

A Life in Music by Daniel Barenboim. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2002. £18.99.

A Life in Music is a revised edition of the autobiography written by Daniel Barenboim and first published in 1991. The title hints that this is the autobiography of a musical life rather than a whole life, and Barenboim makes it clear that there are certain areas of his personal life that are strictly off limits. So there is little about the impact on him of Jacqueline Du Pré's illness, or indeed of his relationship and ultimate marriage to the mother of his children Elena Bashkirova.

But balanced against this gap there is a wealth of information about the giants of the classical music world to whom Barenboim, in a career of over fifty years, has been close. From Klemperer to Solti, Milstein to Perlman, Fischer-Diskau to Domingo. The greatest warmth in many ways is reserved for his fellow pianist Arthur Rubinstein, for whose final London concert Barenboim was the conductor, and his fellow conductor Zubin Mehta, Music Director for Life of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Barenboim also writes fascinatingly about the music that is important to him, and in detail about his roles as a pianist and conductor. Although not in any way a religious Jew, Barenboim's Jewishness emerges regularly, and the passion and pain he feels for his adopted country Israel is all too clear.

Some may regret the comparatively sparse human details that emerge, and the lack of humour for a man frequently photographed laughing uproariously, but this is still a worthwhile book and a record of an outstanding musical life.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh