***Chapter 20***

**Wilfred Jensen came to New York City to launch a career as a cellist in June of 1981. Age 22, ambitious, in acceptable health, naïve, handsome in the obvious way musicians are, he would have been a credit to any orchestra or chamber group. A graduate in all but diploma from the Curtis Institute, he carried with him many of the stereotypes of your typical Curtis product. He believed, for example, that talent and hard work sufficed to make one’s way in a musical career. Without a doubt he possessed the former and had done the latter. By temperament he was not disposed to become a soloist; he could not have adjusted to the competition and unending physical and psychological strain. Yet he felt, like most conservatory graduates, that he ought to try to be one. The most serious handicap he had to overcome was the dogma inculcated into him by his studies, that the groups that he worked with would be at his level, and would play music at the high standard he’d come to expect through his education.**

 **These were very high yet also spoiled. Along with his admiration for the great masters, and the kind of understanding for contemporary and modern music that can only come with a musical education, he had the customary student’s predilection for flashy pieces that displayed his virtuosity; but the work that came his way at first fell into neither of these categories. Like it or not, the first year found him rushing to be on time for rehearsals and performances at weddings, cocktail parties, receptions, community sponsored amateur musicals, religious services, high school graduations**

**By spring of 1982 he’d landed on his feet. In March he signed on to a position as principal cellist in a string ensemble that specialized in the 18th century, the Boccherini Consort. A group with a name like that can always use another first-class cellist.**

**There is more insanity in the practical realities of music profession, than in any other that depends upon similar combinations of individualism and training. It is not that difficult to discriminate between the rank amateur and the accomplished professional; yet it is also a commonplace, that a “rank amateur” can have a brilliant career while the “seasoned professional” gets nowhere. I cite the acclaim given to violinist Andre Rieu, as contrasted to many fine musicians of my acquaintance who live by computer programming and perhaps find time to practice over the weekends.**

 **The profession itself may be mad, but the people who work in it generally are not. I say this to differentiate it from, for example, psychiatry, in which both profession and practitioners are mad. Wilfred did not just want to play music. He insisted on being as good as was humanly possible. He therefore combined several trips to Philadelphia per month to continue his studies with Theodore Sokoloff with private lessons from a cellist with the New York Philharmonic. With respect to all the arts outside of music, his comprehension was narrowly limited by his training. Fortunately, the mere fact that he was living in New York City automatically meant some exposure to contemporary art, theatre, literature and politics.**

**Had he followed the standard trajectory of a career in classical music, he might have settled into a chair in the symphony orchestra of one of the large American cities, more likely St Louis, San Francisco, Detroit rather than New York, Boston, Houston, the most outstanding orchestras; on the first desk if not the first chair: for he was very good. Hard work and his network of connections might even have brought him back to the notoriously prestigious Philadelphia Orchestra, although not, of course, on the first desk.**

 **Yet it is here that the simple determinism that governs the average musical career at his level broke down in his case. It began with his principal motive for entering the musical world of New York City. This was neither fame, nor financial success, nor security; it wasn’t even the love of music. The main reason was the pointless death of his fiancée.**

**His devotion to her had blossomed so remarkably after her death, that it was now far greater than it had ever been when she was alive. Totally forgotten was the fact that, moments before her death, Wilfred was planning a convenient opportunity to break off their engagement.**

 **Yet it appears that the circumstances of her death had laid the cornerstone of an inner shrine to memorialize someone for whom, in real life, he’d come to find a bit of a bore. Every memory, each intimate moment, encounter, shared friendship or relived happiness in the company of friends, had become as intensely contemplated as the beads on a rosary; or, to continue the Christian metaphor, as precious as the true wood of the cross; obsessively fingered, pondered , worshipped.**

**On a more mature level he understood that what had happened on Christmas Eve was bound up with greater historical and political realities; to issues which, as a music student, he’d never had to deal with, in which he nor most of his fellow students had ` never taken any interest. He had acquired the fundamental understanding that there was no sacred boundary separating the concert hall from the realities of hunger, suffering and need of the outside world.**

 **His immediate objective, narrowly focused and somewhat crude, was to uncover the organizations that had murdered Ellen Goldstein, and bring them to justice. The efforts of the FBI as recorded in the newspapers filled him with contempt. He assumed that as an intelligent young artist he was better qualified than they were. In this opinion he was partly correct, though primarily in the estimation of intelligence. Miss Marple is always cleverer than the local police inspector, but in the real world it is not always cleverness which prevails. It is a peculiar handicap of higher education that its victims automatically assume themselves to be more qualified at every occupation than those who have not suffered its benefits. In point of fact he didn’t know the first thing about conducting an investigation into the proliferation of extreme nationalist groups in New York City, or anywhere else. His basic strategy was to keep his eyes open, and follow up leads when he imagined he saw them.**

