
Transcript of recorded interview: David Diamond interviewed by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich at Carnegie Hall on October 15, 1995.

From the Library of Congress in Washington, DC

David Diamond:

...a painter named Romaine Brooks. She lived in Paris for many, many years, wonderful painter. She had a studio in in Carnegie Hall.

Ellen Taaffe Zwilich:

Mm hm.

DD:

I used to come to...to call on her. She was not well. I would love to know what ever happened after her death, what ever happened to all the, the

ETZ:

the memorabilia

DD:

the memorabilia that she had, yes. She had a huge...she had James Joyce manuscripts on, she had them framed. Oh there’s so much. Was there a Mister...Who was the man who ran the audio at the top of the, the hall when they recorded us and did some things?

ETZ:

That I do not know. I mean that’s a very interesting question. I don’t know that those things are around.

DD:
In those days, but, but that’s…they say he was the one who really rounded up all the stuff.

ETZ:

Mm hm. I don’t know. I’d like to get to the bottom of it.

DD:

Should I take these off?

Cameraman:

Let’s…You can take them off.

DD:

Sure

Cameraman:

I don’t know over there. It might be a problem over there. Right here it’s fine.

DD:

They don’t, these…

ETZ:

me something about this wonderful photo of...

DD:

yes, …a Rochester photographer, who was the concertmaster of the Rochester Philharmonic between nineteen… thirty-two and 1935. His name was Alexander Leventon, and he was the one who took these pictures of Lenny when he came...to conduct for the first time after he had already had his great success and was beginning now to guest conduct everywhere.

ETZ:

It’s a beautiful picture.

DD:
It’s beautiful. I would guess that’s around nine…

ETZ:

This says, this says ’48. I don’t know.

DD:

That’s it. That’s it.

ETZ:

Actually, there’s a, there’s a nice later one that seems to have suffered in the archives in some way.

DD:

Yeah that’s a beautiful…I always liked that one, yes.

ETZ:

I think…Whitestone took that picture.

DD:

Yes. Yes. Yeah that’s a regular commercial…that’s a commercial.

ETZ:

’Cause I know he too my first commercial…photograph…and...

DD:

And then there was a Blackstone.

ETZ:

Yes.

DD:

That was another, another one that did a lot of that.

ETZ:

Here’s a picture of, of… Lenny just after the...
DD: That’s the famous one with John Corigliano.

ETZ: Corigliano, yeah.

DD: And...oh, there’s Polisi’s father.

ETZ: Oh really?

DD: Yes

ETZ: Really?

DD: That’s Joseph Polisi. He was the first bassoonist.

ETZ: He was the bassoon, right? Yeah.

DD: And that’s...Leonard Rose.

ETZ: My goodness. That’s, that’s interesting.

DD: I bet you’re going to get every pore in my, in my face.

Cameraman:
No, it looks that way. It’s the kind of lens that it is. It’s…

ETZ:

Well…

DD:

These are extraordinary pictures.

ETZ:

We, we asked for the Doris Day treatment, you now, the cheesecloth over the…

DD:

Yes

ETZ:

But they wouldn’t do with that and…

DD:

Well, about my wrinkles I don’t worry about. It’s about the pores.

ETZ:

That’s interesting. These, these ought to be identified.

ETZ:

We ought to tell Gino, you know, identify the people in this picture, cause it wouldn’t occurred to me that that’s Leonard Rose, but, but of course it is.

DD:

I think they, I think those are, they are in Avery Fischer Hall. They are. That’s there and it has a little thing on the side of it that gives the names of that particular one.

ETZ:

…of who it is. Yeah. Well, that’s interesting. And of course John Corigliano is, is so well-known to us as a composer. Yeah. Well, so.
Can I tell the story about John not wanting to play in Lukas’s piece? Or are those terrible stories not permitted.

No holds barred. You can tell any story you like, David. This is…

He would not. He would. Lukas wrote this…it was…he called them Baroque Variations, where he would take Bach’s pieces and cut them up in little pieces, a page of it, and he distributed these pieces…to the stands. And in this case the first set that he did was called…Variations on Bach…and…the concertmaster was asked, John Corigliano, Lukas said, “Now please”…He was guest conductor, Bernstein had asked him to be guest conductor, …he said “Now John you will play maybe about, oh let’s say half of the Preludium” (which was what he cut up in pieces) “You will play it in its original form and then my Variations will begin.” So, Corigliano took for granted, [sings: diddle um bum bum bum], I mean it sounded wonderful and then he sat down. So, came the variation. Now he didn’t know that Lukas was doing these stunts. He had been introduced to John Cage by his wife Cornelia. So, he cut up these pieces and now on cues from Lukas doing his Boulez things all hell broke loose. [Diamond makes random noises]. It just was not… John was so bewildered that he stopped playing, you know. So, he looked up and he put up his hand and said “What’s going on? What’s going on?” So Lukas said “These are my variations and of course you will do it exactly at, at the performance, won’t you?” So John said, “You’re not having me perform. I will refuse.” Then he found out also that he would have to play the original facing the wall. He would not be playing it to the…he would have to face the wall.

