's a critic, but it's the way that we approach art. I've memorized it because I've been working with it. She says that she sees psychoanalytic criticism as investigating the text—the text being not just the written word, but whatever the text is—for the working of the rhetoric seen as analogous to the mechanisms of the psyche. It's a little complicated, but she's basically saying we have a certain kind of mental equipment and we use it in certain types of ways when we approach the arts. I think it very much works here, because what she would say is the audience works backwards. They take this piece and they have to deconstruct it and they have to look, using their own mental equipment, to find not necessarily something that's exactly the same as your 'x,' but something that's analogous, something that has for them the valance that your original 'x' had for you, that enables you to do the deconstruction. It's a very well-put point.

Applebaum: It really is interesting. It comes close I think to what Susanne Langer said about the symbolic analog. I think it's really true. Has anybody read Susanne Langer? Oh good, okay. She was a cellist, and one of my colleagues at UC Santa Barbara was her nephew and he kept on referring to Auntie Susie, and I couldn't think of Susanne Langer as being Auntie Susie. It just didn't work for me, but she was.

A: In modern jazz, frustration of expectation is constant. What's interesting is that what follows is often a sublimation of that very frustration and an extended sequence, in many cases a very creative series of behaviors.

Applebaum: Yes, that's really interesting. There are so many different ways of frustrating that expectation. Some of them mean that the player just ain't that good. I find it much more prevalent for me in winds or something—piano is kind of hard to keep going.

Levy: Is that analogous to flirtation in any way?

Applebaum: To what?

Levy: Flirtation. Frustration of expectation—you keep using that. Is there a process of coyness? Of being coy?

Applebaum: It seems to me that flirtation is sort of—you have to wait until it doesn't work to have it frustrate you, don't you?

Levy: In flirtation there is tantalization as a kind of foreplay between the sexes, so what I'm introducing here is an analogy into love. Love and the experience of these kinds of aesthetic concepts you're proposing. No? Your face says no.

Applebaum: It says no, but I can't figure out why it says no. Maybe I need Janus here. I only have one face. I hear what you're saying. It's really interesting.

Levy: Sleep on it.

Chase: We touched on this earlier, but if you're hearing a work for the first time, it's a new experience, and it's often a sense of context that you bring to what you're hearing, which is why the sense of loss then makes something like an adagietto much more powerful. So you have an expectation—let's say you want to hear Beethoven's seventh symphony, but played well, and you know how it sounds when it's played well. Even though you're hearing the same notes coming out, you're left with something lacking, and so I'm wondering if that's a question.

Applebaum: I think that comes back to what you brought up about how you don't have that expectation with contemporary music, except on multiple re-hearings. What's problematic for me is I can hear it a lot of times and it still doesn't work for me. When I was conducting professionally, I used to specialize in contemporary music, and I mean Boulez, Stockhausen, and the other guys. They were all guys. There was the kinesthetic behind the performance, that so many people worked damn hard and it worked, and that was so exciting. And I couldn't stand the music, just, "God, this sounds really like drivel." But we really enjoyed doing it. It's like Dancing with the Stars, I guess. I don't know how that works. I haven't heard Seinfeld on Dancing with the Stars yet, so I don't know quite what to say.

Chase: You touch on something from a performer's perspective that can be very difficult about contemporary music and so we're working with something that is unknown to us. Composers, if they're good composers, have their own way of putting notes together. They have their own vocabulary and sense of language and so we have to learn that. Then you talked about the

kinesthetic aspects, which could be that your sense of rhythm is constantly being disrupted, so you might feel very proud of yourselves for having gotten through the piece without any problems of ensemble, that everybody was together at the right spot, that you've played all the notes. You get to the end of it and you think to yourself, Why did I work so hard? What is the goal of all this? We did what he wanted us to do, and we did it well. There's that sense of satisfaction and yet there's no connection emotionally to the content, and that's a problem for me sometimes with contemporary music.

A: Is this a model that would only hold up for music, or would it hold up for painting?

Applebaum: I think all the arts, yes.

A: Which leads me to my question: what about inspiration—unconscious-conscious—where you don't ever get an audience? What happens to you then? What happens to that 'x'?

Applebaum: I said you don't always listen to the inspiration. Sometimes you say, I'd really rather watch football. But I'm talking about once you accept the challenge in Campbell's terms. You accept the calling, the hero has been called and you're going to take this journey. Then I think it goes through the process. What if people don't like it? God, I don't know. I think if you worry about your legacy—wait a minute, Bush is worried about his legacy. I have to use a different term. If you're worried about what's going to happen, I think that's a waste of time. What's going to happen is basically what's going to happen. Am I avoiding your question?

A: I don't know.

Applebaum: I don't know, either. Do you know if I'm avoiding her question? Listen, I can see you guys tomorrow, say eleven-thirty, and we can work this out maybe just the three of us together.

Chase: I forgot to mention that Ed does have a small private practice.

A: If there is a genuine urge to create, you always have to. Look at Mahler. All his symphonies were not received with full appreciation. It took him fifty years after his death before we re-discovered his music. Yet he had the conviction, he had to do it. I think you have to approach art and creativity that way.

Applebaum: He firmly believed—in fact there's this wonderful movie that Ken Russell did on Mahler and he said, "My time will come," and it sure did. Campbell says that if you have the calling and you refuse the calling, it's the birth of neurosis.

A: Well, think of Emily Dickinson, who buried all of her poetry.

Applebaum: Yeah, but she did write it. That's something I think slightly different than not writing it. That would have been what Campbell suggests is the genesis of neurosis, as well as the exodus of Leviticus.

A: Picasso once said that if he was put into prison he would draw with his spit. I found that very inspirational. You don't need an audience. This is you, this is what you have to do.

Applebaum: Speaks highly for his salivary glands, I know that.

A: To put it another way, as Gustav Mahler commented, never compose, unless to not compose a piece becomes a damn nuisance to me.

Applebaum: That's good, yeah.

A: For somebody who was almost committed, and was compelled, not in a neurotic sense, but who really has a strong urge to create, there's a creation of identity that this is about. You could almost see it as not just one or two things that you could use to create your identity, but that your identity is like a sculpture or a building that you're continually refining and rebuilding, pulling some elements down, rebuilding others, changing the configuration. For an artist, it seems like many people are suggesting that this is really a major source of the creation identity.

Applebaum: One of the really sad features of Mahler's life is that he was never really satisfied with what he did in that he kept recreating the same piece. I think there are so many clues we can look at and say really Symphony No. 9 is Symphony No. 1 and "The Song of the Earth." He's continually reworking the same materials. He himself said it: "I just can't get it out. I can't create the perfect symphony." And thank God. Yes?