 **One can reasonably speculate that the principal reason for leaving Philadelphia and the Curtis Institute for New York City , was the deep imprint of the shock of the Academy disaster on his heart and mind. He could no longer walk through the downtown area of the City of Brotherly Love, without observing some architectural feature, some street incident, some acquaintance, that brought back anew the horror of the events of that night. His attendance at classes and concerts had become mechanical, devoid of life or meaning. Theodore Sokoloff had recognized this, which was why, in the long run, he had not insisted that Wilfred remain at Curtis longer than necessary. And indeed, his transposition to the great national and international metropolis, less than a hundred miles away, had the effect of awakening new energy in a mortified heart.**

 **The conviction that his fiancée been the victim of Puerto Rican terrorists was engraved on his psyche. It hardly mattered that his political awareness was abysmal, his knowledge of current events almost non-existent. He’d grown up in the 60’s and 70’s, in a world of newspaper headlines defined by Vietnam, Cambodia, South and Central America, the Middle East, Iran, Libya, South Africa, Indonesia, the Communist menace, the anti-war and civil rights movements. As with most people whose political opinions are essentially superficial (and therefore all the more dogmatic) these labels were swaddled in catch-phrases, slogans and clichés: a state of affairs which is decidedly worse with respect to Puerto Rico.**

**For a full century the American media has been consistent in keeping the colony out of the news: Puerto Rico could not exist, because the greatest democracy in history can’t have colonies. More than a century after the Spanish-American War, most college students, even politically-minded ones, are likely to respond with a blank stare when asked about the major events that have shaped the destiny of this extension of American power: the Ponce Massacre; the uprising known as the Grito de Lares; Pedro Albizu Campos and the assassination attempt on Truman; the gunfire in Congress delivered by Lolita Lebron and her coworkers in the Nationalist Party, on March 1, 1954; the fiasco of Operation Bootstrap; the shelling of Vieques island in naval maneuvers. Most Americans, even educated ones, think of Puerto Rico as place whose residents spend all their time between siestas, arguing nation, statehood or commonwealth.**

**The musical education at the Curtis Institute is supplemented by a limited roster of humanities courses. Described by breezy intransitive abstractions (fostering creativity, practicing independent thinking, etc.), and assembled under the vague oxymoron of “liberal arts”, they let in little more than a vague, heavily filtered stream of light into the vaster universes of the sciences, arts, and professions outside of music. Wilfred Jensen, not being a university student, had not been in position to be swept up in the movements dominating the campuses from the late 50’s onwards: labor, conservation, civil rights, anti-war, feminist. Cut loose in New York in the summer of 1981, he wasn’t even a conservatory student. He was, in a manner of speaking, a conservatory drop-out, totally unprepared for any occupation outside of music.**

**Several friends of his were already living and working in the city; in addition he had been given a list of contacts by Theodore Sokoloff and his other teachers. With the help of his friends he took out a lease on an apartment on the Upper West Side on the northeast corner of 90th and Broadway. Two friends, Jane Kretschmar, a clarinetist, and Andrew Parrish, pianist/composer, met him one morning in June at Pennsylvania Station. They helped him put his cello and other luggage into a van, then drove him up to his new place. The district is New York City’s acknowledged ghetto for classical musicians, and both of them lived close by. Jane and Andrew spent a few hours helping him to settle in; then the trio went back out again to show Wilfred the sights.**

**What one might think of as a long traffic island runs down the length of Broadway, interrupted at each intersection by a cross street. At both the south and north ends of each sausage shape one finds a kind of mini-park with benches. It is a common sight in this neighborhood to find them occupied by elderly Jewish housewives and widows. They sit there gossiping, reading or complaining, or merely resting up their feet after the day’s shopping.**

**On Broadway stood the Argo Restaurant, one of the many Greek restaurants in the area. An enormous Shoprite supermarket filled up the southwest corner of 90th Street. Across from this one find a branch of the Chemical Bank of New York. It is a neighborhood of musicians, actors, shops and restaurants. The neighborhood is residential, in other words, and professional. Hardcore poverty sets in half a mile to the north, although desperation is sown throughout this neighborhood, as it is everywhere in Manhattan. One cannot, save perhaps in tiny enclaves on the Upper East Side or Gramercy Park, or Central Park West, draw a line between rich and poor in this city. In the large metropolises everyone in some sense belongs, and everyone is, in some sense, a vagrant.**

**Wilfred, Jane and Andrew walked south on the west side of Broadway. Jane, a talented musician in her early twenties pointed out useful local resources, the grocery stores, laundromat, discount stores, subway stops. As a performing artist conscious of her appearance, she was conservatively dressed, impeccably groomed. Blond hair held together by brooch fell around her shoulders; she wore large earrings, her eyes artificially brightened by drops. Her pocketbook was large enough to hold both her personal items and accessories to the clarinet.**

**Andrew was more ruffled in appearance. Apart from occasionally piano recitals and a teaching load that supplied his basic income, he devoted most of his time to composition. Although his dark hair had recently been cut he usually forgot to bring either a comb or brush to it, save perhaps just before a concert. He almost always carried a portfolio of compositions with him; as if, perhaps, the next person he met might be a conductor, record agent or publisher!**

**Wilfred was dressed in blue jeans and a light grey pull-over, over which was draped a dark summer jacket. His wilderness of uncombed brown hair tousled in the wind. His face had that boyish eagerness and enthusiasm than even a premature sorrow cannot diminish. He strode rapidly, equally dismayed by the shabbiness of the great city and borne aloft by its tremendous energy. He was taller than Andrew, yet already slightly bent down by the many hours of hovering over his instrument. Even as Andrew and Wilfred were keeping up a continuous patter of conversation, Wilfred might suddenly interrupt the conversation to swivel around to peer into the faces of the Latinos encountered along the route. Was he searching for the identifying facial traits of a terrorist?**

**At 85th Street they stopped to buy a copy of the New York Times. They strolled together down as far south as 72nd Street. Here they stopped into a small restaurant to have a bite to eat. Seated in a booth, Wilfred opened the paper and passed along sections to his friends. In the Metropolitan section he discovered an article describing a police raid on an FALN arms cache in Spanish Harlem. He was amazed to find that neither Jane, nor Andrew found were either upset or even interested in the article; Wilfred had imagined that all New Yorkers were terrified by political extremists.**

**Then he shared pieces of the Arts and Entertainment section. They all set to scanning the pages for the same sorts of items: listings of concerts and concert reviews.**

**The NY Philharmonic was performing works. Early 20th century works by Stravinsky, Ravel, Debussy and Bartok, were well represented; the NY Philharmonic offered a special contemporary music concert with works by Takemitsu, Boulez, John Addams, and Crumb. Avant-garde music was being performed in venues around the city, many of them south of 14th Street.**

**Jane was the lone clarinetist in a group of 17 musicians called the Tonart Consortium. Their repertoire ranged from Bartok to Messaien to Elliot Carter. Jane invited Wilfred to try out for a place with the Tonart; there was a vacancy for a cellist at that moment, He didn’t refuse openly, but it was clear that he was looking for a more comfortably traditional niche, something that would increase the density of his contacts with the musical world and with the public. A review caught his eye: the aging Jaime Laredo had given a concert in the 92nd Street YMHA the night before: Brahms, Ysaye, Sarasate, Paganini! Archaeology…**

**Walking back towards 90th Street they paused before a second-hand bookstore on the west side of 87th and Broadway: the Red Star Book Emporium. The condition of the storefront indicated the shoestring operation. A clumsily daubed coat of drab red-orange paint on planks of old rotting wood framed dirty plate- glass display windows, while the building and its surroundings exuded neglect in this neighborhood of comparative elegance. At the same time the little bookstore communicated a sense of toughness, as if determined to survive in spite of its incongruity with its surroundings.**

**In the alcove before the doors stood a bin and several cardboard boxes filled with used paperbacks. They were the rejects priced between 50 cents and a quarter, even some as low as a dime. One finds this at most of the second hand bookstores in the city. It pays to forage, however briefly, in these bins: on rare occasions one may come across the “brick the builder rejected”. After five minutes, Andrew did dig out a water-stained copy of Romain Rolland’s “Jean-Christophe”. The trio stepped inside so that he could pay for it. . Had Andrew not discovered this book, Wilfred might never have met Antonio Rodriguez, and the rest of this novel lost most of its subsequent content!**

**From such unlikely accidents are entire destinies determined.**

**The first thing that struck them when they stepped inside was the intensity of its political commitment. Exposed lightbulbs dangling from a sagging ceiling revealed a dingy, when not totally impenetrable , interior bounded by canary yellow walls that had never been washed., the bookshelves ran in parallel on both sides of the wide front room, as in a library. In the center stood three dark green tables partitioned by wide sections. They supported several hundred books in categories identified by felt-marker lettering on cardboard signs. A few shelves for displaying new books were placed against the wall nearest the entrance.**

 **Books of history, economics and politics with a Marxist orientation predominated; yet one could also find a spectrum of opinion in areas such as civil rights, labor movements, Third World issues, feminism, the arms race, imperialism and wars around the world. More than half of the books were in Spanish. An entire section was devoted to Puerto Rico.**

