



ERIC ZEISL: HIS LIFE AND MUSIC

Gertrude S. Zeisl

Interviewed by Malcolm S. Cole

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Illustrations.	vii
Introduction.	viii
Interview History.	xvii
TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (August 26, 1975).	1
Family background--Grandparents--Parents-- Family circumstances--Eric's position in the family--Environment--Family attitude toward music--Eric's attempts at jobs--His decision to study music--His formal training.	
TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (August 26, 1975).	24
Eric's self-instruction--His pianistic pro- ficiency--Life as a young composer and music teacher in Vienna--Early friendship with Gertrude ("Trude") Jellineck--Anecdotes.	
TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (September 4, 1975).	47
Eric's circle of friends--The name <u>Zeisl</u> -- Early works (1922-30)-- <u>Drei Lieder</u> and the formative role of song--The unpublished songs --Early opera: <u>Die Sünde</u> -- <u>Die Heinzelmännchen</u> --Early critical reviews.	
TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (September 4, 1975).	71
Early works (1922-30) [cont'd]--Song cycle: <u>Aus der Hirtenflöte</u> --Piano Trio-- <u>Mondbilder</u> -- <u>Pierrot in der Flasche</u> -- <u>Three African Choruses</u> --First String Quartet.	
TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (September 9, 1975).	96
Eric's romances--Psychoanalysis--Romance with Trude--Growing recognition (1931-36) --The song year, 1931-- <u>Kinderlieder</u> -- <u>Sechs</u> <u>Lieder</u> (Baritone Songs)--Unpublished Nietzsche and Ringelnatz songs-- <u>Kleine Messe</u> .	
TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (September 9, 1975).	119
Continuation of the years 1931-36--"Der tote Arbeiter"--Passacaglia-Fantasy for Orchestra--	

Scherzo and Fugue for String Orchestra--
Requiem Concertante--Die Fahrt ins
Wunderland--Little Symphony.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One (September 11, 1975). . . . 143

More on period 1931-36--Little Symphony
[cont'd]--Cantata of Verses--"Liebeslied"
--Sieben Lieder (Soprano Songs)--Three
Antique Choruses--Farewell to Youth and to
Vienna, (1937-38)--Leonce und Lena--
November.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side Two (September 11, 1975). . . . 167

The Hitler menace--The flight from Vienna--
Exile in Paris--Incidental music for Job--
The flight from Paris.

TAPE NUMBER: V, Side One (September 16, 1975). . . . 191

Early days in New York (1939-40)--Success
with performances and publications--Birth
of daughter Barbara--Happiness in Mamaroneck--
A new style: Job, Act I.

TAPE NUMBER: V, Side Two (September 16, 1975). . . . 214

Job, Act I [cont'd]--Earning a living--The
lure of Hollywood--Music for travelogues
--Disenchantment--The Return of Ulysses--
Delight with Barbara.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side One (September 18, 1975). . . . 237

Meetings with other émigré composers--The
years 1944-49--Organ prelude--Pieces for
Barbara--Requiem Ebraico--Misfortune with
publishers--Prayer--Fanfare (for Hollywood
Bowl anniversary)--The search for performances
--Teaching positions.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side Two (September 18, 1975). . . . 260

Appointment at Los Angeles City College--Years
1944-49--Uranium 235--Four Songs for Wordless
Chorus--The struggle for survival--Conductors
who performed Eric's music--To the Promised
Land--Kinderlieder revived at Evenings on the
Roof--The chamber music cycle (1949-55)--Sonata
Barocca.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side One (September 23, 1975). . . .283

1949-55 [cont'd]--Brandeis Sonata for Violin
and Piano--Viola Sonata--Music for Christmas
--"The Transplanted Composer" article--Cello
Sonata--Piano Concerto--Premiere of Leonce
und Lena--Tenor Psalm.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side Two (September 23, 1975). . . .307

1949-55 [cont'd]--Second String Quartet--
The Vineyard--Jacob and Rachel--Publications
by Doblinger--Fiftieth birthday tributes--
Orchestras that performed Eric's music--The
pursuit of grants--Cello Concerto--The last
years (1956-59)--Arrowhead Trio--Eric's work
habits--Social life--Roles of Barbara and
Trude.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side One (September 26, 1975). . . .331

Job, Act II, Hanns Kafka--Better circumstances
--Huntington Hartford Foundation grants--Heat
and tension--Eric's death--Memorial concert--
Plans for further works.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side Two (September 26, 1975). . . .354

More plans--Eric's citizenship--Meeting Arnold
Schoenberg--Family life after Eric's death--
Barbara and Ronald Schoenberg--The eclipse of
Eric's music--The uniqueness of his music--The
Zeisl revival--The Zeisl legacy.

Index. 371

Index of Eric Zeisl Works. 384

ILLUSTRATIONS

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| Gertrude S. Zeisl. October 1978.
Photograph by Marjorie J. Rogers. | frontispiece |
| Eric Zeisl. Circa 1957.
Residence at 8578 West Knoll
Drive, Los Angeles. | following p. 324 |

INTRODUCTION

On the evening of February 18, 1959, his teaching finished, the Austrian-American composer Eric Zeisl suffered a heart attack in the halls of Los Angeles City College. He died that night. Only fifty-three at the time and at the height of his creative power, Zeisl had overcome formidable odds to carve distinguished careers in two worlds. He left for posterity a precious legacy of art song, choral literature, dramatic work, and instrumental music. As a remarkable individual who lived a fascinating life, as an inspirational example of determination, perseverance, and resiliency, as an émigré artist, and as a composer who breathed new life into traditional forms and techniques, Zeisl merits attention and study.

Eric was born in Vienna on May 18, 1905. A sensitive, misunderstood child, he burned with one ambition only: to compose. His parents, well-intentioned coffeehouse owners, found this desire incomprehensible. Thinking that he would surely starve, they attempted continually and even cruelly to dissuade him, to no avail. At the age of fourteen, he entered the Vienna State Academy of Music. His professional career began just two years later, with the publication of three songs by Edition Strache.

His formative years provide the stuff of which novels are made. Offsetting fits of melancholy, depression and

despair, resultant psychoanalysis, and a string of hopeless love affairs were an enormous zest for life, a gift of prophetic insight, an irrepressible sense of humor, and a storybook romance. Gertrude Susan Jellinek, his sweetheart and eventually his wife, introduced Eric into a receptive circle of artistic friends. She directed his enormous energy into creative channels.

Throughout this period (ca. 1920-30), song was Zeisl's constant preoccupation, the arena in which his lyric-dramatic talent developed. Song was his stepping-stone to public acceptance also, as acclaim quickly followed the live concerts and radio broadcasts of his memorable dramas-in-a-page. From 1931 (Zeisl's song year) to 1936, the young composer attained ever-increasing stature in Europe. Wishing to project his gifts on larger canvases, he branched into other compositional areas. Original and compelling choral works include the Three African Choruses, which reflect the influence of American jazz and spirituals, the Kleine Messe, and the Requiem Concertante, a large-scale symphonic mass for which he won the Austrian State Prize in 1934. Numbered among his first extended instrumental works are the Passacaglia-Fantasy for Symphony Orchestra and the widely celebrated Little Symphony on paintings by Roswitha Bitterlich. With efforts such as the grotesque ballet Pierrot in der Flasche and the folk opera Die Fahrt ins

Wunderland, he further developed his dramatic-descriptive techniques.

From the outset, Zeisl had one consuming artistic ambition: to write an opera. In 1937-38, with a Singspiel on Büchner's Leonce und Lena, he finally realized his dream. However, as was to happen so often in his career, misfortune struck. The Hitler menace caused the cancellation of both the Prague Radio premiere and the Viennese theater premiere. The work which might well have secured Zeisl's European reputation became instead his farewell to Vienna.

Forced to flee in November 1938, the Zeisl family sought refuge in Paris. Here, Zeisl enjoyed the friendships of Alma Mahler-Werfel and Darius Milhaud. In addition, he encountered Joseph Roth's powerful novel Job, the Story of a Simple Man, the work that was to alter the course of Eric's artistic life. Seeing a parallel between his plight and that of the principal character, he cultivated from this time an Hebraic style, conveying a deep religious feeling through modal harmonies and soaring, chantlike melodies.

Soon, Paris grew unsafe. Again, the Zeisls narrowly escaped. They sailed to America, arriving in New York in September 1939. Life in the new world changed Zeisl dramatically. He exuded a new strength and determination. A daughter, Barbara, was born almost immediately.

Artistically, success with performances and publishers came quickly and with deceptive ease. Renting a house in Mamaroneck, Zeisl plunged into the composition of Job, Act I. Eventually, he would compose approximately half of his total output in America and the majority of his most extended compositions, compositions which in turn reflect Zeisl's blend of an intense Jewish awareness with impressions of America, its size and rawness.

By 1941, negotiations with conductors and publishers were moving less smoothly. Lured by the siren song of Hollywood, the Zeisls moved to California. Sadly, the opportunity that had appeared so glamorous at a distance of 3,000 miles failed to materialize. A grim struggle for survival ruled out all serious composition for over two years. Then, between 1944 and 1949, several major works were created. The Requiem Ebraico, still Zeisl's most popular and widely performed composition, is a memorial to his father and to "the other countless victims of the Jewish tragedy in Europe." Inspired by meeting Schoenberg and horrified by the atomic bomb's potential for destruction, he wrote the ballet Uranium 235.

In 1945, Zeisl became an American citizen. Now permanently settled in Los Angeles, he met other émigré figures. Toch, Tansman, Korngold, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and Stravinsky all became good friends. Disillusioned by the

movie industry, Zeisl entered the teaching profession, first at the Southern California School of Music, then by fall 1949 at Los Angeles City College, where he developed single-handedly a theory and composition curriculum for the evening division. The relative security of the new position allowed time to compose. More frequent performances led to increased recognition.

Between 1949 and 1955, Zeisl cast a series of chamber compositions in the monumental spirit of the dramatic and choral works. Initiated by the Sonata Barocca for piano, this series includes the Brandeis Sonata for Piano and Violin (Zeisl's most famous chamber work), a viola sonata, a cello sonata which incorporates biblical cantillation formulas, and the Second String Quartet. Maintaining an exhausting pace of one major work per year, he composed a piano concerto and two dramatic ballets on biblical subjects, The Vineyard and Jacob and Rachel, the one of overwhelming power, the other of pastoral charm. Brightening these years were two events, the belated world premiere of Leonce und Lena in 1952 by the Los Angeles City College Opera Workshop and a commemorative concert on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday.

The final years, 1956-1959, show Eric moving in new compositional directions. A concerto grosso for cello incorporates new sound resources. A trio for flute, viola,

and harp (Arrowhead Trio) inaugurates a spare and compact approach to chamber music. On January 9, 1957, Zeisl was honored in observance of Jewish Music Month. The stipends, commissions, and fellowships received in these years furnish a reliable gauge of his growing recognition. Two are especially noteworthy. As composer-in-residence at the Brandeis Camp, he was free to explore at some leisure the compositional path he had chosen. Successive grants from the Huntington Hartford Foundation in 1957 and 1958 allowed him, after a hiatus of sixteen years, to resume work on his masterpiece, Job. Shortly after completing the orchestration for Act II, Zeisl died. From around the world, condolences poured in from musicians and artists. The warmth of these messages proves that Zeisl was indeed deeply loved and sorely missed.

Following Zeisl's premature death, his works fell into an obscurity from which only now they are beginning to emerge. Recent revivals of his music throughout Southern California indicate that it retains its freshness, charm, vitality, and appeal. Until 1972, however, this production lay dormant, largely unknown, unrecorded commercially, unpublished, and in some instances awaiting a premiere. The contributory circumstances, objective and subjective, make a sad litany. At the time of Hitler's takeover, Zeisl was too young to have secured a lasting reputation in

Europe. He arrived in this country with a wave of émigré composers that America was ill-prepared to absorb. He belonged to no particular school; he left no great disciple. His highly individual style could not be typed easily. Too dissonant for guardians of the romantic tradition, this same style was branded overly conservative by the champions of atonality. Most damaging, he never achieved permanent affiliation with a major publishing house.

Eric Zeisl was destined to compose. A childhood friend, the novelist and critic Hilde Spiel, has characterized the results as "extremely melodious and yet undeniably modern, tonal and at the same time imbued with the spirit of his age." ("Eric Zeisl fünfzig Jahre," Neues Oesterreich, May 22, 1955, p. 8). That Zeisl chose to reinterpret traditional forms and styles in twentieth-century terms should in no way diminish his achievement. Never a slavish imitator, he simply used tradition to supply a firm foundation for his own expressive purposes. What were these purposes? Through his music, he championed the uniqueness of the individual in an age of depersonalization. In a complex age of anxiety, he pleaded for simple human values. His messages of love, mercy, and hope indeed offer, in Zeisl's own words, "strong medicines against the ills of fate." (Albert Goldberg, "The Transplanted Composer," Los Angeles Times, Sunday, May 28, 1950).

In this oral history, the reader will encounter not one but two remarkable lives, because acting as respondent is Frau Dr. Gertrude Susan Zeisl, the person who knew the composer longer and better than anyone. The only daughter of an upper-middle-class family, she studied law, receiving a doctorate in 1930. In addition to her professional activities, she cultivated, appreciated, and understood the fine arts and moved in an exciting circle of talented young Viennese writers and painters.

Through a mutual friend, she met Eric when she was seventeen (he was nineteen). For several years, they were good friends and nothing more. When romance suddenly bloomed, Eric's song year of 1931 was a direct result. In his personal life, however, as in his art, nothing was easy. Eric had to struggle against overwhelming odds to obtain permission to marry from Trude's parents. At length he succeeded, and in 1935 they were married.

From that time, they were inseparable. Indeed, it is safe to suggest that the success or failure of Eric's career rested with her. For him to survive in a new world in a brutally competitive field, she abandoned her own career and devoted full time to furthering his. Because it was she who first mastered English, she had to speak for him on all his visits with publishers, conductors, and artists. She drafted and typed his extensive correspondence,

translated song texts and librettos into English, and even copied his music. She managed an active social life as well, hostessing parties that are still celebrated in the Los Angeles artistic community. As Barbara grew up and as Eric assimilated English, Trude entered a new profession, language teaching (Latin, German, French), and built another successful career. Now in active retirement as a translator and private tutor, she maintains a breathtaking pace.

The impressive number of works dedicated to Trude testifies eloquently to her influence on Eric Zeisl's life and work. She was the first person he had met who expected him to compose, and compose he did in response. Her encouragement and support aided Zeisl substantially in the creation of his legacy. Her generosity now makes this legacy accessible through the Eric Zeisl Archive in the UCLA Music Library (established January 1976). Together, this oral history and the archive supply the raw materials for a long-overdue study of Eric Zeisl, a fascinating personality, a representative of the émigré artists who so enriched American cultural life, and a distinguished composer who merits inclusion in any comprehensive study of twentieth-century music.

Malcolm S. Cole
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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Malcolm S. Cole, Associate Professor of Music, UCLA. BA, Music, University of California, Berkeley; MFA, PhD, Music, Princeton University.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: The dining room of Gertrude Susan Zeisl's home, 11110 Montana Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

Dates: August 26, September 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 26, 1975.

Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of recording hours: The interviews took place in the early afternoon. The sessions averaged three hours in length. Approximately twelve hours were recorded.

Persons present during interview: Cole and Zeisl.

CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

Together with the respondent, Frau Dr. Gertrude Susan Zeisl, the interviewer pursued a full biographical study of the Austrian-American composer Eric Zeisl (1905-59). Attention was directed to three principal objectives: to obtain an overview of Zeisl's life, personality, and career from the one person who knew him longer and better than anyone, his widow; to explore the case history of an émigré artist who was forced to start from the beginning in a new world; to discuss at some length each of his work categories, relating his principal compositions both to his background and to his life circumstances at any given moment.

Shortly before each session, Mrs. Zeisl was given a rough outline of the proposed time span and topics to be covered. In general, each interview was directed to a chronological approach based on Zeisl's work list, with topical digressions suggested by each composition. During the sessions, the interviewee did not consult notes, outlines, or other prepared materials.

For verification, the interviewer had access to Zeisl's complete legacy of published materials, autographs,

copyists' scores, sketchbooks, working drafts, scrapbooks, correspondence, tapes, discs, and photographs.

EDITING:

A verbatim transcript of the recordings was edited by Malcolm S. Cole between April and December 1976. In substance, the manuscript agrees closely with the tapes. There are no significant cuts. There is no rearrangement for chronology. For clarity, considerable shifting of clauses was done, in addition to minor editing for regular punctuation and small deletions.

Mrs. Zeisl reviewed the manuscript, clarifying words and phrases, completing some unfinished thoughts, and making occasional word substitutions.

Lawrence Weschler, Assistant Editor, Oral History Program, compiled the index. Malcolm S. Cole wrote the introduction and, with the assistance of Program staff, prepared the front matter.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings and the edited transcript of the interview are in the University Archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of noncurrent records of the Universtiy.

Records relating to the interview are in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 26, 1975

COLE: In an attempt to understand Eric Zeisl, the man and the composer, perhaps it would be appropriate to begin with his family background.

ZEISL: Yes, I think that would be very important, because there are several features in his music that reflect that family background. Both of his grandparents came from Czechoslovakia, and I think you probably noticed, because you are so familiar with his music, that there is a definite Slavic flavor in many of his pieces.

COLE: Yes.

ZEISL: In the family of the father, the grandfather [Emanuel Zeisl] came to Vienna when he was thirteen years old as an apprentice Schlosser, which is a blacksmith who makes locks. And this was of course at that time a very expanding city--Vienna always had many beautiful palaces and gardens, and all these gates needed locks--and I think it was a lucrative profession. He made good, apparently, because--I don't know how his life went, but at the time I heard about it, he had a big house, which already seemed to be reserved for people who were doing well (because usually you lived in apartments and didn't have houses).

He had six children. And each of the children--there were three girls and three boys; the girls got handsome

dowries, and the boys each got . . . like a shop. It was either a restaurant or a liquor store. It was told in the family that he said--see, my father-in-law was the oldest--"Sigmund, I have to give something that goes by itself, because he's not smart enough to make a go of it otherwise." [laughter] And so the coffeehouse that Eric's family owned was set up by the [grand]father.

Now, the grandmother [Rosalia Reichmann] later lived one floor below the family, in the same house. It must have been below, because they lived at the top. According to Eric, she couldn't read and write. She said to Eric when he was a child, "Eric, read me this in the paper, because I don't know where my glasses are." But Eric, as a little boy, knew that she said that because she couldn't read and write. My mother-in-law told me that she was the most fantastic cook that ever was, and that on a little alcohol burner, just one burner--in the war they had no coal or anything, and stoves were out of commission so to say--she could make a three-course dinner that would make you faint with joy.

So both these grandparents on the father's side were kind of very folksy and sturdy. And you know, there is a certain strength in Eric's music, and I think it comes from that heritage. It was not at all an intellectual heritage, but it was one of joy in life and of strength. And I think this tradition of the restaurant business

came from this, partly from the grandmother. But though she seems to be such an illiterate type, it is through her that Eric is related to a very famous poet, Richard Beer-Hofmann, because she was born Beer-Hofmann, and I think that was like a cousin of Eric's. He was a very famous poet whose plays were played in the Burgtheater. And he's very well known.

Now, the family of the mother was different. They also came from Czechoslovakia. The grandfather [Michael Feitler] was something like a Jewish scholar, and he was probably like [tape recorder turned off] one of those Hasidic types, you know. Eric told me that his best, or maybe only, friend in the village was the village priest, because he knew Hebrew and he would often come to this grandfather's house and converse and discuss with the grandfather. He seems to have been a very nice and joyous kind of person, but also studious. He introduced Eric at a very early age into the Bible and brought him to the synagogue and developed in him this religious feeling that his music expresses so often.

Now, the grandmother [Rosa Bloch] was a very different type. She was a very negative person, it seems. And Eric said at one time that he hated three things: Hitler, the sun, and his grandmother, in this order. [laughter] (He could not stand sun, and as a matter of fact it was confirmed by the doctor that he had something in his skin

that let the ultraviolet rays through, you know--didn't defend itself. It was really very bad for him. So this was almost killing for him to be in this sunny California, which is for others so beautiful and so wonderful. He was constantly wishing for fog and rain and all these kinds of things that were denied here. Ever since his death, the temperature has very much changed. But when we lived here in the years that we were here, it was hotter than Africa (so we were told by people who came from Africa). And he suffered very much from this. He has diaries where--every so often--every second day he writes down the temperature as the only event of the day--98, or something like this. And it was just terrible for him.

Now, this grandmother--you know, the grandfather came to Vienna, got himself out of his poverty, and had a shop on the Mariahilferstrasse. With sponges. It seems that his own brother betrayed him and somehow took the shop away from him by bad dealings, by underhanded dealings. And the grandmother was very, very bitter about this. They went to live with Eric, and Eric's father supported them, but that made her even more bitter. She tried to be useful, and one of the things she did was darn the children's socks. So she wouldn't allow them to kneel: when they were playing at the table, she'd go, "Knie nicht!" ["Don't kneel!"] They would imitate her, you know. She seems to have been the bane of their childhood. And Eric didn't

like her at all. She represented at a very early stage the negative force or influence of the stars that always appeared in Eric's life. She was the one that was always against him doing anything with music. For instance, as a child he would sit at the piano and fantasize; and she would say, "Er spielt schon wieder statt zu üben"--"He plays instead of practicing"--instead of listening and being maybe delighted that a child could do such a thing, which was probably very unusual.

Now, the father [Sigmund] was a very simple person, but he was not dumb. He had what you call common sense, a lot of common sense, and the strange thing was that Eric was his favorite son of all the four. He understood him better than the mother [Kamilla], who was very smart and clever but did not understand him at all. There was a very great friction, almost like a war between them. And I think Eric was probably naughtier than he would have been, just to get her attention. When I came into the family, when I was introduced and had dinners there, I was told that Eric's place was always next to the mother, and that in spite of the fact that this would result in countless Ohrfeigen--head cuffs--he would stick to this place. He was probably doing his best to get her attention. And she had this big family (she was the real mother hen). And I think--I cannot say it differently--she resented Eric because he tried to be different than

the other children, or maybe asked for more attention and by his talent demanded more attention. And she wasn't going to give in to this nonsense. She found that everyone deserved the same portion of her attention, and who was he to demand anything else than the others? I think the only way he could ever get her attention was when he was sick, and then she proved to be a marvelous mother, according to his tales. I liked her very much; she was a very clever person. When you speak We have in German a word that is called Mutterwitz, and that you could really say about Eric--I mean, that he got it from [her]. She was very quick and she hit the point.

She was not an educated person, as the father wasn't either. But the father loved music. By the way, as I told you, the grandfather on the father's side had six children. The oldest girl, I was told, had a wonderful soprano voice and was studying singing, but she would never be allowed to go on the stage. That was just not allowed in these days. It was considered very low-class, as you would say. My father-in-law belonged to a music society, the merchantmen's singing group [Wiener Kaufmännischer Gesangverein]. And the youngest boy [Erich, Eric's uncle] became a famous tenor in the Nuremberg Opera. He was there for all his life until the Nazis came--no, he had retired before the Nazis came. On the mother's side, I was told, the grandfather wanted very badly to become a cantor, but that

needed even more studying and money, which wasn't there. So he didn't become a cantor. But the love of music was there. Eric's mother had another brother who had absolute ear [perfect pitch] and could play by ear and sing from the piano, but he was as negative as the grandmother. And nothing became of him. There was the talent on both sides to give him this musical talent.

I think that Eric's position as the third one was a very difficult one, because there were the two oldest [Egon, Walter] who were naturally doing everything already before him, and then there came the youngest [Wilhelm] who needed the mother's attention because he was a baby. So that gave him an unfortunate position. And I think it showed very, very early that he was an extremely nervous child. I was told that my mother-in-law went with him to a famous psychiatrist--you didn't call them psychiatrists but Neurologs. He must have had symptoms of extraordinary gravity for them to do that. But when I asked Eric, he never wanted to talk about it. Apparently it was still painful to him in his adult age, what he had gone through as a child there.

COLE: I see. Can we talk a little bit about the family circumstances, especially in the rather rigidly class-oriented society that Vienna was in the early twentieth century? Eric's immediate family owned a coffeehouse?

ZEISL: Ja. They owned a coffeehouse. In the early

days, in his early childhood, they were not rich, but well off. But they were not educated people, and that made them lower-middle-class people. They had a nice apartment in this house--it was Heinestrasse 42. The street was then called Heinestrasse, after the poet Heine. It was a corner house that bordered the Praterstern, a big square which had the Heinestrasse on one side. And the windows went into the Heinestrasse, and here was the big street which is called the Praterstrasse (it's still called the Praterstrasse) on the other side. And the windows looked on the Heinestrasse and the big square, which was called the Praterstern. It was called Praterstern because, like L'Etoile in Paris, it had so many streets landing into it like rays.

Right opposite was the North Railway Station. It was the railway station where the people arrived from the north, which means Czechoslovakia and Poland. Right east was the Prater. The Prater is a big park, you probably have heard. One part of it is the so-called Wurstelprater, which is like an amusement park. It has coffeehouses, and some of these coffeehouses were quite elegant and even the nobility frequented them. When they went to have a good time, they would come down there. Then came a part of the Prater that had big, tree-lined alleys (allées, as you call them). The trees are chestnut trees, and in the spring it's very, very beautiful:

everything, with these chestnuts in bloom, like candles. And it's a very, very broad avenue, through which the kaiser would daily make his outings. He would come down in his carriage from Schönbrunn and go through the Prater and back. On the two sides of this big allée were riding bridle paths, and there the nobility would ride along to see the kaiser and greet him. So this was quite an imposing picture, probably. From their balcony they could see the kaiser coming down. When you looked to the west, you could see from the balcony the hills of the Wienerwald with their castles and the ruins on them, which reminded you of the past. So I think it was a very stimulating place. And this romantic trait that Eric is showing in his music I think was nurtured there, both by the Prater and these views. Behind these allées and princely riding paths was the big park, which was a wilderness. There lovers would meet, and you could meet there birds and deer and everything wild. It was the former hunting region of the emperor, which at one time he had given to the people of Vienna.

COLE: Such proximity to the Prater probably encouraged Eric's love of nature music and certainly of ceremonial music, which figures in many of his compositions.

ZEISL: But also the railway station had its influence, I think, because from the railway station would come the young peasant girls in their colorful costumes. They

were coming to be nursemaids. At that time, the rich ladies would not nurse their children themselves. They would have these peasant girls who were strong and healthy. They left their children, usually illegitimate, behind with the grandparents and came to the city to earn money with nursing. You would call them wet nurses. The young peasant boys, also with their colorful costumes, came to either enlist in the army or be all kinds of servants, you know--go into the service of some rich young woman of the nobility and so on, or become coachmen, and all this. When they arrived, they still wore these native costumes. And during the war, naturally, there came this flood of Polish refugees. In Poland the Jews still wore those old costumes, like 200 years ago, with the black caftans and the black hats. You see it sometimes here around Fairfax [Avenue], but very, very little of it. But there it was still as it was, you know, centuries ago. They came like this. And there right opposite was the coffeehouse. Usually before they did anything else, whoever it was, peasant girls or anyone, they would come into the coffeehouse, take a cup of coffee, and then they would vanish into the back streets.

In these years, the second district, where Eric lived, became completely like a ghetto district, like you have Harlem full of black people. The Jews would stay there in the second district and have apartments there, and the district was full of them. So this I think also had its

impression on Eric. That his music is so colorful. And I think his later trend of turning to his Jewish heritage was, I am sure, strongly influenced by what he saw at this time and identified with his district. Because, otherwise, the parents, the father and the side of the family that had to do with the father were more like peasants. They were really not identifiable as Jews. The father had blue eyes, was blond, and was very athletic. It's very funny: he could do tricks, athletic tricks. He could balance a stick on his nose. It seemed almost like there was a heritage of maybe circus people or something like this.

COLE: That's amazing. What about the family attitude towards music? We've discussed this before.

ZEISL: Well, as I told you, there were three singers in the family. And then when Eric's family, his own family, when the boys grew, it developed that the oldest and the youngest had voices. The oldest had a tenor voice. He was the biggest, and he had a tremendous, very powerful tenor voice. Willi, the youngest, had a very beautiful baritone voice and also had very great musical talent. The oldest didn't have any talent, which is amazing in this kind of family. Eric wrote very, very little for tenor because he had a kind of fear that his brother Egon would sing anything. He was always a little quarter-tone off or something, you know. You were sitting there and clenching your teeth. Willi had a beautiful baritone

voice and was very musical. There was only one piano and therefore one music room, and of course he [Eric] hardly ever had the piano to himself. There were fights about it, which always were won by Egon, the eldest, because he was the biggest and also kind of brutal. In his childhood, Eric said he hated that brother so much that he went to bed with a knife. Because apparently Egon was, so to say, the executioner and would keep the family discipline. That must have been quite difficult for Eric. Being a composer was something that nobody understood, and they didn't even want to, you know--it was just ridiculous. It was, as the grandmother called it--she always said, "Er lebt in dem wahn." "He lives in this delusion." It was just accepted that he could play anything that he heard, that he was always composing, even as a young boy. To make matters worse, they had a piano teacher by the name of Smetana, who lived from his name--he was some distant relative of the composer Smetana--and must have been a first-class jerk. He told Eric's mother that she should not allow Eric to the piano, that he would go crazy if she let him there. And she believed all this, so she burned his compositions and closed the piano with a key--would not let him play. You know, it is incredible because I have now, through Eric, known so many musicians and to everyone Mozart is the god. Eric said that in his youth he began to hate Mozart because the older brothers went

through this--this was a course and you played Mozart and then you played Beethoven. Now, his brothers could already play Beethoven. Eric heard it and then he could play it by heart from what he heard. But [his teacher] made him play Mozart because that was the step-by-step procedure. The teacher had absolutely no flexibility. If I were a teacher and had a gifted child who wanted to play [Beethoven] and could play it, even without notes, I would let him certainly play it.

COLE: In addition to these obstacles that were placed in his path, was it true that the father would actually put want ads of professions, jobs . . . ?

ZEISL: That was later. Eric saw that he couldn't get anywhere with his parents and so he decided that the only way was to flunk school, but completely. He succeeded completely, and I think he had a report card at the end of what would be here about the tenth grade of nothing but fails. I mean, he wanted to fail so that they should see. Then they had a family council. I think a cousin was very instrumental, and the parents were finally persuaded to let him go to the academy [now Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst]. But in the academy it was a disaster again, because Eric said that when he entered the examinations, they examined his ability of hearing, his musicality. And he said they all came together marveling about it. He had that also in his later years. You could sit on the

piano and he would tell you every tone that you hit by sitting on it. He had absolute, absolute hearing. And so when they did that and had complicated the chords more and more, they immediately put him into, I think, harmony and left out something that was before (Musiklehre). But he didn't understand anything, because he had never had any real instruction. So he just sat there and didn't know what the professor was talking about. Of course when there were written tests, he flunked them, completely. After a semester was over, he got home with a certificate of flunking again. The parents said, "See, what did I tell you?" So then the father began wanting him to take a job as an apprentice. He came with these want ads every day to his bed. He had several unfortunate experiences, and then they allowed him to go on.

COLE: Maybe you could illustrate a couple of these unfortunate experiences.

ZEISL: Well, he said that at one job he lasted a day because he was supposed to write the sales or something in a folio, and he began each line with a clef. When the boss, or whoever was in charge of him, discovered that at the end of the day, that was the end of his being there. Then in the next job he got, he was carrying coal from the cellar up to the boss's wife. When he had delivered the coals, he saw that she had a piano, so he sat down at the piano and played, and she listened with great admiration.

After this went on for maybe a week, she said, "Don't waste your time here. I'll persuade my husband to dismiss you"--which [Eric] was very grateful for. And I think there was a third episode that likewise ended in disaster.

Then he was allowed to go back. As I told you, they could not finance that, so he financed it himself by selling his stamp collection, which was very dear to him, and that took care of this half a year. At the end of the year--do you want me to tell the episode of what happened at the end of the year?

COLE: Oh, maybe we can get into that in just a minute. I think at this point we might say that Eric was born on May 18, 1905. Could you give us some idea of when he made a decision to study music seriously? He was a very young boy still.

ZEISL: Well, there was never anything in his mind but music, and he never wanted anything else. He began composing at a very early age, eight years, nine years. As I told you, his mother was completely against it, and nothing has survived of these things because she tore them up and burned them. But that was in his mind, and it was a one-track mind. As the grandmother said, he lives in this delusion. He never let go of it, in spite of all these obstacles, in spite of the fact that nobody would listen and nobody was interested. It must have been a very sad childhood. He had a very, very difficult and

sad childhood in this respect. In other respects, the family was well off. They went to the country in the summer and had a big villa and garden, and all this was very nice.

COLE: I gather that they loved him and thought they were doing the right thing for him.

ZEISL: Ja, they thought they were doing the right thing, but they were restaurant owner[s], and they thought he would starve to death. That was a terrible thought. For a restaurant [family] couldn't think of anything worse that could happen to anybody. So this all took a tremendous amount of strength, but Eric had in him a very, very great potential strength which overcame that. I think you can feel that strength in his music. It's one of the features of his music. There is real power in it.

COLE: Who were some of the musical influences on Eric?

ZEISL: Well, whatever he heard. Naturally, because his brothers were singers, and the youngest and oldest were singers, he heard a lot of songs and singing in the house already. I'm sure that this was a strong influence. Most of his music is going this way. He is writing so much for the voice. And even in one, in two of his ballets appears a singing voice, which is kind of unusual. I think that is perhaps due--we don't know--maybe they were singers and so this was also in his kind of makeup to begin with, or it was because he heard it so much. I can't say.

And of course he was influenced by what was played at the time in Vienna (Vienna was the music city). They went for the summer to Vöslau, and then [at] Baden was a Kurkapelle that played whatever was popular at this point. Coffeehouse[s] played Strauss, but he was never very fond of Strauss or operetta music. They said that Alban Berg loved operettas and loved to go to them. Eric did not, and I think that was the negative side of the problem. He had too much of that, and he disliked it for this reason. It was something he wanted to get out of, this kind of thing.

COLE: Who were some of the composers whose music he admired?

ZEISL: Well, Schubert. And that remained with him until the end of his life. He loved Schubert, and of course Beethoven and later Wagner. Wagner was a god to him. I know that at one time--I just got a letter [which] brought it to mind, because I had forgotten it--that we had a discussion with a young singer who is now in Germany. Since many years she is singing there, at the opera houses (I think she is in Essen right now). And she said, "Remember the discussions we had?" At one time Eric had said that Moses, Christ, and Wagner were the three greatest prophets. She was a very religious girl, and she objected to this very violently. Anyway, she reminded me of this and said how wonderful discussions one had: the art of conversation

seems to be going out of style right now.

COLE: Was he an admirer of Bruckner?

ZEISL: Yes, yes. And you know, when Eric admired something, he was going into it completely, and that means that he knew it by heart and could play it from beginning to end.

COLE: I understand he was an admirer of Hugo Wolf, too.

ZEISL: Ja. Because in the beginning, when he himself tried composing, it was mostly songs, and he told me that [Richard] Stöhr, who was his teacher in the beginning, would ask him to write a sonata or chamber music, and he came back with songs, always. That was a form that he could master at that time, and the other forms scared him. He had all these difficulties in his life and all these fights, and all this strength went into this, I think.

At an age when all children I am a teacher, and I see the tenth graders (who are usually fourteen or even fifteen) and how immature they are. At that age he already had to support himself completely, because his parents never gave him anything for the music. That was all his own doing; he had to compete on his own. I think so much strength then went into this that he kind of postponed the struggle with the material, with the music--how shall I say this?

COLE: With the larger, the more abstract forms.

ZEISL: Forms, ja. But it was always a goal and remained

so. The moment he felt more secure in his craft and everything, he tackled it.

COLE: Perhaps it's appropriate now to talk a bit about his formal training, where and when and with whom he studied.

ZEISL: Well, he was very much like Bruckner in this way. He never felt secure, and he always wanted to test himself. So he changed teachers very often; [he] always went from one to the other and tried to get what was lacking. In Vienna he was for a short time a student of [Joseph] Marx. And in the beginning the teacher was Stöhr because Stöhr made it possible for him to get lessons when he had no money. He [Stöhr] sent him students, and the money that these students brought he would then give to Stöhr for getting his lesson there. Stöhr was a man who knew very much, but he was a very academic person, as Eric described him. He was too narrow a straitjacket for him. He called him very dry. So he was looking further. He went to Marx for a short while, and then he went to a fellow by the name of Hugo Kauder, who is in this country. Eric liked him very, very much and, I think, gained a lot from him. Under his guidance he wrote his first string quartet. That string quartet was then played by the Galimir Quartet. They were quite a famous quartet in Vienna and consisted of brother and sisters (Felix Galimir was the only boy, and three girls). One of the girls, Adrienne, the youngest, married

[Louis] Krasner, who was the violinist who premiered the Berg violin concerto. Stevie [Walter Zeisl, nephew of the composer] met them in Syracuse [University]. They are now teaching in Syracuse. And this quartet had, I think, two weak opening movements, a very excellent scherzo, and a fugue which was made from the theme of one of the songs. This was the first thing that Universal Edition printed.

COLE: Can we talk a little bit about Eric's aversion to the traditional classroom approach to theory? I think this gives us an insight to Eric as a rather unique individual.

ZEISL: One thing was that he had no schooling when he came to the academy, as the others. When the others came to the academy, they were already showing talent, and it was already nurtured and usually guided before they entered the academy. And when not and they entered the academy by the usual channels and were examined, the more average they were, maybe the better for them, because they went through the usual routine. But as I told you, because of this marvelous ear and this piano prowess that he had gotten, so to say, by nature, he was put into classes that were above him, and he could not quite follow. He was anyway a person who could not learn. He had to do things. He was not a very good listener, I think, to theory. So that, I think, accounted for his difficulties there.

When I went to the university--I'm somewhat younger than Eric, but not much, about one and a half years younger--I met a boy in my course. (I studied law.) He was also going to the academy at the same time. He was also very musically gifted. When I talked about Eric, he said that the academy--and that was long afterwards--was still talking about Eric, and that he had been the most gifted student there. He knew his name, and yet by that time he had been out of the academy for more than six or seven years. So I think he made an impression on his fellow classmates. I also know that when we were in New York, Felix Kuhner came to visit us. Felix Kuhner was the second violinist of the Kolisch Quartet. I don't know how we met. He found out that we were there, and maybe they had met at NBC or something. Eric brought him home. And he said, "Now what are you doing, Eric? You were the most gifted there at the academy." I think his classmates saw that, but Eric didn't know that they knew that or saw that.

COLE: Perhaps it should be pointed out that Eric was only fourteen when he made this impression. I think you've told me before about Eric flunking the class in theory even though he was coaching others. There was a marvelous story at the final examination time.

ZEISL: Well, at the final examination, after a year had gone by, the professor said, "Now I want to know who is really gifted. Who can harmonize a melody?" Eric knew

that he could do it, but he wasn't going to speak up. But the children cried--this is how Eric told it to me--the children all cried, "Zeisl, Zeisl!" And he thought that they did that because they were making fun of him, knowing that he was the worst in the class. But he said he was going out anyway. So he went out. Of course, this was born to him; he didn't have to learn it. So he did that perfectly and very marvelously, I am sure. The professor was very much taken aback, and he said, "I have made a terrible mistake. Your mother must come and see me." The mother came, and she was of course very, very doubtful of the whole thing and didn't want to believe it. And Stöhr said that Eric was very, very gifted, a born musician [who] had to study privately because class instruction apparently was not for him, that he was not a youngster who could take class instruction. My mother-in-law told me that herself, and she said, "So I asked him again, 'Do you really think that he should be a musician, a composer?', and he said, 'If not he, then I don't know who in the world.'" Then Eric said, "I have no money." He then made it possible for Eric by sending him [students], because he was the examiner of the harmony examinations that everybody who was studying an instrument had to take in order to get certificated. You called this the state examination in piano. You had to make the harmony, and that was of course very difficult because many of the young Höhere

Töchter, the better educated girls, had to get this examination. They learned to play the piano like you learn to crochet or something. The harmony was very difficult for them. And Eric got them in order to get them through the thing, and the money he then gave to Stöhr in order to get his own lessons. He later said that this gave him such a marvelous technique of teaching. He was only fourteen when he began that, and later on he was quite known as a theory teacher. People from the Conservatory of Music and from the academy itself, professors who were already white-haired, studied with him.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

AUGUST 26, 1975

COLE: We've been discussing Eric's formal training, and the picture that's emerging is one that could be described as a combination of formal curriculum and self-teaching. Perhaps that would be a good place to start. We can talk a little bit about the steps Eric took to instruct himself and the talent that emerged, the strengths.

ZEISL: Ja, it was a great struggle for him, and he was often commenting on it. [He] said that every sixteen-year-old boy who left the academy could write a sonata, and he could not. Yet [he] was so much more equipped than these often very average-gifted children. And yet, [just as] you could be a very poor writer and yet you could write a thesis [for] school, so every one of these boys had learned how to put together the things to make a sonata. Eric couldn't do it, because if he were writing a sonata, it had to be a masterpiece. At that stage he wasn't there, so he couldn't write it at all. He could not do things halfway. That was impossible.

He also told me that Stöhr was trying to teach him these things and was telling him, "So, for the next time when you come to me, bring a sonata," and then he would come with ten more songs. At that time he was writing songs and that was it. Stöhr was kind of disappointed;

on the other hand, he was full of admiration because he saw that these were masterful songs. He was instrumental in introducing him to a man by the name of [Ferdinand] Wögerer, then the head of Strache, who printed these first songs, "Armseelchen," ["Rokoko," and "Neck und Nymphe"]. This was a big thing, of course, because he was only sixteen years at that time. The publisher gave it to [Hans] Duhan, who was one of the most well known singers of the state opera, a very wonderful musician, who sang these songs. Later, he also sang the Mondbilder (Moon Pictures) on the radio.

In this way Eric was very much like Bruckner. He was constantly studying and felt that he [had to] advance himself. It was even so in our married life. Each morning he would emerge from a certain place with a big score that he had been studying. He was going nowhere without a score and studying constantly. He had this urge to verify himself with a teacher, and so he went to several other teachers. Besides Stöhr, he went for a short time to Marx and then for a time he was with Hugo Kauder, who was quite satisfying.

I have here a letter that Hanns Eisler wrote as an introduction for him to go to Schoenberg. But when we were here we had so little money and had such a struggle. And he never dared go to Schoenberg without having money to pay. He would have thought that very arrogant to do.

I am really curious [about] what would have happened if two such very, very different personalities would have met. Would Schoenberg have become more tonal or would Eric have become atonal? I know that the Requiem [Ebraico] was played over the radio, and the person who arranged these concerts where the Requiem was played was a composer by the name of [Julius] Toldi, who was a student of Schoenberg and who later was completely flustered and flabbergasted about the fact that Schoenberg had liked the Requiem very, very much. He couldn't understand, because it was tonal music. But Hanns Eisler, who was a Schoenberg student and atonal, also was very fond of Eric's music, had a great deal of admiration for him and told him so.

Eric never had problems with the creative people. They understand each other. They are like dogs who smell each other and know. But the minor exponent[s of] Schoenberg's school gave him a great deal of trouble, because they heard only the tonality, and that for them was out. They didn't have this immediate response to what was underlying. Because I think atonality [and] tonality are really dresses, and the dress is on the person. And when you know the person, that is [the] important [thing]: is the person worth something?

COLE: It seems that the emerging picture is one of Eric as a lyric-dramatic talent. You've used this

term before, and perhaps you could amplify [it] a little bit.

ZEISL: Well, I consider something like chamber music or symphonic music epic. From the beginning, he was always a lyrical talent. The lied attracted him and the word. It was, so to say, the stimulant that loosened the creative impulse in him. All his life he was looking for texts and wanted to write operas. It was due, I think, to a desperation that he composed the little Mass [Kleine Messe] or the Requiem [Concertante], because the text is so dramatic that it is almost like an opera, and what he composed was almost like an opera. I mean, his approach to it was very much like in the Verdi Requiem, for instance. Not that it sounded like the Verdi Requiem--I don't mean that--but a dramatic approach, the approach of the dramatic composer. And he kind of needed that.

COLE: Yes. I think we'll see this as we get into some individual works. He needed some kind of extramusical stimulus to begin, some kind of dramatic story perhaps. Another facet of his training, one which I think is significant in his development as a composer, too, is his ability as a pianist. Perhaps you could talk about this.

ZEISL: Oh, he was a fabulous pianist, and he had an ability which cannot be explained: on the piano he could bring out tones that were not in the piano. I

mean when he played orchestra [music], it sounded like orchestra. I remember an incident when he came to visit us one time. My father was a violinist--an amateur violinist, not a professional. He had the radio open, and the Beethoven Violin Concerto was played. Eric listened with us; then he went to the piano and played the opening passages. My father was simply amazed and said, "That's fantastic, the piano sounds like the violin! How does he do that?" And also when he played--there was a man by the name of [Ernest von] Gompertz who took lessons from Eric because he wanted to play the "Ride of the Valkyries" and the "Feuerzauber" ("The Magic Fire Music") the way Eric does. So he just sat there next to him and paid him to watch what he did, because it sounded like the orchestra. He did certain tricks. He didn't play the notes as they were in any written piano score. He played what he knew from the orchestra score; he made it sound like an orchestra.

COLE: Had he considered becoming a concert pianist?

ZEISL: Ja, he was, because this prowess apparently was already in him when he was very, very young and a boy. He could play anything. When he entered the academy, he also entered a piano course in order to become a virtuoso. He considered that as a career which might satisfy the demands of his parents for making money and not starving to death. The teacher with whom he studied--I forgot his

name--had a method. It consisted [of] working with one finger or something constantly. It overworked his fingers. He was double-jointed and had very soft bones in this respect. I think it overwrought the fingers, and he had to wear his hand in a cast for awhile. He said that [in] the corridors of the academy he met another professor, [who] said, "Oh, another victim of The Method!" Apparently this happened quite frequently. That ended his career as a virtuoso, but for his own use he played very well. He also needed the piano as a stimulant. When he composed, he would play. When you listened, it sounded sometimes very, very awful, because it was wild chords that somehow didn't make any sense. But they kind of released something.

COLE: And he could certainly hear what was supposed to be coming out.

ZEISL: Ja, but it was sometimes very hard to make out something.

COLE: As we go along, we'll see that his ability as a pianist influenced the way he wrote music and [is] one of the factors that make his songs the significant achievements they are, where the accompanist is a true partner and not a subordinate.

ZEISL: Ja, it is. On the other hand, because he disregarded difficulties and it was easy for him to bring out what he wanted, the accompaniment is sometimes too difficult, I think. I think that accounts for the

rejection that it found, because many of the accompanists are usually the ones who show it to their singers. Then they probably found it too uncomfortable to promote it.

COLE: Yes. I think of something like "Schrei," which is fiendishly difficult if one tries to get all the notes. I think we've begun to get a good picture of his family background, of the obstacles he had to overcome, of some of the shaping forces on his music, of his formal training, and some of the self-teaching to which he continually subjected himself. It's clear that for one reason or another he was determined to be a composer.

ZEISL: Oh, yes. I think there was never any doubt in his mind from his earliest childhood on.

COLE: Perhaps now we can talk a little about life as a young, aspiring composer in a musical capital of the world, one that had been famous for centuries. How was Vienna as a place for a budding composer?

ZEISL: Well, I think it was in some ways a wonderful place, because when you imagine that there were in Vienna three--really four--orchestras that were playing: the Philharmonic, the Concert[house] Orchestra, the Radio Orchestra, and an orchestra that was called the Symphoniker. They had reasonably fine musicians, too. Then there was the big opera, and there was the Volksoper, and then there were usually two little chamber opera outfits. One was in the Redoutensaal--that was in one of the palaces and had a

big hall richly decked out with Gobelins [tapestries]. It was very pretty, and they would give chamber operas. Marriage of Figaro and Donizetti smaller things. There was the Schönbrunn Schlosstheater in the summer. And that is not the operetta houses; that is just the serious classical music. And always of course wherever you went, there were orchestras, in the Prater, in the cafés. In the Stadtpark, which is behind the music buildings, there was this orchestra playing. They were usually playing Strauss and so, and Eric wasn't fond of this. It was some of those Kurkapellen that played wherever they went.

You were exposed to music as a natural thing. In this way it was very, very good. It didn't cost much money to go to the opera. The young people would stand; you know, there was standing room. Being a member of the academy and so on, Eric naturally belonged to the in-clique as a musician with a recognized place. Fellow musicians, as such, were in the in-group. There was this system of clagues. You were usually given standing room. [Otherwise,] it was difficult; you could stand there for five hours and then not get a ticket because there were only so many. At least he was assured that he would get his ticket, and for this he had to clap. The leader of the clique took care of his own. They would then pay back their dues by clapping. Otherwise they were not admitted. In all this it was wonderful.

In other ways it was very terrible. Austria lost the war, and that meant for Eric's parents, for instance, real poverty now. In the inflation, they had at that time rented out the coffeehouse. They had found a person who would pay them like a--how do you call it? [tape recorder turned off] They had sublet the coffeehouse. I didn't mention to you that during the daytime that coffeehouse was a coffeehouse, but it was also a night place. In the night it served drinks, and there was a string of girls there, and all this kind of thing. It was too strenuous for his parents, who were getting on in years. So they had sublet the coffeehouse for a yearly sum. Now so much was paid every month. After the man to whom they had sublet it had been there two months, say, what he paid as a monthly rent wouldn't even pay for a little roll of bread. And yet they had to live. The two older boys were at that time seventeen and eighteen. The second quit school. They went to work, and they supported the family and the parents. Naturally they didn't support anything like music. It was that they could put food on the table. That happened all over Vienna. It was a time of depression and extreme poverty for most of the middle-class families. They had lost everything because of the inflation. And that, again, made it very, very difficult, because music is a luxury in a way. So as cheap [as] it was to stand at the opera and get a Stehplatz, standing room, yet this was already a

problem which had to be met. It was fortunate that even in this bad time, Eric was able to make money by giving lessons.

COLE: Yes. Was teaching the primary way in which he earned a living?

ZEISL: Yes, yes. There was no other way.

COLE: What kinds of lessons, what age groups did he teach?

ZEISL: He taught whatever he could get, and mostly he got little children, which was of course hack work of the worst kind. Fortunately he had a few richer families who paid better prices, but mostly it was very modest fees. And I know that when he went to my father to ask for my hand in marriage (which he didn't get, by the way), my father asked him, "How do you make a living? How do you think that you can support a wife?" He said, "I am giving lessons." My father said, "May I ask what you get for a lesson?" And he said, "Well, that's different. I have lessons for five schillings and lessons for eight schillings and lessons for ten schillings, and even lessons for twenty schillings, but nobody takes them." [laughter] So my father came and said, "This is a complete child. You can't marry him. He doesn't know anything of life." But this is the way it was, actually. Most of the lessons were for five schillings, which is about like a dollar when you translate it into American money.

COLE: Was he teaching piano or theory or a combination?

ZEISL: He was teaching piano to the children, of course. At the same time he had always some young people who were seriously studying music and whom he taught theory. He must have been a wonderful teacher, because his students always--some I have met--treated him not like a teacher but like a god. They thought they owed life itself to him. This was the way they looked at him.

COLE: Would he go to their houses, or did he have a studio?

ZEISL: Let's see. For the little children, he went to their houses. The others, the more serious, came to him. He had one student [Feldstein]--his sister lives here--who he thought was very, very gifted. He perished under the Nazis. Another one [Rudolph Fellner], I think, is a conductor now with the [New York] Met[ropolitan Opera]--I mean, a young assistant conductor. (Maybe now he is not so young anymore.) I have lost track of him. When we were in this country for a little while, we heard of one by the name of [Rudolf] Krüger, who[m] Eric thought very much of, but we never heard of him [again]. I think he might have been taken into the army and maybe perished. We didn't have any address or anything of him.

COLE: The stories are widespread and celebrated about Beethoven's many moves around and about Vienna. Did Eric as a young composer move about frequently?

ZEISL: No, really not. This was almost like a sickness. He was unhappy at home, and it was very confining, as I said, and he had all this neglect or ridicule and everything. But he could not move out of his home. It was really a kind of neurotic thing. He could not travel, not even the shortest distance, like from Vienna to Baden, which is an hour. [He] couldn't go alone by himself. He would take his brother along. And when we were already, so to say, engaged or whatever you would call it, I went with my mother to St. Wolfgang, which is near Salzburg. He was quite poor at the time, and money meant a great deal, but he paid the train fare for Hilde Spiel, whom you met, to come with him, because he could not go on board a train by himself. This made things so difficult because in the beginning, up to, say, his twenty-fifth year, maybe, he could have gone to Germany, as [did] so many of the young musicians. When they had talent, they went. They didn't stay in Austria, because there was very little that you could do here. Austria didn't believe in giving young people a chance. Before you got anywhere, you had to have a beard, and it had to be long and white.

COLE: So you built your reputation in Germany?

ZEISL: The young musicians went to Germany, like Mahler had done, and Bruno Walter, and they all did. But Eric could not do that. He could never go on his own, by himself. He took psychoanalysis for three years and

tried to break himself of this thing, but it didn't work.

COLE: So he had chosen a doubly difficult task to establish himself as a young composer in Vienna. Who were some of his associates? Was there any sort of league of young composers?

ZEISL: Yes, there was. There was a Komponistenbund.