Oh, oh that’ll do it.

I will never forget that day. Lenny was brought in. The union man was brought in and as a result of Lukas carrying-on those three weeks he guest conducted…there was a petition signed by the orchestra. He couldn’t conduct the Philharmonic for, I think, something like twenty years. They never had him back because of this.
Off-camera person: That’s a great story.

DD:

As you see I tell the story with glee because thank God, I’ve had my vendetta about Lukas—we’re finally talking again. To me this was the most horrendous sell-out by such a gifted—we really felt he had great genius—I met him as an eighteen year old when he came over… Aaron Cop…

ETZ:

You’re talking about Lukas.

DD:

Lukas. [mumbles]. We gave a welcome party to him at Aaron’s loft where the state theater is now. He was a little arrogant. His father, a brilliant philosopher…I liked the father. And then Lukas, you know, went the way of all flesh. He wasn’t strong-willed enough to…resist John’s sort of theories and when I was giving a series of lectures in Buffalo at the university there, Lukas happened to be the conductor of the Philharmonic. So there were these terrible, terrible arguments. “Lukas, why?” Such beautiful music. He also put an edict down. His publisher could not anymore distribute any of his tonal music. The Oboe Concerto was never to be played again. His Second Piano Concerto…first…didn’t want…Today he’s allowing his old mu…Mr. Masur is doing his…let’s see they’re doing the Renaissance Flute Concerto, which also has a little nutsiness at the end cause Jane…Backstresser has to walk off as she’s playing. Suddenly for, nobody knows, why, all of the sudden, she’s playing, she suddenly decides to walk off, you see. No bowing. She comes out for a bow. Why this, why he has to think this, all this stuff up I don’t know. It’s…otherwise it’s such a good piece.

ETZ:

[laughs]

DD:

Do you have any theories about, Ellen, do you have theories about…What, what is this thing called, they call it performance something…

Off-camera people: Art [laughing]

DD:
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Performance art.

ETZ:

Yeah. Well, I think that’s another, another day. I think we should…
Off-camera person: To answer your question, yes we have theories [mumbles]

DD:

All right.
Off camera person: Do you want a glass of water?

ETZ:

Yes, I think that'd be very nice.

DD:

So, where would you like me to sit?

ETZ:

I think this is for you. Are we okay here now?

ETZ:

I brought, remember the picture David that you sent me of Sessions…I brought that, and then I brought a picture I took of him in 1980, so, we’ll put this over here.

ETZ:

Which is which

Robert:

This is the sparkling…

ETZ:

I don’t see a whole lot of sparkle, so. That’s all right with me. That’s ok.

DD:

Dead sparkle
ETZ:

Okay, terrific. Thanks very much, Robert. …

DD:

Ahhh, that's great.

ETZ:

Good, huh? For the record I'm Ellen Taaffe Zwilich and I hold the first Carnegie Hall Composer's Chair… and this is the first in our series of conversations with composers here in the archives of Carnegie Hall. Today we have the very distinguished American composer David Diamond with us and this will be a casual conversation with David about his history, the history of Carnegie Hall, the history of American life, the history of the twentieth-century.

David, first of all let me just say that we know that you have been flying all over the country celebrating your eightieth birthday with many, many honors and, and orchestral and other celebrations including having just, within the last few weeks, received the Presidential Medal in the Arts at the White House from President Clinton.

DD:

Yes. I was very touched by that.

ETZ:

I can imagine… and it’s sort of wonderful, I mean all these things that have been heaped on you, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Gold Medal in 1991 and the MacDowell Colony… I don’t know if it’s a medal or…

DD:

Yes, the Edward MacDowell Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement.

ETZ:

And which is a very…you’re among a very distinguished crowd in both those cases.

DD:

I was very touched actually by that one because… when I was a penniless nineteen-twenty-year-old composer, had Mrs. MacDowell, who was still very much alive at that time
and did live on another ten years, had she not heard that I was in need of a place to work for the summer... ...I would not really have had any place to go, and I worked all of 1934, '35 there.

ETZ:

Oh how nice.

DD:

went back again in '42. So, that medal meant more than just the MacDowell Medal for what it was, but also the gratitude I felt for having been there so early on.

