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MILTON SALKIND AND THE SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Interviews with:
Milton Salkind
Elizabeth Elkus
Agnes Albert
Ava Jean Pischel Brumbaum
Zaven Melikian
May Kurka
Colin Murdoch

With Introductions by
Sol Joseph and
Peter Oundjian

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1993 and 1994

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A full-length interview with Milton Salkind, and focused interviews with faculty, staff, and members of the music community, document the history of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since its development in 1917, and the presidency of Salkind, 1966-1990. Discussion of early faculty; chamber music performance and community presence; board of directors; composition of the faculty and student body; the preparatory division; the future of the Conservatory. Appendices include "A Brief History of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 1992," a time line since 1917, and various brochures and newspaper articles.

Interviews with Milton Salkind, Elizabeth Elkus, Agnes Albert, Ava Jean Fischel Brumbaum, Zaven Melikian, May Kurka, and Colin Murdoch.

Introductions by Sol Joseph, San Francisco Conservatory Faculty, 1948-1977; and Peter Oundjian, Tokyo String Quartet.

Interviewed 1993-1994 by Caroline Crawford. Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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INTRODUCTION--by Sol Joseph

I began teaching at the Conservatory in the summer of 1948. The two ladies who founded the school, Lillian Hodghead and Ada Clement, were still, in addition to their teaching load, directing the school.

Misses Hodghead and Clement harbored high ideals for the school, and their honesty, motivation, and dedication rubbed off on the faculty and students. They were terrific: Lillian was a driver who made the students work hard; Ada was a very sweet lady who taught piano. The teachers were possessed with idealism about the Conservatory and felt teaching was an important job. It was a pleasant place to work, if doing what you like is important, and classroom instruction was engaged in very seriously. I don't remember the names of all the faculty at the time when I came to the Conservatory, but some of their names come to mind: Winifred Jones, Zoe Petersen, Marion Murray, Beulah Forbes.

Always looking to improve the school, the two ladies reached out to engage world-famous artists as teachers: Ernest Bloch, Roger Sessions, Adolph Baller, Kurt Herbert Adler, Albert Elkus, Ernst Bacon, Madi Bacon, and the Griller Quartet. While I was not of world stature, I was numbered as a recent acquisition and regarded as a valuable member of the faculty.

A year or so after I came to the school the two ladies Hodghead and Clement decided it was time that they relinquish the directorship of the school, and they handed over the reins to Albert Elkus. In the few years of his directorship he made some significant improvements: he established a visionary board of directors; he guided the relocation of the school to the premises which it still occupies on the corner of Nineteenth Avenue and Ortega Street in San Francisco.

Since Mr. Elkus was well on in years when he assumed the directorship, he soon announced his coming retirement from that office, and he was replaced by Dr. Robin Laufer, who quickly proceeded to make further improvements: he established a significant budget for the library and the school in general and a medical plan for both faculty and staff; he made improvements in the facilities for teaching and study; and he obtained state and national accreditation for the Conservatory.

Dr. Laufer died during his tenure and he was succeeded by Milton Salkind. I have nothing but good things to say about Milton Salkind. He was a very well educated musician; he was also very sociable and knew his business. During his term, there was an emphasis on teaching well and community service so that the students would be part of the community when they completed their studies at the Conservatory. One might say that during his tenure the Conservatory moved forward by leaps and

bounds. He changed a small community school into a national institution, and from what I've heard, the school continues with its solid and substantial growth under the aegis of its present director, Colin Murdoch.

Most of my professional life was spent at the Conservatory, and I was glad to be associated with a group of people I could admire and respect.

Sol Joseph
San Francisco Conservatory of Music
Faculty, 1948-1979

August, 1995
Oakland, California

INTRODUCTION--by Peter Oundjian

"Would you like to play in a chamber music festival in San Francisco this June?" It was Milton Salkind and it was March, 1977. As chairman of the accrediting team of the Association of Northeastern Colleges and Universities, Milton had just wound up a meeting with a throng of Juilliard students. Inspired by the eager ears of the leaders of other institutions, these students (of which I was one) had just treated the visiting panel to volumes of exaggerated criticisms of every aspect of the school. Despite all the complaints, Juilliard managed to retain its license to give out degrees and a good time had been had by all.

Three months later, at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Chamber Music West was born. Organised at blinding speed and with total efficiency, it was a real happening in the musical life of the Bay Area. For me, and many other young musicians, it provided the first opportunity to play chamber music with seasoned, highly respected professionals. The impact upon us was profound.

Milton had once again taken one of his ideas and made it a reality. Some people have great ideas. Others are good at putting things into action. Few are capable of both. The extraordinary development of the San Francisco Conservatory under his leadership hinged on these multifaceted talents. In all aspects of musical life, whether on the creative or administrative side, Milton possesses a shrewdness and wisdom that are indeed rare. Ask him to play and you get free-flowing phrases, a mellifluous tone, a respect for the style and a deep understanding of the musical form. Ask him to teach and he pinpoints immediately the strengths and weaknesses of his students and knows exactly how to encourage them to discover and bring out their best qualities. Ask his advice about anything and you discover a mind that had observed keenly and is extremely discerning.

It is his vision for the future that has enabled him to make such a difference in so many people's lives. Every board in town constantly seeks his ideas, knowledge, and unaffected leadership style. Students from the past are frequently calling on him for advice. He has become a public figure with the deserved aura of a dignitary. And let me divulge something else while I have the chance; one secret to his success lies in his ability to make people laugh, and at just the right moment. We should never underestimate the value of a sense of humour. When you enjoy people's company, you are simply more likely to co-operate with them.

Now, for the Conservatory and for Milton alike, an era has ended, and both are still prospering. But were he to call me and ask if I would like to play chamber music this June, the answer would still be, as it ever was, Sure. Any June!

Peter Oundjian
Tokyo String Quartet

May 1994
Boston, Massachusetts

VOLUME HISTORY--by Caroline Crawford

The purpose of the oral history is to trace the development of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as it developed from a small school for piano studies in 1917 to the full-fledged conservatory it is today, with 250 collegiate students, more than a thousand preparatory and extension students, and alumni performing in orchestras all over the world, including the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the San Francisco, Philadelphia and Chicago Symphony Orchestras. San Francisco's Conservatory is the only independent conservatory of music in the western United States.

Much of the history focuses on Milton Salkind, Conservatory president from 1966 to 1990, who engineered the period of its most rapid growth through his warmth, personal involvement, and investment in the larger music community. Salkind's view was that the Conservatory should be small in scale, low-key and informal, while insisting on hard work and high performance standards. His interview begins the volume.

The chapter with Elizabeth Elkus follows. Elizabeth Elkus's husband Albert Elkus was head of the Conservatory from 1951 to 1956, after he had resigned as chairman of the music department at the University of California. Their relationship with the institution goes way back to the 1920s and a friendship with the institution's founders, Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead, who headed the Conservatory from 1917 to 1925 and 1930 to 1951.

Agnes Albert's short interview follows, documenting her many years of involvement with the Conservatory, particularly the chamber music program, which grew from short summer sessions to the first master's degree program in chamber studies in the country.

Ava Jean Brumbaum, involved with music in the Bay Area since her student years at Berkeley, was interviewed as an early and longstanding member of the Conservatory board of directors and an insider through several administrations. Her interview reveals how the needs of arts institutions vis-a-vis governing boards and funding realities have shifted over the years.

Zaven Melikian and May Kurka represent the Conservatory faculty in the history. Mr. Melikian, for many years concertmaster of both the Symphony and Opera Orchestras, is that special teacher with whom students choose to stay after their preparatory years; in the history he reflects on his more than two decades there. May Kurka, head of what is generally accepted as one of the finest preparatory departments in the country, addresses the training of young children (and their parents) for a

musical career, and the needs associated with the growing cultural diversity of the school.

Colin Murdoch, first dean and then president of the Conservatory since 1992, represents the institution's future. What he has to say about new directions in curriculum balances represents a sea change in current viewpoints about music education throughout the conservatory world today, shaped by economic realities.

The history also reveals a new era in Conservatory development, as boards change from small, personal support groups with small budgets to larger entities with the responsibility for keeping the doors open and raising ever-increasing funds to maintain operations.

Introducing the history are Sol Joseph, a long-standing member of the piano faculty at the Conservatory, and Peter Oundjian of the Tokyo String Quartet, who took part in Chamber Music West for several years. Our thanks for funding help are due to Phyllis Wattis, the project's principal sponsor, and to Ava Jean Brumbaum, who raised matching funds for Mrs. Wattis's generous grant.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum and is an administrative division of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

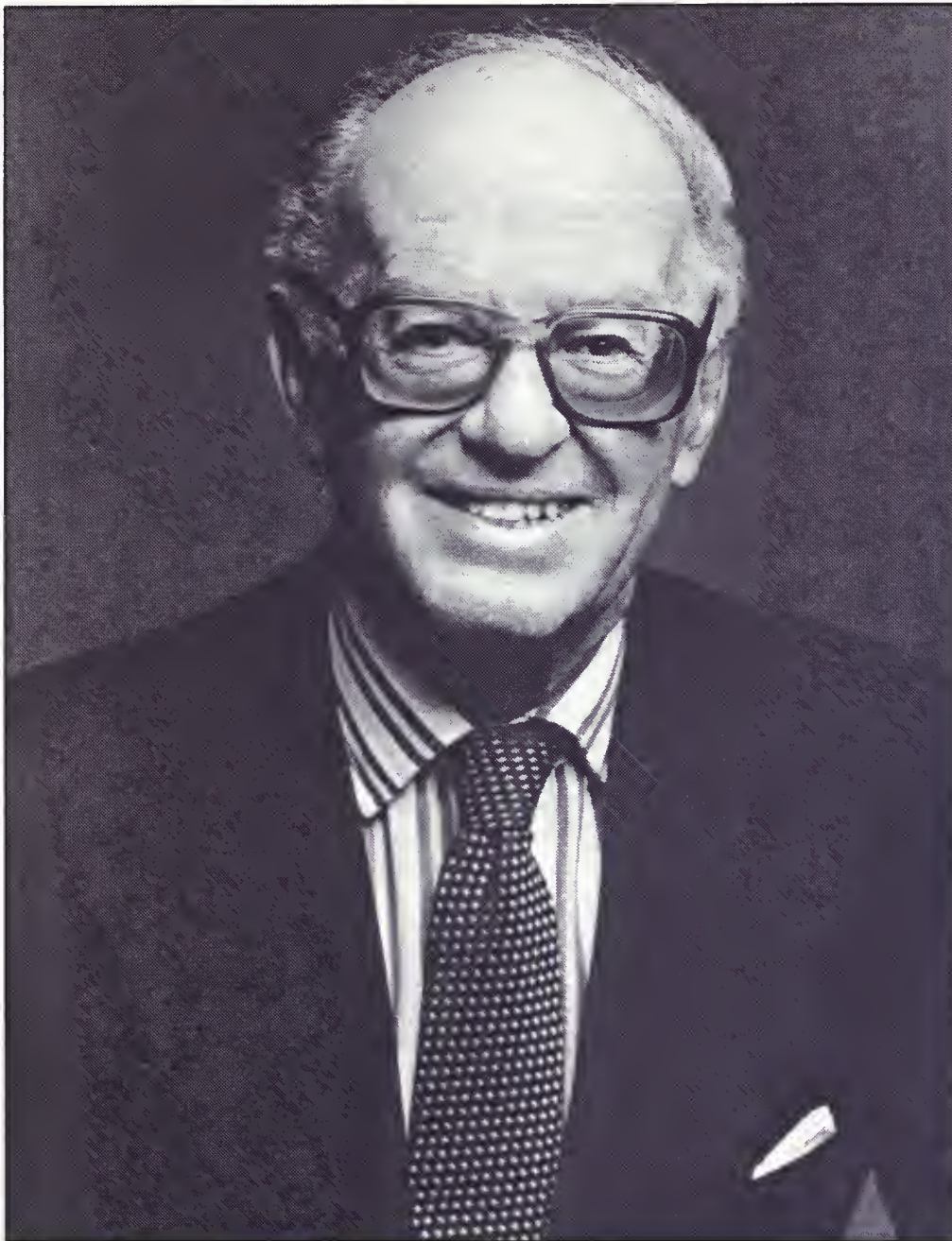
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Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Milton Salkind

PRESIDENT AND BUILDER OF THE CONSERVATORY, 1966-1990

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1993



Milton Salkind, President of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 1966-1990.

Photograph by Lisa Kohler

Milton Salkind

Milton Salkind, the pianist and educator who helped transform the San Francisco Conservatory of Music from a small community school into a nationally renowned institution, died yesterday at his home in San Francisco. He was 82.

Mr. Salkind had been in failing health for several years, according to Ken Porter, the conservatory's marketing and public relations manager.

Mr. Salkind was president of the conservatory from 1966 to 1990, the longest and most important presidency in the school's 81-year history, and served briefly as acting president in 1991. Under his leadership, the conservatory went from a local institution with 42 students and no endowment to a well-funded program serving some 250 collegiate and graduate students.

Mr. Salkind expanded the school's curriculum and increased the number of international students in attendance. He also introduced a number of new programs, including the Community Service Program — which sends conservatory students to perform at hospitals, rest homes and community centers — and the annual "Sing-It-Yourself Messiah." It was also on his watch, in 1976, that the conser-

vatory opened Hellman Hall, its elegant and comfortable concert auditorium at 19th Avenue and Ortega Street.

Mr. Salkind and his wife, Peggy, were active as a piano duo, performing throughout North America and Europe and commissioning new works from such Bay Area composers as Andrew Imbrie and Robert Helps.

Mr. Salkind was born in Wilmington, Del., and began studying the piano at age 5. He held degrees from George Washington University (in economics) and the Juilliard School and was on the board of the San Francisco Symphony and Ballet.

He is survived by his wife, who chairs the piano department at the conservatory; his son, Mark, head of San Francisco Urban School; and his daughter, Karen Ashley, a New York manager of opera singers. The family requests that contributions be made to the Milton Salkind Scholarship Fund at the conservatory. Plans for a memorial concert will be announced.

— *Joshua Kosman*

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Milton Salkind

As much as an individual can chart the course of an institution, Milton Salkind has been the engine behind the development of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music for the past two and a half decades.

Salkind's tenure as president from 1966 to 1990 was extraordinary. When he took the position, there were only forty-two students on the Conservatory's collegiate roster. The small budget was met largely by individual donors and there was no endowment in place.

Of his appointment the softspoken, modest Salkind says: "[The board] asked Yehudi Menuhin to be director. He couldn't . . . he had an international career, and he couldn't take this on. So, here I am." Before Salkind's tenure ended, he had offers to lead the New England, Peabody and Cleveland Conservatories.

A Juilliard-trained pianist, Milton Salkind drew on his East Coast network to bring new faculty and students to San Francisco, strengthened his board of directors, and successfully called on major foundations on both coasts for support. The Ford Foundation gave a two-for-one matching grant of a million dollars for the Conservatory endowment, apparently won over by the fact that Milton Salkind could find a student to drop in and play the piano in his office on a moment's notice while the Foundation representative was visiting. Another grant was landed when a foundation visitor observed Salkind making a loan to a needy student during their meeting.

Salkind sent students into the community to play in prisons and hospitals and at parties; the community service program is the one he is proudest of. He also showed a marked talent for marketing, booking the San Francisco Opera House in 1979 for a singalong *Messiah* that has become a fixed Christmas tradition in San Francisco.

The three interviews that follow took place in November and December of 1993 in Salkind's apartment on the second floor of a spacious Victorian home on Broadway. The sessions were often interrupted by callers with invitations to musical events and students coming for lessons. Salkind, now retired from formal Conservatory duties, teaches students ranging from a "brilliant fourteen-year-old who wants to do nothing but play the piano" to composer-musician Bobby McFerrin, who was recommended to Salkind by Seiji Ozawa.

Salkind edited the interview text lightly and expanded various sections.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

June, 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name MILTON SALKIND

Date of birth 2/21/16 Birthplace WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

Father's full name NATHAN SALKIND

Occupation MERCHANT Birthplace MINSK, RUSSIA

Mother's full name ROSE DEKTOR

Occupation HOUSEWIFE Birthplace LITHUANIA

Your spouse PEGGY R. SALKIND

Your children KAREN SALKIND + MARK SALKIND

Where did you grow up? DOVER, DELAWARE THROUGH

Present community S.F. A.S.

Education B.A. in Economics, George Washington Univ.
B.S. in Piano, the Juilliard School, N.Y.

Occupation(s) MUSICIAN

Areas of expertise PIANO

Other interests or activities Board of S.F. Symphony Bd. of Governors
Board S.F. Ballet Board, artistic adviser, S.F. Chamber Symphony + on Bd.

Organizations in which you are active _____

I EARLY YEARS, FAMILY, AND EDUCATION

[Interview 1: November 29, 1993] ##¹

Parents

Crawford: Well, let's start at the beginning and talk about your early years, when and where you were born and who your parents were.

Salkind: I was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on February 21, 1916, and I grew up in Dover, Delaware. We moved to Dover, the capital of the state, when I was about six years old. It was at that time a very small town of about 5,000 people. I had a relatively happy childhood. Our mother and father were both born in Russia, my mother in Lithuania and my father in Minsk, Russia.

I remember the rest of the family, I mean, my mother's sisters and brothers coming over. My mother and father were not musicians, but they loved music. And one of my strongest memories was that my father used to sit us down in front of the radio and we listened every Sunday to the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. And that was a very pleasant memory.

I started lessons when I was about five years old and my sister played the piano; my brother played the violin. And I remember my brother and I would perform whenever there was a party. I remember my brother hitting me on the head with his violin bow, because I would correct him and he didn't like that.

Crawford: Did he become a musician?

Salkind: No, but he still plays. He lives in Berkeley now.

¹ This symbol indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Exposure to Music

- Crawford: Other than listening to the Philharmonic, what was your early exposure to music?
- Salkind: Well, just my piano lessons. I had no particular influences except the New York Philharmonic. I remember my parents bought a Milton piano, which I had never heard of. I don't even now know of a Milton piano.
- Crawford: A grand or an upright?
- Salkind: It was an upright. So, I started in and I was the only one that could really play better than my teacher at that time. I remember playing all my life, and even now, when I go back to Delaware, people say, "Oh, Milton played the piano all his life." I remember that it was a small high school and we had a lot of celebrations and I just remember performing all the time.
- Crawford: Did you have an orchestra at the school?
- Salkind: Yes.
- Crawford: How about your aunts and uncles?
- Salkind: Well, an uncle of mine was very interested in music and loved to play the violin. But he was the only one. My mother had about five sisters and three brothers.
- Crawford: Were there religious celebrations that you played for?
- Salkind: No. You know, things like May Day and school celebrations.
- Crawford: And then I know that you studied economics at George Washington University during the Depression; I guess your father apparently thought that that was a little more solid [than music]. Would you talk about your parents' influence in terms of how they directed you?
- Salkind: Well, they didn't really direct me. They didn't direct any of us. My father wanted us to go into business, his business, which was the liquor store, but he really wasn't very serious about that. He hated it himself and he really was an intellectual who hated business.
- Crawford: What had he been doing in Russia?

Salkind: Oh, he came over when he was a very young child in his early teens.

Crawford: He met your mother here?

Salkind: Yes, in Delaware.

Crawford: What did his parents do in Russia?

Salkind: I really don't know. I don't think he knew.

Crawford: So he came and he wasn't university educated?

Salkind: No, he wasn't. And neither was my mother.

University Years, and Performing for Eleanor Roosevelt

Crawford: How did you decide on George Washington University?

Salkind: Well, my brother went to Washington and he majored in economics. And this was during the war--no, before the war. I went to George Washington because my parents wanted me to go to be near my brother. I accompanied during my whole college career; I accompanied and gave recitals and I accompanied modern dance. So, I really managed to play the piano wherever I was.

Crawford: What were your university years like?

Salkind: I became quite active in student politics at that time and I was very interested in what was going on. And the friends I made were very interested in student politics.

Crawford: Was it hard for you financially, particularly hard during those years?

Salkind: It was, but my brother helped and then I made my own way. I lived, for a while, with my brother. But then I got my own apartment. After that I met Eleanor Roosevelt. I met Eleanor Roosevelt and she invited me to play at the White House twice and that was really an experience for me.

Crawford: How did you meet her?

Salkind: She came to a function at which I had performed. It was a canteen that I was instrumental in opening, a canteen for soldiers.

Crawford: Not a USO canteen.

Salkind: No, it wasn't a USO. I can't remember exactly what it was. But this was a canteen that Joseph Eger, whom I had met in the army, [helped start]. I met Joe Eger, who was a graduate of the Curtis Institute, the horn player, and he was very active in this canteen. This was in 1938 or '39.

Crawford: So you met her at the canteen, and did she hear you play?

Salkind: Yes, but that's not when she invited me. She invited me a couple of weeks later.

Crawford: That's remarkable. And how did the invitation come?

Salkind: By telephone.

Crawford: From her? Or from her secretary?

Salkind: No, from her secretary.

Crawford: How did you prepare and what were you asked to play?

Salkind: Well, I accompanied a singer who has since died. Toby Zion, that was her name.

Crawford: You were in Washington during what years?

Salkind: Well, I graduated in 1932 from high school.

Crawford: So, 1933 to 1937, something like that.

Salkind: Yes. I lived in Philadelphia for a year with some relatives before I went to Washington. These were cousins who also had an influence on my music. They loved it.

Crawford: So it was a little later. Well, tell me about preparing for and playing at the White House.

Salkind: I accompanied this singer and I haven't any idea what I played.

Crawford: Was she an opera singer, Toby Zion?

Salkind: Yes, she was. And she was from Washington, D.C. I think I played a Polish dance by Schwarenka and I played some other piece that I can't remember. But, I do remember that when I went into the White House, it was in the Lincoln Room and there were a lot of people drinking. It was a reception.

Eleanor Roosevelt was way at the other end. I didn't even see her. But as soon as I got to the door, she was there. And she was, as everybody says, very gracious and warm. And then, after I played, there was an elegant reception and when I left a lot of people came up to me.

And then I didn't hear anything for about two months, and then she called again, not Eleanor, but her secretary called and asked me to play some solos this time. So I did.

Crawford: How much time between your performances?

Salkind: About two months.

Crawford: And was this for a reception too?

Salkind: It was for another reception, but it was a little more formal. There weren't as many people there.

Crawford: Were they seated?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: What did you prepare that time?

Salkind: I performed the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* of Bach.

Crawford: Difficult.

Salkind: And a Chopin piece. I don't remember what.

Crawford: Were those composers that were special for you?

Salkind: Well, the Bach certainly was.

Crawford: And did you meet the president?

Salkind: No, he wasn't there.

Crawford: What a lovely gesture, though, for her to make to a young student.

Salkind: And she, it seems, went out of her way to recognize unknown people.

Crawford: When you went in the army, were you stationed in Washington?

Salkind: For a little while. I was at Bolling Field, D.C., and that's where I met several musicians such as Joseph Eger, Virgil Fox,

and Victor Babin, who later became president of the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Crawford: Were they in the military as well?

Salkind: They were all in the army. And Victor Babin was part of the two-piano team Vronsky and Babin.

Crawford: So, what was the chronology, then, after you finished your bachelor's degree at George Washington?

A Job at the Office of Price Administration; Joining the Army

Salkind: Well, then I proceeded to get a job as an economist in the OPA--the Office of Price Administration. I remember getting a job as a junior economist. (My son now says, "Dad, you don't know a thing about economics.") But I was in a "Rags and Bags" office, and I remember answering the phone, "This is Milton Salkind, rags and bags." And everybody got a kick out of that.

Crawford: What did it mean--rags and bags?

Salkind: We were doing research on rags and bags there for paper.

Crawford: For the national paper supply?

Salkind: Yes.

Then for a while, I was with automobiles and I remember Cyrus McCormick was my boss in Chicago and that was very interesting. And I had a fascinating boss from Swarthmore College.

Crawford: Was this a government office dealing with the automobile industry?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: What was Washington like musically in those days?

Salkind: Not very stimulating. I remember that I played a concert in the Phillips Gallery with Joseph Eger and John Martin, cellist, now the principal cellist of the National Symphony in Washington, D.C.

Crawford: Who was the conductor? It wasn't Howard Mitchell, was it?

- Salkind: It was. It was Howard Mitchell and my friend John Martin studied with him.
- Crawford: He had a long tenure. He was there in the sixties when I lived in Washington.
- Salkind: Yes.
- Crawford: How did it come about that you went into the service?
- Salkind: Well, I volunteered. My eyes weren't good enough--so I just volunteered and they took me, finally.
- Crawford: And were you in the band?
- Salkind: No, no, I wasn't in the band. All the others were in the band but they had no piano in the band. So, I was in Special Services. Then I went into "I and E," Information and Education. I talked about why we were in the war.
- In the Special Services the Inspector General asked me to write a report on what was wrong--I had a knack for talking to the soldiers and finding out how they really felt. And he was very interested in that, and he asked me to write a report on that. When I did, he said it was the best report that he'd ever gotten in the army.
- Crawford: How was that going to be used?
- Salkind: Well, I don't know how it was going to be used.
- Crawford: Was it propaganda?
- Salkind: Well, yes, that's really what it was because they didn't tell me how they were going to use it.
- Crawford: But you felt positive about going into the war?
- Salkind: Yes. Then, what happened? Oh, I was sent to Egypt. And in Egypt, I was still in Information and Education, but we didn't do very much. I was there for several months. And then suddenly, I was transferred.
- Crawford: With the OSS?
- Salkind: No. I was with anti-aircraft artillery. But I knew nothing about artillery. And so they selected a small group of soldiers, about twelve of us, to go to Turkey. And I was sent to Turkey and I was in Ankara. And at that point, we were

there, presumably, to advise the Turks on how to build an airfield in case of a Russian attack. I don't know how well known this is, but I was in an administrative capacity. I was head of that group; I was the staff sergeant.

The Turks there were very friendly with the Nazis at the time, and when we got there, the Germans were just leaving. And we would go into this restaurant, Pepy's, and they would wine and dine us with caviar and all the goodies that the Germans had been getting. It was very weird. There were just about twelve of us. We lived in a boarding house, and I started meeting a lot of Turkish musicians and also Hungarian musicians who had fled to Turkey from the Nazis. It was really fascinating.

Crawford: You got the German provisions because the Germans had gone?

Salkind: Well, they weren't provisions. It was a restaurant. They catered to the Germans at that time, and then when we got there, they catered to us.

Crawford: Was that hard work and did you put in a lot of hours?

Salkind: No, I knew nothing about building airfields. And I don't think any of the others did.

Crawford: You just happened to be available to go when the assignment came in?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: And was an airfield built?

Salkind: No. I was there seven months.

Crawford: And then was it Eger who suggested that you go to Juilliard?

Salkind: Yes. I went to New York then, and I was discharged in New York.

Crawford: And you'd served how many years all together?

Salkind: Three and a half.

Crawford: How long in Egypt?

Salkind: About three months. We didn't do anything other than climb the pyramids and that kind of thing. [laughter] We also rode some camels!

Crawford: Then what happened to you after your discharge?

Studying at Juilliard

Salkind: Joe was in New York and he said, "Why don't you try for Juilliard?" He said, "Your talents are enough." So, I started taking lessons from Freundlich, Irwin Freundlich. And Joe knew him.

Crawford: Did you apply right away?

Salkind: I took the summer off, then I applied immediately and did get in. And one thing that happened, Freundlich wasn't on the regular faculty at Juilliard. He was in the extension program. That means that he wasn't considered good enough to be on the faculty. I don't know whether that was it or not, but that was his reputation.

So they told me I couldn't study with him. I had to study with one of the big-name teachers. I said, "Unless I can study with him, I won't come here." So, that's how Irwin Freundlich got on the faculty.

Crawford: Oh, they put him on the faculty? They wanted you.

Salkind: He was very grateful for that, and he turned out to be one of the best teachers there.

Crawford: Who were the so-called big names?

Salkind: Well, Ernest Hutcheson and Muriel Kerr. She was a great pianist. And Lonnie Epstein. And Rosina Lhévinne.

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Crawford: Do you remember what it was like at that time?

Salkind: I remember that I was a little bit older than the average student. And I remember seeing a report, "in spite of his age, he'll do very well," something like that. Josef Lhévinne got off the faculty--I think that was the year he died--and Rosina was then the big name on the piano faculty.

Crawford: Did you study with her?

Salkind: And Ernest Hutcheson. No, I didn't study with her because I wanted to study with Freundlich. He was the first one who taught me how to really practice. So I wanted to stick with him. They all wrote some good things about me.

Crawford: And how long was your course of study?

Salkind: Well, since I had graduated from George Washington University, I only had three years at Juilliard, because I didn't have to take any humanities there.

Crawford: Three years and then you came out with a master's?

Salkind: A bachelor of science in piano.

Crawford: What was your curriculum like?

Salkind: Well, it was kind of chaotic because William Schuman, who was the president at the time, was just starting a literature and materials course, which involved piano literature and harmony. It was an idea that he had of integrating everything into one course. But it really didn't work that well. It's working all right now. I had one teacher that was very good in sociology. I really enjoyed the course.

Crawford: Oh, so you did take some humanities?

Salkind: Well, I took that in addition. I didn't need to do it. But I just wanted to take it.

Crawford: I didn't realize that there was a rounded curriculum. I thought it was more focused on music and the individual instrument.

Salkind: Yes, it is. The whole thing wasn't really good. I was very interested in how the piano students felt and I immediately got very interested in politics from a musician's point of view.

Crawford: Did you organize the students at all?

Salkind: No, no. I didn't organize. But I was organized in the sense that there were other influences on me.

Crawford: What were those?

Salkind: I remember a John Kelly from Hawaii who was very active, and who had tremendous hands. He was a pianist but he couldn't play very well. But he was very active.

Crawford: In student politics?

Salkind: Yes. I remember Walter Giesekeing came to New York and they wouldn't let him in. I was one of those who protested his coming in.

Crawford: Protested against it?

Salkind: Yes, because all of us at Juilliard thought he was a Nazi.

Crawford: Was he?

Salkind: I don't know. I think he was, but it isn't talked about now.

Crawford: Do you feel now that that shouldn't have been important?

Salkind: I think it should have been important, yes.

Crawford: How do you feel then about the Furtwängler case and others who conducted during the Nazi era?

Salkind: I just listened to Furtwängler. The other day somebody loaned me a recording. I don't know. I want to know more about that. He was very good, a wonderful musician. But so was Giesecking.

Crawford: Was Giesecking admitted?

Salkind: No, he wasn't.

Crawford: He wasn't. Was that the extent of political activities or were there other ramifications?

Salkind: There were, but I didn't know much about that. I practiced very hard and I got to know William Schuman, the president, very well and Fredrick Prausnitz, the conductor. And also Peter Mennin, who was president of Juilliard. He became president. I remember at one point--he was a very handsome, meticulous man--and my wife and I were invited to Fred Prausnitz's for a cocktail party and it was a very small East Side apartment. And I remember sitting down and Peter Mennin was sitting next to me, in this tiny apartment.

There were a lot of people there, and he had one red sock and one blue sock. I could never get over that. I could never picture him that way and then later, he was very, very well groomed when he became president of Juilliard.

Crawford: Had he been a student before?

Salkind: No, he was on the faculty. He was a composer.

Crawford: Were there lots of social outings? Did you go to homes?

Salkind: Yes. Although I can't remember what social outings there were.

Crawford: Did you go to Carnegie Hall?

Salkind: Oh, yes. We got free tickets to Carnegie Hall. And that was a great blessing. That's one of the things that caused me to, when I got here, to plug for some free season tickets. And we finally got them.

Crawford: For the symphony?

Salkind: For the symphony here we got about fifteen tickets. That took me, I think, more than fifteen years to get.

Crawford: What were your living conditions like during your student years in New York?

Salkind: First I had an apartment. Then I had a roommate in the apartment. No, first I lived in the Village and I commuted to Juilliard. That only took around forty minutes or so.

Crawford: And that's where you practiced?

Salkind: Yes. I had a room in someone's apartment on St. Luke's Place. And then I moved out of that and got my own apartment near Juilliard.

Crawford: Did you work, too? Or did you have a scholarship?

Salkind: No, I taught. I did have a scholarship, but I did some teaching. Juilliard had a very active placement office, so I traveled to Brooklyn and taught there.

Crawford: How was the spirit? You always hear that Juilliard is so competitive.

Salkind: Yes, it was competitive. And there were things about it that were not so good. When a student played in the recital hall, the other students were listening, all the students, and you had the feeling they couldn't wait until you made a mistake. And then they all sort of talked about it and [discussed it].

For my first appearance in the recital hall I was playing *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*. You know how it opens up. I completely turned that around, that first passage.

Crawford: Yes, the ascending notes?

Salkind: Yes, [sings ascending notes]. And after that, I was fine, you know. But, my teacher said, "What in the hell were you doing up there?" And you know, that kind of thing always happens. I

couldn't do it again if you asked me to. But then I just couldn't get it right.

Crawford: What happened?

Salkind: I don't know what happened. I guess just nerves.

Crawford: Were you a nervous performer?

Salkind: No, not terribly but I was a little bit nervous then, because it was my first time at Juilliard. But, you know, unless you are a little bit nervous, the performance isn't very good. So, I just assumed it was that.

Crawford: Did they come down on you, the students?

Salkind: Yes, several of them said, "What were you doing there?"

Crawford: Did you make friends among the piano students?

Salkind: Oh, yes.

Marriage to Peggy Rippe Salkind

Crawford: You married one as well. Would you talk about meeting Peggy?

Salkind: We met in a class. She sat behind me in Julius Herford's class. It was Bach, interpretation of Bach. And Herford was a famous Bach specialist. And Robert Shaw, the choral conductor, had studied with him and I had worked with Robert Shaw, so I was especially interested in this class. Peggy sat in back of me, and she was mumbling a great deal.

And I finally turned to her and said, "What are you mumbling about?" And then we got into the elevator, at one point, and we became very friendly. She had just had a nervous breakdown and she had come from San Diego.

Crawford: Had there been something particular that brought about the breakdown?

Salkind: Well, her parents had been divorced, but she was determined to make a go of it. Her parents didn't want her to come back to New York--she had been there a year before that. I was nine or ten years older, and six months later, we got married.

Crawford: You both got your degrees before you were married?

Salkind: Yes. She was on a scholarship before I had gotten there, in the old graduate school.

Crawford: Where was that?

Salkind: That was in the same place. The Institute of Musical Art it was called. It was on 122nd Street at Claremont.

Crawford: Has it been moved now, the school?

Salkind: Yes, down to Lincoln Center.

So, we got married in San Diego and then came up here. Peggy had a cousin here, and on our honeymoon we fell in love with San Francisco.

Crawford: When was that?

Salkind: 1948. Then we went back to New York for a year and I talked to Bill Schuman and he gave me Al Frankenstein's name.

Crawford: Music critic in San Francisco at that time. Well, what were the qualities that made it possible for you to go through Juilliard as you did?

Salkind: I guess a certain determination and integrity and artistic standards.

Today's Standard in Music: "A Demonic Sense of Discipline"

Crawford: Let me read to you what you've said that it takes today to do this and see if it applies to when you were at Juilliard. You said, "Today's students need a demonic sense of discipline, a sharp sense of reality, and good sense of individual capability."

Salkind: Yes, yes. I think it takes a more demonic sense now than it did in those days.

Crawford: Why?

Salkind: You really have to be so obsessed now because it's so difficult. Everybody is competing.

Crawford: Is it just because there are more people or is the quality better?

Salkind: The quality is--well, I don't know that it's any better, but it's more focused and the students now need to know exactly what they're going to do. I have always told students that they have to be able to do a variety of things and not only play one instrument. They have to be willing to teach. They have to be well-rounded. And I think that's much more true now than it used to be.

Crawford: How would that experience differ from your own if a student were going into Juilliard in the 1990s? Would the practice be much more intensive?

Salkind: No, practice wouldn't be. But they have to know so much more about the field. They have to know much more about people and they have to, I think they have to be very human and really have to think about their relationship to people. They have to, I think, know much more than we had to know, even though I was older than most of the graduates, because I had a degree. And that was an advantage in a way.

Crawford: When you say know more about people, what do you mean precisely?

Salkind: They have to know how to relate to people.

Crawford: Do you mean go into the community? Extend themselves more?

Salkind: Yes. One of the first [things I told the students] when I got the job as president, was that they could pursue musical excellence and at the same time be of service to the community. Nobody had ever talked to me or to any students like that. They didn't know what service to the community was.

Crawford: But you didn't have that at Juilliard?

Salkind: No, as a matter of fact, I just now read in the Juilliard Bulletin that they've started a community service program. And I was the first one to do it in any conservatory. And ours is operating very well now.

Crawford: That's wonderful. When they asked you to be president, you indicated that you didn't really want the job but you said, "I knew what a conservatory should be." Was that statement a reference to Juilliard and your experience there?

Salkind: Yes, partially. I mean, I'd grown up knowing about conservatories and when I was in Philadelphia, I knew about

Curtis and Peabody in Baltimore and Juilliard in New York and the Manhattan School of Music. And then I was for a long time the president of the Association of Independent Conservatories of Music. That's in the whole United States. When I first came here, when Peggy and I first arrived in San Francisco, many, many people didn't know what a conservatory was.

Crawford: It's an eastern institution.

Salkind: Yes. And the school had just moved out to 19th Avenue and even for years and years after I became president, people would ask, "What is the conservatory and where is it?" And they didn't know what it was all about.

Crawford: It needed to be put on the map?

Salkind: Yes, yes. Well, so I guess I knew; that's what I meant, really.

Crawford: What would have been the facets of Juilliard that you would not want to have repeated here?

Salkind: I think the competitive quality of the whole school. Now it's in Lincoln Center and it's a very cold place. I don't like big colleges, and when I went to school there, it wasn't at Lincoln Center. It was at a much smaller place and much warmer and we really liked that.

Crawford: What was the building like?

Salkind: Well, it's now the Manhattan School of Music. And they rebuilt it [in the late 1960s] and so it's much warmer than Juilliard. Juilliard is full of big, long corridors and it's very cold and you don't get the feeling that there's much content. One year I was head of the accrediting team at Juilliard.

Serving on the National Association of Colleges and Universities
Accreditation Team

Salkind: Every few years the Conservatory, through the National Association of Colleges and Universities, has to be reaccredited. Juilliard could choose their own team, and they chose me and they chose the head of Yale School of Music and other faculty people from the East Coast. They could select the chairman, that's what it was, the chairman. So, I was chairman of the accrediting team at Juilliard.

And at one point in the three-day visit, we could meet without any faculty or staff. We could meet with students and they could complain about anything they wanted to complain about. So, we met with them and I had the feeling that probably nobody would show up.

We met in the president's office or the board of directors' office and it was almost stacked to the ceiling with students. Not one student had a kind word to say about Juilliard. I was amazed and appalled.

Crawford: This was later, after you had left, of course.

Salkind: Yes. This is when they had moved to Lincoln Center. When I was out here; I was president of the Conservatory.

Crawford: What did they have to say?

Salkind: They said they never saw Peter Mennin. They saw a man walk through the hall with a raincoat on and sort of very sneakily. And he had this big office. You can't imagine. They said they hated the atmosphere. They didn't like the faculty. Some of them had said that. It was pretty terrible.

Crawford: And it surprised you on the basis of your own experience.

Salkind: Yes, yes. Peter Oundjian really was the most outspoken student there. He was a student of Dorothy Delay's. And he loved chamber music, but he hadn't done very much. So, I invited him to come out to the Conservatory. I first checked with the dean, whom I knew very well, and he said Peter was an excellent violinist. Peter claims that I invited him to come to the Summer Chamber Music West, and he claims that's what got him started in chamber music. And now the rest is history. They're celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary. Peter isn't, but the group as a quartet is celebrating.

Crawford: The Tokyo Quartet?

Salkind: Yes. They're very, very good, and we've since had them at the Conservatory in Chamber Music West. And they're playing this year at Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall and all over to celebrate their twenty-fifth anniversary.

Crawford: You have just been to their concert at La Scala in Milan, haven't you?

Salkind: La Scala and Florence. And then they were in Switzerland. But I left to go to Paris then, and London.

Student Life at Juilliard

- Crawford: What was your student life there like when you got out of the practice room? Did you meet with the students?
- Salkind: Very, very pleasant. I found that, you know, I was in my element there.
- Crawford: Did you socialize with the students there?
- Salkind: Yes. We had a lounge that we had to ourselves, and it was very enjoyable.
- Crawford: Who were the notable instrumentalists that came from your group, your years.
- Salkind: You don't mean peers, do you?
- Crawford: Yes. Who do you remember from your class that we would know?
- Salkind: Well, Harriet Wingreen was one--she's very active. She's a pianist with the New York Philharmonic. But you wouldn't know her. Alexis Weissenberg, a pianist who subsequently made a lot of recordings. Russell Oberlin, a wonderful singer, whom we still see. Robert DeCormier, a well-known choral conductor and my best friend. He had a son who died of leukemia. Very sad.
- Crawford: What did you do apart from school in New York?
- Salkind: We went to concerts. We ate in my favorite Chinese restaurant on 125th Street. Concert-going was the greatest. I mean, we did that a lot.
- Crawford: Did you go home often, back to Delaware?
- Salkind: Every couple of months, yes. I didn't like it very much.

II A NEW LIFE IN SAN FRANCISCO IN THE 1950s

Leaving the East Coast

Crawford: You'd moved on to better things. Well, you left Juilliard. You got married and moved to San Francisco in around 1950. And what was your impression of the city and musical climate?

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Salkind: Well, Peggy and I started playing four hands. I had had a class in four-hand music at Juilliard. Two pianos and four hands. And so I knew something about the literature and when I went to see Bill Schuman before we moved out here, he told me to go see Al Frankenstein and so we did.

One of the first things we did was to go make an appointment with Al. And he said, "I don't like two-piano music, but have you ever tried four hands, one piano? I think you'll love the music written for four hands, one piano." So he gave us the idea. It had never occurred to me to sort of make a career out of that. And so we proceeded to do that and we started out by getting engagements at women's clubs and such places.

Crawford: Were you a novelty?

Salkind: We were.

Crawford: That's sort of a nineteenth-century endeavor, isn't it?

Salkind: Right. As a matter of fact, I think we led in the renaissance of four-hand music, because it's now quite popular.

Crawford: How did that work out for husband and wife?

Salkind: As you see, we're separated. No, but actually it worked out very well because no one could believe that a husband and wife could do this and also that we crossed over. You know sometimes I would be on the top, on the outside and on the inside, you know. And Peggy would be in the middle. I used to say that the trick to four-hand music is to keep out of each other's way and be very close together at the same time. It's not always easy to do when you're married. So, women's clubs got a big kick out of things like that.

Crawford: Did you both teach?

Touring and Performing Four-Hand Programs

Salkind: I taught, mostly. And we went to Alaska, and we had children, of course. And then we started out with women's clubs and we grew into other things. And then we went to Europe. We took the children.

Crawford: How soon did the children come along?

Salkind: Oh, we were married for a few years and then we decided to have children. Our children were very funny about our playing, because I played a great deal when they were very young and Karen could carry a tune in any key at eighteen months. And Mark, he was always a little shy about that. But they were both very, very musical. And they used to dance. I sat and played the piano in the living room and they used to dance and we had a great time. We did a lot of that. And we used to sing as a family.

The children were very embarrassed whenever they had an audience. The audience would applaud and the children would hide their faces. We especially noticed that when we took them to Alaska and Canada. We were going for a month, but we took them for two weeks and we let them fly home alone and had a babysitter meet them. And it was usually one of the teachers at Marin Country Day School, where they went to school. But we had a very good time in Alaska.

Crawford: And you played recitals?

Salkind: Sometimes on little uprights and even one of them was a spinet. We flew every place by sea plane.

Crawford: Did you let someone book those recitals for you?

Salkind: Yes. It was then known as the Alaskan Music Trail.

Crawford: Then when you went to Europe, when was that?

Salkind: We went seven times. We took the children once. The first trip was in 1964. I remember playing in Switzerland at a private school. They never applaud there, and our children couldn't understand. They said, "Didn't they like you?" They did like us, and they all came up afterwards.

Crawford: And where did you play?

Salkind: We played in London, Rome, Paris, Oslo, Berlin, Florence.

Crawford: What sorts of halls?

Salkind: Oh, we played in Paris on Paris television. That wasn't a hall, of course. But then we played in the American Embassy twice. And that was a hall.

Crawford: How about in Italy?

Salkind: Oh, we played at the Academy of Rome. In London, we played at the Purcell Room. We played at a couple of places where Chopin played, and we traveled to Cracow, Poland. I had read about a four-hand piece that Chopin had written and we traveled there to get that piece and get a copy of the piece. And that was exciting.

Crawford: What's the form of that piece?

Salkind: Variations.

Crawford: Did you record the piece?

Salkind: Yes, we did record that. That trip was very fascinating. We got on a little Polish plane in Warsaw that was going to Cracow. We didn't even have to fasten our seat belts. There was a stewardess but she didn't ask us to do anything. So, we sort of jiggled around and we landed there in a storm.

We thought nobody would meet us, but we got there and then this little man came up to us and he greeted us and he took us right to the office where they had this music. And I said, "Can we perform this?" And he said, "Yes, absolutely." So, we were the first ones to get that, and it really was a great piece.

Crawford: Did you get paid enough to make your trip worthwhile?

Salkind: Well, we did because we were paid in Oslo, Norway, just before we went to Poland.

Crawford: Were you ever state department guests?

Salkind: We made a state department tour in Mexico, where we performed the Mozart two-piano concerto with the Mexican National Symphony in Mexico City, and we performed four-hands, one-piano concerts in Guadalajara, Zacateca, and in Mexico City.

Crawford: Would you describe that?

Salkind: In Mexico City the conductor was from São Paulo, Brazil, and he invited us to come to Brazil, but we couldn't do that. Ava Jean and Harold Pischel and Edith and Henry Garland flew down to hear us in Mexico.

Crawford: When did you go on the faculty of the Conservatory?

Salkind: It was when I became president in August of 1966.

Crawford: Weren't you with the Conservatory before that?

Salkind: No.

Crawford: You were exclusively a private teacher?

Salkind: Private, yes.

Remembering Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead

Crawford: Did you know Ada Clement then?

Salkind: Yes, I did. I knew Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead, but not very well. They were very imaginative, I think, and very courageous to start the Conservatory; I thought that was one of the most imaginative things that they could have done. The Conservatory wasn't very well known, then, but when Ernest Bloch came, it became better known. And it never really had a lot of support.

Crawford: What were your impressions of Ada and Lillian in the early years?

Salkind: Well, Ada Clement was very gentle and kind and had a lot of integrity. Lillian I didn't know nearly as well, because she



San Francisco Conservatory of Music founders Lillian Hodghead (left) and Ada Clement. Ms. Hodghead and Ms. Clement directed the conservatory from 1917 to 1925 and from 1930 to 1951.

*Photography courtesy of the
San Francisco Conservatory of Music*

wasn't a pianist and she was a little more austere than Ada was, though I did like them both and they wanted me on the faculty. But at the time, it wasn't very feasible, I didn't think.

Crawford: Why was that? Was the salary very small?

Salkind: Yes, I thought so at the time. And I didn't think it was the right place for me at that point. I liked the school, but I didn't like being there. Nothing moved me about the place. I guess Juilliard was too near in my experience. And then they called and said they'd like to interview me for the Conservatory job. I was in Sun Valley, in the piano department of the Sun Valley music camp, when somebody called and said, "Are you interested in that job?" And I said, "Well, no, not really. I've never done that kind of thing, and I don't think that's for me."

Jim Schwabacher was the first one. He said, "Dorian Crocker wants to meet you." And I said, "Why?" and he didn't know. Anyway, I said, "I don't think I'm interested in the job." So, then a couple of weeks later, he called again and said, "She really wants to meet you. Robin Laufer has died." So, I said, "Well, I'll talk to Peggy," and Peggy said, "Why not. You always said this was a good place for a conservatory."

Crawford: What was the Sacramento Street School like?

Salkind: Like a brownstone house, you know; not even as nice as a brownstone. But there were two separate buildings: an ordinary house with a porch, and then a bigger house right next to it. They were connected. And, you know, I guess it probably was the fact that I'd come from Juilliard and it looked like a little house to me.

Teaching and Commissioning Piano Pieces; Family Life

Crawford: How did you go about attracting students when you and Peggy came here?

Salkind: We played in people's homes and we started commissioning works for four hands, one piano. And we commissioned thirteen works from Andrew Imbrie, Seymour Shifren, Richard Felciano, David del Tredici, and Robert Helps.

Crawford: How did you come up with the funds for that?

Salkind: By playing in people's homes; we raised the money.

Crawford: Do you have any of the documents and the music from those commissions?

Salkind: I'll give you a record of ours that we made. Let's see, do I have any music here, or does Peggy? I can get it.

Crawford: So, really the focus was your teaching and your four-hand programs. How long did you perform together?

Salkind: Oh, one of our crowning achievements, and I'll get to that, was when we played in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And we played in Boston. Michael Steinberg, a critic there, came and he gave us a very good review.

Crawford: Where did you play in Boston?

Salkind: At Jordan Hall. And we played with Arthur Fiedler here and there. And we played two pianos here and there.

Crawford: And you did four hand at the Met?

Salkind: Four hands, one piano, and it was the first time that anybody had played a concert like that. That was in 1975.

Crawford: I once heard Boris Goldovsky and his nephew do a four-hand concert there, shortly before his death, and it was marvelous.

In addition to that, you went to Europe several times, Alaska, Mexico, and managed to raise two children. That's not the easiest thing to do.

Salkind: Without any help. We never had any help.

Crawford: Did Peggy work as well?

Salkind: She taught. That was something, although not as much as I did. We had to laugh because we were interviewed by some well-known woman, I've forgotten who it was, who said, "You live in a world of music all your own." And here we were, Peggy was up to her ears in diapers and all that. And we used to laugh about that.

Crawford: You've said that you separated along the way. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

Salkind: It was about ten or twelve years ago. We're not divorced. We're very friendly. I guess there was too much togetherness, you know. We raised the children together. We slept together.

We did everything together. And I guess it finally got too much for us.

Crawford: It's remarkable that you've remained friends. And wonderful for your family, too.

Salkind: Our children were already grown and out of the house. And Karen is now in New York and a vice president with Columbia Artists. She's a manager now. She was a ballet dancer, an actress and a singer; all those things. And that's another whole story--she came out here and went to the Conservatory. But she's doing well. As I said, she has been asked to be a vice president of Columbia Artists.

Crawford: How old is Karen?

Salkind: She's forty.

Crawford: And Mark is head of Urban School, I know, and he's a musician.

Salkind: Yes. Did you know he played with the New York Philharmonic when he was thirteen?

Crawford: I did. I read that. Was he at the Conservatory?

Salkind: No. He went to Yale and he studied with Robert Bloom, who was a famous oboist at the time.

Crawford: How did he happen to play with the Philharmonic?

Salkind: Oh, with Leonard Bernstein. He won one of those Young People's Artist Competitions when he was thirteen. I said, "Mark, do you want to go to New York to compete in the Leonard Bernstein competition?" And he did.

Crawford: Had he done piano before?

Salkind: Yes. I remember that the children used to get up early at seven o'clock every morning and practice. They took turns. But, music was always in the family so they came by it naturally.

The Administrations of Albert Elkus and Robin Laufer: 1951-1966

Crawford: I wanted to talk now about some of the people here who were so involved with the Conservatory in the earlier years. First of

all, Mr. Elkus. I talked to Elizabeth Elkus and had just a delightful time with her.

Salkind: Well, I didn't really know him. I met him, and I know Albert Elkus was very well respected, a very good man.

Crawford: What kind of a director did he make by reputation?

Salkind: I don't know. You'd have to know more about the Conservatory, I guess, than I did at the time. I didn't really know him. You know, there wasn't much fund-raising, I think, when he was there, and when I got there, a hundred dollars was a major, major contribution!

Crawford: Expenses were pretty well covered by tuition?

Salkind: Yes, and I don't think anybody did any real fund-raising. Even the board--Morty Fleishhacker and Dan Koshland. I mean, they were very, very nice men, and I like them both very much. But there was never any real leadership there.

Crawford: Did they give through their foundations or were they just simply board members?

Salkind: No, they were board members and they gave a hundred dollars or so and that was a big contribution.

Crawford: I remember talking to Kurt Adler about the opera during that era and he said, "There was no need to raise funds. If we needed money, we would go to a major benefactor, someone like Robert Watt Miller, and he would get on the phone and it would be taken care of." So, I guess there wasn't the impetus or the even the need to do the kinds of campaigns they do today.

Salkind: And also, the people didn't bother to think about a conservatory.

Crawford: How about Robin Laufer?

Salkind: Again, a nice man but there was a revolt, which Ava Jean Brumbaum will want to talk about. I remember very vividly, I was struck by the fact that the revolt was led by Ernest Bloch's granddaughter.

Crawford: Oh, Lucienne or Suzanne?

Salkind: Well, no, not Lucienne. Lucienne and Suzanne were his daughters. But I started to tell you about the revolt, which I

just read in the papers about. I didn't know Ava Jean then, but the students revolted against him.

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Crawford: We're talking about Robin Laufer's time as president of the Conservatory.

Salkind: How long was he president?

Crawford: I think it was 1957 to 1966, not such a short time.

Salkind: Oh, yes.

Crawford: And he'd come from Europe. I think that he'd been in the war.

Salkind: Yes, he was in the French underground.

Crawford: How did they happen to call him?

Salkind: I don't know, they tried Yehudi Menuhin and, you know, as always they went for big names.

Ernest Bloch at the Conservatory: 1925-1930

Crawford: Well, Ernest Bloch had come, and that gave the Conservatory quite a bit of mileage, didn't it?

Salkind: Yes, well, but he came at first to give a master class.

Crawford: Was he extremely important to the Conservatory?

Salkind: Ernest Bloch? I think he was. I didn't know him, but I remember writing to him once and asking if he would be interested in writing a work for us. We would commission him. And he wrote back a rather arrogant letter and he didn't like four-hand music. But I think it's just as well that I not talk about him. I knew Suzanne from New York, and I knew Lucienne from Mill Valley.

Crawford: She still lives there, doesn't she?

Salkind: No, they live in Seattle. There used to be a big wall in the auditorium, which was very tiny, seating a hundred people. There was a big mural that Lucienne did. I have to laugh about the auditorium because Bob Commanday would say, "Every time I go

in here for a performance, I think puppets are going to appear on stage." Did you ever see the auditorium before Hellman Hall was built?

Crawford: Yes. Would you describe the mural?

Salkind: It was somewhat of an abstract mural of musical instruments.

Crawford: So it was one of the grandchildren who started the revolt.

Salkind: Yes, Sita Dimitrov, Bloch's grandchild.

Crawford: What do you remember of the Laufers?

Salkind: He was quite pleasant to me, and she was, too. I had only met her a few times. Agnes Albert and Ava Jean were friendly with them.

Crawford: Did the revolt amount to much?

Salkind: I really don't know very much about it.

Crawford: That's when you were called. Well, what about some of the other people? The Griller Quartet seems to have been very colorful and very much involved at the Conservatory. Did you know them personally?

Salkind: Yes, I knew them, but I wasn't involved with them. Colin Hampton was married to Bonnie Hampton at the time. I knew Sydney and Colin.

Crawford: Mrs. Elkus told such a lovely story. She said that when her son went to study in England and he met Myra Hess, she said, "Is your father being Grillered?" I guess they were known to be difficult.

Salkind: Right. All quartets have their problems.

Crawford: How much was chamber music on the scene then?

Salkind: Not really very much at all, because we never had good enough players to perform chamber music. And it wasn't until we started to get really talented students that I decided we better have a chamber music program.

Crawford: The first of its kind, I gather.

Salkind: Yes. I guess I was more innovative than I thought. It occurs to me now because I started a lot of things that way.

Famous "Alumni": Isaac Stern and Yehudi Menuhin

- Crawford: We'll want to deal with those separately and in depth. What about Isaac Stern and Yehudi Menuhin? How important were they on the musical scene and what was their association with the Conservatory?
- Salkind: Well, Yehudi Menuhin was at the Conservatory way back before I ever came to the scene. And, let's see, the dates--
- Crawford: I think it was 1928 through 1930.
- Salkind: [Reading] "In 1926, pianist Marcus Gordon won a Juilliard scholarship, allowing him to study with Joseph Lhévinne. And in the same year, nine-year-old violin prodigy Yehudi Menuhin made his dazzling solo debut at the San Francisco Symphony." The Conservatory was on the map.
- Crawford: Is it surprising that Menuhin and Stern lived in San Francisco instead of in the East?
- Salkind: Well, Isaac studied with Naoum Blinder. And Blinder had a very vague association with the Conservatory. He had some misunderstanding, I guess, with somebody there and he withdrew. And that's the story that I got.
- Crawford: What was that about?
- Salkind: I don't know. I did know him, but very briefly. Neither of them is living now.
- Crawford: Well, talk about their association with the Conservatory in the years since, in your years.
- Salkind: Isaac Stern and Menuhin? Oh, well, I know them both very well. And Isaac is, you know, a rather difficult person but his wife is more difficult. I've had contact with Isaac off and on for several years, and Yehudi Menuhin is a very good friend. But, you have to ask me some questions and I'll know what to cover.
- Crawford: Well, let's see, you said difficult. How difficult? It seems like Isaac Stern comes to perform for the Conservatory and with the Conservatory.
- Salkind: Well, he did. He did for the seventy-fifth anniversary.
- Crawford: How did you arrange that?

Salkind: I made the first call, and I arranged a meeting between him and me and Colin Murdoch.

Crawford: Do they feel some special loyalty to the school?

Salkind: He didn't. I gave Isaac an honorary degree.

When he brought his wife along, we would meet at Margaret Sloss's house. And Isaac was always very friendly and then he became very friendly with the Gettys. And one night, there was a benefit at the Gettys for the Conservatory and Isaac kept us waiting and waiting. He was late, an hour late. And the students were waiting to perform and there were a lot of people there.

And when Isaac finally got there, I finally got up and announced that the late Isaac Stern had arrived. And he didn't like that and I couldn't blame him. But we got over that, and we've been very friendly and I know the whole family now. I had the son, Michael, conduct for the San Francisco Chamber Symphony, of which I'm the artistic director.

Crawford: Oh, is that Jean-Louis le Roux's group?

Salkind: It used to be, yes.

Crawford: Did Menuhin give master classes?

Salkind: Oh, yes. He's done them. I remember Yehudi and I stood on our heads for the whole school before Hellman Hall was built.

Crawford: Why did you do that?

Salkind: I don't know why in the world he did it, but I remember that he was delighted to do it. And I said, "Oh, I can do that." So, I did it, too. We both stood on our heads. We were together.

Crawford: Where?

Salkind: In the auditorium, the little auditorium. I gave Yehudi an honorary degree, of which he has something like 200 or so.

Crawford: He has done master classes.

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: What is the value of a master class?

Salkind: Well, it brings a different viewpoint aside from the teachers. Sometimes much better than the teachers. Sometimes not as good. A master class is very stimulating to the students. It's good for them to see a new face with more experience.

Remembering Outstanding Members of the Faculty

Crawford: What do you remember of the piano faculty in those days? That is not to say the faculty, necessarily, but the pianists in San Francisco. I think Egon Petri came about that time, and Adolph Baller.

Salkind: Yes, Petri was around. Baller is still here. He's on the faculty of the Conservatory. [Adolph Baller has since died.] He was a very good pianist, a very good teacher, I think. Bernhard Abramovitch in Berkeley was very, very good. He was a very good pianist and teacher. And Alexander Liebermann was very well known, a very good teacher.

Crawford: Where was he?

Salkind: He was at Mills for a long time and then when he left Mills he was in private practice.

Crawford: How did Mills draw Milhaud and Liebermann?

Salkind: In those days, Mills was very lively and they were enterprising. And Milhaud loved Mills and Mills loved him. They were great-- they'd have the Budapest String Quartet in the summers. That was the first summer we were here. And they had a lot of chamber music for the summer.

Crawford: I heard that Ada Clement tried to get the Conservatory incorporated with Mills and then with Berkeley when she was getting older and thinking of retirement.

Salkind: Yes, well, I tried with Berkeley too. I met with--was it Clark Kerr? It was Roger Heyns. They both really wanted the Conservatory. It's when we were becoming better known and they wanted to use the Conservatory or the performing arts building in San Francisco. But it really couldn't work. I mean, it would have meant commuting back and forth. Students would have to commute to Berkeley and they really didn't want to do that.

Crawford: What did you think of the new plan when it was chosen?