That wasn't only young composers; it was composers. They gave concerts in which they performed the works of the members. Marx was the president of that thing. He was also critic for the press [Neue Freie Presse]. And then Eric was in a league which was called Young Art--Junge Kunst. It had meetings every month, I think, in the lower level of a coffeehouse where they met. They were all kinds of performers and creative artists--writers, musicians, singers, painters. They all belonged and had their meetings there. That was quite nice and stimulating, and we had friends there with whom we communicated.

COLE: And there was an opportunity of hearing each other's music at these sessions, too?

ZEISL: Oh, ja, ja.

COLE: One reads a great deal about the Schoenberg circle, but one often has difficulty discovering what else was going on.

ZEISL: Ja, well, at that time already, when this happened, Vienna was really dead. It was very, very dead because of Hitler. Hitler had come to power, and that meant that

there was a complete shutting out--you know, Germany was closed for people like Eric, who were not considered completely Aryan. You could not be performed in Germany, and the publishers couldn't publish you. So Vienna became-- it wasn't a capital, anyway, anymore, but as long as the connection with Germany had existed and the old tradition that Vienna had as the capital of an empire kind of persisted, then it had all the institutions, like the opera, and so that went on. And all this still had Germany as a hinterland. But then this was not anymore, and so it became like a little frog pond. It was really quite an unbearable situation for a gifted person, and Eric suffered under this very, very much and longed to go out. After we married, we had kind of planned--because with me beside him, he would have dared--to go out and maybe try London or Paris or something like this. Then Hitler came, and that was almost like a liberation, to send us out of this.

COLE: In line with this train of thought, perhaps we can talk a little bit about an observation Eric made about the interaction among composers and musicians as opposed to that among artists.

ZEISL: There was really not much fellowship among the composers. They were mostly intensely jealous of each other, didn't seek so much each other's company. At one time we went into the Wienerwald, as we used to every

Sunday, making these hikes. My best girlfriend [Lisel Salzer] was a painter. And we met her. There was a group of painters who were at that time the most known painters, making an excursion together through the Wienerwald. Eric remarked how wonderful that was, how he would love to do that with his fellow composers, but it was nothing that was really done. The reason was also that most of the people that were there were older than Eric, about ten years older, you see. [They] had established themselves there, had some kind of position, with the conservatory and so on. The younger ones who had nothing had gone out, so there was like a vacuum there.

COLE: Another fascinating aspect of a young composer's development is how one goes about getting his music played. How did a young composer go about getting a piece played in Vienna?

ZEISL: Well, that was rather difficult because the big institutions like the Philharmonic would wait until you had a beard like Brahms. Before that, they would not acknowledge you. There was the radio, and that was very good because the radio also paid you when you were performed. The procedure was usually that: you went there and--say you went there in February, you got your appointment for September. That was already lucky because you had to please the secretary who gave you this appointment. Then when you got this appointment, you talked to [Oswald]

Kabasta, who was the director of the radio. When he liked you or liked the score you showed him, then he would actually schedule it for performance, and that was then next February. So in some way it was perhaps not so bad for a creative person, because your mind was at ease. There was only this one opportunity. You could get it or you couldn't get it. When you got it, you knew, and up to February there was nothing in the world you could do. While in America, you almost--the thousands of things that you could do left us breathless in the beginning. There was really never any definite "no" to anything, because at the next step there were so many other opportunities and you kept running. It isn't good for a creative person, you know.

COLE: No, I agree. One last thing about establishing himself as a professional composer. We've said he supported himself by teaching. Just before Hitler's final rise to power, Eric was appointed a professor at the Vienna Conservatory. Is this not correct?

ZEISL: Ja, well, he was by that time about thirty-one, thirty-two, and he had many performances and was getting recognition and being regarded as a coming great talent of great hope. And so this showed also in that Professor [Joseph] Reitler, who was the director of the conservatory, was giving him a contract to teach at the conservatory for the next season. Then Hitler came and people emigrated, so it never came to it.

COLE: This is one of many examples of how unfortunate circumstances beyond Eric's control worked against him. I think that to conclude this first interview, we could ask you [to tell] a couple of favorite stories about Eric. Since both of them involved you, perhaps you could tell us when your connection with Eric began. You certainly knew him very early.

ZEISL: It began through a common friend, whom you have heard me mention, Fritz Kramer. I grew up with Fritz Kramer. He was like a brother to me because our mothers were best friends. We grew up from babyhood together and spent all our vacations together and all of the Sundays together. Fritz was a kind of piano prodigy and a very fine musician. One day he began telling me that he had met at a party In his words he said, "I have met somebody who can play everything, like me." Then pretty soon he began telling me that this person was so gifted as a composer, and he tried to describe him in words [and] what he had composed. And so he said, "You must meet him."

So one day--Vienna has this wonderful environment, and when you meet you go out into the Wienerwald with your friends, especially when the weather is beautiful--we went to a place called Häuserl-am-Roann. That is a little inn in the middle of the woods. Their specialty was Ribiselwein. Ribisel is gooseberry or something like this. It's little, little red berries, very tart. Out of it they had made a

wine which wasn't at all very powerful, but [was] very good. He had brought Eric along, and we all drank a glass of Ribiselwein. At this time I was about between sixteen and seventeen and Eric must have been eighteen. Well, this glass of Ribiselwein had a very unexpected effect, because it was like a whole bottle of whiskey would have worked on somebody else. He was completely, but completely drunk. And he began these wild fantasies that were very, very X-rated. I didn't know what to do. On the way home, he was jumping at all the street lights, claiming they were the moon and [trying] to get them. So it was very amusing to me. And I had the feeling of something very odd, something that you go and see in the zoo.

After this first meeting, then Eric kind of entered our circle. At that time there were no rock-and-roll bands around, and the young people entertained themselves. Usually every weekend there was another party at some friend's house, either at my house or at somebody else's house. They arranged these parties during the wintertime. After midnight, when we were all tired from dancing and sat down, Eric would sit down [at] the piano and play, just wonderfully. And we were sitting there listening. He would sweat profusely at these occasions because it was very hot, and we would say, "Take your jacket off! Take your jacket off!" And he wouldn't take it off. I later discovered that his shirts were of two colors in the back,

because they were all repaired, I don't know how many times. Part of it was blue, and the rest was green or something. He was ashamed of that, but it just gives you the idea of what poverty meant at that time. I don't think any poor boy here would wear such a shirt or even consider keeping it.

At this time, as far as we knew, Eric was always violently in love with some girl. At one time he wrote a trio for my friend Lizzi [Alice Weisskopf], who was a very, very beautiful girl, and [who] of course wanted nothing to do with him because the stage in which he was at at that time was really not anything any girl would want to have anything to do [with]. So his love affairs were usually very unhappy ones. He was very much You know, I remember really unforgettable times when we went hiking through the woods, we young people, and then came to some little inn with some piano that was completely out of tune, and he would sit there and play for hours. It was this kind of Schubertische atmosphere, and he could make these old pianos sound like something really beautiful. It was really very beautiful. But apart from his music, he was a very wild, untamed fellow at that time. We were all from better families and were carefully brought up, and we kind of shied away from this. And, as I told you, Eric had then gone through analysis, which I think left him crazier than ever, if anything. It was shortly after that--I was

already, I think, twenty-four years old--when he had naturally matured and so had I, and then the thing began between us. We both knew then what we were doing.

COLE: We begin to get a picture of a very unique personality and a strongly romantic individual. Perhaps we can conclude with just these two marvelous anecdotes which I think illustrate not only his uniqueness, but also the friendship and the affection that many people had for him. Perhaps you could tell us the remark made by Alma Mahler, who apparently was a friend and an admirer of his.

ZEISL: Alma we met here--that is, we met her first in Paris, but in Vienna we did not know her. That was here. But I can tell you the story if you want to fit it in here.

COLE: Yes, fine.

ZEISL: Well, we met Alma That was quite interesting, most characteristic of Alma, very characteristic of Alma. We were in Paris at that time. We survived in Paris--because we came to Paris without money--through a very marvelous incident. We came and were in this little hotel which was filled from the cellar to the top with refugees who had just arrived. Eric's three brothers were also there.

And so we came to the desk very often to ask, "Are there any letters?" The people around us, who also came for this, were usually from Vienna also, heard "Zeisl" a great deal, and they remembered the name. It was maybe

two or three days after we had arrived in Paris when in the morning the telephone rang and somebody said, "Are you Mr. Eric Zeisl?" And I said, "Yes, Eric Zeisl lives here." He said, "In the Pariser Tageszeitung"--that's a newspaper called Pariser Tageszeitung--"there's a very big ad looking for you." So we went down and bought a paper and sure enough, there was a big ad, "Eric Zeisl, composer this time in Paris, is asked to call the number so-and-so." I said to Eric, "You don't call." I was afraid it was the Gestapo or something. And so I called. It turned out that Eric had had in Vienna a--if you want to call it a student. He was an art dealer [Hugo Engel]. He had wanted to compose little waltzes and [such] that he had in his mind, and Eric was putting it down for him because he himself couldn't do that. This man had then moved to Paris. He had a customer, a rich Spaniard [Carasso] who had said at one time to him, "You know, I have made a lot of money, and that was my goal for a long time. But now I am settled and I have enough and I am wealthy." He said, "I would so much like--I have my head full of music, and I'd like to write it down." And this art dealer said, "Look here, I know the man who could do that for you. Maybe he is in Paris. Will you spend the money for an ad?" He said yes. And that was two days after we arrived. Well, to make it short, we lived off this man, and he made our stay in Paris possible and very enjoyable.

Of course, we lived only in a hotel room, and the

hotel room was very cold and disagreeable. So Eric took that music that he was doing for this man to the Café Weber and was writing there, on a table. And Alma was there. When she saw somebody writing music, she immediately left her place and seated herself next to him. When I came to fetch Eric, there he was sitting with her, and Werfel was there, too. She was at that time sixty years old, but beautiful, a charming, sweet face. Blonde. And so we became very good friends. She had asked him what he was writing, and he told her. She had this kind of flair. She knew immediately if somebody was somebody. And so we then were friends, and that continued when we came here to Los Angeles. We went to visit her quite often. She could say remarkable things, and I was terribly disappointed when I read her book. The two figures, the personality that emerge[s] from her book and [the one] I knew, are so completely different that I can't understand how they could be the same. She had that flair: when she was with somebody who was somebody, or especially a creative person, she became like a mirror and she reflected. She would then also say great things and novel things.

COLE: She made a very concise observation about Eric.

ZEISL: When he [had] played his music to her, and she admired it greatly and [told] many people how impressed she was, she said, "You are a tonal nature, just like Schoenberg is an atonal one."

COLE: I think we have time for this one final story which illustrates the uniqueness of Eric. Perhaps you could describe the episode where he would wait for you at lunch-times.

ZEISL: Well, Eric had very definite times where he could compose every morning, up to, say, about twelve-thirty, because in the afternoon he was giving his lessons. The morning was his composition time. And when he had finished composing for the morning, he went and fetched me at my place of work. I was a lawyer's assistant at that time, a Konzipient, as you call it. That was in the Trattnerhof, off the Graben in Wien [Vienna]. And there he was standing and waiting patiently for me to come down, because sometimes that took some time. One day a friend came by and talked to him, and then she said, "Goodbye. I am going." And he said, "I am going with you." And so she said, "But are you not waiting for Trude?" He said, "No, today she isn't coming." But he was still standing there because he was used to that place. That was his place, I guess, to kind of free himself from the accumulated steam of the morning composition. He needed that, so he was standing there anyway.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 4, 1975

COLE: In our first interview we talked about Eric Zeisl the man, his family circumstances, the obstacles placed in his path, his formal training, and life as a professional composer. Before we get into the material for today, is there anything that you'd like to add?

ZEISL: Perhaps I should describe a little bit more the circle of friends he had, because I think they were of quite a bit of influence in some ways. Now, I should mention that in his very early years, Eric didn't have a large circle of friends. I mean, this was almost something remarkable, because young people--sixteen, seventeen--usually move in a big circle. He did not. He usually had one close friend, of who you very much wondered why he would be his close friend. For instance, at the time that I first described when I met him and he was so drunk, then he had a friend who later became a lawyer [Marcel Singer], and was just the typical lawyer type--very, very dry, a very logical man, and just so much the opposite of Eric. But he tagged along. He was musical, I presume, and he tagged along. It was necessary for Eric to have somebody to tag along, but he was never real close to any kind of friend. I think he was either too close to his brothers or distrusted men because of his brothers, because they had so

little interest for him. He was much more liable to become very close to a woman, and trust a girl, and completely devote himself when he was in love, which he usually was. And then he was constantly with that person, with the exclusion of all others.

But he did accumulate some friends, and when he entered our circle, and especially when he became closer with me, then he acquired my friends (and I had a large circle of friends). Now, one of his friends, for instance, was a rather rich young man [Roland Stern] from a wealthy house, and he looked and acted like Maecenas, the Roman. Whenever Eric was in dire need, he was always good, we would say here, for a buck (there, it was a schilling or two). It wasn't very much that he got. This man was generous, but to a point he was also very commercially minded, so he didn't give it for nothing. He wanted Eric to give him a score for this, and Eric always promised, and the poor guy never got any of these things. (I still have them here.) I think he sold him the Requiem [Concertante] about three times over or something, but never delivered it. But he was good-natured and didn't seem to mind, just a few bitter remarks here and there of never getting anything. Then there was, of course, Fritz Kramer, who appreciated him very much and with whom he became closest, as far as Eric became close with anybody. And then there was a young poet, Alfred Farrau he

called himself later; his real name was Fred Herrnfeld. And then of course there was Hilde Spiel. Remember, she was a writer of considerable talent and is still active in Vienna, is very much respected there. I told you that she included him in her first novel [Kati auf der Brücke, 1933]. A whole chapter has a figure in it, a composer that is just a copy of him, as if you would sit down and make a portrait of somebody. And it's really very good and accurate when you read it. I wanted to describe these few people to you which were especially important, I think.

They sometimes came and provided him with books. They knew that he was always looking for texts to compose. So I think it was this Roland, the Maecenas, who gave him the Africa Sings [Afrika Singt]. And they brought him the [Christian] Morgenstern poetry or later on the [Joachim] Ringelnatz. They introduced him to current literature. Ja, I forgot to mention Lisel Salzer, who was a painter, and a very gifted one. She is now living in Seattle and getting many prizes, and [is] very respected in her field. She was very musical, and it was at her house that we usually met and where Eric played the latest thing that he composed. Sometimes it was a movement of a greater work; the Mass [Kleine Messe] was entirely premiered at Lisel's house. And we all sang, Hilde Spiel [and everyone], and we called it the Gesangsverein Keuchhusten, which means the Singing Academy Whooping-cough, because

none of us had really a voice, but it had to do. We sang the different parts, and this way the thing was premiered at the house.

COLE: As time goes on, we'll be talking more about Zeisl's melody. It's amazing to me that Hilde Spiel could remember Zeisl's song melodies at least forty years after she'd heard them.

ZEISL: Oh, ja, but that was a part of our life at that time. He was the uncrowned king of that circle. I mean, everybody knew that he was, so to say, three feet higher than everybody else, though these were very gifted people. But he was a unique person, and one knew that.

Now, another thing that I have been speculating about is the name "Zeisl." In Austria, Zeisl means a little singing bird. And many places even are called so, like Zeislmauer, and have that name in them. It's known. But the family came from Czechoslovakia, and I was sometimes wondering whether the name really had that connotation in the beginning, and if it didn't come rather from the Hebrew word Zeiser which means actor. And since the father was so good, almost like a circus [performer]--so athletic, and could do circus tricks--I was wondering if, in the past, there was not a background of circus people, because that was a thing that existed at that time, these wandering wagons of people who could sing and act and perform circus tricks and apparently made their living this way. It is

interesting to me that the name Toch, which is quite a frequent name also, comes from the Spanish word tocar, which means to play: like the guitar, you would say "tocar la guitarra." And I heard, for instance, that Schoenberg was related to the mother of the Marx brothers. So I think there is such a background there of all-around musician-actor-performer that maybe then culminates in people like that. This is of course pure speculation, but it might be true.

COLE: It could be. Today I thought we could begin with the year 1922, a significant year in Zeisl's life as a composer, because this was the year in which his first compositions appeared in print. Certainly he'd written compositions before. We know that several had been destroyed by the family. But this is the year of his first published compositions, a set of three songs, published by Edition Strache. We've talked about this before, but perhaps it's worth reiterating: song is the basic ingredient of Zeisl's art. It might not hurt to summarize the reasons for this early and effective cultivation of song.

ZEISL: Well, all his life, before he came to America I would say, Eric was drawn to this form. And it had several reasons. For one thing, song was the best medium for [him] and song was so pervading the life of the family even, with his uncle a tenor, his father a tenor in the Singakademie,

his brother a tenor, and his younger brother a baritone. So he constantly heard music of the voice, and so that was a natural thing. But it was also that he was born a true romantic and that song is a romantic medium; and it attracted him for this reason, I think. And we have already talked about it that the spoken word or poetry and so on were a kind of releasing element that would stir his creative impulses. Therefore, he reacted to these short poems. And also he was an enormously dramatic talent, and he said that a song is a drama in a page.

Another thing is that he had overall, not only in music, this very great talent of portrayal, and he could measure up a person with one phrase. He would say one thing, for instance, about his brother. I better say it in German first, because when you translate it, it isn't as good. Part of these sayings are that they are very short and sometimes humorous--most of the time humorous. But also they have a kind of poetic quality. It only occurred to me why they were so good in German when I began to teach Ovid and Virgil, and I was explaining to my students the rules of consonance and assonance. And there are these things. They have a flow, and there is a poetic assonance and consonance in them that makes them better. When you translate, this is all lost. So for instance, he said about his brother, "Mein bruder ist eine komische Mischung zwischen ka Kunstler und ka

Kaufmann." Now you see, this komische Mischung, and ka Kun and ka Kau--this is so alliterative, and consonnant, it makes it so much better than when you translate it and say he was a funny mixture between no artist and no merchant. You know, the meaning of it is still very good; it is there, but it isn't as well coined.

Very often, it was like a game in our parties that he would characterize on the piano the people that were there, and it was just uncanny how he could with a few melodies characterize a person [so] that you would think, he comes into the room and you see him. Anyway, he had that gift of really seeing to the bottom of your heart. And when he looked at you, he knew you and knew everything about you. And there was a strange thing about him, that for instance he could take a letter, and he had never seen the person, and [yet he] could describe that person, exactly how he was, and not only the exterior of the person but what he was thinking and what his character was. And he had never studied graphology or even been interested; it just sprang out of the pages to him. And so when he met you he also had that feeling, he knew who you were. This sometimes created enemies, because when you were a good person, you saw yourself as he saw you, and you liked what you saw. It was like a mirror. When you were not so nice, you also saw that, and all of a sudden you saw yourself as a contemptible person. You didn't like that, and so you didn't like Eric.

COLE: I see. It's clear that Eric needed some kind of extramusical stimulus to get his fires burning. With the song, obviously the poem was inspirational. But as time goes on, we'll see that plays, stories, liturgical works, and even art works inspire music above and beyond song.

ZEISL: Yes. As I told you, it was very important for him to have a stimul[us], and usually it came from the word, but not really always. Sometimes very outside stimuli would translate themselves then through the medium of the song or of the poem. For instance, it's hard to believe, but the "Stündlein wohl vor Tag," which is so eerie--when he brought it to me and played it to me and I was the first to hear it, he said, "You know, this morning I saw this pigeon on the windowsill." And you know, nothing in the poem or in the [song] would relate to such a thing. But it was maybe a bird or something, and then he got stirred by it. It was, of course, an expression of the mood he was in at that time, because he was in an extreme anxiety. Our relationship was--I will speak about this later.

COLE: What factors affected his choice of a poem? Was there any common denominator?

ZEISL: Well, there was constant turmoil in his soul. He was very restless and very, very unhappy most of the time. And I think, for instance, he looked for texts that would give him quiet. He was kind of trying to heal himself. And therefore that he made so many night songs was like

he would give himself a medicine and quiet down this stormy soul of his. He loved especially, for instance, the first night song, "I Wander through the Silent Night" [Sechs Lieder]. It expressed the feelings that he had at this time, and they were pretty much the same, but especially strong in his views where everything was unsolved, so to say. Was [that] what you wanted to know?

COLE: One thing that amazed me is the broad taste he had in selecting poets. I see a little bit more clearly now. Some of his friends brought poems. Did he read widely, too, searching for texts?

ZEISL: No, that was the funny thing. I think he had very good taste in his selections. Whenever he composed something, they were mostly of a much above-average lyrical and poetic quality. And yet he was not a reader at all. I very often made fun of him because I am a very ardent reader and he was never reading. He was, of course, all the time reading, but scores. He was a one-track person. I think he never knew the real contents of Lohengrin. I think he knew the score from A to Z, every note of it, but in this way the text didn't interest him. But he had this feeling for text and for real quality. For instance, I think the only book that he had read up to then--later on, here in America he read quite a bit, especially in the last years of his life--but then I was always kidding him that the only book he had ever read was [Wilhelm] Hauff's

Märchen. He loved fairy tales, and this was one of his favorites. But at the same time he could--and would do it for fun--imitate Schiller or Goethe, but in such a way that you would think they had written this thing. He needed not much to get the gist of something and knew exactly what made it. I think that for quality most of his texts are very well chosen.

COLE: Yes. Beginning with this set of three songs, Zeisl comes upon the stage, as it were, and is recognized. From the year 1922 to about 1930 we see a continuing and growing recognition of his talents in Vienna and beyond. In the dissemination of this material, one needs performers. Who were some of the singers who performed these works over the years?

ZEISL: Well, he was very lucky already with the first three songs, because [Hans] Duhan There you see the power of the publishing houses. A private person hardly ever gets to a performer, but the publishing houses have an in. Strache approached Duhan, and Duhan liked it and performed them. Immediately, the year they came out, they were performed by him in the concert. He gave only one concert a year, and he included these songs in his concert, which was a great honor. And I think it must have given Eric great encouragement. You know, in between all these disappointments, there were always these certain things that kept Eric going, that told him that there must

be something that was true behind what he thought and that he should continue.

And so there were of course a number of younger singers and performers that would take material like this, but they were not known themselves, and it was always kind of a struggle. Usually it was done like this, that the composer was promising to sell so-and-so many tickets, and this made part of the concert possible. And I remember at one time when my friend Lizzi and I had taken some tickets to sell for Eric, and then we left and went skiing and forgot all about it. It was the trio [Piano Trio Suite in B Minor] which was dedicated to Lizzi. And my father wrote me and told us that Eric had come to his place of business and asked for the money because he had to deliver it. And we had the money but we hadn't delivered it. And he said, "The beautiful Lizzi, the trio is dedicated to her, but not its proceeds," and that we should send the money, which we then did. But this was terrible for Eric because he had no money; and there he was responsible for it, and it must have been quite a situation that he went to my father for it.

There were a number of very important singers that sang him. Shortly before we left, I think it was in the year '35 or '36, [Oscar] Jölili sang a cycle, a whole cycle, the Night Songs--you know, all these baritone songs [Sechs Lieder]. And he commented how beautiful they are, and how

happy he was finally to sing something that seemed so worthwhile to him, and how sad it was that he couldn't do them in Germany. He was German and was really very much known in Germany, and he was very, very upset about the fact that he couldn't sing them in Germany anymore. [Alexander] Kipnis came to Vienna, and Eric at that time, I have mentioned it, had a disciple--or what you would call it--a Baron Gompertz. He was a rich man who lived on his income. He didn't do any work. He was a typical aristocrat of--how [do] you describe them?--very much for the arts, very interested in but not doing a bit of work. And he perished because he could not face going out of Vienna and could not face doing any trade or anything, so he just stayed there and perished. But he was very interested in Eric's music, and he had this knowhow of course--born as an aristocrat and very much of a society man, he felt free to approach anybody. And so he went with the songs to Kipnis, and Kipnis liked them and sang them. But I think if Eric had come, he would never have succeeded even to be admitted into his presence. There was a very beautiful young singer--I don't know what became of her--Tatjana Menotti, who sang his Children's Songs [Kinderlieder]. And there were others whose names I have forgotten.

The Children's Songs were the most performed. And it was very moving to me (because they were all the time performed in Vienna, and Eric would usually accompany them

himself) that when we came to America and long years passed by, they were given on the Evenings on the Roof, and Eric accompanied them here, too. When he came on the stage, it became obvious to me how many years had passed, because his temples were gray, and I saw him yet as a young man performing them in Vienna. In the meantime maybe ten or more years had passed, and there was like an older person coming on the stage, like it was somebody different.

COLE: Getting back to the three songs, it's interesting to me that two of them represent very different poles of Eric's character. Perhaps we could talk a little bit about the first song of this set, called "Armseelchen," a piece that you said is almost a symbol of Eric's own life.

ZEISL: Ja, really it is, I think. And he felt that probably as a child, because he said that he composed that when he was only a child, maybe nine or ten years old. Probably the harmonization was refined later, around 1920.

COLE: Here he is only sixteen and it's published.

ZEISL: Ja. And it is a very simple song, as you know, almost like a fairy tale, but it has this aspect of something very moving going on and nobody paying attention, and that not even a light would shine at the funeral of this little soul that was buried, and that the children were singing, that the wild animals were crying, but the

important thing was not happening, and this was very typical of his life.

COLE: And symbolically, too, especially in light of our last interview, this song is dedicated to his mother.

ZEISL: Well, that was a lifelong wound. She was very strange. I remember we were young married, and it was the first time that we had come back from the honeymoon, and it was the first time that his parents came to the house. And he had at that time composed Leonce und Lena, or was in the middle of it. He didn't know any other way to please somebody than to play his music. How should he honor his parents? That was synonymous. And so he went to the piano and he played that. And the mother shook her head and said, "I hope you will sometime make a good operetta." And it was like a slap in his face; she could not see anything else. I think she had She was a very clever and smart woman, but she was like a chicken that could only see the corn before it. She had no far-sightedness, or no view of the world, and she was only worried about what was before her, and the next day, and these things.

Now, the father, though he was probably seen as a little dumb by the people, had this ingredient: he could see the world. He could see ahead. And so it was always disappointing, and the two, Eric and his mother, were always up in arms. I think that when you speak of the

songs, many of them, not only the "Armseelchen," are in some way autobiographical, as in the Night Songs and "Aus dem Walde tritt die Nacht" ["Die Nacht," Gilm], all this disorder in his soul. But also the portrayal, for instance, in the "Stilleben." I think there was a scene that Eric and his brother very often enacted, and they enacted the father and the mother discussing Eric and the mother nagging. And he must have been impossible, but it was because she didn't understand him. And so she would always say, "Das halt' ich nicht aus!" "I can't stand that any longer, and the boy must get out of the house! I can't stand that! I can't stand that!" And the way of the music really imitated the mother. I never saw her like this. She behaved very well with me. But all the children kind of made fun of her--they would say, "The lovely voice of Mama," and so on, indicating that she probably shrieked most of the time when she talked with them. But it was almost like he had composed it [sings tune of "Stilleben"], this nagging wife in the "Stilleben." It was almost just copies from how she spoke.

COLE: In the "Armseelchen," we see Eric's ability to capture a mood concisely. We see the accompaniment as an equal partner with the voice. We see many things that will be typical of his songs throughout his life. Perhaps most typical, we see a gift for lyrical, expressive melody. Did Eric ever say how a melody came to him? It's a magical

process, we know. Beethoven has talked about it a bit.

Did Eric ever?

ZEISL: I don't think he talked about it too much. It came at different times, but mostly it came when it was supposed to come, because he--it is strange that such a wild and stormy person was in other ways very pedantic. You should have seen his workroom. There was not a pencil that was in disarray. And he was very, very tidy and almost pedantic, and so also were his work habits. And because he always gave lessons in the afternoon, he had kind of trained himself to work in the morning. He went to the piano and began. But there were times when absolutely nothing would come, and it would make him extremely unhappy, because then he would think that it would never come. And he could not force it at all, and it either came or it didn't. And when it didn't come, then he was unable to work and could do nothing. Now, he had a number of sketchbooks (I still have some here), and in part they contain the nucleus to what is later a composition and existed, but I do not really know how he used them and if he used them during the day. I have never observed him do that.

About outward stimuli, sometimes it was--for instance, the Requiem [Concertante], the big Requiem. We had a great political upheaval in Austria, in which a man by the name of [Engelbert] Dollfuss, of [whom] you may have heard, suppressed the Socialists, and it was like a civil war.

There was shooting in the streets, and there were many dead. And that is when Eric began the Requiem. But the Viennese forget quickly. The thing quieted down, and everybody went to the Heurigen, which is the place where you drink wine, and everything was quite happy. And so after working feverishly on the first part, the whole mood of the city went back to normal, and he couldn't compose any more. It was impossible for him. And he had one of those times where he couldn't compose at all. And then Dollfuss himself was killed, and there was another uprising of the Nazis at that time, and he was killed under very pitiful circumstances. He had a mortal wound and they hovered over him. They didn't let any doctor come in, and he slowly bled to death, and it was really quite a horrible thing. And then Eric continued.

COLE: Finished it. That's amazing.

ZEISL: Ja. So it was really absolutely outward stimulus.

COLE: The opposite pole from "Armseelchen" is the third of this set, "Neck und Nymphe," which is a marvelous early example of a comic song. Maybe we can talk a little bit about Eric's sense of humor.

ZEISL: I think that his sense of humor was one of the most marked features that he had. I remember quite a few things, but I constantly meet people who remember this or that of him which I have forgotten. He never told a joke or even remembered a joke. He made them up himself. His

coinages were so funny that you really could remember them, like Hilde Spiel remembered the melodies. They were really quite unique and original sayings. He had a real sense of humor. He was not witty; he was humorous. And, of course, the humor in a little child, or the humor in an animal, as Disney, for instance, caught it so well--you know, the quack-quack of the duck or something like this--he had this kind of humor, a humor of portrayal. Or he could, as I have told you with the example of his brother Willi, coin a phrase. He would characterize me, for instance. I am so absent-minded. All our young marriage, I was trying very hard to be a good Hausfrau and so on. And so he said, "My wife is the best Hausfrau. Every schilling is turned three times and then lost." [laughter] In German it's much funnier. "[Jede Schilling] wird dreimal umgedreht und . . . dann verloren." It's funny. But it characterizes me so very much, so excellently. And he had sayings like this. And of course his humor was sometimes--it was never bitter, but it was sometimes sharp, and then it would run into the grotesque, like in the "Grabschrift" ("Mimulus, ein Affe") or the "Stilleben."

COLE: We'll talk about those as we go along. One other manifestation of the year 1922 is a little unpublished song called "Vale." It's not the most memorable song, but it is the earliest preserved example of an unpublished song, and this might be the [place] to mention that Zeisl

has a large, large number of these.

ZEISL: Ja. Well, he was quite fond of this song, and it was in a way a kind of autobiographical song because it pictures his very unhappy love to my friend Lizzi, who was at that time not my friend (I didn't even know her yet). She later entered our circle, and we became very good friends. She was very, very beautiful. This song pictures a monk who must renounce his love and gives his heart to the bells which ring out, plays the evening chimes, and in this he sings out his love. And so it was somehow reminding of Eric, who did the same with music. This Lizzi was a very great experience for him, a very unhappy one. And he did go into psychoanalysis after that experience because it really must have disturbed him to the point where he was unable to work and

COLE: [whistles] I hadn't known that. Two things strike me about this large amount of unpublished material. One, certainly there is a large number of pathétique songs. Is this again in large degree autobiographical?

ZEISL: It is. It is. And when you speak of his humor, then I would say that humor is usually just the other side of melancholy. And the most humorous people are very melancholic offstage, in their daily lives. And so he had a melancholy streak, and it was very justified because his life was very unhappy. And as I said, many of his songs are very autobiographical, because there he was with this

extremely sensitive nervous system, which was very unfortunate. It probably belonged to the trade, but it was also a very hard thing to cope with. And with that he had all this strength that he had to expend for his daily life. It was just like a very fine racehorse that has to pull a coal wagon, because he had to earn his living. Can you imagine a person with such ears who has to teach little children who play every note wrong? Think what that must have been.

COLE: And at the same dynamic level always.

ZEISL: Ja. Yet he was so patient, and children just adored him.

COLE: And then of course the other question which we can perhaps attempt to answer is, why were not more of these marvelous songs published?

ZEISL: Well, part of it was that it was the time of the Depression, so nobody took time to look at them. And then it was Hitler. From his twenty-fifth year on, where Eric really emerged, Hitler was in Germany, which means that no song could be published there, and no songs could be sung there. Therefore, even the Austrian publishers didn't like to publish anything by a person who could not be sold in Germany, because there was the market. And so it was extremely difficult to place something. It was really quite hopeless. Eric often told me that Schubert had difficulty selling his songs, but he got one gulden when he sold it. But Eric got nothing, and he couldn't even

place it for nothing, because at that time it was just impossible to place.

COLE: Once again he was a victim of unfortunate circumstance--as so often.

ZEISL: Ja, the circumstances were certainly very much against him. The Depression was against him. Then nothing would go. And then Hitler was a special thing, and that he came so early in Eric's life. The other composers, all the ones whose names you know, had already established themselves. They were about ten years older, and more, than Eric. So they were already published; they were already established. And when they came to America, they had an established name. And for Eric that was very difficult. He was just emerging. In normal times, I think he would have certainly become famous in the next ten years.

COLE: Yes, I agree. In the year 1924 two new things happened. I understand that he, while still a teenager, produced his first dramatic effort. This is an early opera that I haven't seen.

ZEISL: Ja, it was called The Sin [Die Sünde], and it was taken from a little Boccaccio story. And it is about a young--how do you call? they are not knights yet--page, a page who is in love with his lady. And they pray together, and the prayer becomes a love scene. Just about the time when Eric entered our circle, he had finished this, and this great love song in which they

end, this duet, was a constant number to which we were treated. I have read somewhere where Oscar Levant, I think, said that an evening with Gershwin was a Gershwin evening. Well, it was very similar with Eric. He would begin with other composers, and then it would invariably end with himself, and he would play his own composition, and we were his audience.

COLE: I see. And already we see him attempting the larger dramatic forms that he will undertake very successfully in future years. The other thing new in this year is a piece, a suite for piano actually, called Die Heinzelmännchen. This is an early example of instrumental music. Maybe we can talk about it a bit.

ZEISL: Well, unfortunately I don't know anything about it. Eric never played it to me or to any one of us. It must have been behind him already at the time he entered our circle.

COLE: It is interesting that again it's an extramusical kind of influence, a programmatic nature. Perhaps we can mention what ein Heinzelmännchen is.

ZEISL: Ein Heinzelmännchen is a little dwarf. They are supposed to be quite helpful to man. [There exist] lots of stories in which the tailor has work to finish, and he's already so tired and goes to sleep, and the Heinzelmännchen come and they finish it. And in the morning, to his great surprise, everything is done for him. They always perform

these impossible tasks for persons that they favor, but sometimes they can be mischievous. Like Rumpelstiltskin is such a Heinzelmannchen.

COLE: So here again we see something consistent with something we discussed the other day, that in these early years it was difficult for Eric to think in terms of abstract musical forms. He takes a programmatic

ZEISL: Ja, ja, that was his love. But I think Stravinsky was similar in this respect.

COLE: Yes. Also beginning in 1924, and continuing as long as Eric remained in Vienna, was a large number of reviews in a tremendously wide range of periodicals. The thing that impressed me is the favorable reception that one finds in papers intended for a wide variety of readerships.

ZEISL: Well, for one thing, you must understand that the Viennese took their music seriously, and that music was really a very important part of their daily life. So, for instance, a review of an opera or of the last concert appeared on the front page of the most important papers. And the music critic of any newspaper was one of the most known and feared personalities of the editorial staff. We had a great, great number of newspapers at that time. And they all felt it their duty towards their readership to review concerts and would faithfully go to these concerts, and it was news, and it was read. So this is one part of it. The second part of it is that Eric--I don't want to

sound like I say this because I'm his wife or something, but it was the truth--that when on a whole concert one song of his was played, it was usually the one that made the evening, so to speak. Everybody felt it in this way. And it even happened here, when his song cycle, the Children's Songs, were played on the Evenings on the Roof. This is usually a very intellectual audience that is not given to much applauding or demonstration. And they applauded so much that it had to be repeated. And again, what the critics wrote most about of the evening was it. He had something that--in German we called it Zünden. It put an audience to flame.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 4, 1975

COLE: We ran out of tape as I was [about to] say that the scrapbooks function as a marvelous research tool. I certainly hope that people become aware that these are available. [They contain] reviews [from] most, if not all, of his career. You have them arranged chronologically, and one sees an amazing variety of journal and critic and the favorable response to Eric's compositions. Moving ahead a couple of years, we could talk about unpublished songs in 1925-26. But we find something new in 1927, namely, a song cycle. This is a cycle of four songs, on a text called Aus der Hirtenflöte, by a poet named [Karl] Kobald. I had never heard this name before. Can you tell me a little bit about him and perhaps about the cycle?

ZEISL: Ja, he was an elderly man, a Hofrat, very typical. The Hofrat is a very typical thing of Austria. It is a man who has served in the government service and has gotten to a higher rank. And most of these, especially in Austria, were very cultured people who dabbled in the arts, aside, because their offices left them a lot of time. And he befriended Eric. Because it was before my time, I really don't know how he got to know Eric, but he must have been quite taken by his gift and probably was an admirer and audience for Eric, and Eric was very grateful for this because he had so little response from his family, as you

know, and of the world yet. And so he gave Eric this cycle of his poems, and Eric composed quite a few--not only this cycle, but I think he composed a great many of these songs. I think they were also performed, because immediately when he wrote something there was usually some performance possible, but not all of these performances were of the same importance, naturally. When they were played--when a Duhan sang something, it was the Grosse Konzertsaal, and it was heard and then also reviewed very extensively. Or when the radio brought something, that was an excellent opportunity to get your name known, because at this time radio provided almost the only entertainment that was possible for people at home, and they were home a great deal, especially since the time was Depression. Also, it was a great thing to be performed on the radio because the radio paid for it, and that was important to a composer. Otherwise I don't know much about it, because when Eric entered our specific circle, he did not see him anymore. Either the man had died, or I don't know what had happened. I never got to know him.

COLE: The year 1928 sees two significant compositions. The first of these is a piano trio. Is this an early example of absolute music?

ZEISL: Ja, I think that is one where he tried, and I think successfully tried, to go into bigger forms and also into what you call abstract music, without lied.

But the stimulus for this was his love for Lizzi. The trio was dedicated to her, and the trio was very successful from the start. A very good young group of players took it under its wing. I think the pianist was Edith Wachtel, and the violinist was called [Georg] Steiner, I think. They were excellent musicians, and they travelled with it, and they went to Hungary and Yugoslavia and Rumania and so on; so it was played not only in Austria but also, so to say, in foreign countries. And always it received very favorable reviews. I heard it several times, which is an indication that it was performed quite a bit, because this was before my time--composed long before Eric entered my life, so to say. And when I have heard it, it means that it had staying power and was even later performed after it was composed.

COLE: One significant component it contains is a theme and variations movement. I say "significant" because this is the first manifestation I know of a baroque form used in the works of Eric Zeisl, and we're going to find baroque forms surfacing again and again in practically every major [work] he was to compose. When did this interest in baroque procedures surface? What can you tell us about this?

ZEISL: Really, I think it was always there. It was a wish, a desire, something Eric was striving for. And why the baroque influence? I think it is there in Vienna wherever you go. You have these baroque buildings and

I think the baroque time is a time of intense religiosity, and Eric was a religious person by nature. And the counter-point was something that had eluded him at first but that he was striving for, and I think successfully striving. I think he never completely attained mastery in the larger forms. Strangely enough, I think Stravinsky had the same problems and was always striving to do music--at least in our talks. He talked with Eric about it and said that it was a great problem for him, that he was striving and trying to attain it.

COLE: Could we mention the subsequent fate of this piece? I think there is a moral to be derived from the story.

ZEISL: Well, we took it to America and it was there; and then I don't quite know anymore the year, but it was the year in which Eric orchestrated a Tchaikovsky operetta for the Philharmonic for a fellow by the name of [Theodore] Bachenheimer, who was the producer. There was a young conductor by the name of Franz Steininger, who came from Vienna and who had heard of Eric. He had arranged melodies of Tchaikovsky to a simple love story. He came to Eric and wanted Eric to orchestrate that. And Eric got \$2,000 for that. And it was a great moment in our lives, because up to that [time], in our life in America, we had never seen that much money in one piece before. So Eric did it, and it was given to a man by the name of Rubinstein, I think, to copy. We became friendly in the exchange of the work

with him. And at one time he arranged [for] this trio to be played. (He was doing chamber music at his house.) And that is the last time I know that it was there, and it was played. And we never knew. Either Eric left it there, or I really don't know what happened after that, because it wasn't there afterwards.

COLE: The moral is, what a fragile link connects an unpublished work with posterity. If you have only one or two copies and they're lost

ZEISL: Absolutely. I think quite a few things got lost this way. I think Eric had many more songs than are there, because sometimes when he wanted to give or dedicate a song to somebody, like a present, he would take that song, and he was too lazy to copy it, and that was it.

COLE: They didn't have Xeroxes then.

ZEISL: No.

COLE: The second significant composition in 1928 is a marvelous cycle entitled Mondbilder. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about the poet of this cycle and the overall fascination with the moon that one finds in this piece and in many Viennese works in the earlier part of the century.

ZEISL: Well, Christian Morgenstern was a very famous poet of the time, and he was mostly famous not for his earnest songs but for very scurrile--I don't know if that is an English word. [tape recorder turned off] He had a whole volume of these scurrilous verses which were called Songs

of the Gallows (Galgenlieder). And to give you an example, one said, for instance, "A knee went wandering through the world; it was a knee and nothing else." This kind of thing. It was very strange and very good poetry. And this cycle had some of these traits of the scurrilous but was also partly serious. I think a friend gave the book to Eric, who was always in need and looking for good texts to compose. And the Moon Pictures were the result. He did them first for piano, and then he decided to orchestrate them. And at that time I think his art of orchestration developed to a point where it was masterful. That was one of the gifts that he didn't have to struggle with. It was always there; from the start, he got it.

COLE: Yes. Perhaps we should point out that he offered many optional accompaniments for songs and song cycles. You could accompany them with piano or with orchestra. Was he fortunate enough to hear many orchestral performances of his Mondbilder?

ZEISL: Ja, the radio performed it twice with the Symphoniker, and at one time I think it was Duhan who sang it again, the first time, and the second time another singer. I think his name was [Ernst] Urbach, but I don't quite remember. But the program would tell you what it was, when it was played over the radio. The orchestration was wonderful, and Eric was very pleased with it, because sometimes, in rehearsals. . . . Here, I think the musicians

are much better at sight-reading. You will seldom have these first reading debacles. The Viennese are wonderful musicians, and the orchestra had a wonderful way of playing when the thing was rehearsed, but they are used to about twelve rehearsals or something. (That's the least, if not more.) So at the first rehearsal they do not have this intensity. [It] doesn't matter too much. So sometimes at the first rehearsal the thing sounded awful, and Eric would come to me, and he was gray with perplexity and fright. "I can't orchestrate," he said, "I can't!" And then when the thing developed, it turned out that it was just like he wanted it to be.

COLE: If we get back to the moon in this particular cycle, is there any comparison, do you think, between Eric's version and Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, or are they attempting different things?

ZEISL: Well, I think they both depict the moon, but otherwise they are completely different. Because Schoenberg's piece, to me at least, is really a break away from earth, so to say, up into the stratosphere. And you really have the feeling when you hear Pierrot Lunaire, and it must have struck everybody, especially at that time. (Now the stratosphere is something familiar.) Well, in these Moon Pictures--though they are, I think, very original and very personal--Eric is looking at the moon as a person on earth looks at the moon, and maybe the only thing that is not

different there (and which is already in the poetry) [is] that the moods are so different and are really hardly from the day, but have a dreamy quality and bring in mythology and the Austral native, etc. So it isn't really the average person that looks at the moon. It has a kind of eerie quality there. And of course, a great sense of humor is there.

COLE: Yes. We might mention [that] it is a cycle for baritone, one that certainly could be revived with some profit.

ZEISL: Oh, I think they are marvelous songs.

COLE: The year 1929 witnesses a major breakthrough in the composition of a large dramatic work, entitled Pierrot in der Flasche. To get into this piece, we might talk a little about the figure of the Pierrot in general at that time.

ZEISL: Well, I think it wasn't so much Eric that looked for the Pierrot, but he was always looking for texts, and so I think this Mr. [Zdenko] Kestranek, who was the singing teacher of his brothers and therefore also knew Eric quite intimately and knew of his need and was dabbling in literature, decided to make a text for Eric. And he read [Gustav] Meyrink, who was a very popular poet at that time and who also had this sense of the scurrilous and the absurd that we find in Morgenstern, only he wrote prose. And so Kestranek chose that particular little novelette.

COLE: This was called The Man in the Bottle.

ZEISL: Ja, ja. I read it sometime. I have again forgotten if the person in the novelette is also a Pierrot, but I forgot.

COLE: He's in the costume of a Pierrot. He's a prince who's been dallying with the Sultan's wife. So he's in a Pierrot costume.

ZEISL: Pierrot costume, ja. So this was more or less incidental. And Eric, if it were not a Pierrot, would also have composed it. What I think is interesting and special to Eric is that this ballet contains a song, because the Pierrot or the lover or whatever you would call this figure, comes with a serenade, and the serenade is really one of the best pieces of the ballet. He comes from backstage with that song.

COLE: So perhaps it [represents] a sense of frustration in not having an operatic text. Another thing we can point out is that the original score, which you and I have studied, has an amazingly complete and detailed libretto, more so than I had seen in a ballet; this also seems like opera.

ZEISL: Ja. It was interesting that that piece, when it was played over the radio--the conductor was a man by the name of Karl Alvin, who was a conductor of the Viennese State Opera and a very fine musician and a friend of Richard Strauss. And Richard Strauss had often played

his compositions to him, he told us, and had harkened to what he would say about it and sometimes change even. And when Kabasta, who was the director of the radio, gave him this piece to play, he called Kabasta and said he didn't want to play it because he didn't know Eric's name and he, being a famous conductor, wasn't going to play the thing of an unknown. And it was to Kabasta's merit that he said, "Just look at the score before you turn it down." (All this is what Alvin told Eric.) And he then looked at the score, and he was just amazed and conducted it and loved it. And he thought very, very great things of Eric.

My mother--I have never mentioned that Eric always had somebody who was against him. And in the picture of me and Eric, it was my mother. She didn't want to hear about this thing at all. You know, like the grandmother who had said, "He lives in this delusion." [If] I told her that he had a performance, she would say, "That's what he tells you," or something like this. She wouldn't even believe it. She was this negative figure that always appears in his life. And we were in St. Wolfgang, in the Salzkammergut, and Eric came there, and we met Alvin. And my mother was there, too. And he put his hand on his shoulder and he said, "This will be a great man. He has a great future before him." That was the first time that my mother heard that from somebody whose judgment she couldn't doubt. So that was Pierrot in the Flask, this

piece. It brought Eric a great friend. But unfortunately, when we came to America, Alvin went to Mexico, and he died there very soon afterwards. Because he would certainly have done something for Eric.

COLE: Was the complete ballet ever performed?

ZEISL: No, it was never performed as a ballet. And Eric then made the suite out of it and orchestrated it, and as the suite it was played.

COLE: I see. Wasn't Eric to do this many times? He didn't want to waste a scrap of material, and he would take the best movements and make suites.

ZEISL: Ja. This was a kind of a practical thing, because he wanted it to be performed. He didn't want to have done it in vain. And there was a possibility, because symphonic music had a greater possibility than ballet at that time.

COLE: In this piece one sees many Zeisl characteristics [which will be] developed increasingly. You've mentioned this quality of the grotesque and one certainly sees it in this composition.

ZEISL: Yes, absolutely. That is very strongly there, and also already in the Moon Pictures.

COLE: Yes. And we see the use of the fugue [for four giant toucans], another baroque procedure and a procedure that was quite difficult for Eric to master. Isn't it somewhat innovative or unusual to use fugues in dramatic works?

ZEISL: I think it is. I couldn't say it haunted him, but it was something that he desired and loved to do. And so he did it whenever he could. I think it was as if he would do repentance for his youth, where his teachers wanted him to do this kind of exercises, and he wouldn't hear of it or wouldn't do it. And the moment he got mature enough, then he would do it on his own.

COLE: It's a shame this piece was never performed, because it would have been delightful to see the four giant birds dancing the fugue.

ZEISL: Ja, I think it has a very interesting text.

COLE: Yes, it's fascinating. They actually took the Meyrink story, which had been set in one time and place, and updated it considerably. Was there any sort of jazz influence or American influence here?

ZEISL: Well, the circle in which Eric and my friend Fritz Kramer and all moved--they were absolutely crazy about jazz. It was at the time when jazz became very fashionable. You know that Milhaud wrote a jazz piece and that Stravinsky was influenced by it--it was a very strong influence of the time. It came over like a wave from America, and it caught the fancy of all the young people and composers.

COLE: It seems to me that in some of the characters in this ballet, Charlie and Li perhaps, one sees an almost American flapper type of influence.

ZEISL: Oh, yes, yes, definitely. Eric loved, for instance, when An American in Paris and the Rhapsody in Blue came over, and when Eric was enthusiastic about it--and he knew the Rhapsody in Blue--he knew it by heart. He could play it from the first to the last note, which he often did at that time.

COLE: It seems to me that there are a few other components in this ballet that are worth mentioning because they show Eric's ability in different dimensions: as an orchestral and a descriptive composer. I understand that the "Dance of the Bats" became quite popular.

ZEISL: Ja. That was a very impressive piece, I think, and it was very weird and rhythmical and yet very melodic at the same time. And I think the orchestration in the ballet is very masterful.

COLE: It's outstanding. Whenever possible, Eric tried to score for a large symphony orchestra, didn't he? The outcome of the romantic tradition.

ZEISL: Ja, he did, but he also has quite a few chamber pieces. The older he got, the more he tried to say it with the most thrifty means and, even when he orchestrated for full orchestra, have only one instrument play at a time, instead of the full orchestra. He was talking about this and pointing it out that he was striving for this. When I say that orchestration was born with him and that it was easy for him, one should still not imagine that it

was easy, because I would sometimes come into the room where he was orchestrating, and I would notice that his forehead was swollen, that there were actually like big bumps over his brows. And that was from the mental effort of the orchestration.

COLE: He had a gift for it, but it still was not an easy task. There are two other movements that strike me because they illustrate things we've talked about already, and one can see them now in the concrete. The "Festmusik," for example, is a marvelous bit of ceremonious music. You've talked about the Prater before, and this must still have been with him then.

ZEISL: I think so. This kind of grand gesture, that depicting a king, appears in many of his pieces. It is the love for the stage, I think, that inspired that.

COLE: We've established a picture of Eric as the romantic figure, the person always in love but rarely successful in love. Might this have [occasioned] the lushness and exoticism which he [brought to] his "Love Dance"? [It is] certainly a marvelous example of sensuous, rich orchestration.

ZEISL: Ja, I must say that he was an extremely sensuous person. And of course, his loves were completely without luck. He was a person to whom sex was very necessary, and I thank my stars that he never became a victim of some dread disease, because he certainly had all the opportunities

for this and took them to get it. He was running wild. He was a rather wild person. [tape recorder turned off] He had no restraints or inhibitions. When he thought he needed something, that had to be so. And I think probably it was partly due to that that he was so unlucky in his real loves, because the young girls to whom he addressed all these feelings were not ready for this kind of thing, and so he had to go to the kind of worst paid thing because he was very poor. Knowing as I now do that Schubert and Schumann and Beethoven were all victims of these dread diseases (because they probably had similar temperaments), I really am very happy that he was spared this one thing. So love music came natural to him.

COLE: In the year 1930, which I think we'll use as the terminal year [of] this first period--[Zeisl's recognition] by the Viennese public--two compositions certainly should be discussed. The first is a set of pieces called Three African Choruses. It came as a surprise to me to find an Austrian composer in 1930 setting black American poetry to music. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about the impact of this poetry as it appeared translated in a volume called Afrika Singt.

ZEISL: I think this is very fine poetry, and Eric always reacted immediately when poems were good. He had a natural feeling for it, a natural sense. It isn't necessary for a musician to have that, but he seemed

to have had it and, though he was not a literary person, a great deal [of it]. Now, the poems were usually given to him by somebody--some of his friends, who were literary people and read a lot and therefore knew of new trends or appearances by publishers and so on. And then they would think of him, who was always in need of this and could so easily be stimulated. It needed not much. He always wanted to compose. And so some friend gave him this book, and he immediately set about to compose it. And it could have been that at that time--since his father was a member of the Merchants' Singing Academy and the brothers were both singers--there was an outlet for him, where he knew that he could get a performance. The conductor of the singing academy, a man by the name of Julius Katay, was very impressed with Eric and liked his music very much and usually performed what he brought to him. And so he immediately performed this.

COLE: This was a vocal group that was part of a tradesmen's guild?

ZEISL: Ja, like this. And it meant a great deal to the father. It was, so to say, his life. And his sons would kind of kid him about it. (You know, he was so simple; he was almost that simple that he would believe everything.) So they would say, "Today I met a Mr. So-and-so, and he said you will be expelled from the singing academy!" "Oh, what have I done? How come?" And he was just beside

himself. Then they told him that it was just a joke. But you can imagine when they made these jokes that this was a very important thing to him. He loved it. And so this singing academy did it. And I think the first performance, if I'm not mistaken, was in the Burggarten, which was a beautiful setting for it. I think you have seen the Burggarten. It's a very beautiful garden next to the big palace. And the summer evenings are so lovely. I remember it was at a time when I was just friends with Eric, nothing started between us yet. And I was in Reichenau with my parents, because it was around Whitsuntide, and I went in with the train and left earlier just in order to hear that concert. Because our circle was really very much taken with Eric--it was all very important to us.