ETZ:

Do you remember what you were writing there?

DD:

Yes, absolutely. I threw...it's away with discarded works. It was a setting of an Ezra Pound poem called “Night Litany” and...I had worked on it with Boulanger and she thought that, that, that it had very, very strong elements in it, but I don't know as the years went on, I found that it was weak. It had a lot of tremolandi in the strings and I don't like...I tell all my students at Juilliard, I say, “Please, Sibelius did them, no tympani rolls, this is out. If you want to use the tympani, give them rhythmic motivic ideas that are in your materials. Don't, don't have those old nineteenth-century rolls.” That's the only thing I agree with Boulez about.

ETZ:

[chuckles] I started my First Symphony at the MacDowell colony so I, I know how you feel that sense of...

DD:

It hasn't changed very much. It's, it's still...the hurricane that was there I think it was '38... ...did so much damage we had to raise lots of money for it, but...it's back to what it was.

ETZ:

Well at any rate...it's, it's nice to see at this stage in, in one's life the kind of... ...not just acceptance, but the reverence that people feel towards what you've done and, and your
music. I'd like to really back all the way up though. Let's go back to your childhood and talk about...coming of age and...your family was not musical, was it... or...

DD:

No, but I would say...my sister and my mother were definitely artistic. My mother was a very well-known dress designer, dress maker for the Yiddish theater in during the Austrian, Austro-Hungarian Empire, was known as Lemberg and today it is Lviv. It was taken over by the Soviet Union and is right under Kiev. So as a child I grew up with four languages including English, but there was Yiddish as well, so five languages going, Ukrainian, Russian, German, Polish, which is what the other language that they spoke. This helped me enormously. Then my sister played the mandolin and that sort of gave me, it, well it would confuse me as well. I think I remember telling you once that when I first discovered a violin it was lying open in a neighbor's case and it had four strings and I was already imagining music in my head, but I, as I heard the notes in my head I saw four strings. Well, this created havoc when I wanted to write it down on, on paper. You see I would draw my own lines. I didn't know anything about buying manuscript paper. I was only about six then, or something. So, what happened was that with all these strings on the mandolin there was double confusion. So, I asked my sister what kind of music she reads from and she didn't have any other music but a piece called “Sobre las olas,” which turns out to be “Over the waves.” You know, dee dee duh duh duh.

ETZ:

[chuckles] Sobre las olas

DD:

So this was my great masterpiece that I, I learned, you know, first. But it also, the four lines gave me a chance, then when I discovered there were five lines to music staves...

ETZ:

So it was a tablature that she had.

DD:

That's right. So what it did for me, it taught me instinctive transposition, you know, fixed do up and down.

ETZ:
Yeah. That a staff isn’t a, a God-given thing and, yes exactly.

DD:
That’s right. The do can be, where now with five lines, it’s down there and then it’s in the space.

ETZ:
It’s interesting sometimes these little things that, that resonate throughout our lives.

DD:
Oh yes.

ETZ:
Just, just a small thing like that.

DD:
That is emotionally very vivid to me, my discovery that I now could move up notes any place that I wanted and could hear them. I must have had perfect pitch as a child…I have close to that now. I never did have it, but as I get older, I seem to developing perfect pitch.

ETZ:
Hmm. I have it, but… I wasn’t even aware of it for a long time in in my life…I’m, I’m such a believer in, that that music takes place in between the notes that I tend to put little emphasis on having perfect pitch or not, but…David, when did you start to study music?

DD:
I began to study the violin at the age of…well, this violin was given to me as a gift. This open case that had this three-quarter size violin belonged to a neighbor, friends of our family, the Weiner’s, as a matter of fact. And Ruby Weiner, the, the boy was about four years older than I was, he wouldn’t practice. So, my mother asked Mrs. Weiner if I could have it and I remember picking it up and just taking the bow, and just going…I, I can still feel…I had very large hands even as a, as a six…very abnormally large, and I could…so I began doing things like that. I don’t know w…I hadn’t yet heard of violins in concert either… the only violin music was on our Victrolla, 78 recordings of Tosha Seidl playing Humoresque of Dvorak and, Träumeri of Schumann, Heifitz playing On Wings of
Song. That’s about it, as far as…we didn’t have money to go to the Eastman Theater in Rochester to hear concerts, but...

**ETZ:**

Did you begin to study, now this is in Rochester, which is where you were born...

**DD:**

A private Russian teacher, his name is...