Salkind: At the Conservatory? Well, I like it now. There was always a big controversy whether we should move the Conservatory downtown in the arts center near the symphony, near the ballet and opera. But it turned out that this is a better location for parents of students in the preparatory department, the children. And that's a large item, with five hundred students in the preparatory department who come--

Crawford: Did you start that department?

Salkind: No, it was already started.

Crawford: So, you felt better about the Conservatory when it moved out of the brownstone on Sacramento?

Salkind: Yes, yes. I did. And there were some wonderful teachers there, Sol Joseph. Do you remember his name? He was a theory teacher. I saw him last week. He's retired now.

Crawford: This was in the early sixties?

Salkind: Yes. Everybody asks about Sol Joseph. Everybody seems to remember him.

Crawford: Who else stood out on the faculty before your time? I guess Margaret Rowell was there?

Salkind: Margaret Rowell. Yes, she was there. And I still see Margaret. She's great.

Crawford: She was special, wasn't she?

Salkind: I loved her, yes. Very special.

Crawford: I was very touched by the tribute to her with all the cellists playing.

Salkind: Oh, yes. Right. Yes, she's a wonderful woman. She and Sol Joseph were the two special ones. Claire James was a very well known English teacher. I mean, she was English, but she was a very good piano teacher. She died recently in England. She was there, oh, long before I was there.

Crawford: There was the First American Composer's workshop, which is pretty impressive. They had Carter, Elliott Carter, and del Tredici. So, people came to San Francisco, even for a short term.

Salkind: Yes. I brought John Adams here. David del Tredici told me, when he was at Harvard, that John Adams was working here as a carpenter. So, I called around and I finally got Oakland. And sure enough he was there and I brought him on the faculty.

III SERVING AS CONSERVATORY PRESIDENT: 1966-1990

[Interview 2: November 30, 1993] ##

A Call at Summer Music Camp

Crawford: Let's begin today by talking about your appointment to the presidency of the Conservatory and how that came about.

Salkind: I believe I told you yesterday that I was at Sun Valley when I was called. They had a summer music camp, and I was head of the piano department there. Jim Schwabacher called. He was on the committee, on the selection committee, and he called and said that Dorian Crocker, who was chair of the board at that time, wanted to meet me.

Crawford: And you mentioned that you weren't interested.

Salkind: I was not interested.

Crawford: According to what I read, it was your wife who said, "Well, why not try it and see?"

Salkind: Well, no. That's not how it happened. I mean, she did say that, but after I had turned Jim down twice, then I said I would talk to Peggy about it. And Peggy said, "Why not, after all your yapping about there not being a good conservatory in the West."

Crawford: Was it still more or less a piano school? Was that its reputation?

Salkind: It really was. But when I said that, some people took offense, like Ernest Bloch's daughters.

Crawford: Oh, was it you who said that?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: Because I know Mrs. Elkus mentioned that she wrote a letter, I think to the *Chronicle* or to *Image* magazine, saying it certainly was not "a little piano school."

Salkind: Yes. Well, from my point of view it was. But then from her point of view, it really wasn't. So, I don't know. She didn't really write the letter. It was Lucienne Bloch who wrote the letter. And I realize why people could take offense at that.

Crawford: Was it published?

Salkind: No, not that I said it. It was really a kind of a total description. You know, I'm embarrassed to say it, but in terms of conservatories in the United States, it was really bad. And there were only forty students and the caliber was not very good. So I could only characterize it as a small piano school. You know, we didn't have any great variety of students and--

Crawford: You changed that measurably.

Salkind: But you can see why I would call it a small piano school. I could also see why Elizabeth Elkus and Lucienne Bloch, who worked very hard at all this--

Crawford: What did Lucienne Bloch do?

Salkind: Well, she didn't do anything, but [she protested] on behalf of her father. She had painted that mural, and that was, well, that was kind of an unhappy experience. I didn't want to say anything, but I didn't realize, I guess.

Crawford: I don't think Mrs. Elkus knew that it was you who said that. She said that it was written in an article somewhere, as I remember.

So then you decided to take the presidency on, when you were finished at Sun Valley.

Salkind: Yes, and it was Peggy who said, "You would be perfect for this," even though I hadn't had any administrative work. So, I did meet with Dorian Crocker--in her bedroom. That was a funny story because they were painting her living room, something like that. So, we met in her bedroom.

Crawford: Was she president of the board?

Salkind: She was chairman of the board, yes.

Crawford: And she offered the position to you then?

Salkind: Well, we talked about it. And yes, she did offer me the position and I told her I would think about it. They had gone to Europe, of course, to see if they could find anybody there. And they couldn't. They checked with Yehudi Menuhin too.

Crawford: They asked if he would be the director?

Salkind: Yes, I think they did ask him to be director. He couldn't. But at that time he had an international career, and he couldn't take this on. So, here I am.

During the course of that time, Peggy and I continued to play together. We practiced every morning and I would start looking at my watch to see what time it was. And Peggy would burst into tears and that's when she said--no, it wasn't then, but I don't know how long after that we [separated]. It was about twenty years. No, fifteen, I guess, years we went on. And we did do a lot of playing, but it wasn't as intense as before.

Crawford: Well, that was a nine-to-five or nine-to-whatever job and it cuts into your life.

Salkind: Yes. And I did everything. I mean, I didn't even have a dean at that point, and I remember Mark, my son, saying, when at one point I was sweeping the auditorium floor as I often did, "Can you imagine the president of Juilliard doing this?" But I had to do everything, and in a way it was really better because now there are so many committees and everything has to be done through faculty and committees and has to have the approval. Now, everything has to have the approval of everybody. And in those days, there was no question. I had to make the decisions and I had a free hand in doing a good many things, and I did.

Crawford: Let me give some figures here as reference points. When you came in as president, there were forty-two students, focused mainly on piano studies, and the school was sustained largely by private donations. Today, nearly thirty years later, there are 270 collegiate students alone, more than 500 preparatory students and as many adults in extension classes, an endowment of \$12.3 million, an annual budget of \$6.2 million, many added departments, and a chamber music department with the first major in the country that has produced quartets such as the Franciscan, Ridge, and Sierra Quartets--all of which grew out of your Chamber Music West program, based on the Marlboro model. An extraordinary success story by any standards!

The Board of Directors in the 1960s

Crawford: Let's begin with the directors. Your board wasn't particularly a working board at the time. Is that right?

Salkind: No, it wasn't really. I said that the board had not been a fund-raising board before that, and now I tried to change the nature of the board.

Crawford: You were an advantageous choice in that you were located in San Francisco. You knew the community and you knew the conservatories elsewhere, unlike somebody who may have come in from Europe, as the board apparently wanted.

Salkind: Or from another city, even. When I went to my first board meeting, the board told me, "We would like a candid report of how you feel about the school." And I went to the board meeting and gave a candid report and Ruth Hellman, who was on the board said, "Oh, Milton, you're a breath of fresh air. This is exactly what we need." And everybody liked it except a couple of people disapproved of what I had to say. I just indicated at that point, I indicated that it was just a small piano school.

And Germaine Thompson, who was on the board then, she has since passed away, and somebody else told me that I should be careful about what I was saying about Robin Laufer. I didn't say anything about him, just about the school. She wasn't aware that I was asked to give a candid report. I went home that night and somebody on the staff, one of the secretaries, said, "Uh, oh. You shouldn't have done that. You shouldn't have said something like that." I thought, oh. It's the first time in my life I was told that I shouldn't have said anything like that. And I thought maybe I should resign--I was really thrown by that.

Crawford: Were there also negative feelings about the Laufer administration?

Salkind: Yes, there certainly were because as soon as I got the appointment, all the faculty started coming in, I mean, not all of them that were there, how they hadn't had any raises and they complained about Laufer.

Crawford: I understand there was a problem because he didn't really relate to the students.

Salkind: Yes, yes. And of course, as always, when the new president comes in, the [faculty] appear and say they've been promised

this and that. Anyway, Edwin Mejia was on the board then. He was like a brother. He was very friendly with me. His sister was the Mother Superior at the Lone Mountain College at that time, and [their brother was] Pui Folger, who is a great friend of Agnes Albert's, from a strong Catholic family. So, Edwin sort of took me in hand and told me what to be careful of, who to be careful of. And he said, "Milton, you really need one friend on the board that you can talk to aside from me." So I chose Ava Jean Pischel, and we have been very good friends ever since.

Crawford: Boards have lots of chemistries going, don't they? Lots of politics.

Salkind: And you have to be very careful of what you say.

Crawford: What did you have to be careful about in particular before the board?

Salkind: Well, talking about how the school was previously. You know, I had to be careful of how I said it, not what I said so much. But anyway, the school took off very soon afterwards. I started out with forty-two students, as I just said, of not very good caliber.

Crawford: Where did you get the additional students?

Salkind: The forty-two students?

Crawford: No, those who came after you became head of the Conservatory. I believe you went up to two hundred rather quickly. Was that your first priority, when you looked at the school--to get a better and larger student body?

Salkind: One of them.

Crawford: How did you recruit the additional students--where did you look?

Salkind: It took a while. We had to let people know what a conservatory was; where it was, but primarily what a real conservatory is. And then I wanted a better faculty, too.

Expanding the Faculty: Paul Hersh to Bobby McFerrin

Crawford: Let's talk about the faculty. Since we last met, Isadore Tinkleman passed away. We've talked about his memorial concert.

Could you describe the qualities of special teachers such as he was?

Salkind: Very much. He was a very human man, and he was sympathetic to all his students. He was born in Portland [Oregon] and he and Bobby Mann [Juilliard String Quartet] went to Juilliard at the same time. He contracted polio, I think it was when he got back from Juilliard.

Crawford: What made him so special?

Salkind: His compassion, and he had knowledge about violin playing that few people have. I often think that because of the fact that he was in a wheelchair and had all these physical handicaps, it made him think more about the violin and that often happens. I think Izzy thought a lot more about what to do with your hands and the bow.

There were students who, when he was ill, flew out from Baltimore--Peabody. Bobby Mann flew out the day before he died and played for him, and he said it was the best lesson he ever had.

Crawford: What would you look for in his replacement?

Salkind: I always looked for a personality that is warm and friendly in addition to a good violinist.

Crawford: When we talk about a new, younger faculty, is there a new way of teaching--a new philosophy?

Salkind: No, the way doesn't change. I've just been reading a lot about piano teaching. No, the way doesn't change.

Crawford: Let's mention some of the faculty you brought in. Andrew Imbrie, Margaret Rowell.

Salkind: She was at San Francisco State and I offered her a job at our school. She stayed at both schools for a while, and then she switched to the Conservatory.

Crawford: And what did she add to the Conservatory?

Salkind: Oh, she added a great deal. I mean she was a lovely person, she had a lot of stature and she no longer played, but she was a great teacher. We have a standing joke, Margaret and I, because at one point, I walked in on a lesson of hers that she was giving. She was flat on the floor, lying down, and she was demonstrating, you know, she had to demonstrate how to handle

the cello bow and that was her way of demonstrating. So, we had a joke about that.

Yes. And then at one point, I hired a Japanese pianist. I was determined that--I said, "Here we are, almost in the twenty-first century, and we're still playing eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music. And we've hardly begun to learn about contemporary music."

So, I hired a Japanese pianist who was an expert on contemporary music. His name was Takahashi. And I was determined that every student had to play a contemporary piece at their juries, every pianist. And so, this man taught every pianist to play a contemporary work. And I don't know how successful it was but that was typical of an idea that I had.

Crawford: At most Eastern conservatories, would that be mandatory?

Salkind: No, not at all. Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia doesn't even have anything later than Stravinsky in its library. At that time it didn't--it may now. I don't know. But it's a very, very conservative school.

Crawford: And Juilliard?

Salkind: Juilliard is much more with it. But they would never do anything like hire a teacher just to do contemporary music.

Crawford: Could you explore that a bit--what works were chosen and how the students reacted to the policy?

Salkind: Takahashi made suggestions and the students worked with him.

Crawford: Imbrie is a well-known composer. How did you engage him and what kind of work did he do at the Conservatory?

Salkind: Well, he was at Cal and I invited him to come to the Conservatory to teach composition.

And then I got Paul Hersh, who was in the Lenox Quartet as a violist, and I invited him to teach piano. John Beckman, who became chairman of the board at a later point, helped me do all this.

Crawford: Financially?

Salkind: No, not financially. But he helped me work out what I had to do in order to get Paul Hersh. He was very fond of Paul.

Crawford: What did you have to do?

Salkind: Well, I had to go to New York and meet him. He was at the college where the Lenox Quartet was. It was in upstate New York, Binghamton.

Crawford: How did you know of him?

Salkind: Oh, the quartet often came to San Francisco. And that caused quite a rift in the quartet because of losing him. But Paul had asked both me and John Beckman to let him know if there were ever any vacancies.

Crawford: How did you make it attractive enough to him to come be on the faculty?

Salkind: Well, he's a very enterprising man. I mean, he was just interested in viola and interested in piano and interested in a lot of other things too.

Crawford: So, you got Paul Hersh and he could teach two instruments.

Salkind: Yes, and John Beckman and I worked together for a long time. So, we figured out ways of making it worth his while. And he and his wife always did love San Francisco. Melanie was from San Francisco.

They had been the quartet in residence and they were on the faculty in Binghamton, New York. And they then were later transferred, moved to Grinnell College in Iowa.

Crawford: Was there upset when he came out here?

Salkind: Yes. And then the quartet broke up afterward, you know.

Crawford: Has Paul Hersh been able to draw exceptional students to the Conservatory? Is that the way it works?

Salkind: Yes, but at this point Paul does not have a lot of piano students. Paul wants to do many things, teach chamber music, classes in humanities--he is very demanding and good for a lot of students. He has high standards and we need that.

Crawford: Well, let's see. How about Jacob Krachmalnick? You got him on the faculty, didn't you?

Salkind: Yes, he was on the faculty. We got to know him through his wife at that time, Corrine Swall, and we knew her, a singer. That goes way back to when we first moved here, because we bought

their 1933 Plymouth. And we were very friendly with Jake at that time. So, Krachmalnick, I think, did not attract many students, but he was a good musician.

Crawford: What are the qualities that make a teacher attractive to students, enough, say, to bring them from other parts of the country?

Salkind: Most students are attracted by a big name, or they have to have confidence in the school to select the right teacher for you. Now students do not always know who the best teachers are, so the teacher must prove him or herself. Students must know that you care. In my opinion, it is not the screamer that does the trick.

Crawford: Who were the faculty members that you brought who actually drew students from across the country?

Salkind: Then I hired Mack McCray.

Crawford: Where did you find him?

Salkind: He studied under the same teacher that I did. I remember sitting at Lincoln Center, sitting on the steps of Lincoln Center with Mack, and he was willing to come for anything. And he was dying to come. He was from Redding, California. No, no, not Redding. Redwood City.

Crawford: So, he wanted to come home.

Salkind: Yes, he came back.

Crawford: What was he doing at the time?

Salkind: He was looking for a job. And he had graduated from Juilliard.

Crawford: Has he been an outstanding teacher?

Salkind: Mack is a popular teacher, especially among Asian students.

Crawford: What about Ivan Tcherepnin?

Salkind: Oh, Ivan Tcherepnin. I brought him.

Crawford: There was a letter from him that he was so grateful to you because you gave him his first teaching job. He's at Harvard now.

- Salkind: He didn't draw students, but he was sort of a name and he was gifted. But a composer almost never draws a lot of students.
- Crawford: Why is that?
- Salkind: Composition is a very difficult subject to teach. It is not as appealing to most young people as piano, voice, or stringed instruments and you really have to be older (for the most part) before you start.
- Crawford: John Adams brought students in?
- Salkind: Not really. John Adams didn't become well-known until he started writing operas. This was why he left the Conservatory-- to allow time to compose.
- Crawford: You brought John Adams in '72. Was he beginning to compose, then?
- Salkind: Oh, yes. And that's why David del Tredici recommended him. David told me that John was a gifted composer.
- Crawford: What were the benefits of having John Adams at the Conservatory? Was he responsible for drawing Reich, et cetera? Did he conduct the orchestra?
- Salkind: Yes, he was responsible for our New Music Ensemble and he also conducted our orchestra. He was a very good conductor.
- Crawford: You could talk a little about Bobby McFerrin because he's become involved with the Conservatory and particularly with you now, as a piano student, and as a faculty member.
- Salkind: Yes. He's coming tomorrow for a lesson. But he wouldn't want you to hear him play. He's an amazing man. Have you heard his recording of his playing with Yo Yo Ma?
- Crawford: Could you tell me about it?
- Salkind: Bobby's a very gifted guy. He was born in New York and he trained in the Juilliard preparatory department. That was the pre-college thing when he was a young boy. And he went into jazz at a very young age--he did nightclub work. I don't know how much he was influenced or who influenced him but he still likes jazz and he does that.
- Crawford: You brought him over to the Conservatory about five years ago. And I'm wondering if that started his forays into classical music. He's being commissioned to write an opera now.

- Salkind: He taught a class, which he called Creativity 101.
- Crawford: Did you think this up?
- Salkind: No, I encouraged him to do it, but I didn't think the title up. He goes to Tanglewood every summer and he's gotten into conducting, which he's always loved to do. Have you ever seen him conduct?
- Crawford: No, I haven't. He's studying with Ozawa now, isn't he?
- Salkind: No, he studied with Gustave Müller, who is at the University of Michigan and who goes to Tanglewood. But this last summer, he had one lesson with Ozawa, who said, "Bobby, you have to learn to play the piano." He can play a little bit, but he's embarrassed about playing. He can't read the left hand very well.
- Crawford: Well, what's your approach to teaching Bobby McFerrin?
- Salkind: The same as everyone else. We talk and I have him play some Mozart, which he does haltingly. But he can sing when he sees something. He can sing it right away.
- Crawford: Does he work at the piano?
- Salkind: He says he practices every day except when he's gone, which is quite often.
- Crawford: Is anything upcoming with him for the Conservatory?
- Salkind: I don't think he's planned anything, but I think he would like to come back.
- Crawford: Is he still teaching Creativity 101?
- Salkind: No. He's not. I wanted to tell you about a Russian student, a young girl who's outstanding. She's eighteen, and her name is Julia Rosenfeld and she came from Moscow.
- Crawford: Where does she study?

Salkind: At the Conservatory with me. And she's a senior so she'll be gone next year. She's at Juilliard now. Her project really is to get back to Russia. She wants to see her friends.

Crawford: Oh, she hasn't been out here all that long?

Salkind: No, only two years. This is her third.

Crawford: What percentage of students come from abroad now?

Salkind: Oh, not that many. I don't think there are more than six.

Major Grants: The San Francisco, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations

Crawford: You brought an ethnomusicologist to the faculty?

Salkind: Yes, I had forgotten about that ethnomusicologist, David Liang. Before that, though, the first grant that the Conservatory ever got, or that I ever got when I was at the Conservatory, was for contemporary music. We got \$25,000 from the San Francisco Foundation for a contemporary music ensemble.

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Crawford: So, this grant came through for contemporary music, or a contemporary music ensemble.

Salkind: A contemporary music ensemble, yes.

Crawford: Was that tied in with the appointment of the ethnomusicologist?

Salkind: Well, no, that wasn't tied in with the grant. That was completely separate.

Crawford: Before we get to the grant, who on the faculty, do you think, was a real plum, somebody that drew students?

Salkind: I think the real plum was the atmosphere.

Crawford: What do you mean?

Salkind: It was sort of a burgeoning atmosphere and you felt that things were about to happen. And they did. That's also when we got a big Ford Foundation grant; when the man, I believe it was Howard Klein of the Ford Foundation, came out to witness what was going

on. He said, "Milton, I'd like to hear somebody play this piano," that was in my office. And I reached out, I went to the door, reached out and it just so happened that a young pianist that I liked was there and happened to be walking past my door and I took him by the arm and dragged him in and I said, "Bob, you want to play something for this gentleman?" So he played, and Howard was very impressed and I guess that wasn't the main reason [he gave the grant]. But the whole warm and humane atmosphere was one of the reasons that we got this big grant.

Crawford: Did you go to the Ford Foundation?

Salkind: Yes. I was in New York a lot then. And I went to see them and they were interested, as all the foundations were; also the Rockefeller Foundation. We got grants from the Ford, San Francisco, Mellon, Skaggs, Rosenberg, and others.

Crawford: That was quite remarkable, because you generated a lot of funding, and I don't think there had been that much fund-raising of that sort here.

Salkind: No. There hadn't been any fund-raising of that sort.

Crawford: Who actually wrote the grant applications and made the contacts with the program people?

Salkind: Oh, well, in the beginning, I did.

Crawford: Did you know the foundation people?

Salkind: Then, yes. And they were impressed, all of them were very impressed with the fact that I had the door open to my office all the time. I can't remember who was especially impressed, but someone was, with the fact that students could come in and borrow a dollar or whatever, you know. And I would give it to them. There was a great deal of trust in those days.

Crawford: Was the first large grant, one of several, to come in from the San Francisco Foundation?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: That was John May, wasn't it?

Salkind: Yes, and he was very friendly with me.

Crawford: And that one was dedicated to a contemporary music ensemble. Was that the Howard Hersh ensemble?

Salkind: Yes, right. Howard Hersh was a musician who was interested only in contemporary music. I haven't heard of him lately, at all. I don't know what's happened to him. But that generated some excitement. Contemporary music concerts did.

Crawford: Twenty-five thousand was a lot in those days.

Salkind: In those days, yes.

Crawford: More specifically, what was the new music program?

Salkind: It was my conviction that our students had to become familiar with more than seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth-century music--we are living in the twentieth century! So I was determined to do this, and the Ford Foundation was interested in this. It became a part of our curriculum and now it is no longer sustained by foundation grants.

Crawford: Then you came up with a five-year plan and approached a number of foundations.

Salkind: Yes [van Loben Sels, Zellerbach, Mary Crocker Trust, the NEA].

Crawford: The Ford Foundation Grant was a large grant, a million dollars to be matched two for one for an endowment fund. When you were interviewed for the philanthropy series in 1976 you had raised \$1,600,000 toward that match. You had also raised a million dollars for the building program. How did you go about raising that money--what was your approach?

Salkind: Hard work. It was very exciting. I sat down with heads of corporations, my private contacts, friends. In large part it was conviction and passion, just what I try to instill in my students.

Crawford: You have a remarkable record as a fund-raiser.

Salkind: If anybody had told me I'd end up being, as Sally Lilienthal said, the best fund-raiser in town, I would have been horrified. But it takes a lot of work. You have to involve yourself in a great many things and meet people.

Crawford: Is it still possible to call personally on corporate presidents?

Salkind: I think it is. I have a certain sense of perspective, and I think I know whom I can and can't approach. So I did that. It takes a certain amount of daring, and at the same time a certain amount of reticence to do that. It takes shyness in a way and persistence.

Crawford: What was Paul Resnick's responsibility as director of administration?

Salkind: I gave Paul his first job. I had a lot of confidence in Paul and he warranted that confidence by working hard, coming up with new names, pushing old names, always helping me keep an eye on the budget.

Crawford: How about scholarships? Had there been scholarships before?

Salkind: There had been, but very few. There was the Ada Clement Scholarship. Those were just awards and we didn't even name them.

Crawford: At one point, the figure for students receiving aid, including the California State Scholarship Program, was 65 percent. You got a large grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for scholarships. Did you go personally to Rockefeller?

Salkind: Oh, yes.

Attracting New Students

Crawford: What about the student body?

Salkind: Well, I think more and more, I'm convinced that the atmosphere drew students in. They heard about it. At that time, the Asians were not a big factor. And the students that did come in were mostly from the West, a few from the East and some from the Midwest. But they were up and down the coast. That's one thing the Lenox Quartet did. [They came in 1969 for a four-week workshop and] it attracted students from Curtis and Juilliard, New England, and Peabody.

Crawford: How did you get them to come?

Salkind: Well, I went back East and announced auditions for this. And Peter Oundjian came out here, and then he went back and talked about us and then that's how it happened. We started getting these students from the East. I can't tell you how many, though.

Asian Students and the "Asian Mother"

Crawford: You mentioned Asian students. How many Asian students now?

Salkind: At least half or 60 percent now.

Crawford: What does this do to the Conservatory?

Salkind: Well, it's very good because for one thing, they're now more prosperous than we are. Most of the time, they don't need any scholarship help. The Chinese occasionally do, like my student Michael Tan. I think it's lifted the level of the Conservatory.

Crawford: In other words, the other students have to come up to the level?

Salkind: Or else they'll be known as the poor American students. There's no such thing as a Jewish mother anymore. It's the Asian mother that's constantly there behind them pushing. [See more on pp. 70, 71.]

Crawford: Your first year, you had a big fiftieth anniversary celebration and Eugene Ormandy came.

Salkind: Yes, the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Crawford: That was quite impressive. Did you arrange that?

Salkind: Yes, yes. I was sort of the public relations, too, because we didn't have a P.R. office.

Community Service

Crawford: You've said that the community music program was very important to you. Do you want to talk about that?

Salkind: Oh, yes. The community service program. Well, I think I told you yesterday that my big cry was that we could pursue musical excellence and at the same time be of service to the community. So I started this community service program. It started out as a class. We selected the class and I had somebody in charge of that. Mack McCray originally did it, but it got too much for him and he couldn't do it anymore.

Crawford: How was the class structured?

Salkind: People had to sign up. We had to audition them and then if they were good enough, we sent them out into the community. And they got paid a little something for that and they got credit for it, too. And that was one of the grants we got. I can't remember who gave us the grant.

So we started performing in hospitals, jails. And I remember, I'd run along to one jail with them. It was around Christmas time, or right before. We went to the women's jail in San Francisco and students performed and we were all in tears, you know, as certain women got up and said that this was their first time in jail and they wanted us to know how much they appreciated what we did. And it was very moving, the whole experience. And let's see, oh, museums and hospitals, jails. We did a big thing at the Bank of America.

Crawford: This takes a lot of arranging. Who did the arrangements?

Salkind: Well, by then I had a dean. Larry Snyder was the dean. Between us we arranged all these things. We became busy and popular fast. People called about weddings and bar mitzvahs and all kinds of affairs--sometimes parties, and just performances.

Crawford: Was the program one of a kind?

Salkind: Yes, it was. But after I brought Mack McCray to New York with me to a meeting of the Association of Independent Conservatories and had him talk about what our community service was like, a couple of years later they all started community service programs on their own.

Crawford: Well, that's a wonderful program. Is that what you're proudest of?

Salkind: I think so, because I was determined to make the music education and performance the thing. And it's what I try to tell students even now, that they can't expect to just be a performer. They have to learn all kinds of things. And they have to learn to teach, to perform chamber music and solo; they have to be prepared to do all that.

Crawford: Did students continue community involvement as professionals?

Salkind: We have no record of students' involvement (after they graduated), but I am certain they all became very aware of what community service is.

- Crawford: I notice here in 1969, the Composer's Forum was established with a pretty impressive slate. Aaron Copland participated. And Andrew Imbrie. What did that amount to?
- Salkind: That had already been formed when I came. Peggy and I were very active in that and it was already established. But we went to a Composer's Forum and there were twenty-five people there. It was not very popular.
- Crawford: Did it build?
- Salkind: Well, through the Conservatory, we created a bigger interest in contemporary music.
- Crawford: Was that aligned with the new music ensemble or was that something different?
- Salkind: The contemporary music ensemble was something different than the Composer's Forum.
- Crawford: What form did the Forum take?
- Salkind: They just played contemporary music. They did one or two concerts at the Conservatory, but they [mostly] performed at the Museum of Modern Art.
- Crawford: Was Aaron Copland involved with the Conservatory other than that?
- Salkind: No, but I did give him an honorary degree.
- Crawford: What does that mean to a composer like Copland and was he present to receive it?
- Salkind: I am not sure, but he was there to receive it and was very eloquent and gracious about it.

The Chamber Music Program

- Crawford: What about the chamber music program?
- Salkind: After the Lenox Quartet came here in 1969, I thought that we should really pursue chamber music. And now we have enough gifted students of our own, we don't need to go to Juilliard or Curtis, Peabody, New England any longer. Then I started this Chamber Music West Summer Music Festival. And that was

difficult, but it was very successful. We had the Juilliard Quartet and big-name quartets [such as] the Tokyo Quartet.

Crawford: In residence, more or less.

Salkind: Yes, a couple weeks at a time in the summer. And then we had Bonnie Hampton on the faculty and Nathan Schwartz. They're married and they're a team.

Crawford: When did you start Chamber Music West?

Salkind: Nineteen seventy-seven.

Crawford: Was that costly?

Salkind: It was. Everything was costly.

Crawford: Well, how did you raise the money for Chamber Music West?

Salkind: I went to individual people and we budgeted that. It seems to me that I convinced the board that that was very important and we had to do chamber music because chamber music was a vital aspect of music training. And I thought that we didn't have to have the emphasis on solo performances. So, they were sold on this idea.

Crawford: They were. And then the Juilliard Quartet came for a month at a time?

Salkind: No, more like a week at a time.

Crawford: And they taught intensively during that time?

Salkind: Yes. And then, for a couple of years, I had a junior Chamber Music West, which Peter Oundjian headed.

Crawford: How long did Chamber Music West survive?

Salkind: Well, it still survives in a way. Colin Murdoch could pursue it more, but I know his priorities are different than mine.

Crawford: How so?

Salkind: Because as things got more financially difficult, he had to prioritize.

Crawford: But in the summer, how long did it go?

Salkind: Oh, about twelve years.

Crawford: And then it just became too costly?

Salkind: Yes, so they incorporated it in the academic year.

Crawford: Yes, I know Mrs. Albert helped with that, didn't she?

Salkind: Yes, and Mrs. Albert was always a very good friend.

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Crawford: Was Margaret Rowell an important part of that program?

Salkind: Yes, and she represents the same kind of conviction that I do, and all her students come back and still see her.

Crawford: Yes, they love her very much. Was she instrumental in the chamber music program, I mean, apart from her teaching, and of course and the cello club, was she instrumental in pushing chamber music and getting more of it?

Salkind: Well, actually Bonnie Hampton did more. Bonnie was a student of hers. And Bonnie's been there at the Conservatory for a long, long time. And Margaret was sort of getting older and she was retired, too. She always loved chamber music, and she pushed it whenever she could. But Bonnie was really the one who did that.

Crawford: The master's degree in chamber music, which you established, what does it mean exactly and what does it produce?

Salkind: You know, I don't really like titles like that. But it means more accreditation and colleges more and more won't take anybody that doesn't have a master's or a doctor's degree.

Crawford: You mean in terms of teaching.

Salkind: Yes, yes. And I wouldn't give a doctor's degree in music, but, you know, Juilliard does and New England does. I don't really believe in that.

Crawford: How long does that degree stretch your conservatory training out to be?

Salkind: It takes about two years to get a master's degree. It takes about four years to get a doctor's degree. So, that's about eight years.

Crawford: Do all eastern conservatories have that degree?

Salkind: No, not all. Mannes doesn't. But Manhattan does--they all have to compete with each other so they do it. I don't know whether they believe in it or not but I don't. It just means you have to read more, play more--you don't really have to play more. You have to be skilled in literature.

Crawford: You think maybe it's too long to stay in school, that one should be out there performing?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: The Franciscan Quartet, all of whom studied here, were in residence at Yale in 1986?

Salkind: Yes.

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Crawford: Well, we should talk here about Hellman Hall because that was a signal advance that you made. Tell me how that came about.

Salkind: Yes, well, he wanted to do something for his wife, Ruth, who was on our board and she had died. And so I met with him and with Nancy Bechtle, who was Marco Hellman's daughter. She's now president of the Symphony. And Ruth loved many people and she was always very friendly to me and so Marco Hellman thought that this would be a natural thing to do.

Crawford: And did he fund it solely?

Salkind: No, not solely. We got other people to help and I can't remember who. It was Joan [Mrs. William] Roth and others on our board. We got funding from a lot of different people.

"Milton's Follies": Adding to the Board

Crawford: You mentioned that you worked to build up the board during your first years. Whom did you add during those years?

Salkind: Mrs. Eugene Shurtleff and Mrs. June Kingsley, Jerry Kingsley's wife. She later became chair of the board and is a great friend of mine. All these people were added then--oh, I wanted to try all kinds of people on the board. I thought there should be a great mixture. At one point, some of the board and I jokingly

referred to "Milton's Follies". I put Bill Graham on the board. And he wasn't any help at all.

Crawford: Was he too busy promoting?

Salkind: He was, all right. One year, he did arrange for the community service people to come to his house. He liked the cello. So, I sent some people over. But he didn't contribute very much. And then at one point I had Enrico Banducci on our board.

Crawford: That was a very colorful board!

Salkind: Yes, and he brought Bill Cosby. And Bill Cosby gave a benefit and Frank Foster played the violin, I remember that. Frank Foster was black, a black student. He played the violin very well. And Enrico also played the violin. So, he got Bill Cosby to come in, not to the Conservatory but to Enrico's [Restaurant] to do a benefit for us.

Crawford: Who came to the benefit?

Salkind: Oh, everybody came. I mean, Enrico's was filled.

Crawford: When was that?

Salkind: In the seventies.

Crawford: How long were Banducci and Graham on your board?

Salkind: Well, Graham was on two or three years. Before I forget, Ray Taliaferro was another one. He's a black commentator. He didn't do anything either, though he did promise to give me a list of black millionaires in the Bay Area. He did not.

Crawford: Did they come to board meetings?

Salkind: Once or twice. But it was an experiment, and I had to go through with it.

Crawford: Good for you. Well, who were some of the other so-called follies?

Salkind: Let's see, I can't think of anybody else. But at one point, there was a St. Milton's Guild. [laughter]

Crawford: St. Milton's Guild was a lady's guild?

Salkind: Yes. At that point everybody thought I was great and everybody loved me and all that, you know. So there was a big sign in the

bookstore, I think it was in the bookstore, called St. Milton's Guild.

Crawford: And what did the guild do?

Salkind: Oh, they helped with the bookstore and they had programs and various little fund-raising things.

Crawford: How much bigger is the board today?

Salkind: Oh, I guess near forty people.

Crawford: You must have an executive committee, then, and smaller groups that meet.

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: Who are the people who are most active?

Salkind: June Kingsley is one. She was in charge of major fund-raising and when I was president, she raised over two million dollars for our endowment.

Crawford: There had been nothing in the way of an endowment before your time?

Salkind: There had been nothing. Peter Mennin always said it's foolish to start any conservatory without at least twenty million dollars, so we were highly determined to do half of that anyway.

Crawford: Was your board instrumental? Did they raise most of it, the two million dollar match for the Ford Foundation?

Salkind: Oh, yes. And we got some foundation money, Kresge money, for Hellman Hall. [The board] helped with that, and the family gave around \$600,000.

Crawford: What does that represent for the Conservatory?

Salkind: Hellman Hall? It's one of the nicest auditoriums in the Bay Area or anywhere in California, I think.

Crawford: It has about three hundred seats?

Salkind: Three-fifty.

Crawford: We don't have many theaters that size these days.

Salkind: No, no. Because they're not money-making.

Crawford: Right. Is the hall utilized by the community very much?

Salkind: No, it can't be because we're too busy. I mean we have too many recitals. We have junior recitals, senior recitals, orchestra concerts, and the Preparatory Department recitals.

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Crawford: You were quoted once as saying that you were looking for board members who had nothing else to do, who were totally focused. Did you find these rare creatures?

Salkind: When did I say that? [laughter]

Crawford: I saw it in a newspaper story that was written about the time of the seventy-fifth anniversary.

Salkind: Oh. I don't think you can ever get totally focused. Well, I think June Kingsley was. And at one point, Ava Jean Pischel [Brumbaum] was. And John Beckman was. He came out to the Conservatory several times a week to work with me. And I think he was an example of a totally focused person.

Crawford: So you had a really dedicated board. Was it ever largely a Jewish board, given the fact that Jewish philanthropy has historically been important here?

Salkind: No, it was largely un-Jewish. Well, Jim Schwabacher and Dan Koshland, who wasn't in my time, but he was a very good friend. He was on the board, and Morty Fleischhacker. Didi Boring is now chair, but she's not Jewish.

Crawford: What has Mr. Schwabacher's role been at the Conservatory? Did he start the vocal department?

Salkind: No, he didn't. But he certainly helped with it. He was a strong supporter of the voice department, and of the school in general.

The Vocal Department and a Traditional Messiah

Crawford: What is the quality of the vocal department as it's developed?

Salkind: Well, now we have Hermann le Roux as chair. And there are many, many voice students out there. Yes, Hermann is on the voice faculty, and he's managed to attract a great many young people,

preparatory students. He has many more than he can handle. And in opera--Wendy Hoffman is a graduate. She's at the Metropolitan Opera. And Wendy Hillhouse. She's another one at the Metropolitan Opera and here, too. And John DeCarlo. Chester Patton is a black singer, and he's in the opera here. And Steven Guggenheim.

Crawford: He took the lead in *Titus* this season, didn't he?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: Speaking of opera, I saw *Transformations* at the Conservatory last year, and you must have brought Conrad Susa on to the faculty?

Salkind: He's on the faculty, yes. I brought him on. I had met him in Carmel at that theater south of Carmel. And then I later met him here and I invited him on the faculty. It was a gradual thing but there was a kind of ambiance and excitement and it grew.

Crawford: Has Mr. Schwabacher been as involved as he has been with the Merola program?

Salkind: He and Didi Boring are on a committee to raise money for an Isaac Stern chair. So, he is very involved.

Crawford: Didn't you establish some chairs?

Salkind: Yes, I did. Jim Schwabacher himself did a voice chair. He's funding it still.

Crawford: A voice chair. And who has that chair?

Salkind: Well, we aren't naming it. Did I mention Sylvia Anderson? She is a former opera singer with the San Francisco Opera and she's on the faculty. I got her on and she's living here now with her son and her husband.

Crawford: Is the vocal department quite strong? Is it where you would like to have it be?

Salkind: Not yet.

Crawford: Well, let's talk about the Conservatory *Messiah*, which started in 1979 and has since become a major holiday tradition here.

Salkind: Yes. Well, Brayton Wilbur, who was president of the Symphony at that time, always says, "Milton, we should have done that. The

Symphony should have done that." He'll never get over the fact that we did it.

Crawford: That was a coup. How did you happen to come up with the idea for that?

Salkind: Well, it happened because this woman, whose name was Alice Foster, in our business office said, "Why don't we do a *Messiah*?" At that time, I didn't like the idea because we didn't have enough good singers or orchestra players, and I just didn't think we could handle it. But then a few years later I saw on TV a sing-it-yourself *Messiah*--it wasn't called that--from Chicago. And it was pretty dull, I thought, but I thought it would be great to have everybody come in and sing the work here. So, I did that and then KQED televised it for several years.

Crawford: I participated in a sing-along a long time ago in a church here. Was that part of your effort or was that something else?

Salkind: No, no. Ours opened at the Opera House.

Crawford: Who conducted?

Salkind: Lou Magor. And then he moved to Seattle, and now we have Michael Barrett, who's a graduate of the Conservatory. And we used to engage singers because nobody was, again, good enough to sing solo. But we have auditions now.

Crawford: From among the students?

Salkind: Marcia Ehrlich runs some sing-it-yourself choruses. She doesn't conduct them but she administers the program. They have a big weekend in which they do nothing but sing the *Messiah*.

Crawford: At the Conservatory?

Salkind: No, it's at an out-of-town place. It's up in the Sierras, somewhere. I think it's the Sierras. And Michael Savage, the former chair of the board, goes there, and they have a great time.

Crawford: So, it's really developed into an enterprise of a sort.

Salkind: Yes, we make quite a bit of money out of that. It's our only big fund-raiser now.

Crawford: Could you estimate how much has been raised by the *Messiah*?

Salkind: Well, the Opera House sold out two nights the first year.

Crawford: Is it still televised?

Salkind: Well, not now, because, as you know, televising is terribly expensive.

Crawford: Do you place chorus or professional singers in among the audience as "anchorpersons"?

Salkind: No, we don't. We did have, when I was president, choruses from outside, and anybody else can join them. It's a great event, and I get a big kick out of watching.

I started to talk a little bit about Michael Barrett. He was one of Leonard Bernstein's assistants in New York and he married a local girl, another violist, Leslie Tomkins. Both are Conservatory graduates. And he has a very appealing way of doing this. He's very different from Lou.

Crawford: How did the two styles differ?

Salkind: Lou was very colorful and joked a lot and he sort of dwindled away. And Michael Barrett joked but not excessively. The styles aren't that different. But they are different personalities.

Crawford: How did the audiences respond to the two--any measurable differences?

Salkind: I don't like comparisons. They both filled Davies Symphony Hall and they both have very different styles.

Crawford: What was the Quartetathon? You had that in 1979, the same year as the first *Messiah*.

Salkind: Our idea was to play all the Beethoven quartets. Oh, that's another thing that I started. In addition to the Quartetathon, we had marathons every year. So, the Quartetathon had different quartets, and a local one that started up just to do this, to perform all the Beethoven quartets. And then one year we had the Amadeathon, I think we called it, or an all-Mozart marathon. The whole day we'd have refreshments. We'd sell refreshments. And then we had the wall-to-wall Brahms. It was always a Sunday, I guess. I should know whether that's still going on. I don't think it is.

Crawford: And the idea was to give the students exposure?

Salkind: Well, not only the students, but the community.

Crawford: And did that do well?

Salkind: It did. It was free, and it was public relations and for educational purposes. And it was [effective].

Crawford: You're very good at that. You've come up with some real stars.

The Conservatory Orchestra

Crawford: The development of the Conservatory orchestra. Let's talk a little bit about that, where it was when you started and what you feel has been done.

Salkind: When I started, nobody knew what a tie was and they wore blue jeans--they wore anything. And then gradually, I started to organize it a little better. Jean-Louis le Roux was the conductor then, and Marta, his wife, was on the faculty at this point.

Crawford: Wonderful piano player.

Salkind: Yes, she is. And she and I were very friendly. But Jean-Louis couldn't control the young people every time.

Crawford: Really? Why?

Salkind: You know, he was a very sweet guy, nice, gentle. But I had to make a change there, so I did not renew his contract.

Crawford: Is that when he formed the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players; about that time?

Salkind: No, he first was the San Francisco Ballet conductor. And then he gradually got out of the Ballet Orchestra and the Opera and he formed the Players.

Crawford: Did you then get Denis de Coteau?

Salkind: No, I think we had several in between there. We had George Cleve for a while, until that got out of hand.

Crawford: How did that get out of hand?

Salkind: He had a terrible temper. And he started to pull out telephones from the wall and that kind of thing. He had big fights. He had a girlfriend who happened to be the concertmistress. So, they had fights in front of the whole orchestra, and so I had to make a change there. And finally we got Denis, who's been very good for us.

Crawford: What are his special qualities?

Salkind: Good musician, humane, not a screamer.

Crawford: How much activity is there for the orchestra?

Salkind: Oh, they rehearse three times a week for two hours.

Crawford: And credit is given for that?

Salkind: Oh, yes. It's a very good orchestra.

Crawford: Let's talk about the relation of the students with the youth symphony.

San Francisco Youth Symphony

Salkind: About one third of the orchestra of our preparatory department makes up the youth orchestra. It was a very touchy thing when the youth orchestra started. I was all for the youth orchestra, but it meant that our students had to give up something. We worked it out finally, and the youth symphony is very, very good. Several of our people have been soloists with the symphony, and even this year, one of my students in the preparatory department was selected to be a soloist. The youth symphony this year is going to play the Rachmaninoff Variations on a Theme of Paganini.

Crawford: They're attached to the symphony?

Salkind: Yes, yes. Agnes Albert is a great guide of that. She didn't found it but it was a long-time idea of hers to have a youth symphony.

Crawford: What kind of collaboration is there between the Conservatory and the Symphony and Opera?

Salkind: We have faculty members who are in both Symphony and Opera orchestras. Currently our graduates are now in both orchestras.

Crawford: I read that Kurt Masur once suggested that 80 percent of an orchestra should come from the local or regional conservatory.

Salkind: Yes--we had lunch together and I think he was referring to his orchestra, the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. We aren't there yet, but the numbers are growing. But I told you about the Symphony tickets, and that took a long time [to get through]. I am on the Symphony board, and at the Opera, I think we can get students in at the last minute. You know, rush tickets. But they have to buy them. They don't get anything free.

Crawford: How is it at Juilliard? Is there more collaboration, because there's so much musical activity?

Salkind: I don't think there is.

Crawford: How about collaboration or some kind of association with Berkeley and Stanford?

Salkind: Well, I did have some connection with Stanford and Berkeley but it wasn't any formal relationship. Berkeley gave me the Berkeley Medal, they call it.

Crawford: It's the highest honor, isn't it?

Salkind: Yes. And I have a free parking place whenever I want to use it in Berkeley. But I mean, that indicates that there was a recognition of the Conservatory.

Questions About Curriculum

Crawford: Well, we haven't talked about curriculum. What were the major curriculum changes that you made?

Salkind: Let me say this. I didn't believe and I don't believe yet in WASC, which is the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. I know Colin spends a great deal of time on that. And that's something that I don't really believe in.

Crawford: Is it too insular?

Salkind: Well, it's too academic. You see, WASC insists that there be a certain number of academic subjects taught at the Conservatory, including some kind of science and math and, you know, all these things really take away time. And I think what they don't understand is that the students in the Conservatory must be

obsessed. They really have to be obsessed. It takes four and five hours a day just to practice, and, you know, I just don't believe in training young musicians who are serious to be professionals unless they can devote those four or five hours to practice.

Crawford: How did you resolve that?

Salkind: Well, I didn't resolve it. I mean, I just didn't really pay much attention to it.

Crawford: Are those simply requirements for accreditation?

Salkind: Yes. And Colin does pay attention to that and that's, I think, to the loss of other things.

Crawford: Do they have to have science?

Salkind: If you belong to WASC, there has to be a science, and at the Conservatory we try to make it acoustics. But I don't hold much faith in that. So, I think this idea of making conservatories more academic [is unworkable]. This is what's happening to Juilliard now, although they don't belong to an association like WASC.

Crawford: How are they changing their focus?

Salkind: Well, they're making it more academic and they're taking in fewer pianists and fewer violinists and they're just making the whole curriculum academic.

Crawford: Is the focus shifting away from performance?

Salkind: I think so. They don't say that but that's in effect what happens.

Crawford: And that's not a good thing.

Salkind: I don't think so. One of my first brochures was a picture of the symphony with a big hole in the middle and a picture of the players inside. It was entitled "Where do they come from?" And I think that says what I believe. You know, the players have to come from the people and music has to be part of their lives. And it can't be just a little bit. It has to be totally part of their lives.

Crawford: Was your focus to have one-on-one music instruction?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: And how important a part was theory?

Salkind: Oh, that was important, too. Yes, theory, harmony, and ear training. All that goes with it.

Crawford: But you didn't like the science. What else was involved? Humanities?

Salkind: Yes, well, humanities I believe in. We have courses in the humanities, including English, history, French, Italian, German. I think Dorothy Steinmetz now is head of that, head of that department. And we have to teach languages and I believe in that, too.

Jobs for Conservatory Graduates

Crawford: What about student placement?

Salkind: We do have a student placement office and we can make recommendations. So we do that.

Crawford: How many of the graduates go with symphony orchestras when they finish at the Conservatory?

Salkind: Colin has the latest figures on that, but I think almost all of our students really go into music. I mean, at Juilliard they don't, but they're a much larger school. They have dance and theater and music.

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Salkind: We were talking about the curriculum?

Crawford: The placement of students, I think.

Salkind: Yes. You asked what number of graduates go into symphonies. I think about 25 percent go into symphonies.

Crawford: And what percent teach?

Salkind: Oh, you know, a lot of our faculty is in the symphony. So, almost all of them do some teaching and a small percentage does just chamber music.

Crawford: Did you get to a point where the faculty's salaries would be comparable with Eastern schools?

Salkind: Yes, although Juilliard is a prime example of paying terribly.

Crawford: What's the range for professors?

Salkind: Well, most of the teachers are part-time. And so, when I was there, Juilliard was really very well-known for paying terribly. I mean, they were the lowest of the low because everybody [wanted] to say they teach at Juilliard. And then on the outside, you get three times as much because you teach at Juilliard.

Crawford: So, in other words, the rate here would probably be better.

Salkind: Well, probably now. But now everything has changed and we've got some grants for salary increases. And I think our salaries certainly compare with [those on] the East Coast. But I don't know how they are now.

Crawford: What percentage of the faculty are full-time?

Salkind: I think maybe 15 percent.

IV AN APPROACH TO TEACHING: "FLEXIBILITY AND CARING"

Putting a Vision in Place

Crawford: I wanted to talk a bit about this article from the *Chronicle* by Joshua Kosman in which Jeff Kahane says of the faculty in the 1970s: "The people who are now among the most distinguished faculty members, people like Adams or Hersh or McCray--had just joined, and there was a sense that Milton had a vision that he was putting in place." He goes on: "The remarkable thing was that he resisted the temptation to make this like other schools. He wanted to make it a world-class institution on his own terms, not the Curtis Institute of the West." Do you agree with that?

Salkind: Yes. Jeffrey Kahane was very special to me because he was very, very gifted. And when he went to Juilliard, he studied with Irwin Freundlich, whom I studied with. They said, "Why did you change teachers so much at the Conservatory? You've practically studied with everybody." And they couldn't understand that. But we had, at the time, a very inflexible policy, and [although] I didn't allow students to jump around from teacher to teacher, Jeffrey used to go play for various people, including me, and then he studied with Mack McCray for one year. He studied with Paul Hersh one year. He studied with Nathan Schwartz one year.

And he, as a result, he went to Juilliard one year, hated it and then he came back to graduate. I mean, he had been here one year, and I encouraged him to go to Juilliard for a year, where he studied with my teacher. And then he came back here to graduate.

Crawford: What was it about it that he didn't like?

- Salkind: He didn't like the atmosphere. He thought it was too cold and nobody seemed to really care. And that's what he really loved about this place.
- Crawford: So, you were much more flexible.
- Salkind: Yes, and more caring.
- Crawford: Well, I guess that's what John Adams is saying here. "What I enjoyed about the Conservatory is that they didn't have the heavy lines of authority that you have in the big universities. My first year, I taught a course in contemporary music and a graduate class in analysis and gave private clarinet lessons. Over my ten years, I've taught all kinds of things, which is what it made it so much fun."
- Salkind: He was a clarinetist. He was a conductor, too. I let him conduct a couple of times.
- Crawford: So, then, if a faculty member came forward with an idea for something novel, it was okay?
- Salkind: Yes. You know, I really believe in imagination and flexibility. And if you don't have those, I don't think you'll have much of a conservatory.

Faculty Juries: Traveling to Moscow, Beijing, and Paris

- Crawford: Let's talk about the faculty juries. What was the tenor of their approach?
- Salkind: Faculty juries. Well, some of them, for instance, on the piano faculty, we have very sort of gentle juries. I mean, friendly and caring, I think. But some, the string faculty [especially], was always very sort of stiff and rigid and the students had to play certain things. The pianists have to play certain things, too, but I always thought it was very different. And I talked to the string faculty at one point and I think they did get better. I mean, they were more caring.
- Crawford: Margaret Rowell said that, too. She said they insisted on such technical perfection, she thought the students lost something during her years.
- Salkind: Yes. I was going to mention Margaret. Yes. But juries are always very different and I tried always to make them a little

more compassionate, you know, because it's very difficult to get up and perform for a small group of people and pretend that you're playing for a large audience. I went to the Soviet Union at one point. They invited me to visit their conservatories. It was at the time when the San Francisco Symphony went over there and I was interested in the conservatories. And I went at the time of the juries, the Moscow Conservatory juries.

Crawford: What year was that?

Salkind: Nineteen seventy-four or five. And I was especially [interested] that they were very non-compassionate. They couldn't seem to put themselves in the place of the students.

Crawford: How were those conducted?

Salkind: Very formally and very rigidly. The students would all come out and bow. I sat with the faculty in the balcony. The students would all bow to the faculty and then they would sit down and play, and they played for fifteen minutes or whatever it was. I didn't think they were any better than our students. They didn't make any technical errors but I had a very cold feeling about it.

Then I went to China because China invited me to visit their conservatories. I went to Shanghai and to Beijing, and in Shanghai Agnes Albert and I had a project. We were going to select five students, and then Agnes couldn't go. She had to go to London. We were going to select five students, bring them over here, put them on scholarship and see how they did.

Crawford: When was this?

Salkind: That was in 1980. It was after I went to the Soviet Union.

Crawford: Hadn't the Opera already made some incursions into the conservatory in Beijing?

Salkind: Yes, that was later. We went before all the Asian students started to come over; there were a few but not that many. I thought that was a market we should invest in. So, I went to China and they treated me royally. I had chauffeurs and a car and all that. And they had banquets for me and I had auditions that I set up beforehand. I auditioned for two days--two to three. And then I went to Beijing and I made a selection--I chose five students. Chun Mo, Little Mo we call her, she's now in the San Francisco Symphony. And Paner Ying, who got married and is now playing in New York.

Crawford: These are string players?

Salkind: No, no. Oh, everything. They were string and piano. I had two pianists and three string players. Lee Weigang had started his own quartet, very successfully, in New York. So, he called it the Shanghai Quartet. Oh, Jue, who's a violinist, now is recording in Taiwan and is doing well in New York. And Lee-Jian, a pianist who, he was sort of the bad boy of the group. More appealing but the worst behaved.

We kept them here for more than a year. Then they all went back. They had to go back when the tennis player, the Chinese tennis player, I've forgotten her name, defected. And China got frightened and they recalled everybody. But they all came back. They went back to China and then the following year, they all came back.

They're all doing very well. Now, they've graduated. We put them on scholarships but we had a terrible time. We put them in a house near the Conservatory and none of the girls could cook and none of the boys could cook either. But we had the help of Bill Wu, the Chinese art scholar who travels to China and takes tours.

Crawford: How did he help you? Financially, you mean?

Salkind: No, no. He helped us with the languages. Zaven Melikian taught one of them violin, and Izzy Tinkleman taught another one. He was one that I brought to the Conservatory as I mentioned to you before. He attracted students. He's in a wheelchair now. He had polio when he was young and he's been in a wheelchair ever since.

Crawford: How long has he been at the Conservatory?

Salkind: About fifteen years, or twenty. He was from Oregon and was a friend of Isaac Stern's. He's turned out some very good students and they still come back to work with him.

Crawford: He's still on the faculty?

Salkind: Yes. And students from the East come to work with him.¹

Crawford: And he took some of these Chinese students?

Salkind: Yes, and Lee Weigand, the violinist who started the Shanghai Quartet and Little Mo, who's in the Symphony.

Crawford: Who went on the delegation to China?

¹Izzy Tinkelman died January 29, 1994.

Salkind: Just I.

Crawford: How did you go about making the arrangement to do this in Shanghai?

Salkind: Well, I wrote to the head of the Conservatory and told him what I was interested in. He wrote back and said, "Come ahead. You can be our guest while you're here." They didn't pay my way. They never do.

Crawford: Does the style of playing differ in the two countries as much as vocal styles?

Salkind: The piano style does not differ. I mean, they needed help but nothing that our students didn't need.

Crawford: That's a wonderful story, particularly the success of it. Any other trips like that sort of outreach program that you did?

Salkind: Well, in France, the French government invited me, too. I went to Paris. It was just Paris and Lyons. But in Paris the whole approach was very, very different because it was, again, much more rigid. They just had to play certain things and it just was so different. I can't really describe the way they had to do it. It was much, much stricter than our whole approach. And it was much more formalized in the sense that they just had to do everything. They had to pass certain requirements, and it wasn't like our juries. And you know, the whole thing that struck me in France and Russia and in China, too, was that I thought there was no sense of compassion and no putting yourself in their place. If you made a mistake, that was it.

Some Outstanding Students

Crawford: Was this the trip when you met the talented Chinese student?

Salkind: No. Michael Tan came over here. He and his mother came over here from China.

Crawford: And how did they know to contact you?

Salkind: He enrolled in the high school of the arts. What do they call it?

Crawford: School of the Arts--SOTA?

Salkind: The art school. A spinoff from the High School of Music and Art in New York. So, one day this young man and his mother just walked into my office. He'd been in the school, here, and a teacher who's a graduate of the Conservatory said, "Oh, we can't do anything for you; you better contact Mrs. Kurka at the Conservatory." Mrs. Kurka is the head of the preparatory department.

And so his mother and he came into my office and I said, "Do you speak any English?" And he said no, he couldn't. And I said to his mother, "How long have you been here?" She said ten days. They already had a piano. And that indicates how focused they were. And I said, "Would you play something?" So, he sat down and he played several things. And I knew this was it. I mean, the minute he touched the piano, I knew that he knew what he was doing.

He was here for three years. He graduated from his high school, and he was determined to get away from his family. He was very bright. He wrote poetry. I raised money for him to study English here with Dorothy Steinmetz at the Conservatory. But I've never known a student like that.

Well, just now I stopped in New York on my way to Europe to see my daughter and also to see Michael. And I stopped on the way back. He told me he's writing a book in Chinese on philosophy and art and poetry. I said, "Michael, did Juilliard give you a scholarship to do that?" And he laughed. But he's a very unusual young man. He will be heard from.

Crawford: He's at Juilliard now?

Salkind: Yes, and he said, "At Juilliard two courses, ear training and humanities, were terrible, were ridiculous."

Crawford: Why?

Salkind: They were just so basic and also Jeff Kahane had said that, too.

Crawford: How does your course in ear training differ from theirs?

Salkind: I guess it's a different approach--I don't know. I haven't had enough training in ear training. I mean, I have a good ear but I never did any ear training at Juilliard. But I did the normal thing. But what is normal to anybody else isn't normal to Michael. I mean, he had absolute pitch and he can tell any key as you play on the piano. And so could Jeff. So, for them, these things were foolish.

Crawford: Did you try to persuade him to go to conservatory here?

Salkind: No. No, I didn't because I knew he had to get away from his family.

Crawford: Oh, his family settled here?

Salkind: Oh, yes. Yes, that's why he had to get away. And he's an only child because in China they have only children there. That's been a great experience for me. I gave him two lessons a week and I got paid for one.

I have also a Baptist fundamentalist student here who's coming this afternoon. I'm sorry that I didn't say anything to you. He's coming at two. I'd like to have him play for you. He's fourteen and he doesn't go to school. His mother teaches him at home. She has training and was sent to some Christian school. But he's phenomenal, this boy.

Crawford: Well, perhaps I could record a lesson, or part of a lesson, for the book. And we could hear how you're working with him. I think that would be fascinating.

Salkind: I'd like to do that. And also, maybe you could hear Michael Tan, too. He's the Chinese boy that was here.

Crawford: It might be interesting to have him play and then have you talk about it with him, having told the story. Let's do that. Well, I think we're almost finished with our two hours today. Are we?

Association of Conservatories and an Approach to Fund-Raising

[Interview 3: December 2, 1993] ##

Crawford: I thought maybe this morning we'd start by talking about the Association of Conservatories.

Salkind: That was a rather loose organization. They didn't have regular meetings. We met a couple of times a year but it was difficult to get Juilliard, New England, Peabody, and Manhattan, San Francisco, and Cleveland all together. You know, logistically it is difficult, but we used to have, at one point, a consultant, George Allen Smith, who coordinated things. And that got to be rather expensive so we stopped that. But we brought up mutual problems that we all had, and we talked about them and worked them out. So, it was very useful, I thought,

and everybody else thought so. Juilliard was always a little bit resistant, because we got grants together.

Crawford: Would you talk about that?

Salkind: Oh, we went to the Mellon Foundation. That's what it was. Several of us got grants at the same time, but not everybody got grants, so that was a point of tension. Not all the conservatories did get grants. San Francisco, Cleveland, and New England got grants.

Crawford: This was an unrestricted gift of about \$300,000?

Salkind: That's right. It was.

Crawford: And each conservatory got a like amount?

Salkind: No, no. Each conservatory got what the Mellon Foundation thought they needed. We had visits from the Mellon Foundation. But I wanted to tell you I never thought of myself as a fund-raiser. Just like my son at the Urban School doesn't feel that he is. The popular image, I guess, of a real fund-raiser is somebody who can sell. And I don't think of myself as somebody who can sell. I mean, I'm soft spoken, and I realize that that's not what it takes to excel.

My son is the same way. He's very successful in what he does, but he has to do some fund-raising, and I realize that these things are a matter of personality and how you meet people and that kind of thing. You have to have conviction, I guess, is what I'm trying to say. That's the base of any real fund-raiser.

I used to get a big kick out of talking to corporations that didn't know anything about what a conservatory was. And I used to end up, you know, by talking about conviction. And they always picked up on that. Not always, but most of the time.

Crawford: We talked about that before, but you could expand on your approach.

Salkind: I talked about what I really believed in. And depending on whomever I was speaking to, they would be very sympathetic. You know, convictions about what it takes to be a musician. How many hours and how obsessed you needed to be to make it. And they understood that.