**The sales counter was situated against the side wall to the right of the entrance. It held a beaten-down cash register and a table lamp. Adjacent to the table, and in several places around the room, one found a number of bridge chairs for the use of the customers.**

**In a chair behind the sales counter sat a deceptively frail, underweight, middle-aged man of aristocratic bearing and taut features. Intelligence beamed through the cheap wire frames of his spectacles. His clothing was clean though unpressed, somewhat unruly and unkempt; as was his hair, moustache and sideburns. His manner, together with the lines in his dark umber face, communicated a mixture of weariness and defeatism combined with an unbreakable spirit. An unbiased observer would have also acknowledged learning and courage in it . But Wilfred Jensen was not unbiased. What he saw was a Latin American intellectual, therefore an enemy, possibly even a terrorist!**

**Antonio Rodriguez had been living in New York since fleeing Puerto Rico in the 80’s. His real activity was as the director of a political movement dedicated to resisting the hegemony of the United States over Latin America. From his home and offices in the Bronx, using the bookstore as a cover, Antonio directed a clandestine, outlawed revolutionary group of about 4,000 members in Puerto Rico, the mainland US, Mexico and South America.**

**Antonio nodded to the three young musicians as they came in; then he returned to his paperwork behind the table. He was somewhat surprised to see them. Although this neighborhood houses thousands of classical musicians they rarely entered his bookstore. When they did they usually left quickly once they’d examined its contents. Indeed, apart from Wilfred, the others browsed the titles with little focus or attention. Antonio wondered what had impelled Wilfred to pick up a book on Puerto Rican history by Maldonado-Denis and why he perused it with virtually obsessive interest.**

**Putting the book away Wilfred browsed through the shelves at random. Finally he pulled out a book, written in both Spanish and English, dealing with the history of music in Puerto Rico since the days of the Spanish conquest. Antonio could not have realized that this was because the book included a chapter on the contribution of Pablo Casals to the musical life of the island. Wilfred moved to the bright light streaming through the dusty window casement and sat down to study the chapter with more care.**

**After Andrew had paid for his paperback, he and Jane sat down in the bridge chairs waiting for Wilfred to finish. Antonio asked if there was anything he could do for them. Perhaps if he knew what they were interested in, he could help them. When they told him (as he knew already) that they were classical musicians, he pulled down a book about the “music of proletarian peoples” around the world. The subject tingled no nerve endings in Jane; yet Andrew suddenly became very interested and began perusing all the books devoted to music. Soon he and Antonio Rodriguez disappeared into the back of the store. Soon afterwards they returned, bearing around 20 books, pamphlets and tracts.**

**“Folk music has to be protected” Andrew murmured, lowering himself into a tattered leather liver-red armchair, “It’s always played a vital role in the work of composers; yet it’s just about disappeared in industrialized societies under the assault of electronic pop. This phenomenon is fatal to the art of music.”**

**Jane squirmed a bit in her chair, adjusted her hair, sighed: she had no use for this standard opinion:**

**“I’ve heard that argument rehashed a dozen times: I don’t buy it! I know nothing about so-called folk music – so what? It doesn’t make me any less competent as a musician. I don’t know a Lydian from a Phrygian – do I need to?”**

**Andrew, bemused, looked up at the unshielded light fixture on the ceiling, and commented:**

**“I Don’t Play Light Music After Lunch.”**

**They laughed. Jane went on: “What’s that got to do with anything? Who needs folk music in an age in which anyone can get a musical education?”**

**Andrew stared at her, his face filled with rhetorical astonishment. As a composer he considered it his holy duty to wage war against the “bottomless ignorance of performers”.**

**“Jane, you’re just talking nonsense and you know it. I wouldn’t know where to begin to correct your errors. All your opinions about music are wrong. They’re all fallacies, you know!”**

**“There aren’t any fallacies in my opinions”, Jane snapped, rather cross: “They’re correct for me and that’s enough. I would never have been accepted into Julliard if I didn’t know what I was doing. None of my teachers there ever told me to study the songs of Hottentots! To me a real composition means something written by a genius who learned everything he could when he was young, and worked harder than you and I can even imagine. If he’s been dead for 300 years, so what? It’s still better than the pop garbage coming out of the radio day and night!”**

**“Anyway Andrew, no one stops you from studying world music if you want to!”**

**“Stop it right there!” Andrew held up a hand as if warding off a swarm of flies. This was but a single episode in a long-standing feud: “this cliché you’ve expressed: ‘*musical education available to everyone* ‘! If musical education in the schools wasn’t so infernally bad we’ve have more appreciation of music from other parts of the world!**

