

Hi everyone,

After 6 months in this place I decided it's time to go and check Beverly Hills. I took with me a nice Israeli girl, Zohara, who promised to give me a thorough tour of the place with all the film locations of "Beautiful Woman". So now I know exactly where Julia Roberts did what. The highlight of the tour was the famous shopping street - Rodeo drive. The stores there are all Gucci-Pucci-Mucci-Valentino-Tiffani and bullshit like that. The people in the streets were either natives (blond, tanned, redesigned noses and breasts) or tourists who took pictures of those abovementioned natives. The place is beautiful and window-shopping there is great. The shopping is bound to be imaginary for humble mortals such as us, because a T-shirt costs like a toxido and a toxido costs like a Ferrari. But then I did the impossible: with Zohara staring amazed at me, eyes and mouth open wide, I took out my credit card and bought a beautiful shirt of "Guess". It was only \$31! The best part (besides gaining the admiration of Zohara for eternity; alas - she is married) was to walk in the street with a shopping bag with the prestigious writing on it "Guess - Rodeo Drive". This is what makes you different from all the other losers who just walk in that street. And it's true: in the next store that we entered I was treated like a king! I just looked on a jacket and suddenly 4 jackets were shown to me by an eager salesman that began to smell the commission. Since the cheapest jacket was \$850 I just said "well, I don't know, they are not like the ones that we saw in Milano" and took off.

Los Angeles turns out to be, in part, a great place. All the bad things people think of it are true, but since it's so big - you have everything here: good and bad. As for culture - it's loaded with culture. Until today I was here in 4 wonderful first class museums and there are still many more. Theatre, music, films - just name it, LA has it. Only next week we have here Rod Stewart, Elvis Costello and Pink Floyd. As for last week - I had to miss Ivo Pogorelich, who performed on Wednesday and Thursday only, because I already bought 5 months ago tickets to recitals, here at UCLA, of Murray Perahia and Yo-Yo Ma. Who are those gentlemen? Well, it's quite clear who is the best violinist in the world (Perlman). As for the best pianist and best cellist, there is no precise answer. But those two are from the very top.

Murray Perahia, my idol, played the "nich-sey tson barzel" of the piano repertoire. There were no surprises: well-known compositions played in an awesome performance. After the bravos and encores I went to do what I was planning for a long time: talk with him and ask him several questions. After he got rid of the many "butt-lickers" who came to ask for an autograph (I never understood that) and tell him how great he was, he could focus his attention on my profound questions: "Mr. Perahia, after years of dedication to the piano music of Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert and Brahms, the world is waiting anxiously to hear your interpretations of Bach's keyboard music. When will you take that challenge and grant us with that pleasure?". To be honest, I simply asked "when will you play Bach?", but he knew what I meant. Although he was tired and probably wanted to see the end of my "nijusim", he answered all of my questions and was (as he is known to be) very nice and kind.

The two main compositions in the cello recital were two Bach suites. It's impossible to imagine more pure and sublime music than that. However - the highlight of the recital was a short composition that was written lately with dedication to a cellist from Sarajevo. It was like an "Izkor" and it left on the audience a remarkable impact. Yo-Yo Ma was so wonderful and charming and talked and laughed with the audience that I decided that I must go and thank him in person. And I was lucky to be the first in a line of 70-80 people who wanted to thank him as well. I think that I'll play the cello when I grow up.

Lately, I am stuck with my research. I cannot find my direction and the math-muse refuses to influence and guide me. Although I was stuck like that many times before as a research student, it is still depressing. I guess that those of you who deal with research know exactly what I mean. However,

like in the past, I know that I'll "see the light" in the near future. Anyway, I found a lovely and warm comfort in the course that just ended. After the last lecture, I felt like Murray Perahia and Yo-Yo Ma (but, unfortunately, only for a few minutes). There was a line of students who came to thank me and ask me why I don't teach in the next quarter and when will I teach them again. With such a warm feedback, it's so easy to forget that my research sucks.

Pessach Kasher ve-sameach,
Tamir