Crawford: Did you call corporations or did you invite corporate executives to the Conservatory?

Salkind: I knew certain ones; certain ones some board people knew. And I went after certain corporations that I didn't know.

Crawford: And what was your approach? Corporations are really hard to sway, and historically, they're not the greatest funders, at least in the arts.

Salkind: If I called somebody like the Shaklee Corporation here, I did that through a board member who knew somebody who knew somebody else. But let's say it was the head of a bank whom I wanted to talk to. I would, of course, speak to the secretary, and the minute I said I was president of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, already that's a little in. You know, if you're the director, it's not the same as if you can say you're the president of [something]. And then I would try to get to see whomever. And if I wanted to talk about a scholarship, about funding a scholarship, then I would talk to them about that.

[doorbell rings--Jeremie Pigman, one of Mr. Salkind's pupils, enters.]

A Music Lesson

Salkind: [introduces student to interviewer] Okay. Jeremie's going to play Beethoven's Second Concerto. He's trying out for the Seventeen magazine competition which is in Michigan--Detroit?

Jeremie: I'm not sure. At Interlochen School.

Salkind: The applicants have to send the tape in and it's a very big prize, isn't it?

Jeremie: It's five thousand or ten thousand.

Salkind: With a grand winner. If you're selected, then you have to go and they pay your way and you have to play it live.

Crawford: Do you like competitions, Jeremie?

Jeremie: Yes. It's fun.

Crawford: I know you won a competition in Los Angeles.

Jeremie: Yes.

Crawford: Good for you.

Jeremie: We went to Holland in October. We might be going back.

Salkind: So, anyway, one of the things they have to play, if they're selected, is a Beethoven concerto, this particular one. So, we're working on that now. It's the B flat, Second. All right.
[Jeremie plays Beethoven]

Salkind: Jeremie, make that the left hand.

[Jeremie continues to play]

Salkind: [Interrupting] Jeremie, not so loud on this note.

Jeremie: No accent?

Salkind: The C is more important than the B flat.

Jeremie: Okay. You want me to start there?

Salkind: Yes.

[Jeremie begins again]

Salkind: Yes, that's it.

[Jeremie plays again]

Salkind: [Interrupting] And try that again. Not such emphasis on the C.

Jeremie: Okay.

[Jeremie tries again]

Salkind: That's it.

[Jeremie continues playing]

Salkind: [Interrupting] Again do that one. Yes, it has to be even all the way up. [Jeremie tries again] Yes, do it again, yes.

[Jeremie continues]

Salkind: That B flat again.

[Jeremie finishes]

Salkind: This is the cadenza.

[Jeremie begins to play again]

Salkind: Here, you cover this up with the pedal. Can you do this right here?

Jeremie: Okay. Should I take time?

Salkind: Yes. It really must come in. And this here, these have to come out. All right, let's try that.

[Jeremie begins again]

Salkind: That's right. Big, big. [Interrupting] Keep this loud.

That's it. [Interrupting] Okay, I noticed back here you didn't use your fourth finger in the left hand. And in the long run that's very useful to do that. All right, let's go into second movement.

[Jeremie starts again]

Salkind: [Interrupting] A little bit more on the F. Yes, that's it.

[Jeremie continues]

Salkind: [Interrupting] It doesn't matter whether you play this loud or soft because the orchestra comes in at the same time. And so I think I would play it a little bit softer than that.

Jeremie: Okay, not really forte?

Salkind: No.

[Jeremie begins again]

Salkind: Now, this will be loud. [Later] A little bit louder. A little more distinct. [Interrupting] Jeremie, this is a much happier and livelier movement than you're making it.

Jeremie: Okay.

[Jeremie begins again]

Salkind: That's it. [Interrupting] Yes, and this has to be a big surprise.

Jeremie: The second one?

Salkind: The F Major, yes.

[Jeremie begins again]

Salkind: [Interrupting] Big accent on the A and F.

[Jeremie continues]

Salkind: Attack those base notes.

##

[Jeremie is playing]

[Jeremie finishes]

Salkind: Yes, okay. You know what happens. Sometimes these things fall out--

Jeremie: At the bottom.

Salkind: This was at the bottom. You never know what's going to happen. I mean, anything could happen. And that's why it needs so much practice. And remember I told you that Liszt was described as having iron hands or steel hands, with a tip of velvet. And it needs more of that.

Jeremie: Okay.

Salkind: Where do you feel insecure--everything here?

Jeremie: These, the bottom. I mean, last time I played it, I felt fine about it. Then I've practiced it and now I--

Salkind: Start right here.

[Jeremie begins playing]

Salkind: You have to think about the bottom when you start the top.

[Jeremie continues]

Salkind: [Interrupting] Okay, keep on with this and with the other one. All right, play as much of the Sam Adler for Caroline because this is one of the pieces. [addressing Crawford] They have to play a lot of things on a tape and send it to *Seventeen* magazine. They have a choice of several contemporary things. Jeremie chose this one by Samuel Adler. He is still living and he's teaching at Eastman, or has just retired, I think. So, do that one. The first movement.

Jeremie: All right. I'll try.

[Jeremie plays Adler piece]

Salkind: Jeremie hasn't been playing this, because we've been concentrating on others. Let's see, when do they notify you? In January?

Jeremie: January.

Salkind: Yes, whether he's in the finals. They have to listen to them all, evaluate and all that.

Crawford: I have a feeling you'll win it.

[laughter]

Jeremie: Well, we hope so. If not, that's okay, though.

Salkind: Do you have anything to tell Mrs. Crawford?

Jeremie: I don't think so.

Crawford: I notice that you placed your hand under his arm several times. What is that meant to do?

Salkind: Well, when I first heard Jeremie, he was very stiff at the piano. And I sort of push him around and move his shoulders back and forth. And I want him to be more conscious of his body when he's playing. Now maybe he does it too much. [laughter]

Crawford: Jeremie, what do you look for in a lesson from Mr. Salkind?

Jeremie: He gives answers to my questions that I have and solutions to problems that I'm having, you know, with certain pieces. And he certainly solves all my problems or my questions. He gives me a lot of advice--he's very picky.

Crawford: He's very picky, is he?

Jeremie: About every detail.

Crawford: Good, good. Do you always play from memory?

Jeremie: Yes.

Salkind: He's a very fast learner.

Jeremie: As soon as I have learned it.

- Crawford: I can tell. That's impressive. How long have you been working on the Adler piece?
- Jeremie: I started that in August, I believe. I performed it in October.
- Crawford: Thank you.
- Jeremie: You're welcome. [Jeremie leaves]
- Crawford: What do you anticipate for Jeremie?
- Salkind: What I anticipate for Jeremie? In some ways, Jeremie might go further than Michael [Tan], even though Michael's a more thoughtful talent. Michael's all around the very sensitive young man. He's very bright, and he's very quiet. He doesn't like to talk very much. As I said, he writes poetry too.
- Crawford: So he's not focused totally on music as this boy may be?
- Salkind: No, this boy is totally focused. Totally. I mean, you can see that. He wins competitions and he's going to enter the Van Cliburn. They first came to me about a year ago. The mother and father are very religious. I don't know whether they're Baptist fundamentalists or something, but that's why he doesn't go to school.
- Crawford: He's trained at home by his mother?
- Salkind: Yes. She goes to training school for teachers. They're very young, and they came from Kentucky.
- Crawford: What do they do?
- Salkind: Well, the father has several jobs, part time in cable television. He has a card that says "Jeremie's dad." And he tunes pianos. He's learned to tune pianos since he got here. Van Cliburn was his sort of idol, and I think that's the kind of thing Jeremie wants to do. He wants to play everywhere, he says. And in major competitions.
- Crawford: So he could have a solo career?
- Salkind: Yes. He's one of the few, I think, that could make it. And in a way, the fact that he doesn't go to school is very good. He was at the Conservatory before he changed teachers and came to me. And I thought that was ridiculous--I thought his parents should make him go to school. I thought that's what I would do. But I realized soon after he came to me that he was so focused, that that's all he wanted to do. And he's very, very bright.

So he has that focus, to be really obsessed. And that works to his advantage. He learns very fast. I would have thought that Jeremie would have more problems than he does with not going to school. But he meets students in the Conservatory anyway.

Crawford: How much of his involvement is at the Conservatory?

Salkind: Well, he is only there for Saturdays. He is there for chamber music, ear training, and solfège. He's involved totally in the Conservatory on Saturdays.

Crawford: He must practice a great deal.

Salkind: He practices five and six hours a day.

Crawford: That's wonderful to see. He has a kind of a simplicity about him, and it goes right to the piano.

Salkind: Yes. Yes. And that's what he loves doing.

A Special Way of Relating to Students

Crawford: Well, thank you for doing that for the history. The way you relate to the students was something that Agnes Albert talked about. She said that it was quite unique in her experience, and an important quality for the president of a conservatory to have. What would you say about that?

Salkind: Well, it's the only way that I know, and I think I've always done that. That's always been my conviction, that you have to really talk to and communicate with students. And I feel that I can do that. I know that there are some teachers, for instance, who feel that, "Well, I don't want to hear about your problems. Just play the piano." And I can't do that. I mean, if a student starts crying or something at the piano, I ask him or her what's wrong. And he'll start talking. And we spend time on that. And that's compassion and what I consider one of the answers to problems.

Crawford: You can't really separate your playing from your life, can you?

Salkind: No, you can't.

Crawford: I'm sorry to return to more mundane things. We were talking before Jeremie came about fund-raising and I'm intrigued by the fact that you would be able to seek funding from corporations

and actually go call on them and tell them what you needed. Did you always attach it to one special thing that you needed?

Salkind: Well, for instance, in talking about scholarships, that's something we needed more than anything else.

Crawford: Yes, with tuition at \$13,000!

Salkind: I would, in some cases, try to attach it to one specific student. For instance, right now, I want to get a piano, a grand piano, for Jeremie. I think he needs a very good piano. He has a Kawai, which is a Hawaiian piano.

Crawford: A grand?

Salkind: Yes. And they brought it from Kentucky. And so I've talked to the president of Sherman-Clay about Jeremie and what appealed to him was the fact that Jeremie was an American boy, not Chinese, not Japanese or Korean or anything, that we have a lot of now. But this is an all-American boy and he looks very American, doesn't he?

Crawford: Oh, definitely, yes.

Salkind: And that appealed to Don Ravitch, the president of Sherman-Clay. So, he's seeing what he can do. And I haven't told this to Jeremie yet.

Crawford: Wonderful start of a career, and wonderful to be instrumental in that.

Salkind: But that's the kind of thing that I do. I think I told you about my open-door policy. Students would come in and borrow a dollar and that impressed the foundations in New York. And particularly, I think, the Rockefeller Foundation. And the fact that I get them places to live, if there's no place for them, you know, if they can't find an apartment or something. That's the kind of thing Mrs. Albert was talking about.

Crawford: Do they come back and see you?

Salkind: Oh, yes, yes. As a matter of fact, on my last trip, one of them came down from Geneva to Milan and he accompanied me to Paris when I went by train from Milan to Paris. He wanted to see me and he wanted to talk to me. He had some problems.

Crawford: What is he doing?

Salkind: He called me last week. He calls me about every two weeks. And he's making a career playing.

Crawford: Playing with orchestras and so on?

Salkind: Yes. And I guess I'm prouder of that kind of thing than I am of anything else.

Crawford: Well, I would imagine so, yes. When you say "problems," do you mean technical things that bother him about his playing?

Salkind: That and personal problems with parents, et cetera.

Crawford: Let's go back to the Conservatory now. We hadn't talked very much about the library but I know that the Bothin Fund helped expand it. What was it like when you came?

Salkind: It was very small. It really wasn't a good library for a major city that has a symphony orchestra and an opera company and a ballet company. It wasn't much. So, we started working on the library, and now we have quite a few people who donate old music and old records to us. And we have a lot of books. I don't know what the collection is now. We renovated the library, and now it's two levels. And we have a very good recording facility. I think there are eight or nine good stations where students can listen to recordings.

Crawford: And how extensive are the recordings? What kind of collection do you have?

Salkind: We have a lot of contemporary music and all the old classical things. And I pride myself on the fact that Curtis doesn't, at least didn't a couple of years ago, have anything past Stravinsky. But now we have almost anything that students would want.

Crawford: Would it be likely that Jeremie, in selecting a contemporary piece, would have gone to the Conservatory library?

Salkind: Well, no, because there's a selection that the committee in Michigan makes and students have to choose from, you know, Sam Adler, George Perle, or David Diamond. There are a lot of contemporary things, and they do not include Copland and Ives. The students pick one and have to learn it, and the other things that they have to play are a Beethoven sonata, a Bach fugue, Chopin--a romantic piece.

Crawford: These all have to be prepared and taped.

Salkind: And taped.

Crawford: I'd like to go across this timeline with you a little bit through the eighties and find out what were the new things that happened at the Conservatory. Edo deWaart was leading the orchestra in 1983 at Davies Symphony Hall, and I wonder if he worked with the students to any great degree?

Salkind: No, he didn't. He just conducted [the Conservatory orchestra]. That's all I could ever get any of them to do. And it took a long time to do that. Krips would never do it. Let's see, was Edo after Krips?

Crawford: Seiji.

Salkind: Seiji Ozawa wouldn't do it. Then he didn't have time. He was flying back and forth back to Boston. And then Blomsted, and he wouldn't do it.

Crawford: But you've approached them all?

Salkind: Yes.

Crawford: Seems to be a wonderful thing.

Salkind: It's a natural thing.

Crawford: You brought May Kurka here and she has headed the preparatory department. She will be retiring this year, and will be difficult to replace.

Salkind: Yes. I brought her out here. She and my wife had the same piano teacher in San Diego, and they went on to Juilliard. Her family was interned during the war, and then she got married. They had a little girl, Mira, and I'm going to give her away at her wedding May 8 in Baltimore.

Her husband, Robert Kurka, died of leukemia at the age of thirty-five. He was a good friend of mine and I brought May out to work in the preparatory department and she worked her way up to be the head of it.

Crawford: To what extent is she responsible for the success of it?

Salkind: Well, my theory was always that a lot of young people are gifted, and she thought the same thing. We both thought there were more gifted students in the preparatory department than there were in the undergraduate and graduate divisions, and it

turned out to be true. Something happens to them in their teens; they fall by the wayside.

Colin Murdoch's Presidency ##

Crawford: Before we get to Colin Murdoch, Steven Brown came briefly after you stepped down.

Salkind: Well, I didn't know him very well. And there was a selection committee that I had nothing to do with and they came up with him. So, I really can't talk about him very much.

Crawford: You would have been extremely hard to follow, of course. Well, he didn't work out?

Salkind: No. I selected Colin as the dean in Boston when I was at the Convention for the National Association of Schools of Music. It's a very, what I consider a sort of a constipated institution. I mean, it's a national conference and they have a convention every year in a different city. And I went there because I thought I knew a lot of people. I always had to go, and I did know a lot of people there.

On the very last day, I saw Larry Livingston, who was then the dean of USC, University of Southern California, at the convention. And he knew I was looking for a dean and I had interviewed a lot of people there. The last afternoon, he says, "Milton, I think there is somebody that I just heard speak in one of the meetings that I think you'll be interested in." And it turned out that I was visiting with a former student of mine who was in Boston and so I said goodbye to her and I waited around because Larry said, "He'll be right down. I think he's coming down in the elevator." So, I saw this man and he had a nice face, very sensitive looking. And I said, "I bet that's he," and it was.

So, I talked to Colin. And Colin remembers exactly [where] we went out to dinner, what we ate; the date and that I talked about a possible replacement for me and that I would be retiring one of these years.

But when the selection committee interviewed him the first time after he had been the dean, or while he was dean, somehow he didn't make a very good impression. And then they selected Steven Brown. And then when Steven Brown turned out not so

well, they interviewed several more, among them Colin. And they chose Colin this time.

Crawford: What were the qualities that you saw in him when you took him as your dean, initially, and were thinking of a replacement?

Salkind: Oh. Well, I looked for very human qualities, and very sensitive, and all the things that I thought I was.

Crawford: That's a good answer. Was there a selection committee made up of board members?

Salkind: Yes, and staff, too. But you know, everybody thinks differently. Some want a pure businessman, some board members. And some don't.

Crawford: A lot of organizations are coming to that because of fund-raising needs, I think.

Salkind: Yes, but I think businessmen aren't necessarily good fund-raisers.

Crawford: How do you like being in--well, I wouldn't call it retirement--but at least you're not at the Conservatory full time. How is that? You're on several boards, and of course, actively teaching. So you don't miss the day-to-day so much?

Salkind: No, not as much as I did in the beginning when I first retired. I really missed it.

Crawford: Well, I think you're still very much a presence there.

The Conservatory's Seventy-Fifth Anniversary and the Future

Crawford: Talk about the seventy-fifth anniversary celebration, would you? That was an important and big time for the Conservatory.

Salkind: Yes. It was very successful and you know, I managed to get Isaac Stern, in spite of his wife who didn't want him to do it, to be part of this. The orchestra played and Isaac did some chamber music. And Yo Yo Ma and Jeff Kahane were involved in this. It was the all-year celebration.

Crawford: I noticed that Gordon Getty was a big patron for that. We haven't talked very much about his contribution to the scene there.

- Salkind: Well, he gave a million dollars at one point. This is before the seventy-fifth anniversary. I had never seen a million dollars, and he just sent me a check.
- Crawford: How did this come about? You didn't even have to ask?
- Salkind: Well, no, I did ask. I mean, I became a good friend of his. I just got an invitation to his sixtieth birthday party. But I always went to see him and I always asked.
- Crawford: Has he been a supporter over the years?
- Salkind: Yes. He went to the Conservatory at one point. And he's one of the many who always ask about Sol Joseph.
- Crawford: Oh, I see. He did study theory with Sol.
- Salkind: Yes, theory. That's just about it. And he calls. He usually calls me to recommend a copyright or somebody who can help him out.
- Crawford: Is that ever sensitive, since he's a composer and he would love to have *Plump Jack* or another of his works done at the Conservatory?
- Salkind: Well, I think Gordon is sensitive, but he is very conscious of not having his work performed in exchange for donations. I suggested that the orchestra play a few minutes of his music, and they did. They did a couple, two or three waltzes, I think.
- Crawford: So you did play a little tribute music.
- Salkind: Yes. I thought that that's the least that we can do. But he's never asked and he was very happy to do it. He didn't write anything for us. And also Phyllis Wattis sent the Conservatory a million dollars.
- Crawford: When she retired? Wasn't that dramatic, though?
- Salkind: She retired her foundation.
- Crawford: Well, she thinks very highly of you. I think in one afternoon, she wrote checks for \$26 million. Let's talk a little bit, now, about the future, about the needs for the Conservatory, as you see them.
- Salkind: Well, you know, the Conservatory certainly needs more money because it's a little different kind of a school than when I was there. It's bigger and physically we need more room.

Crawford: Would you like to see the location changed?

Salkind: No, not really. I don't think that the location is any hindrance. I can't see it moving down to a, sort of a poor man's Lincoln Center, around the Opera House, the Ballet, and Davies Hall. I did think that at one point we could build a chamber music hall there, in the area where they always have a tent. It would have to conform to the other buildings there, the opera house and the ballet. We could very well have done that, but we didn't have the money. We started to raise the money. It was going to be named after me. But it wasn't to be. And then, things were getting economically depressed and it was very difficult.

Crawford: How about the Presidio? Are you tempted by the Presidio?

Salkind: I was, but so was everybody else. I think Colin's made some gestures about that, but I don't think it's a real possibility.

Crawford: Is the building on Ortega Street adequate?

Salkind: Not really. I don't think we have enough performance space.

Crawford: How about the practice rooms?

Salkind: Well, no, I think the practice rooms are not--you can never find a practice room during classes. But that's always a problem. There should be adequate practice rooms.

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Crawford: Is there an adequate setup for fund-raising? Is the board working enough that they can make what they need?

Salkind: Well, you know, June Kingsley was the last one who was in charge of raising over \$2 million. She was chair of the board and the fund-raising committee.

Crawford: Where did she go for that? Did she go to the big foundations?

Salkind: Yes. She went along with other board members and I went along most of the time. But she was very, very successful at it. And I understand, Colin told me last week that Didi Boring is bringing someone on the board who is guaranteeing fifty thousand a year for five years for scholarships.

Crawford: Personally?

Salkind: Yes.

- Crawford: That's wonderful. So, a scholarship program is well in place. Have Mellon and Rockefeller continued to give grants?
- Salkind: No.
- Crawford: That was more or less seed money, then?
- Salkind: Yes. And we don't get any money from them now. I think their focus now is no longer on the arts but on social welfare and reform.
- Crawford: How about the National Endowment for the Arts?
- Salkind: I was on that, too.
- Crawford: You were on the panel?
- Salkind: Yes, for about five years. We get a little money but not very much. About ten thousand, I think.
- Crawford: The NEA does focus on performance to some extent.
- Salkind: Yes, it does.
- Crawford: Does anyone go back to Washington and present the Conservatory's case?
- Salkind: I don't think anymore.
- Crawford: Did you ever go to the NEA in person for funding?
- Salkind: Yes, I did.
- Crawford: How about the student body? What are the needs? Someone said of the Conservatory not too long ago, "We are a well-kept secret." That was some years ago, of course, but how do you advertise for students now?
- Salkind: The secret is not so well kept. We've had a Naumburg Competition winner, a young Asian cellist. And we're quite well-known now.
- Crawford: When you have a Naumburg winner, for instance, does it draw students? Do they say, "Oh, she's studying in San Francisco?"
- Salkind: Well, we don't know for sure, but it does draw students.
- Crawford: Do you more or less have the student body that you feel is ideal?

- Salkind: Yes. I mean, for our facilities, we can't take any more. We have some very gifted students, and the preparatory department has always had better pianists than the college, it seems to me.
- Crawford: Why would that be?
- Salkind: Well, because young students like Jeremie--their problems are not so huge. But as soon as they get into a college and conservatory, parents get involved and they want more and more for their children. I don't know why it is that young people are very outspoken. You know, they just speak up. And they get more inhibited and more unfocused as they grow older. And so, I'm really not sure, but I've always noticed that there are many more gifted students in the preparatory department than in the college. They have all kinds of problems, generally, when they get into college.
- Crawford: Would you change the faculty in any perceptible way? I mean, are there people you think would make a strong addition to the faculty?
- Salkind: Yes. But that's very hard to do.
- Crawford: Is it still hard to lure people from elsewhere in the country?
- Salkind: No, it's not hard to lure people, but it's hard to hire people because hiring is a threat.
- Crawford: A threat to the extant faculty, yes. I guess if you don't have an expanded program you don't need more faculty. So, it comes down, actually, to replacing someone. But as people retire, then you have a chance to do that. Although it's a young faculty, isn't it?
- Salkind: Not so young now. Oh, Paul Hersh, Mack McCray, they're pretty young. Izzy Tinkleman has died. Zaven Melikian is not so young. I think Colin is aware of the aging faculty. We talked about that.
- Crawford: But you don't see an expanded faculty, greatly expanded.
- Salkind: No, I don't. Knowing now what I know, I wouldn't hire certain people that I did hire. But there are always problems with faculty. I mean, not problems, but relationships.
- Crawford: Did you get a lot of requests or a lot of inquiries from elsewhere about faculty positions?
- Salkind: Oh, yes.

Crawford: In other words, there would always be a file of people who would gladly come. And when the Juilliard String Quartet would come, because they came often it seems to me, did individual players ever think of relocating?

Salkind: Oh, I think so. Bobby Mann was an old friend of mine from Juilliard.

Crawford: You had been there together?

Salkind: Yes, and my wife. My wife was one of his girlfriends. So we all knew each other. I just got a fund-raising letter from him. He's the president of the Naumburg Competition, and they're [looking] for funds, too, because they don't have enough money.

Crawford: You've kept your network pretty active, haven't you? Has that been difficult for you?

Salkind: No, not really. I think I kept it going pretty well; I have a great many contacts throughout the country.

Crawford: We haven't talked about the deans. What does it take to be a good dean?

Salkind: I think it takes a lot of imagination, daring, and courage to be a great dean. You have to be willing to get out on a limb and fight for what you want. I always felt that I was alone in that, that I had to support all these things myself.

Crawford: How often did students come in to complain?

Salkind: A lot.

Crawford: Were there usually grounds when they did?

Salkind: Yes. I always felt we were there for the students. Students exaggerate, but not nearly as much as teachers do.

Crawford: So you did find for the students.

Salkind: Yes, absolutely. But I got peer evaluations going, and I don't know if that is still going on.

Crawford: Do faculties tend to stick together, like the piano faculty?

Salkind: Yes, if one is threatened they are all threatened. Their jobs.

Crawford: How many times did you have to fire someone?

- Salkind: [Several]. It created a lot of tension among the faculty, even though many came in and said, "You did the right thing." And those that complained then felt threatened.
- Crawford: Did you consult with the board before letting someone go?
- Salkind: Oh, yes.
- Crawford: But only a few, really, in twenty-odd years. That's remarkable, isn't it?
- Salkind: Yes. The faculty was very steady through the years.
- Crawford: Colin Murdoch said that one of the things he wanted to do was refine the concept of the curriculum.
- Salkind: Refine the concept of the curriculum. Well, he probably means he wants to make it more academic. I think that's the way Juilliard's going. I imagine that's what it means but I don't really know.
- Crawford: What would that mean in terms of additions to the course work?
- Salkind: Well, more humanities, English, languages, history, some psychology. Oh, that's another thing that I instituted. Peggy has classes in what she calls the professional and business training of musicians. That means training musicians how to be very organized and go out and get concerts for themselves.
- Crawford: How to manage their careers.
- Salkind: Yes, and manage themselves. She brings in people, various people, to talk about income taxes and programming. And now all the other schools are doing it.
- Crawford: Are students still attracted to Juilliard?
- Salkind: Yes. It's New York, it has a large endowment, and it has had the biggest names, and it has turned out the largest number of performers in the past. But it doesn't anymore. The Naumburg winners aren't from Juilliard now. We have had more than one, Hai Ye Ne, a cellist, and a violinist. Vialaine Melancon and her husband, a duo, didn't win the Naumburg; they were musical ambassadors. But Juilliard has gotten too academic.

Reflections on a Long Career

Crawford: What things would you have changed as you look back over your many years? I think you are the second longest reigning administrator in San Francisco, because Kurt Herbert Adler was a twenty-seven years at San Francisco Opera.

Salkind: What would I change? You know, it probably could have been better organized. But then in a way, it would have hampered me to be so well organized. I didn't think I could do anything if everything I did had to go through a committee. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Crawford: Do you think it's become more bureaucratic or do you suspect that it will become more bureaucratic?

Salkind: I wouldn't say bureaucratic. But now everything does have to be approved by a committee, a faculty committee. And the faculty committee has to go to Colin and report. You know, everybody has to report to somebody else. And when I started, there was nobody to report to.

Crawford: Yes. We didn't talk very much about the style of your relationship with the faculty.

Salkind: And my relationship to the board, too.

Crawford: Was your relationship very informal?

Salkind: Yes. And a very good relationship. I had a good relationship with the faculty, too. Except toward the end, you know, when we had Dean Richard Howe, and I felt that he wasn't the right one.

Crawford: Had you been operating without a dean before Richard Howe?

Salkind: No, I had a dean. I had Larry Snyder and Jon Bailey. And they were all right, but as I grew more, I learned more about what I thought a dean should do. And none of them were, I felt, as human as I was.

Crawford: Does the dean go between the faculty and the president?

Salkind: Yes. He is the head of the faculty.

Crawford: So the dean speaks for the faculty. Well, you indicate that your relationships at the Conservatory weren't so good at the end as they had been.

Salkind: Well, I finally had to fire the dean. I didn't fire him exactly, but he resigned and in spite of the fact that some of the--most of the faculty didn't think that Richard Howe was doing a very good job--you know, whenever you remove anybody, that threatens the faculty.

Crawford: Other than that incident, were there any particular points of difficulty with the faculty in your years?

Salkind: No.

Crawford: Well, it sounds to me as if you would say, "Mission accomplished."

Salkind: I think so. I'm perfectly satisfied with what I have done. I don't know about what I'd recommend for the future.

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Elizabeth Elkus

Elizabeth Elkus was interviewed in the year before her death at the age of ninety. Her English complexion defied the years, and her blue eyes had a visible spark when she recalled happy times, of which there were many in her life with Albert Elkus. Mr. Elkus was a composer, pianist, and above all a teacher. His M27 course at the University of California, where he was on the faculty from 1931 to 1959, gave to thousands a lifetime of joy in music. He was a tireless champion of new music--his own and others.¹

Elizabeth and Albert Elkus came from different backgrounds: he was American and Jewish and she was English and Anglican, but when they met during her visit to the United States in 1929, "He knew," she said, "and I knew." So began a life in music shared over the thirty-three years of their marriage.

The focus of this chapter is the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, its early years under Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead and Mr. Elkus's directorship from 1951 to 1957. Mrs. Elkus remembers much about the musical climate in the 1940s and 50s as well, Sunday afternoon musicales, formal performances in San Francisco, Bay Area music critics and such luminaries as Darius Milhaud and Henry Cowell.

Our two interview sessions took place in the large, music-filled home on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley where the Elkuses spent most of their life together. Each time Mrs. Elkus greeted me warmly, as an old friend, offering a chair by the fire and a "proper cup of tea." So many additional details came to her while she was reviewing the first interview that she asked me to come over and record them rather than have her write them in on the transcript. That was done. Mrs. Elkus made slight corrections in the text and added a number of stories as she reviewed it.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

April 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

¹The University of California holds the following Elkus collections: Albert Israel Elkus Papers, Music Library (Archives Elkus 1); Albert Israel Elkus Papers, The Bancroft Library (BANC MSS 82/16 c); George Britton letters, Elizabeth Elkus's wartime correspondence with her parents, 1938-1945 (BANC MSS 80/3 z).

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Elizabeth Elkus

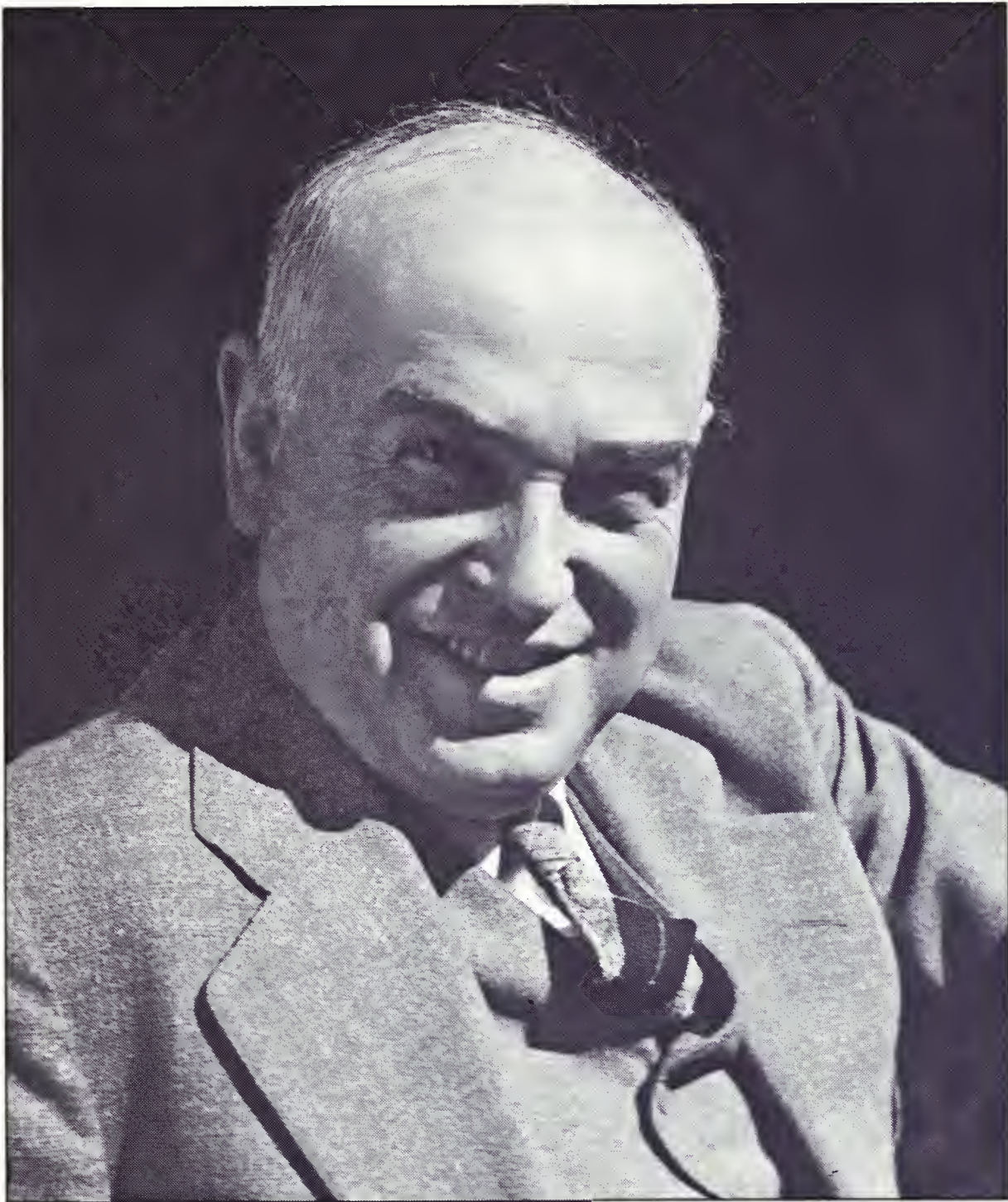
THE CONSERVATORY IN THE EARLY DAYS:
MEMORIES OF ALBERT ELKUS, ADA CLEMENT, AND LILLIAN HODGHEAD

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1993 and 1994



Elizabeth Elkus in the 1930s.

Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Elkus



Albert Elkus, circa 1935.

*Photograph by Imogen Cunningham
Courtesy of Elizabeth Elkus*

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly or type. Use black ink.)

Your full name Elizabeth Britton Elkus

Date of birth August 26th 1902 Birthplace London, England

Father's full name George Britton

Occupation Printer Birthplace London England

Mother's full name Helena Elizabeth Britton

Occupation Housewife Birthplace London, England

Your spouse(s) Albert Israel Elkus

Your children Jessie Britton Elkus, Howard Britton Elkus

Where did you grow up? In Walthamston, Suburb of London

When did ^{you} your family first come to California? 1929

Reasons for coming Friends in California (San Francisco)

Present community Berkeley, California How long? 19

Education (and training programs) Wiston County High School (Wiston
Furzedown (LCC) College for Teachers

Occupation(s) Class room teacher specialising in History.

International Cyclopedia of
Music and Musicians

ELKUS, Albert Israel (b. Sacramento, April 30, 1884), American composer and teacher; he was graduated from the University of California in 1906 with a B. A. and in the next year received his M. A. degree. He studied piano with Bauer, Lhevinne, Fuchs, Schumann, Prohaska and Schalk. He has taught piano, theory and composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, lectured and taught piano at Mills College, and was a teacher of musical theory at the Dominican College and at San Rafael. Beginning in 1931 he lectured at the University of California for four years, and in 1935 was appointed Professor of Music at that school. His compositions include:

For Orchestra—*Impressions from a Greek Tragedy* (1921),
On a Merry Folk Tune (1924).

For Chamber Orchestra—*Concertino on Lesione III of Ariosto* (1917).

Choral Works—*I am the Reaper* (Henley) (1921).

Chamber Music—*Serenade for String Quartet* (1921).

A gathering in memory of
Elizabeth Britton Elkus



Snapshot by Alfred Stern, 1980

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1994 AT 11 O'CLOCK
ALFRED HERTZ MEMORIAL HALL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

I EARLY YEARS AND FAMILIES

From England to San Francisco: Meeting Albert Elkus

[Interview 1: May 19, 1993]##

Crawford: Let's begin with some background on your life.

Elkus: At Jim's [Hart] suggestion, I should have done this years ago. Of course I wasn't ninety years old. I was fifty-sixty. I just said that my memory's not good enough.

Crawford: I doubt that very much!

Elkus: So, just ask me questions and I'll answer them.

Crawford: Let's start then by talking a little bit about your families; when you came to California; when you met and married Albert Elkus.

Elkus: 1929. I came from London, a suburb of London. English born. Mother and father and three big children, and my mother and father had twins when I was nine. I was the youngest of the three older children, so the three children were well on their way when the twins were born, and then one of the twins died at five with diphtheria, as children did then, and it was the First World War and there was no vaccine to spare for civilians. I don't think it's called vaccine; it's preventive shots that everyone now gets for diphtheria. It's not a dread disease anymore.

Crawford: Immunization?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: What prompted the move to the United States?

Elkus: For me to come here? I was already twenty-four and I knew people here, and so I was invited to come by people living in Palo Alto. So I stayed there first and then I decided it would be better to get a job. I was only there for one year. I was a classroom teacher in Birmingham, then Walthamstow, a suburb of London. It was Essex, actually, then. Now it's a part of London.

Crawford: How did you meet Mr. Elkus?

Elkus: Well, I met him through an American, a San Franciscan, whom I'd met in London. She had become a friend of my sister's--my older sister--and heard I was thinking of coming to California. She gave me her address and telephone number in San Francisco, in Clay Street, and I remained friends with her until she died.

Crawford: Tell me about your parents.

Elkus: Well, they were both from Bethnal Green, working class. Both had left school at twelve. It's all written down someplace--at The Imperial War Museum and at The Bancroft Library.¹

Crawford: What about the Elkuses?

Elkus: They had come from Europe. They lived in Sacramento, Albert's parents, and he was brought up in Sacramento and actually went to school there, until he came through high school. [Then] he came to UC Berkeley and he went through the regular schedule there.

Crawford: Was his father musical?

Elkus: No, his mother. His father had a men's clothing store, and I think could have been called a pioneer, but I'm not sure when pioneer ends and starts. [laughter] Both of my husband's parents are one of nine children, so there are lots of cousins around. Although they all had small families--two or three. They were all very welcoming to me.

Student Years in Europe and Free-Lance Teaching in the Bay Area

Crawford: I'm very interested in Mr. Elkus's student years in Europe after he finished at the University.

Elkus: Yes, he started out with one of his uncles. That was a very common thing then, of course. Families looked out after each

¹See Albert Israel Elkus papers, 1938-1962, The Bancroft Library.

other, as it were, and he started out in an insurance business with one of his uncles and was really a fish out of water and very young, very unhappy. I think he could have done it, but he would have lived a miserable life, because he was a wunderkind, one of the first.

Crawford: He studied with Harold Bauer?

Elkus: Yes, because Harold Bauer was still teaching in New York then. Anyway, he came to New York later and actually came to Mills College too, so I got to know him as well, not as a student but as the wife of somebody teaching there.

Crawford: Mr. Elkus studied with Prohaska, I think, as well. Where was that?

Elkus: I think Vienna, and he studied in Berlin too and then came the war, the First World War, 1914, and so he had to come home, I mean [it was] demanded by the American Consulate.

Crawford: Was it in Berlin that he studied with Josef Lhévinne?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: And then later Lhévinne was on the board of directors at the Conservatory, wasn't he?

Elkus: Well, there wasn't a board then. It was Ada and Lillian! [laughter] There were several teachers. They called it the Conservatory of Music and it was a conservatory, with composition and so on. I think Albert taught composition.,

Crawford: And then after he returned, what did he do? I have noted that he started working at the Conservatory and Mills College as a music teacher.

Elkus: Yes, and at Dominican [College]. He didn't come to Berkeley at that time. Berkeley had a music department at that time and he knew the people in it, but their hearts weren't in it.

Can you remember the name of Charles Seeger? He was running the music department and has written his memoirs for the music department, because I heard that through the secretary of David Boyden, the chairman. And he had asked Charles Seeger before he left to write his history. This is somewhere written down--it must be in the music library, I don't know.¹

But when Albert got back from Europe he was free lance teaching piano, and then had classes at Dominican and Mills, and

¹Charles Seeger, "Reminiscences of an American musicologist" : oral history conducted by Adelaide G. Tusler, [1966] and Ann M. Briegleb, [1970 and 1971]. Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1972.

he was earning a good, very happy living and he was playing in concerts still, playing with quartets and things like that.

Crawford: What do you remember of the musical climate in the Bay Area in the early years of marriage?

Elkus: Well, one sentence: loving and giving.

Crawford: Did you go to the symphony and the opera?

Elkus: Yes, we did. But we were married in December and I really had to go home. I'd said I was coming for a year, you see, and I really had to go home and see my parents and introduce Albert to my parents, you know. We were married in three weeks, and when I tell you that it was really quite a shock for my parents.

Crawford: You mean three weeks after you met?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: You're a woman of decision! That's a wonderful story.

Elkus: Yes, it was quite wonderful. He knew and I knew that this was right.

Crawford: So you went home and how much time did you spend in England?

Elkus: I suppose we had all the summer as you do if you are connected to universities. I think we probably stayed three months. My father arranged with me in letters that we would go on a trip together. He was in printing and would have two weeks holiday, and he planned it all. We went from Liverpool Street station, which was the central station for us in London, and the railways had a trip that took people up the East Coast by train, stopping at all the Cathedral towns, and other towns and cities and then we went across by the Caledonian canal and came down the West Coast through Chester.

It was a wonderful two weeks. My parents had, you can imagine, with bringing all of us up and educating us--we all got scholarships--so I'm not talking about school fees, I'm talking about time. I mean the schooling went on. Albert got to know my parents that way and they got to know him and they got on absolutely marvelously, with absolutely different backgrounds.

Crawford: Did they come to California?

Elkus: My mother came because I was so needing her and wanting her to come so much, and she did that, train and boat. Never been out of England before, and stayed until we all went back there, with the two little children, train and boat.

II SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AT ITS BEGINNINGS

[Interview 2: November 10, 1993]##

Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead

Crawford: Well, we can go forward then and talk about Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead.

Elkus: Well, Ada was, I think, what probably we would call the founder, and Lillian was her chosen person--friend--and considerably younger, but I don't know this. Lillian was her helper to run the Conservatory.

By the time I came into the picture, they were looked upon by me as longtime friends.

Crawford: How would you characterize them?

Elkus: Steadfast in what they had chosen to do, and really staying with it. They were devoted to their chosen task, the Conservatory, and they thought and talked a lot. Albert was their mentor and friend, and then I became their friend, and our children became their friends. We went over to Mill Valley for pleasure, but work was always present.

Crawford: When did you meet them?

Elkus: I met them almost immediately as soon as I'd met Albert really, because they were sort of using him in the school. Ada taught piano, they both taught piano, and I was wrong when I wrote an irate article. It was a piano school, but they didn't have to call it a sleepy piano school! They were never sleepy, Ada and Lillian.

Crawford: Doesn't sound like it. Who wrote that?

Elkus: Well, somebody at the Conservatory used that expression in the *Chronicle*, and I was incensed. Somebody in the newspaper,

writing in there in a letter, and I answered that with some venom!

Crawford: Good for you--somebody has to do it.

Elkus: Yes. I don't do it very often, but when I do--[laughter]

Crawford: Do you have a copy?

Elkus: I could have. It was called *Focus* at that time. The periodical. It's gone out of business now as it was then. No, it was part of the KQED magazine, not the *Chronicle*, but it was in its infancy. I think it was before Mr. Salkind's time.

Crawford: I know that Ada Clement studied with Harold Bauer too, but in Paris.

Elkus: Yes. This wasn't true of Lillian Hodghead, who was younger, but Ada was able to go to Europe. This was before the First World War that she went to Europe.

Crawford: Would this be usual, for an American or English girl to go off to Europe to study music?

Elkus: Not usual, but possible if you had the spirit Ada had. She knew what she wanted to do, and she did it.

Crawford: I read in her memoirs that she gave a benefit concert to raise funds so she could go to Europe.¹

Elkus: Oh? That's interesting. Well, her memoirs would be correct.

Crawford: Was her family musical?

Elkus: She had a sister-in-law who was musical. Nettimae, her name was, and her child was musical.

Crawford: Her brother was at the Conservatory teaching?

Elkus: Not that I know of.

Crawford: Neither of the women ever married?

Elkus: No. But their friendship, as far as I know, was not the kind of friendship we talk so much about now--a homosexual friendship. No implication of that at all, but we weren't looking for it as we are now.

Crawford: Was it talked of?

¹"A few reminiscences : for her family and friends," by Ada Clement. Dictated to Lillian K. Hodghead and Nettimae Clement, June 28, 1952 and July 12, 1952, with comments by Lillian K. Hodghead. Music Library, UC Berkeley.

Elkus: No.

Crawford: What were they like, Ada and Lillian?

Elkus: Well, they seemed, of course, very old to me, because I was twenty-four or twenty-five, something like that. Must have been at least in their thirties. They seemed old because it's how I saw them, as old.

Albert was forty-five, and I think they were not as old as he. In their thirties, and running this school together because Lillian's father was a doctor, Dr. Hodghead, and he had a family house that was called wrongly a mansion in the paper. I corrected that too. It was a nice house, a large house, you know. I expect he had his surgery at the back door, the kind of thing which they did then.

I never knew the parents, though. They died young, left some money to Lillian and the house to her, so that was used as the conservatory.

The Conservatory of Music on Sacramento Street

Crawford: Would you talk about the Conservatory as it was then?

Elkus: It was a large city house. I'm sure it stood alone; I remember it as an old house, but it had a cottage in the same property, also separate, and as they grew older, they used that to cope with the growth that was going on. They had lived in the cottage, the two women.

So they used a little cottage on the same acreage at Sacramento and Presidio. That hill was empty at that time, where the hospitals are now--Fireman's Fund [Presidio and California]. I don't know if it's still Fireman's Fund, but anyway there are modern buildings there.

Ada and Lillian bought one-third of that property at Presidio and California with money that a grateful student had left them. It came absolutely out of the blue, this money.

Crawford: That was Dorothy Lucy?

Elkus: Yes. I never knew her.

Crawford: She must have been quite wealthy, because the bequest was \$250,000 as I remember--a very large sum of money. Did they transfer to the new property before moving to Ortega Street?

Elkus: No, they stayed on [Sacramento], but they had grown out of it. I heard all of this. I was having the children at that time and making new friends and getting to be acquainted with San Francisco, where we were living. This was all talk I heard, because Albert used to come home and tell me everything, and I remember most of it, I think.

So that was the money they used to buy the new property and then they made a profit on it because the other parts of the property were bought by Kaiser Hospital and Permanente, I think--a big concern. So they kept that acreage there, hoping to get and to build the conservatory, but it became difficult with either the Depression or the war.

Crawford: Do you remember details about the Sacramento Street site? For example, how many pianos were there?

Elkus: I don't remember.

Crawford: I read that Sherman/Clay sent over Caruso's piano for Ada's use.

Elkus: I think they meant the piano Caruso was using during the earthquake, when he was here.

Crawford: Singing with the opera company.

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: Who else was on the faculty with your husband in the 1930s?

Elkus: I'm not able to remember her name, but there was a person who did a lot of the ordinary teaching, and when the children got to show talent, they moved on to others like Ada, Lillian, and then Albert.

Crawford: So she was a preparatory teacher?

Elkus: Yes, and then there were Saturday morning classes.

Crawford: Is the house still there?

Elkus: No, it's gone.

Crawford: Did they plan a piano school or a conservatory when they started out?

Elkus: I think it just grew as their friendships grew. They were nice, social people.

Crawford: Did they entertain there?

Elkus: I was never entertained in the social sense there--they had functions there, and those turned into parties, and everybody brought something. It is very different now. For instance, you book up and pay for your dinner, and it's all white tablecloths and napkins. Larger numbers of people, but they were very nice people, and I felt at home there, and they really took me in as a stranger.

A House in Mill Valley

Crawford: It was your husband who found the Ortega site, wasn't it.

Elkus: Yes, he found it through one of the--you see, Ada and Lillian begged him to take this on, because many years had passed by this time and they were getting old. And they had a place in Mill Valley which they liked. That was burned out, the whole hillside was burned out in that time, so they built again, and it was a very comfortable, small house--you'd call it a house by that time on the hill. We went there often with our little boys.

Crawford: What do you remember of the house?

Elkus: It was always a fireplace, cozy home.

Crawford: Who came?

Elkus: Anybody who they knew well, I think. There was an upright piano there, and it was a warm atmosphere. It was a lovely outing. From the bottom of Hyde Street [in San Francisco] on a boat and then to Mill Valley several miles from Sausalito.

Crawford: Did you walk?

Elkus: No, we took the train. Sometimes we stayed overnight.

Crawford: You said there was gossip?

Elkus: Oh, yes! Much laughter! Many people from the orchestra came. Not the Hertzes [Alfred, the San Francisco Symphony conductor]. They had a place in Mill Valley, and that was known as a

"hideaway." We didn't go there, but we were frequent guests of the Hertzes in the city.

Crawford: So you were very close to Ada and Lillian?

Elkus: Very close. We loved them.

Crawford: Where did you live then?

Elkus: Well, I went to where Albert was when we first married. An eighth-floor, one-bedroom apartment at Washington and Gough. It's called Seaview--something-view. We had no children there. We moved because we were going to have a child, between Broadway and Washington, on a steep hill there on Steiner Street.

III THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES

Remembering Ernest Bloch

Crawford: Let's talk about Ernest Bloch. He came to the conservatory in 1925.

Elkus: Yes, he was among Albert's closest friends, but I'd already met him when we were at the studio apartment. I remember him as just a loving person, completely accepting of me, when I had no idea about music, seriously. I mean I'd had music at school because I went to a very modern high school, and I'd heard music at college. I'd also been a churchgoer as a child and had heard music. I gave that up with religion, I won't say painlessly--through a good deal of thinking and talking, [during] adolescence, and then when I sloughed it off, I felt emancipated and I've felt emancipated ever since. [laughter]

Crawford: Was that the Anglican tradition?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: So you knew the hymnal backwards and forwards?

Elkus: Oh, yes!

Crawford: Mr. Bloch was at the Conservatory about five years, I think.

Elkus: Well, he may still have been in the East, but Ada and Lillian knew of him and played his music and at some point they went to Russia and brought back the first symphony of Shostakovich. It was recorded on a disk, and we all, when I say all I mean Albert and I and whoever else happened to be there and part of the Conservatory, stood around and listened to this Shostakovich work. He was very young and he was very unknown.

Crawford: Did Ada and Lillian travel a lot?

- Elkus: Yes, they did. They were the kind of people who were interested in what others were doing.
- Crawford: How did they manage to run the Conservatory and still travel to the East Coast and Europe as they did?
- Elkus: Well, they had Ada's niece, the one I mentioned. She writes one of those Christmas letters. I'm very fond of her, and she likes the old times too.
- Crawford: Could you talk a bit about Ernest Bloch? You said in your tribute to the Conservatory that your son Jonathan had ridden on his shoulders from your house to the Conservatory.
- Elkus: Well, he had a great love of the countryside as well as San Francisco. He had come from Europe and had a fellowship from Mrs. Sigmund Stern, and she had made it possible for his family to go to Paris and Switzerland. It was a continued education for him, to give him time to compose. There was much need here to help artists, and you can put down many successes in the symphony and opera to those people, who worked for the Conservatory and the Opera. The Haas family, Sterns, Hellmans. We didn't need their help personally, but it was because of their trust in Albert.

I liked him very much, and he liked me. We had fun together. He had shining eyes, and loved to tell a story, and he and Albert had a great friendship.

I never got to know his wife. He said to me, "I like the ocean and the sunshine, and she likes the dull weather."

- Crawford: The fog? She came to the right place.
- Elkus: But that's the kind of relationship he had with his wife. What was her name?
- Crawford: Was it Lucienne or Suzanne?
- Elkus: They were the children. He had a son whom he was very proud of. His son became a lawyer and he was able to handle the father with pride, but not getting into the music world at all.

Have you talked to the daughters? They are both alive.¹

- Crawford: I'd like to. I think Suzanne studied with Nadia Boulanger in Paris and specialized in period performance and instruments.

¹See interview with Lucienne Bloch Dimitroff, "Art, Music, Family, Fresco, Belief," in Renaissance of Religious Art and Architecture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1946-1968, Regional Oral History Office, 1985.

Elkus: Last time I saw her we were both invited to a lunch at a very big retirement home, and she was the same old--Albert called her "a chip off the old Bloch"! [laughter]

Crawford: Somewhere I heard that she feels bitter about the Conservatory. Do you know anything about that?

Elkus: I don't think so. I don't think there's any bitterness there.

Crawford: Did Mr. Bloch put the Conservatory on the map?

Elkus: Yes, because his name was known other than in San Francisco. But he was a stranger here. He had to be helped a lot. Financially, and it was the Depression.

Ada Clement and Fund-raising

Crawford: I read that Ada was quite a fund-raiser, and that she went back to New York and talked to Mr. Juilliard and to the Carnegie Trust and to Hoover, who was then Secretary of Commerce, I think. She was apparently very disappointed because she only got a stipend from the Carnegie Trust, but she must have been a go-getter.

Elkus: Yes, she was very ambitious for the Conservatory. That's how it came where it was, you know. And then, as I told you, they really begged Albert to take it over. He had retired from UC Berkeley, and he said he would for five years, I think he committed himself.

Crawford: That was 1951 through 1957?

Elkus: Yes, that sounds right.

Crawford: What do you remember of Ada and Lillian as they grew older? I believe Ada died first.

Elkus: Yes, she had cancer.

Crawford: Didn't they want to re-establish the Conservatory at Mills College or at UC?

Elkus: Well, Albert wanted very much to have common use of the libraries and for students to pass from one to the other. It didn't work out, it was one of the projects he had that didn't come to fruition.

- Crawford: He did get extension credit at the University for Conservatory students in theory, I think.
- Elkus: I remember much talk about that.
- Crawford: Did Lillian remain on the staff after Ada died?
- Elkus: Yes, she would have stayed with them. It was a very warm, take-your-lunch kind of place.
- Crawford: That's a nice description.
- Elkus: But by then they would have what you might call "lieutenants."

Albert Elkus and UC Berkeley

- Crawford: What about your husband's work at the university here?
- Elkus: By then he had resigned as chairman of the department. He had really sort of gone through bringing up the department.
- Crawford: How did that association come about? I mean from--.
- Elkus: Well, he was a graduate of Berkeley with a master's degree. He had all his music education in Europe; he was the best man for the job. And Charles Seeger really felt that it was time that the department had someone with more [experience]--of course Seeger was a musician--I never knew him but he must have been a very nice man. And the music department wasn't going well. Mr. Alloo had left and it was very small. Albert hadn't been there, or he was just a casual teacher as he had been at Mills and the conservatory--he was free-lancing.

Seeger suggested it, and Albert already knew Monroe Deutsch, who was provost and everybody was very eager that he should do this. He was married and maybe our Ben was born then, because we have two children.

- Crawford: I'm sure you know this, but his name is much loved at the university.
- Elkus: Yes, isn't it?
- Crawford: It comes up often.

- Elkus: Yes, well he was a lovely person. I knew it within minutes and he knew it within minutes. I mean, if I may say so.
- Crawford: He worked with the orchestra?
- Elkus: Yes, he conducted the orchestra and there were classes. I don't think he had started the Introduction to Music course, but that was his really big thing.
- Crawford: Yes. Mrs. Brumbaum is helping us with the history--and she was telling stories about Music 27. [See pp. 153-154.]
- Elkus: Yes, we'd go to concerts and operas, much later, and somebody would come up and say, "Mr. Elkus, you don't know me, but I was in 27 and that's why I'm here tonight." It's a wonderful feeling. I hear the gossip and it still goes on.
- Crawford: So that was a large part of his teaching.
- Elkus: Well, it was what he seems to be known for. He had some success as a composer, and pianist, but I think his forte was really teaching.

Promoting the Cause of Contemporary Music

- Crawford: Did your husband teach new music at the Conservatory?
- Elkus: Yes. It would be a part of his teaching. But he saw music as a much larger field. He would go through it all when it came out.
- Crawford: In the correspondence I saw at the Bancroft Library there were letters written to Alfred Frankenstein, written to Pierre Monteux, and to Al Fried about the fact he felt that contemporary composers were not played here, particularly local composers, and he said that Bloch's violin concerto had been played by Szigeti, but not in San Francisco, and wondered if that could be done. I don't know if it was ever done.
- Elkus: I don't know.
- Crawford: He taught the Beethoven Sonatas and Quartets?
- Elkus: At the Conservatory, because I remember friends who went, and they loved those courses.

San Francisco and Its Conductors

- Crawford: You talked a little about the Hertz and Monteux families. Did they have anything to do with the Conservatory?
- Elkus: Yes--friendship. It was as one musician to another. Not particular. I don't remember them teaching there.
- Crawford: You must have known the Monteux family well.
- Elkus: Yes. They were very successful here and I think Albert was very supportive of getting him, because he knew of his work in France. He had conducted there.

They were the first people in my time, anyway, who really mattered a lot here. No, Alfred Hertz--that's wrong. Alfred Hertz was really the person who started the orchestra--of course, recording had come in by that time and that helps a lot. You hear about it more.

- Crawford: What about Alfred Hertz? Of course, he has a flamboyant reputation.
- Elkus: Oh, yes, he was wonderful!
- Crawford: What do you remember of him?
- Elkus: Well, I remember they entertained a lot at Sea Cliff--had a very nice household. His wife was very Viennese. She talked about Wien all the time. She was a singer. And Albert would sit at the piano and accompany her, with new songs that were beginning to be well known--Hugo Wolf--that were known in Europe but were not known here. She would bring them. She would go home to Wien, which we would all hear about; she was a very powerful person. She traveled on the first commercial airship.

The Depression

- Crawford: Back to the Conservatory. Ada talked in her memoirs about the Depression and how she would take lunch in to her starving students and she would share her lunch with them because they had nothing, but still piano lessons were offered and they kept going. What are your memories of that time?

Elkus: I remember particularly her coming home and saying--I'm having name trouble in my old age--a young man who has become quite well known, but not a Yehudi well known. He accompanied Yehudi on a concert tour.

Crawford: Leon Fleisher?

Elkus: Local boy--I think Albert taught him some. He's gone around with Yehudi one time as his accompanist. I'll think of it and I'll confide it to you when I think of it. He's still around. He concertizes. Well known.

Crawford: Was Adolph Baller?

Elkus: No.

Crawford: Do you remember the fees for teaching at the Conservatory at the time?

Elkus: Low. But I was English born and bred, and I hadn't known what it was to have more. It was no problem for me, the Depression. But Ada had a lot of those people who had wanted San Francisco to become a center of the arts. Their mothers had worked to place San Francisco on the map as far as the arts were concerned.

Crawford: You're talking about the Haases, Sterns, and so on? What was Mrs. Stern like?

Elkus: She took widowhood gracefully, and she had a woman friend who ran an art center. Rhoda Goldman would remember her name. She was a professional, and Mrs. Stern wasn't.

Crawford: In what way?

Elkus: She ran a school in San Francisco. She'd been to college, and a lot of the women helping financially had not been.

Crawford: How was that period for you? For your family?

Elkus: Well, I think I had a job then, because I went into work at the Ann Martin Center here, on this side of the Bay, for a doctor, medical doctor for disturbed children. And I worked in the nursery there. When I say the nursery, it was just called that, it was a pre-school.

We had behavior disturbances where mothers were worried about the children, and they would come and the mother would have an hour with the therapist, and I would be with the

children in the nursery, and we had two-way mirrors in the nursery, so that it was also a teaching situation. Teachers would bring their students from the University to go behind the two-way glass to observe. It was a very good thing.

Dr. Ann Martin was the founder, and I hear they've started up again. But I have sort of opted out. Very nice people came to see me, and I sort of did up my swan-song of a check and made it quite clear that was it. And I did the same thing for the Conservatory. There comes a time when--I can't get around--I don't drive anymore.

Crawford: And you have really focused on Berkeley, haven't you?

Elkus: I've had this house for so long, and I'm not about to move.

Crawford: I noticed in the files that you had correspondence with Dorothea Lange. You must have been close friends.

Elkus: Oh, yes! Dorothea.

Crawford: In one letter she addressed you as "D.P." From London or New York, I think.

Elkus: What did she call me?

Crawford: I think it was "displaced person," because she made an asterisk at the bottom of the page [with an explanation]. She thought you loved London best.

Elkus: I don't think so. I think it was some kind of affectionate name that she gave me early on. Actually she was at the same house we were the night we were married. Yes, we knew Maynard [Dixon] too--that was a Maynard [pointing to a painting] that they gave us for a wedding present. Tuolomne Meadows.

Crawford: Were you hikers?

Elkus: Albert was, and I was a walker. Yes, I loved Tamalpais, and we did a lot of walking on Tamalpais before we had the children. And then we took the children.