**“ You won’t find one performer in 10 who has any competence in composition, who can improvise decently, who knows a damn thing about music history! Let’s hope a time will come when books like this one” – he held up a paperback entitled *Colombian Folk Music, A Vanishing Tradition* will not have to be written.”**

**Antonio Rodriguez, sorting and arranging books along the shelves, turned to them and commented: ”What you are saying is true for most capitalist countries. In Marxist societies proletarian music, and all other forms of proletarian culture, are protected by the government. So that if you want to learn about the folk music of my country, Puerto Rico, you really ought to go to Cuba. In Puerto Rico, you will find, radio, television, movies and the recording industry are destroying our traditional culture.”**

**Andrew, indicating by a gesture that he was giving some serious thought to Antonio’s statements, leaned back into the armchair. Over his lips there hovered a simper of annoyance. Finally he said: “Somehow I don’t believe that’s true.”**

**“What is it that you don’t believe?”**

**“What you say about Cuba may be true: I can’t really speak for that country. Yet it certainly isn’t true of Russia or the countries of Eastern Europe. What they call “folk music” is just a label for an exported product, like the Bolshoi Ballet or their Olympic athletes; it’s even less authentic than Simon and Garfunkel massacring “Scarborough Fair”.**

**Surprisingly, Antonio indicated by a nod of the head that he agreed with Andrew:**

**“ You’ve got a point. I don’t hold up the Soviet Union as a model to be emulated. The “popular culture” that Russia or Czechoslovakia exports to the West is thoroughly adulterated by the objectives of geopolitics. I don’t deny that, but you’re overlooking the positive side. I’m more interested in the protection of the folk arts within the country proper. This is guaranteed by official government organizations staffed with prominent musicians and composers.”**

**Drawn in spite of himself into the conversation, Wilfred came away from the window and sat down with the rest of them:**

**“I’m very sorry”, he said, “Let me apologize if there’s something I don’t understand, yet it all sounds very odd to me. The protection of folk culture by government institutions and acclaimed composers seems almost a contradiction in terms. If folk music is protected by an official government agency one somehow feels it isn’t folk music anymore.”**

**Jane nodded agreement: “I think that what Wilfred is saying is that if one tries to ‘protect’ an art form, there’s a risk it will be stifled: the notion of protecting an art goes against its creativity.”**

**Antonio clarified his position: “You must excuse me. I did not mean to imply that the forms were ‘preserved’ – like wild birds in a zoo –what I really meant was that, in all progressive nations the proletarian spirit is protected and local initiative encouraged. The music of the people is given support, while the music of the professional classes and the intelligentsia is obliged to relate to the needs of the workers. One doesn’t have to put up with any of that avant-garde nonsense they perform in Soho!”**

**Wilfred and Andrew broke in simultaneously: Andrew shouted:**

**“No one forces you to go to a concert! I don’t see John Cage knocking on your door with a policeman, forcing you to go to his concerts!”**

**“You’re trying to tell me!” The manner in which Wilfred pointed at Antonio one might think he held a cello bow in his hands *“that you approve of government censorship of music –* in the name of the people no less!”**

**Antonio was not easily intimidated: “Yes, I do”, he responded, calmly but firmly, “I’ve been a Marxist all my adult years. As a Marxist I don’t believe that culture is an end in itself, a kind of Absolute Good, a ladder to the heavens outside of all social, historical and economic contexts. So-called avant-garde music, I say ‘so-called’ because I see nothing ‘vanguard’ in it, is deeply neurotic, a fraud, a symptom of all that is wrong with American society, a decadent sideshow of monopoly capitalism. In any society genuinely concerned for its peoples, such music would be banned by the government! ”**

**“May you never see your ‘genuine concern for the people’ in a thousand years!” Wilfred sneered, “You must be the sort of person who he imagines he’s making a political statement when he pickets concerts!”**

**“Music, young man, like all the arts, has a great deal to do with politics!”**

**“And I say – bull to that! That’s a lot of bullshit! It’s the kind of dangerous talk that causes fanatics to bomb concerts, terrorize festivals and invade sport events. Music - SIR! - is an ART FORM! Don’t you understand anything? It’s spiritual! It has nothing to do with politics!”**

**Now it was Andrew’s turn to regard Wilfred with surprise. He’d not expected that his reactions would be so vehement. Antonio went on:**

**“Young man, can I ask you for your name?”**

**“Wilfred Jensen. I apologize for my outburst.”**

**“Don’t be silly. I like passionate people; why, your zeal for music is almost political! Why don’t you call me Antonio? What are your names, by the way?”**

**“Andrew”**

**“Jane. We’re all musicians.”**

**“That was obvious from the moment you walked into my store. To return to this issue, which is very important to me: I maintain that, not only is there politics to be found in music but, for reasons which I myself do not fully understand, music seems to have more politics to it than any other art form! If you have a moment to spare, I will share my theories with you.”**