COLE: I gather [that] this premiere was part of a festival week. Perhaps you could explain a little bit about this Musik Festwochen.

ZEISL: Vienna was always a music city. I really don't know the historical context and who had the idea, but this Festwochen idea developed. May and June was festival time in Vienna. And before Hitler appeared, a lot of Singvereins came for it, from Germany especially. And they performed there with their singing groups, because all over Germany you had these singing groups. (That is a very typical German thing, to belong to a singing academy.) The teachers have their singing group.

COLE: They have men's and women's and mixed choruses.

ZEISL: And mixed, and everything. And it's a way of life there. And so it was really a very fine performance there in the Burggarten. It was something, an achievement that he was happy about. It was done with orchestra.

COLE: As far as you know, this was one of his earliest choral ventures, wasn't it?

ZEISL: Ja. And I think [that] out of the cycle, it was this song ["Harlemer Nachtlied"] that Fritz Kramer always told me about before I knew Eric. He was so fond of that song, and thought it was marvelous, and told me a great deal about it, and then thought I should meet Eric.

COLE: There were ultimately three components in this group of choruses. The critics recognized Zeisl's ability to write for chorus. There are some marvelous reviews about the way he handles the human voice.

ZEISL: When I remember it now, the voices sounded like orchestra voices. It sounded like an orchestra.

COLE: Do you know the extent of Eric's interaction at that time with other composers who set these same texts? It turns out, as you know from my research, [that] I've discovered six composers.

ZEISL: Ja. He didn't know of any of them.* No, he didn't. Maybe he heard later on of [Wilhelm] Grosz, because Grosz was also in Vienna.

*Zeisl did know one of them, Fritz Kramer. [M.C.]

COLE: It's rather striking that six composers would set these texts to music within a year of their appearance.

ZEISL: Ja, it just shows you the impact that book had.

COLE: Yes. Hilde Spiel said it sent shock waves through her literary circles at that time. Each piece, I think, has something worth discussing. The "Harlem Night Song" is one of his greatest choruses, a magnificent piece which we hope to hear recorded on tape in revival pretty soon. There are two things associated with the other choruses that I think are worth commenting [about]. One, we've talked about Zeisl's ability to capture the essence of a text, how he was always searching for a text. What happened in the "Arabeske"?

ZEISL: Well, the "Arabeske" was completely misconceived, so to say, by Eric, and that wasn't his fault but the translator's fault. He had translated "swinging in a tree," as schaukeln. And schaukeln meant "rocking."

And so Eric translated a picture of a black man who was holding two babies and rocking in a tree, and the whole thing very merry and happy and full of sunlight, while [really in the original] it was a stark contrast between the two little children--one black, one white--who love each other and kiss each other, and in the tree the black man's swinging, the victim of a lynch mob. And this went completely by his understanding and, I think, the others that composed it, likewise, because schaukeln, in Vienna,

just doesn't bring up that picture of hanging.

COLE: Two other composers set a very similar mood, a happy one basically.

ZEISL: Besides, we also probably didn't know too much about this.

COLE: Isn't it true that once Eric had come to America, he received a communication from Frank Horne, the author of this poem?

ZEISL: Yes, I tried very hard, because I could not find this poem in the libraries. (I found the [Langston] Hughes poem, the original. And I saw that the "Love Song" ["Harlem Night Song"], for instance, is a little bit different, but Eric had left out something.) I found other poems by Horne, and so I wrote to the publisher, and the publisher brought me into contact. Horne was at that time in Washington and had quite a fine position there, in the government, and--I forgot what it was.

COLE: He got into housing.

ZEISL: Ja, he was in some of the branches of the government in Washington, and he answered me and sent me the poem in its original text. But it was very hard to place these poems here because of this fact. And no publisher wanted to do it because the first one was miscomposed.

COLE: The other interesting facet is what happened to the third chorus, a marvelous Langston Hughes poem called "Aunt Sue's Stories." Once again the name Kestranek surfaces.

ZEISL: Yes. All his life, Eric was never sure of himself. The slightest remark of ever so unfit a person--if the maid in the kitchen [or] the cook would say, "I don't like that song," he would tear it up. And he had absolutely no real assurance or confidence. And that came from his background, where always in the family he had met with so much indifference or neglect or ridicule. And he had composed it and, I think, excellently composed it. It is a woman holding a child at her breast, and the music is very wild because the nature of the woman is very near to nature and not tamed or anything. And now Kestranek thought that was ridiculous. He thought the woman cannot be alone. That must be a whole bunch of people dancing. And so he immediately told Eric to forget that and he would change it. And so he invented the Dance of Kyulila, around whom the whole crowd is dancing, instead of just one moment of a mother rocking her child at her breast.

COLE: He even shifts the scene, doesn't he?

ZEISL: Ja. He shifted the scene to Africa, I think, instead of the back porch in Louisiana, or wherever it was. And Eric immediately consented, because that's the way he was. When I was going to marry him, his brother said to me, "Look here, I think you will be quite happy with Eric, but one thing I must tell you: when he says he comes at five o'clock and is on his way and he will meet somebody else who says, 'Go somewhere else,' he

will go somewhere else if that person is [persuasive] enough, and you will wait in vain." And it wasn't quite like this, later on, but he was like this: he was so easily persuaded. Probably, this way a lot of things were lost that should have lived.

COLE: The other composition from 1930, a piece that's quite different from the African Songs, is the First String Quartet. Now this is interesting from many points of view. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about how it was put together originally and what happened to the first two movements.

ZEISL: I'm not quite sure whether they are here or not, and I would have to look for them. Maybe they were lost, too.* He always wanted to write chamber music but never felt quite secure enough to do it. And to write the quartet, he went to [Hugo] Kauder, a teacher who had a lot of patience and was very nice. I think Eric appreciated him very much. And he brought Eric through that and he finished the quartet, which was something that Stöhr wasn't able to do. And Marx, I think, never attempted because Marx himself was mostly a lieder composer. And at that time he brought it to the Galimirs, who were a young, rising quartet and very good, and they took it and played it quite a bit. Now, among the performances was also a

*The movements in question were located. [M.C.]

performance in the league of composers. That was a league of the composers that lived in Austria, and that gave concerts periodically--not too often, maybe one or two times a year.

Eric had, of course, always, always tried to be published. He made numerous trips to the Universal Edition, and they always turned him down. And I can understand. He was such a wild fellow, and it was hard to see whether he was only crazy or really something. And he had no real approach and didn't know how to handle people and was always saying disagreeable things to them. And so nobody liked him there too much. There was one exception--a director, [Hugo] Winter, who was fond of him, but he didn't have too much influence. And the people that were influential there were usually people that came from the Schoenberg school, and they didn't really look at the thing. It was tonal, and that was enough for them not to look a second time. And so nobody listened or nobody knew. And this quartet was going to be played, and on the day before the performance, we went--on the Kohlmarkt is a marvelous shop with only cheeses; it's very famous. And Eric was, of course, always very fond of eating, and we went there and wanted to get a certain cheese for dinner, when we met one of the lower echelon people from the Universal Edition, a Mr. Roth. And Eric said, "Oh." And he greeted Eric, which pleased him very much already,

and so Eric said, "Listen, you are here, and tomorrow my quartet will be played. Why don't you go and hear it? You have never heard anything of mine, and nobody has, and you could really get an impression there." And so the man promised, and he really did come. And as I told you, when Eric's things were played they were always the hit of the evening, and so it was there, too. And the man was quite impressed. And he told the others about it, and then they said, "No, we don't need quartets, and we can't place quartets" (and of course Germany was out already), "but we will do it into a string suite, and only two pieces." So he took the Scherzo and Fugue, and he changed it a little bit to serve a string orchestra instead of just [a quartet]. And Universal printed it, and it became an instant hit. It was played by all of the radios. And [Alfred] Wallenstein, who was at that time the director of WOR in New York, played it and bought the parts. But the funny thing is, the moment Eric was here in Los Angeles and Wallenstein was here (the music director of the Philharmonic), he never played anything when it was easily available. It had to come from Austria when it was played. So this string quartet was really a very good thing for Eric because it gave him his first printing with U.E.

COLE: Isn't it true that the movements that were published were based on song themes?

ZEISL: Yes, they were, they were--not the Scherzo, but the trio of the Scherzo had the "Vergiss-mein-nicht," the "Forget-me-not." And the Fugue was made out of "The Donkey" of the [Sechs Lieder] baritone songs.

COLE: So here in this still formative stage of his career, we see him coming to grips finally with one of the formidable mediums, the string quartet, something that had been a test of composers, as was the symphony, ever since the classic period in Vienna. In summary, by the year 1930 we see Eric getting an increasing number of performances, increasing critical recognition, and even some feeling from publishers, finally. Perhaps this would be an appropriate place to conclude this interview. In the next interview, we can begin with a new period and some new directions.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 9, 1975

COLE: Before we get to the material at hand today, is there something you wish to add to the last interview?

ZEISL: Well, perhaps not add, but I think we have come to a point where I should go a little bit further into Eric's romances and loves, because pretty soon I will be a main character, which I haven't been so far. When I said that Eric joined our circle, you should understand that he was not really in the inner circle of my friends but lived more or less on the fringes. When we had a party he was invited, and it was because of his playing the piano and because he was very amusing.

But from time to time, as I told you, he was in love. And then he disappeared completely from our circle, because when he was in love he was totally in love and was then completely with that girl. I haven't met most of these girls. Only Lizzie I know because she later became a very good friend of mine. And she was in some ways far superior [to] the others. She was not only beautiful but also musical. She had studied the piano and was intelligent. But the others were little young girls--very much chicken-, goose-like. I mean, there was no intellectual interest. And I think they were very pretty, all of them, and that was the attraction they held for

Eric. And when he was in love with them, he was constantly with them, but he very rarely got what he wanted. And I think being in love was very necessary for him, for his creative output. When he did not succeed with them, it was almost as if he chose them not to succeed, because that was then sublimated in an outpouring of song, or some compositions; and he needed that. I think Richard Wagner did the same thing, and probably others, too.

Now, right at the time at which we stopped in the other reel, there appeared for the first time a woman--not a girl, but a woman--that he fell in love with and where he actually had an affair. She was a pianist. And she was not from Vienna; she was from Poland. I have never met her. Eric described her as being very, very beautiful, [with] long blonde hair and blue eyes, and quite voluptuous. And she must have been a little bit like a female Eric, a very wild and very sensuous person. And Eric was totally in love with her, but she was not the right one, and he knew that. And as time went on and he saw that she would become a drag, when the first great erotic rapture was gone, as it goes when love is fulfilled, then he noticed that she would not fit. When he was in love, he was always totally committed, so they meant to marry. Fortunately for him, since she was not from Vienna she was returning home to Poland to tell her parents, and Eric was supposed to go with her and then marry over

there. And there came, very handy I think, his awful fear, his phobia of traveling, which helped there. And when the day came that he was supposed to go with her on the train, he just refused. And there was nothing she could do, and she couldn't persuade him and finally went alone by herself, and he would never afterwards see her. And in this way she vanished.

The whole thing had kind of matured him, and he was not anymore this completely wild fellow that he had been before, where he really was like a strange something that didn't fit into society, or in our society at all. We regarded [him] with amusement but did not understand him, like some very strange creature altogether. He also had gone through analysis. And this did not do too much for him. For instance, it did not heal him, never healed him of his phobia of travelling. And he said he thought the reason his psychoanalyst, who was a direct student of Freud, did not succeed with him was that Freud was not musical, and therefore he never understood really the mainsprings of his nature. Psychoanalysis in itself is probably good for everybody, and for Eric, too. It probably helped him in some way. But this man didn't do what he should have done, namely, bring him to work, and he really lost valuable time. And all the money he earned--and it was very hard-earned money, which could have been spent in much more positive ways--went to this man. So

he remained desperately poor in other ways, which didn't help his self-confidence. He didn't even have a suit that was halfway decent. And all these kind of things are important for young people. [He couldn't] pay when he took a girl out and really entertain her or [do] anything that gives confidence to a man. All this he didn't have, because all the money went to this psychoanalyst. And he didn't bring him to work, to his creative thing. He didn't even know, I think. It went by, and he never talked about this. What he really should have done is encouraged him in his work, and that would have been much better.

Well, anyway, as I said, Eric had matured out of these reasons, and so had I. I was by now twenty-four years old. And I had just broken off with a boy that I had loved very, very much and meant to marry, but he was the wrong one. Later on, I often thought how lucky I was that I had broken up. And I was just in this period after I'd broken up and rather very sad. And I think Eric felt that in me. At one time he even saw it in my handwriting. We all tried sometimes this graphologic gift of Eric [by] writing little notes, and he didn't know who had written the note. And he immediately said, "This person's very sad," and so on.

So one day there was all this company. My parents loved young people, and there was always company at our house. And the others had already gone out of the living room, and we stood in the doorway still talking to each

other, and up to this time never had there been any kind of electricity or anything between us. And all of a sudden, he put his head forward and he kissed me. And this is the way it started. And then we went together all the time, and that went for a year. And it was a very fruitful year, and he would bring me his compositions. But he was not really so much into the thing, and as time went on we both felt that it was the real thing.

And then I wanted to marry Eric, and he was quite willing. And so at that time he went to my father, but my father said no. And my father was a very wonderful person who loved me dearly because I was his only daughter. And I could see no reason--because both my parents had liked Eric very much, and he was part of the circle and very welcome. But my father afterwards said, "You know, I'm not rich enough for the luxury of having a composer as a son-in-law." He saw this from a very realistic point of view, and he was not wanting to deprive me of anything, so I think. My mother, on the other hand, was a kind of possessive mother and very jealous, and the moment Eric appeared to be serious, she began to just be awfully against him. And she was again a force, like it so often appears in Eric's life, that made very simple things that for others go very smoothly become awfully complicated.

Now, the complications were partly in Eric's nature, too. Because he said, "When I will marry you, I have first

to try to get rid of my obsessive love for my family and have to live alone." And so, about four weeks before he went to my father, he rented a room and tried to live by himself, and it went quite well. But it was for him a very deep experience, which I could not even understand because I was twenty-four years old, which in America seems perhaps very old, but [since] I was an only child and so protected, I think that I was less than eighteen years old in my outlook in life and so very, very naive and child-like. And so I could not understand this at all. But it must have been very, very hard for him and opened up very deep springs in his nature. And up there in this room, in these four weeks, he composed the children's cycle [Kinderlieder]. And he composed that cycle partly because he was so very much in love and was happy because of this, and partly because he was thinking of his own childhood and was, so to say, taking leave of this childhood and of being a child himself, which he had had as long as he was with his parents. And I think it is one of the best things he has written. And so this is how this children's cycle originated.

I think I have already mentioned that he went to my father and that my father said no. And that was a very, very traumatic experience again, because he was so shaken already of having lived alone and expended all the strength and courage that it took for him to do that. And now this

"no" just completely devastated him, smashed him to pieces. A person like this, his feelings are so really different from ours. Everything, you know, when the weather was bad, for instance, it was already a catastrophe, when the heat came. Everything was taken not like we do normally in life, but was . . .

COLE: . . . magnified.

ZEISL: In German we say, "Himmelhoch jauchzend zu Tode betrübt." He was either very, very up or very, very down, and it didn't take much. So this blow of having to take this "no" just completely upset him. He immediately left the room and went back to his parents. And when I called, he wouldn't come to the phone, and his family didn't want to let me speak to him, which again was like his mother had closed the piano and burned his compositions in order to do good for him because he was probably acting very crazily. And so again he must have acted pretty crazy. And so they thought to do the right thing, but I don't think it really was the right thing. But they didn't let me talk to him, and he didn't want to talk to me, and for two months we were separated.

And then a good friend of mine, Hilde Spiel, whom you met and who is a very fine writer and has quite a name in Austria, met him on the street. She was six years younger than I--in other words, eighteen years at that time--but she was about six years older than

I in experience and outlook of life. And so she knew exactly what was missing and what had to be done. And she took him and said, "Come with me." (She didn't mention me.) She said, "Come with me and come to my house." And he went with her. This was a quality--I don't know if I mentioned it--when somebody [said] "Come with me," okay, he went with them. So she had him there, and she phoned me. And by a stroke of luck I was home. I could have just as well been out, and then my life would have been completely different--and Eric's, too. And she said, "Eric is here. I'll hold him here, and you come here as quickly as you can." And she lived very far from me. I took a taxi and rode over there. And I cannot describe to you the feelings that I had in this taxi. I knew that my life was in my hands again and that everything would be well. I knew that when I would see him, everything would be fine.

And so we saw each other, and of course everything was as it was before. And he took me home, and we walked home, the whole way from Hilde's house--she lived in a completely different district, very far from my district--and we walked this whole thing, which took probably more than an hour, or perhaps up to two hours. And on the way we talked, and he explained to me that he couldn't go on like this, and [if] we couldn't marry that we still had to be together. [To] live together wasn't possible, but

our relationship had to be a completely different one. And that was very hard for me to take, because I was an only child and very fond of my parents and at that time-- it's hard for us now to realize what it meant at that time-- if anything like this would come out, my parents would feel disgraced. It was a shame, a dishonor. Today I see parents of very respectable families quietly talking about this, about their daughter living together. But at that time that wasn't done. I mean, it was a horrible thing. And I had to do that to my parents. But I knew that Eric was the right person, and so I agreed I was going to do that. Still, though, it took me some time. And I think that all this triggered a terrific spring of song in Eric, and the year '31, where this actually took place, is one where he composed a great deal of the songs that are in his output, and some of his best are among them.

COLE: We've seen that song is a major part of his output, but suddenly from 1931 I've counted at least twenty-three unpublished songs and two published collections. This amazing outpouring recalls Robert Schumann, who also had a song year. We see now it was for the same reason: he fell in love.

ZEISL: You see, why I really think I was good for Eric is that the same things were important to me that were important to him. And unlike the psychoanalyst, I was happy--it was a wonderful thing for me that he composed,

and I expected it of him, and he was happy that finally somebody was there [who] expected that from him, where the family was always "no," or making fun of it, or being completely negative. And there finally he had found somebody who loved the same things as he and for whom this was just as important as for him. And it was all my life very important to me. I don't think that it came accidentally. My whole circle was one of people who had something to do with the arts, and most of them with music. My own father was very musical; my mother not. But my father was, and he played chamber music pretty regularly. And my friends-- my best friend Lisel was a painter, and Hilde was a writer, and I could go on and mention them all. They all had something to do, were either pianists or musicians, and it was because I had this bent, you know. And so I think I was at that point really the right person for Eric, to release all this.

COLE: It was indeed an amazing circle, and in this year Eric, of course, became a part of your inner circle.

ZEISL: Yes, yes. Now, I have already told you that Eric couldn't travel, and of course the whole thing was a secret. And so whenever vacations came, I went with my parents, and Eric did not come along. And these were horrible times for him because he was a person who loved so completely, and the light, the world, was completely out for him when I wasn't there. And he was really

person who would never look at another person. (And that wasn't only me. When he was in love, that was totally. He would then never look at somebody else.) And so this was a miserable time.

And one time I came back from vacation--I think in this first year, and he hadn't seen me for four weeks. Also, you must understand that I was a pretty girl, and I was from a good family, and there were naturally a lot of people interested and wanted to court me. And so it was a time of terrible anxiety for him, because he was probably thinking there I was, on vacation in some nice hotel, and how many much more eligible young men were there who would try to court me, and he would never know and think that he would probably never see me again and wonder if I would be back. You do not know about your partner, how deeply committed your partner is. I was, but he couldn't know that. So when I came back (and it was late in the evening), he wanted to see me. Now, I have to explain to you a little bit about the position of a tyrannic and fearful person that dominated Viennese life, and that was the Hausmeister. Every house has such a Hausmeister. It was kind of like a janitor, I would say. The houses in Vienna were closed at ten o'clock, and the Hausmeister had the key. So everybody who came after ten--I mean, the Hausmeister knew [every]thing anyway, because when you entered the house, there was the

apartment of the Hausmeister, and he saw you coming and going, so he knew everything about your life anyway. And if you lingered a little bit at the door when you came home even before ten, he would know about it and immediately start rumors. But after ten, when the big gate was closed, he had to open [it for] you, and when you came with a young man and would go up with a young man, that was already something that was rarely seen and committed you already in his eyes. And my parents had said no, and so that was therefore impossible. It was after ten o'clock, so my father said, "My daughter doesn't go out after ten o'clock to greet somebody." It was out of the question that he come up, because when after ten o'clock you came up to the family, you were almost like accepted, you see, future son-in-law. So that was out of the question, and I wasn't supposed to go down. Now, you can imagine how much Eric had waited for that moment that I would come back, and how much he wanted to see me, and then being denied this privilege, you know. He was just raging, really raging, and through this empty and silent street he was shouting curses or whatever. And this very much upset my parents. And from that moment, my mother said, "He will not set foot in my house again." And I think it was a very welcome thing to her, because she didn't want to see him anyway.

COLE: Yes, it gave her an excuse.

ZEISL: So from that time on he wasn't even allowed to

set foot into the house, and we had to meet at [the house of] my friend--fortunately, my friend Lisel Salzer lived very near me. (She had very nice parents who both perished in the war.) And her home became my second home and there we always met, at her house, and there Eric played whatever he had done, a song, or movements of this Mass that he wrote later on. And our circle was there and assembled, and we sang these compositions with him. And if I hadn't had this, it would have been a very, very sad time for me, because I was so used to having these young people around. And my father was very, very sad about it, but he didn't want to fight with my mother about it, and he missed these young people that had been always around. My father was a darling person, and the young people would come and they said, "Where is the father?" They were almost as fond of him as they were of me. When they came, he was great fun to be with and he missed that very much, but my mother was absolutely adamant.

COLE: This is certainly a marvelous romantic story. Maybe we can talk a little bit about this Kinderlieder cycle; it is a cycle for soprano, appropriately enough, and one that he dedicated to you, did he not?

ZEISL: Yes, he did.

COLE: Was this particular cycle, more than any of his other early works, the work that brought him critical recognition in Vienna?

ZEISL: Yes. Immediately it was very widely sung, and the singers loved it. And most of the time Eric accompanied it, which helped because the accompaniment is very, very difficult. And in cases where he relies on the accompanist to choose the songs for the singer, which they usually do, this was very much against him, because they saw this very difficult accompaniment and didn't want to tackle it. But since he accompanied himself, that helped greatly in making the songs so widely performed.

COLE: I see. Why did he pick poems primarily from Des Knaben Wunderhorn? I think this might be interesting to explore.

ZEISL: I think he wanted to do children's songs, and this kind of naive and folklike expression that is in the poetry very much suited his purposes. I think he chose generally poems that were very direct and lyrical, and very seldom very involved poetry, like Schiller, say, or something that was more epic in its approach. He never tackled things like this. He liked a direct lyric simplicity.

COLE: Was Des Knaben Wunderhorn in general as deeply rooted in the Austrian consciousness as in the German, would you say?

ZEISL: Oh, yes, yes, I think it was.

COLE: And then he included one poem by Richard Dehmelt, the "Triumphgeschrei." Did he choose that just because it fit?

ZEISL: Ja, I think so. You know, he always had these

books around him and when he felt the urge to compose, he would leaf through them. And one of them would hold his interest. Sometimes it was just the first line that called his attention and gave the spark, so to say. And so, "Alle kleine Kinder schrei'n Hurrah'" ("All the little children cry Hurray!")--I think that lighted the spark there. He was, as I told you, in a happy mood, in a hopeful mood at that time.

COLE: Perhaps we can get out of the chronological sequence for just a moment and comment upon the staying power this cycle exhibited. It was done with great success in Los Angeles in 1948, I know, and it's been revived in 1975 with considerable success.

ZEISL: Ja, I really think that this is a cycle that has no time label on it at all, and therefore whether you play it now or even maybe in a hundred years, it will be the same thing. It is so immediate, and it is so very much the thing that it expresses, and the thing itself is so timeless, namely, the aspect of the child--because he has caught it so completely--that I think it is, as [Albert] Goldberg said, completely devoid of fashions or formulas. And it's the thing itself, so to say.

COLE: Yes. Well, not only was this cycle an important expression of his love for you; it also was important for his career in another way, in that it became his first published song cycle. Did he approach Capriccio?

ZEISL: Capriccio was a new publishing house that had sprung up. And I think it was at one of the concerts where this man, whose name I have forgotten, was there and heard it and approached Eric with it.

COLE: I see. As we mentioned in connection with Mondbilder the other day, so in the Kinderlieder Eric provides both orchestral and piano accompaniments, and once again we see him at work with the large romantic orchestra. In connection with the orchestration, you told me a marvelous anecdote once concerning a comment made about the introduction--was it?--to the song about the sun shining over the Rhine.

ZEISL: Oh! When Eric orchestrated this, he was not yet completely, as later on, a master of orchestrating for only single instrumental voices that move in texture, but had still hanging on a few of the older techniques. He was always a born orchestrator in his colors--and that was born with him--and I think his orchestrations are really very wonderful. And around this time we just met Kurt Adler, who is now [artistic] director of the San Francisco [Opera], and who was then a very good friend of ours. We just met him around this time, and he became a very close friend and loved Eric and loved his music. As persons, you could not again imagine two people more different than [those] two were. But he appreciated Eric, his sense of humor, his directness, and his folksiness, because he came from a very wealthy [family] and had been a rich boy.

(Although later on he was very poor, he had all these society manners which Eric didn't have.) He brought that cycle with orchestra. During the rehearsal--of course, in the rehearsal everything is real rough and you do not know how to tone down things and balance them right. The song is called "Sunshine Over the Rhine." So he said to Eric, "I think it sounds more like 'Thunder and Lightning over the Rhine'!" [laughter]

COLE: In this particular cycle, finally, one sees again the extremes of his moods, the pathétique in "On the Tombstone," and the grotesque in "Song of the Hussars," which are two of his most memorable songs.

ZEISL: Ja. Well, "On the Tombstone" is a variation on the theme that Eric constantly has. I think creative people are in a way prophets, and he probably saw coming this great reaping of death that went through Europe, and maybe also he had a forewarning that his own death would be untimely--maybe that, too. But anyway, this theme of death and requiem, so to say, is a constant reappearing theme in his compositions.

COLE: Yes. We'll be talking about his Requiem before too long. Another collection that was compiled during this time, although not published until later, is a set of six songs.* These are interesting because they're

*These were performed in Los Angeles February 16, 1977.

his largest published songs, his most extensive. They were for baritone. Maybe we could talk about a couple of these songs because they show interesting facets of his personality. "Nachts," the opening song, was dedicated to a mysterious Frau Dr. T.J. Who could this have been?

ZEISL: [laughing] It was me, because my name was Jellinek when I had my parents' name. And he loved the night song especially. And of course [in] all this time which I describe, it is hard to describe what went on in his soul and all the anxieties that he had to endure. Part of it was his poverty, and [part] that we couldn't marry, and that he couldn't see me when he wanted to, and that we had to meet, so to say, always on the sly. And he was a very open person. And all this, I think, must have weighed very heavily and produced great turmoil in his soul. And so the night song was one way of softening all this, of bringing peace to himself. So in this time, there [are] a great many night songs. As a matter of fact, four of these songs deal with the night.

COLE: Right. And there are many others unpublished that also deal with the night. Another song of interest in this collection is "Ein Stündlein wohl vor Tag," one of his most excellent settings, I believe, and a poem that had been set earlier by Hugo Wolf. This raises an interesting question, because this is not the only text Eric set that had been set by earlier composers. Did he have

a reason for picking such poems, or was he aware?

ZEISL: Well, one of the reasons, I would say, is a very practical one. When Eric went to concerts--and of course he went very often to concerts--he would keep the programs. And along with his very sparse library, they were there. And when he was in need of composing, he would leaf through the texts, and so he would consider this just as a text and would probably maybe not even notice whether it was composed by Hugo Wolf or by somebody else. And sometimes right there in the concert, when it was a minor composer, he sometimes felt, "I could do this much better." Or, "I want to do this, but in another way."

COLE: There's a song that is almost frightening in its impact. It's called "Schrei." It has to do with a locomotive that's driving and wailing in the night. This is the earliest example I know of machine music in Eric. Machine music was quite popular at one time in this century in general. There are three or four other pieces by Eric that also involve the machine, and all but one are frightening. How did he view machinery and twentieth-century technology?

ZEISL: I don't know about the train. I have told you that [the] train was one of the things that had to do with going away, and how this was his trauma, and a very strong trauma. It was really a kind of sickness with him. So in this case, the locomotive that puts terror into the

souls of men was very much the reaction that he had when somebody said, "Going away." Because even when we were married and we would go to places One thing I must say: it put terror in him, but he wanted to go away. I mean, it wasn't that he didn't want to go away. It was just so terribly hard for him. And even after we had been married a long time, when we would go to Lake Arrowhead, he would be just awfully unhappy the first night. And it lasted about twenty-four hours, and then he was adapted to it. But it was not being where he usually was. This was a very, very great pain and trauma.

COLE: He had a very strong sense of place, it seems, and a very localized sense, too.

ZEISL: The funny thing is that when we actually emigrated and went so far away to America, he was happy all the time. On the ship he couldn't have been happier. And that was really kind of strange.

COLE: In addition to the serious and (in the case of "Schrei") frightening songs in this cycle, there are two that are absolutely hilarious. One rarely uses the term in connection with art songs, but in the case of these two it fits. The "Stilleben" you mentioned last time was more autobiographical than I had dreamed, and "Der Weise" is a marvelous setting of a poem by Wilhelm Busch. Did other song composers use the texts of Busch?

ZEISL: If they did, I really don't know of it. But Eric

had a great similarity with him in his nature and in his way of composing. As Busch was able to draw a very simple line to express humor and hit the mark marvelously, so that in just a few strokes of the pen you could recognize the type, so he had that same in music. So the two were alike in this.

COLE: And just a brief remark about a couple of the unpublished song sets from this same year. There's a set of three songs by Nietzsche, two of which are among Eric's very best. These all plumb the more pathétique side of his personality. Was there anything about Nietzsche that he responded to in particular?

ZEISL: No, I think he had a very poetic nature, and it vibrated at the same level as certain poetry. And this apparently was a poem that brought his soul into vibration. And he had, as I have often said, very good taste in poetry. And cheap poetry would not do it.

COLE: One of the Nietzsche songs had been used in Mahler's Third Symphony, which came as a surprise to me, too. Eric sets it in a much different way, and, I think, a very effective way. He makes a set of three songs by Ringelnatz, too. Who was Ringelnatz? I don't know much about him.

ZEISL: Well, Ringelnatz was a typically Berlin figure, whose fame, I think, grew up in the cabaret. And he had been a jack-of-all-trades, but mostly a sailor. And he had this kind of scurrilous pathetic humor that very much

appealed to Eric. And I think the "Briefmark" really very charmingly expresses the sense of the poem.

COLE: Yes. Well, this was an amazing song outpouring from the year 1931. Never again in his career was he to write as many songs in a single year, but the flood was to continue for many more years.

ZEISL: Ja. You know, his great love and desire was for opera. He meant to write dramatic music, and he was desperate for a text. There is a cute anecdote that he met a common friend, who is still also quite a well-known writer in Vienna, Friedrich Torberg. And he asked him if he couldn't write a libretto for an opera. And he was willing. So he went to the bookstores and he bought several volumes of Rabelais. He knew Eric mostly from his humorous side, and he thought that this would be the right thing. And he had these three secondhand volumes in his hand, and he met another friend, who said, "What are you doing with this?" And he said, "From this, I want to write a libretto for a composer friend of mine." And the friend said, "You will never make as much from it as these three volumes cost. I advise to give them back!" And so he did that and didn't write the libretto. And he was right. Because at that time, you know, there were two opera houses, true, but it was almost next to impossible to get in, and Germany already was closed at that time. And so the opportunities for operas were indeed nought.

COLE: And somehow a text from Rabelais might have been a little difficult to sell in this opera house.

We can begin the year 1932 with another kind of composition altogether, the Kleine Messe, a fascinating work which today sadly exists only in skeletal form. This is an early example of Eric's sacred music. Something that's fascinating to me, in view of what was to happen in his American production, is that here he's setting the traditional Christian mass text. Was it the drama of the text that appealed?

ZEISL: I think it was the drama. The text of the Messe in its simplicity contains a marvelous dramatic story. And it has really all the ingredients of a first-class libretto. And so in his desperation of having somebody write him a real operatic text, he found the Mass, and it helped him express this dramatic flair of his and this urge to do dramatic music. And I love the Mass, and it is really a great shame that it is lost and cannot be performed, because I think it has very, very beautiful spots in it. Of course, it's also in Latin, and Eric didn't know Latin. I think he had found friends, and perhaps I helped, too--I don't remember--to tell him about what it meant.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 8, 1975

COLE: When the tape ran out, we were just talking about the Kleine Messe, and you had mentioned that there were some marvelous sections in this.

ZEISL: Yes. As I said, Eric didn't know Greek or Latin, and it was translated. I do not know whether "Kyrie Eleison" was ever translated to him (it means, "Lord, have mercy"), because the first [movement] begins with that and it is like a marching song that he composed there. And it doesn't fit with the text at all. Or maybe it does, because Eric needed and had a lot of courage. And maybe he was challenging God, so to say, in this "have mercy." And it was like his answer: "If I will have the courage, you will have the mercy." It could be that, but I rather think it was that this was in his soul, and maybe it was again one of those curious prophetic things, because the war was before the door and it was a martial thing he composed there. But that curious Kyrie was always interesting to me.

COLE: As we pointed out, this is a work that exists in skeletal form only because, as happened with a couple of pieces we've seen already, at least a part of it disappeared in the United States. Maybe you could talk about what happened to the score. Now all we have is a

torso; the solo parts seem to be lost.

ZEISL: What happened was that Eric had a friend here by the name of Norman Wright, and he was organist of the First Methodist Church. And he turned out to be one of the most devoted friends that Eric had. He loved his music, and Eric was like a brother to him. He really understood him and understood his music. And the way we met him was the first performance of the Interfaith Forum, for which the Requiem Ebraico was composed. It was composed really as the Ninety-second Psalm, as you know. And it was a concert that had all the three faiths represented in music. And he was supposed to do the Ninety-second Psalm for the Hebrew section, and because it was the spring of 1945, and the war ended and he heard about the fate of his father and other friends, the Ninety-second Psalm, which is in its text an expression of hope and faith, became a very sad composition. And so he called it a requiem. And this was premiered at Norman's church in a very small form, with fifteen singers, and Eric's brother Willi as the cantor part. And Norman immediately, so to say, caught fire with it and became a great friend of Eric.

And he planned to do the Mass [Kleine Messe] with his church choir, which was a very great choir of sixty to eighty [voices]. He did a lot of Eric's works. He did the Requiem [Ebraico] later with his great chorus

and orchestra and everything, and did it almost every year then with his church group. And he thought that the way the Mass was written would not be very legible for his chorus, and so he proposed that Eric should give him the score and he would have it copied. Eric gave him like a printed score, like a copied score. And then at one time for some reason he wanted another one. And so Eric gave him the only handwritten score that he had. And then at one time, even after Eric's death, I discovered that both were missing, and I remembered. And I asked him about it. And so he said that one of his students was supposed to copy that, and that there was a fire in his kitchen, and that the thing had burned. And I must say that it seemed very strange to me, because he had never told me about it. And so it is lost.

COLE: This is a tragedy. We simply can't reconstruct the solo parts from what we have.

One notable unpublished song of 1932 is "The Dead Workman." This is certainly one of Eric's greatest songs. Were there any political overtones, or was this again simply a text that appealed to him?

ZEISL: Eric was a completely unpolitical person. One funny remark that he made to illustrate how unpolitical he was was that he said he only knew that a war was on because Pearl Harbor was announced in the Philharmonic. The Philharmonic was interrupted and they announced that.

And he gave that as an example. But of course he was certainly a deeply social-minded person. And so there was again something in the text that appealed to him, rather [than] that he wanted to write social music. I think it is autobiographical, because [although] he was not working in a workshop, with machinery and so, his life, even after we married and everything, was in a way very dreary [because] he had to do this hack work. And it was very, very difficult and took so much energy out of him because he had to go to these children and take the streetcar, and they lived very far apart, and he was going all over town to reach them and then be there and listen to them play, which must have been an ordeal. So it was very much like a toil, the kind of thing that he described in the song.

COLE: I see. Nineteen thirty-three was the year in which the Kinderlieder cycle was published. Several works quickly followed to print. Although it's still some time before World War II will break out in Europe, is the German hinterland already being denied?

ZEISL: Oh, yes. Hitler was already on the rise [in] 1930-31. He was considered the coming man. And with '32 he became a certainty. And by the end of '32, he had taken over. And from then on, publishers in Germany would not take anything. I must look for it, because I have kept it. (The way Eric kept things was that there's

something written on the back, something I don't know what. And I think I have this letter of Schott's Söhne, you know, the representative in Austria, who was present at some of the concerts where the songs were played, and was very interested, and sent them to Schott's, to Germany. And back came a letter that they thought these were indeed very remarkable things, and they were very interested, but that the political situation was such--it was '32--that they could not consider print, but please keep an eye on him. They didn't know yet how things would develop, you know. They developed in the wrong direction. Now, Universal Edition and a few struggling publishers like Capriccio--Doblinger was also an old established house--were still, so to say, struggling on, but they were of course very reluctant to do things that could not be played in Germany, because that was the big hinterland. Especially since the Germans are so musical, and it is there not only the rich concert life that is in every city, but it is also the public that bought chamber music, that bought songs and sang them at home. There was a Musikpflege ["cultivation of music"] in the home that was very, very marked there and very developed all over Germany. And that was not accessible anymore, not accessible.

COLE: The year 1933 also witnesses a brand-new kind of composition, perhaps the first preserved instrumental

piece of Eric's that is nonprogrammatic as far as I know.* This is the Passacaglia-Fantasy. Can you talk about this piece a bit?

ZEISL: Yes. It was Eric's constant preoccupation to master these forms which he had, so to say, refused when he was studying with Stöhr and the other teachers. They wanted him to do this, and he was too restless, perhaps, or too unsure of himself to tackle them. But it stayed there as a challenge. And now, because he was happy in some ways, reassured because of our relationship, he began to devote himself to his development, and he tackled these forms. And so the Passacaglia was an example of that. And it has an unusually long theme.

COLE: This is his contribution [to the old form], isn't it?

ZEISL: Ja, and whenever we went somewhere, in our circle of friends, I would play the theme and Eric would play all the orchestral voices for piano. It was a four-hands sort of thing. I had the easy part always.

COLE: Had you had some musical training?

ZEISL: Ja, the usual musical training that every well-educated child in a Vienna family that was halfway well-to-do had. But also I cannot type very well. I have a

*A subsequent search turned up a much earlier fantasy for violin and piano, a product of his early teens. [M.C.]

certain thing that somehow my brain and my hands do not cooperate. And that presents a difficulty--so I never reached any prowess on the piano. But I think I am a very musical person, and I feel music, and I understand music, and sometimes I was quicker to understand something when we went to concerts and there was a new piece played. I was quicker to understand it and to feel it than Eric, who had to really study the thing and digest it and make it his own before he loved it.

COLE: I see. Did this piece find success in performance?

ZEISL: The Passacaglia was played. It was accepted by Kabasta and was played over the radio with the Symphoniker. But again, to gain acceptance in Germany was not possible at that time anymore, and Eric had a curious thing: he could not change anything. And under no circumstances--when something was done, that was it. And it was as good as he could do it. Then he would do something else, where he would maybe get rid of some mistakes or errors that would appear in the other piece, but he would not change.

COLE: He wouldn't revise, in other words.

ZEISL: No. He refused to do that. I know that [Eugene] Ormandy came to Vienna at that time, and we had some access to him. I think that Ormandy's wife was Viennese, and she had been a friend of his brothers. And so we met; and through her, Ormandy saw the score. He liked it, but he didn't like certain things about it, and he

suggested to Eric to change that, but Eric wouldn't change it. That was, of course, bad, because he should have.

And there's an incident which I should tell, though it is not good; it's negative, like so many. He got an interview with Bruno Walter, who was at that time a great conductor there. And he played him the Passacaglia. And Bruno Walter was in a bad mood. I don't think he wanted to give the interview in the first place, and so he was just awful to Eric, and Eric came from this interview just completely crushed. Oh, he was so downcast because Walter said he should immediately give up composing, and he was no composer, and how could he dare to play something to him? And Eric called Alvin, who was a great protector of his and a friend of Bruno Walter (they were fellow colleagues at the opera), and Alvin called Walter immediately, and then he called Eric back and said, "I can't do anything. He really means it." And I don't know--there was something, I think, in Eric's behavior probably. Or maybe it was that when Eric was excited he would only play fortissimo, though there are very beautiful, poetic, soft parts in this Passacaglia. Well, anyway, for Eric it was one very niederschmetternd ["crushing"] experience. And much, much later, in America, we had already met Walter then, because he was a neighbor of Alma and so on and he had heard about Eric from Alma. And Fritz Zweig, who was also a friend of the Walters,

was very, very fond of Eric and a great admirer of his music, and he told him of it. But he was too vain a person, and it was really like this. He was too vain a person to admit that he could ever have made an error. And so he remained this way. But you can't blame him now.

COLE: No. In 1933 the Scherzo and Fugue for string orchestra was published. We've already talked about this work at some length. It is significant to point out here that it was Zeisl's first published instrumental work, and by no less a firm than Universal. Can you talk a little more about Eric's association with Kurt Herbert Adler? The piece is dedicated to him.

ZEISL: Ja. We were invited to a party at a friend of Eric's who was a writer and later did the first libretto of Leonce und Lena. His name was Hugo von Königsgarten. And he was a very elegant, refined person, and at that party we met two couples who later became very great friends and inner-circle people. One was Kurt Adler and his wife, and the other one was a lawyer by the name of Dr. Hanns Popper, who was the lawyer of the Swiss legation and led a great house, as you would say. There were always parties with very good people there, the cream of Vienna, so to say. And it turned out that the wife that Dr. Popper had married in the meantime was an old, old friend of Eric's brothers and he knew

her. And so she was delighted to see him, and a great friendship developed with all these people. [tape recorder turned off]

Now, Kurt Adler had just come back from Germany. He had been a conductor in several of the smaller opera houses. I think his last one was Kaiserslautern. And there he had married a very vivacious, darling person whose name was also Trude. And she took to Eric like that, you know. (She liked men anyhow.) And they became great friends. Kurt at this point was very, very poor. [tape recorder turned off] Kurt had lost his position in Germany--he had nothing here yet--and he also had to support not only a wife but also his mother. But they had been extremely wealthy people, and he had this background and this youth behind him. And he was so proud that only when we became very, very good friends did we know about this at all. You would never know, and he would never talk about it, but it was a more critical situation than Eric's because Eric had been, so to say, brought up with poverty--not in his earliest years, but later on, from the war years on. And so he got used to it and knew how to fight the thing, but Kurt in the beginning didn't. But he then got certain jobs. He was conducting with the Volkstheater and so on, and finally landed a job as chorus director in the Volksoper. And he was very, very fond of Eric, as I have said, and

whenever he had an opportunity, he did something of Eric's music. And even in this country, in the beginning--later, when he became director of the opera company, his commitments and his position didn't allow him anymore, I think, to go out for something like this, because everything costs so much money, and he was responsible for every cent and penny, so he couldn't dare go into experiments. And new music always is.

COLE: Last time we pointed out that the Scherzo and Fugue were actually two movements from the First String Quartet, and we talked about how it came about that Eric scored them for small orchestra and they were published. [tape recorder turned off] Another movement from this first quartet was the Variations on a Slavonic Theme, and I thought we might talk about this for a couple of reasons. Did Eric ever tell you where this theme had come from, or is it a folk theme?

ZEISL: Ja, that was a chorus that he had done. And it was a very beautiful Slavonic folksong. And he had at one time done several choruses like this. He was always writing for chorus; that was one of his favorite expressions.

COLE: And the other interesting thing to me about this piece is that looking at the manuscript, one sees a very lovely copy, and I understand you copied it.

ZEISL: Ja, but it is very friendly of you to say that it was lovely, because it was awful, I think, and I have no

talent for it, but there was no other way. In the beginning, Eric [was] so used to copyists, because in Vienna nobody does it differently. You compose that, and you do it in your handwriting and don't even try to be careful about your handwriting, and then you give it to a copyist. And at that time there were a number of very fine musicians who made a living by being copyists. And so this was the way it was done, and Eric thought copying was a terrible waste of time, which it is, in a way.

COLE: Yes. Most composers would agree.

ZEISL: But here in this country it was impossible to afford a copyist, so he began copying. But in the beginning he wouldn't hear of it, and yet one needed copies, so in desperation I began to do it. Now, I had begun this in Paris when he was working for this Spaniard, which I mentioned. And we had a kind of a factory going. Eric was composing these little things for him, and then Willi and I copied it. And the man was a millionaire, and he paid very handsomely, and we lived beautifully in Paris, and instead of starving to death, which was really what we could have done--because we came over, and we couldn't take a penny of money with us out of Germany--Paris became a kind of a vacation to us because of this. And at the end of the year we were able to rent a villa in Le Vésinet, where Eric then began to compose Job.

COLE: That's amazing. In the period 1933 to 1934, Eric was occupied with the composition of a major work, a work that turned out to be of considerable importance to him, the Requiem Concertante. This work won the Austrian State Prize in 1934. Can you talk a little bit about what that entailed?

ZEISL: Yes. I do not quite remember now whether the immediate start of it was the death of my father, because my father died rather suddenly. We suddenly discovered that he had cancer, and he was operated, and it was found that it was too late, and very soon afterwards he died. And it was a terrible blow for me. I was terribly, terribly sad. I loved my father dearly. And I think this great sadness that involved me was felt by Eric, and I think that started him. And then the thing was given momentum by the political events of the day, because it was that great clash between Dollfuss and the Socialists, which caused a lot of death and kept the thing going--from an outward stimulus. And I think it was foremost his need of dramatic expression that drove him to these texts, and perhaps a kind of prophetic feeling that a requiem was the thing that fitted--was the thing of the future. And I know when we came to America and America was in the Depression but otherwise in the full bliss of peace, nothing was farther [from] the American soul as any thinking of war, though it was already threatening in

Europe. Well, he showed the Requiem to Erno Rapée, who became such a great promoter of Eric's music and did almost everything, but he thought it was ridiculous to even write a requiem. And Eric was very much taken aback with that attitude, because he felt that this was really the thing that was to come. And he felt that.

COLE: What were the circumstances of winning this Austrian State Prize? Was it a competition?

ZEISL: I think Stöhr, who remained in contact with Eric, told him that this was like a prize, an award, that was open, and he should apply. And he did, and there was a commission at the academy that had to decide about this, and then Eric was notified of it. And he was quite happy, though the amount of money was very small, and he was kind of disappointed because it didn't amount to very much, and he needed money. And Stöhr said, "You will find it higher if you think that the elevator in the academy is on the blink since two years, and we don't have the 200 schillings (\$40) to have it repaired."

COLE: Did the award do anything to boost his career?

ZEISL: No, not really. It was an honor, naturally, and it boosted his confidence and in this way made him happy, but it didn't boost his career. But something else happened around this time and that is that he became a member of AKM [Autoren, Komponisten, Musikverleger]. And that was very important to him. He was not yet like a member,

but they called it a sustaining member or something, [and] then after three years of that, I think, or five years, he would have become a regular member. And it meant a certain security, and when you were old you got a pension, and everybody--especially when you think of later marrying and so on--steered for such a thing. And that made him very happy, to become a member. And I know that the first check he got was, I think, 125 schillings for something. And in American money that is translated to something like \$250. It was a little bit more in Austria, but it amounted to this. I was jokingly saying to him, "Now you are rich and powerful," and he took it literally and said, "Oh, no, not yet." In other words, he was so happy that really these 125 schillings seemed like a fortune, like something.

COLE: I can imagine. And this is a large, large work in the tradition of the Viennese orchestral Mass. Did Eric talk about any influences? Did he study other peoples' requiem settings?

ZEISL: Yes, and he studied all the time while he was doing it. He was having the Mozart Requiem and the Verdi Requiem--or maybe even another one, but I remember especially these--at his side, so to say. And it isn't like either of them, but it was just really for the technique or the forms that he studied these things. And all this, I should mention, he composed in a room

which he had rented. He stayed all the time now with his parents, but he had rented this room so that he should compose somewhere else and really have the peace and quiet. (And of course, he also needed a room where we could meet.) And this was in an apartment of an old lady who was a Frau Hofrat. She had a beautiful apartment, and now, like so many people in Austria who had lost their money through the war, she needed the money and gave this room away. And she understood Eric (she was a very musical person), but she needed the money. And he was very often in back with his rent money, and then she threatened to throw him out, and that gave him such anguish as you could not imagine. And even later in our married life, after we were married twenty years, he would dream that she came in and gave him warning to lose that room. And it was like a recurring nightmare to him. But in this room he composed the Passacaglia, the Mass, and the Requiem.

COLE: In connection with the Kleine Messe and also the Requiem, we've mentioned that perhaps the mass text served as a substitute for another kind of drama. We've mentioned [that] he's always looking for a libretto. Finally in 1934, he composes a Volksoper, the Journey into Wonderland [Die Fahrt ins Wunderland]. Isn't it rather strange or surprising that he uses material from a Kinderspiel?

ZEISL: No, that was a commission. Kurt Adler, as I told you, was at that time the chorus director of the Volksoper.

And the Volksoper had accepted this text by Alfred Moeller, who was a very known dramatist of this kind of thing. And they wanted to put on this play for their Christmas production for children. And so Kurt Adler came to Eric and said he should compose it and gave him the libretto. And it had to be finished, I think, within four days. And so Kurt Adler told me, "You just shut him into the room and don't let him out." And this is about what we did. And so he did that in the shortest of time. And it was very, very cute and was successful. The critic was very good, and it was a very delightful performance. Kurt Adler conducted it. It was in the Volksoper. It's bigger in seating capacity [than] the main opera.

And afterwards, Eric made a suite [Märchen-Suite] out of some of the pieces of it. And this suite was constantly played on the radio. It was like semiclassical, as you would call it, because it was very light and meant for children and therefore very melodious and uncomplicated music. And so it was constantly played. And that was the beginning of a technique that later became [an] everyday thing, but there it was, I think, first introduced. They did it on tape and then played the tape. And I'm told that after we left Austria, the tape was still played without mentioning the name, because it was a very popular piece.

COLE: There is much in this story to recall Hansel and

Gretel. There's a prayer, and there's a wicked witch. If anything, Moeller seems to have taken ingredients that worked well in this earlier setting and compounded them.

ZEISL: Ja. I think he took all the ingredients of the fairy tale world and put them in this play and mixed them up with Christmas. At the end was a Christmas theme.

COLE: Yes. I meant to ask you about that. Is that particular tune a well-known Christmas tune for German and Austrian youth?

ZEISL: Ja, it was a very, very, well known, very ancient Christmas song that was used there ["O du Fröhliche"].

COLE: I see. When Eric made a suite from these numbers, did he ever talk about the logic or the thought process by which he connected them? I notice he does not reproduce the movements in their original order, as a rule.

ZEISL: No, I think there is a certain balance, right, that slow and fast or loud and soft, and so on, should alternate. I mean, it was just aesthetics that worked when he gathered the pieces, in which order they were to be put to give contrast.

COLE: And would you say that his reason for reorchestrating was to have a larger, more effective orchestral palette than what might have been available to him in the original setting?

ZEISL: No, I think [that for] the original dramatic setting he had an orchestra there, because the Volksoper full orchestra was there. And some pieces used it already,

and [in] some he didn't want to use it, but it was at his disposal. It was rather the other way around, maybe, that the [reorchestration] for the suite was [for] this particular man [Schönherr] who conducted this band, or whatever you would call it, that played on the radio. I think [he] was a student of Eric. He was an older man but was at that time studying harmony. You know, I told you [that] along with the children, he always had some students that were musicians, or wanted to be. And so he was befriended with Eric, and he said, "I could use a piece." And for this Eric did it.

There was also an interlude there. Eric had this song of the fairies, or the elves, and it was to be danced. And the ballet master refused to do it, because it was not like these little tiptoeing elves [of] Mendelssohn, but was rather a soft, slow movement. It was like you would see in the woods when these evening dew clouds would gather on the meadows, and it was this kind of feeling. It is a very beautiful piece, in my opinion, but he refused. But Kurt was a very great friend of Eric and loved his music, and he fought it through, and he went with him with the piece; and the ballet director had Eric play it to the final director somewhere, and it was decided that it was a good piece. And so he had to adapt himself. But whenever Eric had an important event, there were situations--there was always somebody around who said no to something, you

know. And there was always fight, and it was just characteristic of Eric's thing.

COLE: We've talked in general terms already about the wealth of criticism, the variety of readerships, and the large number of critics functioning in Vienna. In 1934, we see at work a specific critic who is still very much with us in Los Angeles now, Paul Pisk. And he wrote something rather significant in Radio Wien. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about the scope of this magazine.