Crawford: Tell me about the children.

Elkus: Benedict, called Ben, has become an ecologist and walker, and he goes walking with his group. He has a physical disability. He didn't get diabetes until his college years. He trained Peace Corps personnel in Puerto Rico, though he did go to South America, traveling, I think.

Jonathan is a musician; he teaches at Davis now. He is also a music publisher.

Crawford: Did they study at the Conservatory?

Elkus: No, we had moved over here and Estelle Caen came over here to teach. She was a pupil of Albert's--Herb's sister--and she was my first really close friend. There was a Depression on, and we really took her in, because it was so difficult to make a living. She was from Sacramento.

Crawford: Did she live with you?

Elkus: In Clay Street, yes, she lived with us for several months. She said we moved to Berkeley to get rid of her. [laughter]

Crawford: In working on these music histories, I hear her name often.

Elkus: We were over there when my sister was here; we went over to see her. I had asked her to play for us, because I had a niece here who hadn't been here before, and she did.

IV THE FORTIES AND FIFTIES

The Griller Quartet

Crawford: The Griller Quartet came to the Bay Area in the late 40s.

Elkus: Yes, Ada and Lillian had met them, and we had a very good time with them. Difficult, they were.

Crawford: How were they difficult?

Elkus: Well, I think the word is temperamental. They were at odds with one another. But of course as a quartet they were dependent entirely on one another for their livelihood.

As often happens, the first violinist was the boss, and the same I hear of them now. They are back in England--they are an English quartet.

Crawford: How is that?

Elkus: Well, they are still difficult. Myra Hess recognized the talent of these young men, and she helped them a great deal in every way she could. The story is that when our Jonathan went to England for a year between high school and college, he wrote and told us that Myra said to him, "Is your father being be-Grillered?"

Crawford: Be-Grillered? [laughter]

Elkus: Myra told us Jonathan's eyes lit up with humor: "Oh, yes!"

Crawford: Have you memories of Myra Hess?

Elkus: Yes, of course. When Albert died I went to see my sisters and parents in England, and I always had a date or two with Myra. Most loving, and at the same time sure of her career and wanting it as it was. Her life was concerts. She was extremely

dignified, but always laughing. She was honored by the Queen--
Dame Myra.

Crawford: Did she give master classes at the Conservatory?

Elkus: She could have as a visitor, but I don't remember that. We had two pianos here, and upright and this same grand, and Albert and Myra always played for sheer pleasure, and me wandering around getting dinner or putting the children to bed. They would play duets, and when they finished, Myra would go into bursts of laughter.

Crawford: Was the quartet happy with the conditions here?

Elkus: Yes, they had wanted to come. Ada and Lillian had met them, and I think they brought them here, if you can use that expression. Met them in London, perhaps, but they knew them before we did, and it was through Ada and Lillian that we got to know them.

They came back from London and were full of this, that if the Grillers were approached, they would certainly like to come to San Francisco. We heard they were being encouraged in this by Myra.

V SOME FAMOUS ALUMNI: YEHUDI MENUHIN AND ISAAC STERN

Crawford: Did you know the Menuhin family?

Elkus: Warmly, very warmly.

Crawford: He would have been studying already about the time you were married. He is said to have been at the Conservatory from 1928, I believe that's when Louis Persinger went back to Juilliard in New York.

Elkus: Yes, yes. He was a boy. I saw him on the stage at nine, so he would have been at the Conservatory already. It was really the only school, but it was an orchestral musician, violinist, who taught him, not through the Conservatory.

Crawford: I believe it was Louis Persinger, who was the Symphony concertmaster and director of the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco from 1916 to 1928.

Elkus: Yes. Well, Yehudi and Hephzibah and Yalta were brought to play for Albert. The sponsors would say, "What do you think we should do next? Should he go to Paris, or to so-and-so in Germany?" This happened a great deal of the time.

We knew them several years, and then Mrs. Stern was asking what she could do to help, and the decision was that he should go to Paris for his next step. So the whole family were paid for by one of these families to go to Paris.

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Crawford: Were the parents actively involved?

Elkus: Actively! I heard people criticize them, and I said, "How would you raise a family of three genius children?"

I wrote to the sister when I knew she felt she was being pushed around by Yehudi, and I got a wonderful letter back that I was to destroy. I didn't destroy it, but it was saying, "I have gotten my letter and remember old times." She lives down

on the Peninsula and he still goes to see her. [The parents] were very important in the children's lives.

Crawford: Why was she feeling pushed around?

Elkus: Oh, it was something she didn't want to do. It was drama. I saw their television show they did from London recently. He was really being bossed by Diana, and I disliked it very much.

Crawford: His wife? Is she British?

Elkus: Veddy! [laughter] A memory of the Menuhins. When our children were young we were invited to Los Gatos for Sunday lunch. I remember Yehudi and Hephzibah fooling around as adolescent brother and sister do, much sparring and giggling, just as I had with my "big brother." Our Ben (about three years old) climbed into Moshe's lap and took his afternoon nap there. Warmly accepted by Moshe!

Crawford: How about Isaac Stern, who began his studies at the Conservatory in 1930 at the age of ten.

Elkus: Well, whenever he comes to San Francisco to see his family, he always goes to the Conservatory and has a master class and walks around. He is one of the really steadfast, ordinary musicians that is brilliant in his craft. He's one of the pleasures to meet. None of your--what do you call it?

Crawford: Prima donnas?

Elkus: No, he's not the male of the prima donna at all. Nice guy.

Crawford: I remember reading in your husband's papers that he had asked Isaac Stern to perform a piece by Bloch, perhaps for the seventieth birthday party the Conservatory gave him, although that was in 1950; but Stern replied that he hadn't enough time to study it.

Stern studied with Naoum Blinder from 1932 to 1937. What do you remember of the Blinders?

Elkus: We were warmly friends, but we didn't visit one another's houses. We had lots of people--all these cousins, lots of people to visit one another's houses. The Blinders have died now, but they were much more than teachers to him. Very warm. Never gave up their birthright. They remained rather foreign, with accents. He and his wife gave their all to Isaac's musical education.

Crawford: What was so special about Naoum?

Elkus: Master of his craft, I would say.

About Friends

Crawford: Who was in your closest circle?

Elkus: The Grabhorns, Marjorie and Ed Grabhorn, and their daughter. And we used to go there for Sunday night supper, or they came to us with their little girl. She has died, I'm sorry to tell you. Our boys were older--I think Ben was a baby--when Mary was born.

Crawford: I read in Ed Grabhorn's history that he and your husband lived together before they were married.

Elkus: Yes, and among the first people we visited were the Grabhorns. Because he was the best friend of Albert's, and I'm sure he had to get his say-so on me.

Crawford: He obviously approved.

Elkus: Evidently. We had a very nice time. Well, my father was a printer, but not a master printer the way Ed Grabhorn was. Not an artist-printer. We have a lot of Ed's stuff around.

Crawford: And Gaetano Merola appears in the correspondence at times.

Elkus: Not a family friendship, a musical friendship.

Crawford: I think there was one letter in which your husband wrote to Maestro Monteux about setting up a meeting with Mr. Merola to talk about a music school. Would that have been different than the Conservatory?

Elkus: They did [it] in a way, didn't they? I don't think it was ever called that, but how about all those pupils who are still singing?

Crawford: In association with the opera company? Oh, the Merola Opera Program? That was, I believe, established after Merola died as a memorial to him.

Elkus: Well, they're always called Merola's pupils, you know.

VI CRITICS, COMPOSERS, AND PATRONS AND THE CONSERVATORY

San Francisco Critics

Crawford: How were the critics involved with the Conservatory, in your memory?

Elkus: I would say mostly by friendship, trust and belief. They would recommend to parents of talented people the Conservatory. Everyone knew Frankenstein and Fried and we knew them very well.

Crawford: Could you comment briefly on their personalities--as friends--and perhaps a difference in approach to their craft?

Elkus: I remember them being spoken of in the same breath, quoting them. Fine newspaper critics professionally, and warm personalities--they were good friends.

We were very close [to Alfred Frankenstein]. We didn't do much--we were terribly busy--you know, children! But we had a very, very close relationship with the Frankensteins, and after his wife died and my husband died, we happened--we weren't seeing each other socially at all, but we happened on the opposite sides of the street in downtown San Francisco. We hadn't seen each other for months, but we met in the middle of the street, and just did big hugs. So it was a very warm relationship, and delightful, and fun! Everybody was fun.

He would go to these big houses in San Francisco, and it was a very rainy day, and they would be having a musical afternoon and we would be invited and go. And he came in late in this raincoat, dripping, and with his hat in his mouth, holding on to his hat while he was to get his raincoat off! And I was in the audience, you see, and I nearly had hysterics because it was so funny.

Sylvia was a very, very sweet person, and she took it very hard. I think I did too. She had two boys, and she was a

professional violinist, and she found it was all too much for her.

Crawford: To have the work and the family?

Elkus: To be an artist and bring up the two little ones. I found it hard too. It's a very social life as well, married to a musician.

Crawford: And a critic is out so much.

Elkus: Yes, they [divorced]. They admired one another, but I remember it as being quite hard on Sylvia. She was a first-rate violinist and had to neglect, even give up, her professional life.

Crawford: Did he marry again?

Elkus: I don't think he did. Fried did, of course. I think Frankenstein died rather young.

Crawford: I wanted to ask you about some of the other activities that were here. Your husband was on many, many committees, and one of those was the WPA [Works Progress Administration] Committee. What do you remember of that?

Elkus: It was almost a patriotic duty in Roosevelt's time and many musicians gave time and energy. Estelle was very involved in that too. We were all left in our politics--not Communist, but Socialist. I was a Socialist from England. I never found my niche here politically.

Crawford: Not even in Berkeley?

Elkus: Not professionally, as it were. I'm using that word very widely; not as a Socialist. Not politically, and I missed that very much, because I belonged to the Independent Labor Party there. I taught for a year in Birmingham and belonged to the ILP there too, the Union for Women Teachers.

Some Bay Area Composers

Crawford: How about Henry Cowell?

Elkus: Yes, we knew him. Jonathan has kept up with Mrs. Cowell, and they have talked on the telephone recently, and they have a very

fond relationship. But he wasn't part of Albert's generation. Albert was interested in his new music, but not artistically interested.

Crawford: And then his arrest was tragic.

Elkus: It was awful, and not fair. It was one of those absurd things that happens sometimes. It's very American, I think.

Crawford: Why is that?

Elkus: Because there is so much to learn here. It isn't only America-- it could happen in England, where certainly by adolescence they are supposed to know all these things about homosexuality. It's common talk, isn't it. But it wasn't when I was young.

I always felt that Albert should go over and see him when he was in San Quentin, but he never did get to it. But Imogen Cunningham did, and she would bring us back reports.

Crawford: What was the thinking about his music? Did you ever hear his "tone cluster" compositions?

Elkus: Yes. Albert was interested in any innovation, musically speaking.

Crawford: You were close to Imogen Cunningham?

Elkus: Yes, "best friends." I don't know that she went regularly, but she went often enough to make him feel good.

Crawford: Your husband did write on his behalf, that he be given every comfort, and so forth.

Elkus: We really were, well, what's called supportive now.

Crawford: How much did you see of Imogen Cunningham?

Elkus: Well, Imogen was at Mills in the first place, and then after Roy left her, she stayed on a bit in their house behind Mills, and that's where we knew them, and we used to stay there during summer period, at their cottage next door. And then Imogen moved to San Francisco, to Leavenworth, I think. One of those streets.

Crawford: Did she work there during summers?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: How about the Milhaud family?

Elkus: Albert and Milhaud were very friendly. Talked music all the time. I am very slightly in touch with Madeleine still. She's in the same address in Avenue Clichy in Paris.

Crawford: There was such a wealth of musical talent here at that time.

Elkus: Marvelous, yes. And the warmth and love of musicians one for the other is wonderful. It was a great pleasure to me to meet all these people, but not be a musician. Terrific gossip!

Crawford: How so?

Music Patronage

Elkus: Well, talking, you know? Kitchen talk. It was fun. And we also knew and loved the people who supported that group in San Francisco--the Hellmans. We knew Mrs. [Frances] Hellman intimately. The hall at the Conservatory is named for her daughter-in-law, Ruth Hellman. We saw her [Frances] a lot. And she very much depended on Albert for, well, just as a nice man. And she took us to opera--they always had a box for opera. Their summer home [Dunsmuir House] was near Mills College where the Pro Arte Quartet played during the summer months and there was much entertaining.

Crawford: Did you enjoy opera?

Elkus: Yes, very much. Well, I had a good teacher on the way over. It was so funny, because there was a big table and there were servants and so on at the Hellman household, and Albert had told me the story of the opera on the way over, and I had next to me a young woman who said, "I know nothing about this opera. Not a thing." So I launched into everything he'd told me, and I caught Albert's eye at the other end of the table, and, I mean, there were fun moments like that.

Crawford: She thought you were the expert ever after!

Elkus: I don't remember ever seeing her again.

Crawford: You saw the Hellmans often?

Elkus: Yes, but it was Ruth Hellman, for whom that wing was named, the grandchildren who we loved dearly and because we went over to Mills and stayed at Imogen's house for the summer, where

Albert was teaching, and our Jonathan was a baby in a high chair. That's when the famous piano teacher from New York came. This was a very primitive life we lived. But he had fun, and he and Albert had musical fun, and that was very special.

Crawford: What was his name?

Elkus: We mentioned him today, but it's gone for me.

Crawford: Was he on the Conservatory faculty?

Elkus: No, summer school faculty. He was a musician who got around. He taught Albert at one time and they were friends.

Crawford: What other arts patrons did you see? Mrs. Armsby was very influential.

Elkus: Yes. Albert knew her better than I did, because they often consulted him and would therefore go to the nearest place--the Conservatory--and he would come back and tell me about it.

Flora Armsby?

Crawford: Leonora Wood Armsby, I think.

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: Your husband was very interested in Schoenberg, for example, and when he came here to conduct, which he did several times, did you meet him?

Elkus: Albert did probably. I knew of him, and he would be talk at Ada and Lillian's. We would do this catching up in Mill Valley. I just heard it all rather than was part of it.

Crawford: There was interesting correspondence with Howard Skinner, whom you remember.

Elkus: Oh, yes. Nice man. He was on the fringes of music. I don't know that you could give him a name as a pianist, but I think he was much more in the business of music. Running concerts or something like that.

Crawford: He managed both the Symphony and the Opera. But I remember that your husband wrote him a letter about New York management, complaining that we were getting the soloists that they wanted to send, and that perhaps we could use some local soloists here. So I think your husband was always an advocate for local artists.

Elkus: Yes, I think so, because he was a local artist himself.

Crawford: Monteux played his works?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: Well, we didn't talk about Ernst Bacon, who I think was a friend.

Elkus: Oh, yes! And Penty too [his wife]. I think she's still here. At a place for the elderly in Oakland.

I know Madi is still here, and still playing tennis. I saw Madi at the Conservatory last week. I'm not in touch with her socially, but I could tell she still plays tennis when I saw her Sunday. Her face is old, but not her body.

Crawford: Ernst Bacon hired people for the WPA Orchestra he directed. Did he teach at the Conservatory?

Elkus: Yes, and sometimes conducted. He was an interesting and volatile person and a good composer.

Crawford: How was he volatile?

Elkus: I think he felt deeply about music and composition and said so. He was from Chicago and his father was a doctor and his mother was a Viennese princess. So she remained very Viennese. I knew her as their mother, who came out here and we went there with our two children on the way back from England. We went to dinner with the Bacons.

The father was a dignified, placid doctor, and very well known. When their third child was born, a girl, [the mother] said to her husband, who was of course there at the birth, "Eine maedchen," and she was called "Madi" from then on, a name of endearment.

VII THE ELKUS YEARS AT THE CONSERVATORY: 1951-1957

Finding a New Site

- Crawford: Your husband was away from the Conservatory in the 40s, when he was at Berkeley, but was he still involved there?
- Elkus: Yes, very much involved still, and really would have liked to see a marriage with the music department here, and worked towards that within reason. He was the chairman, and you can't push things like this, but he never succeeded. That was the only project that he had that was big and far-reaching, that he wasn't able to accomplish.
- Crawford: Why didn't that work out?
- Elkus: The music department here, and it was run democratically, of course, really didn't want it to happen.
- Crawford: Perhaps they weren't so performance oriented?
- Elkus: No, I don't think that was the reason. I think they felt the two schools had a different function. Anyway, it didn't happen.
- Crawford: I remember they didn't want a university chorus here [within the department].
- Elkus: Yes, it was used in the extension division, which wasn't the same thing. You know, there are always problems, and that was one of the problems and discussions that I listened to from the kitchen or wherever.
- Crawford: When your husband took over the direction of the Conservatory in 1951, did Ada and Lillian retire?
- Elkus: They had retired. They really begged him to give his attention to it fully, and we talked it over quite a bit, and he decided to do it.

Crawford: What do you remember of your husband's years at the Conservatory?

Elkus: I think he moved--did the big move. You see, I thought at the time [it worked out well] because it was a cooperative, and I'm very cooperative-minded. It seemed better for the Conservatory and it turned out to be so, to get a board together and he was wiser than I on this. I mean, the word could not be used for me--wise. He knew enough of the running, especially in this area of music and musical things to know that if he set up a board, it would be useful.

Crawford: How much time did you spend looking for the Ortega Street site?

Elkus: A long time. We would get addresses and go over on Sundays, and then made a big decision, which was helped by the fact that we heard about this particular building where they are on Ortega Street.

I sometimes went along, but I was teaching, and so I wasn't always along. But Albert would always tell me in great detail. They went to big houses to look for a new Conservatory, and it just didn't ring a bell, any of it. And then, one of the people who was extremely helpful on the board was Ruth Lilienthal, and she came one day to Albert and said, "You know, I know Mrs. So-and-so, who is on the board of the infant shelter, and they are trying to sell it."

Albert went to look, and he took a couple of architects with him, and they said this would make a fine school. And the architect--Albert got awfully friendly with him in the lunch hours over there. Terribly nice guy, but he was in the office of Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons. Mr. Bernardi was in charge of the extensive remodeling and he and Albert became fast friends.

Crawford: Who made the final decision?

Elkus: Well, it was a very obvious thing, once they went over--the architect and Albert and the other people that were on the board, the pros said, "You know, this is just a wonderful place and can be turned into a music conservatory. And it can be built onto." You see, it had an inner playground, because they were infants, and so the children couldn't get out, and more was used later for the actual hall, which the Hellmans provided; the Hellman children.

Crawford: Where was the courtyard?

Elkus: Right in the middle.

Crawford; What do you remember of the architect?

Elkus: They were very inventive and positive about it. The Infant Shelter interior was uniform brown and now the architect Mr. [Theodore] Bernadi used bright and varied colors for all woodwork, doors, etc. Very handsome.

Remodeling the Infant Shelter

Crawford: There would have been a lot of children's plumbing. What did they do about that?

Elkus: Yes, the plumbing was very amusing. They all died at the plumbing. Died of laughter, because of all these little toilets. It was the time of toilet training for children. Start early.

They used the underground pipes and put in proper size toilets for adults.

Crawford: And the practice rooms?

Elkus: The third floor were nurses' rooms, and they were all very easy for one-instrument lessons, an upright piano and a violinist, for instance. So they could be used for lots of instruments for practice. I mean, it all fell into place absolutely marvelously.

There was a kitchen there, and there was a flat for the-- what do they call the concierge--there's a name for him, the person who looks after the well-being of the house, the cleaning.

Crawford: Yes; can't think of that.

Elkus: Oh, good--glad you can't. [laughter]

But it really was absolutely marvelous. There was criticism because people thought it was too far out, and Albert said we have to think of people coming from Japan and people coming from Marin and from down the Peninsula, and I don't see why they can't come to this location.

Crawford: From Japan, because of access to the airport?

Elkus: Well, it's straight across the ocean, after all.

Crawford: But how would it be easier for those students?

Elkus: Well, downtown wouldn't be easier. People hadn't visualized it out in the avenues, and it takes time for people to rethink. We hadn't thought about a Conservatory out in that neighborhood. Albert hadn't been looking out there. There weren't any big houses out there. Until Ruth Lilienthal had it up her sleeve.

Crawford: She was on the board, and you told me Albert had built a board. Had there been a board before?

Elkus: No. I preferred it as a cooperative, as it was, but he was very firm about this.

Crawford: What do you mean by cooperative--that everyone ran it?

Elkus: Yes, a lot of things went cooperative during the Depression, and then problems were shared.

Crawford: In the 1950s, when your husband was there, I think they inaugurated the building the year before he retired, was there community service on the part of the students?

Elkus: Well, I suppose it took some time to build up, but it had a good enough name and reference by this time, and scholarship, and community service came later.

Crawford: Did they play in hospitals and that sort of thing?

Elkus: No, I think somebody else thought that up.

Crawford: Yes, Milton Salkind, I believe. Was the chamber music program taking shape?

Elkus: Oh, yes. Bonnie [Hampton] was there early, and she's been the great person in chamber music. Bonnie was a pupil there and became part of it.

Fund-Raising for the Conservatory

Crawford: Did your husband raise money for the Conservatory?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: In the 40s, I think it was done through the particular families, a tradition of giving.

Elkus: Yes, and he remained doing it through friendship.

Crawford: So it wasn't hard for him?

Elkus: Well, it wasn't hard because he was used to it, and tried to get out of it. [laughter] You see, once people have faith in you and trust you, they let you get on with it. And Albert was long into that stage of being completely trusted in what he was suggesting, both musically and for the benefit of whatever he was working for.

Crawford: What did he love to do best at the Conservatory, if fund-raising was on the other side?

Elkus: Guiding the growth.

Crawford: He was appointed in 1951, and the Alma Trio came for summer workshops. Do you remember them?

Elkus: I remember them slightly, but I knew the name. They were good.

Robin Laufer and Milton Salkind

Crawford: Then the year your husband retired, Robin Laufer came. Do you remember anything about him?

Elkus: Yes, he was a good musician, but the war was just recently over, and he and his wife had a difficult time adjusting to America. They wanted to come, but he wasn't really ready to take on a new culture, as well as a new job. He had a difficult time, and finally went back to England. She was English, and he was French. But somebody from the Conservatory met them in Paris and got to know them a little bit, but I think it was too hard for them. He'd been in the army of the resistance, and it was hard for them during the war.

Crawford: And Sidney Griller was the dean, appointed that same year?

Elkus: Yes.

Crawford: And then Milton Salkind in 1966. What were his strong qualities, as you see it?

- Elkus: I think he was a strong organizer, and a good musician. He and his wife were duo pianists, and good.
- Crawford: Well, if your husband hadn't taken over in 1951, what would have happened to the Conservatory?
- Elkus: Looking around for a new place was with the proviso that he would, I think. Ada and Lillian asked him if he would. It was found at just the right moment, and nearly everybody was pleased. Some people couldn't bear to move from the old house and weren't prepared to meet growth, and so--but they were all talked into it.
- Crawford: What were the rewards of your association with the new building and the school as it grew?
- Elkus: The rewards--well, that it was city-wide. It was big enough, it lent itself to growth, and had some dignity. And was cheap!
- Crawford: To buy?
- Elkus: It was an extraordinary buy. It must be in their papers, but I don't think I've remembered. Wonderful buy. Nobody wanted it--infant shelter? If it wouldn't be converting it, it would be to go on with it for an infant shelter and it was out because there were no infants. It wasn't being done.
- Crawford: You've had a marvelous life, and one in which you worked together and laughed a lot. You were very involved in music too, and an asset to your husband.
- Elkus: Yes. Often I'd tell Albert what I'd heard and he would say, "Oh, Elizabeth!" I'd say, "Perhaps I shouldn't tell you--" And he'd say, "Oh, don't do that!"

Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Agnes Albert

CHAMBER MUSIC AND THE CONSERVATORY

Interview Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1993



Conservatory trustee Agnes Albert (center) with Colin Murdoch (left) and San Francisco Symphony Music Director Herbert Blomstedt, circa 1990.

Photography courtesy of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Agnes Albert

Agnes Albert remembers one of her first San Francisco Symphony concerts in 1929, when the soloist was a guest at the family home in Carmel and had to be driven to the Curran Theatre in time for a Sunday afternoon performance. It was in the middle of winter, and Vladimir Horowitz asked to stop several times for medicine, so that he reached the theater well after the program was scheduled to begin.

This was not too unusual an occurrence for the niece of Richard Tobin, one of the Symphony founders in 1909 and an early opera board member with a passion for chamber music. Mrs. Albert, a pianist who performed twice as a soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, inherited that special passion and in nearly fifty years of music advocacy in San Francisco, working through the Symphony, the Youth Orchestra, which she helped to found, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and the public schools, brought music education to hundreds of young people.

Coming from a musical family and having been deeply immersed in the San Francisco music scene, Agnes Albert's recollections are central to any history of music in San Francisco. Known as a very pirate person, Mrs. Albert has so far declined to do a full oral history. We feel fortunate to have this interview on the Conservatory, however slim, a tribute to her appreciation of Milton Salkind.

This interview took place in Mrs. Albert's home on Lyon Street, San Francisco, in the large formal living room that has been the scene of many a chamber music sessions. Mrs. Albert, who speaks with energy and with a pronounced accent from her years abroad, touched on a life of considerable adventure, of which a highlight was a whitewater trip down the Colorado River in 1941. She claims to be only the fourth woman to have made the trip (only three of them survived), and that the vastness of the canyon cast human life in perspective for her for her life to come. She made no changes in the text of the interview.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

April 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name Agnes Albert

Date of birth 15 May 1908 Place of birth San Mateo Calif.

Father's full name Charles Clark

Birthplace Butte, Montana

Occupation Miner

Mother's full name Celia Tolson

Birthplace San Francisco

Occupation _____

Where did you grow up? San Mateo & Paris, France

Present community San Francisco music world

Education Convent school (Catholic), Paris

spent school for 2 yrs high school - then
left school to study music & Italian

Occupation(s) _____

Chamber Music - love of nature & adventures
trip down Colorado river in 1941

Special interests or activities _____

CHAMBER MUSIC AND THE CONSERVATORY

[Date of Interview: September 29, 1993]##

Education and Influences of Musical Uncle: Richard Tobin

Crawford: Could you talk a little about your exposure to music in your early years?

Albert: Yes, certainly. I was extremely privileged by being exposed to music, and especially to chamber music, very early in my life. My uncle, Dick Tobin, who was--well, he was a scholar, he was a banker, he was a diplomat, he was a musician. He was not married until very late in life, and so I have him to thank for all my love of music and musicians. He was never happier than when he was surrounded by musicians.

He always had string quartets, and so as a child I met the Flonzaley, the Lena, the Pro-Arte--all the great quartets. He would make me come in and play with them, poor things. He'd say, "My niece is now going to play a movement with you." They were very sweet, and of course it was fantastic for me. He really influenced my whole life, not only in that, but in literature; he was a great reader.

I went to school in France as a child. I did study music, piano, as a little girl in San Mateo--I was brought up in San Mateo--but when I went to school in France, we were so busy with our studies that I didn't have much time to pursue piano playing.

Then I came back to New York with my two sisters and we went to school. We were very unhappy there; we were fish out of water, having come from life in a convent in France. After two years my mother decided to let me leave school. I never did get a high school diploma, and I'm doing it now, because every day I'm going to Urban School. I'm not getting a diploma but I'm following their classes!

Crawford: You are?

Albert: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I'm taking a course in Russian literature. It's wonderful. And everybody says, "What are you doing here?" And I say, "I never did finish high school, and I'm making up for it now."

Crawford: Bravo!

Albert: So then, I left school and I studied music in New York and also Italian, Dante. I lived with this woman scholar who was quite extraordinary, and we spoke Italian and we read Dante and Petrarch and all the big Italian writers. Mainly Dante. She used to teach at the Casa Italiana at Barnard. That's when I really started to study music seriously, but I can't say that I studied so much with the piano. I studied with all the string players with whom I played, Michel Piastro and Sascha [Alexander] Schneider and Robert Maas, the wonderful cellist of the Pro Arte Quartet.

Eventually my daughter married a cellist, Donald McCall from the Lenox String Quartet, so we've always had music in the house, and he and I have played a lot together. I was never a professional pianist, but I just loved it, and I had this great good luck of being surrounded by marvelous musicians.

Working and Performing with the San Francisco Symphony

Albert: I became very involved with the Symphony when I came back from Europe in 1940, just at the time of the war, and that's when I started to become involved with the Symphony, and I've been involved ever since, in every aspect of it. I mean, every aspect, not with the administration but with the musical side of it.

I've known all of the conductors very well, and the members of the orchestra--I've played with some of them--and then the Youth Orchestra we founded about ten years ago. Before that we had music in the schools, and I would like to tell you about my experiences with the Conservatory and the string quartets there--shall I do that now?

Crawford: We'll get to that later.

Albert: That just about covers it.

- Crawford: Well, you worked so closely with Maestro Jorda and Maestro Krips.
- Albert: Oh, we were very close friends, and I played with Krips, too. We played out at the Legion of Honor--I did the part of *The Bourgeois Gentleman*--and I remember when he said to me afterwards that I was very "schmalzig" and I thought that was probably the greatest compliment I've ever had. He used to come here with his cigar and he'd make me practice. At any rate it was great fun.
- Crawford: You played at Maestro Monteux's farewell concert in 1952 too, didn't you?
- Albert: Yes, I did. At his final concert.
- Crawford: How did that come about?
- Albert: Well, it came about because Mrs. Armsby was then the president of the Symphony, wanted very much to have a local performer at the final concert, and she wanted me to do it, and I remember so well because the manager was then Howard Skinner, and he said, "Look, you've been invited to play Franck's Symphonic Variations at the final concert. I was stunned, and I thought, "Well, this isn't really right, because there are so many young people, much more talented than I am, who should have this. What am I doing, doing this?" So I told him, "I've got to discuss this with my uncle," the same uncle, and I always remember this. He must have thought I was very strange--Howard Skinner--that I didn't say, "Yes, here I am"--I said, "I've got to think it over."
- So I went to talk to my uncle, and I said, "Look, I don't feel that this is fair to other people," and I always remember what he said, because he said, "Look, those thoughts are really very morbid on your part. They've asked you; it's because they want you. And it's the most wonderful thing for you, for me, for the entire family, for your children. You just go ahead and do it." So I called Howard Skinner, and I said, "Okay, I'll do it."
- Crawford: How did you feel when you walked out on the stage at the War Memorial Opera House?"
- Albert: Well, it wasn't as scary as going down the Colorado River on a rowboat!

I felt inspired, you know, and capable of doing it. I had played before with [Bernardino] Molinari years before. You lose the feeling that it's you, if you're inspired, and I loved the music, and I can't say I was terribly nervous.

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music: The 1920s

- Crawford: I know that you didn't know the founders of the Conservatory personally.
- Albert: I didn't. I was on the board of the Conservatory and I don't even know the dates. It must have been shortly after I moved into this house, and that was in 1946 that I was on the Conservatory board, when they were still down on Sacramento Street.
- Crawford: Well, talk about the Sacramento Street facility, will you? Which had been Lillian Hodghead's house.
- Albert: Well, it was a modest little house. I don't remember much about it, actually. Ava Jean Brumbaum was very active in it; that's when I got to know her. And Albert Elkus was the president. I don't remember that I participated too much in it then, actually. I really don't.
- Crawford: You being a musician yourself I wanted to ask you--was it unusual for Ada Clement to go and study in Paris with Harold Bauer? It's interesting that a young woman from California would have done that.
- Albert: No, perhaps not. In those days, I don't think so. She was probably a very independent spirit, you know. But I really didn't know her.
- Crawford: In one article they called the Conservatory a "sleepy little piano school," and Mrs. Elkus took umbrage to that.
- Albert: I'm sure she did. I'm sure she must take umbrage at a lot of things that are being said. It's hard to be told, "Look what it used to be and see what it is now." It's very hard. It was another era, and it was on a small scale, and he [Albert Elkus] was perhaps not--I don't know much about it in those days--not until Robin Laufer became president. That was much later. I really know little about those days. I attended meetings--I can't remember what I did.

- Crawford: It's said that Ernest Bloch was important to the Conservatory, the implication being that he really put it on the map.
- Albert: Very. It's an enormous name.
- Crawford: Did you know him?
- Albert: I met him only. I was not really involved much with the Conservatory in those days. I was on the board, but I don't think I did much.
- Crawford: Another high point in the 20s was Yehudi Menuhin. Did you know the family?
- Albert: The Menuhins. Oh, yes, I've known them always, really, because he played with the Symphony when my uncle Dick was president.
- Crawford: With whom did he study?
- Albert: He studied with [Louis] Persinger.
- Crawford: Was that at the Conservatory? I know they claim him as an alumnus.
- Albert: Yes, that's right. Like Isaac Stern. Gordon Getty.
- Crawford: Do you remember Guilio Silva, who started the vocal department?
- Albert: No.
- Crawford: Gaetano Merola was also involved in vocal teaching there. Did you know him?
- Albert: Yes, he was wonderful. A wonderful character.
- Crawford: What about Isaac Stern, one of those famous alumni?
- Albert: I don't know what his official affiliation was.
- Crawford: I know he studied with Naoum Blinder, whom you must have known well. Would you talk about him?
- Albert: Naoum Blinder? Well, he was our concertmaster. He was Russian. He and his brother, Boris Blinder, who was the cellist.

The 1940s: The Griller Quartet, Darius Milhaud, the Board

- Crawford: How about the Griller Quartet? Their first residency was in 1948, I believe.
- Albert: The Griller Quartet. Yes, I knew them all. I never played with them, because they were mainly in Berkeley. Then, of course, Bonnie Hampton was married to one of them, and she's given enormously to the Conservatory to this day. She's wonderful. Wonderful artist; wonderful person.
- Crawford: Did Darius Milhaud have much to do with the Conservatory?
- Albert: Oh, Milhaud had no connection with the Conservatory, really, I don't think. Mills College was his field.
- Crawford: Did you know him well?
- Albert: Oh, I knew him very, very well.
- Crawford: What was he like?
- Albert: Oh, he was a wonderful person. Full of humor. Brilliant. As brilliant in mind--not only musical but literary, witty, just an extraordinary person. I only knew him, of course, [in the] forties, when he first came out here. He was in a wheelchair, very crippled, and his wife was Madeleine Milhaud, and she did these wonderful recitations, and we used to go over and follow her classes.
- Crawford: At Mills?
- Albert: At Mills. But he had no affiliations otherwise, I don't think. They were friends with Robin Laufer, because Robin Laufer had spent so much time in France.
- Crawford: What about the connection with Berkeley? I read that Ada Clement at one point wanted to give the Conservatory to the University and let them run it.
- Albert: Well, there has always been talk of that. There was also talk of Mills College at one point. But the Conservatory wanted its own identity. Wanted to play its own role, really.
- Crawford: When they moved out to the Ortega Street site in the early 1950s, was there some controversy about that?

Albert: Yes, there was a lot of talk whether that was the right spot for them to be, and all that.

Crawford: What is your feeling?

Albert: I was away. I was in Europe at that time. but I rather questioned it, and I still question it. Everybody does, you know, because it's far for people to go out there and park. It has its advantages, such as the housing is less expensive for the students.

When Alioto was mayor, he wanted very much to have them move down where Davies Hall is, and then that didn't come off. and Milton Salkind was always against their moving closer to the musical center. He felt that it was very important that they have their own musical identity.

Crawford: I heard once that it might be moved to the Palace--

Albert: Palace of Fine Arts.

Crawford: Yes.

Albert: Yes, that's right.

Crawford: How about your participation on the board?

Albert: I didn't do much.

Crawford: Was it a working board?

Albert: No, it wasn't, I don't think, really. But of course, the minute I joined the Symphony I was right in the middle of everything. I wasn't on the Conservatory board terribly long; I got off the board, because of feeling a conflict of interest, when I was sponsoring the chamber music seminars out there and I felt I shouldn't be on the board, so I resigned, but I mean I've been more involved with the board ever since then than I ever was when I was on the board.

Chamber Music at the Conservatory

Crawford: Will you talk about your work with the chamber music program at the Conservatory?

Albert: Well, my son-in-law, Donald McCall, was with the Lenox Quartet, and they used to spend their summers out here. They were in residence in Binghamton, up in New York State. And we decided to have a string quartet seminar here, and we had, I think, five quartets.

They auditioned young people from all over America and we held those at the Conservatory, and that was about twenty-five years ago, I suppose. And they had tapes, the quartet did, and they traveled around, and they picked up various members of the quartets, and it was to last, I think, six weeks.

We did it three years running, and of course we auditioned young students--they auditioned students from the Conservatory, locally, too, and there was never one student from the Conservatory that was taken. That was proficient enough. Can you imagine?

And now, twenty years later, or whatever it is, their groups of chamber music are winning prizes all over the world. That was an indication of what Milton did to develop the chamber music at the school.

Crawford: That is something.

Albert: There was not one student taken. And it was embarrassing, because it was held here. And they had chamber music concerts at the deYoung Museum and at the Legion at the end of the seminars.

Crawford: When was that program?

Albert: That must have been twenty years ago, if not more than that.

Crawford: What was it called?

Albert: String quartet seminars? I don't know.

Crawford: Sponsored by the Lenox?

Albert: It was sponsored by us. I say us--the Lenox, the family, and so forth.

Crawford: That probably generated interest and brought better students to the area.

Albert: Yes, and some of those erstwhile students had wonderful training. They did nothing but play string quartets. Some of

them are in our orchestra now, and some went to Mills. They were all young then--in their late teens. But we had to give it up after three years. It all got too complicated; too expensive, or something or other. But the extraordinary thing was that there was not one local student from the Conservatory, although the classes were held there. But even a few years later the whole chamber music department just blossomed.

Crawford: With Margaret Rowell?

Albert: With Margaret Rowell, with Bonnie Hampton. Just blossomed. They had string quartets, trios floating around, winning all the first prizes. So that just shows what can be done. And it was Milton Salkind's doing.

The Presidency of Robin Laufer: 1957-1966

Crawford: Could you talk about Robin Laufer's time?

Albert: Robin Laufer was very much an intellectual. He'd worked, I think, for UNESCO in Paris. He was very foreign--I don't know what his actual background was, but he almost seemed more French than English, in a way, and he had extremely high standards. I think he was fairly unhappy there; I don't think he had the gift of getting on with the students, really. He was too remote from them in his whole concept. In his whole manner. Very fine person, very nice man, and he died very suddenly of a stroke, I think.

Crawford: So he was more of a musicologist, then.

Albert: Much more, that's exactly what he was. He would have probably have been better at Berkeley or somewhere.

And then after his death, I was asked to be on a search committee with Jimmy Schwabacher, and I guess Ava Jean [Brumbaum], and I don't know who else was on that search committee, and we interviewed several people, and Milton Salkind was taken at that time.

The Presidency of Milton Salkind: 1966-1991

- Crawford: Interesting choice. You might have looked for someone from New York.
- Albert: That's right, that's right. Not very well known at all, and certainly not as an educator. And of course to me, his great forte has been his closeness to the students. There's never been anything like that, anywhere, I mean.
- Crawford: What are his special qualities?
- Albert: I would say his devotion to the students. I mean his closeness to the students. That came first, above the board, the administration, the people who worked there, the students were it for him, so it created a whole sort of hierarchy of students all over America.
- Whenever I speak to him: "There's a student just over from England who wants me to have dinner with him." You know, surrounded by this aura of students.
- Crawford: They say it's a very nourishing environment as opposed to a competitive one.
- Albert: Yes. Oh, yes. Very warm, very human. Yes, compared to what they get at the big music schools like Juilliard and Curtis. I think that's what's developed.
- Crawford: How do they compare?
- Albert: Well, it's different. You can't compare them.
- Crawford: Do you get the same quality of musicianship?
- Albert: Yes, yes, of course so many of the young students go east, and that's natural too. Lots of them want to get away from their families, so its really natural if they're brought up here and suddenly they're eighteen and they think, "Oh, let's go to New York and try Juilliard or Peabody, or something else." It's a natural tendency, don't you think, and probably a rather healthy one.
- Crawford: You mentioned James Schwabacher. What has been his involvement with the Conservatory?

Albert: Oh, he was president of the Conservatory. He has been very involved always, always a devoted friend. But of course his great field has been vocal music. That's what interests him the most, always. The Merola [Opera Program]. Oh, it's wonderful.

Crawford: How is their vocal department considered?

The Messiah Sing-along and Other Innovations

Albert: I don't know anything about the vocal department. Of course the *Messiah* has been a wonderful thing; that's what Milton started too.

Crawford: The one now given annually as a "sing-along" for the public at Davies Hall? That was a real stroke for the Conservatory.

Albert: Yes, and that was the first of all the *Messiahs*. Now everybody copies that. And then [the Conservatory] had classes, sort of music appreciation, and people learning all about music and all that. The value of this kind of program is substantive for the Conservatory.

Crawford: Do they have a large extension program?

Albert: Yes, and Bobby McFerrin is another part of that outreach. He's very fun, wonderful with the students, he gives courses there, and he's a friend of Milton's.

He's going to take piano lessons from Milton. He was in Tanglewood this summer--you know his great thing is conducting now--and Seiji [Ozawa] is giving him lessons in conducting, and he said to him, "Look. You've got to study the piano. You study with Milton." So now he's going to.

Crawford: I'm waiting for his opera.

Albert: So am I! There is a sort of a quality too of very avant garde about the Conservatory; Any new ideas are taken up. It's very alive. Which I'm sure a big school like Juilliard can't afford to do, really, you know, I mean they're structured. This is a quality that can follow any wave.

Crawford: Why is that possible here? John Adams said just that, that it's a "cauldron of ideas."

More about Milton Salkind

- Albert: Yes. In great part it's thanks to Milton, I think.
- Crawford: How happy has he been as an administrator, do you think? Being a pianist. I guess he didn't particularly want the job, and his wife suggested him to the board?
- Albert: I don't know. It may be he didn't think he was sufficiently qualified from an administrative point of view.
- Crawford: He expanded the student body greatly, from about forty to several hundred. How did he do that?
- Albert: Well, they have very good teachers there, and they have lots of teachers from the Symphony. Some of our first-desk people.

Davies Hall, "Lake Louise," and Hellman Hall

- Crawford: Has there been much crossover with the Symphony?
- Albert: It's never been as close as it should have been, and I think had they moved to what we call Lake Louise, to the old school building or somewhere, it would have been much closer, because the students could have gone to rehearsals, and so on.
- Crawford: Lake Louise refers to Davies Hall?
- Albert: Yes, that's what the musicians call Lake Louise. Because it's still empty, that lot, and there was talk then of putting the Conservatory there. In a way it would be wonderful because it's a little inaccessible now for lots of us to go down there at night. You can't park and all that. [Hellman Hall] is a lovely hall, and there are few halls that size.

##

- Crawford: Is it about 300?
- Albert: Three-forty, three-fifty, just like the hall at the Legion of Honor.
- Crawford: Do you like that hall?

Albert: Do I ever!

Crawford: How does the sound compare in the two?

Albert: I think they're similar. Just very good. It's a lovely size, and I think the building is very nice in a way. The courtyard and the informality of the building, It's very nice, but it's the placement of it. But who knows, the whole city may go out in that direction. How does one know?

The Conservatory and New Music

Crawford: How about new music?

Albert: New music? Yes, I think they've done quite a bit--done their fair share. It's not easy. Look at us at the Symphony. We have to give up the Wet Ink for next year. Which is our contemporary music thing. So everybody's in the same boat. It's expensive, it doesn't pay--but you have to do it, and certainly in a teaching organization you should do it even more. Although it's necessary everywhere.

Crawford: When you think of the faculty, who comes to mind?

Albert: Bonnie [Hampton].

Crawford: And Irene Sharp, is she still there?

Albert: Irene Sharp is marvelous. She has produced so many cellists for our youth orchestra. She must be an extraordinary teacher.

The Youth Orchestra and the Conservatory

Crawford: Would you just talk about the youth orchestra here, so that we can see how it fits into the musical scene?

Albert: Yes, well, we get quite a number. At first they were not very happy about having the Youth Orchestra out at the Conservatory because it interferes with the young people who were going to come from the Conservatory. They had some programs on Saturday mornings or afternoons they were going to have to give up, because they really spend all day Saturday at Davies Hall.

But they did come, most of them, and they still play in the Conservatory orchestra, but that's not the same kind of training as the youth orchestra. We had lots of the young people in the orchestra who were conservatory students.

Crawford: Where else do they come from?

Albert: Well, they come from Anne Crowley's Music School in the East Bay. They come from Marin, they come from the East Bay.

Margaret Rowell and the Cello Club

Crawford: The East Bay has been a center for chamber music, and the cello club started there. Could you talk about that a bit?

Albert: Well, Margaret Rowell was the queen of it all, and she played a great deal at the Conservatory.

Crawford: Did you know her well?

Albert: Quite well. I loved her, a lovely person.

Crawford: It is said that the cello club started in Margaret Rowell's living room, and that she founded the club with Colin Hampton of the Griller Quartet.

Albert: Yes, I suppose so. And then when they had her ninetieth birthday at the Conservatory, two or three years ago, they all played. A hundred cellists on the stage. That was very touching, and she sat with her grandchild on her lap.

Crawford: We did an oral history with Margaret Rowell, and she said that she thought at one time that the Conservatory juries were too strict by comparison with the Eastern music schools, that they wanted perfect technical playing--too demanding in that area.

Albert: I don't know about that.

Crawford: When did the Lenox break up?

Albert: They broke up some years ago. Paul Hersh was the violist in the Lenox Quartet, and of course he plays quite a role at the Conservatory, because he taught piano and viola. Very talented. And also taught, I think, Chinese art or literature. He can turn his hand to anything.

Community Service, AIMS and Fund-Raising

Crawford: Would you talk a bit about the Conservatory's community service program?

Albert: Oh, yes, they do play a lot, I realize, in hospitals, schools, prisons and that sort of thing. I don't know very much about it, but they've also been involved with our education program at the Symphony--this AIMS. Art and musicians--we have some from all over and they go out in the schools and play.

Crawford: There used to be so many orchestras at the middle-school level.

Albert: Yes. Not any more. No money.

Crawford: How about fund-raising?. I remember reading in Doris Monteux's book [*It's All in the Music*] how funding got to be such a headache in the 50s. I think then it was done by patrons who came forward and didn't require campaigns. She was grateful particularly to the old Jewish families.

Albert: They're wonderful. The San Francisco arts and music would be--when you think of the Jewish families that promoted all the great talent, really. Leon Fleisher and Yehudi--all of them. Heifetz--all of them--they were always supported by the Jewish families.

Crawford: I think Milton Salkind has been very skilled in fund-raising.

Albert: Very.

Crawford: What is the secret of his success?

Albert: Well, perhaps because he's so dedicated himself. You can't help fall for it. He presents it well; it means so much to him. Yes, I think he's been very successful.

Crawford: He has been able to get large national grants. The Ford Foundation, Mellon.

Albert: Yes, that's right.

Crawford: Were you off the board by the time he came?

Albert: Very shortly thereafter. I'm on the advisory [board] and I'm a very close friend of his and also of Colin Murdoch, but I work from the sidelines.

Crawford: What is the work of the advisory committee?

The Conservatory-San Francisco Symphony Connection

Albert: Whatever you want. It's very much like the Symphony. I work on the sidelines.

Crawford: What work do you do now with the Symphony?

Albert: Well, these things are very loosely structured. I just work very closely with the president and I work very closely with the conductor, and I just seem to do it my way. And at this point I'm not very anxious to be on boards. It takes so much time.

Crawford: What I was telling you before we began recording was that it was mentioned in the history of San Francisco Opera and Kurt Adler that you were very influential in programming at the Symphony, something not to be found at the Opera during the Adler reign.

Albert: He imagined that.

Crawford: You didn't really talk about programming and soloists?

Acnes: Well, it depends. Some conductors want to talk about it and some don't.

Crawford: I heard that Seiji Ozawa didn't.

Albert: Yes, except that he and I were such close personal friends.

Crawford: Did the conductors ever go over to the Conservatory much?

Albert: No. They have a conducting program, but there's never been really a close connection there, and some of the conductors we've had have not been too interested. I mean, they're so taken up by the Symphony, and it's such an overpowering job and they just don't want to.

The Master's Degree in Chamber Music

Crawford: The Conservatory was the first to offer, in 1985, a master's in chamber music, which is impressive.

Albert: That is the shining light, I think, is the chamber music, because I love it so much. But that is really what distinguishes the Conservatory, I think.

Crawford: You said that various ensembles win prizes?

Albert: Oh, yes, they are all over the place: trios, quartets.

Crawford: I noticed that a Heifetz violin was to be played by a student at the Conservatory. Do they collect such instruments?

Albert: At the Legion of Honor.

Crawford: Oh, it may be that the student just borrowed it.

Albert: That's right. A student gave a concert on the instrument.

Crawford: How about the preparatory department? Is that outstanding?

Albert: I suppose. May Kurka is an extraordinary person.

Crawford: Oh, talk about May Kurka.

Albert: I think she's done a great, great job.

Crawford: A pianist at Juilliard, I think, and married to a composer.

Albert: I wouldn't know.

The Conservatory at Seventy-Five

Crawford: Did you take part in the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations?

Albert: Yes, they gave a dinner in my honor, so I was extremely honored. At the Davies Hall, for the anniversary. They played a work of John Adams that night, and I can't remember--maybe I

have it here. You know, there are so many things taking place that you don't know what you're doing. Here it is, you see.

Crawford: What was the focus of the evening?

Albert: From my point of view it was that it was such a youthful organization that you couldn't believe it was seventy-five years old, because it is always changing. It's like the Youth Orchestra; it's always changing every year. Which is wonderful, too.

Crawford: Mr. Getty chaired one of the celebrations with Yo-Yo Ma?

Albert: Yes, that's right.

Crawford: Has he been very involved with the Conservatory over the years?

Albert: No. Well, he's been generous the way he is with many organizations.

Crawford: He is a composer and you might think the Conservatory would be a focus for him.

Albert: He'd like to hear his works played.

Crawford: Who did *Plump Jack* [the opera] in concert version?

Albert: We did. The Symphony did.

Crawford: What would you say are the strengths and weaknesses of the Conservatory today?

Albert; Its weaknesses. Actually, I don't know. I just wouldn't know what to say. I see its strengths.

Finding a New President to Succeed Mr. Salkind: Colin Murdoch

Crawford: Of course. Well, I know it was difficult to find someone to succeed Mr. Salkind. Tell me about Mr. Murdoch, and how you and the board of directors came to that decision, to give him the job.

Albert: Well, I like him very, very much. He's a man of great understanding and human compassion, and I like his attitude toward Milton Salkind. You know, respect for what he did. It

hasn't been easy to follow him, and then they had the interim one, and that wasn't a success.

Crawford: That was Mr. Brown.

Albert: Yes, and now he has appointed a dean, for the first time. A very young woman.

Crawford: There's never been a dean before?

Albert: He was dean. Colin Murdoch was dean, and then he hoped to be president and they chose somebody else instead. It was hard on him, but perhaps he wasn't ready to be president then. But now I think he's ready, and doing a great job. Tactful, very strong, and quiet; and stubborn--all the proper qualifications! [laughter]

Crawford: Fund-raising will have to be part of the job.

Albert: Yes, that's right. And not coming from San Francisco, it has to be difficult. How to meet people and how you should approach them. I think he's doing a fine job, and he's so well liked by the teachers out there.

Crawford: He's a musician, too, isn't he?

Albert: I think he plays the violin--I don't know that it was too serious.

Crawford: Well, you aren't on the board now so you probably don't know too much about board balances at this point?

Albert: No. I like Michael Savage very much. And John Anderson, too. It's very difficult to find people who can give enough time to it, you know.

Crawford: That's what Milton Salkind said, that he'd like to find people who have only this interest.

Albert: Yes. That's right.

More About Chamber Music; Summing Up

Crawford: We didn't talk too much about Chamber Music West, but I know that you saved that program single-handedly.

- Albert: Well, Colin Murdoch said it's better to have it spread out through the year, because during the summer months the students are gone, and should be, and it's as much for the students as for anybody, for the students to play with these visiting artists, so I think that's a sensible formula he has now.
- Crawford: Not to have the summer program.
- Albert: Not to have the summer program, to have it spotted through the year, and have famous artists come for four or five days with the students, coach them and play with them and all that. Sometimes those things outlive themselves, you know?
- Crawford: That's right. Well, summing up, could you say what other contributions Milton Salkind has made over his long tenure?
- Albert: Oh, it's hard to say. But that is his contribution--the Conservatory and what he has made of it. It is his life, it's his love, it's his passion.

Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Ava Jean Pischel Brumbaum

CHARTING THE COURSE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1994





Lillian Hodghead, Ava Jean Pischel Brumbaum, Dorian Crocker, Robin Laufer, Mary Costa, and a conservatory student, circa 1959.

Photography courtesy of Ava Jean Brumbaum



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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Ava Jean Pischel Brumbaum

Milton Salkind likes to call Ava Jean Brumbaum the Conservatory's "oldest living board member." This has nothing to do with her chronological age, rather it refers to her involvement in Bay Area music going back to her undergraduate years at Berkeley and her forty-plus year membership on the Conservatory board. She began her service on the board in 1950, ended in the mid-1980s, and still continues today as an associate member. She is a person of extraordinary energy and optimism.

As a student at Cal, Mrs. Brumbaum, then Ava Jean Barber, was active with the San Francisco Symphony Forum and studied with Albert Elkus, and it is that relationship that led her to the Conservatory, where she served as chairman of the board for a number of years.

In these two interviews, she talks from her broad perspective of several presidents and their administrations, focusing on the Salkind era and the dramatic development of the school during those years.

The first interview was held in my San Francisco home, and the second in a cafe midway between Nicasio, where the interviewee lives, and San Francisco. Mrs. Brumbaum reviewed her transcript carefully, making many minor changes in wording.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

April 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name AVA JEAN PISCHEL BRUMBAUM

Date of birth July 11, 1922 Birthplace San Francisco

Father's full name Oscar Thomas Barber

Occupation Attorney Birthplace Carson City, Nev.

Mother's full name Ava Elizabeth Earle Barber

Occupation Housewife Birthplace San Francisco

Your ^{1st} spouse Harold Dohrmann Pischel

Occupation Merchant Birthplace San Francisco

Your children Thomas Kaspar Pischel, Harold ~~F~~ Dohrmann Pischel, Jr., Peter Barber Pischel, Ava Pischel Elliott
deceased *deceased* *deceased*

Where did you grow up? Berkeley til age 23, 42 years in S.F.

Present community Nicasio, CA.

Education Berkeley and Oakland public school
U. of Cal, Berkeley, BA Class 1943

Occupation(s) Housewife, Employed 2 years as a
laboratory technician (Crocker Radiation Lab, Berk)

Areas of expertise Board membership and volunteering

Other interests or activities Gardening, Skiing, tennis, reading
music

Organizations in which you are active S.F. Symphony, formerly
S.F. Conservatory of Music, Fine Arts Museum, Episcopal
Lay Chaplaincy Program, S.F. General Hospital, St. Luke's Church
etc.



CHARTING THE COURSE OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Involvement with the Symphony Forum in the 1940s

[Interview 1: January 26, 1994]##

Crawford: Let's start with your musical background. I know you were at Berkeley and a founding member of the Forum.

Brumbaum: I had little musical background. Piano and violin lessons were rather unsuccessful--I didn't like them much. But for some reason I had interest enough so that when I was in the Theta House on the Berkeley campus and the Forum was just beginning, I agreed to be on the committee to distribute the Symphony tickets in the sorority. I was a sophomore.

Somehow that involvement led to my getting into the Student Forum. Box seats were being sold to sororities and fraternities because Howard Skinner, then the Executive Director of the Symphony, knew that boxes didn't sell well to the public. He reasoned that he could develop a new audience if he sold them inexpensively to students.

Crawford: That was a brilliant idea.

Brumbaum: It was. He was very foresighted. Attending the Symphony was a new thing for students in those days, and it became a social thing to do on campus. Many sororities and fraternities took a box, and if they had eight seats, the seats were distributed through the entire organization. Different people went each time. They were premium seats, available at about half price.

Crawford: Boxes, of course. When did it start?

Brumbaum: Around 1940.

- Crawford: James Schwabacher, who has had an important role at the Conservatory, was involved in that too, wasn't he?
- Brumbaum: Yes, he was, but the real leader was Phil Boone, who really started the Forum. There was a small core group that was really interested, and Howard Skinner sponsored and encouraged us. He took us to concerts, he gave us tickets, and after concerts we would sometimes have a chance to go out to dinner with Pierre and Madame Monteux, or some prominent guest artist at a restaurant or some Symphony board member's home.
- Crawford: What do you remember of them?
- Brumbaum: They were characters. Oh, I do remember her!
- Crawford: She ran the show, didn't she?
- Brumbaum: Absolutely. He was incapable, I believe, of surviving without her. She protected him, she managed him--I believe many conductors' wives have done that over the years: leaving the husbands free to be involved in their musical activities and their scholarship. Doris Monteux certainly did a good job of protecting him. They were devoted.

Remembering Albert Elkus and Music 27

- Crawford: I wanted to ask you about Albert Elkus, because you knew him then and took Music 27, that famous course of his.
- Brumbaum: That course was a turning point in my life. It was the most exciting course I ever took. That dear man had such a bad stutter that it was a challenge to listen to his lectures at first. But he was able to communicate his excitement and love of music in a way that was so wonderful that one forgot about the delivery. I worked harder in that course and enjoyed it more than any other.

I've never forgotten that we did Mozart's G minor Symphony, no. 40, for our final exam. We had to break down the sonata form--starting with the introduction, first theme, the second theme, bridges, and so forth. I can still do it! Very few courses stayed with me in that way.

Mr. Elkus also brought in musicians like Ernest Bloch and Roger Sessions to lecture to us. I am more impressed with those names now than I was then.

The Forum had little groups that would get together. We were allowed to use a beautiful room in Eshleman Hall as our music library. It was a room for meetings and listening to recordings, and once in a while Howard Skinner would bring renowned musicians to meet with us: Sir Thomas Beecham and Artur Schnabel, for example.

I became president of the Forum at Berkeley and went to Albert Elkus to ask him for speaker suggestions. Though I didn't know him well, he must have remembered because I'm sure he was responsible for my going on the board of the Conservatory.

Joining the Conservatory Board: The 1950s

Crawford: Talk about that.

Brumbaum: I don't remember what year that was--probably early 50s--but he must have asked me to go on the board, because I didn't know anybody else there at the time.

Crawford: Where were you living after school?

Brumbaum: I worked on campus for about two years before I married. I worked at the Crocker Radiation Lab, but I wasn't a career person; I knew I'd have to have a Ph.D. if I ever wanted to proceed in bacteriology or zoology, and I didn't want to go to school for that long. No, I was married and living in San Francisco when I joined the Conservatory board.

Crawford: What was the makeup of the board then? Fund-raising was largely done by private donors at that time, wasn't it?

Brumbaum: Mr. Elkus told me when he invited me to join that there would be no fund-raising. The board members, notably Mrs. I.W. Hellman, paid the bills. She sent \$500 every month. It seems incredible to think the school could function with so little. Of course the building in use on Sacramento Street at that time was Ada Clement's family home. Perhaps she paid the rent.

At my first meeting in the library there on Sacramento Street, I remember Henriette Lehman, Esther Powell and Dan Koshland. At that time, or a little later, Mortimer Fleishhacker and Ruth Lilienthal were on the board.

- Crawford: What was the focus--was it social, or was it a working board then?
- Brumbaum: The board was there to look after the needs of the Conservatory. Lillian Hodghead was still alive, and I believe she ran the academic affairs. Adolph Baller was the head of the piano department, and that was the main thing that kept the school going in those days.
- Crawford: I read that Adolph Baller died.
- Brumbaum: Yes, I got a notice from the Conservatory recently. He was the most distinguished member of the faculty, and was at that time part of the Alma Trio. They used to perform there. I don't remember going to any performances on Sacramento Street, but very soon after I was on the board there was talk of finding a new facility with more space. I don't know how many years I'd been on the board before Joan Escabosa came on and Jim Schwabacher. Dick Goldman was on for a while, too, on Sacramento Street.
- Crawford: What about musical people? Did I see that Monteux was once on the board?
- Brumbaum: No, that was the artistic advisory committee.
- Crawford: Letterhead board.
- Brumbaum: Yes.
- Crawford: Were you involved in choosing the new location?
- Brumbaum: I remember going with Albert Elkus to look at a couple of facilities before they found the Infant Shelter at 19th and Ortega, which is the present site of the Conservatory. Joan Escabosa became chairman. She was a bright, capable person, and she was the one who really spearheaded the fund-raising.