**Everyone’s interest had been aroused. Even Jane, whose defense of the paradigms of great art had been somewhat exaggerated, was willing to spend a few more minutes in discussion before going back to her apartment to face the hours of practicing that awaited her.**

 **“You may have noticed how remarkable it is that musical taste, more than in any other medium, divides sharply along class, even caste, lines. Tell me a person’s profession, race, education and age, and I can tell you, with near infallibility, the kinds of music that person will like or make an effort to listen to.**

**“Academics always prefer classical music, whether or not they understand it. Their children however may prefer the folk music that came out of the 60’s, which to a minor extent is still being produced today – Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Peter, Paul and Mary, Pete Seeger. Most people like some form of jazz, although it is only the oppressed black masses that understand it.**

**“Go find me a restaurant worker or truck driver who can abide two minutes of Mozart; of course it does happen, but very rarely. I do remember once, hitch-hiking out in the West, I was picked up by a truck-driver who had only Mozart, Vivaldi and Schubert on his tape decks. It does happen, but it's very rare.”**

**Andrew agreed: “Truck drivers like Country and Western music.”**

**Jane smiled: “Andrew, how many truck drivers do you know?”**

**“Keep on trucking, Jane; keep on trucking! Anyway, Antonio, you were saying?”**

**“The white society relates to jazz primarily as a form as dance music, that is to say, for the wrong reasons. Jazz is the private language of the black culture, just like their English. What appeals most to white Americans, even educated ones, are Broadway show tunes; or movie music which has much the same atmosphere.**

**This music, which has its own charm, is frowned upon by both the audiences of jazz and serious classical music. It’s only ‘pretty’, at most.”**

 **Jane commented: “When you hear it in the form of ‘cocktail music’ it’s repulsive!**

 **“Yes, Jane”, Antonio continued, “ but there are lots of office workers, executives, even medical doctors, who find it pleasant to listen to. There are millions of people who listen to music only as a background for doing other things, a kind of wallpaper. For the jazz musician and the classical music lover, music is serious business.**

**“All these choices and preferences are political. The music of Broadway musical comedies is also “political”, although its message would appear to be that serious worry about anything is a bore.”**

**Andrew remarked, facetiously: “Don’t we all love that song of Schubert’s: ’*Baby, baby, I need you! Yea, yea, yea!!* ’ ” Antonio became serious:**

**“Don’t kid yourselves: ‘Baby, baby. Baby I need you’, may be the message jazz musicians wants us to think they’re sending; underneath the music is entirely serious…**

 **“Genuine folk music scarcely exists anymore, yet wherever it can still be found it usually represents the assertion of a rural cultural identity against the urban oligarchy.”**

**Andrew added: “All the major composers have used folk music in their compositions, from Haydn to Bartok to Charles Ives.”**

**“Yes, and our distinguished Puerto Rican composer, Hector Campos-Parsi, Jack Delano, and Rafael Aponte LeDee! So, my dear friends, you all see how political the art of music really is! It cries out for a Marxist interpretation: it’s the most visible example of the conditioning of aesthetic judgment by economic necessities!”**

**“Since music is so class specific, its symbolic content, however abstract, must include associations which are intelligible to informed or educated listeners. Elitist music, like Schoenberg’s 12-tone, depend on the elitist musicians with highly specialized training who are able to play them. Their political opinions will mirror those of their audiences…”**

**Andrew, driven beyond patience, interrupted: “After this brilliant exposition of class-conditioned musical tastes, you really expect us to believe that the Soviet Union allows freedom of expression? How can someone with your obvious erudition believe such nonsense?”**

 **“I’m not going to be drawn into an argument about Russia. All empires are imperialist – by definition!” he laughed, “If I prefer Socialist nations it is because of their encouragement of proletarian art.”**

**All during this discourse Wilfred had been staring at Antonio. As he began speaking one felt that, for him, the moment of truth had arrived:**

**“I would bet, sir, that you have all kinds of ideas about the musical ‘establishment’ in Puerto Rico. Isn't that right? And about a certain cellist, a Mr. Pablo Casals? Isn’t that right?”**

**Antonio regarded him curiously: “Why do you ask me that? It appears to me that this question must have a personal interest for you.”**

**Wilfred stammered: ”You’re damn right it does! You’re damned right it has a personal interest! And yes, I’m a cellist!”**

**“Of course. Does your personal interest have anything to do with the recent activities of a certain make-believe group of Puerto Rican terrorists in Philadelphia?”**