ZEISL: Well, that was a weekly, and it had a rather high level, I must say. It was available every week to the general public. The level of these papers, even the smaller ones, is really amazing, and how seriously art and music were taken, and how much they were part of the general public, in contrast to here, that's still something amazing. Here, the general public is not interested. There it was the baseball of Vienna. I mean, the public, the everyday person, was interested in it. And so I think Eric was allowed to go to whoever he wanted to have the piece discussed. And Pisk at several occasions had given very good reviews of his compositions. I think many of these must have been lost, because I don't see them around, but that prompted him to go to Pisk, because he thought he would be sympathetic. And he wrote very nicely.

COLE: Yes. He said that of the generation of composers under thirty, Eric was one of the most significant.

ZEISL: Ja, he thought that at the time, and when something was played, he had expressed that in different reviews.

COLE: Nineteen thirty-five sees the composition of the Little Symphony, a significant piece for Eric's career both in Vienna and in America because this was one of the pieces that helped establish Eric with American audiences. We've talked about the extramusical stimuli that Eric sometimes needed to begin functioning as a composer. In this case it was a child prodigy. Who was Roswitha Bitterlich?

ZEISL: Well, she was at that time only fourteen years of age, and she was a young Tyrolean girl. And her paintings were really remarkable. I don't know if I have told it to you on this tape. At one time I came from court--I was what you would call an assistant lawyer at the time--and the court building is very near the big exhibition building in Vienna. And I saw this long, long line of people standing, and I was interested, and my court appointment was over, and I had a little bit [of] time before I returned to the office. And so I joined the line and went in, and I was simply amazed. It was really amazing. And what was so amazing was not her skill or her talent of painting, which was remarkable for such a young girl, but it was rather her ideas, which were really fantastic. And of course the most striking

painting was the one that Eric later did as the first movement, "The Madman."

COLE: Maybe you can describe that a bit.

ZEISL: It showed this really hideously looking man with a very thin, pointed, horrible nose. I think the nose looked mad already. And he had red hair that went straight up, was standing on end, and this very pale face, and these frightened, mad eyes. And around his neck, he had bound a cord, and he was fiddling on this cord. And the whole thing was in a dark--one didn't know what it was, but it had very small windows with iron bars, so that it was like a prison. And the whole [was] symbolic of the thing, of this man imprisoned in his own madness, so to say, and not aware of his tragedy, and fiddling there, and yet the fiddling would also cause his being strangled at the same time. It was so remarkable for a fourteen-year-old--and the way it was expressed.

There was one that Eric did not paint. It was the Madonna. And the Madonna was very big, and at her feet--like usually you see the children playing at her feet--was a small figure of a clown dressed in a Harlequin's suit. And with an ever so very gentle movement, she took off this clown's mask and under it was an old, old, very sad, like dying face of a man. And it was ideas like that that she had.

And the other one that Eric painted, the "Expulsion

of the Saints," was kind of like a medieval city, with cathedral doors open. And out of the cathedral were streaming a procession of saints in all kinds of sorrowful movements, bowed down, and they were driven out by a howling, pursuing, jeering crowd, very ugly faces, and so on. And somehow the crowd was smaller than the [saints], which were of course statues. And so again there was a symbolic feeling about it, like they being bigger than their pursuers.

COLE: I see. Even in a large, serious, and somewhat grotesque work like this, there was a marvelously humorous movement, "The Wake."

ZEISL: Ja. This was just a little pencil drawing of two peasants, very chubby-faced, who ate from a plate. They had jugs before them, and they ate big Knödel, as you call it in Austria, this big, round dumpling thing that plays a great part in Austrian life (most of our dishes are with Knödel, especially in the Tyrol). That joy in this eating and drinking, and it was called the Leichenschmaus--"The Wake." I was so amazed and very stimulated by that exhibition, and I knew that when Eric would see that that it would stimulate him the [same] way. And so I prompted him to go there, and it did very much impress him.

And just at that time, of course--since Universal Edition had done the string suite and done well with him--he was now thinking he was accepted and kind of a pest

there probably and constantly bringing in big things like the Requiem, and they said, "Now bring us something smaller and we will do it." So he did that and was anxious not to make it too big. It's about twenty minutes, because he thought that had a chance. And they gave him a contract for it, but that was in '37, and before it was even begun to be copied or anything, Hitler came. But it was performed, and the first performance took place in Czechoslovakia, which was really the first big performance that Eric had outside of Austria. Because Universal Edition, of course, was anxious to place it and, so to say, try it out. And so that was a very enjoyable experience for Eric. And we all traveled there in a car. We had a friend who had a car, and we traveled there, and we were there for two days for the main rehearsals. And it was a very successful performance.

COLE: Was this in Prague?

ZEISL: No, that was in Brno, the capital of Moravia.

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COLE: In our last interview, we were discussing the period 1931 through 1936, a period in which Eric achieved increasing recognition from public, critics, and publishers alike. We had gotten to a consideration of his Little Symphony, a significant work in his output, and we were talking about its premiere in Brno. You still had a few remarks to make about a person Eric met as a result of this.

ZEISL: Ja, we did not meet him in person, but the story was, according to my memory, like this: that [Heinrich] Swoboda was at that time the director of the radio. Czechoslovakia had two state radios; one was German and one was Czechoslovakian. And because a great many Germans lived in Czechoslovakia, that was Hitler's claim, then, that along the whole border of Czechoslovakia, all around, in the mountainous area, it was mostly settled by Germans. And in the plain lived the Czechoslovakian people. And the Czechs were really very decent about this, and there were equal rights, as you could see. And it was really a true democratic thing, and the Germans had their own radio, which was in German. And Dr. Swoboda was the director of the whole thing, whether it was in Prague or in Brno, and maybe there were other stations of

this, too. And he had done the string suite [Scherzo and Fugue], and liked it very much. And I think Kurt Adler knew him, because Kurt Adler at one time had been a director--a conductor--in one of those Czechoslovakian border towns (I don't remember now in which town; one of those border towns near Germany, not near Austria) and had got to know him. And I think maybe through this connection, too, and because he had the string suite, he arranged for the performance of the Little Symphony. And after the Little Symphony--he had listened to the Little Symphony and was very impressed with it--he told Kurt Adler that Eric seemed to be a born opera composer, and he should compose an opera for the radio, and he would perform it. And it was after that that Eric was looking for a text that would be light enough, so to say, and not too difficult for the average listener. And the result was Leonce und Lena.

COLE: We talked, too, about Universal, the publishing company, and its interest in this score. Finally, Universal did honor its commitment, long after the Second World War had ended. Included in this published score is a set of program notes describing the paintings of Roswitha Bitterlich and the general mood of each movement. Did Eric write these program notes?

ZEISL: I really don't remember this 100 percent. They were only done in America. And you know when Erno Rapée

premiered the piece, Milton Cross was the commentator on NBC. I don't know if on his suggestion we made these program notes, trying to describe the pictures, but by then the thing had already been composed, and so the description is sometimes not that of the picture, but of the music. Like, for instance, "Poor Souls." The painting was very impressive. It was just a dark brownish background on which you could hardly distinguish some writhing figures. And they were not distinguished as figures. It was just that whatever you saw there in a grayish-white gave you the impression of utmost pain, and it was called "Poor Souls." But Eric had made it into a night piece with bells, and it seemed to him that it was this kind of ghostly appearance of poor souls, of which there are so many legends and sagas in Austria, that the poor souls of the damned appear at midnight, between the strokes of the bell, bemoaning their fate. And this is the scene that he composed.

COLE: That helps clarify some confusion in my mind, too, because what I read in the description by Roswitha Bitterlich's father didn't jibe with the music.

ZEISL: I do not quite know anymore if we wrote very distinctly what we thought this was and it was exactly as we wrote it, or if Milton Cross maybe did it. I know that when Universal Edition published it, we translated into German what we had in English. At

that time this was already the time when we were in America, and the thing was finally published.

COLE: This piece is strongly indebted to extramusical stimulus, the four paintings of the child prodigy. At this time, did Eric ever talk, or did he ever think of composing an absolute symphonic work?

ZEISL: Well, the Passacaglia was an effort like this. And as we have already discussed, his first love belonged to the theater and to the word--choruses and songs and so on. And the stimulus came usually from this, and so he was less given to absolute expression. He struggled all his life with form.

COLE: Getting back to dramatic works and vocal works, another work from this year 1935 is the Cantata of Verses. In this composition Eric apparently had five movements in mind originally, including a Goethe text. But primarily he used Bible proverbs and the works of Silesius. Can you tell us who Silesius was?

ZEISL: Silesius was a poet, I think of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, with a tremendous religious passion. And his poems are very, very strong, and very expressive, and very famous--and justly so. And so among his collection of suitable texts, this must have existed already. As a matter of fact, he had composed another, or a sketch of another one of those, which begins, "Love is like death." But he did not include it later on. He did

not polish it off to be included, but it is in the sketch-books. And I think the stimulus came from the conductor of the Merchants' Chorus, who needed another piece. You know, every year they had a big concert. And so he probably said to Eric, "Why don't you compose something for this concert which we are planning?" And then Eric did this.

COLE: Why would he discard the Goethe text? Did he simply feel it didn't belong with the other movements?

ZEISL: No, the Goethe text was performed. And there are people that thought this was very impressive and liked this best. But I personally think that the Goethe text did not come off as strong as the others did.

COLE: I see. Speaking of strong, perhaps the strongest movement is the Passacaglia on the famous passage from Ecclesiastes, "To everything there is a season." Could you talk about this a little bit? In its drive, is this another example of his machinelike composition?

ZEISL: Well, it isn't really very machinelike when you hear it. It has just this kind of iron step of fate in it. And it is a tremendously powerful, beautiful work. And it was performed while I was a teacher at Pacific Palisades. It's a very stark piece, really. And it was performed at the high school there; the teacher did it with the young kids. And they all came up to me--not the ones that I had in class, but the ones that sang

(they knew of me)--and they said it was the most beautiful thing they'd ever heard, and I was really surprised that these young people would respond so much to such a very stark piece. But it has a tremendous power.

COLE: Yes, and once again, the dramatic use of the baroque formal procedure.

ZEISL: Ja, and you know, it's just one line; it is very concise. It doesn't elaborate or anything. And yet in one line, Eric presses the whole meaning of this line, whether it is happiness or sorrow. It is so well expressed here, I think.

COLE: In this year, too, we see the publication of "Liebeslied," a single song, as part of an anthology or collection by Universal of young Austrian composers. Was this a circle or league of composers?

ZEISL: No, Universal Edition at that time planned this volume where they wanted to give the collection of songs of Austrian composers. And you must know that there were so many, I mean, numerous, and some of them were already quite old, much, much older. I think Eric was one of the younger ones. And naturally he had already by that time made a name for himself, and he had this wealth of songs, all [of] which he submitted to Universal. And it is very characteristic what they chose. I don't think they can be blamed for choosing this because it is a very powerful, fine song of his. But it is one which does not show as

much his gift of melody and tenderness, maybe, and charm, or anything that characterizes him in other songs. It is, again, a very stark ostinato (he was very fond of ostinatos, therefore his favoring the Passacaglia) that was a basic germ of an idea. And this has this heartbeat of this unhappy girl that goes through the whole piece. We can feel her anguish through that beat. But all the other songs were not taken. Now I don't know--I do not have the volume, and I didn't study [it]. Maybe they only took one song by each composer.

COLE: Yes, they did. There are twenty or twenty-one composers.

ZEISL: Eric was kind of disappointed at that time.

COLE: In the year 1936, we see the publication of a set of seven songs, this set for soprano. And I think we can talk about some of these, because again you figure quite prominently. There's a song called "Forget-me-not," which is dedicated to you, and you told me a marvelous anecdote about the way that song came into being.

ZEISL: Well, that was my impression. It came into being on New Year's Day. Eric composed it on New Year's Day. And on New Year's Eve, there was a party at my parent's house, and that was the time before Eric was forbidden [in] the house. So there were all these young people. My parents were very fond of young people and very hospitable, and a party at my parents' house usually

meant a great many young people having a good time. And so we were there, and it became already quite late--one or two o'clock--when you are just sitting and a little weary. And I had at that time a blue dress. And I was sitting next to Eric, and it was this kind of mood, late in the evening. And the next day he composed that song. And a great many sad thoughts went on in his soul because we were already very, very close, and yet there was this impossible borderline between us because my parents didn't agree. And they had nothing against Eric joining our circle of friends at that time. They just thought, "We said no, and that's it, and the whole thing will blow over." And so he must have been feeling all this, and the next day he composed the "Forget-me-not." And I am convinced that the blue dress had something to do with him choosing the [title] "Forget-me-not," which is a blue flower, and of course the word forget-me-not.

COLE: To prevent any confusion, it should be pointed out that this song was composed some years before it was actually published.

ZEISL: Yes. Now, in this cycle of songs, Eric just collected what he thought were very good songs, and also for the sake of giving contrast and so on, which he always was very conscious of, that they should be partly dramatic and partly lyrical and give a kind of change in pace.

COLE: Certainly, one of the songs most conducive to a

change of pace is "Der Unvorsichtige," which has to do with a little fly. Maybe you can talk about that a bit, because here's another Busch poem.

ZEISL: Yes. Well, that was Eric's sense of humor. He was strongly attracted by Busch texts. And I really don't know what made him compose it. At one time he did this. It's so very well done and so humorous, and one has to hear it to appreciate it. These songs were immediately very successful and widely sung. One that was one of the favorites and composed, I think, much earlier than this--because I remember hearing it over and over in the time when we were just friends--was "The Fiddler." And I think it meant a great deal to Eric. It expressed himself, so to say.

COLE: Yes, it's the perceptive, extremely sensitive boy who, while listening to a street fiddler, seems to be out of step with the rest of the crowd.

ZEISL: And he was the street fiddler, too, because that was his role at that time. At our parties, there he sat, and he was mostly there for our entertainment. And of course, we did take him seriously. We knew where he stood--I mean, what he was and what his destiny was, but it wasn't taken too serious. He was just taken for granted. I think for most of us it was more important whom we met there and to have a good time.

COLE: In this year, a set of small pieces appeared: Three Antique Choruses. This is, to my knowledge, his earliest

use of a Greek motif. He used Greek sources for a couple of these. Did you introduce him to the Greek texts?

ZEISL: No, I think he had them. You have seen that in my library there are a lot of these lyrical [poems], and many of them came from Eric's collection. Either they were given to him by friends--I really don't know what the story is, how he got hold of this, but this was from a collection of Greek songs.

COLE: And one of these pieces was subsequently reused, appearing as the "Greek Melody," for three B-flat clarinets. And this was one of his first pieces to be published in the United States, wasn't it?

ZEISL: Yes. Now this is a kind of involved story, and if you want, I can tell it now. Or shall we tell it in connection with his arrival in America?

COLE: Maybe we should put that off till the arrival in America. From this year also comes a large orchestral and choral setting of Psalm 29, a piece that to my knowledge was never performed. Did he have an occasion in mind for this?

ZEISL: No, he was always very strongly attracted by religious texts. He had this very strongly religious nature. As a young boy, probably under the influence of his grandfather, he had been very religious--I mean, observing religious--but at the time I met Eric this had completely passed. But in his soul, there was this very

strong religious feeling.

COLE: I see. So again, perhaps, this psalm was expressing a dramatic text, a dramatic mood that appealed to him. It certainly took a tremendous amount of perseverance, I would think, to compose a work of this size without a prospect of immediate performance.

ZEISL: Ja. There were very few occasions at that time. I mean, Leonce und Lena is an exception, or the Little Symphony, where Universal said, "Bring us a shorter piece, not such a big piece," or things like this. But normally when he composed, there was no hope whatsoever.

COLE: I see. This pretty well concludes the period 1931 to 1936. I thought it appropriate to make a break here, because beginning with 1937, we find Eric composing a real dramatic work, an opera, on a text that obviously appealed to him. A friend of his [Dr. Hans Sittner, director emeritus of the State Academy] told me in absolutely direct and simple terms that this opera is one of the finest composed in this century. This is Leonce und Lena. [tape recorder turned off] This is a work, you've told me, with which Eric symbolically bade farewell to Vienna and to his youth, a work that obviously meant a tremendous amount to him.

ZEISL: Well, this really is a big jump in time with Leonce und Lena, because a lot of things happened in the meantime. As I told you, my father died. And [with] this death of my

father, my mother's influence and power, so to say, waned somewhat. And it was only a matter of time that we knew she had to give in. And so one Sunday when, as usual, there was a young crowd at my house and Eric was excluded, all of a sudden the bell rang, and he came up, and he said to my mother, "This can't go on like this; you can't exclude me from the circle anymore." And my mother, astonishingly, gave in. She knew she was licked, so to say. And from then on, at least this horrible thing--that we couldn't see each other at my house, and that he was excluded, and all the other young friends were there and he couldn't be there--vanished. And then about a year later, she gave in. I was very, very strongly attached to tradition and so on. I don't think I would have married without her consent, because I felt like a superstition, that it would be an unlucky thing, that I could never be lucky or happy if it were not with the blessing of my parents. And so I was very happy, and the date was set, and then we married, in 1935.

Of course, Eric had now these responsibilities. He went out of his parents' home, and I worked, too. As you know, I was a lawyer. In our country, you are not a lawyer before seven years are over. You make your doctor's degree, and then for seven years you have to practice in an assistant position. And it was Depression, and there were hundreds of young lawyers without a position. And I was

really very fortunate and lucky to get a position at all, because without that position you could not then have the opportunity to become a lawyer. But the payment was very, very poor. And there were many, many young boys who took these positions without payment at all, if they could afford it, just to get this time. And so I had to be very lucky and satisfied to get paid at all, but it was a very poor payment. So that was my contribution. I had also inherited from my father some money, which gave some interest. And we had this interest, and then the rest Eric had to provide. And he did it like usual, with lessons and so on. But it took a great deal of strength.

So in the morning, as usual, he composed, on that opera. And I think the happiness of this fulfillment and young marriage went into it; and somehow, because people like this are always prophetic, there is a sense of farewell over the whole piece. And it was partly farewell to his youth, and partly, I think he felt, farewell from Austria. And already we were really seriously debating going out from Austria. And I was just waiting to fulfill this term that I needed, these seven years, of which I had now a great deal because it had taken five years of our courtship, or whatever you would call it, until we married. And then we debated. And Hilde Spiel, our good friend, had already gone to England and had married there a writer who lived in England (related to Mendelssohn). And she came

back to Vienna, and visited us, and very strongly persuaded Eric to leave Vienna behind and come to London and try his luck there. She said, "You have absolutely no chances here; try it." And so we wanted to do that. Of course, our finances were very shaky, and it was a great undertaking, but we were almost convinced to do it. And so maybe this explains also this sense of farewell that is in this music, because Eric was the Vienna figure, who was so strongly attached to his environment. And they called it the Viennese sickness. Grillparzer had it and Haydn, who was suffering under this Esterhazy and was treated like a servant. He was given the greatest offers by England to come there, and [he] would have been a prince there. But he refused and stayed in his humble position because he couldn't leave Austria. Austria has a very great hold on its denizens.

COLE: Of all the potential material at hand, Eric finally settled upon a play by [Georg] Büchner. Maybe you can talk a little bit about what appealed to him in this play.

ZEISL: Well, the idea was that it should be lighthearted and fit for a presentation by the radio. And of course this in some way hindered many of Eric's creative impulses, because it could not be too stark and so on. But he managed to bring a few of these things in because he couldn't do otherwise. And at that time, the libretto was written by Hugo von Königsgarten, and he took the

basic story line of Büchner and certain basic texts-- [Büchner's own] words. It was his idea that the whole thing should be like a Singspiel, with the spoken word [spoken dialogue], rather than a fully composed opera. And wherever there were music interludes, he would take lyrics from the time by Eichendorff, or Knaben Wunderhorn, and so on, which is about the same time as Büchner. I mean, the Knaben Wunderhorn is a publication about that time.

COLE: It's old, but it's a publication of the early nineteenth century.

ZEISL: Ja, the poems in the Knaben Wunderhorn are partly much older, but the publication was around this time. And the textbook as it came out was not completely to Eric's liking, I think. It was not dramatic enough. He loved really drama, and that isn't in that. As a matter of fact, as charming as it is and as great a genius as Büchner is, Leonce und Lena was never successful on the stage either, while Wozzeck can be played also without the music. It was a marvelously successful play. And I think the circumstances of Büchner's doing Leonce und Lena were similar to that of Eric. He was thinking of marrying. He was a young man who was engaged, and had written these fantastic dramas, and was entering another phase, and was also saying goodbye to his youth, and at the same time enjoying this bliss of being in love and wanting to marry. But he died

before he married. Eric sometimes referred to Lena as die dumme Gans ["silly goose"]. He didn't like her too much. She is a rather wan figure and doesn't come out too strongly, I think.

COLE: What about the effectiveness of this drama, especially if it's performed in a small postage-stamp-like country like Austria? It's not a bitter satire certainly, but there is some gentle satire in the story.

ZEISL: Well, the satire was very much directed at Austria, when you knew it at that time. Of course, we didn't have an emperor any more. But this little, little country that sported a capital and had a residence of the kaiser still and all these earmarks of former grandeur, and yet was so small that you could almost walk to the border. Really, when you went to Czechoslovakia or Hungary, it wasn't much farther [than] when today you go to Santa Barbara or Ventura, almost. And within an hour you could be on the frontier, on either side. So there were many similarities.

COLE: I see. And yet people had a grandiose notion of this whole thing.

ZEISL: And the bureaucracy of the imperial times that had partly survived, with everybody having a title--Regierungsrats and Hofrats all over the place--though there was no court anymore. Hofrat means like court counsellor. And there were still a lot of Hofrats, [but] no court to justify this title. And so all this poked

fun. And of course, in the figure of Valerio, that is a figure like Eric himself.

COLE: I see. A wanderer.

ZEISL: Ja. A rather wild, sometimes even vulgar, fellow who isn't afraid to coin a phrase, as it is, and Eric was like this.

COLE: Now, was it at this time, or was it later, that John [Hanns] Kafka entered the scene in preparation of this work?

ZEISL: Much later. I mean, Hanns Kafka was a friend of mine because a girl with whom I went to class and was very friendly was his sister. So he belonged to our circle and was always there. But at a very early age, he went to Berlin. Like most gifted people, he left. And he made a name for himself and was quite well known in Berlin. He had published several books of novels, and at that time already wrote screenplays also.

COLE: We can probably come to him a little bit later then. As far as you know, was the work ever performed in Prague?

ZEISL: I really don't know, because at the time we sent the manuscript to Swoboda and then never heard of Swoboda again. And there was no real time, because this deluge came over Austria and all we could think [of] at that time was how to save ourselves, where to go, and not stay; and all these things came second.

COLE: Is it true that there was a performance projected

in Austria, at the Schlosstheater in Schönbrunn?

ZEISL: Oh, ja. When Eric had finished this opera, then we had a meeting in January. And it was Kurt Adler who was supposed to conduct it. Then there was a man whose name I've forgotten, who was a very well known stage director at that time and did a lot in the radio. (And he was quite a well known figure, which meant when he took something, that would be successful.) And [there was] the librettist. And they all had a kind of a meeting, and when there were several meetings and it was decided that it should be performed Ja, no! Kurt Adler went out and there was a young conductor at that time who was with the state opera, and his name was Loibner, Kurt or Karl Loibner, I have forgotten. And after the war he was still with the opera and even wrote Eric, but then we lost track of him. (He went to Japan, I think, with the Vienna Philharmonic.) And he was supposed then to conduct the thing. And the Schönbrunn Schlosstheater was like a branch of the opera. I mean, it belonged to this complex, to the state. And they put on lighter and smaller things there. And there they planned the performance. And I think one of the last meetings of this--it was already very much in the planning stage; the performances should have begun in May or in April even--and in March, Hitler came into Vienna, March 13, so that ended all of this.

COLE: That's amazing. So as far as we know, the piece

had to wait until 1952, when it was finally premiered in Los Angeles?

ZEISL: Ja.

COLE: Here, we see Eric's comic gift projected into an entire opera. We see his love of lyrical melody. We see passages that are even sensuous. The love duet certainly is one of the greatest movements he wrote. We see counterpoint surfacing again, this love of the baroque procedure, with a marvelous wedding fugue. There's also a quartet that you have told me anticipates the later Zeisl.

ZEISL: Oh, ja, the quartet, which has these very dark, somber tones. I think it is really the highlight of the piece, to me at least, as far as musical value is concerned. And it has the words, "Every road is long," which means we have to struggle along. And this was, of course, very much what he felt. And I must tell you that giving lessons, and being newly married, [and] having left his parents and everything, which was always a kind of a very traumatic experience, and composing at the same time took so much strength out of him that in the summer, when he had composed all this, there began something like a very, very marked depression. And he just went deeper and deeper into this thing. And I would come home from the office when I was able to because I was so concerned. It was really a very, very terrible thing. And there he would be in the room, maybe 11:00 in the morning, and the curtains

were drawn completely, and he said, "Everything is so dark." And I said, "But of course it's dark. Open the window!" But I mean he was really in a very deep depression.

I think what had begun this was that I didn't understand how much strength he had used up. And at one time I suggested and said we should have a baby. And I think this was such an extreme fear that he completely withdrew into himself. And he was so shocked--he was almost shocked out of his senses by the very idea of having this burden, which he wasn't prepared for. And it was dumb of me. And then, of course, I left this idea completely. But the damage was done. And this whole time he did not compose anything. In November, he tried one November piece--I think it was the "Souvenir" or the "Shepherd's Melody," I don't quite remember--one of the November pieces, and left off again, because he was not capable of doing anything. His depression was too strong. And I fought like a lion not to let him have psychiatric care, because I had seen the state in which he was after it. And I thought [that rather than] spend all this money for something which was completely futile, I would be strong enough to get him through. And with Hitler I had help, so to say, because this great shock and at the same time the liberation--that he knew he would get out of Vienna and a new life would start--lifted that thing. And he became well almost overnight.

COLE: His last major composition of the Viennese period appropriately reflects the effect of this Hitler onslaught upon Austria. Is November, which he composed in 1937-38, a reaction in large part to Hitler?

ZEISL: Ja, because he had, as I told you, composed one piece of this and then left it again and did not compose. He went on and did his duties, gave his lessons. But otherwise he was almost like a dead person. It was a very terrible time for me. I was too young and unexperienced for such a thing, and I must say that I showed a great strength of spirit, because it is a terrible thing to have when you are young married and everything should be happy. And it had nothing to do with his great love for me because that went on. But it was just a physical thing, I think. He had just driven himself. He was completely exhausted, and this had to fill up again.

COLE: Did the entrance of Hitler into Austria profoundly affect your lifestyle at the moment?

ZEISL: Oh, completely, completely. For one thing, when Hitler came to Austria, things really went from bad to worse. I should explain certain political things. Hitler had planned this all the time. And so he had established in Bavaria a legion, like a foreign legion, and every criminal that did something in Austria went over the mountains into Bavaria and joined that legion. And with this legion of outlaws, he entered Austria and gave them

free rein, because he hated Vienna. Hitler had spent his worst times there. He didn't have the Austrian characteristics at all. And he was from the borderline of Germany; he was never so Austrian in that. And so this was really a regime of terror, and they entered the houses and took people and you never saw them again.

So I took Eric to my mother's flat, where he was not registered, for after a while we didn't dare to stay home. And then at Eastertime we went to Baden, which is a little resort--Baden, you know? A Kurort, a spa, which was internationally famous, and so a lot of foreigners came there from all parts. And there the thing wasn't so bad, because they didn't want to give that impression to foreigners, you see. They were afraid of that, and so they held back a little bit. And I saw that the whole atmosphere there was not so terrifying. And so I suggested to my mother that we should rent a place in Baden over the summer and stay there, and we did that, and rented that very lovely villa, the upper part. And there we stayed over the whole summer.

And only in the fall, when Hitler wanted Czechoslovakia and went to Munich, we had a bad experience, which is not too interesting, musically speaking. Ja, it might be, because through all this time his spirit had revived, [and] Eric was still wanting to compose an opera. And there was a rising Austrian poet there by the name of [Hermann Heinz] Ortner, whose plays were played in the

Burgtheater, and he was very well known. And we were in correspondence with him, and it so happened that he lived in Baden. And so we had a date with him to visit him in his villa, where he lived. And we got nicely dressed and were about to go there, when the SA [Sturmabteilungen, the Brownshirts] came by. And that was already fall, because it was the time when Hitler went to Munich and said [that] all the Czechoslovakian-Germans were fleeing because the Czechs were persecuting them. And it was then decided to give him all these parts and leave Czechoslovakia completely unprotected, which resulted in his marching in right away. So they came and took us to a school where we were supposed to sweep up and prepare straw sacks where all these Sudetendeutschen--all these border Germans--were to be harbored for the time being. They didn't harm us. After we had done that, they let us go. But it was kind of a little scary experience, I must say. I was well dressed because we were going to visit, and I said to one of them, "Can I change?" And he said, "No, that isn't necessary." And I was going to sweep up and fill the straw sacks with my good dress. But otherwise they didn't harm us.

Of course, Baden is such a little town. So we met quite a few of these Czechoslovakinas--I mean Germans--there, and we said, "How was it when the Czechs came?" And they said, "We never saw a Czech. The storm troopers came and said we had to leave immediately." And so they

had to leave their houses as is, to give that impression.

COLE: I see. Then was it here in Baden that he composed November?

ZEISL: No, that was already before. That was around March when we were still at home. And he composed that there and finished it there. And it was piano pieces.

COLE: They later became sketches for chamber orchestra. Was it you who supplied the program notes, the little program descriptions?

ZEISL: Ja, I think so. He played them to me and they all had this somber mood. And I think the first one was . . .

COLE: . . . the autumn loneliness.

ZEISL: Ja, and so it all suggested this to me.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 11, 1975

COLE: The discussion of music pales to insignificance beside the onslaught of Nazism. When did it become clear to you that you would have to leave Vienna and Austria?

ZEISL: Oh, that was clear from the first moment on because as I have probably told you before, the situation in Austria was very different [than] it had been in Germany, though it was leading to this in Germany, too. In Germany, there was still a remnant of order and maybe law left, but when Hitler came to Austria, all these vestiges fell. And the reason was that Hitler had prepared to invade Austria for years. And he raised a legion, an army, which he trained in Bavaria. And all the people that were called "illegal Nazis" (political sympathizers), which was forbidden in Austria, went to Germany and joined that legion. Mostly everybody who feared the law, every criminal that was about to be caught by the police, went over the mountains into Bavaria and joined that legion. And with that legion of outlaws, he entered Austria and gave them free rein, because he hated Vienna especially. And it was a kind of triumph and pleasure for him to enter there with a regime of terror.

So from the start you heard all these terrible stories. People were picked up in the street, brought

to Gestapo headquarters and tortured there, and imprisoned and shipped off to the concentration camps at night. The Nazis entered the apartments. Most of them were sixteen to seventeen years old. And they had given them all guns. And the population was peaceful and had no defense against this. And so it was quite clear to us, especially since we had already even planned to leave. The difficulty was that when Hitler came to Austria, everybody wanted to leave, and that caused such a storm that the other countries shut off their borders, because by then Depression had begun in all the countries, and they feared the competition of this tremendous influx of people who needed work when their own people had no work. And so afterwards you couldn't get a visa; you couldn't get out of the country. It was very, very difficult, and you had to try all kinds of things.

We had acquired quite a few visas. For one thing, Eric had a student by the name of Hong Pan[?], who was a nephew of Madame Chiang Kai-shek--at that time Chiang Kai-shek was still in China--and really he had absolutely no talent. And Eric often wondered why he was studying music, but he was also at the academy. And I think it was just a mantle or cover. He was there for diplomatic reasons. What was interesting--he knew so much, being so near the high personalities--is that in that year in which Hitler came, he prophesied and knew that Hitler

would make a pact with Russia, which was unthinkable then, because when Hitler came to power, he really came to power against the Communists. We couldn't believe that this should be so, but later on it became true (but only a year or more later). And so Hong Pan gave us a visa to Shanghai, which, however, we didn't want to use and didn't use. We bought somewhere a visa to Liberia, where they said that when you arrive, somebody would come and stick a fork into you to see if you were good to eat. [laughter] It was still a very wild region at that time. But anything, just to get out.

We lived nine months under Hitler. One of the ideas that then finally succeeded and helped us to get out was that I went to the American consulate and looked into the New York telephone book for Zeisl. And I found seven Zeisls, to whom I wrote. My knowledge of English was pretty good, but not so strong that I understood everything. Next to the name there were sometimes little letters. One, for instance, plb. It meant, as I found out later on, plumber. Or jwl, which meant jeweler. I didn't know that.

Well, anyway, at that time we were in Baden. As I told you, we had rented this villa. To give you an idea of how the situation was, before we went to Baden, and even there, Eric went around You know the Nazi uniform at that time: everybody in sympathy with the

Nazis, when they were still illegal, went around very demonstratively in Vienna, which was after all a city, with Lederhosen and white Strupfen (short stockings made out of coarse wool). So Eric went everywhere with these Lederhosen and Strupfen, and this made him more unrecognizable, because he was really in mortal danger. Very often, for instance, he came to a young boy student to give him the piano lesson, and the Gestapo was there just ten minutes ago to take away the father. The situation was so bad--whoever male would be there, they would take along, whether they had an order for it or not. And on the street you could be picked up, and in order not to be picked up, everybody was wearing a swastika on his coat whether he was in sympathy with the thing or not, just as a protection not to be molested. But of course Eric could not wear that. That would have been punishable by death. And so he wore this uniform, and over the uniform a raincoat, whether the sun was shining or not, because the raincoats were made out of this plastic material, and you didn't like to stick a pin in. So even the Nazis themselves did not wear the swastika on their raincoats. So in this kind of uniform he went around in order to be unrecognizable. And that saved his life. Also, he had very sharp eyes, and when he saw a brown or black figure--oh, I don't know how many, a hundred yards away--he would duck into a house entrance

in order to let them pass.

And of course we had many near misses. Both brothers of Eric--Willi and Egon--were picked up and held at the Gestapo for, I don't know, two days. And one never knew whether you came out alive. And it just depended whether the person handling your case was an out-and-out beast or somebody who still had some human instincts left. There were not too many there at the Gestapo headquarters. For instance, in Baden, friends came out to visit Saturday and Sunday. And there came these two young friends of Eric from this group which I had mentioned before, the Junge Kunst (Youth and Art). And they were two poets. One was a very close friend of Eric--Alfred Farrau, he is called in this country--and the other one, I forgot his name. And they read their poetry, as was usual in these meetings. And I still remember the poem of the one young poet. And it was pretty late when they left, and Fred stayed overnight with the other boy, who was a wealthy boy. Now, in the morning the Gestapo came to their apartment, and they were there, so they picked them up. And they probably didn't even come for them, but for the father, who was some kind of realtor, and when you were wealthy you were already automatically high on the list of being taken. And so they took them and shipped them to Dachau. And two days later the parents of the other boy got the urn with his ashes. And only when Alfred Farrau came out

(two months later, they let him out) His wife went to the Gestapo daily and finally found somebody who had pity on her, and they let him go. But he had been there for two months, and it was a horrible experience. And he told them then what had happened. The Gestapo made them sit on the train and look into the lights, and when they blinked or took their eyes off--because it was nighttime and they naturally got tired--they shot them, for disobedience. And that had happened to this boy. And when the parents got the urn there was no explanation; they didn't know what had happened or anything.

And so you can imagine that it was really necessary to go out. And one day my brother-in-law came and said, "I met in the coffeehouse a young man who says he can get us French visas, for fourteen days only, but it is something, and we get out, and after that we'll see." It cost so-and-so much. (It was a great sum.) And he said, "I want you to come with me and look at him, if you think we can trust him with the money, because we have to give him the money. He's a complete stranger, and we have to trust him." And so I went there, and I looked at him, and I trusted him. And we gave him the money, and he delivered these visas to us. The visas were from Cologne, not from Vienna, and he said, "You have to go to Cologne, and in Cologne you have to do two things: you have to go to the police and have your residence changed from Vienna

to Cologne, and then you have to go to the embassy and have them put the date in, because the visa is only for fourteen days. And so I didn't put the date in, because I don't know when you will be leaving." And so we at least had these visas, and it was something.

And in the meantime, I think I told you that I had written to these seven Zeisls, and the one with plb, the plumber, answered. And at that time, here in America they had shown films in which the Nazis drove hordes of people through the Prater and abused them, and the people were very upset about this, and they were aroused by this. And the Cunard Line had printed forms of affidavits. But they were not real affidavits; they were, so to say, a promise of an affidavit, because for an affidavit you have to give copies of your taxes for the last three years, and your bank accounts have to be stated, and all these kinds of things.

And so in the meantime we knew that we would leave, but we didn't know where we would go. And so we still had money in Austria, and we paid the farthest freight for our furniture, which was either Australia or California. And we shipped the furniture to Hamburg, where it could stay for six months, until we thought we would have arrived and would then direct it to where we would go. And we didn't know, we might have come to Australia, where of course we also applied. But in order to enter Australia,

you had to have 1,500 pounds, I think--I don't remember the sums--considerable money, there, in Australia. And we didn't have anything outside the country. So on the day that all this furniture was shipped, I stood there in the empty walls, and we looked at these empty walls, and it was a shaking experience. All of a sudden, your whole life is emptied out, so to say, and your future is a completely dark hall. We didn't know where we would end, what would happen, and I went by the door, and there was the mailbox, and there was this letter from America, with that affidavit of the plumber. And when I wrote these letters, I had written for me and Eric and the youngest brother-in-law (Willi, Stevie's father, with whom Eric always was the closest). In the meantime, the two older brothers had already left with these French visas, and they had arrived in Paris. And so we finished everything, and the date which was set for our definite departure was November 10.

Now, it so happened that November 10 was an infamous day, the so-called Crystal Night [Kristallnacht]. There was in Switzerland[?] a young Jewish boy [Herschel Grynszpan] who knew that he had only one year to live. He had some kind of tuberculosis or whatever, and he thought he would do something for his people, and he killed a person of the German Embassy in Switzerland [actually Paris], a person by the name of [Ernst von]

Rath. Many people even said that maybe he was hired by the Nazis themselves, because they took that as a pretext for this famous Kristallnacht, where they destroyed all the synagogues. Whoever came into their hands was sent to the camps, and that meant all over Germany, where this kind of thing had not happened yet. In Austria it was from the beginning, but in Germany this kind of thing was something new. And they demolished all the Jewish shops and so on.

And on this famous tenth of November, we were going to go out. In the morning appeared Willi. And you know, in order to emigrate you had to have all kinds of documents, I forgot what, where you had to go to all kinds of magistrates, and it was always a very dangerous thing to go there anyway. And so on this special day, Willi, who was always a very procrastinating person, had decided to do that, and so before he came near the magistrate, he met a person who apparently recognized that he was Jewish, and he said, "Don't go any further, because the Gestapo has surrounded the place and they will only take you. Don't you know what's happening?" And he told him what was happening. He didn't even know, because he hadn't opened the radio and didn't know about this thing. And so he came to us and told us, and so I said, "You will go with us." And he said, "I have no papers." And I said, "Well, we are a family, and maybe when we have

our passports and papers and another comes along, maybe they won't notice." And they didn't. He had his passport, but he didn't have his other emigration papers. And so we called his parents, and the Gestapo had been at his parents' house, and they had stolen everything out of the cupboards, taking these two old people to the station, but then [they] released them. And so he couldn't go home anymore either. So he had nothing. He had no belongings or anything.

Whenever a trunk was ready, I took a taxi and brought it to the railroad station. And of course we were in my mother's house, where Eric was not a listed resident. But even so, fortunately after all this was done, in the evening the Gestapo arrived. Ja, I had them hidden. I didn't even want them in the flat, and I had them hidden in the [laundry room]. You know, in the houses in Vienna is a laundry room, where you had these big, old-fashioned laundry vats where the washerwoman washed the laundry. And there they were hidden. But the janitor's wife--I already told you about the all-important function of the janitor. The janitor's wife had discovered them there, and so I took them again back into the flat and sent them home to our apartment. And we didn't know where it was safe to be because it was such a horrible day. And in the evening, when everything was ready, thank God, and the things were all at the station, the Gestapo came and

said we had to leave the house immediately. And my mother had left her glasses on the table, and she said, "I just want to go back to get my glasses." And they said no. So we had to get glasses for her in Germany, in Cologne. But I mean, no rhyme or reason to it, naturally.

And so we went to the station, and our belongings were already at the station. And we had sleeping cars--it was in the evening--and that was a lucky thing, because even out of the train they got people, but they left the sleeping cars alone because, again, a lot of foreigners were traveling in the sleeping cars, and they didn't want these people to report to their countries what was happening. So we were safe there. And we arrived in Cologne. And next morning, of course, everywhere there were these signs that we were not even allowed to be in the hotel where we already had reservations, but we didn't say anything, and nobody asked, so everything was fine. It could have resulted in our being sentenced or I don't know what.

And the next morning we went to the police to get the residence in our passports. And there was a long, long hallway with many, many doors. And just by accident we waited at this particular door, and the door opened, and out came this young man, whom I had seen only once in my life for five minutes in this coffeehouse when we gave him the money for the visas. And he recognized us and said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "We are

doing what you said we should do." He said, "Were you already at the embassy?" We said, "No." He said, "Don't go to the embassy. They will take your passport away because the man who gave us the visas has been arrested." So I said, "We have no date." He said, "Put the date in yourself." I said, "I won't do that." And I left it without the date. And that was lucky because this way they couldn't prove when it was And he was a legitimate employee there who had just made a little money because of Hitler, taking advantage of the thing. So the plane was delayed about one hour, and they searched every inch of our luggage and everything and were so careful because of this visa. But they let us go, and the French let us in because of this French visa. But even the French would not have let us in at that time anymore with a fourteen-day visa, but when we showed them this really worthless printed sheet with the affidavit and said, "We are going to America," they let us in. So this man, Zeisl the plumber, on the spur of the moment--it had cost him a dollar to write that--had really saved our lives, I think.

COLE: That's absolutely amazing.

ZEISL: And through all this Eric was like a parcel, well bound over. I was doing all the things and I was putting him here or there, and he wasn't doing anything and wasn't as unhappy as he would be in a normal situation, when he

went on vacation and it was always a big trauma. I mean, he was almost dying, even when he wanted to go to a beautiful place for one day. And there he was completely blissful. You know, all the responsibilities were taken from him. It was nothing of his doing, something beyond his control. And so he felt quite secure. And he felt something like relief to be out. And he saw his whole life before him, and he had no doubt that everything would be wonderful and great. He was a terrific optimist. And even when things went the worst, he was always sure that America would win the war, that Hitler would lose. He doubted it not a second. It was this sure instinct; he was right. So we arrived in Paris.

COLE: How then did you go about setting yourself up in Paris? How were you able to survive?

ZEISL: His two brothers were already there, and we stayed at the same hotel. It was filled from cellar to garret with other people of like fate. And I think I have already mentioned that about two or three days after we were there, there appeared this ad. And we had arrived without any money. My mother had a little money in Paris because she was a jeweler and had friends, her business connections. And she had a visa because she had business connections with France and was going to Paris regularly. She was a representative of Juvenia watches, which are still sold in this country. This was a big French outfit. And she

had there other French connections whom she represented in Vienna. And so she had a little money, very little, so that we could survive maybe for fourteen days, but then we had no money whatsoever. And I don't know what we thought, because we were so confident everything would be all right. And through this ad which we read there, Eric came to this man and he fulfilled his dream through Eric, by having Eric set his little compositions and make regular pieces out of them. Sometimes he wanted a sonata, and he said, "Da-da-da," and then Eric made a sonata out of it. And he was very wealthy and paid very well, and it was like a little factory, because Eric composed these things, and Willi and I copied, and we got very handsomely paid for the copying, so we lived beautifully in Paris.

And of course, it was an inner circle in Paris, because so many had the same fate. So we met there the critic Paul Stefan, with a singer--he was connected with the lady (she was not his wife, but they were always together). She was a very fine alto singer--I forgot her name, unfortunately [Yella Fernwald]. My memory--it's more than thirty years ago. If I would think very strongly I would find it, and it's in the programs. She had sung Eric's songs in Vienna. She had a beautiful alto voice.

And then we met Alma and Franz Werfel. And I think through them we met a Catholic priest, Father Moenius, a very highly intelligent man who was actively fighting

against Nazism. He was a great friend of the Werfels and became a great friend of ours. And I could mention more. And we met a young composer by the name of [Marcel] Rubin, who is now in Vienna, and he had a brother-in-law who was a very fine poet.

And before all things, we met [Darius] Milhaud, who was very, very friendly, and immediately took Eric to his heart, and was incredibly wonderful to us. And he took us to all the concerts. We were at the premiere of Honegger's Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher and at the rehearsals. And Milhaud's Columbus was then premiered, and all these things. We were at the Opéra and at a piece of a young French composer, where Milhaud had given us tickets for the loge. And so it was a wonderful, wonderful life and much more the life that Eric, as a young composer, was supposed to lead [than] this miserable, dreary, lesson-giving drudgery that he had had in Vienna. So we were really very happy. We had a kind of a round table, where we went to this restaurant, and all these people would come at lunchtime. (We still had lunch as the big meal then.) And so it was a very pleasant, beautiful time, like a great travel-vacation experience.

Now, we also met there the Kafkas. And of course, I had known Hanns Kafka since my childhood. And he and Eric immediately clicked, so to say, and became very, very close friends. And his wife, Trude Kafka, was a

very famous actress. And now Joseph Roth at that time also lived in Paris, as an exile. He was terribly unhappy for many reasons, for the reason that he was in exile. For a writer, exile is so [much] more of unhappiness, because he is deprived of his instrument, so to say, the language. And he also had a personal tragedy in his life. He loved his wife very much, and she was in an insane asylum, I think, and it was a great tragedy for him. He had loved her very much. And so he sat in this little bar and literally drank himself [to death]--it was his form of suicide. He drank this very, very strong absinthe--Pernod, it's called. It's a green liquid and incredibly strong, and he drank it by the jugs. The whole day he sat there and literally drank himself to death and died in Paris within that year.

And now we met, through Hanns Kafka's wife, a producer [Paul Gordon] who was really the model for the often-ridiculed movie producer. Only he had some kind of a flair of who was something in literature, and he had some kind of an artistic feeling, but [he] was such an amateur that it was just incredible. And he had befriended that completely befuddled Joseph Roth and had gotten from him the rights to his book Job. And Roth, I think, didn't even know what he was doing. And Gordon had a brother, who was a very gifted writer and who had made this into a very good play. And he was going to produce that. Of

course, he had very little money, and he rented the Théâtre Pigalle, which belonged to Rothschild, and was putting on this production. And Trude Kafka, Hanns's wife, was supposed to be Miriam (that is one of the figures). And she told Eric, "There is a dance there, a Cossack dance, where I am supposed to dance, and you should write the music." And Eric was immediately very enthusiastic. Theater music was just right up his aisle. Somehow--I forgot how (probably Milhaud helped us)--he had gotten hold of an old piano, which was moved into the hotel room. And there he composed the Cossack dance.

And in the meantime, as I told you, we had done very, very well with this man. And we had some money saved, and so we decided that the Kafkas and we and, of course, Willi (who, in the meantime, had met in the Jardins de Luxembourg, next to the university, a very charming young Scottish girl; they had taken quite a shine to each other) would rent a villa in Le Vésinet, which was one of the stations there on the line to St. Germain-en-Laye, very beautiful, along the Seine. And there we found this villa, and we and the Kafkas went out there, and we all contributed so that we could rent this villa for some months. And there Eric finished the overture and then the song of Menuhim. And he asked Milhaud, and Milhaud recommended to him one of the foremost organists of Paris [Jean Manuel], who was willing to play this piece at this occasion for nothing.

He would get very little or nothing, I don't remember. It was like a performance in memory of Roth, and I think it was something like a charity thing and was under the patronage of the Austrian community there. And then he recommended to him a young girl by the name of [Janine d'] Andrade, who played the Menuhim song, which was for violin. And of course the Cossack dance Eric himself was to play on the piano. Andrade played that [song] incredibly beautifully.

That we had these artists was thanks to Eric and Milhaud, because in the week when the dress rehearsal was, we asked [Paul] Gordon, who was the producer, "Now who is going to do the music?" "Oh," he said, "I get them on the Place Pigalle," which was true. Every day the union musicians--these people who played the harmonica and things--assembled there; and the little restaurants, when they needed music, went there to the Place Pigalle and hired them for the night or for the day. "Now I go there," he said. And Eric said, "What do you mean? These are difficult and serious pieces. These musicians can't play them." And so he went in his desperation to Milhaud, and Milhaud helped. But this was to illustrate how Gordon did things. So he got this. And on the day [that] the rehearsal should be, we found out that the organ didn't work. And of course there was no time to go through all these channels and contact the Rothschilds

anywhere. The organ had to be fixed or the performance was off; I mean, the music was off. And so we had the organ fixed for Rothschild, which is kind of funny. [laughter] And fortunately there wasn't too much wrong with it--something in the electrical system didn't work. And so everything went fine, and the rehearsals--I can't really describe to you the general rehearsal. Nothing went right. The lead role said, "Take a seat," and the chair wasn't there, and that was the dress rehearsal. Or he was supposed to have a glass of water, which plays a very important part, because the child is supposed to be a deaf-mute, and the father puts a spoon to the glass and sees that the child reacts; he's not deaf, just mute. And the glass wasn't there, of course. And these were important key situations. But you know, the actors were so enthusiastic about it, and they were such wonderful, fine actors, mostly famous people from the [Max] Reinhardt ensemble. Hugo Haas, who played the main role, later became quite known here. He played in many films and later on produced many films, too.

Now, when the performance was, there were also speeches, of course, commemorating the occasion. And there was one young actor who was supposed to hold like a prologue, on which he had worked diligently. [But first] came the overture, and the overture lasted five minutes, which isn't too long for an overture, but it was an organ piece and

rather serious, and this young actor was very eager to give his speech, so he always entreated the organist to play quicker or end it. And you can imagine the fury of this man who played there, who was such an eminent organist and played for nothing, or what amounted to nothing, and being interrupted at his performance. (Of course, this took place behind the scenes.) Finally the young man got so frustrated that he put the cover on the hands of this organist in order to stop him. But he managed to finish the piece. That things like this could happen gives you the idea of what kind of a producer Mr. Gordon was.

But the performance was a tremendous success. Milhaud and his wife, who was an actress herself, [were] so impressed and Mrs. Lenormand--[Henri René] Lenormand was a very famous poet of the time--wanted to translate it into French. And Madeleine Milhaud said that she would coach the actors. And they were just overwhelmed with it; it was beautiful. And I must say that Hugo Haas, too, had a lot to do with it because he gave the most moving, marvelous performance of Job. And also his wife was played by an actress--again I forgot the name, but the program will have it [Sidonie Lorm]--[who] was a famous actress in the Reinhardt ensemble. And I mean she just was Deborah. It wasn't playing anymore; it was really this kind of performance where there was a complete identification between the actor and his part. So the thing was very, very impressive. And Eric, too,

was so taken that he decided to make an opera out of it. And since Hanns Kafka was living with us, it was an easy thing, and from day to day he adapted the thing as Eric wanted it. And Eric did the whole first movement. No, not quite--part of it he did.

But by then it was August, and dark clouds were gathering already, and you could see that war might break out any minute. And in the meantime, we had to go through an ordeal. Every four weeks we had to appear at the French magistrate. And Milhaud had done us a great service. He knew everybody there, of course, and he had given us a letter from the minister of the interior of France-- [Albert] Sarraut was his name--"donner à ces étrangers ce qu'ils veulent" ("to give these foreigners what they want"). So we got a very, very highly treasured permission to stay in Paris. Almost everybody was sent away. For instance, Eric's older brother was sent to Marseilles, and for many people this resulted in death, because in many of these outlying places, like Nice and Marseilles and so, there were American consuls who were not very good people and who would sell legitimate visas for money. And then the people who had the right to these visa didn't get them, and they postponed and postponed until the war broke out, and they never got out of France, and through this many of them perished.

In Paris, fortunately, was a marvelous man, whom I

really should include in my daily prayers. Though we didn't have money or anything, he was immediately very friendly to us and said, "You are the kind of people we want to have," and he advised us. In the meantime we had written again and again to the plumber to send us the necessary papers that you needed for a regular affidavit, like the tax--and he never answered anymore (and afterwards I found out why). And so he said, "You don't need that. Do you have a relative in America?" And we had a faraway cousin of Eric's father, you know, second generation. And in the meantime my oldest brother-in-law, Eric's oldest brother, had already arrived in America and went to this relative, and he was good enough to send these affidavits though he himself had a family, and we were already number seven and eight. And it was really worthless, I think, but the consul was so nice that he accepted it. It was within the law. He could by law accept a relative's visa whether it was very valuable or not. And he did that for us, and so we got our visas about the eighteenth of August.

But Eric was so smitten with Paris and loved it so much [that] he said, "I'm not going"-- his old fear of traveling; he didn't want to go. But then the war came, and so of course we had to leave. And I went every day to Paris to get ship tickets. Everywhere there was a line around the block, because naturally all the people

wanted to leave Paris when the war broke out, lots of legitimate Americans and not refugees. And so the situation was hopeless. Just by luck--that is not interesting here--I got the ship tickets, and we went on one of the last boats. But the war had already broken out, and the voyage took ten days instead of seven.

And on the ship I was very seasick, but when I came on land I was still seasick. And then I discovered that I wasn't seasick, but that I expected Barbara. [tape recorder turned off] It was a strange thing that Eric, who dreaded trips and journeys so much, was completely happy on this trip. As I told you, he was like a packet that you post somewhere, well bound with thread and then sealed and sent off. And he was in this kind of role. And all responsibilities were taken from him, and he was happy to come to a new land, and he was optimistic, and he was looking forward to it. And then I discovered, as I told you, that I was expecting Barbara. And I had always wanted a child very, very much, and it was unthinkable for me not to have a child. And so I was confronted with this terrible thing. I didn't want to tell him that, because I remembered--and it was only a year ago--that he had gone into a severe depression when I had even mentioned it. And so I thought, "God! Everything is unknown. We come to this strange country where

he doesn't know one word of English. We have no money. Everything is insecure, and I should confront him with this news--this will break him."

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 16, 1975

COLE: At the conclusion of the last tape, you were on your way to America. You were pregnant with Barbara, but you didn't want to tell Eric.

ZEISL: Well, on the ship I was very seasick, and I didn't know that it was not seasickness. It turned out later to be Barbara.

On the ship we met a Mrs. [Camilla] Short. She was an Austrian countess and had married a Mr. Short, who was, as she described it, a right-hand man of Roosevelt. By the name, I think that he was probably a relative, maybe a brother, of that Short of the infamous fame of Short and Kimmel, the two generals who were responsible for Pearl Harbor. (One of them was called Short, and maybe this one was a relative, I don't know.) Anyway, she took an interest in us, us being Austrian and she having come from Austria. And she took us under her wing, so to say, and said we must meet her husband.

And she said, "By all means, you have to stay in the hotel where we always stay. It's the right thing for you." It was the Hotel Irving on Gramercy Place, and it was indeed a charming place. The inhabitants of the hotel got a key to a little park that was just outside the hotel. But the problem was that we had arrived in America with exactly

\$300, which we had saved from this period in Paris and the millionaire for whom Eric [worked]. In the first week we were there, \$100 of these \$300 was gone, though the hotel was pretty cheap. I remember us having lunch there for fifty cents, though it was a fine hotel and catering to the upper class.

And we did meet her husband. That was really quite an experience for us. It was the first American government official that we had met. Now, when we met him and his wife, he was in his hotel room, and as a kind of greeting, he showed Eric that he could put his foot behind his neck. [laughter] And he was like a boy, you see, and a very, very nice man, but already in his fifties. But this was kind of his behavior; he took his foot and he put it behind his back. And we were used to these very stiff, bearded gentlemen who were state ministers and high officials and Hofrats and Regierungsrats and we had imagined meeting somebody like this. Also she said right away that we must meet a friend of hers, the widow of Elihu Root. It was only years later, when a film was made about Woodrow Wilson, that I encountered in this film the figure of Elihu Root, who was the leader of the Republican party and did everything to destroy everything that Wilson wanted to do. And she said that this woman was still more powerful than Roosevelt in New York, and by all means we must meet her.

And we did meet her, and the thing was this: she had invited a great party, and Eric and his brother were supposed to play, but what Viennese songs, you know? And so in order to please--you know, the new environment--they played these Viennese Heurigen ["wine"] songs, and Mrs. Elihu Root was surely about seventy-seven, and everybody else that was invited there was either seventy-seven or eighty-seven or ninety-seven. And all of a sudden Eric came to me and he said, "Do you also feel so old?" Because there they were, and they clapped their hands, and to us it was a little bit like kindergarten. Though they were so old, we felt like [a] thousand years older than all these people there, because somehow Europe is such an old continent as against America. And we felt that very strongly there.

From now on, it is difficult for me to tell you everything, because there is so much. In Europe, only the most important things stand out in my memory, and everything else has become quite hazy. But there, there was so much, and everything is very clear to me, and I remember all the names, and I remember everything. So what not to mention I think will be kind of more difficult to me.

I told you that in the last year Eric had been extremely depressed, and now it was just the opposite. From the sea voyage on, from the ship, he was the

happiest person in the world. There was no doubt in his mind that he was going to conquer America. Maybe he was aware, but that he was going to conquer, as Eric Zeisl, who was not known in America at all, that he was going to conquer a continent--that never occurred to him. It was quite sure to him, and he felt in himself this great talent and the world was waiting for him, and everything was open that had been closed.

On the ship already, his happy mood showed itself in a tremendous appetite. I have to tell you a funny episode, because I, on the other hand, couldn't eat anything because I was so seasick, as I thought. And eating was just an ordeal for me. And it was a Dutch ship with the most marvelous meals, and in the morning already came this breakfast with ham and sausage and cheeses and heaven knows what. And Eric would take the plate that they put before me and put it over on his plate, because he knew I couldn't eat anything. And on about the fourth day, there were two young men sitting near us, and we finally got to meet them and were introduced, and they said, "Mr. Zeisl, are you going to America?" "Yes." "Are you going to stay there?" "Yes." "Well, then we have to tell you something. We don't treat our women like this." Apparently they had the idea that he was taking all the food that I got for himself and didn't leave me anything. But it showed that he was so happy on the ship and, in that

state, looking forward [to] New York.

Now, in New York we met quite a few friends that had already come before us and were already settled, among them former students of Eric. And they all gave him advice of whom to see and so on. And among the people that he should contact was a Mr. [Erno] Rapée. This Mr. Rapée was the conductor of the Radio City Symphony (that was the big movie theater that had a show going on before, with music). And this man was of course a kind of a little bit flashy Hollywood type, but he was really a good musician. And, as a commercial hour for the theater, he had every Sunday a nationwide radio hour in which he took that symphony orchestra, which was a very good orchestra, and played serious music with it. (He was, for instance, the first man in America who presented on this hour, and in this year in which we arrived, the complete Mahler cycle. That's something that the Los Angeles symphony hasn't done.) And so we wrote a letter that we had arrived, and we mentioned Milhaud, among others that had recommended us. And I came home, and Eric didn't know a word of English, you know. So he told me something garbled, which by intuition I understood was the address of Radio City Music Hall. He said something like "Firsty-fifth Street" or something like this. And so I had written the letter and knew it was Fifty-first; so I knew that was that. And so we went over. It was, I think, the

first week we were there.

COLE: This is still 1939 then?

ZEISL: Ja. 1939. And Eric took the Little Symphony, which wasn't printed yet. And he showed it to him, and he looked at it, and something about it pleased him, and he said, "I'll bring it next Sunday." We almost fell from the chair. Because remember what I told you, how the procedure was in Vienna: how first you had to have an interview, and then it took six months to get the approval, and then six months to be performed. It was of course a joyous thing, but there was one flaw in it, and that was that we didn't have the material, because we had not taken it with us. We had departed rather speedily because the war broke out (I don't know if I have mentioned that), and so this was going by trunk, and it wasn't to arrive before maybe three months. And so with the rest of the \$200 that we still had, we had the material copied, because we didn't want an occasion like this to slip. And I think it was a good idea, because that piece had such a success [and] the station received so many letters that Rapée repeated the piece three times within six weeks. And then having had such success with the thing, he did almost all the things that Eric had presented him with. He did the Passacaglia; he did the pieces for Job. And other radio stations, like Columbia [Broadcasting System], did things, too. So it was really a very happy year, and it was almost like Eric

had imagined, you know. Because when you imagine that he came there and immediately had nationwide broadcasts on NBC, which was the most [prestigious] company at that time, so it was really something.

Now, our financial situation, of course, was much less than desirable. We found a room which was near the river. From our balcony, as a matter of fact, we could look out [on] the river. And it was just one room and had many, many windows and this balcony, so it was a very light room, but it didn't have any furniture, [besides] two beds. In the first week, a friend of mine came to visit and she sat down on the bed (because chairs we didn't have), and the bed broke down, and it remained like this for the rest of our stay there, which was about nine months. We had arrived in September. And when it became winter, it turned out that the landlord used very cheap coal, and this provided steam that didn't go to this front room. And the room was so cold that the milkman used to come in the morning and put the milk bottle on the table (we would still sleep longer, because he arrived at five o'clock), and when we woke up, the milk came out of the bottle like a cork. It was frozen stiff. So you can imagine how cold it was in the room.

I was expecting a baby, but nevertheless we didn't really suffer under these circumstances. There was so much to do and so much going on. Eric was a very

gregarious person, and immediately we were friends with the whole house there. Everybody came into our room, and Eric played. They had never heard anybody play like this, and they were, of course, fascinated.

We had many friends with the same fate, too. And also, by one of these friends that we had already made on the ship, we met a family by the name of [Morris (Mutch) and Ruth] Oppenheim, who were very philanthropic and who were very, very considerate and tried to help the newcomers in any way. And they would invite us to dinners and parties and tried to do their best to help. The lady wanted to give Eric English lessons, but she gave that up because he was not a person who could take lessons. He had to absorb it through the air, but so far he hadn't. So I went everywhere with him, trying to get jobs and so on. Here and there we would get some orchestration jobs for Eric. In the meantime, we also had contacted one of these organizations that helped the newcomers, and they gave us like a little pension--I think it was seventy-five dollars for the three of us (that included Willi). But our room cost forty-five dollars, so the rest was done by a few (jobs).

In a hatbox we found the address that this millionaire had given us, who had already left for America in May. He was a businessman, a very shrewd one, and he told Eric at the time, "I know that France is lost. Hitler is next. I will not stay here." And he moved his family to America,

and he gave Eric this address. Eric at this time didn't even want to go to America; he wanted to stay in France. But we had this address, and so Eric contacted him, and sure enough, he was there and was very happy to see Eric. But he said to Eric, "I am not a rich man here. I was wealthy in Paris, but here I am not a rich man." But next to this pension it was still a little bit of an income, which made us, so to say, survive in the situation. At least we were not hungry.

And so one day he said to Eric, "I have contacted Mills Music and they are interested in my music and want to do something of it. Would you do me a favor and go with me and play these pieces which you have done?" So Eric went with him and played these pieces, and they said to Eric, "Can we have your address?" And then they contacted him and said, "We were very impressed with what you have done there and how charming this was harmonized. We would like to do things of yours. Do you have anything?" So they said quite frankly, "We are mostly interested in school music, because that is where we make our money. Can you make us some pieces that would be suitable for this?" At that time, I think we didn't have the piano yet, so composing was not possible at that moment for Eric, but he was adapting some of the pieces he already had, like the "Greek Melody," the "Souvenir," and the "Shepherd's Song." And he did another which he called

"Ducky's Dance," but they didn't do that. And they printed these three pieces. And again it was something that made Eric quite happy, you know, that something was going.

COLE: So these were really his first American publications.

ZEISL: This was his first American publication. It happened right in the first year, the first few months while we were here.

Now, in the meantime, five months had passed, and I knew already what was happening, but I didn't tell Eric anything because I was very afraid. Here he was so happy and in such a wonderful, positive mood. We had absolutely no money and lived, so to say, on handouts and what the next day would bring. And I thought, "If I tell him under [these] conditions that I was expecting a baby--when he got so melancholic and crushed in Vienna, where the situation wasn't [nearly] as critical and bad--it would crush him," and I didn't want to do that. So I didn't know what to do. And we had a little party going where some people were invited, and it was already the fifth month and it showed considerably. Eric would make little remarks: "You're getting fat," and so on, but it didn't dawn on him. And so one man there at the party said, "Congratulations, Mr. Zeisl." And he said, "For what?" And he said, "Well, you're expecting a baby." He said, "I, a baby?" He said, "You don't know?" So I said, "I don't know. I will go to the doctor. I will find out." The

next day I pretended to go to the doctor, where I was going anyhow, and then came back and said yes. Eric was overjoyed, and he couldn't be happier. And I was so fearful of telling him this and now it was very different, and he saw it all positive. And he made his little jokes about it, as I told you.

And so we went on and in April, all of a sudden, we got a letter that his mother had died. She was such a fervent mother; I mean, you could not think of her without the children. And they had all left, and I think that is really what killed her. It was a cancer that killed her, but you get these things, you know, when you are so vulnerable. And of course it hit Eric very, very badly. But the next month the baby came, and I think that eased this great sorrow.

I was really not supposed to have a child, because all the doctors had warned me against it. I had something wrong with my heart from childhood on. It was diagnosed. And I had never really paid attention to it, thanks to my mother, who was very young when she got me and was very strong. (She lived until eighty-seven.) And she could not imagine that her child could be sick. The doctor would say, "This child can't live," and the next day she would take me up the next mountain. And I think that is wonderful. I can't thank her enough for it, because she never made [me] a hypochondriac. But the doctors had all

advised against a child, even when it was later diagnosed as something that wasn't as bad as they had first thought. But I wanted one.

So I really had taken my life in my hands, and sure enough--I don't know if it was my heart, or if it was something else, or if it was this terrible situation in which I didn't have one minute's peace when I came back from the hospital. My room, this one room, was also my brother-in-law's (because he didn't want to stay alone in his room there which was opposite), and when my mother came home from work she was there, and the neighbors. Barbara was an exceedingly cute baby, and the neighbors came in all the time to admire the baby and even to take her out and show her, and so there was never any time for me to sleep or to have any kind of peace. And so finally, after the tenth day, I got a just terrible day of--[I] can't describe it--of constant waves of something, where I thought I would surely die, and I was really very near death. In the night a heart specialist was called, and he then said that I would survive but I [would] have to lie down three weeks, completely quiet, which I did. And I always wanted to get up before, but it wasn't possible, and he was quite right.

And so my mother, who was a very good mother in this respect, thought that when these terribly hot summers would come, she wanted to take me out of this miserable

room, and she was going out to the country to Westchester County. Somebody, I don't know who, must have told her of Mamaroneck, and she was going and looked in Mamaroneck, and it was Depression, so everything was amazingly cheap. And we had paid forty-five dollars for this miserable room, and my mother found a house on the [Long Island] Sound (where we could swim in the sea) and which had fourteen rooms, and a billiard room, and it was a mansion. It had belonged to three sisters. One had died and the two others retired to a convent, and they wanted to sell that house. Until it was sold, they rented it, and the rent cost sixty-five dollars.

In the meantime, Fritz Kramer had arrived from Australia. He was another one of the friends that was fleeing Vienna. He was a wonderful, marvelous pianist, and he had signed up with a group which was called the Comedian Harmonists, and [he] went with them all over the world as their accompanist and arranger and so on. He had always been very fond of jazz, which was quite a rage at that time in Vienna and had very much gotten hold of him. And he had been with the group in Australia and came for a concert in America and was stuck there because the war had broken out in the meantime. And so he said, "We will go with you and pay part of the rent." So he came [with] I think one of his Comedian Harmonist friends. And my mother did the cooking, and so we were there. And

then, too, we had other people, who rented rooms because there were so many.

And so we spent the summer there. And it was of course a wonderful, beautiful house, and for the first time in his life Eric had a workroom. You could not imagine a more beautiful one. It had a piano, and outside was a cherry tree, and you looked over the sound. It was just beautiful.

And here he began to work on his opera again. I think part of his great hope and confidence in his coming to America was that he had this book, and that was always his great desire: to have a book to write an opera. And there he had, he thought, the right book. And the first act [libretto] had been finished by Kafka. And so here he [Eric] finished the first act.

When the fall came, at the end of the summer, one of the sisters came. And the house was full of antiques and beautiful things, and my mother was always very fond of this. You have seen our furniture. That was her great love in life, and she collected it herself. So she felt so at home, and she took such good care of all this, and the lady saw that and said, "Why don't you stay on? I'll give it to you for the same price." She even let it for sixty dollars. "And stay on."

And so we persuaded my mother to stay on, though she was reluctant to do so because it had its disadvantages. It was away from the city, and you could only make your

living in the city, you know. And so even sixty dollars were a lot of money, even though we found some people who rented rooms and made it up. In the winter you have to heat; and it was very expensive to heat such a big house. And everything cost money--the telephone; when you went to the city it was a dollar's fare. And a dollar at that time was terrific, because for thirty cents you could have a meal for three people. A pound of hamburger cost not even thirty cents, and three pounds of peaches cost fourteen cents. I remember the prices because money was a great rare commodity, so when I went shopping I remembered prices. Now I wouldn't really remember it. [tape recorder turned off]

So again, Eric was very happy. But he had also been happy in this miserable room. Through the recommendation of a friend, we had gotten in this old room an old piano that was given to us. It was standing in some basement of some apartment house, and for transporting it we could have it. The transport, of course, was quite a bit of money, I think ten or fifteen dollars, which was at that time tremendous. And we got that piano, but we were unaware of the fact that in it lived a mouse family. So that was a disagreeable kind of interlude, because we had to put traps, and every so often at night, when we were lying there sleeping, all of a sudden you would hear that click and then you would know that you were in the room with a dead mouse, which wasn't pleasant.

At that time, Eric had acquired a few students. One of them was the sister of Karl Krueger. He was conductor of the Kansas Symphony at that time. He had come to Vienna and been shown the Passacaglia, and [he] had promised to bring it in America. Eric contacted him in America, and he sent his sister to Eric. Another student was a young man, a Dane, who appeared one day at Eric's and said that he had been commissioned to make a film, but he couldn't do it. Would Eric do it for him? And Eric did that. It was the film [tape recorder turned off] And So They Live. [?] It showed the life of the farmers in Kentucky, and it became quite a model. The director was a man by [the name of] O'Flaherty [Robert Flaherty?] or something, who had a very good name in intellectual film circles. And he did that, and it was a very good film. And Eric never saw the film; he had only the book, the text, to go by. And [Eric] did that for him. And a friend of Eric's, Carl Bamberger, who is a conductor in New York, conducted the score then. [tape recorder turned off]

COLE: This period of adjustment is absolutely fascinating. I'm curious to know whether you were ever able to contact the Zeisl who actually had contributed to getting you there.

ZEISL: Oh, yes. We were hardly off the boat when we bought little presents, whatever we could afford at that time, and went to see him at the address we had. And we were also wondering why he had never again answered after being so

kind and sending this, and we wanted to tell him that though he hadn't answered, he was instrumental in saving our lives. And so we came there and then we understood, because this was such a miserable shop that there wasn't one whole pipe in this whole shop. And the man was evidently a very poor man and had on the spur of the moment spent this dollar, which must have been something for him in his circumstances, and that was it. By doing it so promptly and doing it immediately, when he thought of it, [he] really at that time saved our lives. And so we thanked him and we told him and brought him our little presents, and he was very pleased. But afterwards we did not have any contact with him, because he didn't even know about music; it didn't make any impression on him that Eric was a composer. He would have done it for anybody whose letter he had received. He was a really good man.

COLE: Well, maybe at this point we should talk a little bit about Job. We've [already] talked about the staged version of the Joseph Roth novel, and we've talked about the incidental music Eric composed for the staged drama in Paris. Obviously, this was the libretto he'd looked for all his life. Maybe we should give a summary of the story (it's not quite the Biblical Job). This was to occupy Eric for the rest of his life.

ZEISL: Yes. The story is the story of a poet schoolteacher in prewar Russian Poland. And he has four children, two

sons who are strong and healthy, and a beautiful young daughter who loves the Cossacks too much. And then he has a little crippled child that isn't able to talk nor to walk and that is still in its cradle. And he has a miserable existence through little lessons that he gives to the children. And his wife is constantly nagging him about not making enough money and so on. And the scene of the drama begins with the two sons having just been called for military [service], you know, being conscripted. And they are still hoping that they will not be taken. But of course they are young and healthy and will be taken. And Deborah, the wife, cannot cope with that, and she wants to do something about it that they should not go to the military. For the Jews at that time, this was the worst thing. They would never hear of these boys again. They would either become absorbed into the life of the people there and never return home, or they would perish. And so they dreaded this very, very much. And he admonishes her and says, "You cannot do anything against the will of God. If he wants to protect them he will, and if he doesn't" You know? And against his Bible quote she always has another one, "Man must help himself," and so on.

And so the boys come back and they are indeed accepted in the army. The older one is unhappy about it. He wants to emigrate. He wants to go to America. He has heard of America and he wants to be a merchant and see the world.

The younger one is very happy at being accepted. He's looking forward to riding with the others and be a Russian like them and become a real Cossack. And to the father this is, of course, unthinkable. And the daughter is fascinated with them. They will be in uniforms; they will look like the other Cossacks. She's looking forward to it. She speaks of her great longing for this kind of life that is so far away from them though it is so near.

The next scene is then in the inn, where the Cossacks have a drunken revelry. And they take in Jonas, the younger one, and they put the uniform on him and accept him as their comrade. And the older is just aghast at this. And Miriam, of course, begins immediately to flirt with one of the Cossacks and to steal away.

Deborah comes into the inn, and she tries to bribe Kapturak. Kapturak is the police officer there, and he is that despicable figure of the very corrupt police officer who does anything for money and in his greed tortures these people and has absolutely no feeling. He is a kind of devillike figure. And she comes to him, and he says, "How much money have you got?" And she has about fourteen rubles or something, and he says, "For this I will get one free." And she has to choose. And so how can she choose between two children whom she loves dearly? And then Jonas, the younger, says, "I want to stay. I want to become a Cossack." So it is Shemariah who will go.

In the first scene we are already introduced to that sick child, and the father somehow loves that child the most. He is a reminiscence of Eric's father, who also somehow loved Eric the most of his children. Later on, I will tell you a little story about this that well illustrates Eric's father and his simpleness and how he loved Eric. And he takes the child--that is in the first act--and he reads the Bible to him, which begins, "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth." And the child does not react. And he puts a spoon against a glass of water there, and it makes a sound, and to this the child reacts. And then the church bells begin to ring, and the child creeps to the door after the sound, and so the father says, "He can hear tones, but he cannot speak."

All of a sudden there is a knocking at the door. (This is still the first act; I have forgotten to tell it.) And a wonder-rabbi is coming through the village. And he has been contacted by Deborah to look at that child if he ever comes through. And he comes into the room, and he goes to the cradle of the child, and he makes a prophecy that the child will be well and that everybody will listen to him and that his afflictions will make him wise and kind and so on. And of course Deborah and Mendel are overjoyed. And they thank God for this. And immediately after this, the child says his first word; it's "Mama." He says "Mama." And so they think he is already well, but nothing happens after that.

I already told you the second act. In the next act we have Mendel having a letter from America, and Shemariah (Sam) has already arrived in America, and he is doing well, and he is sending money so that the family should come after him. And so they go to Kapturak for passports. Kapturak takes the money, and then he says, "But how can you go? You cannot go with the crippled child, Menuhim." And then they say, "When Menuhim can't go, we can't go." And he says, "Well, you don't make jokes with Kapturak. I keep the money now. You have given me the money and that's it. You get the passports."

Now it is Friday evening, and they are very sad because the dream of joining the son Sam is not fulfillable, and because they don't want to leave the sick child. And the old man goes to the synagogue. In the meantime we see that Miriam is meeting a Cossack in the cornfield nearby, and they have a big love scene there. And the father returns from the synagogue, and he sees her shawl that the wind has carried, and he realizes what has happened. He cries out about it in anguish, and immediately the scene is full with the people of the village. They all realize that scene and make fun of him. And so it is evident for Mendel the schoolteacher that they have to leave. He wants to save Miriam from these what he thinks terrible ways of squandering herself. And he thinks he can save her this way, and so they are going to America. This is as far as Eric has composed it.

The next acts show the life in America, and just like the real Job, Mendel is first in fine circumstances and has everything. [At first,] everything is wonderful. Miriam is now engaged. It's an Irishman, Mike, instead of the Cossack, but anyway he will marry her, and Sam is doing wonderfully well. As a matter of fact, Mendel cannot understand that Deborah goes around in her Sabbath dresses on Mondays, so to say, as he sees it. Everything seems to be fine. They have even heard of Menuhim, good news that he seems to be in the care of somebody. And from Jonas there has also been only one letter, but saying that he's happy with his life.

And so everything seems to be wonderful and they celebrate, when all of a sudden there is a parade in the street, and extras, and it turns out that World War I has broken out. And there comes a crowd of new volunteers who have enlisted in the war, and Sam immediately joins them. He's so happy in America he wants to fight. He was aghast about his brother wanting to join the army in Russia, but now this is different, because America is like a fatherland. So he joins them. And of course their happiness is dulled by this.

[In] the next act, Miriam comes home (she has been working in an office), and it isn't time for her to come home. She brings terrible news that she got a letter and Sam had been killed in the war. And the mother dies at

hearing this news. Mike, her fiancé, has also enlisted and is also in the war. And in the meantime, Miriam has, of course, fallen back into her old ways, and when the mother dies, this bad conscience and everything turns her over the hill, and she begins to laugh hysterically and turns quite mad. Before, I think, they have gotten a letter that says that the village where they lived was overrun and destroyed by the enemy, and so Mendel thinks that Menuhim is also dead. And they haven't heard anything from Jonas, the Cossack. And now with the war, of course, all this seems to be over. And so the old man, who has lived only by his beliefs

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 16, 1975

COLE: We were just at the point of finishing the Job story. The father had heard that his village had been occupied and his life, in essence, destroyed.

ZEISL: Well, in this moment after so much misfortune strikes him--his wife dead, his daughter brought to the insane asylum, no news of his son Jonas in Russia, the village destroyed with his favorite little child there, and his son Sam also killed in the war--the old man despairs. His whole life, [which] was belief in God and the word of God, is falling apart, and he wants to destroy even the Bible. And there come his two friends and it is a scene really reminiscent of the book of Job, where the two friends come and argue with him. And they say about the same words: "What do you know about God?" But they cannot bring him back from this. And from now on he is a completely dead person, and he doesn't believe anymore, and he will go out of his way to spite the old rituals and his old beliefs.

They live in this little apartment house. He has a back room there in the music store of his friend. And one day he discovers there a record of a young musician that all the world was talking about. And it's called "Song of Menuhim." And be it the name, or be it the

melodies that come from this record, he is fascinated with it, and whenever he is alone he takes that record and he plays [it]. And it is the only and first thing that makes something stir in his completely dead soul.

We have now the Easter feast coming, the Passover feast, and he is of course invited to the family where he lives, but he doesn't want to come; he doesn't want to celebrate. And the talk is of the young composer who has come to New York with this group, and everybody is so fascinated with him, and how wonderful he is. And they celebrate the Passover feast, and there is a moment when they open the door to let the prophet come in. There is always at the Passover table a cup of wine that is prepared because it is believed that this Messiah or the prophet Elijah will come and bring good times again. And so they open the door for him. And before the door at that moment is a young man, and he enters and says, "Is a Mendel Singer living here?" And they bring the old man forward. And he says, "I have good news for you." And the old man says, "Good news?" And he could not believe that there could be any good news for him. And the young man says, "You had a little house there in this village and it has been sold, and I am supposed to bring you the money." And you see the disappointment of the old man, because money doesn't mean anything to him anymore, and he does not consider it as good news. They invite the young man to stay with them,

and he looks around and says, "It is strange. When I am again with my countrymen" (they all come from this region there), "I see my home again. I see this old man and the four walls," he says, "and this old man sitting at the table with a little child and holding the child and reading the Bible to him and saying, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'" And of course we see the scene from the beginning, and the old man Mendel recognizes what it is, too, and he sees that this is his son, Menuhim. And Menuhim now tells how there had been a fire, and because of the shock of the fire, he could all of a sudden raise himself and walk away and cry, "Fire!" The doctor thought it was such a remarkable thing and [took] him into his house and brought him up, and so on. And anyway, they celebrate the finish of the Passover feast, and the old man is brought back to his God, so to say.

COLE: I think it's been appropriate that we talk at some length about this story and this entire time of adjustment, because Job is going to occupy Zeisl for the remaining twenty years of his life. "Menuhim's Song" is going to run through his work almost as a leitmotif; a theme similar to it can be found in many of the works that he will compose in America. In fact, "Mehuhim's Song" was eventually detached and published as a separate entity, wasn't it?

ZEISL: Ja. Mills Music did that as they did the Prayer later on. And this was then not done as school music, but

in their regular catalog. But I don't think they made any money with it, I'm afraid to say.

COLE: Was it during this time in New York then that he composed most of Act I? Remember that before he had simply done incidental music.

ZEISL: Ja, he finished the whole Act I there in Mamaroneck. I think it was an extremely happy time for him.

COLE: I've meant to ask you this for some time. Did he ever talk about what went through his mind as he composed this? Did he ever refer to many of the techniques used in this work that are actually derived from Wagner practice and then applied to a Jewish story with a much different harmonic language? The idea of the leitmotif, for example?

ZEISL: No, the leitmotif was only part of it, because a lot is without leitmotifs. There were only certain things, like the "Menuhim Song," which were used leitmotivically. But otherwise, I don't think there's too much leitmotif technique in it, at least not that I know of. His friends and fond critics have always blamed Eric for almost the opposite, that he was putting [in] too much [melody]. Melody was coming so easily out of his pores, so to say, that he would not be economical enough with it. And especially in the works of his youth, you know. There were the same beautiful melodies for when the servant said, "They are coming," as for the main aria. And a little bit of this, I think, is still in this first act. I mean, it's just an outpouring

of melodic inspiration. Only I think it is a very inspired first act; it's a very inspired piece.

COLE: Never before had he tackled anything of this size and continuity, because unlike what we see in Leonce und Lena, here the music flows continuously.

ZEISL: Yes. And the characterizing. One of his fortes was to characterize people, to paint them, so to say, in melodies so that they stand before you. I think this is of course so exceedingly strong there that we really can [see] Jonas in his strength and forthrightness, and the other one, and Miriam. And of course the great scene of the father with the boy, where he tries to read the Bible to him and make him respond, is really one of the most moving and beautiful scenes that I know of.

COLE: Was it this same conductor, [Erno] Rapée, who performed some excerpts from Job?

ZEISL: Ja, the Overture and the "Cossack Dance," which were already finished. I think that Eric had probably done the orchestration of it still in Vésinet, while we were in France, because in the original performance the "Cossack Dance" was only a piano piece and the Overture was for organ. And he did the orchestration while we were still in Vésinet.

Now when the first act of Job was finished, Eric was red hot to go on, but the rest of the play was a stage play, and it wasn't right for being composed.

It had to be made into an opera libretto, which has different rules. It was much too talkative in the stage play and didn't have certain things that Eric needed. In the meantime the Kafkas had come, but they stayed in New York only a short while and then moved on to Hollywood, because Kafka was already at that time quite a well-known screenwriter and in Paris had already sold ideas and books to Hollywood. And so he moved to Hollywood because there he had more opportunities, and so he wasn't available and had also too much to do. And everybody was trying to keep himself alive and make a little bit of money, which you need for this.

COLE: How long did you remain in Mamaroneck?

ZEISL: Well, we wanted originally to go away in the fall, to go back to New York, but this landlady appeared and said we should stay, and Eric was extremely happy there, and with the workroom it was ideal. And so we stayed. About two days a week, we would go in and kind of hunt for jobs. I was always going with him and making the speaker because he didn't know English yet. And one of the jobs he got was to orchestrate for the "Metropolitan [Opera] Auditions of the Air." I think it is still going.

COLE: Oh, yes, very much.

ZEISL: Now, this worked this way. At that time a man by the name of Wilfred Pelletier, a very good conductor, was the conductor of that hour. Now about on Wednesday the

program was fixed, what these young singers would get as their material. Very often, it didn't fit the orchestration that Pelletier had at his disposal, so it had to be changed. And sometimes a young singer would want to sing a certain song that he liked and that wasn't orchestrated at all, and so Eric had to do the orchestration. The problem was only that he got the material on Wednesday and had to give it to the copyist on Friday, no matter what. At one time, after he had done everything, on Friday, within one day, he had to do the whole thing over again, because a singer that was supposed to sing got sick and couldn't make it, and another one was substituted with a completely different program. So it was a kind of little hectic thing, but it was a livelihood, and while it lasted it was fine. Pelletier was very fond of Eric, and he also did his string suite [Scherzo and Fugue]. At that time, he was conductor of the Montreal Symphony and did his work there. But Eric could not do the copying, too, and so he gave this to a copyist of his, and this copyist made so many mistakes that Pelletier got angry, and this way we lost the job. But that was one of those things, you know.

COLE: When did you decide to move to California?

ZEISL: Now, in the meantime, of course, we lived in the house, but it was a temporary assignment always because the lady really wanted to sell the house. And this house,

this wonderful house with fourteen rooms, filled with antiques, with Persian carpets, with twenty-four-people silver, with a huge billiard room in the basement, all this was on the market for \$5,000. And we could not buy it because we didn't have any money. And she really wanted so badly for us to buy it, but we couldn't. And even [if] we would have found somebody--because all the down payment for it was \$500--my mother said, "How can we do that?" The taxes would be like a millstone around our neck. It was just not possible. So finally a neighbor bought it, and it was really very sad, because she sold everything that was in the house just out of it, like this, you know, and then sold the shell of it. And it was such a genteel, beautiful house (one of the sisters had been the wife of the Colombian ambassador), and it was all done with great taste and very beautiful.

In the meantime, Rapée was so fond of Eric's pieces, as I told you, and they had all been broadcast nationwide. He did so many of his pieces: the Little Symphony three times, the Passacaglia, and all these pieces. And also a conductor by the name of [Howard] Barnett, who was conductor of the CBS Symphony, did the November pieces, which I think Eric orchestrated while we were still in this room in New York. And all these broadcasts were nationwide. And a talent scout--they were at that time always on the lookout for newcomers--had heard that, and she recommended Eric to

MGM. And so all of a sudden we got this call, if Eric was available. Of course he was available! And so we had Kafka there, and Kafka was supposed to be our go-between. And he talked with these people, and they seemed quite earnest about it. And he said that we had stuff, and when we had to move, they should pay for the moving, and they were all willing to do that.

Now in the meantime, the house was sold. And we thought, why now move to New York and wait there for the contract? (The contract was just before the signing stage.) We could move the things directly to Hollywood and then not have an interim, which would only cost us money and had no sense. But that was a big mistake, because the moment we were here, everything seemed to be off all of a sudden. Only later did we really know what happened. [tape recorder turned off] So the whole picture was completely changed. Our agent was a Mr. Polk, who was the agent of Heifetz and also other luminaries. And so he came to the hotel where we were, and we felt like kings; I mean, they treated us like royalty. And everything was fine, and then all of a sudden it was like the whole thing had broken off, and all the promises were gone.

Now, after this, we went on for about four or five weeks. All of a sudden Mr. Polk called and said, "They want to see you at ten o'clock," say, "there and there."

And it turned out that there was at that time a producer here in Hollywood who made travelogues, the famous Fitzpatrick Travelogues. They always ended in the same way: "And so we reluctantly take leave of beautiful . . ." whatever he had just done, Samoa or "beautiful Mexico," and so on. At one time he all of a sudden got the idea of making pictures about the life of composers, you know. And then they all said, he would end it with, "And so we reluctantly take leave of beautiful Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart," and so on.

So we came to the studio where these travelogues were shown. There were about six of them. And I remember the first one. It showed Massachusetts. And it was the coast of Massachusetts, and a lot of seagulls, and the surf was thundering against the rocks. It was very beautiful, and Eric was delighted. He loved to do this kind of illustrative music. And so I think he did it very well, and you heard in the music the shrieking of the gulls and the thunder of the ocean. When he played it then to the producer and the head of the department, we could see that something was wrong. So then we heard that the man Fitzpatrick had said to the head there that Eric, being from Vienna, didn't know how to paint Massachusetts; and anyway, he proposed that the music that should be underlying this film should be the Blue Danube. And I thought that was so funny, because he thought he wasn't Massachusetts

enough to do it, and then he wanted the Blue Danube! And that was it. And the Blue Danube was then put into this particular scene.

So this was our first encounter with the face of Hollywood that we hadn't known. But after these first six pictures were done, he gained confidence, and then Eric could do what he wanted, because he saw that the rest was very good, and he hadn't interfered with the rest. For composing and orchestrating these pictures, Eric got \$600. They were ten minutes long, each. And the union price of this would have been probably \$6,000 or something like this at that time, because especially the orchestration and scoring prices were very high. And so the real reason Eric had been sought for and hired was that the chairman of the department wanted to get this so cheap while he asked a tremendous price from the producer of this picture, and the rest went into his pocket. But of course all these things, we didn't know.

Now, the contract with MGM was still not signed, and these travelogues were, so to say, on the side, but at least we had \$600 in our hand and could live. And so one day, when this went on and on and dragged on--there was another series of pictures again with a few hundred dollars that kept us alive--finally Eric went to Polk and said, "If the contract isn't signed tomorrow, I will take my family and go back to New York, because I cannot wait here for

these few pictures and have nothing to do otherwise. I came here for this contract; in New York I was doing fine and will do fine again." And when Polk saw that he would lose Eric, the contract was signed. But it was not the same contract that we had done before. But by then we were so down and had spent so much

If you remember, we had sent our furniture on. I don't think I spoke about this. I said that we had paid the freight for the furniture, and the furniture was supposed to be sent to Hamburg, and then we could order it either to Australia or to America. And then still in Paris we got a message from Eric's parents, who said that inland, in Vienna, they had heard that the Nazis rifled these lifts, the closed thing (they opened them and took everything valuable out), and we should send it on. Now by this time we already had the affidavit and knew that we would come to America, so we sent it on to California. We had paid California, and we had arrived in New York and were for two years in New York. Now, in the meantime the furniture stayed here and accumulated rent, storage fee. And so we had to pay this when we were here. And the way we paid it was that we had, in this lift, two pianos. One was the piano of Eric's parents, a Bechstein, and the other one was Eric's own piano. There was a new firm, Schweighofer, which had opened. I think the man was the first workman of Bösendorfer; he came to Eric and had him

choose which he thought was the most beautiful piano and he wrote something into a propaganda booklet that he thought it was very beautiful. And for this he gave it to him for half-price. But still, for Eric and in his circumstances, it meant a lot of sweat and a lot of lessons and so on that he had to give until he had that, and so he was very fond [of it]. But we had to sell both of these pianos in order to pay for the storage and then to pay for settling. We found a little house that we could rent and settle and bring everything in and live. And we sold quite a bit more of our belongings before everything was under the roof.

And so we had to accept that contract though it was completely different. Now the contract in itself was not so bad: it promised Eric twenty-five dollars for a minute of music. Of this kind of music, Eric could make ten minutes in ten minutes, and he was guaranteed two minutes per week. This gave us fifty dollars a week. Of course, there were so many taxes, and in the meantime the war broke out and so there were--they didn't ask, but there was Dutch relief and Russian relief, and all our allies had some relief, and the studio took that off, and what we got was really very little. And of course we needed a car, because the studio would call sometimes at nine o'clock: "Be there at nine-twenty." And they never did anything in advance or let you know; it was always like

this. It had to be very hectic, either at midnight or like this, so that we were always in a state of hysterics. They needed that. And so it was absolutely necessary to have a car. We got a secondhand Plymouth that promptly We got it, and the next time when we drove it, it stalled on the railroad tracks on Santa Monica Boulevard and was almost totally destroyed. Anyway, all these little things happened.

And so Eric thought that was a pretty good contract, but it didn't turn out to be a good contract because he could not get enough work. It was like a very closed thing. The people that were there were kind of like in a fear of him. And he was there a week when he called me and said, "You must come. I think I am paranoid, but when I come, I think they all don't want to sit with me." And so I came with him for the next luncheon, and I saw that this was truly happening. The moment he was sitting down, they got up and went somewhere else, and they didn't want to talk to him. They treated him just abominably, really bad. Years later I have heard that from one of the composers there, a man by the name of Franz Waxman, had gone to a soothsayer about two weeks before Eric came (when you knew Eric, you must only know what a child he was and completely greenhorn and not having any scheming or anything in his nature whatsoever), and this soothsayer had said, "Beware! Very soon now there comes to MGM a man

who will take your job away." So when Eric came, that was it; he was that man. Nothing could be funnier when you really knew how Eric was, and all he wanted was to live.

And so there was a group of people there who were really mean. For instance, the first picture was shown, and I was always with Eric because he didn't know English. There was this funny story, how they explained to him about the dialogue which goes with low or high voices, and the dialogue which goes with this or that scene, and he later asked me, "What is 'loguewhich'?" And so I went along, and we were shown this picture. And usually, when they showed a reel, they would then show it in reverse, too, so that you could see it two times. And they were giving us stopwatches, where we should ourselves stop and see how many seconds each sequence lasted. And when they reversed it, the reversal went double as quick, and I was completely confused because it was the first time that I did anything like this. And of course Eric didn't even think of doing this himself; he was just watching. And so I turned to the composer behind me, who was supposed to do half of that picture, and I said, "Can you tell me what is the difference in the speed?"--or something like this; I wanted an explanation. So he said, "Find out for yourself! I had to find out for myself also." And later on I heard that this was not true, that he was immediately taken under the wing of an older colleague who explained

all the ways to him. But he was very intensely jealous and felt his job threatened by Eric, and so he behaved this way.

There was such an atmosphere of suspicion there, of distrust, and everybody distrusted everybody else. And nobody would say any opinion, not even that the sky is blue. When one said, "Today is a beautiful day," they would answer, "Yes, how beautiful green the sky is," because they were afraid that if they said blue and maybe Mr. Mayer, or whoever was important there, would think it wasn't blue, then they would have said something wrong. So they would constantly joke, you know. Now, with his bad English, Eric caught on that the atmosphere was constant jokes and that he was supposed to laugh. But then they would suddenly say, "I had a very bad toothache yesterday," and he would laugh, and this made him not any more popular than he was already.

He really had a very rough introduction, and he really hated every minute of this. And at the same time, he would have loved to compose because these pictures presented some kind of drama that in some instances appealed to him and brought things out of him, and he liked to do it. But when he said that, that again was something they didn't want to hear because it was for them a routine thing--a job, so to say--and when he was enthusiastic about something,

they got very suspicious and they didn't like that, either. So he couldn't win them in any way. Sometimes he would come home, and I'd have the dinner prepared and the plates ready on the table, and he would not greet me or say anything before he had taken one of the plates and shattered it on the floor to get all this feeling out of him, this frustration and bitterness.

COLE: Then this was a rough experience.

ZEISL: Ja, it was.

COLE: Was it in the movie work that he met [Erich] Korngold, who later became a friend, or was this outside of the movies?

ZEISL: No, it was not through the movies, because Korngold was at Warner Brothers and the studio of which I am speaking is MGM.

So this lasted for about one and a half years and in this time Eric made about forty of these travelogues. And he got his fifty-dollar check regularly. I mean, it wasn't fifty dollars, as I explained to you; it came to about forty-one dollars, and of this we had to pay thirty dollars a month for the car, and the rent for the house was sixty dollars, so there didn't remain too much, but at least we didn't go hungry. The unfortunate thing was that everybody knew that Eric was an MGM composer, so we were supposed to take out everybody to dinner and pay the bills. He was considered a rich, wealthy film composer. And you couldn't

tell the people how your circumstances were really; that would have taken off your prestige again. So it was difficult this way, too. [tape recorder turned off]

After a year had gone by this way, Eric wrote a letter and said that he should get somewhat more, because we really couldn't make ends meet. And then the head of the department (who had really pocketed all the money that came from the Fitzpatrick and had not put them on the MGM roster, so that Eric was really in default and hadn't even made the two minutes, while in reality he had made so much more) said that he should give to the library every week a piece of I don't know how many minutes, I think probably of two minutes or something, and that then he would eventually be paid for this. And so he made another every week. They must still have these pieces, and some were quite charming. They were done for piano, and the library usually told him, "We need a fight, or a battle, or a sundown," something like this. And so he delivered this faithfully but never got paid. And after one and a half years, the head of the department was fired. This was not the only thing he had done, and so this became his undoing eventually. And so with him went everybody he had hired in the last two years. That ended Eric's contract, and he came home absolutely jubilant. I got pale when he told me, because there was of course no possibility to save money from forty-one dollars. And we had a child, naturally, but he was so

happy to be rid of this horrible atmosphere there.

And so I had been a lawyer, and I went to bat, and I wrote letter after letter, and I fought the thing out, and they had to pay us. There was money they owed, and it amounted to about \$1,100, I think, which at that time was a fortune to us. And I fought that through for him, and so at least we had no immediate worries. And in the meantime the war had broken out. [tape recorder turned off]

So things were not too good financially, and we struggled along. We had this money that I had gotten, that brought us enough till that ran out. There were jobs here and there. At Universal, a composer there gave him half of the picture to make because he was at the same time also doing something else. And that was Invisible Man's Revenge, I remember. And Eric had to make these weird things where he disappears. And then he had a few private students; and his brothers, who had in the meantime settled in San Francisco, and were not too bad off, helped a bit, too, I think. And so we struggled through, but it was kind of difficult. I know that when the summer-time came and the private lessons stopped, it was really a matter of life and death. I mean, we didn't have money for the next day's meal. At one time, for instance, Eric got to do a ballet. The composer Ernst Toch had recommended the lady who wanted the ballet to Eric.

Now, in the meantime, we had met Dr. Hugo Strelitzer.

And at that time, there was here a very famous--in Europe--author by the name of Emil Ludwig, who had written mostly biographies. And he had made a stage play about Ulysses, about the Greek hero. And his idea was a very cute one. You know, Ulysses is the wanderer who longs for Ithaca, his home, and the winds always carry him somewhere else, and it takes him ten years to reach home. And Ludwig made it clear that he wasn't so eager to go home, but that these ladies, Circe and Calypso, the nymph, the other nymphs with whom he stayed there, were quite comely and pretty and that he liked to linger when he did. And the whole thing was a comedy, and he wanted music with it. Hugo had approached Ernst Toch to do the music, but Ernst Toch was at that time busy with other things. I think he also worked in the movies and had probably work there. And Emil Ludwig only wanted to pay \$100 for the whole thing, and that was of course too little for [Toch]. And so Hugo came to Eric, and Eric was delighted. You know, that was what he liked to do anyhow. And there he got money for it. And so he did the music, and it was indeed a very, very charming music. It was only for five instruments. During the rehearsals, Ludwig at some time got quite angry because the music seemed to him to overwhelm the thing, but Hugo was of course a Prussian conductor, and you could not budge him. When everything was finished and the rehearsals were over, Ludwig was very delighted with it, and he sent

us a telegram after the first performance that said that just like nobody knows who the author of Rosamunde was, [set by Schubert], so also they will not know his name, but only this delightful music will stay. He especially loved the Ithaca motif, which is very beautiful and really expresses in music the feeling of what we in German call Heimweh, and which was, of course, something that lingered in Eric's soul in spite of being happy here.

In general, I must say that he was much happier in New York. In New York he was all the time happy. The American experience was one of hope and absolute joy and happiness, and it was only this horrible atmosphere of the studios that had kind of poisoned all this joy. And it was also the climate, because at that time it was very, very different from now, and you would not recognize it. It was hot like Africa. The sun was unbearably hot in the fall. And Eric never could stand sun and heat. He had said the famous saying that he had only three enemies: his grandmother, [Hitler], and the sun. And all this sun was just not what he needed and what was good for him. So all this together made him sometimes quite unhappy here.

COLE: This tape is about to end. Perhaps we can squeeze in one little story that I think helps explain this rather long creative silence of serious music. Obviously, this introduction to Hollywood and this involvement with the

studios took a lot of his time, the whole idea of adjusting, but also he had a daughter, and you said he made a statement about that.

ZEISL: Ja, he said one time that he lost two years of his life because of Barbara, because she was so cute--and she was really an enormously cute baby. She was like a baby from the funnies, you know. She was this funny mixture of like Dennis the Menace. She was such a tomboy, and she was really funny and original. And he played with her all the time. And he said it cost him two years out of his life because he loved her so much.

COLE: He was certainly entitled to a little joy after all his frustrations.

ZEISL: Ja. I should say that went on. The Kafkas were here and they were very good friends, but they also were involved in the struggle for life, and so as much as Eric wanted him to do the rest of the textbook, he couldn't make him do it, and he always had something that brought money and which he needed to do. And that was very frustrating for Eric, because this was on his soul, and he would have loved to do it. And if he had had that libretto, I think no matter what the circumstances were, he would have gone on with it. But since he didn't have that, there was a lot of time lost, I think.

Now, during this thing of Ulysses, we met Ernst Toch for the first time, and it was at Ludwig's house, who gave

a New Year's Eve party. And Eric and Ernst Toch clicked immediately.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 18, 1975

COLE: As the tape ran out last time, we were talking about Eric's adjustment to Los Angeles. We had just gotten to the circle of friends you cultivated here and Eric's assimilation in general into the emigré community. At a New Year's Eve party he had met Ernst Toch for the first time.

ZEISL: Yes. It was at the home of Emil Ludwig, and Emil Ludwig was a fabulous host. He had a very beautiful home in the Pacific Palisades, and he said himself that he felt like an ancient Roman, like maybe Vergilius, and over the hill was Horace--and he pointed to the home of Thomas Mann, who was just opposite, and there was a kind of valley in between. And his hospitality was sumptuous, like at some French king's--wonderful cooking, and the most rare and exquisite dishes. And he also provided all this entertainment and had musicians there who played quartets. Now, on this New Year's Eve, he had invited Eric, and there was Ernst Toch, and the two became friends almost immediately. And they sat down at the piano, and without talking about it they began to play four hands, in a kind of funny way, and went through the waltzes of Vienna and so on and had this kind of New Year's Eve mood. And it was very funny. But Ludwig, unfortunately, had another program in mind. He had already given the sign to a quartet to play some

very sad Schubert quartets. So that broke up that mood, which I felt was sad. I love Schubert, but at that point I would have much rather listened to what Eric and Toch would have improvised.

A great number of interesting people lived in Los Angeles at that time. For instance, we already knew Hanns Eisler, and the way we knew him was that Of course, when we were in New York, Eric tried to contact the people his friends told him were there. And he was always very fond of dramatic music and also always on the lookout for a text. And he had contacted Piscator, Erwin Piscator, who was at the New School of Social Research and had there a theater department. And he thought that maybe he could compose for him. We had written him a letter. I say "we" because I was always the letter writer because Eric didn't know a word of English then. So he told me what to say and I wrote it. And Hanns Eisler called us. Piscator apparently wanted him to--maybe Eric sent some scores, I don't remember anymore. Well, anyway, he seemed already to know, and he called and said that he has seen immediately that there was a real composer there and he wanted to meet us.

And we met, and again, Hanns Eisler and Eric became friends immediately. He was very much taken with Eric's music, and very funny, and he said, "Oh-oh! Competition!" And they played together and played each other's things, and he liked Eric's music very much. And [he] gave Eric

at the time, because he was in New York, a lot of recommendations for Hollywood, which, however, we didn't use. We tried one in the time when the contract with MGM didn't come out, as I told you. It was a Mr. Vorhaus at Republic, but it was completely negative, and then we were too intimidated to try any of the other things. So Hanns Eisler came then to Hollywood, and he was a friend whom we saw now and then. [He] came to our house, and we came to his house on the beach, and we liked him very much. And with us he wasn't political at all. And sometimes we also met at Toch's house. I remember an evening where Eisler and Eric and a composer by the name of [Paul] Dessau, who is now in East Germany, were all invited at Toch's. There was a funny controversy between Dessau and Eric, and Toch mediated.

Then there were of course the Kafkas, who lived here, and we became very great friends with them. We had already been in Paris: we had lived together with them in the villa, remember? And then through friends, the Reitlers Professor Reitler was the director of the conservatory in Vienna. And the conservatory was, so to say, the next after the academy. You studied either at the academy or at the conservatory. And very fine teachers were at the conservatory, too, and a lot of students. And Eric had also studied at the conservatory. I think I have already mentioned that Professor Reitler had given him a contract

which was supposed to begin in the fall but never came out because of Hitler's arrival. Through the Reitlers, we met the Korngolds. And again, we became very, very good friends, and they were very good friends, and we made outings together. We went to Santa Barbara together and spent very, very nice evenings together. And Eric was then the teacher of his son. George Korngold, the younger son, studied harmony with Eric. And Korngold was so taken with the things that Eric taught him that he did all the exercises, too, and he said he was fascinated. He had never done these kind of things.

And then, of course, came [Alexandre] Tansman. We met Tansman at the house of Jakob Gimpel, the pianist, whom we also had already met in New York and now met again and were very good friends with. And Tansman really became perhaps the best friend Eric had, and he was the most interested in Eric's music. He was very, very encouraging to Eric and wanted him to compose and really kind of spurred him to go on and not let time go and not compose. And one day Tansman visited with his wife, and they had two little girls who were the same age as Barbara. And like little puppy dogs, the three girls--they were four and five years old at that time--did somersaults on our lawn. And the next day Eric composed a piece, and it was really like you could see this whole scene in that piece. It had come about not only by this impression; it had come about through the encouragement of Tansman, that he wanted Eric to compose, and that he

loved the first act of Job and thought it was so wonderful. And all this brought confidence to Eric, who was really kind of crushed by this experience in the studios and the hostility of the people there.

Through Tansman, we then met Stravinsky. And again, we became very good friends with Stravinsky. He loved Eric, and at one time, when Stravinsky lived on Wetherly Drive (and Wetherly Drive was just an equal distance from our house and Beverly Hills), we gave a little party, and Stravinsky, who almost never came to parties, came to that party. And Alma Mahler was quite jealous and said, "You didn't come to me, but you come here." And he said, "It's nearer to me." But it wasn't nearer in distance. [tape recorder turned off]

Of course, we were in touch with Alma Mahler. Then Milhaud came and lived in San Francisco, but at that time he would sometimes come down to Hollywood and be our guest, naturally. And there was also a writer, who was at that time a friend of a Viennese lady who was our friend, and his name was Maurice Dekobra. And he had written very successful fashion novels, I would say. He was not really a great poet or anything like this. But Eric was always looking for things to compose, and so this man said he would make a ballet text for him, which he did. And that was the text for Uranium 235, which Eric later composed.

COLE: This is certainly a fascinating circle of friends.

In the last couple of interviews, we've been talking a great deal about the period of adjustment to a new country, to new parts of this country, to a new way of life. Naturally, something had to suffer in the meantime, and this was the steady stream of compositions that Eric had been producing. Between the completion of Job, Act I, and the Return of Ulysses, there's really very little new compositional activity.

ZEISL: No, it was a time of adjustment. He had to learn the language. He could not really learn like somebody who takes lessons. That wasn't Eric's style, you know. He learned it somehow through the air, or so. Finally, he was lecturing in English and could give lectures and talk before the public, and very well. He was an excellent talker. He had that gift. And I was sometimes surprised how excellent he would express himself with words that I didn't even know he knew. But in the beginning, of course, it was quite difficult. He didn't know the language and talked, so to say, with his hands and feet, and it was very funny. His students kind of got a kick out of it. For one thing, he thought "fellow" was something like "friend," you know, so the boys and girls [in] his classes he would call "fellows." [laughter] And things like this. Or, instead of "course," he would say "curse." The next curse is Wednesday, or something like that. And things like this, which the students would then quote, and they got a big kick out

of. But later on his English was fine.

COLE: In any event, in 1944 he begins to get back on a regular composition schedule, or at least he begins to produce a large number of major works, works of a wide variety. There's an organ prelude from 1944, a piece that seems to consolidate the style changes that we find in the organ overture to Job. Did he have a special occasion in mind?

ZEISL: No, I don't think so. I think it was rather that he thought that an organ piece would perhaps interest publishers more than other pieces. And the same was You know, when he composed the first piece of which I just spoke, of the Pieces for Barbara, then he kept on composing and made the whole cycle of what is now the Pieces for Barbara. Apart that this first piece had set the pace for it, I think he was thinking that maybe [with] orchestral pieces he had no luck; maybe piano pieces would interest the publisher.

COLE: Let's talk a little bit about this set, the Pieces for Barbara. You mentioned the piece that was inspired by the children tumbling. Can you tell us more about this set and what you did to supply the titles?

ZEISL: Well, with the first piece, I had absolutely the feeling that it was just a picture of what had happened the day before, and so I called it "Somersaults." Eric didn't give these pieces any names, but when he played

them to me they conveyed a very definite impression. And so I gave them the title that the impression conveyed to me. And usually, I think I hit it right. At one time, much later, when Eric composed his Piano Sonata, the second movement seemed to me like a dialogue with God. And when it was played, Hugo Strelitzer came to me and said, "That is like a dialogue with God." And so I think the impression that I got and that a piece conveyed to me was there so very strongly that it wasn't only conveyed to me; it was generally conveyed.

COLE: Maybe you can give us an idea of what some of these moods were and some of the titles you gave. (We don't have to give all.) There were thirteen that eventually got published and four others that didn't. So we have a large set of seventeen.

ZEISL: Well, one was like an old legend, and one was "On the Tricycle," and it really, I think, conveyed quite clearly You know, Barbara at that time had this little tricycle, and she was going up and down the little lane there and before the house, and Eric watched her, and I think it just came out in the piece. And one I called "The Teacher," because it was in a kind of fugal way and it seemed to repeat, just like children would repeat after their teacher. And things like this. And one was "[In] the Factory," and it was quite clearly all these little wheels spinning in a factory, the little hammers.

COLE: Unlike the song "Schrei," this is a rather pleasant machine piece. It doesn't have the overtone of horror or perhaps fear of the machine that "Schrei" did, or that a future piece [U-235] is to have. You say that Eric thought he had a better chance to get piano music published, and that turned out to be true. Could it also be that he viewed the piano miniature as a substitute for the art song, which he'd abandoned after leaving Austria?

ZEISL: I think it might be, because it was really not only Barbara's. I think that was his own name, Pieces for Barbara; I think it was his own childhood he was thinking [of], too, because there are quite a few soldier pieces, which he happened to do well.

COLE: Right. A lot of march rhythms.

ZEISL: Ja. Which had nothing to do and must have been his own boyhood because all boys like to play soldiers, or his brothers might have, you know. Not him.

COLE: Above and beyond the musical interest of the pieces, which is considerable, two things are of interest. One, a recording made by Eric remains. What were the circumstances of his affiliation with this project?

ZEISL: Of course, Eric was trying to get his pieces performed, and wherever we read in the paper or so about conductors who would be likely to perform modern music, we would try to contact and write, and so we had written to a man by the name of [Charles] Adler, who was conductor

of the Syracuse Symphony. And Eric had sent him scores, and he had written back in a very encouraging and friendly manner and liked the scores very much and was going to do them. And then he wrote Eric that he was now engaged in a project where he was making records. And he wanted to do one of the orchestral pieces on records, Ulysses, I think. But he also said that maybe smaller pieces should be done. And so Eric proposed the Pieces for Barbara and the Children's Songs. And Eric played most of the Pieces for Barbara himself, but there were four that were very difficult. And where he thought that maybe on a record his technique--which was one of illusion, so to say; he created the illusion of the thing--was pianistically not as accurate as he thought a recording should be, for this he engaged a young woman pianist, Eda Schlatter, who had played many, many of his pieces, also the Sonata [Barocca]. Later she commissioned a piano concerto, and he wrote the Piano Concerto originally for her, and she played that. But I'm really sorry that Eric didn't play everything, because I think even when it wasn't pianistically 100 percent, it was musically 100 percent right.

COLE: The other fascinating thing is that thirteen pieces of this set were eventually picked up by an Austrian publishing firm, the Austrian Bundesverlag. How did that come about?

ZEISL: I don't know; I do not quite remember. I think

maybe through Doblinger. We were in contact with Doblinger, and then there was this man [Wilhelm Röhm] who was new, and the Bundesverlag was just founded, and he was the director of it. And it seemed that he was an old friend of Eric, somebody who had studied with him at the academy, who knew him from the academy days when they were both children and had remembered him. And he wrote him and said if he had something, he had the Bundesverlag, and they were bringing out these educational pieces. And Eric sent him this and he did the volume, but not the four difficult pieces because he wanted it as a school piece, so to say, for teaching. And unfortunately this whole edition is sold out and they haven't renewed it, because this man, I think, retired and died afterwards, and the new people didn't know anything of Eric and were not interested.

COLE: I see. Beginning in 1944 and extending into 1945, Eric composes a larger piece, which eventually becomes his most widely performed choral work. This is the Requiem Ebraico. We've alluded to it briefly in earlier interviews, but maybe you can talk a little bit more about what was behind the dedication of the piece.

ZEISL: Hugo Strelitzer had recommended the younger brother, Willi, who was a baritone singer, to a rabbi from Germany, who had here a small but very selected congregation [of] intellectual people from Germany. And he was himself a person that was interested in the arts and very musical.

And he hired Willi as a cantor, and through Willi he knew of Eric. And it was, as we say here, "his baby." He had inaugurated that concert, which was to be an Interfaith Forum Concert, in which the three religions should express themselves in music. And he had contacted Ernst Toch, too, for this, and he had contacted Maria Jeritza. Now, Maria Jeritza was the most famous soprano of the Vienna Opera, a fabulous woman who was like a natural force, you know. When she came into our first little house that we had then, she seemed to take the roof off the house. It seemed too small for her. She was a fantastic talent. And at that time, of course, she was not young anymore; she was already over sixty. Yet, [she] still sang very beautifully.

And so he came to Eric and wanted him to compose, as the representative piece for the Jewish faith, the Ninety-second Psalm. This was in the spring of '45, and maybe [after] only a month, while Eric was composing and was just beginning this piece, there came the news [of] the armistice in Germany. And with that there came the news from Vienna, and we learned that his father The mother had already died But the father was like a child; he was a very simple person, as I told you, and he could not face life alone, so he had married the sister of the mother. And both had been brought to Theresienstadt, then on to the ovens, and both had perished. And Eric learned that, and he learned of many others. One had

more or less known this, but now it became [official]. You know, there is always hope that they might have survived, but they didn't. And so the mood of this came into the piece, and though it is a text of praises, the mood of the piece became a very sad one, and he called it a requiem.

And this was then performed at the First Methodist Church of Hollywood, and the organist of the church, a man by the name of Dr. Norman Söring Wright, played the organ part. And a little chorus of only fifteen people, with Willi singing the solo part, premiered that piece. And through it Norman Söring Wright became immediately one of Eric's staunchest friends and admirers, and every year he used to give a concert entirely of Eric's works. [He] really loved his music.

COLE: Well, certainly significant as an expression of Eric's discovery, or rediscovery, of his Jewish faith is the fact that here in America he writes a piece, later called a requiem, which is based on a psalm text rather than the Catholic mass text, which he used in Vienna.

ZEISL: Ja. I don't think that he was ever a Catholic when he composed the Catholic texts. As I told you, it was the drama that was included in these requiem and mass texts, which are tremendously dramatic, that attracted him. There is a great similarity in faith, I think, and in the feeling that is in the heart of faithful people, of religious people. Like for instance, Norman Söring

Wright, who was very religious in his Protestant way, and Eric--they had absolutely no difficulty or dissension in their feelings. They felt very much alike about the thing.

COLE: I'm curious to know whether Eric ever talked about the striking similarity between the main theme of the Requiem Ebraico and that of "Menuhim's Song" from Job.

ZEISL: Well, this was really like a constant wound, this longing of Eric to finish that opera, but unfortunately Kafka wouldn't comply, and he wouldn't write it. And Eric could not himself--he was not a literary person--and so he was always longing, and this was always there, so to say. It was kind of brimful. It was the thing he wanted to do, and so it was a natural thing, I think, that that theme came up the moment he began to compose again something that was similar in feeling.

COLE: During this period of adjustment in the new country, Eric's mind has been occupied with many things besides composition. Significantly, when he writes a major work like the Requiem Ebraico, he goes back to the fugue and makes it, in fact, the climax of this piece. Again, we see this preoccupation with the baroque procedure.

ZEISL: Ja. Well, that was always. Remember, in the [First] String Quartet he had a fugue, at that time a kind of comical or funny fugue. He always loved fugues and baroque forms. And you know, [he] wanted maybe to prove to himself that he could master this thing.

I have forgotten to tell you that at that time when Eric spoke with Eisler here, he said that he kind of envied Eisler for having been a student of Schoenberg. [He] said that it was something that was missing in his life: this very great and inspiring teacher. And Eisler said, "Why don't you study with Schoenberg? He is here." And he wrote an introduction for Eric to Schoenberg. But Eric never used it because we were in such a struggle financially and couldn't make ends meet and hardly had the next day's eating problem solved. And Eric did not have the audacity, so to say, to go to him and take lessons when he couldn't pay for them. So we never used it. We met Schoenberg, but at that time he was already very old and didn't even give lessons anymore. He was already quite sick.

COLE: The Requiem Ebraico was eventually published by Transcontinental, a name with which I was not familiar. Can you tell us a little bit about the firm?

ZEISL: I think that was a publisher that specialized in Jewish music and catered to organizations and synagogues and so on that had a use for this.

COLE: I see. Suffice it to say, the Requiem Ebraico has been performed widely since then, has it not?

ZEISL: I think it is the piece that has been the most performed of all of Eric's pieces. It has been performed in Canada and in New York, in Pittsburgh and Boston, and really all over America. In practically every major city

of America, this one piece has had a performance, and sometimes more. In Los Angeles, I think it had eight or nine performances.

COLE: Including a revival last spring, in 1975.

ZEISL: Ja. And some with orchestra.

COLE: I think there's a lesson to be drawn here. I don't think I'm reading too much into it if I say that a main reason for its frequent performance, aside from its quality, is its published state. If only other works could have been published!

ZEISL: Oh, I am sure that that helps. But Eric, you know, had a strange bad luck with publishers. And it never clicked. Now when we were in New York, Rapée did so many things, and Associated Publishers had promised him [Eric] a contract, because Associated were at that time the representatives of Universal Edition. The director of Universal Edition, Director [Hugo] Winter, was with Associated, and he knew Eric and knew that he was talented. Associated brought out a catalog, which you have seen, with his picture and all his works. And at that time, it was only possible for Eric to be played over the radio, because he was with Associated. At that time, there was a fight between ASCAP and the radios. And so Eric didn't join ASCAP but joined Associated, which was, so to say, the rival of ASCAP. And they had promised him to publish, I think, the "Cossack Dance," the overture, and another

piece, but they never came through with it afterwards. When we went to Hollywood, they forgot all about it and didn't do it. And he had kind of a contract that he was to get so-and-so much for every performance, and the president of the firm came and said, "Look, when we publish this thing, that costs a lot of money, and so you should give up this fee." And so we gave this up, and then they never published, and they never paid for what was played. And so we were really greenhorns and didn't understand.

COLE: Then the bad fortune that had begun in Europe with publishers continued pretty much in America.

ZEISL: Ja. It was always--I don't know. Publishers didn't bite. It was not, perhaps, commercial music. But this wasn't it alone, because a lot of uncommercial music is published, you know. But I think the most important fact was that he didn't come with a big name, and that the other composers, which I have mentioned, all came already with great established names from Europe.

COLE: Yes. They were all older, weren't they?

ZEISL: Yes. And so, that seemed logical, right? When Toch was so much printed in Europe, then the American publishers also felt that they could safely do the same. Or Stravinsky or any one of the people who had been so successful there. But Eric was very young when he came. He was in his early thirties, and through the circumstances which I have already explained, with Hitler and everything,

there was so little published that he didn't actually have a name. And it is really, so to say, a miracle that he did survive as a composer and did have a certain name with all these obstacles and hindrances against him. I think a minor talent would have been completely submerged.

COLE: Continuing in the vein of the Requiem Ebraico, in 1945 Eric composed a piece called Prayer, which he dedicated to the United Nations. We've said in the past that Eric was not terribly political. What occasioned him . . . ?

ZEISL: Well, this was done for the same concert, and Maria Jeritza was supposed to sing it. But this piece, as you know, has a very dramatic "Amen" that goes very, very high, and she was not anymore able to reach these heights. So the piece was then premiered at a concert that came very soon after this. The Congregational Church had a modern music festival, in which they brought modern pieces. And they brought that piece, and it was really the most successful piece of the whole cycle that they brought. They brought out three concerts of modern music, and this piece made so much ado; everybody commented about it. It is a fantastic, very dramatic piece. And the "Amen" is like a chorus of all the people who perish because these simple rules of being humble and having mercy, with which it begins, were not followed.

"O man, I told you to be good and be humble and have mercy."* And because all this isn't followed by man, all these millions suffer and are slaughtered, over and over again, and this "Amen" expresses this. And after this piece was played at the Congregational Church, the music director, a man by the name of Leslie Jacobs, came to Eric and said that he had recommended him to Fischer and Brother and that they should do something of Eric's pieces. And that was then the wordless choruses [Four Songs for Wordless Chorus].

COLE: So he repaid Jacobs by dedicating it to him then. Was it with Jeritza in mind, an Austrian soprano, that Eric returned to the medium of solo song, which he had abandoned completely in America and which he was to abandon again? This is really his only solo song in America.

ZEISL: I don't think that the Prayer can be compared with the songs that he wrote. The songs in Austria were true songs, lyrical songs, But the Prayer is more like an aria, I would say. It's a highly dramatic piece and much longer, and the scope of it is a much bigger one [than] in a song.

COLE: It's a magnificent piece, another one that's been

*"O man, I have told thee what is good, be just, have mercy, walk humbly before thy God."

revived recently with considerable success. Does an orchestral accompaniment exist?

ZEISL: Yes. It was played with orchestra several times, and also on the occasion of the memorial concert for Eric it was played. And the singer who sang it magnificently was Ella Lee, who is now--I think she's in Bayreuth, or in Munich, with the opera. But where Maria Jeritza could not reach anymore, there she only began and pulled it up like--marvelous. She is a black singer, just fantastic. Her height was fabulous.

COLE: In the same year, we see another example of the bad fortune that often plagued Eric. He wrote a fanfare for the silver anniversary of the Hollywood Bowl. Yet it was not performed.

ZEISL: Ja, as I told you, one tried one's best--and we were always trying to contact conductors--and sometimes one was lucky. And so one day (I wasn't even at home), the phone rang, and on the other end was [Leopold] Stokowski. When he came here to the summer Hollywood Bowl, the silver anniversary, Eric had sent him two scores. And I think it was in the newspaper that he was looking for new scores. So we sent him scores, and he phoned and said that he was going to perform the "Cossack Dance," and Eric was of course very, very happy. And then he said that he was also commissioning a fanfare for the beginning of this concert. But it wasn't only Eric; I mean, it was a general

commission, and Eric, encouraged of course because he was taking his score, sat down and composed that fanfare. But another was chosen.

COLE: Perhaps we can talk for just a couple of minutes about this process of getting performances in a new country with a new language. You said you made every effort possible. Did this involve writing a large number of letters?

ZEISL: Oh, yes. And I was, of course, the letter writer. And I knew what Eric wanted, and sometimes he said it explicitly, and so we contacted whoever we knew about.

COLE: You went outside of Los Angeles then?

ZEISL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And we met some of the conductors personally--Steinberg, for instance, who became quite friendly and came to our house whenever he was in town, and he did a score of Eric's, too. And so sometimes we had success with it, and more often not.

COLE: Before we conclude this oral history, I hope that we can talk about some of the conductors who performed Eric, because the roster is an impressive one.

ZEISL: Ja, as you rightly said, the greatest obstacle to being performed was the lack of his having published scores, and everything handwritten in his own handwriting, which apparently didn't appeal to conductors who were used to these clearly printed scores. And I can't blame them. They get such a mass of material, and it is easier to read a printed score. So many of the things didn't get looked

at, but when they got looked at, there were usually very nice comments about it. Now Stokowski, for instance, after the concert, wrote Eric a letter, which I think was very nice, in which he commented how much he had enjoyed doing "your strong music." [tape recorder turned off]

COLE: The tape is just about to finish. Can we talk a little bit about Eric's move into the world of education? He's been teaching privately, but now, with the conclusion of the war, does he not begin to look for a position in an institution?

ZEISL: Yes, of course. And it was tremendously important because we lived from hand to mouth, as the saying is. Sometimes there was an orchestration, which gave us food for several months, or sometimes there were students that used to finish when the summer began, you know, and went to their respective homes, or stopped over the vacation time, and so it was always a very precarious [existence]. And being connected with an institution meant, of course, a certain security. So, by a recommendation of somebody, he was recommended to a school that opened. It was called [the] Southern California School of Music. And most of the students were on the GI Bill. And Eric taught there for very miserable salary, but at least it was a certain security that he had there. I think he got four dollars for a lesson.

COLE: Teaching theory primarily?

ZEISL: Theory and composition. He had very good students and enjoyed the classes very much, but it was a great strain on him, because at that time he already got going on composing and was steadily composing something or other. And so both things at the same time were quite a strain for him. And then Hugo Strelitzer said that there was an opening and he would recommend him to teach evening classes at [Los Angeles] City College. And that was, of course, very much desired by Eric, and before he got these classes he had to undergo a physical, as they called it. And at that physical the doctor said, "Now, how is your hearing, Mr. Zeisl?" And he said, "Wonderful, but I am deaf on one ear." And he didn't have to say that, but he thought it was kind of interesting.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 18, 1975

COLE: We were talking about Eric having to take a physical examination for Los Angeles City College. In passing, he said that he heard fine except for being deaf in one ear.

ZEISL: Ja. And he thought that was interesting, him being a composer and his hearing being so fantastic, because, as I told you, when you sat down on the keyboard, he could tell you every tone that you hit this way--and that is not exaggerated. And so the man became immediately very serious and said, "When you are deaf in one ear, that is 50 percent, and you are only allowed 25 percent of hearing loss, and so we can't take you."

And there it was! And that was, of course, a great blow, because it was, so to say, in the bag already, and he had counted on it and had wanted that very much. And then [Leslie] Clausen, the head of the department, said, "Now why have you even told him about it?" And so we were thinking about it, and I told Eric, "How do you even know that you are deaf in one ear?" And he said that it was discovered when he was a child, and as children they played a game that was called "Quiet Post," where they would sit in a row, and the first one would whisper one word into the ear of his neighbor and then the next one would repeat it, and it was very funny that on the other end something

completely different came out. And when they played this game, he would always say, "Not this ear, the other ear." And they whispered in it, and so they discovered he did not hear on the other ear, and then his parents had brought him to a doctor who had pronounced this ear dead. It was discovered after he was three years old. And he had scarlet fever when he was three, and it might have been caused by the scarlet fever, or, he says, it might have been caused by the rather rough handling of his brother Egon, the oldest, who was, as I told you, the family executioner and handed out ear cuffs that were rather vehement. And so I said, "Well, they have now very different methods, and maybe you are not really completely deaf on this ear, and maybe we can find 25 percent still alive." And so he went there again and said they should test him again. And they did test him with the other method, and he said that with the other ear he heard the things that they tested on this ear; so he just heard it, and that was fine. And then they whispered to him [at] a distance, and of course the other ear was so great that he heard everything. So it was all right, and he was [hired]. We had lost a semester through this, but the next semester he was then employed there. [tape recorder turned off]

In this connection, I would like to tell you an anecdote of Eric's father that illustrates Eric's father, how simpleminded he was, and how naive, and how loving

of Eric. There was a Beethoven film with Harry Bauer, a very famous French actor, in the title role, and it was given in Vienna. And Eric's father went to see that film with the younger brother, Willi. [It was] the whole tragic story of Beethoven. And when they came out of the movie house, he was very moved, and then he said to Willi, "Don't tell Eric." So Willi said, "What should I not tell him?" "How he gets deaf there." He wanted to keep that a secret from Eric, that Beethoven became deaf. Apparently it was the first time he had heard about it. Eric thought it was kind of interesting that he had only one ear, and so this made him say [it]--but he was always talking too much. Very often it was very bad for him.

But anyway, he became then a teacher at City College, and at that point City College did not have any higher theory in the evening at all (and I think not even in the daytime classes). And Eric built that up. And he was then teaching harmony, up to Harmony IV, and counterpoint, and even composition. And he had made a name for himself and attracted students, and his classes were very full. [tape recorder turned off] The funny thing in these classes--they were evening classes--was that the material of students was of the widest variety. There were window washers from Watts and mechanics from the aircraft industry, and there were musicians from the Philharmonic and young composers, and there was together the best and the most

naive and unschooled. And Eric had this really fantastic gift to be able to meld this completely different material into one class. They really loved and adored him. And of course he had these funny expressions, you know. He was sometimes very frustrated by their efforts, and he would say, "If I were you, I would jump out of the window, but close it first." And they made a little window with ink, like a picture of that, and presented him with it and illustrated all his sayings.

COLE: So in essence he built a theory program at City College, putting the evening program on a solid footing in theory. Do you recall any outstanding students who perhaps went on to compose? Was that where he met Leon Levitch?

ZEISL: Ja, Leon Levitch he got at Brandeis Camp, but he kept on studying with Eric. And he had a young composer by the name of Robin Frost, who came from Santa Barbara, who was very, very gifted, and who's won prizes in American contests. I don't know what became of him because I have not been following this too closely since Eric's death.

COLE: I see. In 1945, and into 1946, Eric worked on Uranium 235, this ballet to which we've made brief reference already. Was this commissioned by the S.F. Opera Ballet?

ZEISL: Well, Kurt Adler kept on being very interested in Eric's work. Sometimes he arranged for concerts, and when he had singers whom he coached, he always presented Eric's

songs with them. And on some of these occasions we went to San Francisco, and Eric would usually accompany the singers in these concerts. And he introduced us to the man who organized the ballet there. And he was very interested and said that he would do something if Eric would compose it. When it was finished, however, he was engaged in other projects and did not want to [follow through].

COLE: No. Uranium 235 is a fascinating title and of course 1945 is the very time the first atomic bombs had been used. Did [Maurice] Dekobra make up this story completely for Eric?

ZEISL: Ja, it was his idea. And I think it could have been done in a much better and deeper way. The story itself, I think, is in a way superficial, and it presented a hindrance. But Eric's music, I think, is not superficial. He went more deep[ly] into the core of the underlying thoughts there.

COLE: This was his first dramatic ballet since Pierrot in der Flasche way back in 1929. Maybe you can talk a little bit about the story.

ZEISL: Well, it dealt with certain types, representations, so to say, rather than real people. And it was a pair of young lovers which represented mankind in its naive and innocent stages, and then a scientist who leads them on the road that is a dangerous road, where then a kind of

satanic figure takes over. And there is a hall of science in which the satanic figure brings into motion all these wheels and modern machinery which threatens to destroy the young couple. And at the end, they fall down in prayer, and this seems to resolve the case.

COLE: I see. Did Eric himself ever register a reaction to the atomic bomb and its potential?

ZEISL: I think we were all very, very upset about it, and I'm sure Eric, too. Eric was a very, very good and loving person, and this idea of destruction, I think, was very horrible to him.

COLE: The story evokes some of the most vivid descriptive music Eric ever composed. The "Dynamo Music" section, another example of a machine piece, is a magnificent example of his ability to compose descriptive music. We see, too, another example of Eric reusing material from an earlier piece, in this case the "Lonely Shepherd" from the Pieces for Barbara.

ZEISL: Ja, the shepherd melody is there.

COLE: And we see at the end a hymn of nature that once again recalls Job a little bit, don't you think?

ZEISL: Ja. I don't know this piece so well because I have never heard it played. And Eric did not play it so much, so I know it less than I know other pieces.

COLE: I see. The year 1946 sees the publication of the Requiem Ebraico by Transcontinental. In 1947, no new

compositions appear, but this is the time that he's getting into his teaching and negotiating for the City College position. Obviously, these other responsibilities take a great deal of his time. In 1948, he produces the Four Songs for Wordless Chorus. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about the subject matter that inspired this piece, because the title itself is not exactly what Eric had in mind, was it?

ZEISL: No. At the beginning, the first piece, I think, was composed like an absolute piece, without any title, but it was such a cry of anguish that it somehow suggested this story to me, and I think he then gave it this title and followed through for the rest of the pieces, but it did not really follow a story line like his other pieces.

COLE: But didn't it have some relationship to the songs for the daughter of Jephtha?

ZEISL: Ja, it is a piece in the Bible in which the daughter of Jephtha is to be sacrificed because Jephtha has made a vow to God that he will sacrifice the first thing that will meet him when he comes home. And he is thinking of his dog that used to meet him, but his daughter is meeting him and he has to fulfill this vow. And she says, "I will bend to your decision and to God's will, but let me have four weeks to go into the mountains with my companions and bemoan my fate." And the first piece is like a terrible shrieking and almost screaming of

anguish. And Eric had not yet read this Bible piece when he did that. And I think it was more or less the terrible-ness of the times and of his own life because, you see, it is so easily said, "We wrote letters and some conductors did it and some did not," but on the whole, it was a terrific, horrible struggle of survival. And not only of surviving for your daily bread, but of surviving as a composer and surviving for what life meant to him. And it meant nothing if he couldn't compose.

I've not mentioned it, but among other things, for instance, he had to do this to live. There was a composer here by the name of Rudolf Friml, who is very, very famous. He made the "Donkey Serenade" and the opera Rose Marie. (Everybody knows Rose Marie.) And this man was so rich that he had become too lazy to write down music. But he kept on composing, and he kept composing on the piano and recorded everything that he played on the piano. And then he brought it to Eric, and Eric had to take the music down on paper [by dictation] from the record. He had the record. And you know, his ear was so fine that he could do that, with harmony and everything. But it was a terrible concentration necessary for this and such a waste to waste a brain that was so creative for things like this.

And then this man gave Really, it is a fact of life in America that when you come and you are a green-horn, they treat you as such. And Eric was. Eric, I think,

got about \$100 for a record. And so one day, he came and said, "Mr. Zeisl, your record player isn't good. I'll bring you mine." (First Eric had said, "Listen, when you give me six records at the same time, I'll make it for \$500," because it was very important to him to have this money. We had always these payments which were coming; everything was going on, and to wait for the money was hard, so he thought this way he would make it cheaper.) So then he said, "You know, your record player isn't good. I bring you mine." And he brought him his record player and the record, and Eric worked and worked, and it seemed so terribly long. And what he [Friml] had done: he had brought him a long-playing record, so instead of five minutes, as the records used to be, they were now twenty-five minutes each side, for the even cheaper price. And Eric didn't know that. And things like this.

And the funny thing is that afterwards, in his later years, he was very fond of Eric and loved what he did. Eric would then touch the things up and make them harmonically finer, and sometimes he was orchestrating for him, too, and he loved his orchestrations. And in his later year[s], when he didn't need it anymore and we had enough to live (and I was earning money too, and so we had enough), Eric would ask stiff prices, and he would pay them painlessly and without complaint. But at that time, when we really needed it to eat, he was taking

advantage. So I think the newcomers have to go through this here when they come, and maybe that makes you strong.

COLE: Let's hope it does something! The Songs for Wordless Chorus were commissioned by the L.A. Chamber Symphony. When did their involvement begin?

ZEISL: When I say it was commissioned, I don't quite remember it anymore. You know, at that time we had met Harold Burns, who was the conductor of the Chamber Symphony, and probably he had said to Eric, "When you write me a piece, I will do it in the season of the Chamber Symphony." And then Eric wrote this piece, and he did it with the Chamber Symphony, and it was premiered on the same program with the Stravinsky Mass.

COLE: Oh! Do you remember who performed the wordless choruses? Was that connected with UCLA's chorus at all?

ZEISL: The chorus was the UCLA Chorus, the Master Chorale, only at that year it was not Roger Wagner, who had his sabbatical, but it was Leslie Jacobs, of whom I spoke before.

COLE: So once again an explanation of the dedication to Ruth and Leslie Jacobs.

ZEISL: Ja. And then Fischer, by recommendation of Leslie Jacobs, did that piece and printed it.

COLE: Now, one of the things we've seen all along in connection with Eric's vocal music is his ability to set texts, his marvelous sensitivity to poetry, and yet here

are pieces for wordless chorus. Did he ever talk about why he decided not to use words for this?

ZEISL: No, I really don't know why he did it this way. It was very funny: during the early rehearsals, Roger Wagner was still there. And when he heard the first piece, in which the tessitura of the sopranos is so very high--intentionally so--so that it would sound anguished, he said, "Well, I think we should do the Requiem, too, for the sopranos who have died by singing this piece."

COLE: But obviously, Eric had an expressive purpose in mind, anguish. How do the moods then progress through the rest of the choruses? Do they not move to a feeling of jubilation?

ZEISL: Ja, ja. I think that is almost typical of Eric's pieces. I think he had this feeling that it always ends triumphantly. Now, whether this was wishful thinking or if he had a feeling that he would eventually triumph, I don't know. Let us hope that the latter is true.

COLE: And then again, it was through the kind offices of Leslie Jacobs that the set of four was picked up by J. Fischer and Brother.

ZEISL: Ja. And they printed it. But probably because it is not what you call grateful for the sopranos--it's difficult to sing and has enormous demands on the voices--so this, I think, was an obstacle in the piece becoming very popular. It was performed by several university

choruses. Among them was [one] in South Carolina and a few others.

COLE: Yes. It might be pointed out that this is a piece specifically for women's chorus. One doesn't find a large number of pieces for that medium.

ZEISL: No.

COLE: In the same year, 1948, the suite version of Ulysses was premiered in Chicago. We recall that Eric had written originally for five instruments, and now he writes for a larger orchestra. Were you able to attend the premiere?

ZEISL: No, we were not there, but it was broadcast. The conductor was Henry Weber, I think. And afterwards he sent us a record of the performance. But because it was broadcast, he found it necessary to make cuts in the piece, which I think are not too good for it. But it was a fine performance. I thought that Henry Weber had also done another piece, but I might be mistaken. I thought that he had also done November, but I couldn't be sure about it.

COLE: Perhaps it's appropriate at this point to talk just a little bit about some of the conductors who did perform Eric's work. We've seen that it took a tremendous amount of effort. A great deal of frustration went into these reams of letters that you wrote over a period of years, but there were some successes, and perhaps you could mention some of these people.

ZEISL: Yes. Well, there was Kurt Herbert Adler, who,

whenever he had an opportunity, would perform some of Eric's pieces. He did pieces of the Little Symphony here, too, and he did the String Suite, and other things. And then, as I told you, there was Harold Burns, who premiered this women's choruses. And already in New York, we had met a--at that time--very young conductor. He was twenty-three years old, and it was John Barnett, who was then here with Wallenstein, [as] assistant conductor. He was a very gifted and, I think, very charming person. He became a very good friend, and whenever he had an opportunity, he did works of Eric. Also he did some work of Eric on the "Standard Hour." When he was for a while conductor with the Phoenix orchestra, then he did works of Eric there. And in San Francisco we met a conductor and friend of Kurt's, Fritz Berens, who was conductor, I think, of the Sacramento Symphony. And he did a piece, but I forget which one.

COLE: I think he did the Christmas piece [Music for Christmas].

ZEISL: Ja, right. Ja. He did the Christmas piece. Then there was Karl Krueger, who had already accepted the Passacaglia when he came visiting in Vienna. And then he did it with the Kansas City Symphony. And there was a conductor in New York by the name of Siegfried Landau, who did the piece To the Promised Land, which was in essence a smaller version of the pieces [from] Job--the "Cossack Dance," the Introduction, the "Menuhim Song"--and also

then an orchestrated version, I think a very good one, of the Palestinian national anthem.* And another piece was, I think, the overture of that [Job]. And then there was Wilfred Pelletier, for whom Eric had been orchestrator of his "Metropolitan Opera Auditions of the Air," and he was conductor of the Montreal Symphony and did works by Eric. And Erno Rapée, of course, had done almost all of his works that had been finished by that time.

Then [Jacques] Rachmilovich did the first orchestral version of the Requiem with the Santa Monica Symphony, in Barnum Hall. And that was a great success. And Izler Solomon: we met Izler Solomon in Brandeis Camp, I think, and then we became very friendly with him, and he did a piece of Eric. And William Steinberg likewise became a friend. He was conductor of the San Francisco Opera, and when the opera came, there was always a great party at our house, and he used to come there. And he did Eric's pieces with the Buffalo [Symphony].

And Leopold Stokowski I have already mentioned. He did him in the Hollywood Bowl. And Curtis Stearns was also an émigré conductor here, who did Eric's piece with the Glendale Symphony, and then he was conductor of several community orchestras, with which he did Ulysses and Christmas

*"Hatikvah," the anthem of Israel.

Variations. And Alfred Wallenstein never did a thing here in Los Angeles, but he had done the String Suite in New York. He was music director of WOR and had done the String Suite when it came out in Austria and Eric was still in Austria. But when he was here, then we couldn't even see him or get an appointment to see him. And there were others, too, of course.

We met Otto Klemperer here, and he was very fond of Eric. He was a friend of the conductor Fritz Zweig, and whenever he was here he visited Zweig, and then he always asked that Eric be invited, too. And there was a very funny scene. Of course, Klemperer was very crazy, and he was operated for a brain tumor--but friends that knew him said that he was already crazy before. His musical sense was completely intact, but in all other instances he was very, very unbalanced. And so we came there at Zweigs', and it was a very lively evening. And around twelve o'clock, he said that he had just recorded the [Eine] Kleine Nachtmusik and he wanted to play it. And you know, the Zweigs had no record player. And so they asked Eric, because we lived nearby, "Can't you go home and get your record player?" So we went home and got the record player, which was quite heavy. And Eric brought it in, and he put it on the table. It was already almost one o'clock at night, and Eric always wanted to go to bed early, and it was way after his bedtime. And so he put that record player on the table and said,

"There must be an easier way to get performed." And Klemperer was hugely amused by this. And I think he did one of Eric's things in Europe. I don't know if it was because of this--I doubt that. Anyway, these were some of the conductors who performed him in this time. And, of course, all these things were few and far between, and there were many, many nos to one yes.

COLE: You mentioned To the Promised Land. This was also composed in 1948 and performed in New York. Maybe you can go into the circumstances in a little more detail.

ZEISL: Well, that was the famous producer of Job in Paris [Gordon]. He was here at that time, and he was then producer of a great production that was for the benefit of Israel or something of this kind. It was to be held in Shrine Auditorium, and it was still war and impact of Hitler and the Nazi horrors, and so on. And it was a huge production in which he used parts of Job, the story. And then in between there were Marta Eggerth and Jan Kiepura, who sang operetta songs, and the whole thing was completely incongruous and rather tragicomic. And Hugo Strelitzer conducted, and for this performance, which had a smaller orchestra than for what Eric had composed, he redid the Overture and the "Cossack Dance" and a cradle song that he had composed years before in Vienna and that somehow fitted there, and several pieces in a smaller orchestration. And then there was also the national anthem of Israel, which

was orchestrated by him for this, like an overture. And out of these pieces, he made a suite which he called To the Promised Land and sent it to Transcontinental Publishers, who had a clientele for this kind of thing.

COLE: And who still have the piece, although it's unpublished.

ZEISL: Ja, ja.

COLE: What were Eric's feelings about this emerging state of Israel?

ZEISL: I really honestly don't know if he had any particular feeling about it. Eric was just completely Viennese. He was so typically Viennese. If you imagine somebody or knew the Viennese type, then you would know that there could be nothing more typical than him. So I think that he was surely in sympathy with it, but it did not mean too much because it was a thing that had no connection with him, really.

COLE: I see. Finally in 1948, the Kinderlieder cycle was revived in Los Angeles. It received a marvelous press and proved the staying power of the cycle. How did that come about? It was on the Evenings on the Roof, wasn't it?

ZEISL: Yes. I think it came about through Fritz Zweig, who had been conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic and the opera. He is a wonderful musician. And he was somehow connected with that group. They respected him very much, though he is a very conservative person. There's an anecdote about him that when he met Schoenberg, Schoenberg said, "How come you're here? Do you already use the train?"

[laughter] "Fehren Sie denn schon mit der Eisenbahn?"

But he was a very wonderful musician and he was tremendously fond of Eric. We lived very near each other, and he met Eric always on his walks. He would walk his little dachshund, and Eric liked to walk after composing to get the steam off.

And he said that he would propose Eric's Children's Songs to this group, and they accepted it. And Zweig's student, Brunetta Mazzolini, sang them just charmingly. I've never heard them better sung. And Eric, of course, accompanied her. And of course the Evenings on the Roof are a very sophisticated group, and they make always the most modern compositions and have an audience that is geared to that. And it was very gratifying to Eric to be so well received. There was so great an applause [that] she had to repeat the songs, and this is very rare in these concerts. You have seen the reviews. Of course, the cycle of the Children's Songs isn't long. It's only ten minutes, and there [was] a great number of pieces on the program, but it seemed that Eric's took the greatest place in the reviews. And from then on he was never again asked to play. I wrote several times, and Eric wanted me to, offering them pieces, and they would always refuse them, but in a kind of very biting way, so to say, "We don't want to have anything to do with you." And I don't know why this is, but I think it was one of the things of

professional jealousy that happened so often, you know, where people that could otherwise be friends fall into factions. [tape recorder turned off]

COLE: Well, between the years 1944 and 1948, we've seen Eric get back on a solid compositional footing. He's producing regularly, and perhaps it's ironic that at the same time the Kinderlieder cycle is being revived, Eric is working in an entirely new direction. That is the creation of large instrumental pieces without program. The first of these is a product of 1948 and 1949, entitled Sonata Barocca and dedicated to his brother Walter, in memoriam. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about this piece and why Walter specifically.

ZEISL: Well, Eric had begun this piece, and when he began it it had nothing to do with Walter. I think it was that in these years he had matured to a point where he was confident enough to approach these forms that had somehow eluded him before, or which he did not dare to approach before. And so he began this sonata, and he had almost finished the first movement, by which I don't mean to say that it was the first movement of the sonata that he composed then. I think it was the second movement with which he began, but which later became the second movement of the sonata.

All of a sudden the terrible news came that his brother Walter had succumbed to a heart attack, just

from one day to the other. He had been only forty-six years old. And [Eric] loved that brother more than any of the others. And not only he: everybody loved that brother the most. He was the most wonderful person, [a] human being that lived only for others. And from childhood on he was, so to say, the mainstay of the parents [and] of his brothers, and [he] accepted this role of being there only for them. He had no life of his own. He hadn't married. I think he couldn't marry because there were always these demands. Everybody needed him. And it was up to them, all of a sudden. We had always steadily gone up to San Francisco. And from then on we never went there. And Eric was just really heartbroken.

And he finished the sonata, and it was in a way a very important thing that had happened there, apart from the great sorrow. This brother had acquired some money. He had a business, and the business was now sold, and there was some money that was divided among the brothers. And Eric decided that he would use that money to compose. And he did the four sonatas, and they were made possible by this money, because up to then he had, apart from the City College in the evening, always done all this hackwork. And he did not accept this and then concentrated on composing, and this was possible. And when he had finished the piano sonata, he dedicated it to his brother.

COLE: I see. In this sonata, he begins to develop a

certain approach that he then refines in the ensuing sonatas. He always begins with a large and solemn first movement.

ZEISL: The Sonata Barocca is, I think, especially rich in counterpoint, and as a matter of fact, Eric meant to dedicate it to Jakob Gimpel. But Jakob Gimpel didn't like it, and he said it was too [contrapuntal]. And I remember that Eric was very upset about this. And at this time, we visited Stravinsky, and he said, "Mr. Stravinsky, do you like counterpoint?" And Stravinsky said, "I like only counterpoint." And that kind of reassured him. But anyway, that was the piano sonata. Ja.

COLE: Typically, the slow movement is in a religious vein. Was he attempting to transfer here the techniques he was developing in his Jewish vocal music?

ZEISL: I don't know. I think just that all the events of the time and the great tragedy that had occurred in the Jewish consciousness--all this brought this out, but perhaps also the fact that he could not immediately identify with America. He had lost Vienna and Austria, and here was something that he was able to identify with. And I think he needed that, like a soil from which you grow. And I think he needed to express this thing that had happened.

COLE: Is this the movement that you likened to a dialogue with God?

ZEISL: The second, ja, ja. And it is as if God would

always answer in the negative.

COLE: Somewhere in each of these sonatas, you're bound to find a large movement in some baroque form. In this particular work, it's a prelude and fugue. Here again, we see Eric grappling with this counterpoint and with the large forms that had been such a struggle.

ZEISL: In the last movement, there's also this great apotheosis which always appears in his tragic pieces.

COLE: You mention that the famous pianist didn't like it. This entire sonata is incredibly difficult to play, and I just wonder, as I look at some other pieces of Eric--we know [that] he was a marvelous pianist--do you think that demands such as those we find in the Sonata Barocca were sometimes to cost him possible performances?

ZEISL: I am sure. But I am likewise sure that he never thought of this when he was composing. He was composing the things that were dictated by something to him. And he did not really think of the performer. As a matter of fact, when he later wrote a cello concerto for Piatigorsky, who had commissioned that, Piatigorsky said, "You are very selfish. You think only of yourself, and you do not think of the performer." Because Eric had written a cello concerto that was more in the style of a concerto grosso, where the cello is interwoven and wasn't soloistic enough.

COLE: Do you recall who premiered the Sonata Barocca?

ZEISL: Yes. It was Eda Schlatter, a young pianist who was

technically very, very proficient, but she sometimes did not fulfill Eric's demand. And he was definitely not a women's libber. He kind of wanted men to play him. Simply said, he said that women were going up where it goes down and down where it goes up. His music was, I think, very male, and it really needed a man, I think, or a woman that had that element in her makeup.

COLE: Perhaps this is an appropriate note on which to close, with Eric heading into a new kind of composition. We're going to see this kind refined and expanded.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 23, 1975

COLE: At the end of the last interview, we were talking about Eric Zeisl's Sonata Barocca, a piece composed in 1948-49, a piece that actually was the first in a series of new endeavors in the field of absolute music and large instrumental forms. Before we go on, was there anything else you'd like to add about the piece or its circumstances?

ZEISL: Well, only that the piece was performed several times. It was premiered by Eda Schlatter in a concert at City College, and then it was played several times on the radio. One radio performance was [of] the chamber music concerts [played] every Sunday (or several Sundays) during the season in the Museum Concerts. It was financed by the Performing Arts Fund, and they had chamber music there. The quartet of Eric was played there and several chamber music pieces. And the Sonata Barocca was played there by Natalie Limonick, and she played it in one of those chamber concerts there in another year. And then in a concert that she had together with Marni Nixon, who is quite well known here, Marni Nixon sang the Children's Songs, and Natalie played the sonata. And then she played it over another station, I've forgotten which one--a music station here.

COLE: Oh, yes. KFAC?

ZEISL: Ja, together with the Prayer. And so it was performed quite a bit.

COLE: Um-hmm. In the year 1949, we see several of Eric's things published: "Menuhim's Song," with its dedication to Milhaud (published by Mills Music); the Pieces for Barbara, published in Austria by the Bundesverlag; and the Four Songs for Wordless Chorus, by Fischer and Brother. Also in 1949 and going into 1950, Eric is working on the second of his large chamber pieces, a sonata for violins and piano with the nickname "Brandeis Sonata." Before we get to the piece itself, can you tell us how this nickname arose and what this particular Brandeis concept meant for Eric?

ZEISL: Well, it so happened that at that time an organization which called itself Brandeis Camp, after Judge Brandeis, got a property in Simi Valley. (They still have it.) And they founded there a camp in which they wanted to duplicate something like the Palestinian atmosphere, of going back to their resources of strength that the Jewish people have in their own culture and so on. And from all the universities, the first institute was inviting--into an arts institution--selected, very bright and gifted young people who were especially recommended. And they then went and invited famous composers to come and lecture to these people. And at the first summer [camp], there was there Ernst Toch and Louis Gruenberg

and Eric, and they had also invited Schoenberg, who was glad to come, but he was already very sick, and so he couldn't come. They had famous dancers and poets and so on. And it was a very stimulating atmosphere there and very beautiful. It was very nice surroundings, a beautiful old farm. It had belonged to a wealthy beer brewer, and they had a very beautiful old mansion there, and we were put up in this place. It was very hot; that was the only disadvantage. But our room, fortunately, was in the basement, and it was cool there, or Eric would have died.

And so Eric loved the atmosphere there, and it was also something like a godsend to us, which they didn't know. They invited us and were very honored that he came, but for us it was just like a heaven-sent thing, because we just had spent our last cent. That we got three meals a day there was very, very gratefully accepted, and they didn't know that. But it was for us very, very welcome because the summer was always the dry season. Eric had no lessons in the summer. His students went to wherever they came from. They usually didn't all come from Los Angeles; they came from other parts of the country and returned to their homes. And it was a dry season, where it was hard to make a penny or so.

So we were there, and it was an atmosphere that was very congenial to what Eric felt at that [time]. [tape

recorder turned off] There were lectures about the Bible, very interesting things, history. And Eric was always interested especially in the very ancient times, the Biblical times. And this was with scholars going very, very [much] into depths teaching them about these things. And there were a lot of very interesting young people, and he got there quite a few students who were very gifted. One of them is Leon Levitch, who was at that time there and became Eric's student. And there was a fellow by the name of [Elliott] Greenberg, who was only eighteen years and made a beautiful violin sonata, and Eric had great hopes for him. But he went back to New York, and he founded or became manager of a record company, commercialized somehow. It's strange. Character has to do something, too. You have to have a very strong character and be able to take all these adversities and really stick to it. It isn't the talent alone, but the character.

COLE: What did Eric do there in addition to lecturing? Was he responsible for teaching theory? Did he have a lot of time to himself?

ZEISL: He had a lot of time to himself, but he did some lectures. But that was rather a pleasure, because Ja, one also very gifted student was Yehudi Weiner, who was a son of Lazar Weiner, who at that time was himself quite a known composer in New York. Yehudi was from New York and went then back to New York. He was an exciting

pianist and very gifted. So it was very stimulating.

COLE: Then it was in this kind of atmosphere that he created the Brandeis Sonata?

ZEISL: Ja. So he had a lot of time for himself and he could compose. He did not compose as much as he would have wanted to, because it was very hot. And the piano that he could use was in a kind of a barn, and the barn got very, very hot. It's semidesert there in the Simi Valley, and very often the temperature was 115°, and that wasn't very good for work.

COLE: This sonata was dedicated to Tansman. Were you still in close contact with the Tansman family?

ZEISL: Ja. We would correspond quite frequently. I think they had by this time gone back to Paris, but Eric corresponded regularly with him.

COLE: This is probably Eric's most successful instrumental composition. It was performed widely by Israel Baker and Yalta Menuhin and finally recorded by them. Do you recall how they got involved?

ZEISL: No. For some reason, I forgot how we met them, but I think that Israel was at that time planning a concert tour and was looking for a new work, and Eric said that he would write a work for him, but I forgot how we met them and through what kind of circumstances. Eventually, they did play Eric's work often at Brandeis, but I don't think that we met them at Brandeis or through Brandeis. You

know, we were constantly in contact with musicians at that time, and so he probably played in one of the concerts where Eric's work was performed. Perhaps he was concert-master [and] played something at one of the symphony [concerts].

COLE: He did take this work on tour, didn't he?

ZEISL: He did take it on tour, ja, played it in New York, and on tour, and here several times also and on the radio. [He] performed it many times. And then we got this commission to record it, and Eric chose that sonata to be recorded.

COLE: This was the same company that had already recorded the Kinderlieder and the Pieces for Barbara?

ZEISL: Ja.

COLE: This is a work that follows and perhaps refines the directions taken in the Sonata Barocca. One sees a large, composite first movement with two basic tempos that alternate, religioso slow movement and a rather unusual finale, [which] perhaps best illustrates Eric's Slavonic bent, don't you think?

ZEISL: Oh, ja, certainly. He had this kind of Slavic influence in his music, and it comes out very strongly from time to time.

COLE: It has tremendous energy.

ZEISL: The Slavic bent showed already in the first trio, which got lost. The end movement, a variation type thing,

was similar; [it] was definitely very Slavonic.

COLE: One of the most frustrating things in the world is to try and describe exactly what makes a composer's style what it is. Very often, composers in the twentieth century have been trying to assist us, or perhaps confuse us, by writing or speaking copiously about their approach to composition and what they take to be their style. Eric doesn't say much about his composition. Did he ever think about codifying his thoughts on composition or describing his style?

ZEISL: No. He very, very often spoke about harmony and his approach to harmony, and he wanted to do a book about this (I know that). But about composition, I don't think so. He believed in composing rather than writing about it.

COLE: The thing that prompted me to ask this question was a one-liner that I found in a review. Apparently Eric said this, but you've mentioned to me that sometimes he said these things more for publication than because he really meant them. He's talking about his music composed in the United States, and he speaks of "classic music in a romantic-religious vein." And I just wondered: can one attach real significance to a statement like that, or was this something for the press?

ZEISL: I really don't remember it. I think it was, so to say, hindsight. He was characterizing what his music sounded like. I mean, perhaps he was asked, "What does your music

sound like?" And then he would answer in this way, you know. It wasn't that he was sitting down with the intention of writing this kind of music. It just came out this way.

COLE: Well, in the year 1950, we see the Prayer for the United Nations published, and we see the Viola Sonata, the third in this series of chamber works of large size executed in absolute instrumental forms. This was dedicated to Norman Wright, of whom we've spoken a great deal, and I take it he, too, is still active in Zeisl's [behalf].

ZEISL: Ja, he is in Santa Barbara, and I think [he] is by now retired. But as long as he was active and was the organist and chorus director of the First Methodist Church, he would make a festival of Eric's music almost every year. And he was a very, very devoted friend of Eric and his music.

COLE: This piece was recorded on the reverse side of the Brandeis Sonata by Sven Reher and Eda Schlatter. How did you get in touch with Sven Reher, who of course is still active at UCLA?

ZEISL: Again, I don't know. I forgot. These musicians were, at the time, playing in concerts, and we got to know them. And they would come to the house and play and become acquainted with Eric's music, and he had acquired some kind of a name already and was very often played. So, he must have probably shown interest to play something. And I

think he played it already when Eric asked him to play it on the record. Probably, maybe, we met him through Norman. That could be.

COLE: I see. One little bit of interviewer comment. I know Sven Reher, and he's told me how fond he was of Eric and of his composition. It seems that Eric had this gift of making himself extremely popular with, extremely memorable to, these artists.

ZEISL: The people that responded to his personality loved him, and it was not a distant or stiff relationship, ever. It was either they loved him or they rejected him.

COLE: No in-between.

ZEISL: No in-between.

COLE: This piece, too, contains a large baroque movement, as every one of these sonatas does in some place--in this case a passacaglia and fugue--so we still see him working with these large baroque procedures. Also in the year 1950, we see Eric going in a different direction, this a piece called Music for Christmas. It's a variation and fugue on popular Christmas carols, and it was commissioned by the San Francisco Youth Symphony. How did this come about?

ZEISL: Kurt Adler used to come here with the San Francisco Opera, and he knew that he would have this concert with the Youth Symphony, so he said, "Compose a piece for me." And I think it was around Christmas time that he had this concert,

so Eric wrote this piece for him. It was what you call a Gelegenheitsstück, but Eric enjoyed doing it.

COLE: And it did meet with a favorable reception certainly. What were the circumstances of performance? Were you able to attend?

ZEISL: Well, Kurt premiered it in San Francisco, and it got very good reviews. And then we had a conductor friend here, Curtis Stearns, [who] had a concert with the Glendale Symphony where he did it. And the Glendale Symphony was an excellent orchestra with many studio musicians playing, and it was a very good performance here. I have a record of it. And through this performance with the Glendale, Eric got other performances, because the musicians that played in some of them were teaching at colleges, and so they took this fugue and kind of used it with their classes as a demonstration piece of how you make a fugue.