Raising Funds for the New Facility

Brumbaum: The fund-raising was necessary for the new building. Leon Russell was the chairman of the fund-raising committee, and much of the work was done by Joan, Dan Koshland and Mortimer Fleishhacker.

Our fund-raising meetings were usually at Levi Strauss in Dan Koshland's office. I was little more than an observer and was quite in awe of the other members' ability to get money from their friends and associates.

Crawford: What was the approach?

Brumbaum: We needed a new building and a conservatory was important in the community and they sold that idea.

Crawford: There was a bequest from Dorothy Lucy. Nobody seems to know very much about her.

Brumbaum: It's true. Nobody seemed to know much about Dorothy Lucy. It was thought that she had taken music lessons at the Conservatory. She left something like \$250,000 which, in those days, was a lot of money. I don't remember what we paid for the facility, but I don't believe we could have bought it without her bequest. The former Infant Shelter, with the cherubs around the front door, has worked out quite well. However, ever since we moved in, it has seemed too small.

Crawford: But that's really a sign of health, isn't it.

Brumbaum: Yes, it is. Practice rooms were added at various times on the roof, in the basement, and at one time the library was in the attic. Later, two houses on 19th Avenue were purchased for student dormitories.

There was always talk about having dormitories for students because many students who came were quite young--sixteen, seventeen--and I know that Robin Laufer felt that it was important to have student housing. We've never really had adequate student housing. The students mostly rented rooms in the vicinity. We often had a student living with us on Sixth Avenue who helped with the children or household chores. The required practice time made it difficult for them, however.

There was a lot of talk about whether the location on 19th Avenue was a good place to have a conservatory--whether it should be downtown and more easily accessible to everybody in the community. On the other hand it was a much safer community and had good transportation.

Crawford: Do you remember Ada and Lillian?

Brumbaum: I don't remember Ada at all--Lillian, a little. I remember that she came to board meetings. Albert was the director for about six years.

Crawford: How was the decision reached about the new building and the architectural firm, and all those details of the move?

Brumbaum: I think most of it was done by the finance committee--Dan Koshland, Mortimer Fleishhacker, Leon Russell and Joan Escabosa.

Crawford: Were they focused on the Conservatory, or did they have lots of boards and organizations to do things for?

Brumbaum: They were on lots of other boards, for sure, and Dan Koshland was still vice president of Levi Strauss. He was instrumental in starting the San Francisco Foundation and many worthwhile things. Philanthropy was just a part of his life. The Conservatory was one of the many things he did. He understood that he was useful and needed there and continued to support it. For my part, it was a privilege to know him.

I remember the board members seeming terribly old when I went on. Many were prominent people, many friends of Albert Elkus, who didn't take a very active part, but gave moral support and helped the Conservatory to be known. The artistic side was really in the hands of Albert Elkus and Ada Clement while she was active. The finance committee handled much of the administration.

Crawford: Did they meet often?

Brumbaum: Once a month, probably.

Crawford: Were you closely involved with the new building?

Brumbaum: Joan Escabosa told me that she would become chairman if I would be vice chairman, which surprised me because I was inexperienced, but we had worked together in the Junior League, on the Symphony previews. I used to sit and listen much of the

time. She was a tremendous force; she did much of the business of getting the new building organized and furnished. Of course, Albert was involved in all the arrangements too.

Crawford: When did you become board chairman?

Brumbaum: Joan resigned after five years or so and I became chairman. Albert had about one year more of his term as president and then Robin Laufer came.

The Elkus and Laufer Years

Crawford: How was Albert Elkus as a director?

Brumbaum: Albert had many influential friends in the musical world. He was greatly respected and loved. He was responsible, I think, for accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music--by NASM, which was important for the future of the school.

Crawford: Didn't he also bring good people to the faculty?

Brumbaum: I'm sure he did. Many, like Sol Joseph and Adolph Baller, Marian Murray and Claire James, stayed on a long time after he left.

Crawford: Well, the Grillers, and the Alma Trio were in residence then?

Brumbaum: Yes, the Griller Quartet was there for a time, which was important in encouraging the string enrollment.

Crawford: Were you on the search committee for a new director?

Brumbaum: I don't remember a formal search committee. I believe Joan Escabosa was instrumental in that. I'm not sure how they found Robin Laufer. He came from Paris, where he was, I believe, the music director of UNESCO. He was a very interesting man with a colorful background. He was born in Poland; Poland became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and he kept changing nationalities. He told me his family had lost everything in the first war and he had lost everything in the second war. He was Jewish, and he had been in a concentration camp and had the tattooed number on his arm. Later he was part of the French underground, and I think he got out of France by walking into Spain.

- Crawford: How old was he at the time of his appointment?
- Brumbaum: I'm not sure--I would say in his 50s. But he was very ambitious for the Conservatory, and worked for the accreditation from the Western Colleges Association.
- Crawford: The date I have for both the NASM and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges is 1960, so it seems that both came to pass in Laufer's time.
- Brumbaum: That may be true, but certainly Elkus did much of the ground work. The Western Association accreditation meant that a bachelor of music [degree] could be offered rather than just a diploma. A humanities curriculum was necessary to be accredited by the Western colleges, and Robin Laufer worked hard to build a humanities department with very meager funds. The first teachers were paid on an hourly scale and taught at San Francisco State and other places as well.
- ##
- Brumbaum: The Association of Western Schools and Colleges carried out a very thorough review process. They sent an accreditation committee, which made recommendations that would have to be fulfilled by the next time accreditation came up--every three years or something like that. Their panel talked to practically everybody in the Conservatory at that time, the faculty and the staff. They recommended as essential an upgraded library, for instance. We worked on developing whatever they recommended, mainly humanities courses, in order to keep the accreditation.
- Crawford: What were Laufer's goals for the Conservatory?
- Brumbaum: To get more and better students, and to build an orchestra. He knew that scholarships would be necessary. The first graduation when he was there, I think there were only seven students who graduated, and it was very difficult to have an orchestra or a chorus with so few students. He very much wanted to build up a student body. He required everybody to be in the orchestra. I don't remember the requirements for piano students, exactly, but I think they had to be in the chorus.

He came in 1957 and he died in 1966. He did a lot for the Conservatory, and it grew a lot under his tutelage. I felt he often padded the number of students that were there, for publicity purposes. We had part-time students, and we never

knew how many part-time students made up one full-time equivalent or how many students were actually there. He often talked about the importance of having a conservatory as a feeding organization for the Symphony and other music groups, and he used to brag about how many students played in the San Francisco Symphony or in the Oakland or San Jose Symphonies. He pushed the figures a little bit, as I remember. [laughter] We didn't have many graduates in our Symphony, but the numbers have grown since then.

[Graduates] Robin Sutherland and Jeff Kahane have become well known. Robin and Jeff were just like Mutt and Jeff, and they lived together for a short time in Lillian Hodghead's house in Mill Valley. She gave the house to the Conservatory and students used it for a while. It became sometimes a headache to administer and was finally sold. Robin and Jeff played rags together. They were marvelous!

A Student Revolt

Crawford: There was a revolt spearheaded, I heard, by the Bloch granddaughters--was that in Robin Laufer's time?

Brumbaum: Yes. Ernest Bloch's daughter was Lucienne Dimitrov, a painter, and quite well known at the time. It was her daughter who was studying at the Conservatory and was a ringleader of this revolt. Robin was a European and his authoritarian approach was resented. He required a certain type of dress and decorum. As far as I can remember, that's what it was all about. It was just before the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, and students in many places felt the need to assert themselves.

Crawford: Was he accessible to students?

Brumbaum: Not as accessible as Milton. Milton was always accessible and everybody loved him. I can remember going to graduations when most every student hugged him. Robin was not as accessible. The Dimitrov girl called the press to express the student grievances, and so it made the newspapers. This was early on, before any other students revolts had taken place, so the press made a lot of it. The story made the front pages of the *Chronicle*, with pictures, one day. It was shocking to Robin Laufer, and he wanted to leave. We convinced him to stay. It

became nasty, with many accusations, and Robin barely weathered the storm.

Crawford: What happened to the students?

Brumbaum: I think some good things came out of it. The students needed to become more involved in the affairs of the school. We had committees formed that included students, not for academic work necessarily but for other kinds of student activities. We included more staff on committees for their input as well.

Robin ran an authoritarian school. After that we used students and staff in more and better ways.

Crawford: Had there been trouble with faculty?

Brumbaum: Not that I can remember. Robin stayed a few more years, and then died after a heart attack in 1966.

Crawford: What ever happened to the murals Lucienne Bloch painted at the Conservatory?

Brumbaum: I don't know. They covered one end of the room we used as a recital hall. When the room was torn down to make room for Hellman Hall, I'm sure there was an effort to save them, but I don't know what happened.

New Music at the Conservatory

Crawford: What was the importance of the new electronic tape music studio that was set up in 1961.

Brumbaum: It was very innovative to use electronic production of sounds for composition at the time. Robin encouraged contemporary music. We had a small hall, and there were often new things tried. Robin encouraged new music, and I remember doing a John Cage thing, chance music. There was a goldfish aquarium with circles painted on it. Every time a fish swam past one of those things, somebody hit a brake drum.

Then they had a piano, altered to make different sound. With a conservative board, Robin was courageous in programming new types of music. Darius Milhaud came several times to conduct his own music.

Crawford: For the public?

Brumbaum: Yes, for the public, although the public didn't come out there very much in those days. Not nearly as much as they did later, after Hellman Hall was built. Chamber Music West brought the public, and there are many recitals and concerts now that are well attended.

Crawford: What memories do you have of Yehudi Menuhin and his association with the Conservatory?

Brumbaum: He played or just appeared occasionally. I think we used his name, but I'm not sure he was very involved.

Crawford: I believe that Menuhin was asked to be the Conservatory director after Laufer.

Brumbaum: I don't know. Harold Pischel and I took our family to Europe for a year and we were not around at the time.

The Salkind Era: Building a Lot of Confidence

Brumbaum: They found Milton Salkind while I was gone. I was not involved with that in any way. Jimmy Schwabacher was the head of the search committee, I believe, and Alfred Frankenstein was the one who suggested Milton Salkind. I can remember my own feeling when I came home and heard that a piano teacher from Mill Valley with no administrative experience had been made director of the music conservatory. That was Milton, of course.

The first time I met Milton he asked me if I would go look at a building with him--we were always looking to find a larger building because of short space on Ortega Street.

Crawford: You hadn't known him at all?

Brumbaum: No, not at all.

Crawford: He was on the faculty?

Brumbaum: No, he was not on the faculty, but for some reason Alfred Frankenstein had the idea that he might be a good choice and suggested him to the committee. That's the story I know. How intuitive of Alfred!

I remember Milton's first board meeting when he talked about his goals. He had many sound ideas, and the board was impressed. Robin deserved a lot of credit for moving things along, but Milton did much more. [At that first board meeting] one or two members felt Milton had not given Laufer enough credit and were furious at him.

Crawford: He told that story too--that there was somebody on the board, and that he just hadn't said the right thing at all. Well, how did Milton Salkind's administration develop? His work with the board and other things?

Brumbaum: Well, in a very understated way, Milton got the confidence of the board and of the whole community. He's never pushy, but somehow, he really did build a lot of confidence about what he was doing out there. He had ambitious goals, and he realized them one by one.

Finances have always been the thing that kept the Conservatory back, and if he had scholarships to offer students, he wouldn't have lost so many to Juilliard, Curtis, and places like that. Gradually the Conservatory became better known--it was a slow process. We had not been well enough known to go after major funding or an endowment [before then].

One of the things that was lacking was a prestigious board that could go out and do the fund-raising. That's very important. Most of our board members were on other community boards and raising funds for them as well. It was necessary to find new people with fund-raising potential.

The Conservatory has never had the prestige that the Symphony has or the Opera has, to attract board members, and that's always been a drawback.

Crawford: The current budget is \$5.5 million. What was it when you took the board?

Brumbaum: Perhaps a hundred thousand--really small.

Crawford: How did the endowment get under way? I know about the Ford matching grant.

Brumbaum: I think that was the impetus that started it. Milton became president of the NASM, and that was very good. He became quite respected in the whole music community in the East, which helped get the grant.

Conservatory Faculty and Staff

[Interview 2: April 8, 1994]##

Crawford: Let's talk about faculty and staff. Who stood out among the faculty?

Brumbaum: Adolph Baller stood out as one of the outstanding faculty members. He died a month or so ago. I'm thinking of Sol Joseph, who was there a long time and was important. I remember Beulah Forbes, who taught piano and Marian Murray, who ran the Preparatory Department, and Claire James and Bee Beauregard. The staff was small in those days--the budget was small.

Crawford: Did the faculty have much input?

Brumbaum: No, I don't think so. There were just one or two representatives on the board, one from staff and one from faculty.

Crawford: How was firing handled?

Brumbaum: I think Robin Laufer did it pretty much himself. There was a dean as well who undoubtedly participated.

Crawford: What do you remember of the deans?

Brumbaum: Larry Snyder and Richard Howe were deans. But my relationship with Robin Laufer was that I met with him once a week and we went over everything that happened during that week. I didn't really participate in any of the artistic affairs. We felt that was inappropriate. The concern of the board was mainly fiscal.

Development and Public Relations

Crawford: We didn't really go into Milton's Salkind's administration much. What do you think was important about his time? As an institution builder.

Brumbaum: Milton had a wonderful capacity of being low key, but able to instill confidence in everybody, I think, both the faculty and the people outside. In some way, without being offensive about it, he knew the people it was important for him to know, and he

was able to be a good fund-raiser as a result of that. People did have confidence in him as a musician and as a person of integrity.

Crawford: Did you ever go on these personal fund-raising calls with him?

Brumbaum: I remember being there once or twice when people came to his office. He just became a friend of those who were in a position to help, like Gordon Getty and Phyllis Wattis. He convinced them of the Conservatory's needs and they were often happy to help.

Crawford: I read that he swam every morning with Agnes Albert.

Brumbaum: Oh, he still does, and I wouldn't say that Milton ever made a solicitation call on somebody like Agnes Albert, it was the friendships that developed. When he needed money he'd call them up and tell about a special thing that needed funding.

Agnes has been a strong supporter of the Conservatory. She believed in it; she resigned from the board and wasn't an active member for a long time but she has always been close to Milton, and always aware of what was going on. She has been deeply involved in an advisory capacity and everyone respects her knowledge and wisdom. She has been very influential with the Symphony as well.

Crawford: You are on several boards now. Is that kind of personal fund-raising still being done?

Brumbaum: Yes, I think that is the way it is done in the major cultural organizations. The most important way to raise funds is to select board members carefully who are capable of giving as well as raising funds. I understand that the new San Francisco Museum of Modern Art raised sixty million dollars for the new building from the board alone. That kind of commitment is unusual, however. The president or chairman of the board is usually very instrumental in this process.

I don't know about Colin Murdoch. I was worried at first that he would not have the same social contacts that Milton had built up. I'm not sure how Milton did it. I can remember being at the Symphony with Milton and Peggy Salkind, and Milton and I were off talking about somebody, saying, "Well, he would be a good board member." And she said, "You schemers, all you want to know is who has good potential for fund-raising." And unfortunately, that's the way it is.

We were always looking for good prospects for the board. And Milton did some really innovative things. He put people like--did he put Bill Graham on the board?

Crawford: He did! How did the other board members react to someone like Bill Graham?

Brumbaum: I don't think Bill Graham came very often. Enrico Banducci! I don't think he ever came, either. [laughter]. Milton was always looking for somebody he could interest in the Conservatory who might be helpful, for public relations as well. As I said, when Milton came, the Conservatory was not well known locally or nationally. He did much to improve that, and I think that was his strength, perhaps even more than administration, though he had very good ideas about what had to be done. And his musical integrity was important. My impression is that the faculty respected him for that particularly.

Crawford: And his closeness with the students? Apparently they could come into his office anytime and borrow a dime if they wanted to.

Brumbaum: He was popular with the students and had a very personal relationship with many of them. Robin Sutherland and Jeff Kahane are really close friends of Milton's. I think most students had a real affection for Milton.

Chamber Music West

Crawford: What was Milton Salkind's finest program, in your opinion?

Brumbaum: The most fulfilling thing about the Conservatory for me personally was Chamber Music West, a chamber music festival of sorts for about three weeks each summer. It started with the idea of bringing young musicians to play with professionals. It was innovative in those days--a little like Music from Marlboro. There wasn't much chamber music in San Francisco at that time, and it was an education for me.

Crawford: I have wondered why the press didn't cover those concerts?

Brumbaum: They were partially student concerts, which the press does not cover as a rule. But they had many well-known professionals as well, such as Jaime Laredo, Felix Galemir, and the Tokyo and

Juilliard Quartets. They could make wonderful combinations. How many times do you have the opportunity to hear sextets or octets with winds and strings and voice?

I attended regularly because several of the students from the East stayed at our house each year. Of course, I wanted to hear them play. Some Conservatory students felt it unfair to bring students from Juilliard and such places, as they wanted the opportunity themselves, and were increasing in their skills. Then, too, the program was expensive.

- Crawford: What were your board years? Milton Salkind likes to refer to you as the "oldest living board member," because you joined it when you were so young--you're the veteran.
- Brumbaum: I'm not sure, probably about 1950 to 1985, though I am still an associate member. Though I am not active, I receive and read board minutes and other material which is sent to me.
- Crawford: Did Milton Salkind become distanced from the board as his tenure came to an end?
- Brumbaum: I don't think so, but I wasn't on the board [when he retired].
- Crawford: Well, he was much loved, obviously.
- Brumbaum: Yes. Much loved and respected, I think.
- Crawford: What about Milton's Guild?
- Brumbaum: We always needed more people on the board willing to put in the time to plan and run special events. Board members were always out there cooking and making cookies for post-concert receptions or pre-concert dinners.

There were many people who put many volunteer hours in. I particularly remember Emmy Callaghan and Betty Shurtleff and Chris Getz, who was responsible for planting the courtyards and other garden areas.

The Annual Messiah and the Marathons

- Crawford: We haven't talked about the *Messiah*.

Brumbaum: It has been the most successful fund-raising the Conservatory ever did and has made it more visible. It was on KQED television always, and people really love it! They love to sing. I loved singing it and I loved going to the classes they had before.

Many organizations are doing it now. I hope it won't spoil it for the Conservatory.

Crawford: What about the marathons?

Brumbaum: They were wonderful! They lasted all day long and anybody who wanted to participate had a chance. Amateurs as well as professionals--Gordon Getty singing his own songs one time. And it was fun to hear all kinds of music and all kinds of people who had always wanted to do something get up and do it. The whole day was devoted to one composer, Beethoven or Mozart. Before long they ran out of the most interesting composers.

Crawford: Was it a surprise that Milton Salkind came up with these great musical marketing ideas?

Brumbaum: Milton has had a lot of great ideas.

The Murdoch Presidency and the Future

Crawford: What about the executive committee now? Colin Murdoch says they meet three times a year, and one of those is given to reassessing the president to see if that president should be renewed for the following year.

Brumbaum: I think it's important to evaluate the president. It's hard to make changes, and the president has to grow a great deal in his job. It takes a while, but as far as I can understand, Colin Murdoch is doing a very fine job. I've heard that from faculty members like May Kurka, a close friend of Milton's, but she told me that she thought Colin was wonderful, and that the faculty likes him very much.

Crawford: He was described to me by one faculty member as a "living nerve."

Brumbaum: Nerve?

Crawford: Yes--ready--to go.

- Brumbaum: I don't know him well. I have been meaning to go sit down [with him]. I've had lunch with him once and I've met him socially a couple of times. He lives in Novato, not too far from us, and I intend to get to know him better.
- Crawford: Isn't that a drawback, living so far away?
- Brumbaum: Yes, but he couldn't afford to live in town.
- Crawford: He said as much. That it was difficult getting faculty, because who can live in San Francisco?
- Brumbaum: The Conservatory can't afford to pay top salaries--never have been able to.
- Crawford: I read recently that tuition here is a little higher than Juilliard's, which surprises me. The current tuition is \$13,000.
- Brumbaum: Tuition is shocking to me. I don't know how students can pay it. They end their education with huge debts, and musical careers are not usually lucrative. I think scholarships at the Conservatory are exceedingly important.
- Crawford: Someone on the board has apparently pledged a lot of money for scholarships--to raise it.
- Brumbaum: I hope so. I was in a position to give some money and I gave it to endow scholarships.
- Crawford: I guess for musicians the future is really uncertain. The president of Juilliard said not too long ago that there was no market for musicians any more, and I think Colin Murdoch is inclining more than Milton would toward the academic side. Did you ever have this discussion on the board?
- Brumbaum: I think it's important. I think you have to be well rounded these days. For instance, I'm thinking about Peter Oundjian, who is the first violinist in the Tokyo String Quartet. I know that Milton has always thought he would be a wonderful president of a conservatory, because he has the background culturally and academically. He's not going to want to play in a quartet all his life, with so much travel.

These are the kinds of things musicians have to do. They have to teach, or they have to play in an orchestra, or they have to do something besides playing, so they must have a somewhat general education.

- Crawford: You have been on the Symphony board. What is the feeling there about the Conservatory?
- Brumbaum: For years we've tried to build a better relationship, but it has not evolved as it might have. Each new conductor has said he was interested in the education of young musicians. Each one probably conducted the student orchestra once or twice, but the demands of their own organization are great and not much seems to happen. Of course, there are quite a few Conservatory graduates playing in the Symphony these days.
- Crawford: Do you think Michael Tilson Thomas will bend more in that direction?
- Brumbaum: I'm hoping so. He's very interested in young people. He has, as you know, a young musicians' youth symphony in Florida called the New World Symphony.
- Crawford: We haven't talked about the Preparatory Department, but several people have said that it is one of the best in the world.
- Brumbaum: It has always been an important part of the Conservatory. I remember I was with Robin Laufer one time and we were listening to young people, not conservatory students, play. He commented, "It's too bad they haven't been well taught. It's so important for musicians to be well taught." The Conservatory has always stood for quality teaching for young people.
- Crawford: What has been May Kurka's impact, as far as you know?
- Brumbaum: I understand she has run the Preparatory Department very well. The number and quality of the students has dramatically improved. I only hear good things about the [department] and I think it has always been very well thought of. One of the problems is that we lose talented students to other schools after they've been in the prep department for years. They want to go someplace like Peabody or Juilliard where they can get a full scholarship.
- Crawford: Do you think of the Conservatory as a local institution? Can it draw from national resources?
- Brumbaum: We draw a lot from the Orient, lots of students from Japan, China, and Korea. We are three thousand miles closer than those other conservatories. Whether or not we'll get people from the East coming here is another question, because there are many schools in the East that are older and have good

reputations. I just remember that Jeff Kahane went back to Juilliard for one year and then came back here because he liked it better here.

Crawford: Talk about the Youth Symphony a little bit, would you?

Brumbaum: Milton always felt that there was a little competition between the Conservatory Orchestra and the Youth Symphony. The Symphony Youth Orchestra is very good, but so is the Conservatory Orchestra. Some students play in both.

##

Crawford: One of the things Colin Murdoch mentioned was a kind of "Marlboro West," a summer camp out of the city for Conservatory students.

Brumbaum: We had considered that. It is done in many places now. Yale has a summer camp where the Tokyo Quartet teaches, and Aspen has summer chamber music as well as Santa Fe. There is lots of good chamber music now, and many young quartets. The Conservatory has produced some good quartets, such as the Ridge Quartet, which unfortunately has been disbanded.

Crawford: Where do you think the potential for raising money is today? We've talked about whether the so-called "angels" are passing from the scene.

Brumbaum: I don't think so. I hope not. It is still possible to raise money, but corporations are cutting back--fewer major grants. The first time the Symphony went to Russia, the whole tour was sponsored by Standard Oil and Bank of America. There isn't that kind of support any more. At present, foundations and individuals like Phyllis Wattis, Gordon Getty, the Haas family and others like them are major supporters. I hope there will be new names coming along all the time.

Crawford: How about the lack of music in the schools?

Brumbaum: Because of the shrinking education budget, music is almost nonexistent in the public schools. The Symphony is helping with AIM, Adventures in Music, a program that they are sponsoring. They actually have Symphony musicians working with music teachers in the schools and some of the talented students in summer programs. Of course, the Symphony gives concerts for young people as well.

S.F. Performances sends professional groups to play in the schools. There is another organization called "Music in the

Schools," and these programs help, but are not a substitute for a music curriculum.

Crawford: You said before that it was hard to get board members at the Conservatory, and then all of a sudden people you had been asking to join started to accept.

Brumbaum: That's true. The Conservatory began to be more visible as a community organization that was worth supporting, I think, instead of just being a little music school. It had grown in stature enough so that people would come on to it.

At one time in the 1960s, I think, we hired a consulting firm to do a study. They told us, "There's no way you can raise a large amount of money. You aren't ready for it--you don't have a strong enough board and aren't visible enough." And so all through the years we have been trying to build a stronger board.

It was hard. We didn't have the glamour the Symphony or the Opera had to get community leaders on it. But that seems to be changing, and it seems to me there are more of that kind of people around lately. As I look at the board now, at the resumes that are sent to us when they get a new member, I am impressed with the stature and leadership qualities.

Crawford: What direction do you think Colin Murdoch should take--what would you like to see?

Brumbaum: To continue to upgrade the quality of teaching and students.

Crawford: Mack McCray said the Conservatory's size is what makes it special and different.

Brumbaum: Maybe that's important, because I don't think we are going to attract a large, talented group from the East Coast, so we might as well do well what we are doing. Maybe keep it the way it is. Especially because I can't see raising money for a new building, although they seem to be talking about it. The building has always been cramped without enough practice rooms.

Crawford: We didn't talk about Stephen Brown, who was president after Milton Salkind for a brief time.

Brumbaum: Search committees have a difficult job. Good people on search committees can make unfortunate choices. I know that Colin wanted the job the first time, and people didn't think he was ready; possibly he wasn't. I know that he is doing a fine job

now and it's too bad that he didn't get it then, but maybe he wouldn't have been ready.

Crawford: Any final thoughts?

Brumbaum: The Conservatory is a wonderful institution! I hope it can prosper. I've seen it grow in the forty-odd years I've been involved. Each new administrator has added some new facets and I assume that Colin Murdoch will do the same thing. My personal involvement was mostly during the Salkind years. Under him it grew tremendously and I hope it will continue and continue to get funding.

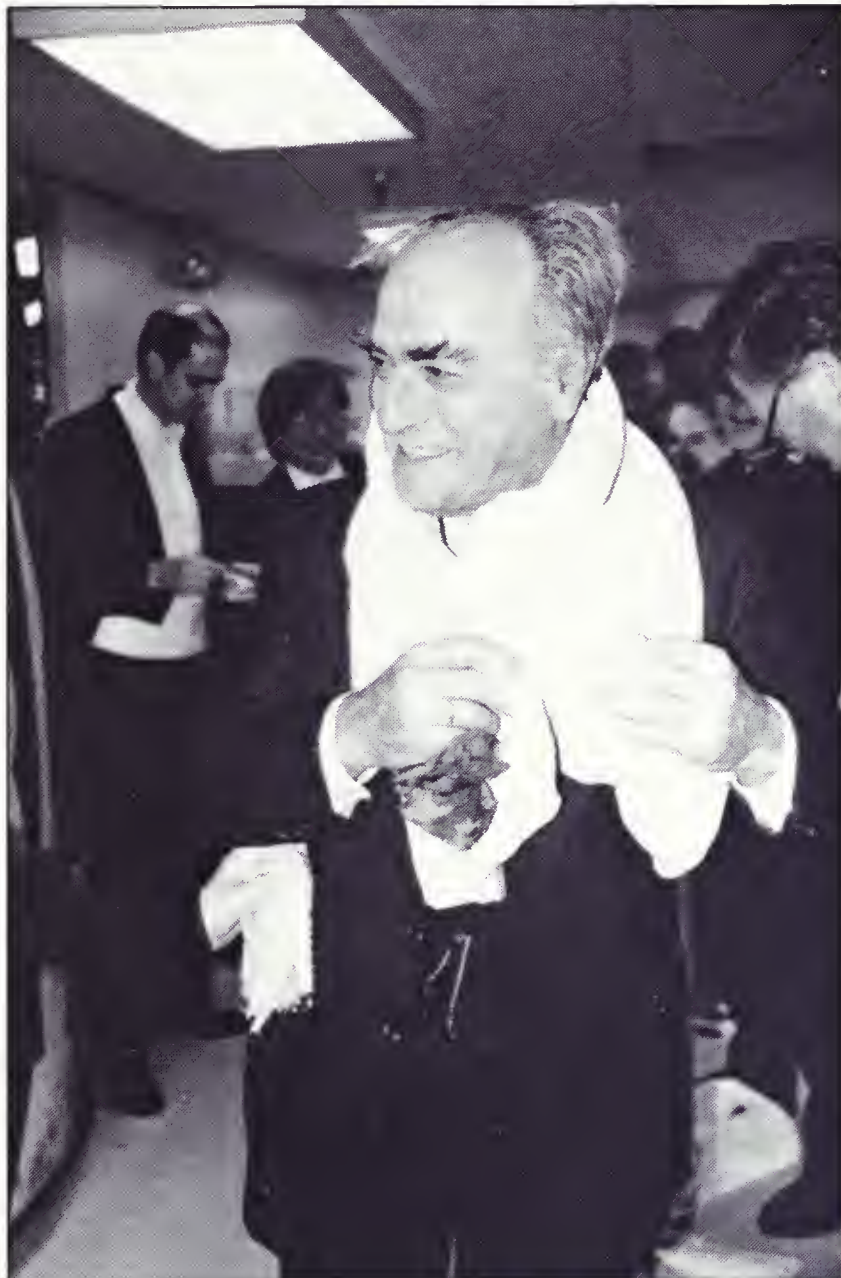
Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Zaven Melikian

A LOOK AT THE CONSERVATORY FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY

Interview Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1994





Zaven Melikian celebrates his retirement with Opera Orchestra colleagues in 1994.

Photograph courtesy Zaven Melikian



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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Zaven Melikian

Zaven Melikian is a handsome, ebullient man who by all accounts is one of the students' favorite teachers at the Conservatory of Music. For many years concertmaster of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and assistant concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony (he retired in 1994), he is as a teacher a tough disciplinarian and strict about requirements in the string department, where he has been on the faculty since 1969.

In these interviews Mr. Melikian talks about the Conservatory through the years, remembering his outstanding students and focusing on what the training for a professional musician should be. He discusses the school's development under Milton Salkind and its prospects for the future, and in general outlines the value of a conservatory training.

The two interviews were held in Mr. Melikian's home near the Conservatory; he edited the transcripts very little.

Caroline Crawford
Interview/Editor

April 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name ZAVEN MELIKIAN
Date of birth AUG. 14, 1929 Birthplace BELGRADE (Yugoslavia)
Father's full name SARO MELIKIAN
Occupation BUSINESSMAN Birthplace PAKARIG (ARMENIA)
Mother's full name ANAHID MELIKIAN
Occupation HOUSEWIFE Birthplace TBILISI (GEORGIA)
Your spouse SUEZANE
Occupation PHOTOGRAPHER Birthplace OAKLAND (CA.)
Your children ARMEN & SHAWN

Where did you grow up? BELGRADE (YUG.)
Present community SAN FRANCISCO
Education CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC, BELGRADE
ECOLE NORMALE DE MUSIQUE, PARIS (FRANCE)
Occupation(s) MUSICIAN

Areas of expertise MUSIC (VIOLIN)
(GOLF, POKER, BACK GAMMON !!!?)

Other interests or activities MANY (GOLF !!!)

Organizations in which you are active SF CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

JUST RETIRED (AUG. 1994) AS CONCERTMASTER SF OPERA ORCHESTRA



A LOOK AT THE CONSERVATORY FACULTY AND STUDENT BODY

Background: Belgrade and Paris

[Date of Interview: January 28, 1994]##

Melikian: I was born and raised--I hate to say it nowadays--in Yugoslavia, in Belgrade. I was twenty-one when I left in 1950.

Crawford: You'd been educated in music?

Melikian: Oh, yes, I was in music since I was six or seven years old.

Crawford: Did you go directly to France?

Melikian: No, we were refugees, so we went to a camp in Trieste in 1950, then ended up in Morocco--Casablanca--because that was the only country that would give us a visa. And I was supposed to continue on to the United States at that time, which my father had promised me.

I was fairly well known in Yugoslavia as a kid. I thought that I was a prodigy--I was a member of the Belgrade Philharmonic, which is the top orchestra in the country at age fifteen, probably the only high school student in the world in a top orchestra in his own country, but I lost a lot of years during the war and after the war in that regime, which I didn't like and I was sort of kicked out--anyway that's something else and I don't want to go into politics.

I ended up in Paris at the end of 1951, and studied at the École Normale in Paris, which was basically the school for foreigners. The Paris Conservatory had great, great limitations for foreign students. You had to be under age twenty-one and each teacher was allowed to take two foreign students in each class. I didn't qualify at all because I was

twenty-two and I lost many years during the war and after the war in the so-called Communist occupation of Yugoslavia.

So I studied at the École, where 80 percent of the students were foreigners and that was the end of 1951 and I graduated in June of 1954. The school was really great. In a sense it was a performance-oriented school, so all the academic classes were limited to a minimum to allow students to simply practice. Like harmony class, history class--what was emphasized was chamber music and performance. Harmony is called "analyse harmonique" in French, and it wasn't full harmony, it was harmonic analysis.

You had to learn the basics, ABA and all the modulations and all that. As a matter of fact, after forty years I must confess that I never went to the harmony class and I had to pass the test, so I took some lessons with a tutor and passed the test and that was it.

When you're a performer, when you get up on the stage and play a recital, nobody's asking you what kind of diploma you have. You either can play or you can't play--that's it!
[laughter]

So it was a wonderful school for me, but I had all those classes before at the Belgrade Conservatory.

Coming to the United States

Crawford: When did you come here?

Melikian: 1956. I graduated in 1954, and I had a kind of a career going in Europe--the beginning of a career, shall we say?
[interruption] And then my parents emigrated here, and my father was very ill, and my mother had never worked in her life. They were basically destitute and I promised them I would follow them here--reluctantly.

It was probably the best thing I ever did in my life, but at the time I wanted to stay in Europe. I was twenty-seven years old, and I had the beginnings of a decent career as a chamber music player and a soloist at recitals and things like that, and I was assisting my teacher at the École Normale. I knew nothing about the United States.

Crawford: How did you get to this part of the United States?

Melikian: Well, what happened was that my parents were already here in San Francisco, and when I came I stayed in New York because I was told that was the place to be. And I was very depressed. I mean, that was not the place for me.

I had made a tour of North Africa in May of 1956, and in October I came here and I had made for the first time some money. I played in Cairo, and Beirut and Alexandria, all those places, and I had made some money in Paris also. I had some concerts around friends, and I had two months on the East Coast. I ended up in San Francisco because my parents were here, but I had already written to Paris; I was going to go back to Paris.

But when I came to San Francisco I liked it. You know this is for Europeans the only town that you're going to be attached to. Then I gave a recital here, which was attended by Naoum Blinder, the concertmaster of the Symphony, just retiring that year.

Crawford: Did he teach at the Conservatory?

Melikian: No, I think he taught privately. Well, in those days the Conservatory--to put it bluntly--wasn't really a very serious institution.

For instance, Milton asked me to teach at the Conservatory. When I first came here I played a lot of recitals and I had a chamber group, and in spite of the fact that I wasn't prominent in the orchestra--I was assistant concertmaster in 1965--Milton knew me and he asked me, and I said, "Look, when you look at the Conservatory roster, everybody who holds a violin is in that roster!"

Almost the whole first violin section from the Symphony was on that roster, but there were very few students.

Crawford: It was primarily a piano school?

Joining the Faculty

Melikian: It was maybe a piano school, that's right. But it was in 1969 that he called me and talked me into it, so I went. I was

teaching privately but I wasn't very involved in teaching [at the time]. I was doing a lot of playing, and I remember my first student, who still calls me once in a while. His name was Patrick Morgan, a very talented black boy, who now is doing very well after twenty-five years in studios in Los Angeles.

Then I started getting very serious about it. I always liked to teach--I had started teaching actually as an assistant to my teacher at the École Normale in Paris--because it takes several lifetimes to explore the instrument, not to speak of the music, the repertoire, but the instrument itself, physically. And it just started getting more and more interesting thanks to Milton, who was very receptive.

Crawford: What did you see change at the Conservatory?

Melikian: Oh, it became a professional institution. The Conservatory, when I got there in 1968, was not a very serious institution, as I said.

Crawford: How about faculty?

Melikian: What faculty? You know what the faculty looked like? When you take the stationary of any musical institution and you see "advisory board," and you find Perlman and Menuhin and Zukerman and Ozawa. There's nothing to it; their names are there but nobody is asking them for advice. It's all just a formality.

Crawford: They apparently asked Menuhin, before they found Salkind, to be the director in San Francisco?

Melikian: I don't know about that. I think Milton was the best thing that ever happened to the Conservatory. Before Milton was Robin Laufer.

Crawford: You knew Laufer?

Melikian: Yes, I knew him. He did not do much for the Conservatory.

Crawford: He didn't develop the faculty, that sort of thing?

Melikian: Nothing, there was nothing. Milton was the best thing for the Conservatory, and with the help of a lot of people, it developed into a very serious, highly-regarded school and a very serious school.

Establishing Some Requirements for the String Department

Melikian: Just to give you an example, I introduced [some requirements] with the help of Mr. [Isadore] Tinkleman, who unfortunately is ill, and I suggested this and he and I sat down and did these requirements.¹

Can you figure this one out--you have a music school or any school, for that matter, that has no requirements--and you get a diploma but you are not required to accomplish anything, to satisfy certain requirements in order to merit the degree. You are supposed to play your instrument at a certain level to get [a degree] but that didn't exist. No juries--no nothing.

As you know, the old building didn't have anything, so the concerts used to be at the Capp Street Community Center. Milton took me to a senior recital of one of the violin students, and on the program among other things was the Bach Chaconne. She was a very good violinist who studied with Galamian in New York, and she got married and had children, and then at age twenty-eight decided she needs a degree.

The last piece in the recital was the Bach Chaconne, and she showed up to play that on an electric violin. Have you ever seen an electric violin?

Crawford: No.

Melikian: It's like a cutting board. [interruption] She plugged the darn thing in and she played the whole Chaconne. I said to Milton, "Is this serious?" and he said, "Why not?" [laughter] I was in a state of shock; I just couldn't recover from it. An electric violin! So we made the requirements.

Crawford: Who else was on the strings faculty? Was Margaret Rowell there?

Melikian: Yes, she was on the cello faculty.

Crawford: The Griller Quartet had been there. Was that a real faculty assignment?

Melikian: At that time in the 1960s they weren't any more.

Crawford: No, but they had been on the faculty earlier, in the 1950s.

Melikian: Everybody was on the faculty!

¹Izzy Tinkleman died shortly after this interview, on January 29, 1994.

Crawford: How did it get to where it is today?

Melikian: Well, it was streamlined into what it's supposed to be. First of all, when you organize the curriculum, [you must establish] what is required to be admitted first, then go from freshman to sophomore to junior to senior. What are the requirements you have to play at the end of each year--you have to play a Bach sonata and another sonata and you have to come to that level. People were getting up and playing "Hot Canary" for the jury! Just a rubber stamp, amateur thing.

Crawford: Were you turning out professional musicians then?

Melikian: No, not really.

Crawford: But now it's a serious school at a very high level.

Melikian: It is.

Crawford: Is it competitive with Juilliard and others?

Melikian: It is not competitive because of the size. How can it compete--our collegiate student body is somewhere around 250 students. Juilliard is somewhere around 800 students. But you can compete with the quality.

Crawford: Is the Conservatory attractive to students from the East Coast and Europe?

Melikian: It depends. [interruption] It depends on the departments. Some are stronger than others--I don't want to really get into it, because it isn't a matter of criticizing anything or anybody. But no, the Conservatory is an institution that really produces. We have alumni that are concertmasters. One of my students is concertmaster for the Lisbon Philharmonic, for instance. I have one of my students who just quit as associate concertmaster of the Belgian National Orchestra. Just speaking of my students.

You know the Franciscan Quartet who started out at the Conservatory. They won the first prize at a big international competition and made a big career, and the first violinist was my student.

Crawford: The Quartet that was at Yale? Well, I know that not everybody becomes professionals; it's not expected, but it is about the same percentage now in the various departments?

Melikian: It depends. The vocal department is very, very, very strong. Many from that department are making serious careers.

Crawford: Why is that?

Melikian: I don't know. I guess good teachers. It is a very popular department, and as a matter of fact, many singers want to come here.

The other department that is very strong, believe it or not, is guitar. David Tannenbaum is fabulous and the cello department with Irene Sharp and Bonnie Hampton, disciples of Margaret Rowell--very strong.

Crawford: What was her role, Margaret Rowell's?

Melikian: Well, she taught at the Conservatory until quite a few years back.

Crawford: Did she attract students?

Melikian: Yes, Margaret was a very special person. The kind of a teacher that is an institution.

Crawford: If you lived in New York, might you have said, "I'm going to study in San Francisco just to study with Margaret Rowell?"

Melikian: Yes, but we have Irene Sharp now, and Bonnie [Hampton] too, who is very much involved with the chamber music program.

We have two chamber music programs: one is the regular program in the undergraduate department, and the other is the chamber music major, which a lot of very fine players come just to do; nothing else. Bonnie is the one who started that.

Crawford: Having that major, is that unusual?

Melikian: I believe it's the first, or only one, in the country, and very, very popular.

The Salkind Era

Crawford: Well, would you talk about Milton Salkind? You've seen him from the beginning. On paper he might have seemed an odd choice for Conservatory director.

Melikian: Well, maybe it was an odd choice, but it was a very good choice. As far as institutions are concerned, symphony, opera, conservatory, ballet, you have to be very adept and resourceful, socially speaking.

Crawford: As an administrator.

Melikian: Not just as an administrator. You have to charm ladies, and you have to be in society. Let's face it, that's where the money comes from. We all know that. Without people like Getty and Reid Dennis, we wouldn't exist. And Agnes Albert, who has [helped greatly] for the last fifty years. And Milton is very good at it. He's a very good musician and teacher, delightful personality, and very well liked in the society. This might sound mundane, but this is a fact. And that's what made him very, very successful.

I think that Milton also had a gift--he's going to love this--that Eugene Ormandy had. You see, Eugene Ormandy capitalized on the belief of moneyed people. He was not a great conductor--I know, I played with him and I know people who played with him. Eugene Ormandy was a good conductor, but he had one great gift--to know how to hire the best musicians.

The Philadelphia Orchestra, for decades and decades and decades, no matter who was up there on the podium, always played with the Philadelphia sound. You could have the greatest conductor on the podium or the lousiest conductor on the podium, they all sound the same.

Crawford: They say that about Vienna too.

Melikian: Vienna sounds the way they want to sound on any given day, and on any given day Vienna can sound lousy. The Vienna Philharmonic is like the New York Philharmonic. It is the most temperamental orchestra in the world, and the New York Philharmonic will torpedo a conductor. If they don't like the conductor, they'll kill him. Not Philadelphia, not Cleveland.

Crawford: Because they have their in-house sound?

Melikian: That's right--they have an in-house sound, and Ormandy knew how to hire the best possible musicians and let them play. Salkind is in many ways like that. Salkind always knew who would fit into this kind of environment and into what he was trying to build, and it's not always necessarily as a teacher what you know about your craft, but how you handle your knowledge and

how you transmit your knowledge to a student. And I think he always knew who fit that kind of a role.

Building a Faculty: A Personal Touch

Crawford: As teachers.

Melikian: As teachers. And I talked to him so many times: "Milton, you have to stop this nonsense." The Symphony had just hired a first chair, concertmaster, whatever. And the policy was always to go to the Symphony and ask the top people to come to the Conservatory. And I said, "Milton, they are not necessarily teachers, and first of all, you have to differentiate between a performer and a teacher." It's very rare that you're going to find a top, top performer who's a top, top teacher.

What a conservatory needs is a personal touch. Not just what you are teaching your student, but how you are advising and guiding him into this musical world.

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Melikian: I'm a very, very, very rare animal, because I'm a good teacher and I have students to prove it. And I've been a top performer at my level for many years. It's very rare, this type of a person. And Milton felt this always.

Crawford: Are you saying he has a knack for this sort of thing?

Melikian: Yes, he has a knack to know who is good.

Crawford: Whom do you consider outstanding on the faculty that was hired by him?

Melikian: You know, he brought Tinkleman from Portland--I don't know how he found out about that. He was very good, and somebody like Dave Krehbiel, first horn at the Symphony. Someone like Irene Sharp--one of the top cello teachers in the country. She was teaching at San Francisco State. He was willing to listen to what has to be done in order for this school to become what a conservatory is supposed to be.

I remember that we had discussions years ago in the string department, because we had been accused of being too tough.

Crawford: Margaret Rowell said so.

Melikian: She did? Well, that was one thing that Margaret and I never agreed on. She was an angel. And if somebody played out of tune, she said, "Oh, that's all right, sweetheart," and I would say to Margaret, I'm one of the very few people who has been involved for twenty-five years now in this town, very intensely in teaching, and also in performing, who knows what is out there. You don't do students a favor by being nice, because out there in the professional world it is very tough.

Being a main teacher at any school doesn't mean you really know what is out there in the real world. Because 99.9 percent of violinists end up playing in orchestras. They all start being the next Heifetz--right?--with that ambition.

Crawford: How do you bridge it--from teaching to what will be there in the real world when the studies are finished?

Melikian: One famous concertmaster once said that if you would ask all the violinists in any symphony orchestra to arrange the seating, you would find thirty-four violinists sitting in two chairs, because they all think they should be sitting in the first chair! [laughter]

Violin players in particular, but string players in general. It all depends on how you look at it. It is a little like the story of the half-empty, half-full glass. I don't care if you are the concertmaster for the New York Philharmonic or San Francisco Opera or Symphony, you can look at it as a great career or as a great failure.

Crawford: If you don't make the solo ranks.

Melikian: Right. I have known concertmasters who every time there were violin soloists would get furious because they were not the ones out there. And yet they owned the town.

You know, I started at the Opera in the last chair in 1957, and I ended up in the words of the late Kurt Herbert Adler as the best concertmaster he ever had.

Crawford: That's not faint praise.

Melikian: And you know, I was just as happy back there.

From a Teacher's Viewpoint: Assessing Student Potential

Crawford: Let me ask you a question. When you get a new student, you must know the potential right away of that student.

Melikian: You know musical potential, yes, but you don't know right away about the maturing of the personality.

Crawford: How do you prepare that student who will be a professional?

Melikian: You try to get the priorities straight--violin first, of course. You prepare him psychologically, but not physically. Physically you prepare every student like he's going to be the next Heifetz, and then que sera, sera--let the chips fall. You prepare him psychologically for what is the reality, but you don't spend four, five, six years--the student who is in Lisbon now, he was with me fourteen years, since six, seven to his masters degree.

I never prepared him for orchestral work, because if you are talented and you play an instrument very well, this business of you have to get experience is nonsense. So you don't prepare them for that, although you know that is where 99 percent are going to end up.

Crawford: Is that understood?

Melikian: Well, it's understood by me. I will give you an example of a student who took a lesson today, for example. A lovely boy that I like very much and took over from another teacher two years ago. He's twenty-one now, a senior. Very musical, very great technical deficiencies--it's a little late when you get a twenty-year-old, and you try to fix his muscles, but it works to some extent.

I said to him, "You are not going to make it in this profession. There's nothing worse than playing second violin in a third-rate orchestra. The most frustrating existence. As someone said, "It's a dirty job, but someone has to do it. But I don't want anybody who's associated with me to do it." So I'm telling this boy, who I happen to like because he tried to make it; it's too late. I said to him, "I suggest you do something else. Don't expect to make a living."

My criteria is when I treat a student is that if the student can come close to what I have achieved--and God knows if you want to compare me to Heifetz, I'm nobody--however, I

had a good life, very satisfied with results in my own career, and in my teaching career. It all depends on what you're after.

Like these guys who get furious because someone else is playing and they don't appreciate what they've got--it's very sad.

Crawford: What is the quality of the students that you're getting, and what is the audition process? Has that changed since you started at the Conservatory?

Melikian: Of course it has changed. There are certain requirements that you have to play. Basically they have to play a movement of a standard concerto and a movement or two of a Bach sonata, all mandatory. And that's all they have to do.

We have all kinds of auditions--auditions in person, by videotape around the country that somebody goes around the country and takes those tapes--and so you assess them when you hear the new players who come in as freshmen. Some of them transfer out of high school, and we get a lot of foreign students, and some of our best students are foreign, I would say.

Crawford: Are you getting a lot of Asian-American students?

Melikian: Yes, many, and not just Asian-Americans but also plain Asians from China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan. So is Juilliard. So is any school, because Asians are just discovering this profession.

The Preparatory Department and Afterwards

Crawford: And they work hard, too, don't they?

Melikian: Oh, yes. Well, it depends what age they are and what stage they are. The preparatory students. The preparatory division, incidentally, at this conservatory, is probably the best prep in the world.

Crawford: Is it true?

Melikian: I am telling you that. I have prep students, maybe you can come to some of the performances--my best students are prep. I don't like collegiate students, unless they are mine, because

that's one thing about the school here, we don't get the best. There are still people in the East who think there are buffalos running up and down Market Street. [laughter] I like that, because there are too many people here. But when it comes to drawing students, our best students are foreign students, not Americans.

Crawford: Because the preparation is generally not very good?

Melikian: No, because those who are really very good go to Juilliard; they go to Curtis, Eastman--so we do not rate at that level.

Crawford: Well, we have the only West Coast conservatory. What can we do to bring it up?

Melikian: You know, Caroline, I don't really know. I mean, I know, but I'm not sure it works. Like everything else in the world today, and I'm going to be very philosophical, human nature doesn't change but the world around you changes--behavior changes to some extent. Students nowadays are like athletes--a strange analogy. You have heard of Will Clark, Giants player, who signed with Texas for a zillion dollars. You hear this in sports all the time, there is no loyalty: "I want to play with the Giants. So I could get two million dollars more over there, but I'll play for less because this is my home." They go where the money is. It doesn't matter if it's Timbuktu or China.

Same with students. This is the worst part--I die every time. I have students that I have had for six, eight, ten years. One of them, [who won the national competition for seventeen-year-olds] plays as well as anybody--that's how good she is. She was with me for ten years, but at age eighteen they all want to get away. She's been here all her life and everybody wants her. So we lose many students this way.

Some of these students apply to a half dozen or a dozen schools. To give you an example, I had one student who was with me over three years. She was a good student who in terms of talent was not very special. She was a high school senior and she applied to five schools. One of these was Peabody, and I mention this because I talked to her about it. Schools recruit students now like baseball teams, and one school she applied to was USC. They flew her to Los Angeles, put her up in a hotel and gave her VIP treatment on the campus. That's how they recruit students.

Crawford: So you have to offer a lot to get the good students.

Melikian: You touched a very sore point. They apply to many schools, and the one that offers them the best deal, that's where they go. They don't even know who they're going to study with. I wouldn't go to a school where I don't know who I'm going to study with. But no, 90 percent of the students go where the money is.

The Conservatory in Cincinnati will give you full scholarship, room and board and living expenses--just come here. And what happens, they get the degree but cannot get a job because they are not very good. Most of the schools don't care what happens to the students. It's a business, just like sports. Do you think Juilliard cares what happens to the students? They graduate everybody.

I flunk a lot of students. If a student comes before a jury and plays badly, I flunk him.

Crawford: Is the curriculum like Juilliard's?

Melikian: Much harder.

Crawford: In what way?

Melikian: Performing, the requirements are much harder. The juries used to be ten minutes, and there was no requirement. We made the requirement, and our juries are a half hour.

Crawford: So a Juilliard degree doesn't mean that much?

Melikian: Not in the real world. Nor in the performing world. I will show you downstairs in my studio if you are interested. One day my wife found a parchment in a drawer. She opened it up and she said, "What is this?" I said, "That's my diploma from the École Normale." She framed it and hung it over my desk, and I told her that nobody ever asked me for my diploma. Everything that I achieved I got by standing up and playing.

Crawford: They must care to some extent.

Melikian: No, I don't mean that a diploma isn't important, because you have to have that if you are going to go into the teaching world, but if I had to do teaching for a living, I would do something else, maybe sell encyclopedias.

Crawford: Why?

The Value of the Conservatory: A Family

- Melikian: Because I teach because I have something to offer. I don't teach to make money. If I would try to make a living teaching at the Conservatory, I will be at St. Anthony's kitchen on Thanksgiving Day for a free turkey. For what they pay over here. If I would quit the Conservatory and teach privately, I would make five times more money.
- Crawford: Why do you stay?
- Melikian: Because that's where the real thing is. At the Conservatory. Because that's where you are going to produce musicians. Private teaching is terrible.
- Crawford: Because students need the environment?
- Melikian: They need the environment, they need the total education, they need the exposure, the performance experience, they need the je ne sais quoi as they say in French--the smell in the air.
- Crawford: Just the sounds at a conservatory--
- Melikian: It's a combination of things. Private teaching is terrible. They come to a lesson; they go home and practice, and once and a while you give house recitals for old ladies. Right now I have twenty-three students. I have some that are fabulous and some that are not so fabulous that I had to take. I am lucky; making my living downtown I get to pick and choose.
- Crawford: Do you take part in Conservatory politics--are you on committees and that sort of thing?
- Melikian: Well, I'm on the scholarship committee.
- Crawford: Is there ever adequate scholarship funding?
- Melikian: You can't ask if it's adequate, because there's never enough for scholarships, but that program must have grown a great deal. We have eight hundred thousand dollars in scholarships.
- Crawford: So you do attract some students on the basis of support.
- Melikian: Yes, only Juilliard doesn't [have to].
- Crawford: I know of at least one student who returned after a year at Juilliard.

Melikian: Juilliard is a factory. And this is the beauty of this school.

Crawford: What's the difference?

Melikian: Everybody knows everybody. It is the difference of a family of six people and a family of sixty people. I have people who have been gone for fifteen years who are in contact with me all the time.

Crawford: They wouldn't get this at Peabody or Curtis.

Melikian: They wouldn't get it anywhere. When you work with them, it's this personal contact. It's a small school and it's a very personal thing.

Crawford: How about competition among students here? I've heard that it can be very vicious.

Melikian: Not here. I can read you some letters. I have a former student who is at Juilliard now. Marvelous violinist. She wanted to go to New York. She writes me all the time, and in her last letter, she said, "I just cannot stand these guys here. They think they are God's gift to violin playing. They are all so conceited."

Crawford: At Juilliard?

Melikian: At Juilliard. She said, "But I found a way. I pretend that I'm a bongo player from Tibet and that I don't speak English. So I don't communicate and I stay away. That's how bad they are."

Crawford: Is there another conservatory that is warm and protective as ours?

Melikian: I don't think so.

Crawford: Is it a matter of size?

Melikian: Size, yes. But it's become such a business--a recruiting business. The girl I started telling the story about, Ilana, she finally said, "What do you think about Peabody?" Because all five schools she applied to accepted her. I said, "Who would you study with?" and she said, "I don't know." "Who teaches there?" "I don't know."

I said, "If you don't know who teaches there, why would you consider going there?" She was looking for the best deal. 99 percent of them, that's what they do. Best deal.

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- Melikian: What a conservatory needs is a personal touch. Not just that you are teaching your student, but how you are advising and guiding him into this musical world.
- Crawford: Yes, I know there was a revolt during Laufer's time because the students felt he was very autocratic.
- Melikian: Caroline, we can't even talk about the Conservatory during Laufer's time as a serious institution.
- Crawford: But that must have been a strength of Salkind's--his relationship with the students.

Colin Murdoch's Presidency

- Melikian: It took many, many years for him to get it. And now it's even better, in the sense that Colin [Murdoch] inherited this.
- Crawford: Talk a little bit about him and the new administration.
- Melikian: Colin--I love the man. The future will show how good he is in the social circles. I don't think he can beat Milton in that. [laughter] But he is a real professional, very down-to-earth, very intelligent, and bright and a very vibrant person. He is one big nerve. Always ready to do something. That type of person. I don't think he is a guy who sits back and figures out his next move. There is a certain energy to him.

Right now the Conservatory is like any other institution--in a financial crunch and he is trying to restructure things--trying to survive. They've been drawing on this endowment, 12 1/2 percent, which is outrageous. We're going to be without money pretty soon. It's not a lot of money. Ten million is not a lot of money. Baseball players make it in one year.

But no, Colin is a good man. Very hard worker, and I think the new dean is very good. She is really getting into it.

Crawford: Let's talk about some of the other programs. Like the community outreach program. If you asked Milton Salkind what his greatest contribution was, he would say it was sending the students out into the community. What importance do you give that?

Melikian: I don't really know how to answer that question. I am familiar with what they do, but I don't know what you mean. Is it important to the Conservatory? It is important to the students only in that they get to perform under very strange circumstances sometimes. They are playing for deaf and blind people, retirement homes, hospitals here and there, and so it is a performance nevertheless, and they do make money from it. I don't know if that does any good to the school as an institution.

The Symphony Connection: The Community and the Critics

Crawford: Well, as an orchestra player yourself, do you think the Conservatory is recognized in the community in the way you would like it to be?

Melikian: No. That is my biggest beef in this town, and I don't think it will ever change. I've complained about it for years. I am rare in that for many years I played both Symphony and Opera--assistant concertmaster in both at one point. There has never been a proper relationship between the Symphony and the Conservatory. Never has been, and I am hoping maybe there will be some with Michael Tilson Thomas coming in, because he is a very exuberant guy who wants to do things, and--not to sound chauvinist--he is an American. I mean, I should talk--I came here as foreigner, but it took me about two years to become an American. When I go back to Paris it's very foreign to me.

[But the Symphony] would have auditions for an associate conductor for the Symphony and they would use the Conservatory orchestra for Hellman Hall and you know why? Because they didn't want to pay their musicians to do it! And we would give them that privilege to use our kids as guinea pigs to audition and I used to scream bloody murder, and Milton thought, "That's all right." They never did anything for this Conservatory, and absolutely there's no connection.

Crawford: How about the Opera?

Melikian: Opera and Conservatory is different. But Symphony and Conservatory should be like this (gestures). Once--and I think Milton was president--there was a man and I hate to mention his name--his name was [Richard] Pontziuous.

And he was going to write this big article about the Conservatory. I remember this--it was not long ago--maybe five, six years ago. He came to interview Milton, and Milton told me, and I said, "Watch out for this guy!" and he wrote a devastating article about the Conservatory.

One of the things in that Pontziuous article, one of the things he said is that the Conservatory never produces anything. There's nobody in our local orchestras that comes out of the Conservatory, which is completely false to begin with. But we do have more of our alumni all over the world than we do right here.

Crawford: How many are working here in major positions?

Melikian: Oh, in the Opera about half a dozen. More than that--I would have to count them. There are a lot of them in the Symphony. But the critics never review concerts at the Conservatory; they never come to find out.

Crawford: Would you have found Harold Schonberg or John Rockwell going to Juilliard for faculty or student concerts?

Melikian: I don't know. All I know is that a conservatory should attract more critical attention. That's our children; that's our future.

Crawford: Would it get more attention if it was in a different location? There's always been so much controversy about the location.

Melikian: I know. Well it probably would make a difference if we had a conservatory at the civic center. I think it made a big difference with Juilliard when they came down to Lincoln Center. But Juilliard was always Juilliard.

On the other hand, look at the logistics. If you had the Conservatory in the Civic Center, what about the students? Where would they live? All of the out-of-town-students live around the Conservatory. I really don't think so.

Crawford: We'll see what Michael Tilson Thomas does.

Melikian: I have a feeling he will [do something]. But somebody has to initiate it. You have to have a real person.

Succeeding Milton Salkind

Crawford: What do you think happened with Stephen Brown, who came and went and didn't work out?

Melikian: How could they expect somebody who comes from Chicago and has no clue what this is all about to bring in money? He doesn't know anyone--it was the dumbest move that was ever made. Not one person on the faculty recommended Stephen Brown.

The board got him. The board spent thousands and thousands of dollars to some agency--what they call headhunters--to find this joker. And it was such a scandal when he left. He just picked up and left. One day he was gone. He made a settlement behind closed doors with the board, I believe.

Crawford: Isn't there a faculty member on the board?

Melikian: Yes, there is a liaison. But the faculty was unanimously against him.

Crawford: Was the faculty heard?

Melikian: Of course. There were three members of the faculty on the search committee.

Crawford: Who did they want?

Melikian: There was somebody else--and Murdoch was a favorite [break]. I spent forty minutes with this [other] guy and he was a motor mouth. You ask him one question and he spoke for forty minutes.

Crawford: Was he musical?