**ETZ:**

oops, sorry (drops notes)

**DD:**

Mr. Sifkin. He was an immigrant, who like many Russian immigrants got out of Russia after the Revolution and Rochester had the wonderful Rochester Philharmonic, which was, I would say, full of Russians, Belgians, and French. Rochester’s Philharmonic was number five among the top.

**ETZ:**

Oh really?

**DD:**

Yes. Today...

**ETZ:**

Now this is after World War One...

**DD:**

After World War One

**ETZ:**

So you’re talking about refugees from World War One? Or people who...

**DD:**

No, from the Russian Revolution.
ETZ:

From the Russian Revolution.

DD:

Yes who came over after 1917. Some had even gotten away after the 1905 revolution, and they came to the cities where already great orchestras were established. We had for example as our, why I remembered him so vividly is he had a name that was an English name, Albert Coates…

ETZ:

Oh sure.

DD:

…he conducted here at Carnegie Hall, but when I learned that he was born in Russia, and conducted, had a career in Russia, that was a great amazement to me. [yawns] excuse me.

ETZ:

…You left Rochester to do your first early important studying though…didn’t you though…you went to Cleveland.

DD:

That would be then, let’s see, that would be in nineteen twenty six seven. (1926/7)

ETZ:

and the family moved...

DD:

That was again, because my father, who was…you’re asking me about…were there musicians family…artist…my mother was the dressmaker. My sister just simply played the mandolin, but my father was an artist in his way. He made those wonderful hope chests…

ETZ:

Oh.
DD:

...that women always had when they married. They would have one of these hope chests always, and then when...mechanization came in...he was out of work because he did all his work by hand. So, out went his job. Now what else does one do? One depends on relatives and they were all in Cleveland. And so my mother’s brother Harry was there and Harry invited us all to come there...just that is my, my sister was about to be married, but...my mother, my father, and they had a fruit business on 105th Street. It was kind of a ghetto section. I grew up in the ghetto section in Rochester and I loved it, because there again, I had all the different nationalities. It’s so different from our time today, where everyone is at each other’s throats, you know...and not at all. Our black neighborhood was only one block...let’s say from 63rd Street down to 59th...that...a couple of blocks, you see. And that was it...but we had a large Polish neighborhood one block away, large Ukrainian, Irish, we all got along beautifully.

ETZ:

Hmm.

DD:

The Jews didn’t fight with the Italians, any of that, see. So, it was a happy childhood in many ways except, the mother, who...practice, you know.

ETZ:

[laughs]

DD:

So, that was about it.

ETZ:

...so then you’re in Cleveland about the time that Sessions was there at the Institute?

DD:

Just as Roger...this, I'll make this very brief... every summer we would go to visit our relatives. So we were going there before the 1927 period when we moved there. Every summer that we visited my Aunt Florence, my mother would enroll me to the Cleveland Institute of Music. In the old building at Bloch, Ernest Bloch was the director of the school.
And Mrs. Franklin B. Sanders, who started the school with Bloch got me financial aid to study with André de Ribeauipierre, the violin teacher, who also, because he knew that I was composing, he had me take Josephine Trott, the scale studies…

ETZ:

[laughs] Oh yes, I remember those.

DD:

And…write a second violin part. And so what I did was write the second violin part with first finger, fourth finger and go right up and down, third position down, with…so I would get seconds and fourths all the way up. Well he found this so interesting.

ETZ:

Ah, you were a modernist already, right?

DD:

He said, “Ravel”…now, now comes 1928, this is a year after we moved there. He said “Ravel is making his first tour. David, he will be fascinated to see what you are doing with your harmony, and anyway I think he should see some of your pieces you are writing.” I remember this one ghastly piece, I still have it, called The Doll Dances, it was…a horror, just terrible, but it had weird harmonies, that’s for sure. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I liked these sounds. And sure enough Ravel’s first… it was January, very cold winter…

DD:

I have the original manuscript. It is a horror.

ETZ:

We ready?

Cameraman:

yup

ETZ:

Well, it’s, it’s…

DD:
Give me my two words. He gave, Ravel gave two concerts, the first evening was a concert of his piano music. Now I felt he played beautifully. Joseph Fuchs, the violinist who still teaches

ETZ:

Who’s still, yeah

DD:

at the Juilliard School today. And we were just talking about Ravel, he thought...he was the concertmaster of the Cleveland Orchestra at the time...Sokolov, Nikolai Sokolov was the conductor then... Joe Fuchs thought Ravel played badly, that he wasn’t a pianist...he thought he was a terrible conductor...I thought he was a wonderful conductor. I remember he used a rather large stick and that in La Valse, which absolutely wiped me out...I mean, I, I...if there are pieces of music that absolutely knocked me out as a kid, La Valse was one of them.