**“Yes. You can say that. I’m from there.”**

**“Ah.” Antonio smiled, “That explains everything.”**

**“No it doesn’t. You may not realize this. I was at that concert. And some dear friends of mine were killed!!”**

**It was Antonio’s turn to stare. Finally, he said, simply: ”My condolences”**

**“A lot of good they will do me now; but I accept them.”**

**“The whole Philadelphia business has something very phony about it. It’s all wrong. The extremists would not have gone about it that way.”**

**“I suppose you can tell us how they would have done it!”**

**“Yes, I think I can. First let me answer Andrew’s question. Yes: Puerto Rico has a cultural establishment. It’s administered by a department of the government called the “Administration Para el Fomento de las Artes y la Cultura”, “AFAC”, sometimes “Fomento”.**

 **I happen to know something about it: there were times in my family’s home Don Pablo was sitting as close to me as I am to you. My father was one of the deans of the University in Rio Piedras. Distinguished artists like Don Pablo and others were frequently invited to dinner.”**

**“So”, Wilfred mocked, “What do you think about him? Another lackey running dog stooge of the Yankee imperialists? Huh?”**

**Antonio smiled, vastly amused: “Not at all. You should not entertain the notion that I am your ridiculous caricature of a dogmatic Communist. By orthodox standards I’m not a Marxist at all! Casals? What do I think of Casals? A good man. A really good man.”**

**Wilfred was sincerely surprised. He’d reached the conclusion that all educated Puerto Ricans hated Casals: “I must say I’ve never heard a Puerto Rican express such an opinion.”**

**“I would bet you – Senor Wilfred – that you’ve never talked with any Puerto Ricans before.”**

**Wilfred stared at the floor, confused: it was true. Antonio’s laughed sympathetically:**

 **“We really are the forgotten people. I’m sure you’ve spoken to many Puerto Ricans, but for you they were all “Hispanics”, just as if there were no differences between an American, an Englishman, a Canadian or an Australian.**

**“We’re not South Americans, because Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States; but, since the United States believes it is the only real democracy on this planet, it can’t have colonies! Therefore Harry Truman proposes a ridiculous name change and Puerto Rico becomes a ‘commonwealth’, like Pennsylvania. But Pennsylvania is a state; we are nothing! Therefore we don’t exist!”**

**Antonio sighed, “I’m so familiar with this phenomenon! I can tell you, Wilfred, and you, too, Andrew and Jane, that most Puerto Ricans loved and revered Pablo Casals in his lifetime, and continue to do so after his death.”**

**Now it was Andrew’s turn to be surprised:**

**“I thought that everyone considered him a political sell-out! In music he was an incurable reactionary!”**

 **“Andrew! Ah- that ‘musical establishment’ again! If you take a poll you will discover that most people think of classical music as an elitist art, out of step with the times and more appropriate to the age of kings and princes: Conservatories! Prodigies! 6 year old children practicing 8 hours a day! Virtuosos! Prima-donnas! Rites and rituals, formalities, customs, traditions! 300 year old masterpieces paraded about like pictures in a museum!**

**“Then there are the symphony orchestras supported by taxpayer money, playing music few taxpayers understand. These orchestras are supported by big cities because they put a city on the map. In Moscow more people have heard of the New York Philharmonic has than the New York Yankees. Symphony orchestras therefore have quantifiable commercial value; they carry the honor of a city all over the world.**

**“However, when it comes to the box office they can’t hope to compete with James Brown, or the Supremes, or Michael Jackson, or the Beatles! They must therefore solicit their support from the oligarchy! Classical music depends upon rich patrons, boards filled with corporation presidents and old money, legacies, trust funds, endowments.**

**“I’m not talking about the artists. A great artist may have a heart as large as the Atlantic Ocean; look at the years Pablo Casals devoted to helping the refugees in France from the Spanish Civil War! Or the municipal orchestras he created in Barcelona and San Juan. And the magnificent gesture of refusing to play in any country that had recognized Franco’s Spain. These things weigh in the balance.**

**“Yet despite whatever he might have felt, to have a career as classical musician, Casals was obliged to identify himself with the interests of the oppressors of the people. Classical musicians operate within the confines of a certain professional world. Marx taught us all cultural tastes derive from class interests. Casals was, at best, an old-fashioned humanist, like Salvador de Madariaga or Leon Blum: A good book; a good glass of wine; a good heart! Siesta in the afternoon, conversations in the library. And always, ‘earnest concern’ for the people! All things well intentioned.**

**“But, Oh my! Wilfred! those friends that he brought with him to our island! Good Lord! Narrow-minded reactionaries like Alexander Schneider, Horzowski, Eugene Istomin, David Soyer! They despised the Puerto Rican people! All they were interested in was doing their own thing! letter-perfect performances of music written 300 years ago under the patronage of Habsburg tyrants. As little aware of the political realities of Puerto Rico as they were of Uganda, South Africa, Argentina, East Timor!” Then, gently, teasing, Antonio asked them : “You have heard of East Timor, haven’t you?”**