Melikian: He was supposed to be a pianist or something.

The Future: Needed Improvements

Crawford: One final question for this session. What would you like to see change at the Conservatory? What would you like more of--what would you like less of?

Melikian: That's a loaded question. [laughter] What I would like to see is not very popular, and never will be. I don't believe in democracy when it comes to a parent and a child or a teacher and a student. I don't believe that ever works.

I think that any educational institution is there to teach, not to be taught, and nowadays that's what I see. This is not just the Conservatory, it's the world we live in. I find that we are not supposed to tell students what they have to do. We are supposed to listen to them and see what they want. I don't believe that. I am a teacher and you are a student. You do what I tell you, period. You don't tell me how I should do it. You don't like it; you go elsewhere. It's simple as that.

Maybe the world has passed me by, but I don't think so, because I know that the results my way are a hell of a lot better. One student--big, big talent--in his freshman year he thought he was God's gift. I knew him as a kid. He wasn't my student, but a violin student, and everybody thought he was the greatest.

His freshman year, he plays for a jury and fakes his way through it. Big talent, but he didn't know half the requirements. And of course he was going to pass and I put my foot down. "Over my dead body; I'll leave the school." And we flunked him.

Years and years later, and he's now very successful, he played for the Opera Orchestra and he's now out of town. But he said to me years and years later, "You know, that's the best thing that every happened to me." It woke him up.

But you can't get away with this kind of garbage. I don't care how talented you are. You've got to meet the requirements honestly. And this is what I would like to change. I would like to have a policy that is dictated and implemented by the faculty and the administration with no favoritism here and there.

I don't want any student committee to come to me and say, "We don't like this; we don't like that." If you don't like it, go somewhere else. This is very rigid; very old-fashioned, I realize, but that's the way I run my place. And I've never had a problem with any student ever.

Crawford: But what you're seeing is that there is too much of that.

Melikian: Exactly. There are too many student advisory committees, too much of trying to please students. Once a student walked into my studio after being with me for a year, a year and a half, and called me by my first name. That's the last time he did that. You just don't call me by my first name! You're not my buddy. But we have teachers who almost insist on that--it doesn't work that way. That's what we have in this school. When they show up in my class with some kind of hair all in disarray, out they go.

One of the students I have taken from Tinkleman, she's a nice girl, and she just had her second lesson today. I guess she just came out of the shower, she plays the violin, and her hair is all over the violin. I said, "Go out, fix your hair, and come back. Don't show up like that."

I'm very old-fashioned in that respect, but in many ways I'm very liberal. Everybody has to know where their place is. A student of mine is not my buddy, and I'm his teacher and his father. But that atmosphere has to be around the school, and it just isn't. They show up for orchestra rehearsal, and I can see them; they keep crawling in for twenty minutes. There's nobody to crack the whip and say, "Look, this has to stop." You opened a can of worms, Caroline!

You know, the prep department as I said is the best prep department in the country.

Crawford: That is May Kurka's department.

Melikian: Yes. We have, would you believe we have four--not one--four recitals almost every Saturday. The collegiate department never had any recitals up until a few years back, and I said, "We have to have recitals--they're supposed to be performers and they never get the experience to play. They get up once a year to play for a jury and their knees are shaking and they can't play!"

Oh, they have noon recitals. You know what noon recitals are. Kids get up and play while the other's are eating their

hamburgers and they have a party. And I said, "They only way you're going to get this experience is when the lights go down, it's quiet, you walk onstage--and die. Because that's is what is out there."

So when I became chairman of the department--and I was supposed to be there two years and rotate--but never did and I've been there ever since and I got sick of it. I just did it on my own. So I said, "I want five dates at Hellman Hall for student recitals." And the students love them. I organize them; I work out the programs. However, a year or two goes by and nobody shows up at the recitals! Those who are playing, but nobody else.

And one Saturday I came, two or three years ago, and there were six people in the audience. There were more people performing than in the audience, and I cancelled the recital. Before I did that I went to the students and I told them--the string department--at the orchestra rehearsals. I said, "When I was a student and one of my peers was playing, if I didn't like him, I went to see how he'd fall on his face." I mean, I was curious to see what other people were doing. I said, "I want you [to come]."

Nobody shows up. So I had a meeting with the administration and the dean, this was several years back, and I said I want a mandatory requirement as part of this curriculum to come to five recitals in the year. There is one in the fall and four in the spring. And they said, "Oh, we can't do that. What do you want, a roll call?" Yes, I want a roll call! They have to be told what to do. They are children and we are teaching them. "Well, they don't have to come if they don't want to."

So I cancelled, after that concert, I put a note on the board: "The rest of the recitals for the year are cancelled." A delegation of fifteen students came to see me. "Please don't do that--we need those things." "Really? How come nobody's interested? Only those who play show up, and even those who play, they pack up and leave. They don't come back into the audience and hear their peers play." It's the truth. This is what I'm telling you I'd like to see changed. That we run the show; not the students. That we tell them what to do, and they do it!

I said, "I'll put them back on if you keep your promise. Next concert I put on there are fifty who show up. Now, the same thing happens. We just had a concert last Tuesday, and

there are thirty people in the audience--not students--people. But this is what I try to convey to my colleagues--that this is not the way it should be, because it is part of their education, and we are the ones who are supposed to enforce this, to teach them.

Never mind professionally speaking--but show the courtesy to your peers. Show up. And that particular concert, I walked out and there were about fifteen of them in the lounge having a party, laughing and singing. And the concert is going on with six people. I feel like I want to shoot somebody.

To put it in a nutshell, I would like to change that entire attitude of the students. I blame us--the institution, the faculty, the administration--nobody personally.

Crawford: Is the attitude in the prep department different?

Melikian: In the prep department, if a girl shows up to play a recital in pants, May Kurka kicks them out off the stage and she puts up the notice in the beginning of the year about the attire. It may sound archaic, but that's the way the world functions properly.

##

Melikian: To play a recital at Hellman Hall, you're required to play an audition a week before, and May Kurka sits there, and I sit there when my students play, and the student comes out on stage and takes a bow and performs, and she decides if that student is ready to perform.

That's only for Hellman Hall recitals. Upstairs in the Agnes Albert Hall, that is a lower level, but downstairs that ritual takes place every time. A lot of people think May is difficult to deal with.

Crawford: But she gets results.

Melikian: She gets results.

Crawford: Does that carry over when the preparatory students get into the collegiate division?

Melikian: You can't really judge. First of all, a high percentage of prep students don't continue with music. We take talented students, but a lot of them decide to be lawyers and doctors.

Those who go into music, a large percentage of them go elsewhere.

Crawford: Do you regret that the most talented students don't stay on in the collegiate division?

Melikian: Very much!

Crawford: Do you think Colin Murdoch might be more amenable to [your] suggestions?

Melikian: Could be, but you have to give him time. The Conservatory is, like everything else, financially in bad shape, and all his efforts are on that side, to get the institution on a solvent financial footing. I think I'm in the minority among the faculty.

Crawford: I was talking to a student who said she thought the Conservatory was too laid back. She missed the form. She had been to Oberlin as an undergraduate.

Melikian: It's a result of being a small school--everybody's friendly with everybody else. Friendliness is all right, but everybody has to know his place. There is one cello student who I see in the hallway, and he says: "How are you, Zaven?" He's not even my student. I just ignore him. That offends me.

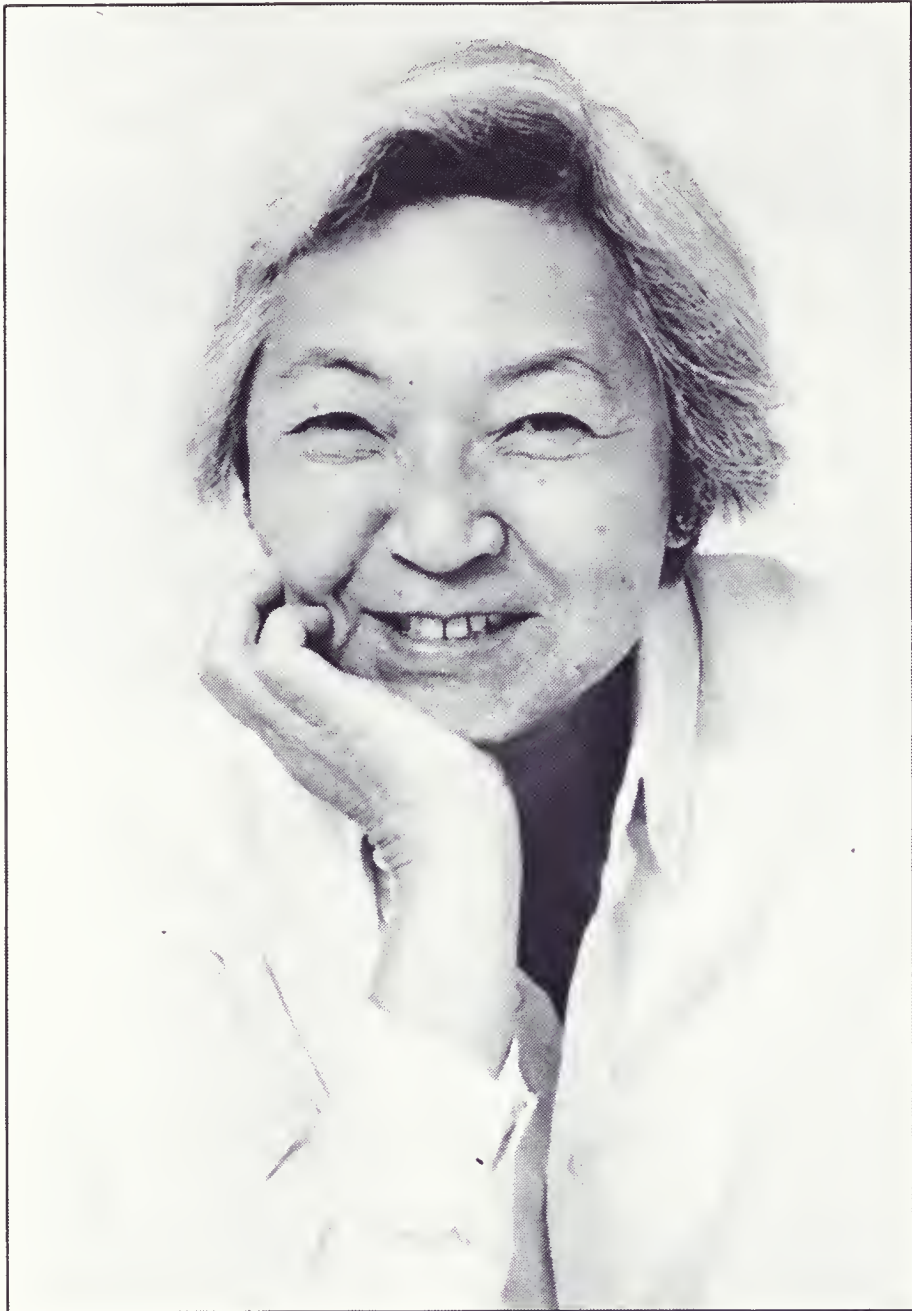
Once I had a student who was in my studio and I came in and he had his shoes off. I said, "If you want to be barefoot, you can go run in the park. Don't show up like that." He was Australian, from Down Under. Maybe Down Under, but not here! Such an innocent question got such a long, long answer.

Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

May Kurka

HEAD OF THE PREPARATORY DIVISION SINCE 1975

Interview Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1994



May Kurka, head of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Preparatory Department, in the 1990s.

Photograph courtesy of May Kurka

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--May Kurka

As head of the Preparatory Department since 1975, May Kurka supervises the musical education of close to five hundred young students who come to the Conservatory from as far away as Davis, Sacramento and even Taiwan. Several people who were interviewed for this history credit Mrs. Kurka with running the best prep department anywhere in the country, and she is known for setting a high standard of musicianship as well as comportment for all the students.

In this interview, which took place in a spacious, light office not too distant from the recital hall where she schedules weekly Saturday recitals, Mrs. Kurka talked in her softspoken manner, black eyes shining, about a passion--music training for children. She also talked about preparing students for professional careers, parent-student relationships, the culturally diverse student population, and Milton Salkind's administration and very special rapport with the Conservatory students during his years, as well as the Conservatory and its future under Colin Murdoch.

The interview transcripts were edited lightly.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

April 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name May Sakamoto Kurka

Date of birth Feb. 17, 1921 Birthplace Long Beach, CA.

Father's full name Josuke Sakamoto

Occupation Real Estate Insurance agent Birthplace Japan

Mother's full name Kane Hoshino

Occupation House wife Birthplace Japan

Your spouse Robert Frank Kurka - deceased

Occupation Composer Birthplace US

Your children Mira Tera Kurka

Where did you grow up? San Diego, California

Present community San Francisco, California

Education B.S. in Piano Juilliard Institute of Musical Art NYC.
BA in music U. of Calif. Berkeley, CA.

Occupation(s) Counter person. Camp Counselor.
Music Library staff person. Piano teacher

Areas of expertise Piano teacher
Administrator of music school

Other interests or activities Non-competitive sports;
chamber music; (all live concerts-)

Travel Plays, reading

Organizations in which you are active _____

HEAD OF THE PREPARATORY DIVISION SINCE 1975

From California To Juilliard

[Date of Interview: June 6, 1994]##

Crawford: Tell me something about where you grew up and your musical education if you would.

Kurka: I was born in 1921 in Long Beach. I grew up in San Diego, California, and finished high school there and was encouraged to try for Juilliard, the Institute of Musical Art, not the Juilliard graduate school, because the IMA would give me a college education plus a degree, whereas the graduate school primarily emphasized performance, which was not my basic interest.

So that's where I was, and then of course that was interrupted by my parents' evacuation from the West Coast during the war.

Crawford: Where were they evacuated to?

Kurka: Well, my father was classified as a dangerous alien, so he was taken to Bismarck, North Dakota. My mother and my brother were sent to Santa Anita Racetrack, where everybody was put into the horses' stalls.

And then from there they went to permanent headquarters in Heart Mountain, Wyoming, so that's where my mother and brother were. My brother was drafted right out of camp for service in the Army, and he was asked whether he would like to serve in the Pacific or elsewhere and he said elsewhere. He didn't want to be mistaken for an enemy. [laughter] That is what war does.

Crawford: Did all of that interrupt your education?

Kurka: Yes. My brother said, "Don't come back," because if I did I would find myself in the camp. So he said, "You better find yourself a job and stay in New York," which is what I did.

I was living at the International House. Juilliard at that point was across the street from the International House, and I worked in the cafeteria at I House eight hours a day and earned my keep and did some practicing at night after hours when we closed the snack bar and there was a little piano in there.

Crawford: You were not going to be a concert pianist.

Kurka: No, I was more interested in being a teacher. And I loved going to school. I loved the nonmusical courses, like Shakespeare, and I was interested in contemporary music also and curious about the music that was being written, so I went to many contemporary music concerts at that time.

Crawford: What were your impressions of Juilliard?

Kurka: At that point in the 1940s, my impression of the Institute was that it was a very organized school with college courses which were minimal but enough to qualify you to get a bachelor of science with a major in music. It was very hard--the standards were high--and we did have to perform and take examinations, so all those things kept me very busy.

Crawford: With whom did you study?

Kurka: I studied with Gordon Stanley; I studied with him all through my student years. I went back after about a year of working. Someone sent a report about my plight to the Quakers, the American Friends Committee, and they found someone who anonymously paid for my tuition so that I could finish at Juilliard.

Crawford: What a lovely gesture.

Kurka: Oh, it was wonderful. I feel that the American Friends have been really quite wonderful in their involvement in helping people come through. I think they probably helped many more Nisei than myself, and I'm still on their mailing list, because I do give a little money when I can. They do more work in foreign countries, I think, in helping people get established and become independent and training them in jobs and that kind of thing.

Crawford: So in New York you wouldn't have had any trouble or been harassed.

Kurka: No. There were many questions asked which I found quite difficult to handle at the time. Things like, "Well, if the government wanted you to go to camp, why wouldn't you go?" [laughter] So it put me in a position where I really had to think very hard and learn how to articulate my feelings about things; things I never had to think about before. We thought we were citizens so we would have access to everything and there wouldn't be any pressure so the camp was a real shock.

Parents' Postwar Resettlement

Crawford: So your parents resettled after the war in San Diego?

Kurka: Eventually, they did. My father was released and finally joined my mother in Wyoming, but she was anxious to move out and I think people were being encouraged to find certain kinds of employment, so he tried to form a farm laborers farm cooperative, but I think his dreams were not ready at that point, because he found that once the cooperative was organized and the men began to get their pay they all sort of disappeared and didn't take an active role in the co-op, so he gave up on that. But my father learned about social security and knew he had to do something to provide for himself and Kane, my mother, in their old age.

University of Colorado at Boulder was where my parents found employment. They both worked in the kitchen. Their first paycheck revealed differences in pay, though they were doing the same work. My mother's pay was less than my father's.

Some of the staff and faculty were made aware of this. Some of them already had a labor union on campus, so they put into motion ways in which there could be equity in pay for men and women doing the same job. At the same time, the evacuees were offered lower pay than those already employed in similar jobs. The union leadership was interested in stimulating ways in which conditions could be improved.

All these activities were an eye-opener--particularly to my mother. She was very excited about the democratic ways in which the problems were being handled. Information was

distributed through leaflets and meetings were held for the entire community of Boulder. My parents made many friends at that time, some of whom I am in touch with even today.

So they were at the University of Colorado and they both worked in the kitchen at the University, because though my father had been able to teach Japanese, since his record of having been classified a dangerous enemy, they felt a little risky. Anyway, he worked there for a while until they realized that they would not qualify for retirement, since you have to have been employed for a certain number of years. So he went off to Denver and found a job in a restaurant where there was social security that he could count on.

So he and my mother moved to Denver. He worked in a restaurant making chicken pot pies all day. [laughter] But always with the thought that they would like to return to San Diego because they never lost their property. They lost everything in the house, including my piano--the house was being rented and there was a woman real estate agent who was responsible for the house and she was renting it to a family.

And as real estate agents do--they read through the ads--and suddenly she found an ad saying this house was for sale. So she quickly got in touch with my father and asked, "How come you are putting your house up for sale?" And of course he had nothing to do with it, so by that time the people who were renting it must have gone off with everything in the house, but they left the house intact.

Crawford: So your father had been teaching. Had he been doing that in San Diego?

Kurka: No, he was a real estate and insurance agent. He had done very well, but when he returned then to San Diego by that time the Japanese were allowed to apply for citizenship. But my father always loved to teach, and so he organized classes so that those who were applying for citizenship could remember all the facts about the thirteen original colonies and that sort of thing. I remember we had a wonderful time listening to him because he kind of composed a song using all the syllables of the thirteen different states because those are very difficult for anyone to remember. He did it in the Japanese song style and he sang them and it was remarkable how easily they remembered the names of the states.

Crawford: Were your parents musical?

Kurka: I think they must have been. They loved music. My father had very interesting ideas about raising his children. He didn't want us to read any novels because he thought it was a waste of time, but he bought us all of Thoreau's writings and Ralph Waldo Emerson's writing. He wouldn't allow us to have a radio, but he did go out and buy us a Victrola, and I'll never forget the first classical piece of music was the Berlioz *Roman Carnival Overture* on this little windup machine.

Eventually he conceded and we did get a radio.

Crawford: That was good discipline.

Kurka: We had no choice!

Marriage to Robert Kurka

Crawford: I think you married while still at Juilliard?

Kurka: Yes, I married a composer. We met after the war. We had a mutual friend--I made a nice group of friends at the International House--his name was Harvey Levin. Harvey went to Columbia and my husband was a composition student at Columbia before he went off to war. My husband, Bob, became a military intelligence officer, because he'd studied Japanese at Columbia, and then went off to Minnesota where the Army had a big Japanese language school.

So, after his freshman year at Columbia, he was off to the war and studied Japanese and then went to Japan following MacArthur's trail up from the Philippines to Japan. My husband bought a cheap violin so he'd always have his instrument with him, and he took it with him all the way into Japan, composed there, and then came back to the States and that's when I met him.

So we met after the war. Japanese is such a difficult language to learn and he was determined not to forget it. So when we were planning to get married he wrote a very formal letter to my parents in Japanese saying he wanted me to be his wife and I said, "If that doesn't convince them, nothing will."

Crawford: Did it?

Kurka: Yes, it did. Unfortunately neither of the parents were with us when we married. We married in New York and had a few friends as witnesses. But it was fine. We had a good marriage, but it only lasted ten years.

Crawford: Yes, I know. Your husband died in the fifties, didn't he?

Kurka: Yes. December, 1957.

Crawford: Is that when you came out here?

A Move Back to California

Kurka: I came out here in about 1963, I think, with the encouragement of Milton and Peggy [Salkind]. I had been teaching at Juilliard in the prep division. My father was not well and I began to worry about him, and also raising a daughter in the middle of Manhattan is not the most ideal or easy thing to do, so with the encouragement of Peggy and Milton, who said they were sure they could find me a group of students to start with, I moved to Berkeley, where Milton's brother Isadore lives. He and his wife Eleanor helped me get started and found a nice place for me to live and the word got around that I was going to be teaching, so I had a nice group of students.

But at the same time I had to add to the income so I worked for the Oakland Symphony, trying to sell season tickets! [laughter] So it was an interesting life--a lot of variety. And then I decided I wanted to go back to school. I wanted to go to Cal and take some music courses, the kind of courses you'd never get at a music school, like the analysis of the Beethoven String Quartets. So I went back to Berkeley and I had a wonderful time being a student at that age. I took courses taught by the librarian there, Vincent Duckles.

Crawford: And then you came to the Conservatory when?

Kurka: By that time Milton was being considered as president of the Conservatory, and he asked me if I wouldn't come and teach on Saturdays.

Crawford: Was there a preparatory department?

Kurka: Yes, there was. I had a lot of fun teaching the children here, and I became the assistant to the director of the prep, Marion

C. Murray. She became ill and passed away, and they hired someone who didn't work out, Maria Cisyk. So when they let her go, though I wasn't working toward becoming director of any division, I finally went to Milton and I said, "I'll be happy to try, and if it doesn't work, you tell me." So that's the way it started. That was 1975.

Taking Over the Preparatory Department

Kurka: I had come to Berkeley in 1963, and then I moved to San Francisco because Milton was able to get a scholarship for my daughter at the Urban School. She was in the same class as Mark [Salkind], who is now the Director of the Urban School.

Crawford: How would you compare the prep department with the one you'd been involved with in New York?

Kurka: Well, we have a much more friendly school. We have a wonderful, supportive parents organization that helps me keep a humane kind of feeling. At a school like Juilliard, there is such a high percentage of talented children that--I like to say it's the parents who get into a competitive environment, which is really unhealthy for youngsters. It doesn't lend itself to any openness or freedom to talk to one other, to make friends. I think we have a wonderful place, thanks to supportive parents and the Parents Council.

Most of the other preparatory departments have two examinations a year, one at the end of the fall semester and one at the end of the spring, and as I observed the youngsters here I found that they did not play their best during the fall exams. There is just too much going on in their academic life. I decided to have only one exam a year--that would be in the spring--so they had all fall semester to really work hard and do a lot of small performances in our recitals and really focus on one examination a year, and it's worked so wonderfully, because I think the youngsters play so well.

I finally realized that every performance means a great deal to each student. They learn a great deal about themselves and about the music while they are performing, so we've now gotten to the point where we have recitals every Saturday, starting in October. We didn't have that before; I don't know about other schools. They may now, I haven't been back to see them for some time now. Some of the youngsters who have

graduated and gone off and are teaching music have told me that the one thing that's so wonderful is that we have performance opportunities for youngsters. And also the fact that there is a warmth between the student and the teacher that they miss in the East. I feel that I have established this program as essential to their training.

Auditioning and Preparing Young Musicians

Crawford: Talk about the process, would you? How the student comes to the Conservatory; how you hear him or her and what you are looking for.

Kurka: I can talk about the young pianists because I audition all the pianists who want to come into the school. I'll try to think about one student whom I can follow through. This is a little girl whose parents are from Vietnam. The mother had started the little girl and they had gone originally to the East, but the father had found a job in the East Bay so they moved out here. When she played for me, I was really surprised at how fast she could play, and I thought to myself, "This girl only wants to play fast." She was really very young; I think she was about five and a half, and I asked her at one point, "Do you have anything slow to play?" "Yes." And then she proceeded to play it so fast! [laughter]

But we've accepted her, she's worked very hard, has gained a lot of skills--she's trying, she knows now what it is to play slowly, she's beginning to listen to what the composer means rather than just an outlet for her energy. She plays artistically for one so young. She is now fourteen, a very bright girl. As a matter of fact, her English is so fluent, she writes beautiful thoughts, and remarkable poetry, using words which seem to interest her.

It really is amazing, and her teacher and I talk a great deal, because I want to make certain that I share my impressions of her performances to see if he agrees. A child like this needs a lot of attention, but I think it's working out very well, because she truly respects her teacher.

Crawford: What do the students get in the way of theory, composition, and music history?

Kurka: We offer ear training, called solfege--the syllables "do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-si-do. We use the "fixed" "do" system. The musical alphabet of A-B-C-D-E-F-G. Each letter has a syllable, permanent in pitch. Basically we believe that a musician must be able to "sing" the music he or she is learning on an instrument. We believe that there is not a true foundation of expressing a musical line if the student is unable to first sing it. This solfege system gives the most accurate "shorthand" vocalizing possible.

Crawford: What does it take in today's world for a child to become a professional musician?

Kurka: Single-mindedness, nurturing parents who are willing to understand the child's burning desire to play that instrument well! Milton has a student like that.

Crawford: Is that Jeremie [Pigman]?

Kurka: Yes. He's just remarkable, and of course since he doesn't attend regular school he does have the time to spend practicing at home a lot. He is home taught, and he is a very bright, very pleasant young man. So for him the Conservatory is special, because this is the only place he comes where he meets friends in a school atmosphere. He comes up during the week too, because he can come any time Milton can give him a lesson.

Crawford: What are the biggest obstacles to becoming a professional musician--a performer?

Kurka: Parents must allow the freedom to do other things in addition to school work. Constant working and cooperating with parents. A talented student emerges often with a totally independent way of study and of absorption.

Recitals and Competitions

Crawford: What is the format for the recitals? Several people have lamented that recitals at the collegiate level are not what they are in your department.

Kurka: Yes. Our recitals are not required like the collegiate ones are. They have to give recitals every year. For ours, there are many opportunities open for students to perform. They only play when ready. Every teacher will send in a slip of paper

saying that her student is ready to play and the name of the piece she would like them to play. I make a calendar of recitals at the beginning of the year, and the teacher looks and plans out when she thinks the students are going to be ready to play. A Bach prelude and fugue, or nowadays students want to play a full sonata, which can take as much as twenty minutes.

I try to schedule recitals that are no more than forty-five minutes or one hour, because I feel that each student who plays should stay for the remainder of the recital with family and friends so they listen and appreciate other performers. It's only fair. For a while I used to see droves of people dash out after someone played and the place is suddenly empty, and I thought, "This is not good."

- Crawford: So you made that a requirement. How did you work with Milton Salkind when you made these changes?
- Kurka: Well, he's left a lot of it up to me. But when I had something dramatically different, I would go in talk to him and he would advise me. I think that's one of the wonderful things about working for Milton. I always felt confident that he believed strongly in the prep--that the children are the most important, valuable resource that we have here in the school.
- Crawford: Several people have told me they think the prep department here is among the best anywhere.
- Kurka: I am so proud of our reputation! I think one of the reasons is that the faculty and I work well together, and I've trusted the faculty. They know that I insist on a certain level of excellence from the youngsters performing, and I keep the participation in competitions to a minimum, making certain that the competition would be an appropriate one for the student to enter.
- Crawford: Could you name some major competitions?
- Kurka: Seventeen magazine and General Motors used to have a competition for high school students, and there are other competitions now. The Kohl Mansion here has a national chamber music competition that includes high school students. The chamber music competition in Carmel is now national, and they have a level for high school students.

We now have students from the prep who have won first prize, second prize, so that they are meeting youngsters from

other areas of the United States. I think that is one way our department is becoming known. When our students go away to other schools, they carry with them the kind of training that we have given them. We really have a remarkable faculty.

Crawford: What is the value of competitions?

Kurka: A certain kind of training. Those who have the stamina and talent gain stature and confidence whether they win or not.

Crawford: Who decides which faculty members teach in the prep department?

Kurka: Milton and I are chairpersons of each department. Standards are getting better and better, so teachers do want to come to us. We are now in the process of trying to decide on a violin teacher since Izzy Tinkleman passed away. He also taught in the prep.

Crawford: He will be hard to replace.

Kurka: Oh, yes, and we aren't often faced with that kind of a decision. Milton has been teaching for a long time. We have others--Zaven Melikian, violin. Renie [Irene] Sharp, cello. Each has both prep and collegiate students. Each faculty member is invaluable to the prep. I support their commitment.

Renie Sharp is the cello teacher who loves to take a student at age four. She's quite remarkable at reaching children at that age. She uses all kinds of interesting things. She asks parents to bring a video camera--she wants to record the lesson every week. And I think she plays some things to help the child remember what she wants them to work on. I think when you use a video in that way it certainly is helpful.

The Preparatory Students and Parental Participation

Crawford: Who are your students, and where do they come from?

Kurka: We had a remarkable violinist from North Carolina. She's graduated and has gone off to Cleveland, but she was a wonderful high school student here. She's lived at the music house--I'll tell you about the music house in a minute.

Merritt Schader comes from McDoel, which is north by Klamath Falls on the California side. Her mother, Robin, used to drive her down every other week for piano lessons, and then they finally started to live at a motel. Soon the family bought a house right up on the corner here, and the mother takes students if we've accepted them in the prep division. So we have students from Taiwan there. We have students who come in from Sacramento every Saturday and spend the whole day here, taking a lesson in chamber music, and with the San Francisco Youth Orchestra.

We have students from Davis, and the parents drive the children here and also spend the day at lessons in chamber music. One of the children's father--they are from Japan originally--is a professor at Davis. The student is very talented in both piano and violin, so she takes piano and violin lessons and has chamber music. They arrive about 10 a.m. Saturday morning and they don't leave until about 6:30.

Crawford: What does the music house offer?

Kurka: Music House offers a homelike setting for the young people. It is strongly knit together by Robin Schader. The monthly cost not only covers room and board but responsibilities for each resident. For instance, there are household chores which fit reasonably into the busy schedules of individual departments for school. Homework must be done; and last but not least practice must be done every day. Robin is a housemother, confidant, and counselor who has worked closely with me in individual needs or decision-making. She has a strong focus, maintained with love and understanding!

Crawford: What is the ethnic balance in the prep department?

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Kurka: Forty-nine percent are Asian--that is Philippines, Vietnam, Chinese--including Taiwan--and then the Koreans and the Japanese.

Crawford: Juilliard has a high percentage too. Why are Asians so strongly directed toward music studies?

Kurka: Love of music, which is an important part of family life. Many parents know little about music, but want their children to have more than what is offered in regular school.

Crawford: Are Asian parents much more involved than other parents, generally speaking, with their children's music education?

Kurka: Oh, yes, they are.

Crawford: Does that ever cause problems?

Kurka: No, I don't think so. On occasion I've had to have conferences with parents to suggest that they not pressure their child so intensely in practicing. That I don't want them to end up hating music. The point is that there is pleasure in music, but the pacing has to change. I think this happens when they go into adolescence, and some children rebel. It depends on the relationship with the parents, too.

Crawford: But you see parental involvement as a plus?

Kurka: Oh, yes, absolutely. Particularly since I keep in close touch with the parents, and they know they can call me and ask me for advice or complain about something. [laughter]

Crawford: How do you do that with so many students?

Kurka: You know, I've made this my life. It's the one important thing that keeps me going. So that's why facing retirement is a tough one. But I'm getting there.

Crawford: Do you want to retire?

Kurka: I think so. I think so.

Crawford: Will you teach?

Kurka: No, I don't think so. There are many things that I am thinking of doing, but teaching is not one, I don't think. I might study the cello. It's been in the back of my mind for many years.

Crawford: While we are talking about ethnic balance, what do you do about recruiting black and Hispanic students?

Kurka: I am keenly aware that I have not had enough time to devote to this issue. I hope to help in some way, whether it be through public school parents organizations or community groups when I retire.

Crawford: Would a program such as Juilliard has on Saturdays for minority students work as well here in your opinion?

Kurka: We could expand to a weekday program for qualified minority students, perhaps off campus.

Summer Music West

Crawford: What is Summer Music West?

Kurka: Summer Music West, which I began ten years ago, was begun as a chamber music program open to all string, keyboard, and wind students in the Bay Area who wanted to try ensembles for their first time. I emphasized the fact that we were not offering private lessons, to assure the music teachers in the area that we were not trying to "steal" their students. Doris Fukawa, violinist and an expert in working with young people, was the director. She has since been replaced by Susan Bates.

Taking Summer Music West to a setting away from 1201 Ortega has been another one of my dreams; possibly the oldest dream.

The Youth Orchestra

Crawford: Would you talk a bit about the Youth Orchestra?

Kurka: The Youth Orchestra is sponsored by the San Francisco Symphony. They have a wonderful young conductor--I don't know if his title is associate conductor, but he has a certain number of concerts of the Symphony that he does conduct. Alasdair Neale.

The Symphony has an education director, Richard Bains, who was at one time a student here at the Conservatory, but now he is in charge of the youth education program at the Symphony and it is probably the best youth orchestra in the state. Many youngsters want to be accepted into the orchestra--I guess we have about twenty youngsters in the orchestra now.

Milton's student Julia Rosenfeld won the concerto competition of the Youth Orchestra. She was the staff pianist for the Youth Orchestra and won it last year so she was able to play this March, I think she played.

Crawford: Does this take time away from the Conservatory?

Kurka: It is limiting in that Youth Orchestra rehearsals are on Saturdays from one p.m. So when the prep has recitals I have to be careful to schedule enough recitals so that orchestra members can perform recitals here and then dash off to

rehearsals, which means that I have 11:45 recitals. I have to schedule them between 11:45 and 12:30.

Crawford: How does the Youth Orchestra compare with the Conservatory Orchestra?

Kurka: A comparison is not appropriate. There is a different age level, and besides the college students are already committed to becoming professional musicians, whereas [in the] Youth Orchestra it's still a pending decision. Some youngsters play well enough, but are not interested in music as a career. So that makes it even more exciting for them, because music is still a wonderful discovery for them. That's one of the reasons I love to hear young people play often-played pieces, perhaps a virtuoso piece, well, because when a youngster plays it, it sounds so different. So fresh, somehow.

Life after Prep

Crawford: Where do they go from here? I understand that not too many stay here.

Kurka: No. I feel that it's important to understand that after a youngster has lived with a family, and when they finish high school, it's time to go away. They shouldn't stay here, unless it's voice, because voice students begin when they're about thirteen or fourteen. The discovery of voice at that age is like a child of seven who begins piano. Their progress is much later, and it's wonderful if a voice student can stay here to continue the training.

But with violinists and pianists, they are ready to go elsewhere and they really want to try it. One of the violin teachers, Zaven Melikian, has had several of his students remain for a year after they graduate. They stay here as what I term post-prep students, because they want another year with him. They audition for several schools, and they delay their matriculation for one year.

Crawford: Is that true only of Zaven Melikian?

Kurka: Yes, so far, but I think that Renie Sharp now has a student considering delaying matriculation.

Crawford: That is a tribute to them, then.

Kurka: They do wonderful things with young people.

Crawford: He said in his interview that things get too informal at times. That he's told students when they turn up for juries--"May Kurka would not allow you to appear dressed like that." Do you agree?

Kurka: Oh, yes, well this is the year of the grunge. [laughter] And I am just horrified. For instance in the voice department, there is a sense of being in show business, or something, so sometimes the girls come out, and they have skirts up to here [gestures]. And it's so inappropriate when they perform. It is so distracting, because you are sort of amazed at their outfits.

So I've requested that they wear skirts that are below the knee, and how beautifully they can perform and look dignified.

Crawford: So dress does affect them.

Kurka: Oh, I know it does! That's why I'm convinced I'm doing the right thing. And I don't want torn jeans when the children come to play for their examinations when the faculty is dressed in a presentable way. It does affect their performance, and that's the way I put it, in terms of why I want them to dress the way they do. No running shoes and that kind of thing.

Crawford: Good for you! [laughter] Well, you must have some idea of how many of the students will become professionals. Do you try to deal with that issue?

Kurka: Well, the Symphony has five or six people who've gone through the prep here and are now members. There are a brother and sister who are members and who studied with Stuart Canin when he was teaching here.

After the prep years they went off to Juilliard and then came back and auditioned for the Symphony, and they are both highly disciplined, wonderfully talented young people. The mother and dad were both musicians too--the dad was a violist with the Symphony and died of a heart attack at a fairly young age. But the mother is a very dear friend, and she said, "We just had an understanding, we do no other activity until everybody has practiced." And the house is the kind of house where each one could go into their own room and start practicing. They could do anything they wanted: go hiking, have a picnic, go to the movies, but I think in that family it worked. In other families it doesn't work that way.

Crawford: Isn't it almost necessary to have that kind of focus?

Kurka: Yes, because it helps you later on, when you can recall that kind of discipline that keeps you going.

Crawford: Can you recognize early on which students will become performers, teachers, and those who will be just music lovers, and do you try to indicate those paths to them?

Kurka: Occasionally, but it's also a wonderful surprise to know of an unpredicted musical career.

Crawford: You have all kinds of people working in music as soloists, accompanists.

Kurka; Oh, yes. When we went East, Milton went on to Wilmington to see Julie Nishimura, a product of the prep who is now a pianist and chamber music teacher at the University of Delaware. She is a wonderful professional pianist, young lady. Her family still lives here in San Francisco.

We have a violinist and violist who was a student of Izzy Tinkleman who went through the prep, who is now a violist in the New York Philharmonic, and when I had an opportunity to go backstage, I was so surprised to see him. Robert Reinhart. He's married and has a young child. He loves the orchestra and living in New York.

Crawford: That speaks well for the Conservatory.

Kurka: Yes, it's wonderful.

Crawford: Who else have you seen placed well within orchestras?

Kurka: Jeff Lee is in Sweden--violin. Jim Lee is a cellist with the National Symphony in Washington, D.C. Josh Koestenbaum plays cello with the St. Louis Chamber Orchestra.

Crawford: What percentage of prep students who take careers in music want to be soloists?

Kurka: Only a few.

About Milton Salkind: A Wonderful Way of Being with Students

- Crawford: Let us talk about Milton Salkind, about his administration and what you think his great strengths are. Certainly there was a dramatic growth in the building up of this organization during his presidency.
- Kurka: Yes, well he never stopped being a musician, even though he was president. Music was his life. He taught and he performed, and he also had a wonderful way of being with the students. I don't think there was much separation between him and the students. They all liked him.
- Crawford: Is that unusual--would you find that kind of relationship at Juilliard?
- Kurka: I don't think so. It may have changed, and I know Juilliard has been self-critical, because I still get the Juilliard bulletin and I know they are trying to address a lot of things. The nature of being in New York makes it a tough place, I think. That's one of the nice things about San Francisco. And our school is smaller.
- Crawford: So being small is not a drawback.
- Kurka: Oh, no, I think the intimacy that we have here is so wonderful for the youngsters. There is competition; there has to be a little competitive feeling, but it's not as driven.
- Crawford: Which of the programs started by Milton Salkind were the most valuable?
- Kurka: Well, I think taking music out to the community. You know, community service. He was taking music out to the prisons, to the senior homes, playing wherever it was needed, and encouraging the students to do that I thought was wonderful.
- Students come with a variety of talents, not just interpretive talents of the well-known classics, but improv, jazz; composition; he certainly encouraged all of that. Did he tell you about his student Eric Chan?
- Crawford: No.
- Kurka: Eric Chan is now a Broadway star. He's been in musicals now, but he was a piano student of Milton's, and at the same time he was always taking dance lessons. Jazz, tap, whatever.

So, lo and behold, when he was giving his graduation recital, it was not only a piano recital but then they pushed the piano aside and he brought out these big boom boxes and the music began and he came out and danced.

This young man's parents are Chinese, and they've done wonderful things for all their boys. The boys have a sense of social responsibility, I think. Eric decided that being in show business was too empty and too shallow for what he wanted to do, so he gave it up for a while and came out and worked in a social service agency or something. Just trying to find out where he really belonged. He did that for about a year and a half and then he decided he'd had it. He wanted to go back to Broadway. That's where he is now, I think. I think he made a film in Hong Kong, but he's gone back to Broadway.

Milton certainly has encouraged composers too. John Adams I know is one that he encouraged. And David Del Tredici is another.

Crawford: When John Adams was here at the Conservatory, was composition a strong program?

Kurka: Yes. You know, when you have a composer of John Adams's talent, there can be only one composer, because everything emanates from this one strong creative person, and I think that's what happened, is that John was the composer at the time.

Crawford: Did that discourage other composers from associating with the Conservatory?

Kurka: I don't think so; I don't know how to put it, but I know that John was a very strong composer, and everybody flocked to him. We had a student in the prep who ended up studying with John. And this young man did everything he could to help John out. He prepared his scores, helped with rehearsals-- wherever John needed assistance. This young man is now a composer on his own, and is in the graduate program at Stanford, John McGinn.

Crawford: How about new music? Has that been a strong focus in the Salkind years?

Kurka: Yes, it has been. I think Joan Gallegos has had a lot to do with that. The New Music Ensemble [has gotten] student composers to write music for them that they would perform. And compositions from other modern European composers. So that's been a strong thing.

- Crawford: Milton Salkind told me that he introduced a new music requirement. That there had to be a twentieth-century work performed for the juries. Is that something you would encourage in the prep department?
- Kurka: I wouldn't encourage it quite so much because it's really quite a difficult thing when a youngster is trying to fathom early European music. There are some students who don't even like Debussy yet because it's too modern. Then you want to give them Bartok or Prokofiev; it's throwing a bit much to them. But I think that by the time you are a high school senior or a collegiate student and you have committed yourself to becoming a musician, the assumption is that you have had a broad spectrum of music so that you can deal with new music. And also if you know the person who is writing the music that makes it more interesting. If you are surrounded by other student composers who have written a piece for you, you know, that's always exciting too.
- Crawford: It seems to me that we have several good chamber ensembles here.
- Kurka: Yes, let's see, there is something called the Twentieth Century Forum and Earplay.
- Crawford: Hasn't Milton Salkind been a strong promoter of the Conservatory? Something like the sing-along *Messiah*--what kind of influence does that have in the community?
- Kurka: Oh, it's tremendous. Not only in attracting the people who want to take part in it, but just think of how many other organizations are now doing the sing-it-yourself *Messiah*-type of thing, all through California, so I think it's really wonderful to think this is something people want to sing.
- Crawford: Did he have a special genius for coming up with these things? I remember the composer marathons too.
- Kurka: Oh, I think he has a way of knowing exactly how to generate the kind of interest and getting the right people around him to make it go. And I think the tradition continues. We have a new young conductor now, Michael Barrett, who I think was a Conservatory student at one time, and now is the director who oversees all aspects of that.
- Crawford: They even have a *Messiah* retreat now, don't they?
- Kurka: Yes, but all the administrative jobs, all the details of the dates and all of that, that's all taken care of by someone

else, and Marcia Ehrlich takes care of the retreat and the musical training parts. It's very interesting, and I think Milton has a way of getting these things started.

Crawford: He was always very much in the community, and trying to get supporters and patrons. Did you do this too?

Kurka: No. He brought in a lot of the money and wanted the prep to be a good part of the Conservatory. We were allowed to work our own way through, because some of our needs are very different from the collegiate, but I think things are changing now. It's a little tougher. [laughter]

Colin Murdoch's Presidency

Crawford: What about Colin Murdoch's style? Is it very different from Salkind's?

Kurka: Oh, very. Well, of course it's a very different personality. I know that Colin is a musician, and I wish he would do more with music. He doesn't play anymore, and I keep asking him, "Maybe it's time you came out and played."

But he's got three very active children, and a young wife, and so they are busy trying to manage the family and Colin has a big job to do, but the children are enrolled in the prep-- Annie, voice, Joe, cello, Sam, violin.

Crawford: What is his focus as president?

Kurka: Well, as far as I can see he is trying to strengthen the academic part of the school to make sure that the students who come here not only have a good musical education but a good academic background, because that's what the young people in this world are going to need. Not only how to play their instruments but to have a good education.

Crawford: What does that mean for a student's future?

Kurka: They must be more articulate in expressing themselves, in being able to write; what I'm thinking about is all the students from foreign countries who come to us. Students from Asia, who have very little knowledge of English and who are struggling and perhaps require a basic English [course].

Crawford: Is that something that would be offered here?

Kurka: No, they have to take a basic course and go elsewhere for that training. Or they should have the training before they come here. But I think it's very important because the education has to be broad, or broader than it used to be.

Curtis, for instance never believed in anything else but knowing an instrument; that's the way the school was started, so that you wouldn't have to do anything but practice, but that's not the way it's going to be for the young people today. You have to get out and teach, be able to absorb many other things besides music, and I think that's something the Conservatory's beginning to do now.

Coping with Cultural Diversity

Kurka: There are so many interesting problems. I talked to Dorothy Steinmetz. I think she teaches German and American literature, and she said that there are so many cultural conflicts among the college students--so many different cultural values that she said they try to address, and sometimes it's hard to do this in a four-year program.

Crawford: What sorts of things are these?

Kurka: Well, values. What kind of values were you raised with and how are they in conflict with American values as they see them. I guess it's the way they look at things. So many of them come, and they can't carry on a discussion in the class when they are trying to analyze a piece or something where the education is not independent thinking but [you] take what the teacher tells you, and that's it. There's no question. So that makes it difficult to encourage students to think that they themselves have some ideas. Those are very difficult things to overcome.

But I think that the students have an orientation period in the beginning of the year when junior and senior students take it upon themselves to see that an incoming student has a friend on the first day to take them around. I think they now have supper at a restaurant, taking the new students out, and having a social time. All these kinds of things are a help to new students, but the fact that there's no dorm worries me.

Crawford: You mentioned the lack of a dorm for students. Is there a chance of getting one in the near future?

Kurka: I think there is now. There is something called a facilities research group on the board now that is looking around for changing maybe--for moving away from this building in the next five years.

Crawford: We didn't talk about that, but what do you think of relocating?

Kurka: Well, I know I'm in the minority. I'm not keen on having the Conservatory near the Opera House.

Crawford: My final question would be to ask you what advice you would have for young people who have the opportunity to pursue music as a career?

Kurka: I strongly advise them to search out all the areas of a musical career. Pianists should look into lieder repertoire; strings, wind, brass players have many areas, particularly contemporary music groups.

Crawford: Thank you. We'll stop here.

Milton Salkind and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Colin Murdoch

MILTON SALKIND'S SUCCESSOR LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

Interview Conducted by
Caroline Crawford
in 1994



Isaac Stern and San Francisco Conservatory of Music
President Colin Murdoch, 1993.

*Photography courtesy of the
San Francisco Conservatory of Music*

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Colin Murdoch

Colin Murdoch was the dean at the Conservatory of Music prior to becoming president in 1992. A member of the violin faculty at Lawrence University and dean there from 1977 to 1987, the beginning of his administration was separated from Milton Salkind's by less than a year, during which Steven Brown served in the office.

Salkind was by any definition a hard act to follow, behind the desk or in the community, but Murdoch determined to establish his niche with an expanded board of directors and a realistic picture of the new challenges the Conservatory faces in the 1990s.

Murdoch, who one faculty member described as a "living nerve" because of his energy and hard work, talks in the interview about the Conservatory's mission as a "people-oriented" institution, its future needs and some possible avenues for expansion, as well as disturbing trends in musical education in this country.

The interview took place in the president's large, sunny Conservatory office, with the sounds of pianos in adjacent practice rooms adding a pleasant counterpoint to the conversation.

Mr. Murdoch edited the interview transcripts considerably and requested that one portion be re-recorded to better reflect his style and meaning.

Caroline Crawford
Interviewer/Editor

April 1995
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Colin Murdoch

Date of birth May 11, 1946 Birthplace Wallsend, England

Father's full name Hugh A. Murdoch

Occupation Carpenter/Joiner Birthplace Wallsend, England

Mother's full name Doris Murdoch

Occupation Homemaker Birthplace Wallsend, England

Your spouse Sandra Murdoch

Occupation Violinist/Teacher Birthplace Laporte, Indiana

Your children Joe (10), Sammy (8), Annie (14)

Where did you grow up? Cleveland, Ohio

Present community San Francisco, California

Education University of Illinois, MM, 1970-72; Case Western Reserve University, BA, 1967-70;
Brown University, 1964-67.

Occupation(s) President, San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Areas of expertise Music, Education

Other interests or activities Sports, Art, Literature

Organizations in which you are active National Association of Schools of Music

MILTON SALKIND'S SUCCESSOR LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

[Date of Interview: February 17, 1994] ##

An Invitation to the New and Different

Crawford: I'll begin by quoting something you said in a newspaper article not too long ago. You said, "There is an invitation in this community to say something new and different." How do you think that statement applies to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music?

Murdoch: I think what is most distinctive is something which has to do with new music. This is a community which accepts new music and musicians who perform new music.

I'm thinking of early electronic music composers, Milhaud, Bobby McFerrin, Turtle Island String Quartet, Kronos String Quartet, John Adams, as examples. But going back even in rock music--say to Janis Joplin, Grace Slick, and the Grateful Dead. You know, this is a community which has a tradition of avant-garde and a community which will support it. And certainly the number of new music ensembles in the general Bay Area is illustrative of that.

I'm personally most familiar with [the new music ensemble] Composers, Inc. When you attend one of the Composers, Inc. events, it's a feeling of being part of the living history of music. You have a charge at those events that I don't feel, perhaps, in any other venue. I'm not saying that any other venue is not as good as or possibly better and I'm not talking here in terms of qualitative comparisons. I'm talking about a receptiveness on the part of a community to consider and perhaps even embrace a new sound or a new musical thought. I think that's true of the Conservatory.

So the Conservatory has, I think, probably two principal signatures, and one of these is new music. And if you look at the faculty rosters over the years, you will see that this

institution has been part of the new music scene for many, many years.

The other signature is chamber music. And there again, the chamber musicians who've been here through the years--I'm thinking of the Alma Trio, the Griller String Quartet, the Francesco Trio, and more recently, the people who are in the program now. Just last year, two faculty members and two students spent an entire year learning the four Elliott Carter String Quartets and performed them all in one evening. It was only the second time in history that that's been done. The Juilliard String Quartet did them. Here at the Conservatory of Music it was done in conjunction with the seventy-fifth anniversary of this institution. But the inclination to something new and to experiment is, I think, different in this community.

Growing up in Cleveland and Embarking on a Career in Music

- Crawford: Let's go back a little bit and find out about you and how you came to be engaged here and a little bit about your musical background. I note from your biography that you were born in England in 1946, and grew up in Cleveland.
- Murdoch: Well, my musical background is this. I grew up in Cleveland at the time of the Szell Cleveland Orchestra. And at that point in time, in the Cleveland public schools there was a very, very strong music program and that's where I began. And within a very short period of time I was taken to the Cleveland Music School Settlement for lessons. And within a short period of time after that, I had played for the concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra, Josef Gingold.

Mr. Gingold was very exceptional in that he not only had an interest in teaching the very advanced students, he was very interested also in working with the youngsters. And there was always a group of little ones around him. He would make certain that whenever, say, Isaac Stern or Nathan Milstein or Leonard Rose--those are names that come to mind immediately--whenever any one of those artists would come to perform with the orchestra, there were always tickets for us, for the little kids. And we were always taken backstage after the concert to meet the artists.

And so, you know, by the time I was ten years old, I'd basically heard the leading string soloists of that era and had met them also. And basically, by the time I was ten, I knew all the members of the Cleveland Orchestra. I'd met Szell many times, and that's how it was with Gingold. And so I had really a rather thrilling and extraordinary childhood in music. By the time I left high school, I'd had private violin lessons, obviously. But private theory, private composition, counterpoint, music history, chamber music as well. I probably had the equivalent of an undergraduate degree in music by the time I left high school.

Crawford: That's unusual, isn't it?

Murdoch: Well, you know, our kids here in the Conservatory Preparatory Department have the same thing. For the kids who really commit here in the Conservatory's prep--and by the way, that's another person you might speak to--May Kurka [head of the Preparatory Department]. You know, it's for a certain kind of kid who is interested in doing that.

But I must say that by the time I left high school, I think I had probably done just about everything an eighteen-year old could do in music without entering and winning a major competition. I'd been in plenty of competitions, but I never entered one of the major international ones, for example. And I think I pretty much had it with that. I'd O.D.'d. with it. And so I went off to Brown, in what was then a new six-year medical program. And I hated it.

Crawford: Was that a pre-med course?

Murdoch: It was a program that after six years awarded a BA in a choice of chemistry, biology, physics, or math, one of the sciences or mathematics, and then an MA in medical science. It was a very high-powered program, and it would have, well, it did for those students who went through it, essentially guaranteed admission in the third year to the medical school of your choice.

Crawford: Brown is an intense place.

Murdoch: Yes. And it certainly was in those years. I discovered that I hated spending afternoons in the chemistry lab. I found myself playing chamber music instead. I became an English major. I still found myself playing chamber music. In the middle of my junior year I thought, what am I doing? This is crazy. And so I left Brown. And I went back to Cleveland. My liberal arts credits at Brown transferred directly to Case Western Reserve.

And so I was technically enrolled in Case Western Reserve University but because the institution was affiliated with the Cleveland Institute of Music, I basically did all of my music, all of my coursework, at the Institute. So I was in a conservatory while being registered in a college.

My orchestra director in those years was James Levine. My chamber music coach was Robert Marcellus, and my fiddle teacher was Daniel Majeske. And so I had the best of both worlds. They were wonderful years. I went on to graduate school at the University of Illinois to work with Paul Rolland, who was a magnificent violin teacher.

I had pretty much evolved to the point where what I really wanted to do was teach in a college and play chamber music. The only positions that were available at the time I left graduate school were senior-level kinds of positions, and I just really didn't qualify for one of them, and so I played in the New Orleans Symphony for two years.

In my second year there, I had a chance to audition for a violin position at Lawrence University, a really very wonderful liberal arts college with a disproportionately large conservatory of music. It's a campus of about eleven hundred students, two hundred of whom are music majors. And so I went there and I taught violin very happily and played chamber music very happily and thought that was really what I would be doing.

Serving as Conservatory Dean at Lawrence University, 1977-1987

Murdoch: In my fourth year of teaching, I was asked by the college's president if I would serve as acting dean for a year because the dean of the conservatory resigned too late in the year to conduct a national search to replace him. And so I was the dean of the conservatory for ten years.

And then in November of '87, I was attending the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Music, in Boston. I had been in Boston for these meetings for about ten days. The phone rings and it's Larry Livingston, who's the dean of the school of music at USC. He said, "I don't know if you're interested in meeting Milton Salkind or not and I certainly don't know if you're interested in another job, but he's looking for a dean at the Conservatory in San Francisco. He's been here at the meetings and he's interviewed several

people and doesn't find anybody yet that he's really happy with. And so would you like to have dinner with him tonight?"

So Milton and I had dinner together that night and struck up a fast and furious friendship. And the following summer, my family and I moved here. And so I came to the Conservatory as dean.

Coming to San Francisco as Dean of the Conservatory, 1988

Crawford: What did you know about the Conservatory then?

Murdoch: I knew relatively little about the Conservatory. You know, at Lawrence I had hired a violin teacher who was an alumna of the Conservatory. I of course knew of Jeff Kahane. I personally had not met him at that time, but I had heard him perform. He had given a master class at Lawrence. I forget how many of our students had graduated from Lawrence and then gone on to study with him--at that time he was at the New England Conservatory--and they spoke glowingly of him.

And I had known distantly of Milton. I didn't know him personally, but I had known of him indirectly all the years through participating in the National Association of Schools of Music. So my own feeling for the school and understanding of it was one based on respect for its alumni and knowledge of the accomplishments of its president, but the school per se, I didn't know.

And so it was only when I visited here in, I think, in December of '87 that I experienced the school. And what I sensed was a group of highly-talented people--hardworking, concerned about the right things. The faculty with whom I met seemed in certain respects to be apolitical in a sense. The conversations that I had with them focused on music and education and what the future of that meant at the Conservatory. They had to do with financial issues such as faculty salaries, which they alleged and which turned out to be comparatively low.

Crawford: So they were candid.

Murdoch: That emerged immediately. So the conversations became substantive immediately. There was none of the dancing that

can take place on a first interview. That just didn't happen. We got right down to it.

And so, in terms of what I would fix right away, I don't think I had a feeling for that at that point in time. When I first arrived here, having moved in July of '88, I spent almost the entire summer meeting the entire faculty. Certain of those interviews were an hour or two, but certain of those were several meetings of three and four hours duration. I literally spent entire afternoons plural with members of the faculty over the course of that summer, because before doing anything I wanted to have a fairly profound understanding of the institution.

I didn't come here with an agenda, as many academic executives do. A composer executive will have a bias toward that; an ethnomusicologist will come with a bias toward that, and I came with none of that. I came with the intention of doing whatever I could to make whatever it was better.

Taking over the Presidency, 1992

Crawford: Fair enough. Well, how do you think you operate differently as Conservatory head than you had in the past?

Murdoch: Well, this is my fifteenth or sixteenth year as an academic administrator as either dean or president, and I think I'm better at it in some ways. I'm not sure I'm better at it in other ways. I'm unable, it seems, to get over a certain organizational hurdle, and perhaps that's the musician in me who refuses to allow myself to do that. I try to leave it creative, with a certain element of surprise, but I think that my early intuitions as an administrator were right and they continue. I think that in a small college such as this, one operates first and foremost at a personal level. This is a people-oriented institution, it's a place where people come first, and I think all things flow from that.

Crawford: You have given a lot of thought to broadening the curriculum.

Murdoch: This is a conservatory of music, first, foremost, primarily and almost entirely a place where music is the order of the day. We have a public relations office to promote music and musicians and teachers and students.

Ironically, though, when I first arrived here the academic issue that I needed to address was not music but general education. In March of the academic year prior to my arriving here, we'd been reviewed by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, our regional accrediting association, and they had raised several questions about general education at the Conservatory.

Curiously, that issue, which comprised at one point 20 percent of the curriculum, became the issue that dominated the first year of intellectual discourse with the faculty, and what it did was open doors of discussion with the whole faculty.

There are those faculty members who would argue that if you want to become a professional violinist, all you have to do is practice the violin. But then there are those who will argue that if you want to become a professional violinist you need to function in the larger society and therefore it's important that you have good command of language just for starters.

So the opposite extremes of that argument had a very healthy discourse on the subject of general education, and what it led to was a broader consideration of the structure of the institution.

This was an institution that when Milton took charge of it in, I think, 1966, was fairly small, and its place in the larger world of higher education was not established. As the institution grew it grew around Milton and around Milton's vision, and it became an institution very much defined by Milton.

At the time I came here, Milton said to me that he was planning to retire at some point--at some point, not a definite point but sometime in the foreseeable future, and that the institution really needed to plan for itself past the tenure of Milton as president.

And so, weaving in and out of discussions among faculty on general education were issues of institutional definition and structure, and so in that cosmos of general education and institutional structure, that was how the discourse began.

Crawford: And you've struck a balance that you're comfortable with?

Murdoch: I must confess I'm not entirely comfortable with the current balance. I think that some of my colleagues on the faculty have given of themselves extraordinarily over this period of

five or six years in the area that I've just been addressed, and I think that ultimately they are important--there is just no question about that--but going back to where I started with this, this is a conservatory of music, and the artistic issues are ultimately the issues which will determine the larger success and place of the Conservatory in the world of music education. And I would like to see us turn more toward those issues and perhaps leave some of these other structural issues.

The Board of Directors: A Focus on the Faculty

Crawford: Has the board changed substantially?

Murdoch: It has changed. I'll try to be as specific as I can on this. I do believe that the board, almost entirely at the present time, sees the Conservatory first as a school. And I think that the issue of the Conservatory as an arts institution, as a cultural institution, as a performance institution, as an educational institution, those aspects of the institution were, I think, more blended when I first arrived here.

The Conservatory is all of those things, but it is predominantly a school. That's why students come here; that's why faculty teach here. If the faculty wanted to perform and not to teach, this would be the wrong place for them to be employed at.

So I think at the level of mission, I think that the mission of the Conservatory has become very, very clear in the minds of the board and it's articulated specifically. I think secondly that the board has focused its energies more and more closely on the issues of the finances of the institution, and even more specifically on finances as they support faculty salaries.