COLE: I see. So we see Eric still preoccupied with the baroque form, using well-known Christmas carols and in fact combining at least three of them in the fugue in a contrapuntal tour de force. Also in this year appeared the most extensive interview, at least to my knowledge, about Eric. (I don't know that you'd [properly] call it an interview.) Actually, [Albert] Goldberg had written a series in the Los Angeles Times about the displaced composer. Zeisl was one of those with whom he had corresponded, and the result appeared in a rather extensive article. What

do you remember about that and about Goldberg?

ZEISL: I remember Goldberg was a friend. We had met him several times, and he enjoyed Eric's sense of humor tremendously. Eric would hold these comic lectures about the life in Hollywood, and it was really a scream. And I remember at one time, he brought in a big flower from outside the little house, and he said, "Now look here!" Like it was something horrible, you know. And Goldberg said, "Why?" And he said, "But not in winter!" And so he enjoyed that very much, and then when he did that [series] he approached Eric and wanted to know his position.

COLE: Well, a great deal of preparation went into this then, didn't it? Did Eric perhaps think a little more seriously about his [position]?

ZEISL: Oh, ja. I think he wrote down what he wanted to say. So it was really an authentic article. And I remember, I don't think that this [series] aroused much antagonism by anybody, but Eric's article did. And there was an answer in the Times then, in which somebody answered to his position very antagonistically.

COLE: It might not hurt to state Eric's position. He talked a great deal about the need for an artist to suffer. He talked about the effect of his displacement, and the fact that without the impetus of this move behind him, perhaps he could not have written his best. So one really gets the impression that he felt he was writing

his best in this American style.

ZEISL: Ja, he felt really that in the end it had a beneficial effect upon him, and that through these sufferings and through these struggles he had gained a certain strength which enabled him to tackle these big forms which he had not done before.

COLE: As I recall, the letter to the Times took him to task for saying that a composer had to suffer. I found it a rather superficial letter myself, but interesting in that Eric had elicited such a response.

ZEISL: Ja. It made this person angry.

COLE: Also in this article, he touches upon a subject that is of some concern to many people now, especially with the approach of the American Bicentennial: this whole idea of what is American music as opposed to music that's written in America? There is no doubt that Eric writes a different kind of music in America, but he doesn't employ what one might call American rhythms or American themes. However, it is a different kind [of music than he had composed in Austria]. Eric again talks about the impact of America upon him, that he felt inclined to write differently here.

ZEISL: Ja. For one thing, he never again wrote songs. America is such a big country, and I think that in some way made an impact, that he tried himself in bigger forms, and that the smaller, gemlike output that a song is, this chiseled thing of miniature drama, that this didn't seem

right here, that something bigger was elicited from him because of the bigness of the country. I think so. I don't know if he meant it so, but it was just a subconscious thing, I think.

COLE: And if one looks at the output, there is no doubt that the works are bigger.

In 1951, Eric composed the fourth in the series of chamber pieces, a cello sonata, which he dedicated to Gregor Piatigorsky. Were you friends with Piatigorsky at this time? How did this dedication come about?

ZEISL: That came about that Eric had constantly in mind to finish Job. And from time to time we saw in the paper certain organizations that seemed to help the artist. And there was this New York Art Foundation, and we wrote to the New York Art Foundation, and surprisingly enough, Piatigorsky answered. And we had an interview with him, and Piatigorsky immediately loved Eric, so we got from this New York Art Foundation support, which was, however, very small. But it enabled Eric to do the Cello Sonata, which was dedicated to Piatigorsky.

COLE: In the slow movement of this piece, another element enters Eric's style, a refinement of something towards which he'd been heading for some time. One really has to call it a new element, and that is that instead of writing the kind of religious, Hebraic melody that seemed to be an imitation of Hebrew cantillation, he writes a

slow movement that is based upon supposedly authentic cantillation formulas. Here the name of Solomon Rosowsky comes to mind. Perhaps you can talk a little bit about him.

ZEISL: Ja. Solomon Rosowsky was a man who had dedicated his whole life [to] investigating and studying the punctuation of the Hebrew language, and it was his conviction that it was a musical system. I don't know it too well, but when you see only the letters [of] the Hebrew language, there are no vowels. And there are little dots there that indicate the vowels, but there are different opinions about them--what kind of vowel, and I think it's pretty free.

(I'm not really an expert to explain that too well.) But he found that this punctuation was not really vowels, but was musical. And by writing it down--he was a musician--he found an astounding musical world, so to say, that sounded very, very different from what we are used to hear[ing] in the synagogues. It had a much more positive and, I would say, not so minor but major [feeling], a much more sunny or positive feeling about it, not this kind of suffering and mourning feeling that you usually associate with the synagogue music. And Eric was very intrigued with it, and it sounded very beautiful to him, and so he incorporated it in a free manner into this work.

COLE: Where did you come in contact with this man?

ZEISL: At Brandeis. He lectured there. And you know,

it was very interesting, because we heard all these lectures, and it was very stimulating, not only to hear your own realm but to be exposed to new things. And that was one of them.

COLE: And then eventually Rosowsky codified his findings and published them in a book, The Cantillation of the Bible, which is a very large and learned work.

ZEISL: Ja.

COLE: Was he aware that Eric had written this movement based on his theories?

ZEISL: I forget, because it was written after that, and I think he returned to Palestine then or maybe to New York. I don't know. He didn't live here, I know that.

COLE: This whole question raises another one: did Eric himself know Hebrew?

ZEISL: Yes, he did, but not as a language. I mean, he could read it, but he did not understand it. He had never learned it as a language. But you know, in school, in religion, the kids learned how to read Hebrew, and he could do that, but he did not know the meaning of the words. When he had composed the Ninety-second Psalm, for instance, the Rabbi [Jakob] Sonderling had written under each Hebrew word the English meaning so that he knew what it was all about.

COLE: I see. So in the Requiem Ebraico had Eric actually set the melodies to English text first and then added the Hebrew?

ZEISL: Well, the first performance was in Hebrew. But what it meant was there. So he composed what it meant, but to the Hebrew-sounding syllables. It wasn't too difficult to put the English under it then, but sometimes there was a little conflict of syllables.

COLE: I see. In 1951, and going into 1952, Eric composed a piano concerto. To my knowledge, this is his first major work in the concerto genre. Had he ever thought of doing this before?

ZEISL: Well, it was Eda Schlatter, who wanted a vehicle to come before the public, and she offered Eric a commission of \$500, which was not very much but at that time was very welcome, and he was always glad when he had a reason to compose. And so he undertook this and did this concerto, and Norman thought it was extremely beautiful. I have heard it performed only once, on two pianos, when Eric and a student that he had at that time performed it. But I have never heard it otherwise.

COLE: I see. Eda Schlatter herself didn't perform it then?

ZEISL: No. She studied it, and she wanted to do it in Vienna, and Eric had written to Kralik, whom he knew from Vienna and who was at that time director of the radio, and tried to arrange a concert for her, but before anything evolved, he died.

COLE: Oh, so then it never was performed to your knowledge?

ZEISL: No. And at the memorial concert, I wanted to put this work on, but she didn't live here anymore; she lived way up in Northern California. And she said no, she would only premiere it in Vienna; she didn't want to perform it here for the memorial concert. And so the Cello Concerto was played. But I think by now she has given up her concert career. She is teaching at the university.

COLE: I see. Do you think that the tremendous difficulty of the piece influenced her decision?

ZEISL: No, I don't think so. She thrived on this. Technically, she was very proficient and just fabulous. I have the record of the piano sonata, which is fiendishly difficult, and you can hear how well she plays--I mean, technically perfect. But Eric was always a little bit unhappy about it. There were certain things, you know, where to him the music seemed to be going someplace, and she was either holding back or rushing or something. She didn't feel exactly--she wasn't quite on the beam. And so the difficulty of the Piano Concerto was not the reason; it was just that she was overambitious, I think.

COLE: In 1952, finally (as far as we know), Leonce und Lena received its premiere. We still cannot be sure about the earlier performance that was alleged to have taken place in Prague. It probably didn't, from all we can tell.

ZEISL: I really don't know. We sent the score and

everything to the director there, and I don't know if it still could come to pass, because Czechoslovakia was independent still, and Hitler had not moved in. But very soon afterwards, he did, so probably that curtailed the thing.

COLE: I see. In any event, in 1952 it was premiered by the Los Angeles City College Opera Workshop. Who were the people involved in this, and how did Eric go about updating the work?

ZEISL: You know, Hugo was the director of the opera workshop, and he had with him Adolph Heller. Adolph Heller was a very gifted conductor and a person extremely interested in modern music. He had a very great library of scores and liked to do modern things, and Hugo was more on the conservative side. So whenever they did something modern, like the Pauvre Matelot by Milhaud, with it then they would do some Mozart. Hugo would do the Mozart, and Heller would do the Pauvre Matelot, and so on. You know, Heller was, of course, also our guest, and we were friends, and Eric had shown him Leonce und Lena, and he said, "I would like to do it." And so Hugo said yes, and Hugo was, so to say, the producer.

He was a tremendously gifted man. And he immediately assembled all the important things, and he had sessions in which the book and all the aspects were discussed. And it was found that for American purposes, the Büchner play as

is would not be feasible. People would probably not respond or understand. And so Eric approached Kafka, our friend, and he agreed to do certain changes in the book. And I think what he did was very gifted and very good. He changed a little bit. In Büchner, Valerio is a complete hippie, and Kafka changed him a little bit to a kind of a demonic figure that draws the strings of these puppets. And it was quite an interesting concept. The Büchner play is basically weak dramatically. It is full of marvelous ideas and poetic scenes and poetic sayings and very biting, ironic statements about the circumstances of his time--which are still in many ways true for our world today--where this kind of pettiness in government and the smallness of the mind and the stupidity of government in general is very well lambasted. And so that was all kept in, mostly. But there is not enough dramatic conflict, really. That is one of the weaknesses of the book. But it did give Eric marvelous opportunities for very beautiful pieces.

COLE: Was he tremendously excited about the thought of a premiere finally?

ZEISL: Oh, yes, it was a very, very great joy for him, a tremendous joy, and before the performance the Austrian consul arranged a great reception in his house. He had at that time a very beautiful house with a wonderful great big patio yard--you know, the whole yard was like a big patio. And there we had this reception. And to this

reception came Lion Feuchtwanger, whom we hadn't known. And at that reception, Eric and Lion Feuchtwanger became friends. It developed into a very fine friendship, and Eric later on wanted to do an opera together with Feuchtwanger, and they had already discussed that and exchanged letters and had sessions about it. He wanted to make Feuchtwanger's Devil in Boston [Wahn, oder der Teufel in Boston] into an opera. And he thought that the moment he was finished with Job, that would be his next project. But he didn't come to it.

But so this was all a very great and joyous time. And I must say that the performance was really enchanting. It was just so fairy-tale-like and poetic and romantic because the fact that all this was played by young people added so much, and they were so young and handsome. In an opera, you usually don't see it this way, you know. Usually the divas, when they have fame, are already on the older side, and there was this young Lena, [who] looked like Lena should look, really like a fairy-tale princess. And the prince was so handsome and cute, like a real fairy-tale prince. And the singers loved the thing so much, and they sang with such gusto and sense of humor, it was really a very fine performance.

And afterwards we went up to Lake Tahoe, and I think all this emotional excitement and everything had really deeply upset Eric. And when we came back from Tahoe, he

got like an attack of gall bladder trouble and had terrific pains and had to have an injection against these pains. And it was then that the doctor mentioned that I should have his heart examined, because he said very often gall bladder trouble is an indication that maybe something is wrong with his heart. And we didn't take it too seriously, but there it showed already. It was about seven years before.

COLE: A couple of things probably should be mentioned about Leonce und Lena. One, of course, is the problem of getting it from German to English. Here, a mysterious translator with the name F. Class enters. Maybe you can tell us who that was.

ZEISL: Well, at Brandeis, Eric was busy either with composing or lecturing, and I had nothing to do--and that was way before the performance took place--so I decided I would prepare the thing and translate it into English. And I didn't want my name to be chosen, so I chose this name, which was a kind of funny thing. I thought the translation was first class, and so it was just a joke. [laughter] The fact is that most of it was used, but Henry Reese, who is a very good translator, changed a few of the lyrics and made them more American. But otherwise, most of it was kept.

COLE: And then significantly, the work got a tremendously favorable press in a large number of newspapers; it was covered broadly.

ZEISL: Ja. It was really amazing, because not always are college performances [covered]. But Eric had at that time acquired a name here, which you can see in his reviews. And so all these people came to the performance. Of course, they did not always know how to look at this. They were trying to categorize it, which isn't possible. I mean, it wasn't like Stravinsky, and it wasn't like Richard Strauss, and that gave them problems because they thought it had to be one or the other.

COLE: One criticism I remember distinctly--I thought it unjustified--was that the happy numbers were marvelous, but somehow the quartet, which is really where the new Eric had shone through years before, was far too serious for the business at hand, and yet this was perhaps the most significant number of the opera.

ZEISL: Ja. And you see, the book by Büchner had the same quality. It was a mixture of just spoofing and these very philosophical and deep moments that appeared in a true poet, of course.

COLE: In the same year--was it a reaction to the strain he'd been under?--Eric composes a piece called simply the Tenor Psalm, really a composite of two psalm texts. It's a large-scale work for tenor soloist and male chorus. This is unusually dissonant for Eric. What was going through his mind?

ZEISL: Well, I told you that the doctor had said that he

should have his heart examined, and so we did. And then the verdict was that he had heart disease. And I really didn't take it too seriously, but he was terrifically shocked because his brother had died of a heart attack, you see, Walter, and just a few years past. And so he was so shocked that he became actually sick. I mean, he was in a deep, melancholic state. And for a while he didn't want to compose at all, and he was a little bit like he had been in Vienna, where he was just crying and just lying there, and he couldn't face death. And slowly but surely We had then a friend who was a doctor, and he told him, "You cannot believe in cardiograms and this." He said that his old professor had said about cardiograms, Zackenschwindel. Zacken are these pointed, toothlike lines, the kind of things that the cardiograms do. And so slowly he recovered from this and forgot the whole thing. But the mood and the shock of the thing is expressed in this.

COLE: I see. Here again is a major composition that was not performed in his lifetime, was it?

ZEISL: No, that wasn't performed at all.

COLE: It suggests that he's still evolving and still searching for new dimensions of harmonic expression, because there are some tremendously dissonant passages in this work. And yet there's a tremendous power.

ZEISL: Ja. I have heard it only when Eric played it,

and then it seemed to me very characteristic of his style.
I didn't notice so much that it was more dissonant than
other things.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 23, 1975

COLE: In 1953, Universal Edition published the Little Symphony. We've said before that you had a contract. How did it come about that it was finally honored at this late date?

ZEISL: Well, we had a contract, and we had the contract with us in L.A., so after the war, then, we wrote to Universal Edition and said, "We have this contract," and they wrote back that they would honor it. And they did, but I think their heart wasn't in it. They just had this contract and fulfilled it, and in the meantime things had so utterly changed. And the circumstances in Vienna were terrible after the war, of course, and they didn't have their mind on this, you know. And everything had pretty much changed and wasn't the same. And Eric had gone out from Vienna, and it was like he had never been there. And so I think they didn't promote the thing enough, didn't do enough.

COLE: I see. They didn't really have an advertising campaign or anything. In this year also, he composed his Second String Quartet. We've talked at some length about the first one, how he took portions of it and re-worked them for string orchestra. Many, many years have passed, and now here's the Second String Quartet, a piece

in D-minor. This was commissioned by the New York Chamber Music Society. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about how it came about.

ZEISL: At that time a friend was visiting us, one of our friends from Vienna. And he was a very good musician, although that wasn't his profession. He was an amateur musician, but a good one. And had he really taken up music, he would have become a good conductor, I think. His knowledge in music is fantastic. As a matter of fact, I think he has made arrangements to give his library to one of the big libraries there, because he has such an extensive library, all the things of chamber music that were ever written from the eighteenth century up. And so we were here together, and he said to Eric that he wanted to commission him to write a string quartet for this chamber society, or whatever it was called, that he had founded. The idea was a very fine one. He was himself an ardent chamber music fan and had regular chamber music in his house, and he knew that so many people wanted to play chamber music but sometimes didn't have the right partners. And so he made a list of all the people that were good chamber music players, and even with differentiation in their skills, first class and so on. And these lists were laid up in the public libraries of every city, so that somebody who was traveling, for instance, could find partners there and call up and say, "I want

to play chamber music," and find partners.

COLE: That's a great idea!

ZEISL: And I think it's a very good idea. So Eric said, "Fine," and he wanted to do it. And he promised him \$150 for it as a commission. And Eric did the quartet, and when he sent it to him, he didn't like it. It was too complicated. He was not really in the first class himself, and apparently his musician friends could not quite master this because Eric never wrote easy pieces. That was one of the things that were obstacles. And he never paid the \$150. And Eric was quite angry, but he remained his friend. But he wrote him, "I shouldn't have started with amateurs and dilettantes. You are a dilettuncle and your wife is a dilettaunt." [laughter] But otherwise they remained friends.

And the Musart Quartet then took this piece up and played it in many concerts. I think they premiered it at a concert of Norman's church. And then it was played over the radio, and they played it in many concerts and radio performances. And Israel Baker later founded a quartet and also played it.

COLE: Well, this was dedicated to you. Was there a particular reason behind the dedication, or does there need to be one when the wife is involved?

ZEISL: No, no. I think I was also very fond of chamber music, and he knew that. And I think that I somehow

wished he would make a string quartet, which he hadn't done. So in composing it he was kind of fulfilling something that he knew would give me pleasure.

COLE: I see. In 1953 also, Eric composed a major dramatic ballet. We haven't seen him occupied with the dramatic ballet since Uranium 235, and before that not since 1929. This was called The Vineyard. It's based on a Bible story, but it has differences, too, and the person who reworked this story is Benjamin Zemach. Who was he?

ZEISL: Ja. Benjamin Zemach was one of the people that we met at Brandeis. He had the dance department at Brandeis, which was a very creative part there. And he was the teacher there and also was a stage director there for the plays that they put on. And we, of course, became friends there, and Eric wanted him to do a ballet for him. He came with this idea, and Eric was very much taken with the idea. He liked the idea very much, so he did that for him. And Benjamin Zemach was at that time also the leading dance director of the University of Judaism, and so he commissioned that from him for the university. It isn't for big orchestra; I think it is for chamber orchestra. But still, putting it on meant a great deal of money, and Zemach could never raise that kind of money because they had problems there. The university wanted a new building, and all this had priority.

COLE: Why did he choose this particular story? Maybe you

could summarize it a bit, and we can see how the librettist made the story more dramatic and more conclusive than it was originally.

ZEISL: Well, I think when they talked with each other--I think Eric felt very strongly that the little man had no chance in this life unless there were certain precepts. And the prophet that appears in the story and forbids the king to take the vineyard from the man, even though he is the king, I think it exemplified that there were limits to power and that the small subject should have a chance.

COLE: I see. Was Eric himself preoccupied with Bible studies at this time, or was it simply the Brandeis context?

ZEISL: It was just simply the Brandeis context, and he told him of the story and showed him the story, and Eric loved the story.

COLE: Did Eric ever talk about the opportunity to return to dramatic music? For some years now, we've seen him occupied essentially with large instrumental works that are not dependent on program. Here we are getting back to a program.

ZEISL: Ja. Dramatic music was always, I think, his first love, and he always loved to do that.

COLE: So perhaps he took this opportunity to pour himself even more into the creation of pictorial music. It's true that every single section has an indelible stamp. The

"Rites of Ashtoreth," for example, is one of the most sensuous passages he ever wrote.

ZEISL: Ja. I have the thing on a tape where Eric played it on the piano, but I've never heard it in the orchestra. But it must probably be quite something because his orchestration was always very colorful.

COLE: Yes. As the piece goes on, the story is altered a bit from the biblical original. In the original, the king, who has usurped this poor common man's vineyard, is punished simply by having his descendants condemned to do this or that. But they changed the story so that he himself gets killed when his palace collapses on him. Eric takes this opportunity to write one of his greatest passacaglias and fugues. Did he talk about using once again the baroque procedure in the dramatic context?

ZEISL: No, but he played it a lot, and I think he was very satisfied with that piece. Wasn't the passacaglia piece the one where Naboth gets stoned?

COLE: Um-hmm, right.

ZEISL: Ja, ja, it was one of the most dramatic pieces that he had written, and you can really--I mean, the anguish and the horrible cruelty of the stoning [were] really so expressed in this music and this evermounting tension of the passacaglia.

COLE: The poor man is stoned in the passacaglia, and then in the big fugal finale the palace crashes down upon the

king. In this piece Eric very definitely uses leitmotifs; he labels them all. He seems to be heading towards a continuous musical texture based on a web of motives. Quite a piece! I ask this out of curiosity, and I don't know that any answer is possible. In earlier dramatic ballets and in an earlier opera like Leonce und Lena, we've seen Eric take the best and most extensive pieces and make suites of them, perhaps more in frustration than anything else, when it seemed that he wouldn't get a performance of the full work. Did he ever talk about his approach to this piece, where you have a totality that can function independent of the drama? One doesn't need to make a suite of it.

ZEISL: Ja. I think he felt that this one was wrought in such a way that it was like an absolute piece and could be played independently and didn't have to be made into a suite, because it wasn't just different pieces. It had a continuity and formal connection.

COLE: Right. And musical independence above and beyond the story line. Well, The Vineyard shows Eric at his dramatic best; it's an inspirational piece. In 1954, we see him at [bell rings; tape recorder turned off] his lyrical and pastoral best. This is a pastoral ballet on the story of Jacob and Rachel. Once again, Zemach was involved. How did he get into this particular venture?

ZEISL: Well, Zemach said that it was very, very difficult to do a big piece like this and that he could not raise

the fund for a big orchestra, but if Eric would be willing to do something for a small group, not more than--I don't know how many instruments are involved--not much more than ten, I think, then [there] would be a much greater chance for performance, and he would probably put it through. And so they decided to do the story of Jacob and Rachel. And he again did the book for Eric, and Eric followed this pretty closely as he had done it, you know. And it follows the Bible pretty closely.

COLE: Yes, this much more closely.

ZEISL: And this was much more lighthearted, and there are funny scenes in it: the wedding dance, with the relatives meeting, you know. And again there are dramatic pieces, of course: the anguish of Leah, who was rejected by Jacob and was jealous and so on.

COLE: Well, did Eric have anything to do with suggesting to Zemach that perhaps the libretto might be more detailed? Here, with the exception of Zeisl's own Pierrot in der Flasche from 1929, we have the most detailed ballet libretto I've ever seen. It covers several pages of text, whereas The Vineyard was quite short.

ZEISL: I think that with this piece Zemach really had in mind a definite performance, so he was much more to the point. And as a matter of fact, he did the first scene. There was a fund-raising dinner at which this was played, of course only with piano. And we had then meetings with

the president of the University of Judaism, and they did spend the money to have the score copied and the parts. But to performance it never came, and I think it would have come, because Eric would have pestered them, and so on, and I didn't. And so it never came to performance.

COLE: I see that the New York Art Foundation also took part in this commission. What was their involvement?

ZEISL: I think they financed part of it, but I don't quite remember, probably gave a grant for it, but a small grant, perhaps a hundred dollars or something.

COLE: I see. Now, this piece is more through-composed than was The Vineyard even. It just flows from one section to another. It's another piece that can be done as a totality. Once again reminiscent of Pierrot from 1929 is the inclusion of a singer.

ZEISL: Yes, uh-huh. Ja, that's an interesting thing, because I don't think there are too many composers who have ever done this. I don't think that Zemach suggested it. It was Eric's idea to have this kind of prophecy sung. And I think it's dramatically very effective when all of a sudden you hear the singing voice. And this first part was done, and it was done with a very good singer [Harry Pressel], who afterwards sang the title role in Milhaud's David that was done here at the [Hollywood] Bowl. (He was a very fine singer, a student of Zweig.) And it is really very beautiful when this prophecy comes out in this voice, like a

biblical God's voice. [bell rings; tape recorder turned off]

COLE: A fascinating thing in any major work of Zeisl's is to look for the baroque procedure. Never does he duplicate; always he seems to take a baroque technique and use it in a new way. A fascinating way in Jacob and Rachel is the variations that appear for the seven years of Jacob's labor. Did he ever talk about that?

ZEISL: No, no. I heard it played. And as a matter of fact, Benjamin Zemach has the tape. And I have several times called him, and he was always promising he would bring it, and he hasn't brought it. And I have only recently thought I must call him again and maybe go over there and get it, because I want to have that tape of the whole thing, which Eric played on the piano. But I heard it only maybe one or two times, so my memory of that piece isn't so clear. [tape recorder turned off]

COLE: In 1955, a couple of significant things happened. First, the series of chamber works was published by Doblinger. What were the circumstances involved there?

ZEISL: Well, Doblinger was the next biggest publisher, and Eric had a friend there. And he wrote to him about this. He was at that time, of course, professor at the conservatory. And he said if he thought he could guarantee that he would sell pieces in America, then they would do it. And they did. And it was, of course, not too difficult for

Eric to have these pieces sold here. He had so many classes and students, and they were all very interested in his work. So through De Keyser here, he sold quite a few of them.

COLE: I see. Didn't De Keyser keep several of his manuscripts that were available on rental?

ZEISL: Ja.

COLE: And then the second significant thing was that Eric turned fifty, and there was a wide range of recognition. In fact, it was in all the newspapers, and tributes poured in from all over the world. Were there other events that transpired on this marvelous occasion?

ZEISL: Yes. Well, Curtis Stearns, a friend who had done the Christmas Variations with the Glendale [Orchestra], came to Eric and said that he wanted to celebrate his fiftieth birthday, and he arranged with the musicians' union, who underwrote the orchestra. And then Eric put together a program because he had all these artists at his disposal. Eda Schlatter played, and I think singers sang the Children's Songs and the soprano songs [Sieben Lieder], and some chamber music was played, and Curtis Stearns did the Return of Ulysses with the orchestra. The hall was filled, and there were many congratulations, and it was a very happy time, and Eric felt very gratified by this.

COLE: Well, certainly such an occasion shows that he was solidly established as a composer here and had a wide

circle of friends and admirers.

ZEISL: Oh, yes! He did; he really had. And, of course, some of them were really of the finest kind you could find in any place, very great composers and artists from all walks of life.

COLE: It might be appropriate at this time to talk a little bit about some of the orchestras that performed Eric. We've mentioned conductors, but we know that conductors move about. As I look at a list of orchestras that performed Eric's music, I'm quite overwhelmed. He was actually heard throughout this country, wasn't he?

ZEISL: Ja. Many of the major orchestras of this country played his work. But you see, it was always only possible to play a small number of modern works on any kind of program during the season. And there was of course a great competition because there were so many great composers living here at that time. And otherwise, I would think he would have even been played more. But as it was, it was quite gratifying when you see the list.

COLE: Yes. I see Los Angeles, Buffalo, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, and even Vancouver. You got out of America. It's a very impressive list.

ZEISL: Ja. Kansas City even, Pittsburgh. And, well, there were very few cities that didn't play once a work of his.

COLE: And, of course, implied is a tremendous amount of hard work on your part, continually writing all these

people. We've talked about that several times, but to get performances it still had to go on.

ZEISL: Yes. As I told you, though the list is impressive, it was always far and wide in between, and all this didn't happen in one year. It happened over the years, you know. So in some years, there was just one performance, and then there were maybe years that were better and several things took place. And Eric would already think, "Well, now I am on my way." But the thing is that here in America, everything changes so quickly. And if he had a friend who also immediately was changed and his position changed, that made it again difficult for him to bring new works and so on.

COLE: How did you go about investigating commissions or grants or things of that nature? It's at this time that they begin to become a little more available in America.

ZEISL: Well, these things are usually written up in the New York Times, and we heard, say, that the New York Art Foundation would give grants or that the Guggenheim was giving grants or the Koussevitsky Foundation. And so we would write these letters, you know. And as with publishers, with foundations Eric was usually not too successful. It seems there was a little clique usually entrenched, and they would give these commissions to their friends and not to [outsiders]. You know, the other day I heard that Schoenberg, too, didn't get the Guggenheim, and so that made me feel a little better about the denials and refusals we got constantly.

COLE: In 1955 and 1956, Eric composed his Cello Concerto. We've mentioned this before briefly and said that it was in reality a concerto grosso in which the solo instrument was part of the ensemble, an equal among equals. This was commissioned by and dedicated to Piatigorsky, but he never played it, I understand.

ZEISL: No. Eric showed it to him, and then Piatigorsky thought it was not soloistic enough. As a matter of fact, he didn't want a concerto grosso. But Eric never, never, ever would change something that he had done, because when he did something, he worked with great care and really took, sometimes, maybe two or three days for a few bars. And so the idea of changing something that was so carefully laid out and worked out so carefully was unthinkable to him. So he didn't want to change it. Piatigorsky loved Eric, but he said, "You are very selfish. You are thinking only of what pleases you and not what you should do to please me," and he wanted something soloistic. And so that was it, and he didn't play it. And the piece was then played the first time at his memorial concert.

COLE: Um-hmm. By a very good cellist [George Neikrug].

ZEISL: Ja. He played marvelous, really.

COLE: One thing I noticed in passing is that Eric specifies that if you perform this work in a large hall, the cello is to use a microphone. Was this Eric's sole gesture towards electronic music?

ZEISL: No, it was just a gesture towards Piatigorsky, because Piatigorsky complained--and when Neikrug played it, I could see that he was right--that there were passages that were very difficult for the cellist to play. And yet he would appear as a figure, and you could not really distinguish it as a solo instrument should be; it was like a texture in which it was one thread. And so he suggested that maybe a microphone would rectify the situation.

COLE: In a sense, then, Eric was thinking in very contemporary terms, the idea of amplifying a soloist.

ZEISL: Oh, he was very intrigued, that I know. He was very intrigued with the idea of electrical music, and I think had he lived he would certainly have experimented with it, and I can only guess what would have been the result.

COLE: Yes. Now this will be a subject for a little speculation later, that he seemed to be heading towards the use of American idioms more and using electronic means to amplify. Certainly he was extremely contemporary, extremely current in his thought.

In 1956 and beyond, we enter the last few years of his life, after the happiness of the fiftieth birthday. Maybe he doesn't feel well; there isn't much time left. In 1956 he composes a work of a much different kind than anything he's written to this point, the Arrowhead Trio. Nicknames are always intriguing. Perhaps you can tell us

how the term "Arrowhead" came about.

ZEISL: Well, we were extremely fond of Lake Arrowhead, and since we both were teachers, we had these wonderful summer vacations. And usually we would rent a cabin up in Lake Arrowhead. And Eric had a student at City College, a huge fellow who was very, very devoted to him and who would transport the piano up to Arrowhead. The little cabin that we had in the last two years was on a garage, with stairs up, and singlehandedly he would transport that piano up. I don't know how he did it, with ropes and things, but he was such a tremendously big person, he seemed to do it with one hand. And there Eric composed.

And this particular summer our friend Fritz Kramer came, and it was one of the things that Eric had and which sometimes very much hurt him. He was always saying the truth, and when he felt something very strongly, then there was no way of holding him back. And we were there and it was a very happy reunion, but pretty soon he got very impatient and wanted to compose. The summer was for composing, and he just as much as told Fritz Kramer, "Get lost, because I want to [compose]." At the moment I think Kramer was a little bit taken aback, but then he composed the Arrowhead Trio. And I think the idea came from a person that we had met at that time, a violist by the name of [Harry] Blumberg, who had formed that group and told Eric about it and wanted him to compose something for this kind of

combination. And so he did.

COLE: So he chose a combination of flute, viola, and harp-- the same combination Debussy had used years before. But Eric works in a much different fashion.

ZEISL: Ja. And I know that the harp was very angry at the rehearsals. She was constantly in a very bad mood because she was used to these Debussy arpeggios, and Eric treated the harp more like a chamber thing. And she said, "It's very awkward." She was very unhappy, but it sounded beautiful. And there was a concert of the Society of American Composers, the Los Angeles chapter, the California chapter, at which it was premiered.

COLE: I see. This is much more concise than any chamber work he'd written to this point. Did he ever talk about feeling personally that he was going in a new direction?

ZEISL: No, he really--no, no. What I was very surprised about was that he wrote this trio while we were there in the summer. And the sunshine, and everything was in bloom, and this lake was so blue. And the piece has throughout, from the beginning to end, a very late autumnal color to it, almost wintry, I would say.

COLE: Yes. Very sparse and direct.

ZEISL: Ja, ja. And so it came from somewhere else than his environment.

COLE: Did you return to Arrowhead in the summers that were left?

ZEISL: No, because the last two summers we were invited to the Huntington Hartford Foundation, and so we did not go to Lake Arrowhead. But up to that point we had gone every year--not for so long. I mean, the last four years. First we went to Brandeis, and then we began going to Arrowhead for the summer.

COLE: I see. This business of Arrowhead brings up a broader question. We've talked about Eric's compositional habits in Europe as well as we could reconstruct them, and we found that there wasn't a great deal that we could say, except how neatly he kept his workroom (and he did that all his life). Did he have a favorite place to compose in Los Angeles?

ZEISL: Well, that presented great difficulties in the beginning because we were in a little house that had everything in the wrong place, and it was really very difficult to live there. And especially, Eric had no workroom, and he needed a workroom to compose, and he didn't compose until he had that workroom. Now, off the bedroom was like a little anteroom, where the closets were, and this was divided from the bedroom by a kind of open doorway. This doorway was open, and of course I had to go to my bedroom; I had my things there and everything. That was enough for him that he could not compose, and he claimed that he could not compose in the living room. Next to the living room was the kitchen,



and I was again busy there. Barbara was still very small and had to have lunches fixed, and the bustling of the family life went there, and so that was impossible. And only when a friend who understood these things visited and said that there was a possibility to make a door and it wouldn't cost too much (because cost was always a forbidding factor), [then] we had this door made, and I think it cost something like thirty dollars, which at that time was very, very much. And from then on he had a room to compose. And when we left this house, after we had been there for seventeen years, then we stayed at a bigger house (at Miller Drive), where he had his own small room (off the hall of the living room) where he composed.

COLE: I see. And he could keep all of his things there. [tape recorder turned off] By this time in Eric's life, had he reached a certain position where he could now compose on a fairly regular schedule? If so, how was his day organized?

ZEISL: Well, that was always so. He was very, very organized and steady in his routine of work. He would always compose in the morning. Perhaps his parents' home was responsible for that, because I think when once in a while he tried to compose at night in his parents' home, everybody would, of course, rush into the room and quickly put an end to it because they wanted to sleep and not be disturbed. And so I think he had gotten the habit of

working in the morning, and in the afternoon he had lessons, and that routine kept on in Hollywood, too. And sometimes, of course, there were these interruptions, and he could not compose because he had to, say, copy a record for Friml and sit there in the morning while his head was still clear and he could do this kind of hackwork or some orchestration. But when he was composing, he composed always in the morning. And in the afternoon there were lessons, and in the evening he had City College.

COLE: This didn't leave you too much time for social activity then, did it?

ZEISL: Oh, yes, we had a very, very lively social life at that time, and as a matter of fact, the house was very small, and Eric felt like a prisoner when he didn't go out at night. And we usually went out. And it was very cute. Barbara loved her baby sitters, and we usually wanted to go out but had no money. And then she would say, "I will pay for it," from her piggy bank, you know. And she emptied her piggy bank and gave us the money for the babysitter so we could go to a movie or out and meet some friends. And that was very important to Eric. He didn't like to stay at home at night. Later on of course, when he went to City College, there was not too much social life anymore, but he didn't go every day; he went three times a week to City College, so there was enough time.

And we had, of course, a lot of parties, even in that

little house. And sometimes we had up to forty, fifty people coming. And since the house was very small and the room were very small, the way we did it was that we put down all the beds, our beds and Barbara's bed, and then maybe at two o'clock at night or three o'clock, when the guests left, we had to put them up again to go to sleep. And of course we were young, and we didn't mind all this kind of work that [was] implied, but everybody used to have a wonderful time. When the San Francisco Opera came to town, there was always a great party, and Kurt would bring all the singers and conductors to the house, and this is how we met Steinberg, for instance.

COLE: How about Barbara during these years? Did Eric find time to be with her?

ZEISL: Oh, yes, he did play a lot with Barbara and was tremendously fond of her and had great fun with her, and she with him, you know. And he would never, never, ever punish her. And she would go with him when she was very little, and we had a long, long garden, and at the end of it was an incinerator. And the house had like a screen porch in the back that was one story higher than the garden. The garden went like up, you know, way down. And sometimes he would be at that incinerator, which was maybe fifty yards away from the house, and he would cry out to me, "Trude, Barbara is schlimm!" (She is "naughty!") And he was standing there right with her. He would never

discipline her. I would have to come down all the way to do that.

COLE: You were telling me an anecdote about when she was in parochial school. This involved Eric.

ZEISL: Ja. Right up the hill from our house was a little Catholic church and a Catholic school, and Barbara went there. It was very practical because she could go by herself; nobody had to bring her. And it was a very good school. And one of the sisters heard that Barbara's father was a composer, and she had, I think, composed little poems. And she gave those to Barbara for Eric to compose. And Eric would usually put them on the piano and forget. And then we could see the top of the hill from our house--that was about, say, like one block, right? And Barbara would see the sister coming to get the composition. And she said to Eric, "There comes Sister whatever-her-name-was!" And then he would sit down on the piano and do that. And by the time she came to the door, he had it finished. And she was so happy with it and told Barbara how elaborate it was and how wonderful and intricate, and she never knew that it was done in five minutes or less.

COLE: In today's interview, we've talked about many compositions. Obviously, Eric was back on a regular schedule and producing a major work at the rate of almost one a year, which is rather a prodigious schedule when you consider the other things.

ZEISL: Ja. All the other things that distracted him, especially the struggle for survival. And it was really survival in the narrowest sense of the word, because if he couldn't get work You might ask me why I didn't go to work. I did later on, when Barbara was about ten years old. But for one thing, Eric didn't know one word of English, and so I had to go everywhere with him and be his mouthpiece, so to say, and also his ear, because he didn't understand what was said. And I had to write his letters before he knew enough of the language to do that himself. Even then, he would rather let me do it because I could type and he could not, and people don't like handwritten letters usually. It's difficult for them. And also, I had learned my lesson from Vienna, when he had this terrible depression. And I was working at the time and was gone, and he was by himself the whole day, and he wasn't used to that, having been in this full pot of a family all his life. And as much as he suffered under it, yet he was conditioned to it, and this complete loneliness he couldn't stand. It made him very unhappy. And so I had learned from this, and I didn't want that to happen, so I stayed around, and I think I had to do that.

COLE: I see. Oh, yes. Well, we've dwelt on some of the disappointments of these years: The Vineyard, Jacob and Rachel, the Tenor Psalm. At the same time, there was a great deal of positive achievement. He had many performances,

and you've mentioned that almost everything he wrote was with a purpose and with a prospect of performance.

ZEISL: Ja, mostly, especially the chamber music pieces. They were usually immediately performed after he had [written them], and by very good outfits and artists. Eric really had very, very few performances in his life that were perfect [and] that he heard, because the real great artists, of course, went for names, and they were hard to reach. You know, I have a letter from Heifetz where he said very fine and moving things and this, but "it doesn't fit into my thing"; and it was the name that didn't fit, you know. But it is very difficult for an arrived artist to put so much labor into something for another person. They have to promise to themselves something that would come out of this, you know.

COLE: Yes. I think we've reached a point where we can pause for a moment. In the next interview, we shall see Eric finally returning to the long-delayed composition of Job in the all-too-few years that are left to him.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE

SEPTEMBER 26, 1975

COLE: We come now to 1957, a significant year in Eric's life, because finally he is able to get back to work on the opera Job, something that had been with him since 1938 but that had continually eluded him, what with teaching and other commitments. How did this come about?

ZEISL: Well, you see, in all these years now, I have not talked about it, but one should understand that the idea of finishing this opera was always very close to his heart and never left him completely, and that there was never a year in which he didn't try in some way to get back to this work. However, there [were] several obstacles to it. For one thing, already in Paris, he had orchestrated the "Cossack Dance" and the Overture and was perhaps beginning to compose the first scene or making sketches for it, but the real composition of the first act was done in Mamaroneck, in Westchester County, where we had this beautiful house and he had a beautiful workroom. And there he finished the first act, so to say, in a white heat of compositional fury. And he thought that he had done a very good thing with it and was kind of proud of it and loved what he had done there. And it was, so to say, the nucleus. The figures were all established, with their themes and their particular characteristics. And they are real persons in

music as well as in the book.

And now, while we were still in Mamaroneck, Kafka moved to Los Angeles and became involved in the movies here ([he] had a contract with MGM). He was very successful. There were several big pictures made in which he had credit and which were done after his story. Clark Gable made a fine picture--I forgot the name--and others, big star pictures. And of course he had no time and had left that completely. And we exchanged letters, but we saw that it was impossible. And even when we came here, Kafka was too involved in this work of his, so that he didn't have the time. And Eric, frankly, didn't have it either, because there was this kind of struggle to just survive, and things with MGM and winning the daily bread--this struggle was very, very precarious always, so that had to be postponed always.

Now, in the ensuing years, Kafka was less successful, and finally he was very, very poor and sometimes had to do hackwork like going into a store at Christmastime and selling socks, or whatever, or wrapping. Once he was a wrapper at [The] Broadway. For years, his wife would support him. And in this time he was involved in writing for himself. He wrote a book that was published, The Apple Orchard, and later on a second one [Sicilian Street]. And because of his struggles and his unfortunate situation, he also didn't get back to Job, because at that time, when he

was so hard up for money and had such a struggle, it seemed impossible for him to sit down and do something that was so much for the future and would not bring in a penny, as he knew, and would maybe never bring anything. You know, it was all in the air, and in this kind of situation you cannot concentrate on such things.

And so, over the years, whenever there was an opportunity--there must be letters in file; I'll probably find them--we tried different organizations and everything to get some money, because Eric, too, knew that he needed at least one year or maybe two to complete this opera. And he wanted very badly to get the money, to be able to sit back and do this instead of this day-to-day daily bread-winning hunt. And it is very funny that at one time, for instance, he was contacted by a movie producer who made a picture with a famous singing star, and Eric was supposed to orchestrate the arias and all the things for him and do the background music in between. This man apparently was very rich and was going to finance this whole thing, and so Eric told him about Job and how wonderful this opera would be if he only had the money. And he said, "Now, how much do you need, Mr. Zeisl?" And Eric said, "Well, with \$5,000 I could do it in a year." And he said, "Then I'm not interested, because if \$5,000 is enough for that, I couldn't make anything that would be worth my while." If Eric had asked for \$250,000 or maybe \$2,000,000, he

would have listened, you know. And we didn't know the circumstances here in Hollywood. You had to learn all these kinds of things. And so also organizations to whom we wrote: he tried the Guggenheim several times, and we tried Fulbright and all these things. And it was always negative because the fact was that he didn't know anybody important, and you have to have some recommendations that are inside, some friend there. And we were too short in the country and had no connections in this direction.

And then finally around '57, our circumstances were better. At that time, I was already earning money, and I could help, because I went into teaching and got a credential. And Barbara was now big enough--she was ten years old then. From this time on I was teaching, because she didn't need me so much anymore. And Eric was established at the college, and so I could go--and so that helped. And because it helped, you see, then Eric, when he didn't need the money so much anymore, did not work anymore for these very, very low slave prices that he had to accept before when we needed the money to buy the soup for the next day. And so, for instance, when Friml came now, [Eric] didn't copy the records anymore but just did orchestrations for him, and they were well paid. At that time Friml made a picture and insisted that Eric had to do the orchestration for his songs that were in the picture, so he got the regular union movie prices that were fine

[and] that he had never gotten before.

All this helped, and so we finally got rid of the little house in which we had been for seventeen years and which was so unpractical and really a great hindrance because Eric had no good working room and the working room was really only an alcove next to my bedroom. And so in all these years, even when I needed it very badly--because everybody gets the flu once in a while (I had toothaches, where my tooth would be swollen, and I would have a fever from it)--I could never use my bedroom and lie in bed, even when I was sick. I had to go off because he was so disturbed by this, because the bedroom was next to the work-room. Also his students couldn't come in through the bedroom when there was a sick person. And so we finally got another house, which was beautiful, and I even remarked to Eric, "This house will prolong your life for ten years," because where we were the environment had changed. For instance, we used to go on walks (it was near Sunset [Boulevard]). That wasn't anymore possible, you know. It became a very unhealthy region, where you didn't dare to walk anymore in the evening, or not even in the daytime.

At that time, Eric had a student who was the wife of the head of Universal Studios. And she was tremendously fond of Eric and thought the world of him. And she persuaded her husband, who was at that time producing, on his own, a film from a story by Erich Maria Remarque--it's

A Time to Love and a Time to Die--and he hired Eric for the music. And of course immediately the usual intrigues in the movie business began, and while Eric already had a contract, we read that the head of the department there at Universal had contacted Miklos Rozsa to do the music. So we thought, "How could that be?" And sure enough, Eric was booted out and Miklos Rozsa got it. But his contract held, and he got the money, which was, so to say, in monthly payments, and that helped tremendously, and we could get this other house, and we had a little money to spare.

And so we decided that we were going to tell Hanns Kafka that a committee had been founded to help Eric do the opera Job. And we offered him \$500 to do the book. And that did the trick. And he immediately sat down and did it, and did it beautifully because he, too, was very involved in that story, and that story is, so to say, like a symbol of the fate of the Jewish people, in which we were also involved because of [what] had happened with Hitler and the tragedy in Europe. So it was also very near his heart, and I think he did a beautiful job with the book.

And so just then, we heard about this Huntington Hartford Foundation, and for the first time there was a real hope that we would get it, because the director of the Hartford was John Vincent, who was a good friend and very friendly towards Eric and liked Eric a lot. And so we had, so to say, an inside track. And he did also help,

though there was a committee on which there were quite a few people that would have liked not to give it to Eric. But it went through, and we came there to the [foundation].

Now, there was only one sticker, and that was that Eric was the kind of person who would never have gone there alone; he could not do it, and so he said he would only go if I would come along. And of course nobody was allowed at the Huntington Hartford just as a wife, and so I was applying, too, as a translator and, so to say, lyricist (they didn't know exactly about Hanns Kafka). So we said that Eric needed me for the book, and partly this was true because I did work with him, and there were constantly things written [by] Kafka that did not immediately fit, and I would change the words somewhat, in the spirit of Kafka, to accommodate the composing. For instance, in the scene that begins the second picture, where there's a chorus of mowers who come from the village, he wanted a certain rhythmic pattern, and Kafka had not had that pattern, though he had written something very beautiful (his lyrics were beautiful). So I took the gist of the lyrics, and I changed it into the pattern. And I did things like this. And the love scene was much too short, and I took the Bible and I adapted this. So it was true in a way. And I also had the good fortune that I could prove that Leonce und Lena had been performed and I had done the book of it. And I had also done some of the song translations which were printed in

the meantime. So all this happened. It came through, and we both could go there.

It is strange to me when I think about it, that Eric had this gift of knowing the soul of a person, and it really didn't matter whether he was a Chinese or an Aztec or an American or [an] Austrian. I mean, he had immediate contact with the human being and could really look into the depths of your soul, whoever you were, and he had that gift of being able to unify people. And very soon, when we were there, it was like one big family, and it was because of Eric, because [of] his warmth and his sense of humor. Everybody knew him, and everybody became everybody else's friend. He had this gift. And yet there was a great shyness in him when I wasn't around. I was, so to say, the buffer zone between the world [and him], and he needed that to really operate. I represented some kind of protection or something. Well, this first summer at the Hartford Foundation is really the most memorable thing that we had and, I think, the happiest time that Eric ever experienced. It was just ideal--it was absolutely ideal--and I feel very, very sorry that all this was given up and not more people can still enjoy this marvelous thing.

COLE: Where was it located?

ZEISL: It was located in Rustic Canyon and was a huge estate, so that you could walk for an hour within the estate. And there were little houses, cottages that had

their own little kitchen, so that if you were in the fury of work and didn't want to go out into the main building where the meals were served, you could make your own. The breakfast and dinner [were] served there in the main building; the lunch they always brought to you, but they brought, for instance, a cold lunch--if you didn't feel like a cold lunch, you could prepare yourself a hot one there, for there was this little kitchen. And this workroom was big and roomy, and they had completely separated these little cottages so that everyone was completely by himself, didn't have any self-consciousness that any neighbor would hear what he did. And there were completely different kinds of people there--composers, painters, sculptors, poets. And just that summer, there was a marvelous bunch of people there, everyone very, very interesting, and they were so congenial (as is seldom the case).

The composers that were there were Ernst Toch, and then later came Roy Harris. And we hadn't known Roy, but we met him there, and Eric and Roy immediately became friends. Roy loved Eric. And in the evening after work, we used to go and take long walks. And sometimes after the walk and still before we came home, we laid down on the meadow and looked up in the sky that was full of stars in the summer night. And Roy Harris would tell about his childhood, beautiful stories. He was quite a poet, the way he spoke. And Eric would tell about himself, and they

would hear each other's works. And he was very, very impressed and loved Eric's music.

And Toch was at that time in a period of intense work and was hardly seen there. He was, of course, a friend, and so Eric was one of the few people he went out to see. [He] came over to us at night, and we had talks and visited with each other. One of the highlights for everybody was in the late afternoon, right before dinner. When everybody had finished with work, they used to go to the swimming pool. It wasn't really a pool--it was bigger; I think it was like a pond--but it had like a board from which you jumped. And everybody was waiting when Ernst Toch came out and made his salto mortale into the water. It was just fantastic because he was already seventy at that time, I think, and really so very acrobatic.

And there was a sculptor, a young boy, twenty-four years old, but unfortunately I have forgotten his name. One of his things--and I think that he did that there--was for a bank on Sunset Boulevard, and it's a group of dancing children that are made out of metal. And they're just barely indicated in their shape, but you can recognize that they are children. And he was tremendously gifted and only twenty-four years old, but had many commissions already. He could not even do them all. And a very, very handsome-looking boy, almost like a girl, dark-haired and beautiful dark eyes. And there was a very, very gifted

writer there from the South [Byron Herbert Reece] who had written a novel that we read there, and it was a very stark story about lynching in the South. And this man was already in his early forties, I think, and a very introverted person who did not speak too much with anybody. But this same year, in the fall, he committed suicide, and they said that it was out of love for this boy, that he had so deeply fallen in love with that boy that he committed suicide.

And with her husband, there was a young writer from Kansas City, a beautiful girl [Josephine Rider]. She was a blonde; her hair was like a Kansas cornfield. And they loved Eric. She was just as earthy a woman as Eric was a man, and she enjoyed his humor tremendously. And a young sculptor, a very beautiful young British woman, was there. Barbara was her first name; I forgot her last name [Phillips]. And many more like this. In the evening we met sometimes, and Eric played his music, or somebody else played his or told his stories, and everybody was interested. It was almost like our first years in Vienna, when we had this Junge Kunst going also. And it was really a circle of friends, not only interesting people. So the work went very well under these circumstances, and the first summer-- I think the second act consists of two pictures--Eric finished the first scene. The next year he got again a grant to stay there, and then in the second year he did the second scene of the second act. And in the fall he

always orchestrated the scene that he had done.

The second year was not as satisfactory as far as the people that were there. The first year, really, everybody that was there was so interesting and really first class. The second time, the people were not that outstanding. The writers were more of the journalistic type. The composer that was there was Ingolf Dahl, and he is a very fine musician. As a composer, I have really not too much of an impression of his work. But he was a kind of a cold person and not friendly. His reaction to Eric was more one of hostility, I would say. I think he was responsible also that Eric's work was never played in the Evenings on the Roof. Now, whether it was jealousy or just a misunderstanding, that he didn't have any key to Eric's music, I don't know. But there was never this atmosphere. There were like cliques, and people were in groups, and it wasn't like the first year.

I forgot to mention: in the first year, there was a couple there, and the man was a painter, and he had a funny thing [about] his voice. He was a very sweet person but had a voice that was so deep and growling that whatever he said--when he said, "Hand me the bread," or "Give me the salt," it sounded like the villain in a [melodrama]. At one time, in the morning, Eric was shaving, and while he was shaving he was imitating this man's voice and this deep grumbling and saying these nonsensical things, "I

am shaving, and I think" And it sounded like him, and I was almost falling out of bed because it was so funny. And Eric immortalized him in this first scene in the opera. When Kapturak sings, it's like an imitation of how this man spoke, this low, grumbling, sinister voice. He provided the inspiration for that.

So I spoke of the second year, right? The composition again went very well. These little cottages were so beautiful. They were in the middle of the woods, and in the evening there came down the raccoons. We were usually visited by a family, a mother with two babies. And then there was a seemingly unconnected old bachelor that also came, and Eric called him Uncle Willi. In the evening he would call "Uncle Willi!" and then they would come out. And of course there was deer, and everything; it was beautiful.

COLE: It sounds idyllic.

ZEISL: There were also rattlesnakes. When Roy Harris came, he was a special friend--I think also a teacher--of John Vincent. And so they and the director of the foundation were waiting for him when he came. And they led him to his cabin. And lo and behold, before the door, as a reception committee, was a rattlesnake. And the director of the foundation was a westerner, a real cowboy type--he was a painter--and he killed that thing. And he brought it over to the main house, and it was really

gruesome. It had its head severed, and yet it would writhe and curl up and [try] to charge after it was long dead. It did that until the sun sank.

COLE: A muscular reflex.

ZEISL: Ja.

COLE: That's amazing. Well, Job really was the culmination of his entire career, wasn't it? We should say that each of the scenes he composed in these two years is as large as all of Act I.

