



A Classical Pianist Explains His Faith

Eldar Nebolsin of Uzbekistan is an internationally acclaimed pianist. He has played as a soloist with orchestras in London, Moscow, St. Petersburg, New York, Paris, Rome, Sydney, Tokyo, and Vienna. Eldar grew up in the Soviet Union as an atheist. But later he concluded that humans are the work of a loving Creator. *Awake!* asked him about his music and his faith.

How did you become a musician?

My parents are both pianists. They began teaching me when I was five years old. Later, I studied at the advanced school of music in Tashkent.

Tell us about the challenges of playing with an orchestra.

No two orchestras are alike. They are like giant musical instruments that are “played” by their conductors. Perhaps the

main challenge for the soloist is to achieve balanced interaction with the conductor. It’s like a conversation between friends—rather than one always taking the lead, each should yield to the other. Usually, you have only one or two rehearsals in which to develop this rapport.

How much time do you spend practicing?

At least three hours a day—and that isn’t just to practice

difficult passages. I also study the structure of the piece I’m preparing—but without actually playing it. Another thing I do is listen to the composer’s other works, which gives me more insight into the present piece.

What would you say distinguishes a fine pianist?

His ability to make a piano “sing.” Let me explain. The piano is a kind of percussion instrument. After a note is struck, the sound can only decrease in volume—unlike that of wind instruments or the human voice, which can hold a note or even increase its volume. The challenge for pianists is to overcome the tendency of a note to fade. They do this by subtle movement of their fingers and wrists, along with the complex interaction of

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the right pedal, which extends the duration of a note and varies its timbre. When pianists master these difficult techniques, they can make the piano sound like a flute, a horn, or even an orchestra. They can also make it resemble the finest musical instrument of all—the human voice.

It's obvious that you have a deep love for music.

For me, music is the language that most directly expresses and evokes feelings that are difficult, if not impossible, to communicate in words.

What aroused your interest in spiritual matters?

Our house was always full of books, which my father brought from Moscow. A book that especially interested me contained Bible stories about the dawn of history and the experiences of the Israelites. Another book I came across was *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.* Its clear presentation of Bible teachings fascinated me. When I

moved to Spain in 1991 to study music, I took that book with me and read it several times. I discovered a faith based not merely on emotion but also on sound reasoning and convincing evidence.

A teaching that really intrigued me was the Bible's promise that humans can live forever on earth. That made so much sense! I might add that I still had not met Jehovah's Witnesses. But I resolved that when I did meet them, I would ask for Bible lessons.

How did you meet the Witnesses?

A few days after I made that mental resolution, I saw two ladies, each with a Bible in hand. 'They look like the people I've read about in my book,' I thought. 'They are preaching just as Christians did in Bible times.' Soon, I was studying the Bible with a Witness. Today, my greatest joy is helping others to learn about our Creator.

What convinced you, a former atheist, to believe in a Creator?

Music itself did. Almost everybody appreciates music, and

in a way that no animal can. Music can express joy, confidence, tenderness, and almost every other emotion. We naturally move to the rhythms in music. But is music necessary for our survival? Does it play a role in the "survival of the fittest," as evolutionists teach? I think not. In my view, it's unreasonable to conclude that the human brain, with its ability to create and appreciate music like that of Mozart and Beethoven, is the product of evolution. A far more reasonable explanation is that our brain is the product of a wise and loving Creator.

What led you to believe that the Bible is from God?

The Bible is a collection of 66 smaller books written over some 1,600 years by about 40 men. I asked myself, 'Who could have orchestrated the writing of this unified masterpiece?' The only reasonable answer is God. In my mind, the Bible is like a symphony with an elegant structure, a masterful arrangement, and a moving message for all mankind. ■

* Jehovah's Witnesses now use the Bible study aid *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* It can be accessed at www.jw.org.