I believe that the board has come to the recognition and a deep commitment to resolve this issue. That the faculty here are not paid competitively, that many of them are maturing in age and approach retirement age, and that replacement for those faculty will exceed current costs, and that in order to maintain and improve the quality of the institution, all that depends on our attracting the best faculty possible, and that's going to cost more money.

And so I think that a) the board has come to the fundamental understanding and belief in the Conservatory's mission as an educational institution, and b) the priority of faculty salaries has emerged as an absolutely far-out-there priority. And those two things are real, important developments on the board.

Certainly there have been changes in personnel--in board members. But I think that those philosophical centers are really the major differences.

Crawford: Must financial support be generated locally?

Murdoch: I venture to say that unless things change dramatically, yes.

Crawford: Do you see new constituencies?

Murdoch: Most of the Conservatory's giving has been by individuals. I think that phenomenon will continue. I can report very happily that we have identified new individuals who are giving at high levels, and I think we are on the trail of others who will do so, and so I'm feeling fairly confident about that aspect of the Conservatory's future at this point.

Networking

Crawford: Networking--what are you doing in that area?

Murdoch: I remain active in the NASM, but I regret that the deans and the presidents of the conservatories per se are at a kind of intermission in the collegial life that they had led previously. Milton had established an organization that was called, I think, the Association of Professional Schools of Music, and over a period of a half dozen years either the admission officers or the presidents would meet.

But in my first year here the members of that institution met at the Manhattan School in New York--Milton and I were both at that set of meetings--and what happened at that meeting was that the president of Juilliard, Joe Polisi, led, along with New England, a sort of withdrawing from the organization. They didn't want to pay dues--they didn't see what benefit they were receiving from dues.

Now the dues in effect went to pay for a part-time staff person, and the organization was an arm of the Cleveland Institute and was operated out of Cleveland. Milton was president of that association, and I think that Juilliard and Mannes and Manhattan as New York institutions perceived themselves as New York and the center of the whole thing and they didn't want to pay dues that go to Cleveland that they perceived made it possible for an institution like San Francisco to be part of the East.

I honestly don't know all of the internal politics of the thing but it was pretty clear to me that several of those member institutions refused to pay dues, and basically it died after that.

Crawford: That's a shame--a kind of provincialism on their part.

Murdoch: Very sad, because all of us, including Juilliard with its remarkably wealthy endowment; we are all facing the same issues.

Crawford: They have a three hundred million dollar endowment?

Murdoch: Three hundred and sixty million dollars. But I understand that Juilliard is downsizing, and well, you know, that's a sign of the times. Truly, I think we are all experiencing the same issues. I'm just speculating here--three hundred sixty million dollars is a lot of money, but Juilliard has close to a thousand students, and that facility is at the heart of Lincoln Center and it's a facility that needs a lot of money to support it. You play it all out, and they need the money.

Crawford: They need an endowment that size.

Increasing the Conservatory's Visibility in the Community

Crawford: Let me change streams here and ask you about education. We've talked about the image of the Conservatory here, and the need to educate a community that doesn't know fully what the Conservatory is.

Murdoch: You've really asked a critical question. I think in our community--the extended Bay Area--the challenge of establishing a great visibility for the Conservatory is a fundamental challenge. We undertook the 75th anniversary celebration not

primarily to make money. In fact, the budget was approved only with the expectation that it would be a wash.

The principal reason for that 75th anniversary [celebration], quite apart from the fact that we needed to recognize the accomplishment of the school and the people and the history, was for visibility purposes, and I think it's fair to say that our visibility during that year was enhanced greatly. We had great coverage in all the media locally and to some extent nationally, but I don't think we have maintained that level of visibility, but then we don't have big, splashy events.

Crawford: Isaac Stern doesn't play every other month.

Murdoch: No, and therein lies one of the dilemmas of the institution. We are a school, and what we do all day is meet students, teach students and students give performances and faculty give performances, and we do it in the Sunset. Those things are not particularly appealing to the media, but that's the business we do.

I think that a handful of our trustees are right now pushing for us to establish some kind of ongoing, perhaps even annual, event that draws the public's attention.

Crawford: The *Messiah* does that?

Murdoch: It does, but you know, that's another curious thing, because I venture to say that if you were to poll the people who are exiting, a very significant percentage would say that it's a Symphony event.

You asked a critical question, and I will confess to you that I don't think that we have answered it entirely. I know that this question nagged at Milton; that he found it enormously frustrating over the years that in order for us to gain the public's eye we had to do something that a) either took us to Civic Center and/or b) we did something that brought tv cameras. That means a Bobby McFerrin or an Isaac Stern. But doing what we do doesn't draw the public eye.

Crawford: To a large extent you are really educating the future musicians in San Francisco. Do you see that as a task you can take on?

Murdoch: I must add that the Community Music Center plays a valiant part. I think the two of us, and certainly the Symphony education program, and to some extent San Francisco State all

contribute to this. Beyond that, though, it's very hard to find where it's happening in really meaningful ways. The public schools have the High School for the Arts. You've caught me on a day where I feel more optimistic than on other days.

If you talk to people at the Symphony or the Opera, they say that when they hold auditions they don't see shrinkage in [the numbers] of people who show up, and they will say that the people showing up are ever more qualified than they have been.

And so I'm wondering to myself if the people who have the large talent, who will ultimately find their way to places like this to develop that talent, whether that's the question, or whether the real question is where the audiences are going to be.

Crawford: It's circular, isn't it?

Murdoch: That's true.

Thoughts about Milton Salkind

Crawford: Would you focus a little on Milton Salkind, his strengths, as you perceive them?

Murdoch: I am not knowledgeable of the Conservatory of 1966. I've been in this business, I think, long enough since my childhood--I think I can read into it what it was. I suspect it was a wonderful, high quality school with tremendously devoted teachers. It was in the very best sense of the phrase a community school. It emerged out of the identity of its community. Its supporters were community leaders devoted to music and young people, highly emotional, highly humanistic, highly artistic community of teachers and artists. Small in size, but I suspect highly localized, and I think that when we look at Milton as president for twenty-five years we see somebody who took an institution as a small child and raised it into young adulthood.

I think Milton must have had in those early years a vision that had to have been affected by his Juilliard experience.

Milton's background before he went to Juilliard--he in fact was enrolled in a liberal arts program with a major in

economics. And so he went to Juilliard with that liberal arts education background, then going to a school of highly professional orientation, and so he brought to the Conservatory a certain humanism as well as professionalism. And I think that humanism side of Milton accounts in large measure for the personality of the school even as it exists today. It is a professional school, but one with I think a certain view toward the competition of the field that is not quite as neurotic as it can be. Not quite razor blades between the keys of the piano.

I think Milton sensed early on here, I don't know if it was fully conscious--and I suspect that much of it was intuitive--that there was the possibility of a vision here that had high professional standards, that had a humanistic quality to it, and a location in California which nurtures both of those things. [He had] an ability that emerged fairly early on to meet people and cultivate those people who would become involved in the life of this institution.

I've heard this story many times. I don't know if you know Emmy Callaghan, but Emmy is San Francisco--born and raised here--really a great lady. The story is of Emmy in blue jeans, on a ladder, painting the hallways of the Conservatory. Milton was able to involve Emmy and many other people of Emmy's generation--Ava Jean Brumbaum was another one--who would form the backbone of the new Conservatory.

I think Milton probably had a similar challenge to the one I've had in becoming president. Milton became president essentially after Ada and Lillian. There were presidents after Ada and Lillian, but they were still around, and the presidents who succeeded them were never of long duration. In fact, Robin Laufer, who immediately preceded Milton, had I think a very short tenure as president.

So I think Milton took on the big shoes of Ada and Lillian just as I've been asked to take on the big shoes of Milton.

Crawford: And this very personal kind of operation, is it desirable or even possible at this point?

Murdoch: I happen to think it's essential.

Conservatory Demographics

Crawford: A question about demographics. Do you think it's important for the Conservatory to reflect the population makeup of the country? You have a sizable group of Asian Americans--how about blacks and Hispanics?

Murdoch: I do believe that is important; I believe that it is a long-term objective. Going back again to the National Association of Schools of Music, at that national level, there is a high level of concern for the demography of the people who will ultimately make up this profession in all of its aspects. Either as teachers or performers or volunteers or whatever.

I think we are living with a certain reality that at this point in time the number of people who are Hispanic or who are black is small compared with other people in the profession. The Conservatory in my experience has taken, I can say quite dramatically, the following steps: When we are able to identify a Native American or Hispanic or black student who show promise, we very much go out of our way financially if that student needs support to make it possible for that student to come here. I am honestly quite proud about this. I hate to put it so crassly, but we really do put our money where our mouth is.

But I am concerned that we're not doing well enough in identifying that talent. I'm not sure if we can assume all of that responsibility, and here it seems to me is where the responsibility of the schools lie. And here's where the real challenge lies, because it just isn't going to happen there, unless things change.

The Student Body##

Crawford: The figures I have, from 1990, show that 3 percent of the students were African-American, 25 percent Asian or Asian-American--I know that number has increased--and 5 percent Hispanic. Well, who are the students and what is the balance between the divisions?

Murdoch: They are extraordinary. There are three divisions in the Conservatory. There's an adult extension program which I'll talk about first. It has in any given year up to a thousand

people who come here for things ranging from intense private lessons to one-night topical seminars. For example, John Adams did a one-night thing on *The Death of Klinghoffer* prior to its performance with the Opera.

Paul Hersh is doing one this spring on the complete Beethoven piano and violin sonatas. Last year two nights were devoted to the Elliott Carter string quartets. There are full semester-long courses ranging from things such as how to listen to music for the complete novice to really very in-depth courses on, say, the music of Schubert or a genre of literature. So it's a rather large and diverse array of offerings for the adult person.

Let me talk about the prep division next. The prep division has about 450 students. And this is a program for youngsters aged eighteen and younger. These kids come from all over the Bay Area and by Bay Area I mean very extended Bay Area: Sacramento, Carmel, Santa Rosa. They come in after school during the week. They come in on Saturdays. And we also have prep students [from other states]; one who's here from North Carolina, one from Maine, one from Taiwan, one who flew in every other week from Seattle, on Saturdays.

Crawford: Is the program well known?

Murdoch: Oh, yes.

Crawford: One of the interviewees said it's possibly the best in the country.

Murdoch: It's fantastic. These kids are the best. They are just extraordinary. They include kids who are precisely that, you know, music kids. But these are also kids who will go off to Harvard or Wellesley--they're fabulous, fabulous kids.

Crawford: What percentage of those serious music students stay in the collegiate division here?

Murdoch: Very few. We do not run a prep program as a feeder into our collegiate program. We do it for the greater good of music. Now every year there will be, say, three to five students who will stay in the collegiate. But we don't do it for that reason at all.

Crawford: Is there a value in staying with Mack McCray or Paul Hersh once they've started?

Murdoch: Depends how long they've studied with that person. You know, if this is a student who began, let's say, with Zaven [Melikian] at age seven and at age eighteen is still with Zaven, chances are it's a good thing for that student to leave and get a different point of view.

On the other hand, if it's a student who went through the prep and all of a sudden is a senior in high school, studies with Mack and it's a good chemistry, maybe it's a good idea to continue with Mack or Zaven for the next four years. It depends. And there is, of course, the age-old desire of students to go off to college away from home. And that is healthy.

The collegiate program has 270 students in it presently. They come from about twenty countries and they come from more than thirty states.

Crawford: Are you aggressive recruiters?

Murdoch: We are. We travel all over the country, auditioning all over the country and at various college fairs. And we also are in continuing and regular contact with certain individual teachers all across the country.

I'm going to give you two examples of how people react to the collegiate division. I take a lot of guests to concerts here. It's part of engaging them with the institution. And I cannot tell you how many times I have heard this after a guest has heard one of our student recitals. A comment will come up, some version of the following: "You know, you read about young people in the papers today, about the drugs, about the guns and the violence, the sex, the whole load and you begin to worry about the future of the country, its values, its commitment to the higher minded things." And how many, many times it's followed by, "I just can't tell you what this has done for me in terms of giving me a sense of hope for the future of our country." I have heard that more times than I can possibly recapitulate for you.

And then, there's another comment that I've heard. We have a friend of the Conservatory who was a well-placed IBM executive who worked all over the world. And I surmise, I don't know this for a fact, but I surmise that he made enough money that he made a change in his life and he doesn't need to work. And he decided to live in San Francisco. I'm going to guess he's no older than fifty.

There are some people who love music and then there are some people who can't live without it, and he's in the latter category. He goes to the Symphony, he goes to the Opera, he comes here. And again, I can't tell you how many times this person has heard a concert here, walked out at its conclusion, made a beeline toward me so that he can say what's on his mind and said the following: "I go to the Opera. I go to the Symphony. But I never leave a concert feeling like I feel after hearing a concert here."

Chamber Music at the Conservatory

Murdoch: Part of the philosophy of our chamber music program is that we take talented students and our faculty perform chamber music with the students. And part of the philosophy for as long as I am aware of it has been to bring in distinguished outsiders and have them perform with faculty and students. This certainly goes back to the concept of Chamber Music West as inaugurated by Milton.

And so what we have right now is a reconfigured Chamber Music West. Chamber Music West was a summer music festival and it became a very expensive proposition for us. There were concerns, certainly among some of the faculty and certainly among some of the trustees, that Chamber Music West had become too much of a festival independent of the academic program. And here we are a school, and what's the mission of the school? Well, the mission of the school is to teach students. So that if we're doing something with guest artists, why don't we have guest artists come here while the students are around rather than in the summer when the students are all gone?

Crawford: Incorporate it.

Murdoch: Yes. And so this is the first year of a reconfiguration of that. Last week we had Joel Krosnick here for the entire week. Joel is the cellist of the Juilliard String Quartet. Well, Joel told me at the end of the week that it was just an incredible experience to be here, you know, working with our kids, working with our faculty and performing with them, that it was a tremendous experience. He would love to come back. And the students and faculty are saying the same thing to me, that the electricity that developed was tremendous.

Well, they performed last Saturday. They performed the Schoenberg *Verklarte Nacht*, which is a string sextet. The first violin was a member of our faculty. The second violin was a student. The first viola was a member of the faculty. The second viola was a student. The first cello was Joel Krosnick. The second cello was a student.

So, there were three students, and I have to tell you that performance was as elevated and sophisticated and at the most elegant level of chamber music and as artistically high an expression of performance as I have ever heard in my life. Hands down, comparing it with anything.

Crawford: Of course, everybody wants to be the second cello and the second violin. Who decides?

Murdoch: The faculty select. I don't have the photograph here; it's just outside of Hellman Hall. But at the Isaac Stern concert, they did a Brahms sextet, and there is a poster signed by the performers, of whom two were students.

Crawford: Was that like an extended master class?

Murdoch: No. There were master classes all through the week, but then there were rehearsals all through the week for the performance. And so here, with Joel, last Saturday, they performed it in Hellman Hall and with Isaac, of course, they performed that in Davies Hall.

Crawford: Was that reviewed?

Murdoch: Not Saturday's.

Crawford: Shouldn't the critics come to those?

Murdoch: Well, that's another topic. You know, with Bob Commanday's retirement and Marilyn Tucker's leaving the *Chronicle* we're down basically to one critic for each paper. And the chances of one critic coming out here are now diminished by a good margin.

Crawford: Is that something you want to work on and strengthen?

Murdoch: Oh, yes. Sure.

Crawford: You always hear about the competition at Juilliard among the students, and I'm told that doesn't exist here.

Murdoch: We have, I think, an extraordinary level of talent here. And it's made all the more extraordinary by what I perceive as competition in the best sense. There's no getting around the fact that the students here are competitive. They are plenty competitive. But I think that the faculty encourage them, and it really starts, I believe, with the faculty. Or it perhaps starts with the administration that won't tolerate the kind of backbiting and razors-in-between-the keys, you know, kinds of competition.

When we have a student who wins something here, there's just an outpouring of nonjealous congratulations. You know, when Hai-Ye Ni won the Naumburg, people just basically stood in line to congratulate her.

Crawford: When somebody wins the Naumburg or any prestigious competition, what does it mean to the Conservatory? Does it make waves?

Murdoch: Oh, yes. Oh, definitely.

Crawford: Do people want to know who she studied with and do they seek out teachers on that basis?

Murdoch: Do they come for teachers? They absolutely do.

Performance Opportunities

Crawford: How are the performance opportunities here for students? Are they what they should be?

Murdoch: They're very extensive. It's a wonderful community for the students because first of all, the Conservatory, I think, provides through the degree program requirements and the ensemble and solo course offerings a great opportunity for performance. But we also have what we call a community service and job placement program. And this was one of Milton's projects. I do believe its creation is among Milton's proudest accomplishments here.

And you know, our kids perform in things ranging from when the president of the United States comes to San Francisco to musical visits to a prison to concerts at homes for the elderly. And then there are the usual job-placement gig kinds of things--weddings, bar mitzvahs, you know.

Crawford: And they get a little pocket money.

Murdoch: And they get money.

Crawford: How about your career placement?

Murdoch: We don't have an office as such of career placement. But our faculty are well connected into their various worlds of specialty. You know, the oboe teacher of the San Francisco Symphony knows what the openings are. And if they have a student who is qualified for such and such an opening, they'll get them into the auditions. Denis de Coteau, the orchestra director, has a lot of contacts throughout the world really, and for example, the concertmaster of the Conservatory orchestra this year is really very, very fine. I think she's subbing with the Symphony and with the Ballet orchestras and the Opera. And I'm sure that's Denis.

Just the other day Paul Hersh said to me that the Arditti String Quartet, which specializes in new music, was looking for a new second violinist. Well, one of our chamber music majors is a nut about contemporary chamber music. And so Paul will see to it that this kid hooks up with those other three people. So, it happens like that.

Crawford: How about UC and Stanford and their new music programs? Is there any kind of collaboration or an interchange?

Murdoch: Although I am certainly aware of the new music program at UC and Stanford and have met with many members of their faculties, I don't really feel qualified to answer substantively.

Crawford: Could your students have access to those facilities if they wanted to?

Murdoch: I think they probably could if they wanted it.

Student Recitals and Informality

Crawford: Student recitals. Somebody mentioned that the students are so laid back that you can't get them to go into the hall and listen to their peers much. Is there that kind of laid-back atmosphere, and if there is, does it attract people because it's not so fierce and competitive?

- Murdoch: I think that may be an historic reputation rather than a current reality. I think that we do have some students here who are laid back in that California kind of sense. But I would say that the vast majority of these students here are ambitious and hard-working.
- Crawford: Do you encourage informality?
- Murdoch: The size of the school and its location invite a certain informality. I do believe it's a defining aspect of the school's personality.
- Crawford: One of the faculty said he would like a little more formality at the graduation ceremony, that sort of thing.
- Murdoch: There is more formality today than there has been. And there may be more even as we speak at this year's commencement. There appears to be an interest on the part of some students to wear caps and gowns, which would be a first I think. I should add that I think it possible for academic and artistic rigor to coexist with a friendly environment, and they do here at the Conservatory.
- Crawford: We've talked about the large number of Asian students here. How do you see that forming or reforming?
- Murdoch: I believe that it's an absolute statement of fact to say that if it had not been for Asian populations of students at the American conservatories of music that all of these schools would a) be smaller today, in terms of enrollment size and b) they wouldn't be as good musically. I think that's a statement of fact. I think anybody who would deny that or would challenge it doesn't know reality.
- Crawford: Does the Asian community here and abroad support music education in such a way that you can benefit?
- Murdoch: Financially? No. With some exceptions. I think that's one of the big challenges, one of the big unanswered challenges. But to answer your question about Asian students, our collegiate population is probably about 25 percent Asian. And the preparatory Asian population, either Asian or Asian-American population, is about 50 percent. And I believe that population, that those figures may even be greater at Juilliard. I don't know that for fact but that's my sense.

We're having an interesting experience now. Beginning perhaps three or four years ago, we saw the first signs of

Russian immigration. And this year, I'm not certain of the exact number of Russian students, but I think we may have a handful, and I venture to guess that we'll see more of them. These are kids who come with that great tradition of Russian musicmaking. They're going to be a force.

Faculty Development

Crawford: Would you talk about the faculty a little bit, and where you want to go with the faculty. Is there a young guard coming in?

Murdoch: I'm going to talk in broad strokes about faculty development. As I've indicated, I've been fairly active in the national circles of music and higher education for fourteen or sixteen years. And having served on the commission that actually takes the steps that makes the decisions on accreditation over a period of six years, I probably in that six-year period saw ten years worth of correspondence, because the accreditation cycle in an institution may be up for renewal and it may take three years or four years to undo or redo whatever is an issue.

That six years probably gave me a ten-year time frame of looking into what's going on in music and higher education. And I venture to guess that I saw as many as 80 percent of the institutions that are accredited by NASM, which is essentially almost all the major music schools in America.

There is a very disturbing picture that emerges out of all of that, and it is that music schools at a national level are downsizing in terms of their music programs. They are decreasing their financial support for these programs. They are, in fact, in many instances redefining what the music program means on the campus from a program of some presence to a program of fairly minimal presence. It really is of great concern.

Built into that is an enormous shrinkage of not just performance programs, but music education programs. Programs that certify people for teaching in the public schools. Well, that's a direct reflection of what's happening to music in the public schools with notable exceptions. The state of California, I believe, ranks fiftieth of all fifty states in its support for music in the public schools. In San Francisco schools, there's the School of the Arts and one or two programs here and there. But by and large, that's about it.

Crawford: It's considered marginal.

Murdoch: Marginal is, I think, often an overly optimistic description of it. You know, what does that mean for music in this country twenty years out? Who is going to teach violin at the level that violin needs to be taught at this institution in fifty years? I think that's a great question. I don't think anybody has an answer to that question.

And if you then impose upon what I've just described--the change of financial support for the arts, the emerging diversity issues, and the maturing off of the moneyed people who have traditionally supported the arts in this country--it's a picture that has a high level of concern to it.

Crawford: Does the NEA get involved at this level?

Murdoch: The NEA has essentially, and this is one person's viewpoint on this, but the NEA has almost no effect whatsoever, at some important, underlying, philosophical, financial leadership level. It's a very small amount of money that does not answer in any way the issues that I have just raised.

Crawford: And so it has to be generated within the community.

Murdoch: Yes, and the question you asked me about the emerging faculty at the Conservatory plays into this picture very closely. I'll get very specific quickly. One of our longtime violin teachers, Isadore Tinkleman, I venture to say, had thirteen to fifteen students who came to this institution not because this was San Francisco, not because this was a conservatory, not because this was the San Francisco Conservatory. They came here for one reason only. They wanted to study with Izzy.

Replacing Izzy is going to be a real challenge. It is a challenge at two or three different levels. One, there aren't many people who teach violin at his level, at all. If such a person considers living in San Francisco and presently lives almost anywhere except New York, Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles, the financial implications of such a move are startling.

Crawford: Can you still offer less, as Milton Salkind was reputed to have done, and be successful?

Murdoch: No. The recruiting challenges are significant, and they have to do a) first and foremost with the artistic questions as they

relate to the future of the art form and b) the financial considerations of living in the Bay Area.

Replacing an Isadore Tinkleman: "Creative Spark"

Crawford: How do you go about finding a teacher to replace someone like Isadore Tinkleman?

Murdoch: We will advertise through all of the normal channels, which would include the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the Collegiate Music Society job vacancy bulletin, various minority announcements. We will send a position description to virtually every music school in the United States. And we will also, through every contact we know, get on the phone. It will be an aggressive campaign.

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Crawford: Has the basic approach to teaching changed appreciably?

Murdoch: Are you asking whether I see any evolving pedagogies or different attitudes toward music or just plain new blood?

Crawford: Let me put it this way. Is new blood a desirable thing in your view? Or are you looking at it that way?

Murdoch: Oh, absolutely. Yes. Look, we have on our fiddle faculty, right now we have Ian Swensen. And I think that Ian has brought some wonderful new blood to that department. I venture to say that when we find Izzy's replacement, there'll be a similar occurrence. But I don't think there's anything extraordinary or exceptional about that. I think that is a fairly universal phenomenon in faculties as they evolve.

Crawford: You re-recruited Stuart Canin. Am I correct in that? Do you actively do that to get a good balance?

Murdoch: Yes.

Crawford: Somebody like Bobby McFerrin, what kind of a contribution does he make? Interesting that he's taking piano lessons now from Milton. What is he offering at the Conservatory?

Murdoch: You've asked a larger question here than just one about Bobby and what he does here. Bobby has, as you know, a phenomenally

busy career. And because of the pressures of his career, he has really only been able to be part of the Conservatory's weekly educational activity for one semester.

One semester a few years ago, he taught a class every week. It was called Creativity 101. And what that did--some of those students found it to be ear-opening. They were able to think musically in more expanded ways than they had previously. It helped their own performance. It helped their own musical thought process, their own creativity.

And I would say that that's what it's all about. I think that's why we have Bobby. We don't have Bobby here, from my perspective, because Bobby is Bobby. You know what I mean? In fact, I think the faculty would find that having Bobby here because Bobby is Bobby to be a very offensive proposition. And I think Bobby himself would find that offensive. You know what I'm saying?

So I think what we're after is that creative spark that he possesses and how does that relate to this program. And as I've described, it relates. I mean, we've had some students who had that experience with him that was very meaningful and productive.

Conservatory Facilities and the Future

Murdoch: I would venture to say that given a different building with more space, and given the opportunity to hire a few additional faculty members, I would take it back to where you and I started in terms of what do I find distinctive about music in the Bay Area.

I'll just get a little bit crazy for you for a moment here. You see, I can imagine a new music institute here that Bobby is part of, that the Grateful Dead are part of, that other jazz figures might be part of. I can see a small jazz contemporary media program here. It's reflective of the area. It could tie into filmmaking.

And from my own personal experience, at Lawrence we had a jazz program. It was not a jazz major. We did not want to offer a major in jazz studies at the undergraduate level. We felt that it was a graduate level program by definition, but we had a very wonderful jazz program, and what we found over the

period of the years that I was dean was that the jazz trombonist was very typically our hottest symphony trombonist, that they could cross over.

And what it did, it gave the percussion program tremendous life and creativity. And for the wind and brass kids, the kids who are in the orchestra--the trumpet player, you know, gets to play one piece on each program for six concerts a year. That's not a whole lot to keep them musically satisfied and stimulated, you know. Whereas if you give them a jazz quintet and if you have a sensitive teacher who will not let the kid blow the lip out so they can't play symphonic music, it's like taking a needle and giving an injection of adrenaline to the program.

Crawford: Could it happen here?

Murdoch: Given a different building.

Crawford: Talk about the building. Is it too small?

Murdoch: It's a limited space. It is not a music building by design. I think we make the best out of something that could be a lot better. I'm speaking for one person only. I'm not here speaking on behalf of the institution, okay? But based upon what I think I know from the larger world of music, I think that we would be very ill-advised to set as an ambition or a goal the increase in size of the classical music program. I think that we would be well served if we focused solely on maintaining this size program or slightly smaller and simply focusing our energy on quality. I think that above all things, that's it--quality.

The one exception to this would be if we could add a program of the kind I just described. When I first came here in '88, I forget what the size of the program was, what the enrollment was, but it was just a little bit too small. You get a certain critical mass and certain stuff begins to happen and multiply on itself. And I think we're at that critical mass right now. I think if we become a whole lot larger we lose the personality of the program and we run the danger of hiring faculty that ten years out we'll have to let go because there aren't going to be enough students.

Crawford: We have this unique opportunity with the Presidio opening up.

Murdoch: The Presidio is a long, long shot. We have been pretty close to all of its deliberations. We have an application in. But

there are certain aspects of that which are not attractive at all. One of these is that you may not own the land that you might build something on. You lease the land. And they're talking at this point in time of fairly limited-duration leases of twenty years max, which is completely unacceptable to us.

Secondly, in terms of a building, many of the buildings are going to be historic designations. And we can't redo them. In other words, if there's a wall there, we can't move the wall.

Crawford: So instead of infant plumbing, military plumbing? What about a downtown location?

Murdoch: Well, as I understand it, if I heard Sydney Unobsky correctly and I think I did, he has us in as part of the city's civic center grand plan. I imagine that if we came up with 100 million dollars, they'd find a plot of land for us.

Crawford: That would be very exciting.

Murdoch: Well, again there's a downside there. As you know we have a prep program which means young children [and] teenagers sometimes taking public transportation here alone, which means young mothers and fathers dealing with not just their eight-year-old or ten-year-old who might be studying here, but their five-month-old. It's very much at certain times of the day and on certain parts of the weekend and is very much a prep school. And unless that neighborhood changes at Civic Center, it's less attractive.

The public transportation lines here are very good for our collegiate kids, and those who drive; it's good for the north people, it's good for the south people. And the neighborhood itself is about as safe as it is anywhere in the city and it's probably as affordable as it gets in the city, so a lot of them live around here. There are tradeoffs. There's just no question about it.

The Financial Future and Coping with Change

Crawford: In the next fifteen years, how do you plan to spend your time? You have only so much time. How are you going to divide it up?

Murdoch: This Conservatory, at this moment in history, does not have an artistic problem. It does not have an educational problem. It

doesn't have an identity problem in terms of what its mission is. It has one paramount problem and it's financial. And the more that I am able to focus attention on solving that particular problem, the better.

Crawford: And what new directions will that take?

Murdoch: I think it means appointing highly qualified and highly visible faculty so that again, that issue of quality is paramount. I think it means tying money to those appointments. I think it means broadening the base of support for the Conservatory. We keep going back to the same people for support financially. And many of those people are well advanced in years and we're going to have to replace them with people not previously connected.

Crawford: So there is a lot of groundwork to be done. Well, any other new directions that you'd like to mention?

Murdoch: I think that the school is operating at a very high level right now, and I don't want this to sound like it could sound but going back to another version of a question you asked me, what does new blood do? People don't play the violin a whole lot differently today from what they did twenty years ago or a hundred years ago. It's basically the same four strings with the same bow. In some technical sense it's still the same box with a bow. It's still the same four fingers. I think pedagogies have evolved. I think that we've learned through medical science that certain things are dangerous and that certain things work better.

The same is true in voice. The technology of teaching has improved. And so, I think there have been advances. But the fundamental act is about the same. The literature doesn't change all that dramatically. There's research going on all the time that revises how it's performed. There are new composers composing new music. But in all these respects, it's really a cultural evolution that is in a certain respect no different today from what it was in Corelli's day or Vivaldi's or Mozart's or anybody else's. And you know, I think that a conservatory of music has its heart lodged somewhere in that cultural evolution.

It's in that continuum of change that the conservatory world lives. And in that sense we are constantly changing. You know, twenty years ago there were almost no Asian students in this school of music. Now the presence of Asian students has changed the way this faculty deals with its students. How

do you teach the history of Western civilization to a class where 30 percent of the kids barely speak English? And you're talking about philosophical concepts of the age of reason, you know.

You take that example and multiply it by the fact that in the Asian cultures, it's not just China or Japan, it's all of the Asian countries with all of those different traditions feeding into this cultural continuum that we're a part of, that we're part of its definition. And so in that sense, you know, we are constantly changing. But these are not changes that occur as an earthquake where the landscape has changed from one day to the next.

Years ago when I was at Lawrence, the media actively portrayed the liberal arts concept, the liberal arts institution, as no longer relevant to society, because what we need to be doing, the media alleged, is to prepare people for jobs. [It wasn't] important to have the broad, philosophical underpinnings of our liberal education.

I think there's a version of this for SFCM. Our mission is not to create all sorts of new job-training or education programs that answer to the latest fad in music education. Many institutions have attempted that and what they ended up ultimately with was a loss of identity.

I think this institution has a very strong identity, and I think that we don't want to lose that identity. We're too small, we could diffuse it very quickly. Because we're so small, the personality of the school is fragile. It could be lost in five years. The heart of the school musically is in the Western music tradition. I think that we have to be willing in a respectful, in an embracing way, to accept indigenous musics. We're going to hear more of them as the years go by. And I think we also have to accept and respect what I've described in a sense as new music in the jazz and contemporary media sense. That's the best answer I can give.

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San Francisco Conservatory of Music

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

In the fall of 1917, pianists Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead proudly opened the doors on the Ada Clement Piano School. Located in the remodeled home of Lillian's parents on Sacramento Street, the school began with three pianos, four studios, two blackboards and forty students.

Seventy-five years later, Ada's little piano school is the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, one of the most respected institutions of music education in the country. The collegiate program now enrolls 270 students, the Preparatory Division offers instruction to more than 450 children, and over 700 adults participate in a full program of evening classes. Conservatory graduates have moved on to successful careers in the music world—more than two-thirds are employed in the music profession. The faculty comprises 78 exceptionally talented and committed professionals drawn from the ranks of the finest musical organizations in the country—including sister institutions the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Ballet.

Within a few years of its historic opening, Ada Clement's piano school had experienced tremendous growth. By 1923 the school had changed its name to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and had over 300 students attending classes in individual instruments, theory, composition and voice. Among the early students nurtured by the

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Conservatory were two of this century's greatest violin virtuosos—Isaac Stern and Yehudi Menuhin. In 1924, the eminent composer Ernest Bloch was engaged to teach a summer master class. The course was a resounding success and Bloch was soon hired as Director, beginning his tenure the following year.

“Uncle Ernie,” as Conservatory students and faculty fondly called him, served as Director for five years. Bloch's musical vision, international reputation and skills as a teacher helped implement a real expansion for the school. New instruments and equipment were acquired, an orchestra and chorus were established, and prominent musicians were placed on the faculty. When Bloch left in 1930 to compose full time, Ada and Lillian resumed leadership of the institution.

From the very beginning, chamber music was an important part of the Conservatory—the first faculty chamber group was formed as early as 1926. In 1948, the internationally renowned Griller Quartet established a summer school at the Conservatory, attracting students from across the U.S. The ensemble returned for three more summers and served on the faculty for many years after that. The renowned Alma Trio began a summer residence program at the Conservatory in 1952; the ensemble's pianist Adolph Baller is still on the faculty.

After 14 years as Chairman of the Music Department at UC Berkeley, Albert Elkus came out of retirement in 1951 to assume the post of Director of the Conservatory. One of his first priorities was to find the school a new home. With over 600 students attending classes in the old buildings on Sacramento Street, the Conservatory was bursting at the seams. A generous bequest from a former student, Dorothy Lucy, allowed the Conservatory

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to purchase a large Spanish Mission revival building that had been an infant shelter. The move to 1201 Ortega Street took place in November 1956; two months later, the public was invited to an inaugural chamber music concert.

Musicologist Robin Laufer succeeded Elkus in 1957. During his tenure, the Conservatory reached a major milestone, receiving accreditation from both the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the National Association of Schools of Music in 1960. Laufer also worked hard to improve the curriculum: an Opera Theatre department was added, a master's degree in music program was established and, in 1963, the San Francisco Conservatory became the first conservatory of music to offer a degree in classical guitar.

Appointed President in 1966, Milton Salkind guided the Conservatory through its greatest period of expansion. During his 25-year term, collegiate enrollment soared from 42 to over 250. He also developed many innovative programs, many of which became models for other conservatories. Stressing the importance of performance, Salkind added recital requirements for juniors and seniors and increased performance opportunities for all students. Today the Conservatory maintains an ambitious schedule of over 250 recitals and concerts each year. Salkind also instituted a community service program—the first of its kind among conservatories in the U.S. Through the master class program, Salkind brought the professional music world to the San Francisco Conservatory with visits from such artists as Alfred Brendel, Leon Fleisher, Placido Domingo, Beverly Sills, Yehudi Menuhin and Pinchas Zukerman.

The Milton Salkind years also saw the birth of many events and programs that have now become annual traditions, such as the Music Marathon and the “Sing-It-Yourself

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Messiah.” Chamber Music West, a summer festival bringing together talented students, alumni, faculty and distinguished artists, was launched in 1977. The chamber music program fulfilled its early promise in 1985, when the San Francisco Conservatory became the first U.S. conservatory to offer a master’s degree in chamber music.

The performance of new music also flourished during Salkind’s tenure. Building on a composition department that had its roots with Ernest Bloch, Salkind hired such talents as Andrew Imbrie, Ivan Tcherepnin and John Adams. Student and faculty new music ensembles were formed and premiered many new works by such composers as Pauline Oliveros, John Cage, Morton Feldman and Gyorgy Ligeti.

The facilities also were expanded during this time. In December 1975, a new wing was completed which included Hellman Hall, considered to be one of the finest chamber music halls in the country. Bothin Library was inaugurated in 1980; today it houses more than 30,000 volumes and offers more than 7,000 recordings in its Daniel E. Koshland Listening Room.

Salkind retired in June 1990, but again returned as Acting President following the departure of President Stephen Brown. Colin Murdoch, Dean of the Conservatory since 1988, was appointed to the position of President in January 1992.

Murdoch is an accomplished musician, scholar and administrator. Before coming to San Francisco, he held the position of Dean at the Lawrence University Conservatory for ten years (from 1978 to 1988), having been a member of the faculty from 1974 to 1978. He has been very active in the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). Former member of the New Orleans Symphony, he earned his B.A. in music *summa cum laude* at Case Western Reserve University and his M.M. in violin performance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

San Francisco Conservatory of Music
75th Anniversary Celebration

[4/92]

TIME LINE

- 1992 - SFCM Dean Colin Murdoch appointed President.
- Enrollment: 270 collegiate, 450 preparatory (plus 100 in Summer Music West), 700 Extension.
- 1991 - Chamber Music West participates in the citywide "Mozart & His Time" festival celebrating the 200th anniversary of Mozart's death.
- Violinist Robert Mann and cellist Joel Krosnick, both of the Juilliard String Quartet, give master classes.
- Stephen Brown resigns; Milton Salkind resumes position as Acting President.
- 1990 - Milton Salkind retires; Stephen Brown appointed President.
- Student cellist Hai-Ye Ni wins prestigious Naumburg Award; at 18, she is the youngest recipient.
- SFCM celebrates the 90th birthday of noted cello teacher Margaret Rowell with a performance in Hellman Hall that includes a musical tribute by an orchestra of over 100 cellos.
- SFCM student Robin Sharp performs on the renowned Jascha Heifetz Guarnerius violin in a special recital series; the series marks the first time the violin is heard since Heifetz's death.
- 1989 - Master class led by cellist Yo-Yo Ma.
- Bobby McFerrin appointed to faculty; teaches collegiate course in creativity.
- Preparatory Division graduate Annie Chang makes her piano solo debut with the S.F. Symphony.
- Completion of the E. L. Wiegand Electronic Composition Studio.
- 1988 - SFCM appointments: Colin Murdoch as Dean, Denis de Coteau as Music Director of Orchestra.
- Judy Collins and Bobby McFerrin host two performances of "Sing Out, San Francisco!" presented by SFCM in Davies Symphony Hall. Performance broadcast locally (KQED) and nationally on PBS.
- Seismic renovations on SFCM buildings completed (campus sustained no damage during 1989 earthquake).
- 1987 - SFCM presents very first staged production of *The Trial of Mary Lincoln* by Thomas Pasatieri.
- Master class by violinist Pinchas Zukerman; lecture by Pulitzer prize-winning composer Ned Rorem.
- 1986 - Chamber Music West festival celebrates 10th anniversary with ten concerts around the Bay Area.
- Master classes given by pianist Garrick Ohlsson, conductor Nicholas McGegan.
- San Francisco Symphony Music Director Herbert Blomstedt gives commencement address.
- Franciscan String Quartet, comprised of SFCM alumni, wins Banff International String Quartet Competition.
- 1985 - SFCM becomes first conservatory in U.S. to offer Master's Degree in Chamber Music.
- Master classes by cellist Yo-Yo Ma, opera stars Alfredo Kraus and Renata Scotto.
- The opera *Tom Jones* by François-André Philidor receives its Bay Area premiere in Hellman Hall.
- 1984 - Summer Music West, an intensive summer music program for ages 4-18, is established.
- Mayor Dianne Feinstein proclaims October 7-13 "SFCM Week" in honor of the Conservatory's 67 years of community contributions.
- SFCM alumnus Jeffrey Kahane performs as piano soloist with the Conservatory Orchestra in downtown concert at Davies Symphony Hall.
- 1983 - San Francisco Symphony Music Director Edo de Waart leads Conservatory Orchestra in a concert in Davies Symphony Hall.
- 1982 - Spring concert by the Conservatory Orchestra, conducted by Jahja Ling, is presented in Herbst Theatre, establishing tradition of annual downtown concerts.
- "Sing-It-Yourself Messiah" expands to two nights.
- 1980 - Bothin Library inaugurated in February.
- Master class given by world-renowned violinist and former SFCM student Yehudi Menuhin.

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- 1979 - SFCM presents first "Sing-it-Yourself Messiah" in Davies Symphony Hall.
- First Music Marathon, "Quartetathon," presented in 1979. The event features 10 hours of continuous performances of Beethoven's 16 quartets.
- 1977 - Chamber Music West summer festival established.
- 1976 - Dedication of Hellman Hall on January 21. Honorary degrees given to composer Aaron Copland and arts patron Daniel E. Koshland. The Francesco Trio performs Copland's *Vitebsk*.
- Composer Andrew Imbrie appointed to faculty.
- 1975 - New wing completed for 333-seat Hellman Hall on December 2; first program presented in new hall on December 14. New section includes classrooms, practice rooms and an electronic studio.
- Post-1950 composition performance requirement added to undergraduate curriculum.
- Francesco Trio joins SFCM as Artist Faculty; leads summer workshop.
- May Kurka appointed Director of Preparatory Division.
- Enrollment: 160 collegiate, 300 preparatory, 100 extension.
- 1974 - Former SFCM student Isaac Stern attends Hellman Hall ground-breaking ceremony (May) and is awarded honorary degree.
- Richard Howe appointed Dean.
- 1972 - Composer John Adams appointed to faculty.
- 1971 - SFCM becomes first conservatory to add Ethnomusicology and Asian music to curriculum.
- Pianist Leon Fleisher gives master class.
- 1970 - Pianist Alfred Brendel and singers Beverly Sills and Placido Domingo lead master classes.
- 1969 - New Music Ensemble, directed by Howard Hersh, founded with Ford Foundation grant. Ensemble gives 14 concerts during the 1969/70 season.
- Community Service Program established. SFCM is the first U.S. conservatory to offer a comprehensive community outreach program.
- SFCM Composer's Forum established; Andrew Imbrie, Aaron Copland participate.
- Job placement service for students established.
- Lenox Quartet leads four-week summer workshop; 20 scholarship students participate.
- 1968 - Cellist Margaret Rowell appointed to faculty.
- 1967 - Appointment of Milton Salkind as President.
- SFCM announces record enrollment figures: 100 collegiate and 500 preparatory and adult students.
- SFCM celebrates 50th anniversary with a series of chamber music concerts in May. The Philadelphia Orchestra led by conductor Eugene Ormandy gives a benefit concert for SFCM (May 27).
- 1966 - Robin Laufer dies on May 31; Milton Salkind appointed Acting President.
- Lectures given by composer Aaron Copland and violinist and former student Yehudi Menuhin.
- 1963 - Two-year graduate program leading to a Master's in Music instituted.
- Guitar program added to undergraduate curriculum. SFCM is the first U.S. conservatory to offer a degree in classical guitar.
- 1962 - SFCM presents concert celebrating Stravinsky's 80th birthday at California Palace of Legion of Honor.
- 1961 - Electronic tape music studio set up in attic of SFCM.
- Degrees awarded to first graduating class of accredited college program.
- 1960 - SFCM accredited by Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the National Association of Schools of Music—first music school in western U.S. to receive both accreditations. Exchange program set up with USF the same year.
- The first American Composer's Workshop (5-day festival) features first performances of works by 30 composers, including Elliott Carter, David del Tredici, Charles Ives and others.

- 1958 - Noted piano teacher Egon Petri appointed to faculty.
- 1957 - Inaugural concert held January 25, 1957 in new building. Concert features performance by cellist Gabor Rejto and pianist Adolph Baller of works by Bach, Hindemith and Brahms.
- Appointment of Robin Laufer as President; Sydney Griller appointed Dean.
- 1956 - Move to permanent home on Ortega Street, site of a former infant shelter (November).
- 1952 - Griller Quartet appointed to faculty.
- Alma Trio in residence for summer workshop program.
- 1951 - Appointment of Albert I. Elkus as Director.
- 1950 - Authorization from State of California to confer Bachelor of Music degree.
- SFCM throws 70th birthday party for Ernest Bloch. Festivities include performances of Bloch's chamber music by students of the Griller Quartet.
- 1948 - Establishment of Griller Quartet summer school of chamber music.
- 1947 - SFCM receives \$250,000 bequest from former student Dorothy Lucy to establish new home.
- 1946 - Affiliation with University of California Extension, establishing college credit for theory courses.
- 1940 - Flute, clarinet and brass departments added; instructors all from San Francisco Symphony.
- 1939 - Day at the Fair on May 13. Students at all levels perform in free concerts on Treasure Island.
- 1930 - Clement and Hodghead resume directorship following departure of Bloch.
- Violinist Isaac Stern begins his studies at SFCM at the age of 10.
- 1928 - Violinist Yehudi Menuhin begins his studies at SFCM.
- 1926 - First faculty chamber group formed: the California String Quartet.
- Singing teacher Giulio Silva appointed to faculty (Silva served on faculty for over 35 years).
- 1925 - Composer Ernest Bloch appointed Director.
- Faculty numbers 34, including instructors teaching theory, composition and opera.
- Organ studio built in former garage.
- 1924 - Composer Ernest Bloch teaches a 5-week summer course.
- SFCM publishes its first student newspaper, "The Lyre" (May 30).
- 1923 - Incorporation as non-profit educational institution under name San Francisco Conservatory of Music (Jan. 1).
- 1922 - Addition of vocal (led by soprano Rena Lazelle and Gaetano Merola), instrumental and theory departments.
- 1921 - First SFCM scholarship program started.
- 1920 - Cellist Stanislaus Bem joins faculty.
- 1917 - Foundation of the Ada Clement Piano School on Sacramento Street in San Francisco by Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead. School begins with faculty of 3, 4 studios, 3 pianos and 40 students.

INTRODUCING CHILDREN TO THE JOY OF MUSIC IS A PRIMARY GOAL OF THE PREPARATORY DIVISION. WE DEVELOP INTELLIGENT LOVERS OF MUSIC. AT THE SAME TIME, WE PROVIDE THE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT NECESSARY FOR THE TALENTED STUDENTS WHO NEED TO KNOW THAT THEIR SKILLS ARE APPRECIATED AND ENCOURAGED. STUDENTS ARE CHALLENGED AND STIMULATED, WITHOUT THE DAMAGING EFFECTS OF COMPETITION. NOW THAT THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAVE CUT BACK THEIR MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS SEVERELY, THE PREPARATORY DIVISION IS ESPECIALLY INVALUABLE. WE OFFER CHILDREN AN INTENSIVE AND WELL-ROUNDED PROGRAM OF INDIVIDUAL AND CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES NOT AVAILABLE ANYWHERE ELSE IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. THE PREPARATORY DIVISION MUST BE EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO THE HIGH POTENTIAL OF STUDENTS. CHILDREN ARE OUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE, AFTER ALL, AND DISCOVERING AND DEVELOPING THAT MUSICAL POTENTIAL GIVES US GREAT JOY AND A CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG.



*Colin Murdoch
President*

*May S. Kurka
Director,
Preparatory Division*

*San Francisco Conservatory of Music
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Photos by Stuart Brinin, Allen Nomura, Katy Raddatz, Oliver Rosberg, Juli Weiss and Kingmond Young

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San Francisco Conservatory of Music

For more than seven decades, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music has assumed an increasingly important role in music education, not only in the West, but also in the nation and throughout the world.

The school was founded in 1917 by Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead as the Ada Clement Piano School; by 1924, it had become the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. The eminent composer Ernest Bloch became the Conservatory's director in 1925. Among the early students nurtured by the Conservatory were two of our era's greatest violin virtuosos—Isaac Stern and Yehudi Menuhin.

The Conservatory's Collegiate Division enrolls over 250 students each year to study for graduate and undergraduate degrees with a faculty that includes close to three dozen members of the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet orchestras.

The Conservatory's Preparatory Division now accommodates 400 children after school and on weekends. Another 90 young musicians participate in Summer Music West, a comprehensive music program instituted in 1984.

The Conservatory is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and by the National Association of Schools of Music.

Preparatory Division

The environment of a conservatory, with its commitment to excellence in musical training, is the ideal setting for a preparatory program. Students find a serious and exhilarating atmosphere for all aspects of music-making. The Preparatory Division was created to give the best musical training possible to young people aged 4-18 with pronounced talent and potential.



CONSERVATORY CELLO INSTRUCTOR IRENE SHARP COACHES A YOUNG STUDENT. PREPARATORY DIVISION INSTRUCTORS ARE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE TRAINING OF YOUNG MUSICIANS AS WELL FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS MUSICIANS AND TEACHERS. PHOTO COURTESY OF SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER/KATY RADDATZ

The success of our programs can be seen through the numerous local, state and national awards received by Preparatory Division students. Our highly trained faculty are chosen for both their ability as musicians and teachers and for their commitment to the training of young musicians.

While discipline and structure are important to serious musical education, the Preparatory Division remains sensitive to the needs of individual students. Great care is taken to evaluate students' progress in relation to their peers as well as to their own capabilities. The Preparatory Division's method of teaching emphasizes the evolution of the student both as a person and as a musician.

Curriculum

For the most thorough training of our young students we offer the following course of study:

- A private lesson;
- A musicianship-solfege class;
- A performing group (chorus or chamber music);
- Other elective courses.

Because it is critical to the success of the program for a student to progress at an orderly and consistent

pace, the Preparatory program follows a semester system. The academic year is divided into two 16-week semesters that coincide with 32 weeks of solfege classes.

At midyear, during the week before the spring recess, the student's continuing improvement and growth is evaluated through jury examinations, in which each student has the opportunity to exhibit his or her

skills on an instrument before several members of the faculty. Jury examinations are an important tool for assisting students, faculty and parents in identifying musical strengths and direction for future study.

Programs of Study

The goal of the Preparatory program, beginning with the child's earliest experience in Furhythmics classes, is to provide the foundation for future musical training and to identify those children with the motivation and potential to continue their studies.

EURHYTHMICS

Dalcroze Eurhythmics, named for Swiss musician and educator Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950), is a musical education method based on the relationship between music and movement. Approached through active participation and discovery, eurhythmics offers students a tangible movement experience and thus a deeper physical understanding of music.

Exercises in listening, which require a variety of physical responses, combine with activities that explore creative musical expression to strengthen the bond between ear, mind and body. The result is a deepened musical awareness and appreciation accompanied by a greater capacity for musical interpretation at an instrument.

**EURHYTHMICS I
(AGES 4-5)**

The environment created in Eurhythmics I encourages the young child's active participation in music and capitalizes on that particularly sensitive period of growth. At no other time in a child's life can music be so effortlessly and joyfully learned.

The basic musical elements of pitch, melody, rhythm and meter are presented through games, stories and songs. Children participate in musical ensembles with their bodies as their instruments. Eventually, they learn to read and write elementary music symbols. Eurhythmics I meets for 45 minutes once a week for 16 weeks. A minimum of seven children are needed to hold the class. The Conservatory reserves the right to cancel classes due to lack of enrollment.

**EURHYTHMICS II
(AGES 6-8)**

Eurhythmics II offers students exposure to music fundamentals in continued sequence from Eurhythmics I and prepares them for instrumental study. The primary focus of this class is on ear-training (solfege) and the rudiments of music (theory) with continued



EURHYTHMICS STUDENTS ACQUIRE A DEEPER PHYSICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MUSIC THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND DISCOVERY. EXERCISES IN LISTENING AND CREATIVE MUSICAL EXPRESSION STRENGTHEN THE BOND BETWEEN EAR, MIND AND BODY.

emphasis on eurhythmics. The aim is to train the ear to hear and the mind to think in terms of the order, sounds and rhythm of music — fundamentals that must underlie sound musical training.

Classes meet for one hour once a week for two 16-week sessions in sections of seven to ten students. Applicants must be in first or second grade. Admission is based on an interview.

At the end of one year of Eurhythmics II the parent and child are advised on the choice of an instrument and are placed with a Preparatory teacher either through the Division or in private studies.

**SOLFÈGE-EURHYTHMICS
(AGES 7-9)**

When the student begins instrumental studies at ages 7 through 9, solfege-eurhythmics becomes an important adjunct to their musical education. The Preparatory Division offers continuing ear-training and theoretical studies called Musicianship-Solfege in combination with movement, deep rhythmic concepts, and memory training through Eurhythmics.

This course is open to those currently studying an instrument or to those newly accepted in the Preparatory Division as instrumental students. This core combination will be offered Saturday afternoons.

Please note: Solfege (45 minutes) and Eurhythmics (45 minutes) must be taken together; the subjects are not offered as separate courses.

**INSTRUMENTAL
LESSONS**

Lessons are offered in piano, voice and all orchestral instruments.

Students who have completed Eurhythmics II class will be considered for instrumental lessons as beginners with a final interview with the director. Students who have not had Eurhythmics but have had some previous training demonstrate their musicality and level of skill through an audition with the director of the Preparatory Division and, when appropriate, with an instrumental faculty member.

The Preparatory Division accepts applicants who show musicality, energy and the will to learn. Those who exhibit very little aptitude are given advice as to the choice of instrument and the need for the desire to learn; they also receive

guidance on the appropriate kind of musical study to pursue. Private studies outside the Conservatory with a Conservatory faculty member are frequently advised in these cases, with re-auditioning for acceptance into the Preparatory Division a possibility.

The demands of the musical repertoire require 45-minute or 60-minute lessons each week. The primary importance of scheduled lessons is the regularity so necessary for a student to progress and thrive in musical instruction.

The Preparatory Division welcomes all requests for auditions. Some are advisory while others are for entrance into the program of studies. Advice can be given intelligently only when there is a performance audition. Upon receipt of the completed application form (with \$15 fee), an appointment will be made.

SOLFÈGE (AGES 9-18)

The necessary foundation for the artistic playing of any instrument is a musical ear. Instrumental work alone cannot supply this, as the attention of the student must to a large degree focus on technical development and proficiency. Solfège, an integral part of music education, is offered in conjunction with instrumental study.

The solfège curriculum emphasizes all aspects of musicianship: ear-training, theory and analysis. Solfège teaches the student to be musically literate through the development of memory, sensitive rhythmic and pitch sense, the study of general principles, and interpretation, reading and notation.

Individual instrumental instruction combined with solfège broadens the student's musical responsiveness. There is a solid relationship between what is taught in the private lesson and what is taught in the classroom.

Solfège classes are 90 minutes in length.



THE PREPARATORY DIVISION DEVELOPS INTELLIGENT LOVERS OF MUSIC IN THE SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT NECESSARY FOR TALENTED STUDENTS. WE TRAIN THE EAR TO HEAR AND THE MIND TO THINK IN TERMS OF THE ORDER, SOUNDS AND RHYTHM OF MUSIC.

CHORUS

Preparatory Choruses — Young Choristers for students aged 7 through 11 years and Chamber Singers for students 11 through 18 — are geared toward the learning and performing of choral literature particularly suited to young voices. The repertoire chosen develops the pupil's understanding of stylistic and interpretive distinctions in vocal ensemble literature.

CHAMBER MUSIC (AGES 9-18)

String players, pianists and wind instrumentalists participate in this comprehensive program designed to introduce students to a wide variety of chamber music literature through sessions coached on a weekly basis. Additionally, students perform in student recitals, in master classes

given by collegiate faculty and outside the school. As part of the curriculum, students participate in numerous master classes given by collegiate faculty and invited guest artists.

In January of each year, chamber music evaluations for the two most advanced levels will be completed by the chamber music faculty. These reports will document and evaluate the musical accomplishments of each ensemble.

The designated age limits are meant as guidelines. Exceptions may be made based on ability at the discretion of the Chamber Music Coordinator. Please note that piano and wind instrument enrollment will be limited according to the instrumentation necessary to the creation of balanced ensembles.

The study of chamber music is offered in the following levels of advancement:

STRING ENSEMBLE is a child's first ensemble experience. Students aged 9-12 years meet for 90 minutes to rehearse and perform string orchestra and chamber music with a conductor/coach. Twelve to twenty students will be accepted into the program by teacher recommendation or audition.

PRE-ADVANCED CHAMBER MUSIC is offered for string and piano students who have learned basic ensemble technique and show the necessary level of rhythmic and musical independence. Pre-Advanced students aged 11-14 years meet with a coach for 90 minutes in groups of three or four players to study and perform works from the standard literature. Acceptance into this level is on recommendation of the String Ensemble coach or by audition. Preparation of music outside the rehearsal is expected.

ADVANCED CHAMBER MUSIC is offered for students aged 14-18 years who have attained a level of ability and maturity on their instrument that affords them competent rhythmic, melodic and technical independence. In addition, students must have a serious desire and commitment to an in-depth study of the literature. Acceptance into this level is on recommendation of the Chamber Music Coordinator or by audition. Students meet for two hours weekly. Preparation of the music outside the rehearsal is expected, and previous chamber music experience is preferred but not mandatory.

A commitment to Pre-Advanced and Advanced Chamber Music is made for the entire year and absence is accepted for illness and academic testing only.

ELECTIVES

Elective classes are offered to advanced solfège and musicianship students.

Recitals

The essence of instrumental instruction is performance. An interest in performing music is very quickly awakened in students. Performances are important not only to the performer but also to the listener. Discussions of the performed works by faculty and students are invaluable.



THE NECESSARY FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTISTIC PLAYING OF ANY INSTRUMENT IS A MUSICAL EAR. SOLFÈGE TEACHES MUSICAL LITERACY THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEMORY AND THROUGH INTERPRETATION, READING AND NOTATION.

Informal recitals are offered once a week providing an inexperienced performer a relaxed setting in which they can try out performance techniques and learn from the setbacks as well as the triumphs. Formal recitals are held in the Conservatory's Hellman Hall by students who qualify by audition. Recitals are announced to the public in the Conservatory's monthly calendar.

Exceptional students may be engaged to perform outside the Conservatory for special events.

Competitions and Awards

Preparatory students are advised of musical competitions and auditions. Our students have been singled out as winners by Bay Area youth orchestras and have placed well in local and national competitions and festivals.

A number of Preparatory students have been chosen to participate in the annual week-long Berkeley Junior Bach Festival. Others have received national recognition as winners through the Arts Recognition and Talent Search Program sponsored by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and Southern California's Young Musicians Foundation National Debut Competition. Conservatory Preparatory students have also won top awards in General Motors/Seventeen Magazine's national competition.

The Preparatory Division continues to be vigilant about competitions. Utmost concern and care is taken in approving a student's participation. Our students consistently fulfill our expectations.

Parent Participation and Events

The involvement of parents in their children's musical education is a primary concern of the Preparatory Division. In order to encourage an active relationship between the Conservatory and parents, a series of parents' forums is offered throughout the year. Parents' forums include discussion and support groups about the special needs of the gifted child.

Throughout the year conferences can be arranged by the director, teachers or parents whenever necessary. Inquiries, suggestions, volunteers and support are always welcome.

FAMILY DAY

Family Day, the biggest Preparatory and parent event of the year, has been a San Francisco Conservatory of Music tradition since 1975. Family Day is held on the first Saturday of March and has been described as "the one day out of the year when parents can relax and make music with us." What began as an informal jam session with parents, children and teachers evolved into a full day of teaching demonstrations, an open house, a gourmet lunch and sale organized by parents, and, of course, music-making.

General Information

FEES

The Conservatory tries to maintain reasonable tuition fees. A generous scholarship fund exists for eligible students based on talent and financial need. For a complete list of registration, tuition and special fees, as well as an application form and the Preparatory Division calendar, please see the supplementary insert sheet.

MAKEUP POLICY

Private lessons are not made up except in cases of illness or exceptional circumstance, and then only when 24-hour notice has been received by the instructor. In the case of an instructor's absence, makeup lessons will be offered.



ADVANCED CHAMBER MUSIC STUDENTS ARE COACHED BY VIOLIST AND CHAMBER MUSIC PROGRAM COORDINATOR SUSAN BATES, WHO RECEIVED THE GRUBER AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN CHAMBER MUSIC TEACHING FROM CHAMBER MUSIC AMERICA IN 1992.

WITHDRAWAL

Intention to withdraw must be discussed with the Preparatory Division director, then submitted in writing to the Business Office. The date on which the notice is received will be considered the date of withdrawal.

REFUND POLICY

All fees are non-refundable. No refunds of class tuition will be made after the second class meeting.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Some students come to us at a very young age with unusual and pronounced talent; others come with high potential that needs to be nurtured carefully. Those who prove to be realizing their talents, as shown through jury examinations, are considered for scholarship.