**. Wilfred fidgeted; Andrew made an embarrassed show of consulting one of his books. It would have been impossible to know which of them blushed the more deeply. It was Jane who took the offensive:**

**“Antonio, if you’re going to dispose of classical music just because its greatest composers lived in the 18th century, you may as well throw out Shakespeare, Cervantes, the Bible, Dante …”**

**“Your point is well taken. There is a difference between music and literature. It is interesting that you should mention the Bible. It wasn’t so long ago that the only book most people were allowed to read was the Bible. In fact they were discouraged even from reading that; instead they were instructed to listen to how it was interpreted for them by a country priest. I find something of that reactionary mentality in the way classical music is presented to the public!”**

**“I’m getting the impression that you don’t like classical music very much.” Wilfred commented, having forgotten that he should be ashamed of not having heard of East Timor.**

**Antonio shook his head, “I do like classical music. It’s just that I’m a political animal than a cultural one. This makes it difficult for me to talk to people like you. Whenever I’m exposed to a work of art I begin right away analyzing it into its historical, economic and political elements.”**

**“That must make life difficult for you at times”, Jane observed, not bothering to mitigate her sarcasm.**

**“Sometimes it does. I lack what is called “appreciation”. On the other hand there also exists a more general lack of appreciation for human hunger and misery, from which you ‘serious’ artists are not exempt. I haven’t met many classical musicians who examine the relationship of their craft to a larger historical context.”**

**“Mr. Rodriguez, in a moment, I suppose”, Andrew countered, with growing impatience “ you’ll be informing us that we, being professional musicians, don’t know anything about music!”**

**Antonio laughed: “How admirably you’ve anticipated my arguments! The modern institutions of classical music are hopelessly decadent!”**

**It would have been difficult for his 3 listeners to organize a concentrated rebuttal to his assertions. Dumbfounded shock was the most they could come up with, and even that was more for form’s sake. One of the problems was that, being intelligent and sophisticated musicians, each of them found something in what Antonio was saying that they agreed with. He went on:**

**“Do you want to know the real reasons why Puerto Rico’s intellectuals have rejected the cultural invasion that Pablo Casals imposed on our little island? Let me explain: Casals brought with him all the viruses of a corrupt artistic tradition, and infected our 400 year-old musical heritage with them . He brought along his baggage of anti-revolutionary, anti-proletarian notions of art, over-specialization, virtuosos, idolatry, cults of personality, puerile sentimentalism, and base snobbery!**

**“The people he brought with him were worse; in them these vices were ingrained: Alexander Schneider, Eugene Istomin, David Soyer, Rudolf Serkin, the Laredos! The origins of this decadence can even be heard even in their music: the religious opium of Bach; the childishness of Mozart; the triumphalism of Beethoven; the effeminacy of Chopin; the bathetic piety of Brahms; the naked fascism of Wagner…”**

**“I’ve had enough for one afternoon!” Brimming with anger Wilfred Jensen stood up and bolted for the door. Andrew was hot for battle:**

**“So! That’s the kind of crap you Marxists sit around telling each other at your meetings! All of European music is a colossal crime committed by monarchists and organized religion! A conspiracy of epileptic Habsburgs, debauched Romanovs, drunk Bourbons, and a handful of deluded geniuses who thought they were writing great music, while all the time they were churning out fascist propaganda!”**

**“Certainly not, Andrew. Orthodox Marxists say things much worse than anything I’ve said today. I have a warm appreciation for the classical canon.”**

**“Allow me to be skeptical, Antonio”. Wilfred had turned at the threshold: “If you ever had a scrap of musical sensitivity in your ears, it’s been totally destroyed by your political theories. *They* are what's sick! *That’s* what’s corrupt and decadent!”**

**He walked back to the table where Antonio was seated. Barely able to control himself, he shook his fist in his face:**

**“ Let me ask you this: when is the last time a musician ever tossed a bomb into a Marxist rally! That’s the difference between you and us. Concerts are decadent but bombs are okay, is that it? I think we’re pretty sane compared to you!”**

**Antonio started to form a reply but Wilfred didn’t wait for it. To everyone’s astonishment, he picked himself up again from his chair and stormed out of the bookstore, loudly slamming the door behind him. Jane followed after him. Andrew apologized to Antonio, then ran out to join her.**

**They caught up with Wilfred a block away. He was sitting on a bench at the intersection of 88th and Broadway, his head bent over his lap, crying his heart out. His friends sat down beside him, conversing in soft tones until the fit was passed.**