ZEISL: Oh, ja. And he was already at work on the first scenes of the next act, the third act, which plays in America, and he had asked American students of his to bring him original ragtimes. And they did. They had brought him ragtimes, which he studied, and he had already sketches there for a ragtime with which the third act was supposed to begin.

COLE: Then he was that close to incorporating genuine elements of American music.

ZEISL: Ja. It was part of it, because it was a street scene of early American times, with children and the tradespeople in the street, workers and everybody going by there.

COLE: And certainly, if the depiction had been as vivid as that in Act II, it would have been unforgettable.

[phone rings; tape recorder turned off]

ZEISL: In this last summer, especially towards the fall,

it got very, very hot, and Eric was always very much suffering when it was hot. He could not stand heat. And he was always complaining about his pain in his arm. And this is, of course, a characteristic thing of heart disease, but we did not recognize it, and he was given all kinds of good advice on what to do against it. It was treated like a rheumatism. And what happened, too, was that when we went from our cabin to the pond to swim in the late afternoon, we passed like a little cluster of trees in order to get there. It was like the path passed under these trees. And in these trees was a swarm of bees, and Eric got stung three times in a row. And the third time he got a terrific swelling, and his leg swelled and was three times its size--I had to go to the doctor with him. And I do think that it really left a mark on his health, you know. He was already kind of low.

The thing was that he was, of course, so eager and so happy to be there. And it was an ideal thing, but he really should have gone and had a vacation, which he didn't have all year long. And it was after a full year's work, after college and all things that he began composing on this, which took so much strength, and he was so much into this that it really drained him. And I think it was too much for him.

So after the Huntington Hartford, we went for a week to Arrowhead with Hugo [Strelitzer]. Hugo came there with

Natalie Limonick, and I have a picture of us all sitting there on the balcony, and Eric looked so bad. When I look at that picture, I think we should have realized that something was very wrong with him. He looked so drawn and very, very pale and bad. And the fall was extremely, but extremely--if you look at the records you will see that it was a record, almost like now but much, much hotter. Every day it was almost like 110° and something like this.

We were very, very friendly, up to a point, with Leslie Clausen, who was the head of the department at City College. And they used to come and be our guests, and we were invited to their house, and especially Margaret, his wife, was very charming and loved Eric. She enjoyed his sense of humor and laughed about him and liked him very much. And Les had proved really a friend in many situations at the college. And lately, in the last few years, he had done things to Eric that Eric couldn't understand [and] that kind of put a crimp into the relationship. That is, Eric had built up the classes there and had introduced counterpoint and composition, which had never been taught there, and had built the classes; and, of course, all this took great effort and everything. And then, in the middle of this program, [Clausen] would all of a sudden curtail it without rhyme or reason. And only later did we know that there came into being a law that when you had ten classes, you were given tenure after a while. And of course, there was an

unwritten law at City College that nobody was to get tenure anymore because their quota was full. So Leslie would cut these classes without sense, you know. There was Harmony I, and then the next semester there was no Harmony II, or something like this, and it seemed completely senseless and Eric didn't understand.

And so this fall, again, these things were going on, only in a worse way even, and Eric was very, very upset about this, because it really kind of ruined everything he had done there and built. And he had altercations with Leslie, and Leslie all of a sudden was very unfriendly, and he didn't want to tell Eric what the real reason was, and so he said other things that made it worse. He was saying, "Because of this and that," which didn't make sense and was unjust, and he didn't even mean that. All these misunderstandings. But I think it would have been possible to clear it up had we been able to talk at home, but it was so terribly hot that it was impossible to invite anybody because parties were out of the question. So this caused a lot of heart-break and aggravation, and Eric was so disgusted with the whole thing and he wanted to throw away that job. You know, I kind of talked to him and didn't want him to give it up, because he needed that. He loved to teach, and he had contact, of course, with people, and it wasn't good for him to be so isolated, which probably would have resulted then. So all this went on, and I think all this brought on what

happened, because when he dropped dead at the college--it happened at the college, you know--he had in his pocket a letter which was addressed to Leslie Clausen and was again complaining, and arguing about the same thing. And this went on and took his sleep away and all this kind of thing. So this led, then, to the end.

But he had finished the orchestration of the second scene that he had done this summer. And it was almost like he took the pen and said, "I ended it," when fate took his hand. Before this happened, about a week before his death, there was a lecture by Sigmund Spaeth, who was a known musicologist. And Eric was that evening at the college. I went there and listened. No, it was like an invitation, where you were invited to dinner by them, and he was one of the invited guests, which already pleased him quite a bit. And then he went and came and picked me up, and Spaeth was still there. And he went to greet him, and Spaeth greeted him so friendly and knew about him and everything. And it made him very happy, because he never knew how far his reputation had gone, with all the things that went wrong. So he had slowly begun really to build up a name and a reputation, and I'm sure that had he been allowed a longer life, maybe only five years more would have made all the difference.

COLE: Right. Of Job, he had finished two acts. Significantly and almost symbolically, he had concluded Act II

with a gigantic fugue, one of his greatest fugues, a marvelous combination of counterpoint and drama. He was about to switch the location to America. Unfortunately, to this day Job has never been performed. Two scenes were premiered with piano in 1957. How were those received?

ZEISL: Oh, very well. Whenever the music of Job was performed, it made a very deep impression. I have one letter that I will show you; when the overture was performed in New York, he got a letter from the head of the refugee committee, and it had like a chairman of its music department, and they expressed their appreciation about this composition and how deeply it was felt and everything. And it was performed here at a concert, and there was a man there that held a speech that this was, so to say, a turning point in the history of music, and things like this. But this country is so funny; they say things like this, and the next day it's forgotten if it [isn't] followed up by somebody that has contacts to the outer world.

COLE: That's a shame because this is really one of the major dramatic works of the century.

ZEISL: And of course the "Cossack Dance" was very often performed, but I suspect that this was more due to the fact that it was a shorter piece, and they were looking for shorter pieces.

COLE: Right; and it's lively.

ZEISL: Ja, lively.

COLE: Almost a wild kind of abandon.

ZEISL: Ja, and the deeper, more serious things were not as easily accepted.

COLE: The basic tone of the work is tragic, and it demands a great deal of the listener, a tremendous amount of concentration and commitment. Well, plans were set afoot fairly quickly for a memorial concert.

ZEISL: Ja. Dave Forester, a man who somehow had contacted Eric before--I don't know in what capacity, whether he took lessons from him or had just got to know him--said that he wanted very badly to make a memorial concert for Eric. And there was the president of the League of American Composers [National Association for American Composers and Conductors, Inc.], a Mrs. [Minna] Coe. She had been very fond of Eric and was a friend, and she was very deeply moved by his passing and immediately, in the next session of the society of American composers, proposed that a memorial concert should be given. And it was accepted of course. But the concerts of the American composers were usually more in the smaller chamber music area. And now when this man came and said that he wanted to do this with orchestra, he contacted the union, and the union was participating and gave from its performance fund money to have this concert. And so this was set up. And I contacted first Eda Schlatter and wanted to do the Piano Concerto, but she was adamant and wanted to do the premiere only in Vienna. And so I

then contacted George Neikrug, who was recommended to me, and they said that he was one of the finest cellists here, which I think was true because he played beautifully, just wonderfully. And so this concert was held. I don't think that Dave Forester had enough experience as a conductor to carry this music, [which] is partly very difficult, as it should be. And before that happened, Norman Wright, Eric's friend, the chorus director of the Methodist church, had made a memorial concert at his church. And he had usually given the Requiem about every year with his choir, and they knew it, and they participated in this concert with the Requiem. And Ella Lee sang the Prayer at this occasion, with orchestra. And the Passacaglia was played and the Cello Concerto and the overture to Job and the "Cossack Dance," too. And I think it was basically a beautiful concert, though the Passacaglia was too slow and the Requiem was too fast, and so on.

COLE: But certainly the spirit was there and the intention.

ZEISL: Ja. I must say that Eric in his life had very, very few concerts that were really to his wishes and were fulfilling and as good as they should be. Especially the orchestra concerts left quite a bit to be desired. Either it was a community orchestra that didn't have [such a good] orchestra, or the conductor was sometimes not the best, and so on. He never had a really first-class performance, or very seldom. And the ones that we had we didn't hear,

because they were not here, like Steinberg--we never heard Steinberg conduct his work.

COLE: I see. [tape recorder turned off] In spite of Eric's deep involvement with Job, it's true also that he had other plans, isn't it? Had he lived longer, these might well have come to fruition. We've talked a little bit already about his correspondence with Feuchtwanger. Maybe we can mention that in a little more detail now.

ZEISL: Well, he was always looking for opera librettos, because opera was his first love, and he was a born opera composer that was somehow frustrated by lack of books and librettos. And we had met Feuchtwanger and became very friendly and had seen his play The Devil in Boston that was given here. And it seemed to Eric that it was a text with which he could do a lot. It had these elements of mysticism, and it had the starkness that appealed to him in this period, and so on. And so he proposed that to Feuchtwanger, and Feuchtwanger was very interested. And there ensued then an exchange of letters, in which it turned out that what he wanted of Feuchtwanger was too much. I mean, it would have involved a lot of work for him, maybe months long--eight months, as he said, that he was not able to give at that time. But he allowed Eric to use his book and maybe get somebody who would adapt it according to his wishes. Feuchtwanger's is a more intimate play, in which appear only certain figures that interact

through dialogue, while Eric wanted mass scenes, scenes of judgment and executions and mystical, conjuring scenes, and all this kind of thing. And that would have meant a great deal of change in the basic book.

And so Eric contacted Mr. [Victor] Clement, who had originally done the play, made the novel Job into a play, which was done in Paris with only incidental music. And he was a good dramatist, and Eric thought that he might be able to do that. And so he contacted him, and he was very interested, but just then, as the thing was going, Eric got this book of Job from Kafka and the Huntington Hartford grant in order to do it. So he decided and told Feuchtwanger that he was going to finish Job first, and then it was the next thing on his agenda. If he had finished Job, he would have plunged into this. And I think it would have been interesting. It's an American theme.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO

SEPTEMBER 26, 1975

COLE: Eric was planning another work that had also to do with American subject matter.

ZEISL: Well, it wasn't perhaps so directly American, but it was an American author by the name of Crockett Johnson [David Johnson Leisk], who had a comic strip, "Barnaby," which you might remember. It was about a little bumbling fairy godfather who was always waving his wand and the opposite things came out. I remember one scene where the boy got a new sled and wished for snow. And the fairy godfather waved his wand, [but] it remained hot and sunny. And so he showed him the newspaper, because the boy complained, and he said, "You overlooked this item." And it says, "Heavy snowfall in Norway." And he had done this strip into book form, a book Barnaby, and it was very, very cute and very humorous. And, of course, humor was Eric's forte, and he was very intrigued by this. And we went into correspondence with Crockett Johnson, and Crockett Johnson was very delighted and wanted to do it, too, and so this was also a plan. I do think that if eventually Eric had done this or the Feuchtwanger thing, it would have had, from the point of commercial success, much more opportunities than Job, [which] was a very deep and tragic theme that was maybe not so appealing for the average

opera house and difficult to put on--and has remained difficult to this day. I do think, though Job is not finished, two acts are completely finished, and they are, so to say, a story by themselves. The whole story in Russian Poland is ended, and what goes on in America is like a new chapter entirely, so that this could be played and could be performed. But the obstacles are tremendous. It has, I think, a very universal appeal, but nobody can foresee that or can see that so well, you know.

COLE: Right. In this series of interviews, I believe that a picture of Zeisl has emerged: Eric as a composer, as a teacher, as a father, and as a human being. One thing that you've mentioned to me in the past, and it might be appropriate here as another example of Eric's marvelous humor, is what happened when he went for his American citizenship.

ZEISL: Well, that was kind of involuntary humor. He was, of course, very nervous and very upset. He didn't like examinations and got very uptight and very nervous. And he went through this whole thing and studied very, very industriously for this. He went before our house, between the two palm trees, with his little book, and all the neighbors looked into the book and asked him questions and said that they couldn't answer the questions although they were Americans, which didn't help to make him more confident. But anyway, he knew his stuff very well and passed everything greatly. Our sponsors were even

congratulated on how well he did on everything, and then at the final thing, when everything is already settled and you knew that you had made it, you came for [the] last time before the judge, and he asks you these routine questions. Have you ever been in an insane asylum? Have you ever been in jail? And Eric was so eager to please and to be so [agreeable]. "Oh, yes, oh, yes," he said. "Were you in jail?" "Oh, yes, yes!" "And insane?" "Yes, yes!" So the judge began to laugh. He didn't even listen. It was just "Yes!" And he came home and was very proud of the fact that he became an American citizen. And we had an old friend here, Jokl, who had been a coach in the Viennese opera under Mahler--a very good musician and [a] very Viennese type, too. And Eric said--he just came from the examination then--"I'm an American now." And he looked him over from head to toe and said, "I have seen more American things."

COLE: Oh, great! We've talked a lot about Eric's environment, his circumstances, and his associates. We've seen that he enjoyed not just the friendship but also the esteem of composers such as Tansman, Toch, Milhaud, and Stravinsky. We've never talked in any length about his meeting with Schoenberg. [tape recorder turned off]

ZEISL: We were friends with [the Erich] Lachmanns, the ones who gave the collection of violins to [UCLA], and they had a very nice circle of friends, and we often met

nice people there. And this time they said they had invited Schoenberg. And I was very, very excited about this, that we finally should meet Schoenberg. As I already told you, Eric had a recommendation by [Hanns] Eisler, but he didn't dare to come to him since he couldn't pay, and we didn't want to contact him just like this, you know. He was too shy for that. And so we met him that evening, and he was fascinating. He made on me the impression of a Leiden Flasche, something that all the time gives electric shocks. The sparks were flying all the time. And it made a great impression on Eric, and at one time Eric asked him why did he make a four-part double canon when it can't be heard? And he said, "That is for the satisfaction of the inner logic." And this was a tremendous answer for Eric. It made a tremendous impression [on] him. And he was just about to start the ballet Uranium [235]. And I think this single answer helped him more than anything to master a big form, which was always a struggle for him. And so this was a very fruitful rencontre.

And Schoenberg had already known about Eric, and he had liked the Requiem, which he had heard over the radio-- to the great surprise of the man who put it on, [who] was a student of Schoenberg and really very much against tonal music, but was a friend of Eric and for this reason had put it on. And he said things like, "If a painting shows what it is, we don't even look at it." And they thought

the same way about music when it was tonal. And so they were completely surprised and taken aback when Schoenberg spoke highly about the Requiem and liked it. But Eric never had any trouble with the big men, only with schools. They thought that the essence lay in the outward form or dress of the thing; [they] never took the time or had the understanding to go deeper into the thing.

COLE: I see. Once you had met Schoenberg, did you remain in touch over the ensuing years?

ZEISL: We remained in touch, but very soon after that he died. And we then remained friends with his widow, and she liked Eric very much, and we were often invited there. And then when very soon after that Eric died, she was really the first who came to me, just the same day, and she brought me a bottle of cognac and said that this was very good and needed, and it was. And then Barbara began going there because I was working. After Eric's death, I remained in a pretty desperate situation because we had nothing but debts. We had just gotten that new house on Miller Drive, which was heavily mortgaged, and the rent was much bigger than the one we had paid on the little house. And I had Barbara, who was only eighteen years old and [had] just begun college, and I wanted her to continue, and all these things.

Fortunately, I had a profession. I was a substitute teacher, and I was now going to try to become a permanent

teacher, which I did. Before, I had never done that. I was just substituting, and I had so much to do for Eric that I was satisfied with this status because it didn't have quite so much responsibility. But now I really had everything on my shoulders, and so that is also part of the reason why I think Eric is so forgotten, because I had to survive and give my whole energy to this thing and I couldn't do anything for him anymore, not write any letters or do anything. So Barbara was, of course, at the university and she had a lot of free time. And she was homesick for the atmosphere of home, where always musicians would come to the house, and music played such a great part of the daily life. And so she went over to Schoenberg's, and there she found the same atmosphere. And she would sometimes write letters for Mrs. Schoenberg, and there was the old grandmother from Austria, who reminded her of her own grandmother and of me. And the same kind of atmosphere--this Austrian hospitality and everything--was there, very strongly. And Larry was at home, who was her own age, a little younger than her. So she was provided a companion and so on, and Ronnie was not in the picture because Ronnie was in the army.

And it was only much later that they met, because at one time Mrs. Schoenberg went to Europe. At that time, Barbara had already finished the university and she began her practice teaching, which was part of making the

master's [degree]. And so her practice teaching was at Revere [Junior High School], which was opposite Schoenberg's (they lived opposite the school). And so Mrs. Schoenberg asked me and said, "I have to go to Europe and Larry goes, too, but the grandmother's all alone. And couldn't Barbara, since it's so near and just opposite, sleep there? and this way the grandmother wouldn't be alone." And so, of course, I said yes, she can do that for these three weeks. And just by accident, Ronnie came home during this time. And he had never met Barbara before, and it was very funny because the friendship went on through years. And Mrs. Schoenberg had always said, "I'm going to Zeisl's, and there is a very nice young girl there, and why don't you come along?" And he said that usually his mother wanted him to drive [her] wherever she went, and then the nice young girl whom she promised turned out to be sometimes thirty years old, or sometimes eleven years old, or very ugly, or something like this. So he suspected the same motives in this case and never went over to us. But I think in this case, then he saw for himself, and I think that started it and then culminated in them later marrying. But it took quite a while.

COLE: The tonality and the atonality finally got together, as it were.

ZEISL: Ja, got together, ja. I think Barbara got a terrific shock because of this early death of her father.

She had been very close to both of us, and then, of course, after Eric's death she was tremendously close to me. And it was therefore very, very hard for her to get really close to anybody, and Ronnie had a very hard time with her, but he succeeded through patience.

COLE: Maybe this is the place to raise a couple of questions that are bound to occur to anyone approaching Eric Zeisl and his music for the first time. You've already partially answered one question, but maybe we should explore it a bit further. Why do you think Eric's music went into eclipse following his death?

ZEISL: Well, I think part of it is that part of his work was written in Austria. He was now an American, and so it was expected of him to compose American music when they did something here. And of course the access that he had in the first place was to European conductors and so on. They themselves wanted very much to get into the American scene and were more interested in American [composers] or in the established European composer that was already known to the American public and had entered their consciousness. And it was kind of too hard for them to bring a new person and to do this kind of selling for somebody who wasn't a European but already here. That was one part of it.

Secondly, it is always difficult for a name that isn't established, and he had lost so many years because of this transplantation, because he did not come with a real name;

the name was not established enough with two works just published. No, only one was really published (I am speaking of orchestra works), because the Bitterlich suite was only printed after the war. Then he had to start all over in a completely foreign environment. And all this made it so difficult, it is amazing that he had successes, [which] speaks for the strength of that talent that he had. But when death interfered and cut his career here short, it had again not been given enough time to really show enough growth. So it was so easily buried under the avalanche of new things that happened daily in America. You have to really come big, or you get buried.

COLE: There's a very awful symmetry of circumstances: Hitler came to power in Austria just as Eric was getting recognized broadly by critics and just as publishing contracts were about to be signed. Then in America, death came when again he had been close to a publishing contract.

We have ample written evidence of the growing esteem in which he was held by the musical community. Do you think another contributing cause might be that fact that unlike a Schoenberg or unlike a Stravinsky, Eric had no real disciple to carry on the tradition?

ZEISL: That was part of it, too. He had acquired a few students, but only in the last year or two, and I lost contact with them and I don't know what happened. City College, in the evening division, was not a school where

the great talents of the country went. And only that was open to him. Now, he had quite a few fine musicians and students, but the real what you call disciples went to the Juilliard School [of Music] or Philadelphia [Curtis] and over here at the universities.

COLE: So he didn't have that driving force who would carry on and keep his name before the public.

ZEISL: No, that is one of the reasons, I am sure. And one of the reasons am I, because I am not commercially talented. I am rather shy, and I do not like to bother people, and I think to a certain extent this is necessary. You have to try repeatedly and patiently, again and again, you know, and I was never able to do that.

COLE: It's probably a combination of shyness and a certain fear of rejection, too.

ZEISL: I think that Trude Schoenberg was just fantastic in this field. She was the most commercially capable person. And when she did something, that was it, and nobody dared to say no to her. But she also had something to work with, because Schoenberg had acquired his name in Europe and came over as a famous person.

COLE: And he somehow projected this fame, this celebrity, just in what you've told me about your encounter with him.

ZEISL: Oh, richly deserved, richly deserved. He was a phenomenal person, I am sure. But it was also that he had a country that gave him the opportunity. And he had enough

struggle as it is, which shows you that in this profession there is a tremendous struggle involved. But the opportunities were still there, and there were all these orchestras and publishers and all this. Even a forbidding person and work like Schoenberg's got published. And I think the publishers did not have too much hope for great rewards at the time they did it, but there was such a need for new works, for this vast, tremendous appetite of the German market that anything really, whether bad or good, could be printed and would in some way pay for itself. But it is true that here in America this wasn't quite so true, because the public here isn't so keen on new things, and you have to really fight for new things.

COLE: The second basic question is, what, in your opinion, as the person closest to him, makes his music sound so unique?

ZEISL: Well, you know, in speaking it is hard to convey this. I think his music is one that can be readily recognized. If you would play the well-known guessing game, I think you would readily recognize a Zeisl piece. He has a definite stance, a definite personality. And another thing that makes his work unique, I think, is that it conveys a message, a meaning. It isn't abstract; it speaks. It describes the human condition. And I think that is uniquely his thing.

COLE: Yes, perhaps a projection of his own struggle.

ZEISL: I mean, this fatal struggle of the individual that is lost as a number in the mass society. I think he expresses that because he so tragically experienced it all his life. He was first lost in his family, where his identity was never recognized, and then lost in the turmoil of the time. [tape recorder turned off]

COLE: Did you have any further thoughts on either of these questions before we turn to the final item today?

ZEISL: The questions of how come he is so obscured or buried? Well, really, it is a riddle to me to a certain part. But I think that the most accessible people to his music would be the ones that are from the same background, right? And they were turned off this thing. They didn't want to look back to Austria or to Europe. They were turned towards America, and the Americans had not yet learned of him. The former works and the new works were partly very difficult to put on and of greater format, so that really, before you put on a piano concerto or a great ballet (a score like Uranium that lasts forty-five minutes), you have to have a great love and understanding to begin with to fight for such a thing on the program, and that takes time. It was not given to him.

COLE: Might it also be the seriousness of the content?

ZEISL: Yes, sure.

COLE: Fortunately, all is not completely lost. There has been a revival of interest in Zeisl recently, and we hope

that this will continue. Do you think it's possible that a return of interest in tonal compositions might help? For a while it was so fashionable to be twelve-tone or serial in some way.

ZEISL: Well, I think that maybe the time has not quite arrived but will come for Eric, because, you see, Schoenberg was a prophet to his followers, and prophesied in his music the complete destruction of the world as we knew it. And in the meantime it has happened. But, I'm afraid, I think we are going to experience ever-worsening circumstances, and then I think we will need something like a healing and romantic look at life that will kind of try to hide the realities that are too terrible to look at. And at that time, Eric's message of love, of mercy, of pity, of pleading for the simple human values of the heart [will be received]. That is, I think, the message of his music. I think it will be needed.

COLE: Um-hmm. And then perhaps its versatility will be recognized, too. As one reads through the reviews and through letters, one sees such words as "earthy," "vital," "charming," "tender"--all of these are part of his style.

ZEISL: Ja. Definitely. You know, it still is a fact that when his things are played, there is an immediate response of the public, and that hasn't lessened.

COLE: I've noticed this in the revivals that we've done of the Requiem Ebraico, of the Kinderlieder, of the Organ

Prelude, and other works. There is an immediate rapport.

ZEISL: Ja, and you know, many of them were written twenty and sometimes thirty years ago or more, and they don't seem to be outmoded at all. On the contrary, they seem more up-to-date.

COLE: Yes. As a final item, perhaps we should talk about the materials that are available here to the scholar, the performer, and the critic. [tape recorder turned off]
Negotiations are currently under way to move Eric's complete holdings to UCLA. Perhaps you can give us some idea of the kinds of materials that will be available.

ZEISL: Well, there are all these scores. We have mentioned all the works that are here, with a few exceptions of works which have been lost, like the Trio and maybe the [Kleine] Messe, unfortunately, which hurts me very much because it's a charming, wonderful work. All this is here, and the original scores are here and should be preserved, and I am very glad that these talks are under way to preserve them in an institution rather than in my private home, where they can be so easily destroyed.

COLE: Destroyed, vandalized, one never knows.

ZEISL: Ja, yes. And of course there are the printed scores, whatever is still left of them. Not too much, because most of these editions have been sold out, and the publishers are afraid that they will not have a return of their expenses if they print them again, which I think

is maybe not so. Sometimes things are surprising in this way, and I think this is one of the things that might have happened. And we will also keep trying, I think, in this direction. And I have records and tapes of some of the performances. Unfortunately, many of them date back many, many years, when the techniques of doing tapes and records were very poor. So the quality of these is not good.

COLE: They've deteriorated over the years. Eric has a series of sketchbooks, which I haven't looked at in detail yet, but I think [that] through a study of these sketchbooks one could see a fascinating process of genesis to the final manuscript product.

ZEISL: Oh, certainly, ja. I do not have all the sketchbooks, but quite a few are here: the Passacaglia sketch and the Little Symphony sketchbooks.

COLE: It's true also that you have scrapbooks of reviews arranged in a roughly chronological manner.

ZEISL: Oh, yes, I have most of the reviews, both in Europe and here, where you can see that he had very many performances, and it just shows how much is necessary to establish your name and to keep it alive.

COLE: Yes. There's a great deal of critical acceptance, and very often a Zeisl work is singled out as the memorable work on a program.

ZEISL: Ja. I think the more knowledgeable critics have recognized him as a great talent, as really did practically

everybody who came in contact with him. There was never too much question about this. You know, everybody gets rejected once in a while, by certain people, but on the whole I don't think there was a question. But there is a difference [between knowing] that somebody has great talent and wanting to go to all this difficulty that it meant to perform one of his works. And his works are difficult; they are difficult to perform, whether they are solo works that pose tremendous difficulty for the performer [or orchestral works]. For the conductor, the fact that they were not printed posed a tremendous difficulty because conductors don't like to work that hard and read written scores. There were very few that would do that.

COLE: You also have extensive holdings of correspondence and papers from which scholars can reconstruct a marvelous network of associations in Eric's life and times.

ZEISL: Oh, yes, I mean, you can certainly see that. And for myself it was yielding information that I had forgotten. I had forgotten about the Feuchtwanger and the Crockett Johnson project, and then I saw the letters and it brought the whole thing back to mind. You know, one easily forgets, and so many things happen during a year. If I had the time to read more through these letters, I am sure I will have forgotten quite a few important things.

COLE: And do you also have a number of photographs that

give a picture of Eric in his surroundings over the years?

ZEISL: Oh, yes, I have very darling photographs, for instance, that show him in St. Wolfgang. The Salzkammergut is famous for the fact that it rains all the time. Once in a while there is a sunny day and everybody goes around gloriously happy. And I have these pictures [of] Eric with a big, black umbrella against the sun, making an unhappy face because the sun was his enemy. And then he was sentenced to live in Hollywood, where the sun shines all the time. It was really an irony of fate.

COLE: Mrs. Zeisl, thank you very much for sharing your knowledge and your insights about this remarkable man and artist.

INDEX

A

- Adler, Charles 245-246
 Adler, Kurt Herbert 111-112, 127-129, 134-135, 138, 144, 160, 263-264, 271, 291-292, 327
 Adler, Trude 128
 Afrika Singt (book) 49, 85, 88
 Alvin, Karl 79-81, 126
 American Aociety of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP) 252-253
 Andrade, Janine d' 184
 And So They Live (film) 206
 Arrowhead, Lake, California 322-324, 345
 Associated Music Publishers 252-253
 A Time to Love and a Time to Die (film) 336
 Austrian State Prize 131, 132-133
 Autoren, Komponisten, Musikverlägern 132
 (AKM)

B

- Bachenheimer, Theodore 74
 Baden, Austria 164-166, 169, 171
 Baker, Israel 287, 309
 Bamberger, Carl 206
 "Barnaby" (comic strip) 354
 Barnett, John 221, 272
 Barnum Hall, Los Angeles 273
 Bauer, Harry 262
 Beer-Hoffmann, Richard 3
 Beethoven, Ludwig van 13, 17, 28, 34, 62, 85, 262
 Violin Concerto 28
 Berens, Fritz 272
 Berg, Alban 17, 19, 20
 Violin Concerto 20
 Berlin Philharmonic 276
 Bible 3, 207, 266, 286, 311
 Bitterlich, Mr. 145
 Bitterlich, Roswitha 139-141, 144-145, 362
 "Expulsion of the Saints" 141
 "The Madman" 140
 "Poor Souls" 145

Bloch, Rosa	
<u>see</u> Feitler, Rosa Bloch	
<u>Blue Danube</u> (Strauss)	223-224
Blumberg, Harry	322
Boccaccio, Giovanni	67
Brahms, Johannes	38
Brandeis, Louis	284
Brandeis Camp, California	263, 273, 284-288, 296, 310-311, 324
Brno, Czechoslovakia	142, 143
Broadway department stores	332
Bruckner, Anton	18, 19, 25
Büchner, Georg	156, 157, 300-301, 304
<u>Leonce und Lena</u>	156-157, 300-301
<u>Wozzeck</u>	157
Buffalo Symphony	273, 318
Bundesverlag (publisher)	246-247, 284
Burns, Harold	269
Busch, Wilhelm	115-116, 151

C

Calderon, Mrs. _____	203, 204, 219-221
Capriccio (publisher)	110-111, 123
Carasso, Mr. _____	44, 180, 192, 199
Chiang Kai-shek	168
Chicago Symphony Orchestra	318
Class, F. (Gertrude Zeisl)	303
Clausen, Leslie	260, 346-348
Clausen, Margaret	346
Clement, Victor	353
Coe, Minna	350
Columbia Broadcasting System Orchestra	196, 221
Comedian Harmonists	203-204
Cross, Milton	145
Cunard Line	173
Curtis Institute of Music	363

D

Dachau concentration camp	171, 248
Dahl, Ingolf	342
Debussy, Claude	323
Dehmel, Richard	
"Triumphgeschrei"	109
De Keyser, John	317
Dekobra, Maurice	241, 264
<u>Uranium 235</u>	241, 264
Dessau, Paul	239
Disney, Walt	64

Doblinger (publisher)	123, 247, 316-317
Dollfus, Engelbert	62, 63, 131
Donizetti, Gaetano	31
Duhan, Hans	25, 56, 72, 76
E	
Eggerth, Marta	275
Eichendorff, Joseph von	157
Eisler, Hanns	25, 26, 238-239, 251, 357
Engel, Hugo	44
Esterhazy, Count	156
Evenings on the Roof	59, 70, 276-278, 283, 342
F	
Farrau, Alfred (Fred Herrnfeld)	48-49, 171-172
Feitler, Isidor	7
Feitler, Michael	3, 4, 6-7, 152
Feitler, Rosa Bloch	3, 4-5, 12, 15, 80, 234
Feldstein, Mr. _____	34
Fellner, Rudolph	34
Fernwald, Yella	180
Feuchtwanger, Lion	302, 352-353, 354, 369
<u>Devil in Boston</u>	302, 352-353, 354, 369
First Congregational Church, Los Angeles	254-255
First Methodist Church, Los Angeles	120, 249, 290, 351
Fischer, J., & Brother	255, 269, 270, 284
Fitzpatrick Travelogues	223-224, 230
Flaherty, Robert	206
Forester, Dave	350, 351
Freud, Sigmund	98
Friml, Rudolf	267-269, 326, 334
"Donkey Serenade"	267
<u>Rose Marie</u>	267
Frost, Robin	263
G	
Gable, Clark	332
Galimir, Felix	19, 92
Galimir Quartet	19, 92
Gershwin, George	68, 83
<u>An American in Paris</u>	83

Gershwin, George [cont'd]	
<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u>	83
Gesangsverein Keuchhusten	49
GI Bill of Rights	258
Gilm, H. von	61
Gimpel, Jakob	240, 280
Glendale Symphony Orchestra	273, 292, 317
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von	56, 146, 147
Goldberg, Albert	110, 292-294
"The Transplanted Composer, Part II" (article)	292-294
Gompertz, Ernest von	28
Gordon, Paul	182-183, 184, 186, 275
Greenberg, Elliott	286
Grillparzer, Franz	156
Grosz, Wilhelm	88
Gruenberg, Louis	284
Grynspan, Herschel	174
Guggenheim Foundation	319, 334
H	
Haas, Hugo	185, 186
Häuserl-am-Roann, Austria	40-41
<u>Hansel and Gretel</u> (fairy tale)	135-136
Harris, Roy	339-340, 343
"Hatikvah" (anthem)	273, 276
Hauff, Wilhelm	
<u>Märchen</u>	56
Haydn, Franz Joseph	156
Heifetz, Jascha	222, 330
Heine, Heinrich	8
Heller, Adolph	300
Herrnfeld, Fred	
<u>see</u> Farrau, Alfred	
Hitler, Adolf	3, 36, 38, 56, 87, 160, 162, 163-167, 178, 179, 234, 253, 275, 300, 336, 362 134
Hofrat, Mrs.	
Hollywood, California	
<u>see entries under</u> Los Angeles, California	
Hollywood Bowl	256, 273
Honegger, Arthur	
<u>Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher</u>	181
Hong Pan [?]	168
Horne, Frank	90
Hughes, Langston	90-91
"Aunt Sue's Stories"	90-91

Huntington Hartford Foundation	324, 336-345, 353
I	
Interfaith Forum	120, 247-248
<u>Invisible Man's Revenge</u> (film)	232
Irving, Hotel, New York	191
J	
Jacobs, Leslie	255, 269, 270
Jacobs, Ruth	269
Jellinek, Hermann	28, 33, 57, 87, 99, 100, 101-102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 131, 150, 153-154
Jellinek, Ilona	35, 80, 87, 99, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 150, 154, 164, 176, 177, 179, 201, 202, 204, 221 248, 254, 255-256
Jeritza, Maria	
Johnson, Crockett	
<u>see</u> Leisk, David Johnson	
Jokl, Hans	356
Jölili, Oscar	57-58
Juilliard School of Music	363
Junge Kunst	36, 171, 341
Juvenia watch company	179
K	
Kabasta, Oswald	38-39, 80, 125
Kafka, Hanns	159, 181, 182, 183, 187, 204, 219, 222, 235, 239, 250, 301, 332-333, 336-337, 353
<u>The Apple Orchard</u>	332
<u>Sicilian Street</u>	332
Kafka, Trude	181, 182, 183, 219, 235, 237, 332
Kaiserslautern opera house	128
Kansas City Symphony Orchestra	206, 272, 318
Katay, Julius	86
Kauder, Hugo	19, 25, 92
Kestranek, Zdenko	78, 90-91
KFAC radio station, Los Angeles	283-284
Kiepurä, Jan	275
Kimmel, Husband E.	191
Kipnis, Alexander	58

Klemperer, Otto	274-275
<u>Des Knaben Wunderhorn</u> (book)	109, 157
Kobald, Karl	71-72
<u>Aus der Hirtenflöte</u>	71-72
Königsgarten, Hugo von	127, 156-157
Kolisch, Henrietta	359-360
Kolisch Quartet	21
Korngold, Erich	230, 240
Korngold, George	240
Koussevitsky Foundation	319
Kralik, Hugo	298
Kramer, Fritz	40, 48, 82, 88,
	203, 322
Krasner, Adrienne	19
Krasner, Louis	20
Krueger, Ms. _____	206
Krueger, Karl	206, 272
Krüger, Rudolf	34
Kuhner, Felix	21
L	
Lachmann, Erich	356
Landau, Siegfried	272
Lee, Ella	256, 351
Leisk, David Johnson	354, 369
<u>Barnaby</u>	354
Lenormand, Henry René	186
Lenormand, Mrs. Henri René	186
Levant, Oscar	68
Le Vésinet, France	130, 183, 218, 239
Levitch, Leon	263, 286
Liberia	169
Limonick, Natalie	283, 346
Loibner, Kurt (or Karl)	160
London, England	37, 156
Lorm, Sidonie	186
Los Angeles, California	43, 74, 94, 110,
	130, 131-132, 161,
	221-370
Los Angeles Chamber Symphony	269
Los Angeles City College	259-263, 266, 279,
	283, 300-303, 322,
	326, 334, 345, 346-348,
	362
Opera Workshop	300-303
Los Angeles County Museum Concerts	283
Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra	74, 94, 262, 274, 318
Los Angeles Times (newspaper)	292-294
Ludwig, Emil	233-234, 235, 237-238
<u>Return of Ulysses</u>	234, 235

M

- Mahler, Alma 43, 45, 126, 180-181, 241
 Mahler, Gustav 35, 115, 295, 356
 Third Symphony 116
 Mamaroneck, New York 203-205, 217, 219-221, 331-332
 Manuel, Jean 183
 Marx, Joseph 19, 25, 36, 92
 Mazzolini, Brunetta 277
 Mendelssohn, Felix 137, 155
 Menuhin, Yalta 287
 Menotti, Tatjana 58
 Merchants' Singing Academy, Vienna 6, 51, 86-88, 147
 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer 222, 224-225, 226-232, 239, 332
 "Metropolitan Opera Auditions of the Air" (radio series) 219-220, 273
 Meyrink, Gustav 78-79, 82
 The Man in the Bottle 79
 Milhaud, Darius 82, 181, 183, 184, 186, 187, 195, 241, 284, 300, 315, 356
 Columbus 181
 David 315
 Pauvre Matelot 300
 Milhaud, Madeleine 186
 Mills Music, New York 199-200, 216, 284
 Moeller, Alfred 135, 136
 Moenius, Father 180-181
 Montreal Symphony 220
 Morgenstern, Christian 49, 75-76, 78
 Galgenlieder 76
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 12-13, 31, 33, 274, 300
 Eine Kleine Nachtmusik 274
 Marriage of Figaro 31
 Requiem 133
 Musart Quartet 309
 Musicians Union Local 47 317, 350

N

- National Association for American Composers and Conductors 350
 National Broadcasting Company 21, 145, 197, 221
 Neues Wiener Konservatorium 23, 239
 New School for Social Research 238
 New York, New York 191-207, 217-222, 224, 234

New York Art Foundation	295, 319
New York Chamber Music Society	308, 315
New York Metropolitan Opera	34
New York Philharmonic Orchestra	318
New York Times (newspaper)	319
Niekrug, George	320, 321, 351
Nietzsche, Friedrich	116
Nixon, Marni	283

O

"O du Fröhliche" (song)	136
Oppenheim, Ruth	198
Oppenheim, Morris	198
Ormandy, Eugene	125-126
Ortner, Hermann Heinz	164-165

P

Palisades High School	147
Paris, France	37, 43-45, 130, 179-190, 219, 239, 275, 331, 353
Pariser Tageszeitung (newspaper)	44
Pelletier, Wilfred	219-220, 273
Performing Arts Fund	283
Phillips, Barbara	341
Phoenix Symphony	272
Piatigorsky, Gregor	281, 295, 320-321
Pigalle, Théâtre, Paris	183, 184-185
Piscator, Erwin	238
Pisk, Paul	138-139
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra	318
Polk, Mr. _____	222, 224-225
Popper, Hanns	127-128
Popper, Mrs. Hanns	127-128
Pressel, Harry	315

R

Rabelais	117-118
Rachmilovich, Jacques	273
Radio City Music Hall, New York	195
Radio City Symphony, New York	195-196
Radio-Verkehrs-AG (RAVAG), Austria	30, 38-39, 72, 76-77, 79-80, 138, 298
Radio Wien (periodical)	138
Rapée, Erno	132, 144, 195-197, 218, 221, 252, 273
Rath, Ernst von	174

Reece, Byron Herbert	341
Reese, Henry	303
Reher, Sven	290-291
Reichenau, Austria	87
Reichman, Rosalia	
see Zeisl, Rosalia Reichman	
Reinhardt, Max	185, 186
Reitler, Josef	39, 239-240
Republic studios	239
Remarque, Erich Maria	335-336
<u>A Time to Love and a Time to Die</u>	336
Revere, Paul, Junior High School	360
Rider, Josephine	341
Ringelnatz, Joachim	49, 117
Röhm, Wilhelm	247
Roosevelt, Franklin D.	191
Root, Elihu	192
Root, Mrs. Elihu	192-193
Rosamunde von Cypern (drama)	234
Rosowsky, Solomon	296-297
<u>The Cantillation of the Bible</u>	297
Roth, Mr. _____	93
Roth, Joseph	182-184, 207
<u>Job</u>	182-187, 207, 353
Roth, Mrs. Joseph	182
Rothschild family	183, 184-185
Rozsa, Miklos	336
Rubin, Marcel	181
Rubinstein, Mr. _____	74
Russel, John	308-309
S	
Sacramento Symphony	272
St. Wolfgang, Austria	37, 80
Salzer, Lisel	38, 49, 105, 108
Salzkammergut (St. Wolfgang), Austria	370
San Francisco Opera	111, 129, 273, 291, 327
San Francisco Opera Ballet	263
San Francisco Youth Symphony	291-292
Santa Monica Symphony	273
Sarraut, Albert	187
Schiller, Friedrich	56, 109
Schlatter, Eda	246, 281-282, 283, 290, 298-299, 317, 350
Schoenberg, Arnold	25-26, 36, 45, 51, 77, 93, 251, 276, 285, 319, 356-358, 362, 363, 366

Schoenberg, Arnold [cont'd]	77
<u>Pierrot Lunaire</u>	189-190, 191, 197,
Schoenberg, Barbara Zeisl	200-202, 231, 235,
	240, 243-244, 325,
	326, 327-328, 329,
	334, 358-361
Schoenberg, Gertrude	358-360, 363
Schoenberg, Lawrence	359
Schoenberg, Ronald	359-361
Schönherr, Mr.	137
Schott's Söhne, B., (publisher)	123
Schubert, Franz	17, 66, 85, 234, 238
Schumann, Robert	85, 104
Shanghai, China	169
Short, Camilla	191
Short, Walter	191
Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles	275
Silesius	146
Singer, Marcel	47
Sittner, Hans	153
Smetena, Mr.	12-13
Smetena, Friedrich	12
Society of American Composers	323
Solomon, Izler	273
Sonderling, Jakob	247-248, 297
Southern California School of Music	258-259
Spaeth, Sigmund	348
Spiel, Hilde	35, 49-50, 64, 89,
	102-103, 105, 155-156
<u>Kati auf der Brücke</u>	49
"Standard Hour" (radio series)	272
Stearns, Curtis	273, 292, 317
Stefan, Paul	180
Steiner, Georg	73
Steinberg, William	257, 273, 327, 352
Steininger, Franz	74
Stern, Roland	48, 49
Stöhr, Richard	18, 19, 22-23, 24,
	25, 92, 124, 132
Stokowski, Leopold	256, 258, 273
Strache, Edition (publisher)	25, 51, 56
Strauss, Johann	17, 31
Strauss, Richard	80, 304
Stravinsky, Igor	69, 74, 82, 241,
	253, 269, 280, 304,
	356, 362
Mass	269
Strelitzer, Hugo	232-233, 244, 247,
	259, 275, 300, 345

Swoboda, Heinrich	143-144, 159
Syracuse Symphony	246
Syracuse University	20
T	
Tansman, Alexandre	240-241, 287, 356
Tansman, Mrs. Alexandre	240
Tchaikovsky, Pëtr Ilich	74
Toch, Ernst	51, 232, 233, 235- 238, 239, 248, 253, 284, 339-340, 356
Toldi, Julius	26
Torberg, Friedrich	117-118
Transcontinental (publisher)	251, 265, 275
U	
United Nations	254
Universal Edition (publisher)	20, 93, 123, 127, 141 144, 145, 148-149, 252, 307, 315
Universal Studios	232, 335-336
University of California, Los Angeles	269, 290, 356, 367- 370
Master Chorale	265
Music Library	
Eric Zeisl Archive	367-370
University of Judaism	310
Urbach, Ernst	76
V	
Vancouver Symphony	318
Verdi, Giuseppe	
Requiem	27, 133
Vienna, Austria	1-43, 46-179, 225, 298, 307
Akademie für Musik und darstellende Kunst	13-14, 15, 20-25, 28, 29, 31, 39, 132, 153, 168
Burggarten	87-88
Burgtheater	3, 165
Grosse Konzertsaal	72
Neues Konservatorium	23, 239
Prater	8-9, 31, 84, 173
Redoutensaal	30
Schlosstheater, Schönbrunn	31, 160
Stadtpark	31
State Opera	30, 79, 248
Volksoper	30, 128, 134-135, 136

Vienna, Austria [cont'd]	
Volkstheater	128
Vienna Concerhouse Orchestra	30
Vienna Kaufmännnsischer Gesangverein	6, 61, 86-88, 147
Vienna Musik Festwochen	87-88
Vienna <u>Neue Freie Presse</u> (newspaper)	36
Vienna Philharmonic Orchester	30, 38, 160
Vienna Radio (RAVAG)	38-39, 72, 76-77, 79-80, 138, 298
Vienna Radio Orchestra	30
Vienna Symphonie Orchester	30, 76-77, 125
Vincent, John	336-337, 343
Vorhaus, Mr. _____	239
W	
Wachtel, Edith	73
Wagner, Richard	17, 28, 97, 217
"Feuerzauber"	28
<u>Lohengrin</u>	55
"Ride of the Valkyries"	28
Wagner, Roger	269, 270
Waisenburg, Mr. _____	187-188
Wallenstein, Alfred	94, 272, 274
Walter, Bruno	35, 126-127
Warner Brothers studios	230
Waxman, Franz	227
Weber, Henry	271
Weiner, Lazar	286
Weiner, Yehudi	286
Weisskopf, Alice	42, 57, 65, 73, 96
Werfel, Franz	45, 180-181
Wilson, Woodrow	192
Winter, Hugo	93, 252
Woögerer, Ferdinand	25
Wolf, Hugo	18, 113, 114
WOR radio station, New York	94, 274
Wright, Norman Söring	120-121, 249-250, 290, 291, 298, 309, 351
Z	
Zeisl, Barbara	
<u>see</u> Schoenberg, Barbara Zeisl	
Zeisl, Bertha	6
Zeisl, Egon	7, 11, 12, 16, 32, 43, 47, 52, 78, 86, 101, 125, 127, 171, 174, 179, 187, 188, 232, 279

Zeisl, Emanuel	1-2, 6, 11
Zeisl, Eric, Archive, UCLA	367-370
Zeisl, Erich (Isidor)	6, 51
Zeisl, Kamilla	2, 3, 5-6, 7, 12, 15-16, 22, 60-61, 101, 102, 105, 134, 201, 225, 261, 279, 325 248
Zeisl, Malvine	
Zeisl, Mr. _____ (plumber)	169, 173, 178, 188, 206-207
Zeisl, Rosalia Reichman	2-3, 11
Zeisl, Sigmund	2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 14, 16, 51, 60, 86, 101, 102, 105, 134, 210, 225, 248, 261- 262, 279, 325
Zeisl, Walter	7, 12, 32, 43, 47, 86, 101, 125, 127, 174, 179, 232, 278-279, 305 20, 174
Zeisl, Walter ("Stevie")	
Zeisl, Wilhelm ("Willi")	7, 11, 16, 43, 47, 52-53, 64, 78, 86, 101, 120, 130, 171, 174, 175-176, 180, 183, 193, 198, 202, 232, 247, 249, 262, 279
Zemach, Benjamin	310, 313-314, 315, 316
Zweig, Fritz	126, 274, 276-277, 315

INDEX OF ERIC ZEISL WORKS

<u>Antique Choruses, Three</u>	151-152
<u>Arrowhead Trio</u>	321-323
<u>Aus der Hirtenflöte</u> (Kobald songs)	71
<u>Brandeis Sonata</u>	279-280, 284, 287-288, 290
<u>Cantata of Verses</u>	146-148
"To Everything There Is a Season"	147-148
Concerto Grosso for Cello and Orchestra	281, 299, 320-321, 351
Concerto for Piano	246, 298-299, 351
"Cossack Dance"	
<u>see Job</u>	
<u>Drei Leider</u>	56, 59-60, 63
"Armseelchen"	25, 59-60, 61
"Rokoko"	25
"Neck und Nympe"	25, 63
<u>Drei Ringelnatz Lieder</u>	
"Der Briefmark"	117
"Ducky's Dance"	200
<u>Die Fahrt ins Wunderland</u>	13
Fanfare (for Hollywood Bowl)	256-257
Fantasy for Violin and Piano	124
<u>Four Songs for Wordless Chorus</u>	255, 266-267, 269-271, 284
"Grabschrift"	64
"Greek Melody"	152, 199-200
"Hatikvah" orchestration	273, 276

<u>Die Heinzelmannchen suite</u> for piano	68-69
<u>Jacob and Rachel</u>	313-316, 329
<u>Journey into Wonderland</u>	134-138
<u>Kinderlieder (Children's Songs)</u>	58, 70, 101, 108- 112, 122, 246, 276- 278, 283, 288, 317, 366
"On the Tombstone"	112
"Song of the Hussars"	112
"Sunshine over the Rhine" ("Sonnenlied")	112
<u>Kleine Messe</u>	27, 49, 108, 118- 121, 134, 367
<u>Leonce und Lena</u>	60, 127, 144, 153- 162, 218, 299-304, 313, 337
<u>"Liebeslied" (in Neues Liedschaffen</u> <u>aus Oesterreich)</u>	148-149
<u>Little Symphony</u>	139-142, 143-146, 153, 196, 221, 272, 307, 362, 368
<u>Job</u>	130, 182-187, 196, 204, 207-219, 235, 241, 242, 243, 250, 252, 265, 272, 273, 275, 295, 302, 330- 333, 336-346, 348-350, 351, 352, 353, 354-355
"Cossack Dance"	218, 252, 256, 272,
"Menuhim's Song"	275, 331, 349-350, 351 214, 216, 250, 272, 284
<u>Märchen-Suite</u>	135
"Menuhim's Song" see <u>Job</u>	
<u>Mondbilder (Moon Pictures)</u>	25, 75-78, 81, 111
<u>Music for Christmas (Variations)</u>	272, 273, 291-292, 317
<u>"Die Nacht"</u>	61

<u>November</u>	162, 163, 166, 199-200, 221, 271
"Souvenir"	162, 199-200
"Shepherd's Melody"	162, 199-200
Passacaglia-Fantasy for Symphony Orchestra	124-126, 134, 146, 149, 196, 206, 221, 272, 351, 368
Piano Trio Suite in B Minor	42, 57, 72-74, 288-289, 367
<u>Pieces for Barbara</u>	240, 243-247, 265, 284, 288
"On the Tricycle"	244
"In the Factory"	244-245
"The Teacher"	244
"Lonely Shepherd"	265
"Somersaults"	243
<u>Pierrot in der Flasche</u>	78-85, 264, 314, 315
"Dance of the Bats"	83
"Festmusik"	84
"Love Dance"	84
<u>Prayer</u> (To the United Nations)	216, 254-256, 283, 290, 351
Prelude for Organ	366-367
Psalm 29 ("Herrlichkeit Gottes im Gewitter")	152-153
<u>Return of Ulysses</u>	234, 235, 242, 246, 271, 273, 317
<u>Requiem Concertante</u>	27, 48, 62-63, 131-134, 142, 249
<u>Requiem Ebraico</u>	26, 112, 120, 247-252, 254, 265, 273, 298-299, 351, 357-358, 366
Scherzo and Fugue for String Orchestra	94, 127, 129, 141, 144, 220, 272, 274
<u>Sechs Lieder</u> (including <u>Night Songs</u>)	55, 57-58, 61, 95, 112-116
"Nachts"	113

<u>Sechs Lieder</u> [cont'd]	
"Ein Stundlein wohl vor Tag"	54, 113
"Schrei"	30, 114-115, 245
"Stilleben"	61, 115
"Der Weise"	95, 115-116
<u>Sieben Lieder für Sopran</u>	149-151, 317
"Forget-me-not"	149-150
"Der Unvorsichtige"	151
"The Fiddler"	151
<u>Sonata Barocca</u>	244, 246, 278-283, 288, 299
Sonata for Viola and Piano	279-280, 290-291
Sonata for Violin and Piano (<u>Brandeis</u>)	279-280, 284, 287- 288, 290
Sonata for Violoncello and Piano	279-280, 295
<u>Spruchkantate</u>	146-148
String Quartet no. 1	19-20, 92-95, 129, 250, 307
Variations on a Slavonic Theme	129
String Quartet no. 2	307-310
<u>Die Sünde (The Sin)</u>	67-68
<u>Tenor Psalm</u>	304-306, 329
<u>Three African Choruses</u>	85, 87-92
"Arabeske"	89-90
"Aunt Sue's Stories"	90, 91
"Harlemer Nachtlied"	88, 89, 90
<u>Three Antique Choruses</u>	151-152
"Der tote Arbeiter"	121
<u>To the Promised Land</u>	272, 275-276
Trio (<u>Arrowhead</u>)	321-323
<u>Uranium 235</u>	241, 245, 263-265, 310, 357, 365
"Vale"	64-65

Variations on a Slavonic Folksong for String Orchestra	129
<u>The Vineyard</u> "Rites of Ashtoreth"	310-313, 314, 315, 329 312
"Wandrers Nachtlied"	55