The scholarship committee meets

once a year in the director's office to determine qualifications: family financial need and the student's intelligent use of this opportunity. It is important to have the approval of the instructor before applying for a scholarship. Forms are available on request at the Preparatory Division Office.

Summer Music West

Since 1984 the Conservatory has offered an exceptional summer music program of daily classes for young people aged 9-18. Each year Summer Music West draws more than 90 young musicians to these unique daytime courses specifically tailored to their various

ages, interests and musical abilities. This concentrated program of studies has achieved outstanding results.

The three comprehensive programs include intensives for chamber music instrumentalists, singers and composers. Students receive a fine musical education while they make new friends and have fun in a supportive, non-competitive environment.

In addition to the Summer Music West curriculum, private lessons are available through the summer. A more detailed Summer Music West brochure is available on request.

Faculty

MAY S. KURAN, DIRECTOR

B.S., piano, the Juilliard School; B.A., UC Berkeley; faculty member, the Juilliard School of Music Preparatory Division for 20 years; faculty, Bronx Settlement House Music School for five years; faculty, San Francisco Conservatory since 1968, and director of the Preparatory Division since 1975; honored by Equal Rights Advocates, one of the country's oldest women's law centers, as one of three outstanding Bay Area women in 1991; recipient, 1993 Agnes Albert Award from the San Francisco Foundation and 1993 Bernard Osher Cultural Award in recognition of her efforts as an "unsung hero" in the field of culture and the arts.

ALEXIS ALRICH, SOLFEGE

M.A., Mills College; B.A., California Institute of the Arts; attended New England Conservatory of Music for three years; studied composition with Mel Powell and Lou Harrison; received Paul Merritt Henry Award and Festival of Mandolins Award for composition; has composed chamber and orchestral works; has written music for independent films and San Francisco performing groups including the Oberlin Dance Collective; recordings on Opus One label.

ANNA SOSNOWSKA BAKER,
EURHYTHMICS

M.A. with honors in Music Theory, Warsaw (Poland) Academy of Music; Dalcroze Teachers Certificate; numerous teaching awards including the award as the best teacher in Poland; author of book on eurhythmics, soon to be published in English; former faculty, Marin Music Conservatory, Crowden School of Music; teaches at Suzuki Regional Workshop; performs as an accompanist; has lectured on Polish music and taught Polish Language at Stanford University; dancing member, Vistula Dancers.

SUSAN BATES, VIOLA,
CHAMBER MUSIC

B.A. and M.A., California State University; student of Albert Gills, Paganini String Quartet and Rafael Durian; member, New Age Quartet; former member, San Jose String Quartet; winner, Carmel Chamber Music Competition; honorable mention, Coleman Chamber Music Competition; faculty, San Jose State University and San Diego Chamber Music Workshop; member, San Francisco Ballet Orchestra; recordings on CRJ label; recipient, 1992 Gruber Award from Chamber Music America for excellence in chamber music teaching; coordinator, Preparatory Chamber Music Program, and artistic director, Summer Music West.

LORRA BAYLIS, VIOLIN

M.M., San Francisco Conservatory of Music; studied with Zaven Melikian; has performed with San Francisco Opera orchestra, San Francisco Chamber Symphony and Houston Symphony; former faculty, Houston Conservatory

PAT BURNHAM, VIOLIN

B.M., violin pedagogy, San Francisco Conservatory; studied with Isadore Finkleman and Jenny Rudin; former faculty member, Menuhin-Dowling Scholarship program at Nueva Learning Center; former department head, Sequoia Chamber Music Workshop at Humboldt State University; former faculty member, Community Music Center.

KATHERINE BUSS, PIANO

M.M., New England Conservatory of Music; B.A., UC Berkeley; studied with Mortimer Markoff, Alexander Liberman, Irwin Freundlich, Russell Sherman and Nathan Schwartz; semifinalist, 1975 Clara Haskil International Piano Competition, Switzerland; former faculty member, New England Conservatory Extension Division and University of the Pacific.

JACQUELINE CHEW, PIANO

M.M., SUNY at Binghamton; B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; studied with Leonard Shure and Paul Hersh; coached with Yvonne Loriod and Roger Muraro in Paris; former faculty member, Lesley College (Cambridge) and Boston Community Music Center; currently teaches at UC Berkeley, and at the San Francisco Community Music Center.

SCOTT CHIEL, GUITAR,
MUSICIANSHIP, SOLFEGE

B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; B.A., Northwestern University; studied guitar with Michael Lorimer and Aaron Shearer; studied solfège with James Wimer; faculty, UC Berkeley; former music staff, San Francisco Opera; former faculty member, Chicago Conservatory of Music.

TRUDI DENNEY, PIANO

B.A., Florida State University; graduate studies with R. Pace, Teachers College, Columbia University; studied Orff Schulwerk approach, San Francisco State University.

JACQUELINE DIVENYI, PIANO

Diploma, Geneva Conservatory of Music; Concert Diploma, Vienna Academy of Music; studied with Bruno Seidlhofer and Stefan Askenase; former faculty member, Geneva Conservatory and St. Louis Webster College.

JAMES FREEMAN, CLARINET

M.M., San Francisco Conservatory; B.A., philosophy, UC Santa Cruz; principal teacher, Rosario Mazzeo; has also studied with Larry Combs, David Breeden and Lester Weil; member of City Winds Quintet, quintet in residence with the San Francisco Symphony's Adventures in Music series; has performed with the Quintessence Chamber Ensemble, the Fidelio String Quartet, members of the Francesco Trio, the Sacramento Symphony, Bay View Festival Orchestra, Aspen Festival Orchestra, the Monterey County Symphony, the West Bay Opera Orchestra and the Oakland/East Bay Symphony.

DORIS FUKAWA, VIOLIN,
CHAMBER MUSIC

M.Ed., Columbia University Teachers College; B.M., Manhattan School of Music; studied with Raphael Bronstein, Ariana Bronne and Anne Crowden; former faculty, Riverdale School of Music and Schumiatcher School of Music; former artistic assistant, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival; assistant director, Meadowood Music Camp; faculty, Crowden School; associate director, Summer Music West.

ADAM GOROON, TRUMPET

M.M., San Francisco Conservatory; B.Mus., University of Southern California; principal trumpet, Monterey County Symphony and Cabrillo Festival Orchestra; member, San Francisco Brass Quintet; performs with the San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet orchestras, San Jose Symphony and other Bay Area orchestras and chamber ensembles; principal teachers have been Glenn Fischthal, Vincent Cichowicz, Roger Voisin and Thomas Stevens.

ERNA GULABYAN, PIANO

Attended Moscow Conservatory and Central Musical High School for Specially Gifted Children in Erevan, Armenia; former faculty, Erevan Conservatory and Central Musical High School.

TOMOKO HAGIWARA, PIANO

B.A. and graduate studies, University of Tokyo; B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; studied with Adolph Baller, Max Egger, Lilli Kraus; first prize, San Francisco Symphony Competition; appeared as soloist under Josef Krips; semifinalist, Long-Thibaud International Competition and Queen Elisabeth International Competition; first prize, Fresno Philharmonic Competition; numerous past and present solo performances and concerts with orchestras and chamber groups; SFCM faculty since 1965.

BONNIE HAMPTON, VIOLONCELLO

Began cello studies with Margaret Rowell, then continued with Zara Nelsova, the Griller String Quartet and Pablo Casals; has participated in numerous chamber music festivals nationwide; cellist of the Naumburg Award-winning Francisco Trio and the Hampton Schwartz Duo, with her husband Nathan Schwartz; many guest artist collaborations with the Juilliard, Guarneri, Cleveland, Mendelssohn, Budapest, Griller and Lenoa string quartets; former faculty, Mills College, Grinnell College, Stanford University and UC Berkeley.

DORIAN HO, PIANO

Ph.D., New York University; M.M., the Juilliard School; diploma, Vienna Academy of Music; studied with Beatrice Beaugard, Eugene List, Martin Canin; winner, Young Artist International Audition; New York debut at Carnegie Recital Hall, 1986.

**MACHIKO KOBIALKA, PIANO,
CHAMBER MUSIC**

M.M., Catholic University; B.M., Hartt College of Music; graduate, Toho-Gakuen School of Music; studied with Akiko Iguchi, Raymond Hanson, William Masselos and Grant Johanneson; former faculty member, California State University at Hayward; member, Kobialka Duo; recipient, California Touring Grant; recordings on Sonic Arts label.

SINA KOUYOUNOJIAN, PIANO

M.M. and B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; began studies in the Soviet Union; studied with Mack McCray and Paul Hersh; solo recitals and performances throughout California; faculty, Community Music Center since 1985.

DAVIS LAW, VIOLIN

B.M., New England Conservatory; studied with Zaven Melikian and Dorothy DeLay.

HERMANN LEROUX, VOICE

M.M., San Francisco Conservatory; graduate, University of Cape Town; participant, major new music festivals throughout the world; studied with Xander Haagen, Desiree Talbot, Robert Bernard, Marjial Singher and Leopold Simoneau; chair, San Francisco Conservatory Voice Department.

ANDREW LEWIN, PERCUSSION

M.M. and B.M., the Juilliard School; B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; substitute principal timpani, percussion, San Francisco Symphony; timpani/percussion with National Orchestra of Colombia; solo marimba tour, South America; drumset and percussion for Broadway musicals; recipient, the Juilliard School's Saul Goodman Award; studied with Saul Goodman, Buster Bailey and Barry Jekowsky.

MEIKUI MATSUSHIMA, PIANO

Diploma, Toho Music College, Tokyo; studied with Eiko Tanaka; further studies at San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Beatrice Beaugard.

**ANNAMARIE MCCARTHY, PIANO,
CHAMBER MUSIC**

B.A., Lone Mountain College; studied with Bernhard Abramowitsch and Peggy Salkind; former faculty, Lone Mountain College; performances at CAMI Hall in New York, Yosemite Bracebridge Concerts, Stanford University and UC campuses; recording for Composer Recording Society label; member, Annamarie and John McCarthy Piano Duo.

**JOHN MCCARTHY, PIANO,
SOLFÈGE**

B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; attended Mannes College of Music and Hofstra University; studied piano with Bernhard Abramowitsch, Katja Andy, Martin Canin, Robert Helps, Milton Salkind and Peggy Salkind; studied solfège with James Wimer and conducting with David Ramadanoff; former faculty member, Lone Mountain College; recording for Composer Recording Society label; performances with San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Ojai Festival, Music in the Vineyards festival; editor, California Music Teacher magazine; co-chair, San Francisco Conservatory Preparatory Division solfège department; member, Annamarie and John McCarthy Piano Duo.

**SUSAN MCCARTHY,
MUSICIANSHIP, EURHYTHMICS**

B.M.E., University of Denver; M.M. and Dalcroze Certificate, Ithaca College; Dalcroze Teachers' License, Longy School of Music; Montessori Diploma; former chair, San Francisco Conservatory Preparatory Division solfège department; studied solfège with James Wimer; theory instructor, San Francisco Symphony Chorus and Church Divinity School of the Pacific.

MACK MCCRAY, PIANO

M.S. and B.M., the Juilliard School; studied with Irwin Freundlich; winner of many awards during 1969-70 season including a silver medal in the International Georges Enesco Competition in Bucharest, first prize in the Charleston Symphony and San Francisco Symphony Auditions for Young Instrumentalists competitions and Juilliard's Edward Steuermann Memorial Prize; invited guest at Festival d'Automne in Paris, Seville's Great Interpreters Cycle, the UNESCO Festival of International Artists at Monte Carlo, the Bucharest Philharmonic's Bach/Beethoven/Brahms Festival, and others; several performances as soloist with San Francisco Symphony; recently performed the U.S. premiere of John Adams' *Eros Piano*.

ZAVEN MELIKIAN, VIOLIN

Attended Conservatory of Music in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and Ecole de Musique in Paris; studied with Yvonne Astruc; solo performances throughout Europe; concertmaster, San Francisco Opera Orchestra 1977-1994; chairman, San Francisco Conservatory String Department.

**STEVEN MILLER, VIOLIN,
CHAMBER MUSIC**

Studied at San Francisco Conservatory of Music with Isadore Tinkelman and at Indiana University with James Bissell; two-time winner of the Calgary Philharmonic/Banff Centre Concerto Competition; recipient, Frank Huntington Beebe Award; recipient, Henry Kohn and C.D. Jackson awards of the Tanglewood Center; violinist, Angeles String Quartet.

LOUISE MILOTA, PIANO

Licentiate Diploma, Royal Conservatory of Music and University of Toronto in Piano Performance and Pedagogy; Dalcroze Certificate and Postgraduate Diplôme, Institut Jaques-Dalcroze, Geneva; former faculty, Royal Conservatory; member, Board of Examiners, Royal Conservatory of Toronto.

GERARDO PAGANO, TROMBONE

M.M. and B.M., the Juilliard School; member, San Francisco Ballet Orchestra; performances with San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony and New York Metropolitan Opera Orchestra; faculty, UC Santa Cruz; studied with Charles Vernon, Steve Norrell, Per Brevig, Doug Yeo, Arnold Jacobs and Edward Kleinhammer.

JANET POPESCO, OBOE

M.M. and B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; studied oboe with Marc Lifschey; Adrian Gnam and William Banoverz; member, San Francisco Opera Orchestra; faculty, UC Santa Cruz; fellowship recipient, Tanglewood and Yale at Norfolk music festivals.

CURTIS RENSNAW, GUITAR

B.Mus., University of Redlands; graduate studies, San Francisco Conservatory; studied with George Sakellariou, Jose Rey De La Torre and Patrick Read; featured artist, Royal Viking Cruise Lines and World Explorer Cruise Lines; has performed throughout the Bay Area; former faculty member, University of Redlands and Loma Linda University.

CAROL REE, VIOLONCELLO

M.M., Yale School of Music; B.A., UC Santa Cruz; studied with Gabor Rejto, Robert Adcock, Irene Sharp and Aldo Parisot; former principal, Monterey Symphony and Santa Cruz Symphony; principal, Berkeley Symphony; member, San Jose Symphony.

RICHARD ROGERS, PIANO

M.A., San Francisco Conservatory; B.A., Oberlin Conservatory; studied with Seymour Bernstein, Marthe Morchang and Paul Hersh; performances at Chamber Music West and with the San Francisco Conservatory Orchestra; faculty, Summer Arts Festival in Fairbanks, Alaska.

REBECCA ROTHFUSZ, EURHYTHMICS

B.M., Dalcroze Eurhythmics, Cleveland Institute of Music; attended Case Western Reserve, modern dance program; has taught many beginning music classes in Bay Area schools.

MILTON SALKIND, PIANO.**PRESIDENT EMERITUS,****SAN FRANCISCO CONSERVATORY**

B.S., piano, the Juilliard School; B.A., George Washington University; studied with Irwin Freundlich and Edward Steuermann; University Medal from UC Berkeley in 1982; awarded City of San Francisco's Arts Commission Award of Honor for outstanding career achievement in music in 1985; recipient, in 1988, of the first Achievement Award given by the California Association of Professional Music Teachers; musical advisor, San Francisco Chamber Symphony; board member, San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Ballet; numerous performances as concert pianist.

LENA SCHUMAN, PIANO

M.M. and B.M., San Francisco Conservatory; studied with Maria Itzkovich, Haggai Niv, Milton Salkind and Herbert Stessin.

**LAURA SCHWENDINGER,
COMPOSITION, SOLFEGE,
COUNTERPOINT/HARMONY**

M.A., Ph.D., UC Berkeley; works performed in Boston, New York, San Francisco and at Harvard and Princeton Universities; recipient, Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters; Nicolas Di Lorenzo Prize and Hertz Memorial Fellowship at UC Berkeley; selected by Marin Symphony Composer's Forum; finalist, Women's Philharmonic commissioning project 1993; former faculty, UC Berkeley Young Musician's program; studied with Andrew Imbrie, John Adams, Larry Bell, John Thow, Ollie Wilson, Milton Babbitt, Chris Roze, Gunther Schuller and George Perle.

**IRENE SHARP, VIOLONCELLO,
CHAMBER MUSIC**

B.F.A., Carnegie-Mellon University; studied with Margaret Rowell, Eugene Eicher, Theo Salzman and Gabor Rejto; participant, Pablo Casals master class, 1960; presented master classes, lectures and recitals in Europe, Australia, Taiwan, Japan and U.S.; invited speaker at national meetings of the Music Teachers National Association and the Music Educators National Conference; taught at Meadowmount School of Strings, Bowdoin Summer Music Festival, Indiana University's String Academy; award for teaching from American String Teachers Association in 1992; founder, Margaret Rowell String Seminar.

KAY STERN, VIOLIN

Concertmaster, San Francisco Opera Orchestra; former first violin, Lark Quartet; former concertmaster, Concordia, Orchestra of St. Lukes, Cabrillo Music Festival and Cleveland Chamber Symphony; former faculty, Cleveland Institute of Music; assistant to Juilliard Quartet at the Juilliard School and to Dorothy DeLay at the Aspen Music Festival; featured on television and radio on the PBS series "Live from Lincoln Center" and "A Prairie Home Companion" and on "St. Paul Sunday Mornings"; recordings on Nonesuch, Innova, MusicMasters, Gramma Vision and GM Records.

IAN SWENSEN, VIOLIN

Studied at the Juilliard School with Dorothy DeLay and at the Eastman School with Donald Weilerstein; awarded the top prize in both the International Violin Competition (1984) and the International Chamber Music Competition (in 1985, as part of the Meliora String Quartet) of the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation; has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in New York, Boston and Washington, D.C.; participant, Spoleto, Santa Fe, Aspen, Marlboro and Chamber Music West festivals; recordings on the Tel Arc, Mercury and Musical Heritage labels.

MARK WALKER, VIOLONCELLO

B.M., New England Conservatory of Music; member, San Jose Symphony, Western Opera Orchestra, Sacramento String Quartet and Sacramento Chamber Music Association; performer and teacher, Beethoven Festival, Bakersfield, 1987-89; attended Tanglewood Institute; awarded full scholarship to Colorado Philharmonic, AIMS Festival Orchestra in Austria and the Grand Teton Music Festival; former member, Sacramento Symphony; former principal cello, Santa Rosa Symphony; studied with Irene Sharp, Laurence Lesser, Harvey Shapiro, Timothy Eddy and Caroline McBimey.

**YAADA WEBER, FLUTE,
CHAMBER MUSIC**

B.A., Mills College; studied with Herbert Benkman, Donot Dwver, Ferenc Molnar and Darius Nilhaud; member, Duo Lioos; former member, Oakland Symphony Orchestra; additional studies with Amos Gunsberg in physiological aspects of performance.

WILLIAM WELLBORN, PIANO

D.M.A., University of Texas at Austin; M.M., New England Conservatory; B.M., University of Texas at Austin; studied with Gregory Allen, Patricia Zander, Nancy Burton Garrett and John Perry; soloist with Austin Symphony, Laredo Philharmonic and Suleten Philharmonie (Poland); recitals throughout the United States and Mexico; guest artist for American Liszt Society, New Orleans International Piano Festival and Competition, Chopin Festival de Piano (Le Chatre, France); compact disc recording of Castelnuovo-Tedesco songs for Naxos Records.

BARBARA WIRTH, VIOLONCELLO

M.M., Indiana University, where she is a doctoral candidate studying with Janos Starker; B.M., Northwestern University; studied with Dudley Powers, Janos Starker and Pierre Fournier; former member, Chicago Lyric Opera Orchestra, Grant Park Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony; performances with San Francisco Symphony, Opera and Ballet orchestras; former faculty member, Northwestern University Preparatory Department, Indiana University, Louisville Academy of Music, Eastern Kentucky University, Morehead State University and San Francisco State University.

JERRI WITT, PIANO

M.M. and B.M., Boston Conservatory of Music; attended Boston University and University of Denver; studied with Karja Andy, Maria Clodes, Bela Nagy and Bernhard Abramowitz.

Serious Fun

JEREMIE FIGMAN ENROLLED IN THE PREPARATORY DIVISION AT THE AGE OF 8 WHEN



AGO HE APPEARED ON NATIONAL TELEVISION PERFORMING CAMILLE SAINT-SAENS' "CARNIVAL OF THE

HIS FAMILY MOVED TO THE BAY AREA FROM KENTUCKY. JOHN MCCARTHY WAS HIS FIRST CONSERVATORY TEACHER. LAST SUMMER HE BEGAN STUDYING WITH MILTON SALKIND, CONSERVATORY PRESIDENT EMERITUS AND FACULTY MEMBER.

"WHEN I CAME TO THE CONSERVATORY I KNEW MOSTLY CHURCH MUSIC," REMEMBERS JEREMIE, NOW 14, "AND ONE MOZART CONCERTO. I ADVANCED FROM PLAYING FOR FUN TO BECOMING A SERIOUS PIANIST."

"JEREMIE IS A SPECTACULAR AND VERY SATISFYING STUDENT. HE WANTS TO LEARN EVERYTHING," SAYS SALKIND. "IT'S UP TO ME TO SELECT THOSE PIECES THAT WILL BEST DEVELOP HIS STYLE, HIS KNOWLEDGE AND HIS MUSICIANSHIP."

JEREMIE'S HARD WORK AND DEDICATION — HE WAKES UP AT 6 A.M. TO SQUEEZE SIX HOURS OF PRACTICE INTO HIS SCHOOL DAY — HAVE EARNED HIM A NUMBER OF AWARDS AND HONORS. TWO YEARS

ANIMALS" AS A MEMBER OF THE DISNEY CHANNEL'S YOUNG MUSICIANS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

THAT SAME YEAR JEREMIE WAS SELECTED AS A FINALIST IN THE UNICEF-SPONSORED DANNY KAYE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S AWARDS COMPETITION, THE ONLY AMERICAN AMONG 169 CONTESTANTS. AS A RESULT OF THAT SUCCESS, JEREMIE WAS INVITED TO MAKE HIS INTERNATIONAL DEBUT IN CONCERT IN THE NETHERLANDS LAST FALL.

JEREMIE FOLLOWS THE MAJOR MUSIC COMPETITIONS THE WAY OTHER TEENS FOLLOW THEIR FAVORITE SPORTS. "THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE CONSERVATORY IS GREAT FOR ME," HE SAYS. "I HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REHEARSE AND PERFORM WITH A PREPARATORY TRIO AND I CAN DISCUSS MUSIC WITH STUDENTS MY OWN AGE. WE TALK ABOUT DIFFERENT ARTISTS AND DIFFERENT MUSICAL INTERPRETATIONS. SUBJECTS WE ALL FIND INTERESTING."

By Richard Pontziou
EXAMINER MUSIC CRITIC

"Reaching for the High Notes," San Francisco Chronicle, June 1, 1986



THE JULLIARD SCHOOL, the Oberlin Conservatory and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music: three schools of national repute whose graduates rank among the finest professionals in music today.

Their common goal is educational excellence. They strive to bring their students into contact with the world's finest teachers and most respected artists. They teach discipline and diligence.

They reach out to the communities they serve, staging concerts, arranging performances with professional orchestras and chamber groups, providing opportunities for master classes with touring artists.

But whether it's the Juilliard School, arguably the most acclaimed institution of the three, the Oberlin Conservatory or the San Francisco Conservatory, all three struggle to face the challenges of the '80s and even more formidable problems on the horizon in the 21st century.

Joseph Polisi, 38, has been president of the Juilliard School since 1984 and speaks well of the institution's past, but he is far from complacent about its future.

Juilliard's strength is its diversified faculty, he says. "There's always been an interesting mix of performers and individuals who were once performers who dedicated themselves to teaching. Together, they turned out a body of remarkably distinguished students."

Ninety percent of the Juilliard faculty is part-time. Fourteen on the staff are from the New York Philharmonic. Graduates and friends of the school, such as cellist Yo-Yo Ma and conductor Leonard Bernstein often "drop in" to teach master classes.

"That makes Juilliard different," he says, without saying that it makes Juilliard better. Fine as it is, the faculty is also a problem. It's an old group. Because of age, some of the teachers do not report to work for extended periods of time, others teach only at home.

The qualities that Polisi likes about the Juilliard School, where he was once a student, are its place in Lincoln Center, which is home for the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera, among others, Juilliard's international student body and its relative financial strength.

San Francisco Conservatory President Milton Salkind, also a Juilliard alumnus, reports that Juilliard's endowment is \$100 million. San Francisco's endowment is \$4.5 million.

Polisi's candor is impressive. Juilliard's prestige had declined in the late 1970s and early '80s, before he was appointed president, and he's been quick to make more than superficial, cosmetic changes.

"We're addressing the criticism that Juilliard is an impersonal, uncaring institution. We're looking toward a school that's smaller in terms of student enrollment, perhaps bringing the total down from 900 to 800. We're looking at increasing scholarship opportunities. We're in a capital campaign to provide safe and quality housing for our students."

Perhaps more importantly, Polisi is revising the undergraduate and graduate curriculum at Juilliard so that when students leave the school they will be better prepared to face all facets of a complicated professional life in music.

Forty percent of the musicians working in Lincoln Center are Juilliard graduates. Fifty-six players on the New York Philharmonic's register of 105 are also out of Juilliard.

"We face a frightening period in our history. There is no market for the graduates of the Juilliard School or for the graduates of any music school. So what do we do?"

"I think that every institution must take a hard look at its goals and make sure that they're not self-serving. We should exist for students, not for faculty. We need to create a curriculum that broadens the individual, so that if they are not in music five or 10 years after graduation, they're not lost."

"There are too many schools of music that raise the expectation of students and lead them to believe that they will have a performance career. In fact, they most likely will not."

Interestingly, Pollsi is taking Juilliard down a path that has been trod for some time by the San Francisco Conservatory. While the institution on 19th Avenue at Ortega is physically smaller and boasts a student body of only 200 compared to Juilli-

ard's 900, the educational emphasis under Salkind has been curriculum variety.

"We were the first music school to start a community service course that sends students out to hospitals, retirement homes and similar facilities in order for the students to get playing experience in conditions that prepare them for the realities of the music profession," Salkind offers.

"We're the only conservatory that has a chamber music major. Our students are *required* to take a course in new music, and I think we're alone in that. We're also small, and we've always been.

"There is a warmth and friendliness here that is attractive, and we give our students more opportunities to perform than they would get in a large school."

Whereas the Juilliard School has come by its reputation easily, the San Francisco Conservatory has not, and this troubles the school president.

Salkind complains that many San Francisco Conservatory graduates with important careers do not list the school in their personal biographies. He cites pianists Robin Sutherland and Warren Jones as two examples.

Sutherland studied at Juilliard and the Conservatory, but lists only Juilliard as his alma mater. Jones, a conducting assistant at the Metropolitan Opera, was an undergraduate at the New England Conservatory of Music and a graduate student in San Francisco, but his biography mentions only New England.

"For some reason they feel it's more prestigious to mention Juilliard than it is to mention San Francisco," Salkind sighs. "Unfortunately, it hurts us, because we don't get credit for the developmental role we have played in their careers.

"We're better known in the East than in the West," he claims. If there were a ranking of music schools, San Francisco would "certainly" be among the top five, he insists.

Salkind's list of top schools includes the Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music, the Mannes School of Music, the New England Conservatory, the Curtis Institute, the Peabody Conservatory and the Cleveland Institute.

He does not consider the Oberlin Conservatory, the Eastman School or the highly acclaimed music departments of various state and private universities, because they are not *independent* music schools.

Why is San Francisco's reputation better in the East than in the West?

"People here don't know what a conservatory is, what it does, or even where it is," Salkind argues. "In New York, people talk about the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera and the Juilliard School all in the same breath. They don't do that here.

"People in the East understand the intelligent relationship between their conservatories and the other professional institutions like the symphony, opera and ballet. For some reason or other, people here don't even question where musicians come from."

Asked what he's doing to change that, Salkind muses, "If the conservatory were located in the Performing Arts Center (with Davies Hall, the Opera House and Herbst Theater), many more people would know who we are."

So why not move to a location that would bring the school to the public's attention?

"That's been suggested, of course. But like everything else, it's a matter of money. We just cannot afford it."

Nineteen years ago, when he was named conservatory president, there were only 42 students in the school. Salkind is credited with turning a bad situation around and bringing new life to the conservatory. It's been a struggle.

"We still cannot attract the big name teachers because it costs a lot of money and we just don't have it," Salkind admits. "Our annual budget is \$3.5 million. It should be \$6 million, then we would be able to do more of the things the community expects of us.

"We need more money for scholarships to meet the computed needs of our students. We need

money to expand our facilities and give the kids more practice rooms — which is, by the way, what they say is the school's most pressing need."

Salkind concedes that being in San Francisco makes it difficult to attract some fine teachers, who continue to work in the East under the impression that the West Coast is a cultural vacuum.

"It's that prestige phenomenon again," he says, "Many teachers are at Juilliard only because they perceive that it's the place to be."

Still, he insists, "We are competitive." In defense of the conservatory staff (21 full-time; 64 part-time), he says: "The dean of humanities at the Juilliard School told me he would give anything to have the young, lively teachers we have here instead of those at Juilliard who fall asleep during lessons."

"Besides," Salkind adds, "big name teachers are often the worst teachers on the market. I don't say that across the board, but often they're good only for the attention they bring the school, not for the education they provide the student."

Among the teachers considered by Salkind to be the most attractive to students applying to the conservatory are oboist Marc Lifschey, pianist Paul Hersh, cellist Bonnie Hampton and violinists David Abel and Isadore Tinkleman.

As for the quality of the students themselves, Salkind concedes that he would like to be more selective. "We take one in four who apply," he says. "Juilliard takes one in seven."

Looking ahead toward the next

tutions. It is unclear whether their positions are full-time or part-time.

While this story was in progress, Salkind called to report that the Franciscan Quartet had just won first prize in the Second Banff (Canada) International String Quartet Competition. Currently in residence at Yale University, the Franciscan Quartet was founded at the San Francisco Conservatory.

David Boe, who heads the Oberlin Conservatory, sees music education somewhat differently than Polisi and Salkind. Where they are in charge of independent schools, Boe's Conservatory is part of a liberal arts college that offers classes in everything from music performance to physics and computer technology.

"The Oberlin Conservatory is unique in two respects," he explains. "First of all, we specialize in undergraduate education, which means that our students are not being taught by graduate assistants. They do not compete with graduates for places in the orchestra or roles in the opera. Our entire curriculum has been finely tuned to accommodate an undergraduate's needs.

"Secondly, the fact that Oberlin is a liberal arts college means that our music students live in dormitories with students studying in all fields. That leads to a very healthy exchange of views. Our students have immediate access to non-music classes."

Oberlin students would not normally be those who apply to Juilliard or the San Francisco Conservatory, says Boe. Rather, they would be attracted to other liberal arts colleges and universities with highly regarded music schools, such as the universities of Michigan and Indiana.

"But even though we have an environment that is intellectually stimulating, we still seek students who are outstanding in performance," he quickly adds.

Like Salkind, Boe is reluctant to criticize his own school. Asked to do so, he projects into the future, saying that he would like to fully implement a jazz program, that he would like to offer a curriculum in piano accompanying, and that he would like to develop a program of studies on period instruments.

"Performance on these instruments is a movement that is growing in leaps and bounds," he observes. "It started with an interest in 18th century performance. Now people are looking at the 19th century.

"The whole issue of style has not really taken shape at any music school. As conditions allow, I would like to set up a program that might be akin to a center or institute for the study of period performance practice and period instruments. Certainly in 10 or 15 years such a program will be important in all music schools."

School administrators everywhere worry about rising costs. Tuition at Oberlin this year is \$9,875. San Francisco's tuition is \$6,250. Juilliard's is \$6,000.

Like his colleagues, Boe hopes that scholarship support can be increased, and he looks toward improving his faculty.

"As jobs open," he argues, "I would like to make a greater number of senior positions available, so that we're not hiring entry-level people. It is important to the future of the school to have a mix of young and experienced teachers."

Whatever the similarities or differences in the philosophies of the three schools, all three administrators agree that there is no promise — either real or implied — in a graduation certificate from their institutions.

"I think the 21st century will require a new type of performer," Polisi concludes, "someone who can present his art in various contexts and various genres: as a soloist, playing chamber music and working in an orchestra.

"It is essential that the next generation of musicians be able to make the people in our country understand the importance and the positive influence of serious music on our culture and society.

"Music is not like law, where it's known in advance at Harvard and Yale that there will be a certain number of positions open every year for graduates to fill.

"At Juilliard we prepare our students to perform at a professional level. Our intent is to give them an education that will make them not only complete musicians, but complete human beings."

few years, Salkind says that he hopes to provide better facilities, more practice rooms and a small recital hall. A building campaign will soon get under way to turn dream into reality.

Additionally, he would like to see more black students come into the conservatory. He added that "the New York Philharmonic has a special fund used exclusively to recruit black musicians. It's tough to find them."

Like Polisi, Salkind is encouraged by the large increase in the number of Asian and Asian-American students competing for places in the school.

Unlike Polisi, who speaks generously of other schools and offers that "San Francisco has a good conservatory for training young music students," and that "Milton Salkind has done an excellent job of developing a fine school," Salkind does not feel the musicians' market is overcrowded.

"I think there is a future for graduates if they have been trained in a realistic way," he says.

The definition of "future" is clouded. A listing of 209 San Francisco Conservatory graduates, 1981-1985, reveals the name of only one individual in a full-time performance position with a guaranteed annual salary: string bass player Steven Tramontozzi, now with the San Francisco Symphony.

Tramontozzi is one of seven San Francisco Conservatory graduates in the Symphony.

On a list of 33 graduates now said to be teaching, only seven can be identified as working in major insti-



"Musical Master Leaves Harmonious Legacy"
 San Francisco Chronicle, October 15, 1989

BY ROBERT COMMANDAY

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music, one of the region's distinguished institutions, prepares to turn a corner this year after the retirement, announced last week, of its president for the past 23 years, Milton Salkind.

He leaves quite a legacy, both with the institution and in the musicians around the country who have very particular musical ideas, experiences and outlooks, gained while learning at the Conservatory. By extension, they're all students of Milton's.

Salkind took over a tiny school in 1966 — 42 students, no endowment and just \$25,000 to parcel out for scholarships. Founded in 1917 as the Ada Clement Piano School, reorganized in 1925 as the Conservatory by Clement and her partner Lillian Hodghead, and put under the directorship of the composer Ernest Bloch, it established a good reputation. Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern went there as kids. But it remained a localized operation.

Salkind made fundamental changes in the curriculum to liberalize the musicians' education. He hired some intelligent and gifted musician-teachers in crucial positions, and instituted innovative and far-reaching programs. Now it serves 252 students, 70 of whom are at the graduate level, and offers 22 majors leading to the bachelor's and master's degrees in music. More than 400 younger students are enrolled in the preparatory department, several hundred adults in the extension division. The endowment is over \$9 million, and a half-million dollars annually is allocated to scholarships.

I went to the Conservatory to ask three long-time teachers, Dean Colin Murdoch and Salkind two questions: What was the most important development during the Salkind years? What is the most important next step?

Paul Hersh, teacher of piano, viola and chamber music, has spent 17 years on the faculty. He responded immediately, "The quality level has become higher. . . . We have more strong performers across the board now. When I first came here, it was more of a joke." Hersh credited the influx of foreign students, particularly Asian, as a factor in the increased quality. This has compensated, he said, for the decline in music education in American public schools.

He also cited the Chamber Music Program, of which he is co-chairman with Bonnie Hampton (cello) Nathan Schwartz (piano). "A stipend program has gotten excellent students in that program, which has a reputation now for spawning active professional groups," he said.

Hampton agrees that the Chamber Music Program is Salkind's best creation. She first came to the Conservatory in the 1950s, left, then returned in 1972 "There was just a general philosophy about chamber music before 1972," she said. "We were and we are a small school and can't compete with the large Eastern schools in certain ways but we can contribute something in a smaller way, as in chamber music. In the '70s, the Ridge Quartet started here (as students), the Franciscan Quartet came in, and then David Abel, violin teacher, and Nathan (Schwartz) both had (student) groups that went on to win the Coleman Award."

Hampton said her master cello teacher, Margaret Rowell, who had already retired, went to Salkind five years ago and announced, "You've just got to do something significant for chamber music." He did: The conservatory became the first in the country to offer a master's degree in chamber music, also offering it as an undergraduate major.

"Since the major was introduced we've gotten some terrific kids. We've always had a few really first-class talents with the potential to do as much as they had the drive to do." There are only a few top students, Hampton said, but "the middle range is pretty good, pretty solid," and their work is inspired by the top students.

Salkind "has an instinct for new things that will catch the imagination and be West Coast firsts," said Hampton. She cited the Chamber Music West festival in June, which the Conservatory began 12 years ago, which embodies the Marlboro Festival idea of having older and younger players rehearsing and performing together.

Mack McCray, piano professor for the past 18 years, nominated the new music program as the Conservatory's most significant development — "That and our access to the international market of music students are the two most important things." Conservatories tend to be cautious toward new music. Salkind established the new music program so that students live with it as a normal, everyday experience.

McCray likens the experience to living in Paris in the 1920s. "We'd go to a concert here and hear new pieces by (Frederic) Rzewski, Christian Wolff, and some of the most important composers, and we were commissioning them," he said. "We were intoxicated with the excitement. Milton did that."

Although the new dean, Murdoch, is only in his second year, his 12 years with the National Association of Schools of Music made him an expert on music schools. He called the Conservatory's accomplishments during Salkind's reign "astonishing." In those 23 years, he said, a very short period of time in terms of institutional life, the Conservatory became a "comprehensive, contemporary school of music." "It's startling that in that period he put together a faculty of this quality, a curriculum of this magnitude, a recruiting effort that is international, the endowment, (and maintained) such quality of the music. The results . . . are reflected in the actual placement of graduates and the careers that our alumni have pursued."

My other question concerned the future. What should be the next major step forward; what is the Conservatory's immediate need and the first challenge for Salkind's successor? (A search committee is already organized, John Anderson, the Conservatory board president told *The Chronicle*.)

"Money and someone who can raise it," Hersh answered unhesitatingly. "For scholarships, absolutely, and as co-priority for faculty salaries, not at the top of the scale but at the bottom. There are people here who don't make enough to constitute a living wage. Then we need new plans and more practice facilities."

Hampton said the first need is to attract more highest-quality faculty and students. "We are a well-kept secret," she said. "We haven't gotten the visibility and perhaps that would happen if we were situated somewhere else. Maybe moving to some place central and downtown would be a very helpful thing."

McCray was definite about the need for a move from its quarters at Ortega and 19th Avenue to a new plant, not downtown but on the Presidio property the government may release to the city. "Everything else here strikes me as in a healthy order of priorities," he said.

Murdoch sees the Conservatory's principal challenge as addressing a world in which music and music education have changed dramatically, school music definitely for the worse. "It's no longer enough for a conservatory of music simply to teach students to wiggle fingers and vibrate vocal chords," Murdoch said. "We need to teach them to face a changing and increasingly complex world."

He sees this in terms of refining the concept, the curriculum, the point of view. However, first the Conservatory must address "two critical areas of need: faculty salaries and student scholarships." The salary issue goes beyond morale to the question of attracting the best teachers to succeed prominent faculty approaching retirement. Murdoch relates the scholarship question to competition from other schools.

Twenty-five percent of the students are foreigners (from 16 countries), of which 15 percent are Asian, according to statistics compiled by Colleen Katzowitz, of the Conservatory's Student Services Office. Thirty-nine percent are from the Bay Area counties, 16

percent from elsewhere in California, 20 percent from other states. The male/female ratio is 42 percent to 58 percent. The ethnic breakdown is 3 percent black, 5 percent Hispanic (up from 1 percent in 1983); 11 percent are Americans of Asian ancestry.

Salkind gave an unexpected answer to the question about the most important development during his tenure. He chose the Community Service Program, in which students from a select class of 40 are sent out to perform for pay (not to teach) at institutions such as hospitals, old age homes, community centers.

"I'd always felt that the students had to become professional musicians and at the same time be of service to the community," he said. "We were the first conservatory to have this program, now they all have it. . . . It's made better musicians of them, in interacting, projecting, and having to speak to an audience."

As for the Conservatory's future direction, he recognizes that it must somehow achieve a better balance within its student population — more Americans, more Californians. To that end, he'd like to get the public schools participating in a program with the Conservatory.

Salkind wants the Conservatory to explore "all kinds of new ideas in electronics" and develop a laboratory. "But I don't think we need a larger school," he said. "More money for salaries and scholarships, surely. It will take a lot of imagination and daring on the part of whoever follows me."

Salkind seemed unusually quiet and untypically abstracted. He has made no particular plans for his life after retirement in June but said he hoped to help the Conservatory more. He seems to have mixed feelings about leaving a large part of his life, where his heart has been.

"I'm still surprised at how many people aren't aware of the fact that the symphony and the opera, which are very glamorous, draw their talent from conservatories. (People) aren't aware of who trains these musicians," he said. Pointing out that almost half of the S.F. Symphony's Youth Symphony is made up of conservatory students, he expressed sadness that the Symphony and its music director have little relationship to the Conservatory. "If I had one wish for the Conservatory it would be for a greater awareness of it in the community."

Achieving that might just be the first challenge for Salkind's successor and faculty and students, and would be the best recognition of his distinguished achievement.

Robert Commanday is chief music critic for The Chronicle.

A Diamond Jubilee for Conservatory

By Marilyn Tucker
Chronicle Staff Writer

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music will observe the 75th anniversary of its founding with a season-long series of special events during the 1992-93 year.

Programs were announced at a press conference yesterday morning that preceded the installation of Colin Murdoch as the Conservatory's eighth president.

Murdoch, who was introduced by Conservatory board chairman Michael Savage, said the festivities will begin October 11 with a concert by the Conservatory Orchestra, conducted by Denis de Coteau, at Davies Hall. Soloists will be pianist Jeffrey Kahane, an alumnus of the Conservatory, and cellist Hai-Ye Ni, a Conservatory student who, at the age of 19, was the youngest winner of the Naumburg International Competition last year.

Former faculty member John Adams will be guest conductor for "The Chairman Dances" from his opera "Nixon in China." Both Kahane and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, who had presented a sold-out duo recital at the Opera House on Monday, were speakers at the press brief-

ing, as was financier/philanthropist Gordon Getty. Ma and Getty share duties as honorary co-chairmen for the jubilee year.

Concert at Herbst

Following the opening gala, San Francisco Performances will present a concert November 9 by Faculty Chamber Artists at Herbst Theatre. Performers include violinist Ian Swensen, violist and pianist Paul Hersh, cellist Bonnie Hampton, pianist Nathan Schwartz, violist Daon Ehrlich and violinist Sae Shiragami.

The Conservatory's annual "Sing-It-Yourself Messiah," coinciding this year with the 250th anniversary of the Handel oratorio, is set for December 13 and 14 at Davies Hall.

Faculty member Conrad Susa's opera "Transformations," based on Anne Sexton's poetic reworkings of Grimm's fairy tales, will be given four performances by the Conservatory Opera Theatre next April.

10 New Works

Also in April 1993, a concert by the Conservatory Orchestra will feature violinist Isaac Stern. The

concert will be preceded by a dinner honoring Gordon Getty, who studied composition for a short time at the Conservatory 30 years ago. The orchestral program will include Getty's "Three Waltzes."

Other special events will include faculty concerts at which 10 new works by faculty and alumni composers are promised. These concerts also are scheduled for broadcast on radio station KKHL. In addition, the Conservatory Orchestra will perform at Stern Grove in the summer of 1993.

Founded as the Ada Clement Plano School on Sacramento Street by Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead in 1917, the Conservatory began with a faculty of three, a student body of 40, using four studios and three pianos.

Today's enrollment is 270 students, with 19 states and 20 countries represented, Murdoch said.

Murdoch, Conservatory dean since 1988, follows Milton Salkind in the post of president. Salkind's 25-year tenure was interrupted briefly in 1990 when he retired. With the resignation of Stephen Brown a year later, he was back as acting president until yesterday.



Who Needs a Conservatory? . . . Everybody

Critic salutes S.F. institution

BY ROBERT COMMANDAY

CHRONICLE MUSIC CRITIC

ON THURSDAY, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music brings its 75th anniversary year to a musical climax with a concert featuring its most distinguished former student, Isaac Stern. He will play in a performance of the glorious Brahms Sextet and join with Geraldine Walther in Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E flat, with Denis de Coteau conducting the Conservatory Orchestra.

The making of music like that is self-evidently the way to recognize this anniversary, yet for an institutional celebration, even musical gestures of appreciation are not enough. For the rededication such an observance demands, the Conservatory's history and future need to be considered, and questions asked.

One question — Why do we need a music conservatory? — suffices, with numerous qualifying phrases: Why in these times, why in this city, why such a specialized vocational institution? Looking at the realities of the music profession today, we may well wonder about this country's producing thousands of aspiring full-time musicians annually when the positions opening up number in the hundreds. Possibly there's even a net loss of jobs considering the orchestras and other performing organizations that are closing down or cutting back in these times. The part-time work in theater and the popular field, crucial to many, has been drastically reduced by electronic sound reproduction.

Furthermore, unlike a degree in law, engineering, public health or other specialties, a conservatory diploma is much less persuasive in helping secure a position.

Happily, most music students, inspired by the art for which they live, put such anxieties into the background. Inspiration and hope are in constant renewal for them. Studying and practicing music can provide, in small but critical increments each day, moments of discovery and recognition that recharge the inspirational battery.

The sudden perfecting of the sound and feel of a tone quality being sought, the achieving of a technical facility or difficult musical passage, the realization through one's own hands or voice of an interpretive idea that an admired artist had produced or a

teacher had revealed — just such moments produce the elation for which one who truly loves music lives.

Of all loves, the love of music is among the most hopeful. Every stage of learning music, every day of practice, every lesson, rehearsal and performance is predicated on hope. The act of practicing pieces of music inculcates hope. The process nourishes the anticipation that the next time, another step toward that fulfilling moment will be gained.

As the process of self-critical practicing proceeds for two or more hours daily, year after year, along with the skill, knowledge and qualities developed comes the sense of the importance of striving toward a goal. That is the hope, the vision that makes for a positive, productive person. No wonder that the faces encountered in the corridors of a conservatory are generally sunny, bright-eyed, enthusiastic. The happiest of all cacophonies is the mix of sounds from a dozen practice rooms heard in a conservatory hallway.

Not even the inevitable competition among students significantly blunts this feeling or sullys the striving. Students vying for awards and advancement, graduates contending for prizes, instrumentalists and singers auditioning for jobs persist with a spirit that defies understanding. That's the everlasting hope nourished during their schooling.

But what about the original question? What about continuing to turn out thousands of musicians for only hundreds of jobs? This is not the Conservatory's concern, nor should it deter students who have dedicated themselves to a great vocation for which they are uniquely suited. It is the responsibility of society to support music-making jobs for them — out of its own self-interest. We need these new musicians for the whole community. We can't afford their being idle or having to support themselves by other work.

This is an issue that touches on the value of music to society and human life. If society finds it essential to preserve in its performing arts centers the best music, then it is obligated to ensure that the best music is made available to all. This is more important now in hard times than during prosperity.

It is not enough to identify the moral issue at the heart of society's situation today and not enough to deplore its declining morale. Music is a most central force in this matter of the human spirit. We know this truth from history as we know the Golden Rule, but do we act upon it? The lesson was brought home again recently in the words of the distinguished singer Todd Duncan, speaking in a radio interview after the death of opera singer Marian Anderson. Concerning her times and the impact she made, he recalled that, in the depths of the Great Depression, when intolerance toward blacks was terrible, the civilizing and inspiring power of music sustained the people and they were not violent.

Consider the state of Israel in its early struggling years, creating many orchestras out of hundreds and hundreds of its new immigrant musicians. Music on the front lines and on the home front helped carry the people, helped make a people of them. Isaac Stern, performing and teaching there, played a crucial role as leader, as messenger of humanity.

In that moving documentary "From Mao to Mozart," we saw him convey that spirit to music students in China. He taught them how to find the ultimate meaning of the great music they were trying to learn. (In a timely coincidence, two of the Chinese students seen in the film were here just two weeks ago, now mature and accomplished artists, making a contribution in the San Francisco Symphony's Wet Ink Festival.)

Where there are not the professional positions to accommodate qualified graduates of our conservatories and music schools, every effort must be made to form orchestras and create other opportunities. Support of existing performing institutions should be ensured so that they flourish, expand and utilize the emerging talent that vitalizes music making.

Take a community such as Sacramento, whose symphony orchestra is struggling to come back from bankruptcy. Consider the predominantly shopping mall/TV-video culture of that once-fair city — where and what is its music?

Sacramento needs all the good music it can get, good music of all kinds, and so do San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond and people everywhere. It's a civilizing factor that bonds us with a feeling of our common humanity.

We are not producing enough musicians. Many, many more are needed to go into the schools and revive the nearly moribund music programs at every grade level. They are the hope to bring music back into the elementary classrooms, where children should be exercising their singing hearts every day, through the high school orchestras, choruses and bands where the joy of making music together is affirmed. That has been denied several generations. It's still not too late. Our connection to our music is not yet severed and lost.

Why a conservatory in this city? Don't the larger establishments in the East with their powerhouse faculties more than suffice? Stern's early instruction in

this conservatory should be a swer enough for that. And after him and students Yehudi Menuhin and Ruggiero Ricci, each graduating class has sent many more distinction into orchestras, teaching studios and onto concert stages nationwide.

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music has a unique program that is not narrowly vocational. The thrust of its curriculum over the past 30 years has been forward looking and educationally inclusive. Its chamber music program exemplary among the nation's music schools.

A CONSERVATORY is a good for students as the aspiration and learning they draw upon from their teachers. It's ultimately a one-on-one experience requiring not a vast faculty, but teachers of the highest quality. On them, currently about 75 working mostly part time, the vitality of the school depends.

So, recognizing the institution's 75th year, best wishes to Bonnie Nate, Paul, Mickey, Mack, Den Tim, Irene, Elly, all your colleagues and your president, Col Murdoch. Stern is coming to perform with you Thursday because he's proud of what you're doing. Keep it up. Keep them coming.

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BY JOSHUA KOSMAN

CHRONICLE STAFF CRITIC

BY LONG-ESTABLISHED tradition, music schools — like medical or law schools — are supposed to be citadels of grim professionalism, unremitting labor and dog-eat-dog competitiveness among student and faculty alike. That's the only way, the theory goes, to turn out musicians who can make their way successfully through the daunting thickets of the profession.

But for three-quarters of a century, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music has been educating musicians on a different plan — one that proceeds from the assumption that music is, first and foremost, a human endeavor, and that educating a musician is just one part of educating an entire human being.

At 8 tonight in Davies Symphony Hall, the Conservatory inaugurates its 75th year with a gala concert by conductor Denis de Coteau and the Conservatory Orchestra, featuring some of the leading musicians associated with the school. Pianist Jeffrey Kahane, a 1977 Conservatory alumna, will be the soloist for the Mozart Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-Flat, K. 482, and another alum, cellist Hal-Ye Ni — who two years ago, at 18, became the youngest winner of the Naumberg Cello Competition — will play the Prokofiev Symphony-Concerto, Op. 123.

Composer John Adams, who taught at the school from 1972 to 1983, will conduct "The Chairman Dances," an excerpt from his opera "Nixon in China." And the opening work, Brahms' "Academic Festival" Overture, will be performed by the orchestra together with faculty members and alumni.

The celebrations will continue throughout the school year, with a special incarnation of the annual "Sing-It-Yourself Messiah" in Davies Hall in December, coinciding with the 250th anniversary of Handel's beloved oratorio. Next April, the Conservatory Opera Theatre will premiere "Transformations," an opera by faculty member Conrad Susa based on the work of poet Anne Sexton, and violinist Isaac Stern — one of the school's most eminent alumni — will perform with the Conservatory Orchestra.

It's plenty of hoopla for an institution that began, like so many worthwhile projects, quite modestly. In the fall of 1917, pianists Ada Clement and Lillian Hodghead opened the Ada Clement Piano School. The equipment amounted to a handful of pianos and a couple of standing blackboards, and the grounds — the Sacramento Street home of Hodghead's parents — were equally unassuming.

Over the ensuing decades, the school expanded and diversified its operations, changing its name in 1923 to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and adding programs in other instruments, voice, theory and composition. Its director from 1925-30 was composer Ernest Bloch, and its students included not only Stern but his fellow violin underkind Yehudi Menuhin as well.

The Conservatory moved to its current home at 19th Avenue and Ortega in 1956, after years of straining the limits of its old surroundings. But by any reckoning, the school's modern history really began in 1966, when Milton Salkind began what would stretch into a 25-year presidency.

Salkind — who retired from the post in 1990, then returned briefly the following



Student Diona Brown with teacher Sima Keuysumdjian at the Conservatory, top; above, from left, Colin Murdoch, Conservatory president; John Adams, who conducts the orchestra at tonight's gala; and Isaac Stern, ex-student who will perform in April

S.F. Conservatory Hits 75 in Style

year — oversaw a rise in collegiate enrollment, and introduced a host of new programs that continue to this day, including the annual Chamber Music West festival and the "Sing-It-Yourself Messiah." It was also on his watch, in 1976, that the Conservatory opened Hellman Hall, its elegant and comfortable concert auditorium.

"When I first came here," Salkind recalls, "this was a pretty small operation. We had a little auditorium, and I ended up doing everything myself — pulling the curtain for concerts, even sweeping up afterward. My son used to say 'Dad, can you imagine Peter Mennin doing that at Juilliard?'"

Among Salkind's proudest innovations was the Community Music Program, which sent student performers to nursing homes, prisons and other unusual venues. "The problem," says Salkind, "was that most people didn't really know what a conservatory was, or what it did. So we sent musicians out into the community to give them the idea."

Kahane, who was a student at the Conservatory in the early 1970s, remembers it as an exciting period in the school's history.

"The people who are now among the most distinguished faculty members — people like Adams or (piano teachers) Paul Hersh and Mack McCray — had just joined, and there was a sense that Milton had a vision that he was putting in place.

"The remarkable thing about what Milton did was to resist the temptation to make this like other schools. He wanted to make it a world-class institution on its own terms — not the Curtis Institute of the West."

Adams echoes the sentiment. "I miss those days," he says. "I work alone now, and my musical relationships are carried on by fax. But at that time, you could be sitting in your office and someone would come by and say, 'Look at these four measures in this Liszt piece I just found.' It was a cauldron of discovery, and it's the kind of thing that can happen only in a conservatory."

Although the official history says that he was hired to head up a new music program, Adams recalls that the assignment was rather looser. "What I enjoyed about the Conservatory is that they didn't have the heavy lines of authority that you have in the

big universities. In my first year, I taught a new course in contemporary music, but I also taught a graduate class in analysis and gave private clarinet lessons. Over 10 years I taught all kind of things, which is what made it so much fun."

The Conservatory may be more highly structured now, but that air of freedom and unfeigned enthusiasm still pervades the school. A visitor to the building on a school day is apt to encounter gaggles of young students hanging out between lessons and practice sessions, chatting about music and their social lives in equal measure.

Like any college campus, the Conservatory halls are studded with photocopied announcements of an upcoming keg party; the difference is that they're nestled among notices for recitals and practice schedules. During this anniversary season, the students come and go past photos from the school's history — including a performance still of dark-eyed 9-year-old violinist Stern.

Colin Murdoch, the former dean who took over the presidency last January, says that creating an alternative to the cutthroat atmosphere of many conservatories is an important goal. "The San Francisco Conservatory has a certain style, a tone, a mood — very different from the Eastern conservatories — that is more conducive to helping young people grow and learn.

"I don't mean to diminish the level of competition, because it's very high. But here, when a student goes into something and wins, the other kids line up to congratulate them."

Even with the improvements in the curriculum and the physical plant, the Conservatory still does not boast the reputation of such East Coast schools as Juilliard, Peabody or Curtis. But that may be changing, says Murdoch.

"I still feel that the school's future is in front of it. With the decline in music education in the public schools and even in the universities over the past 10 or 20 years, the Conservatory is going to have to work harder to bring students to a love and appreciation for serious art music."

Although he concedes that "we don't have the kind of hardware that UC Berkeley or Pomona College can offer," Murdoch says that the high caliber of the teaching can make up for that. There seems to be universal agreement that a dedication to teaching is chief among the Conservatory's virtues.

Adams, for instance, says that when he left the faculty to devote himself full-time to composing, "I felt that being a really good responsible teacher was not something that you could do part-time. That's what is wonderful about the Conservatory — there's nobody on that faculty who is part-time in the emotional sense. These people are immensely dedicated; they're fanatics about teaching."

For Kahane, the teaching was about much more than keyboard technique or musicianship. "I feel fortunate to have had teachers who cared about the actual person as well as the product," he says. "At Juilliard, one had the sense of being an item; you were either going to succeed — in which case you were important, and mattered — or not, in which case you didn't. I never felt that at the Conservatory. I think people were and are valued for their human quality as well as for their ability to play the Liszt Sonata — because the view is that ultimately, they are one and the same. The person you are affects the kind of music you make

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music's 75th Anniversary Gala Concert will be held at 8 tonight at Davies Symphony Hall.

BY VINCENT MACDONA/THE CHRONICLE



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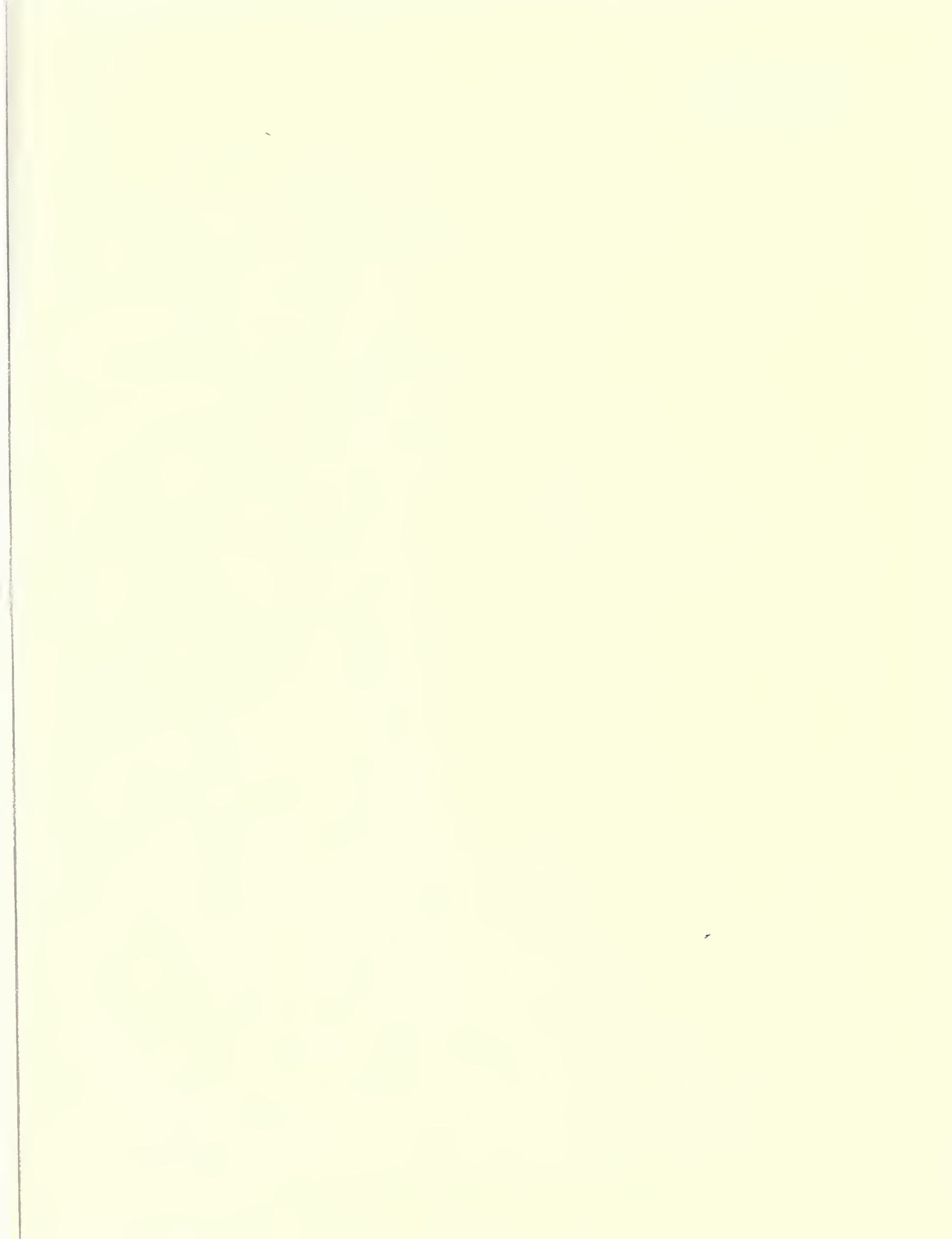
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