ETZ:

Hmmm. Did you hear Ravel do this with the Cleveland Orchestra?

DD:

That, that was the second concert. First night was piano music. Second night. Now, after the second night, Mr. de Ribeaupierre took me back. Now I was wearing...I still have it too, it’s not moth eaten...a purple turtleneck sweater...we were very poor, my mother, you know to buy a shirt, was some thing like two dollars I think in those days, and that was a lot of money for a shirt...So, I washed my turtleneck sweater every other day and I had green corduroy pants. I loved wearing those green corduroy pants...and suede shoes. I don’t know how I came to the suede shoes, but I, I must have been a walking rainbow for sure...

ETZ:

[laughs]

DD:

...and all this red carrot curly hair falling all over my head. That’s the way I came into the room with Mr. de Ribeauopierre and I can still see Ravel’s face. [laughs] He just fixed me like this camera’s fixing me and he walked up to me...“C’est tardons”...[laughs] C’est
tardons… I didn’t know what in God’s name… it sounded like a swear word to me, it was so terrible… and he took me by my hand, sat me… He was a very tiny man with a huge, abnormally large head, white hair, prematurely white hair, on a jockey’s body. It was absolutely a jockey’s body. Everything was perfectly proportioned, except the body was smaller than the… the head was out of proportion to the rest of the body. He was still in his tails and he sat me down on the couch and Mr. de Ribeaupeierre brought along these Trott studies and my counterpoint and my harmony exercises and he quickly looked at them. He said “demain, demain.” I didn’t know what “demain” really meant, but I got the idea that it had something to do with afterwards, afterwards… but it meant then, and I heard them talking… it meant I… Mr. de Ribeaupeierre was to bring me to the Wade Park Manor, was the name of the hotel. I don’t think it’s there, or it may be there, but it’s not a hotel I don’t think. It was right opposite Severance Hall, where Severance, that was not there then… the concerts took place in the public auditorium down in, where the baseball, new baseball stadium is today.

ETZ:

Oh really? Yeah.

DD:

And…

ETZ:

So this is all before Severance Hall and Cleveland?

DD:

That’s right, but the Wade Park Manor was right, right there where, right opposite the, what became Severance Hall there. And so I remember being ushered in with Mr. de Ribeaupeierre. There was a grand piano in the room and… he was now wearing a regular afternoon suit and this is what he was wearing. I can still see… yellow shoes, well what they called, what golf players in the twenties and thirties, you know, sort of brown and white… yellow, however, with stripes that went like this… orange socks, orange wool socks… a green shirt

ETZ:

Maybe you inspired him
No, this was, this was... Ravel was famous for these outfits. An orange tie on a green shirt... a jacket that was a mixture of the, of turquoise and the green of the shirt and... it all fit, but he was a walking rainbow. So this time I guess I was looking at him and then he said something again in French and broken English about, “I, I am in competition with you,” or something 'cause...[laughs]...here I was again in my purple turtleneck sweater, you know, and something about concurrence, it was explained to me afterwards by Mr. de Riveupierre. And so there he really looked carefully through and he said the following too in a kind of broken English...“Il faut, Il faut, that you, that you, Il faut that you study, study, you will come to France and you will study with,” and now I heard for the first time the name, Nadia Boulanger. And then when, when I went back home that night I wrote down this name, I remember I spelled it N-A-D-J-A, you see. Again it was the Polish spelling.

Mm hmm, sure.

And I immediately, after he left, I think he finished up the tour in three other cities... After he left, he had given me his address, I sent off a letter to him, a thank you note, and in less that three weeks I got a letter from Paris from him and we corresponded regularly. Now that letter that’s in the Ravel Reader, the R. B. Ornstein anthology, is one from 1933, but we kept writing to each other and he said, "now it’s important...c’est tres important que vous venez en France, you know this, and, and what can be done. I have spoken with Nadia." Now he was one of the first to help establish the Conservatoire Americain in Fontainebleau, you see... Walter Damrosch from the States, they, I think Damrosch raised the money... Mrs. Henry Harkness Flagler also contributed. The Warwick family contributed money. And so it was started and then of course Aaron Copland had heard from Marion Bauer, the American composer...it’s too bad people have forgotten about Marion Bauer. They talk about Ruth Seeger a lot today as a woman composer, but I think Marion Bauer’s music should be looked into. She’s totally forgotten. She’s written a good book about American composers. At any rate, she was the first American composer that worked with Nadia Boulanger. Then she returned and told Copland about this extraordinary woman and then Aaron went, you see. And so Aaron spent 1921, ’22, I think part of ’23 and then began the regular pilgrimage of Roy Harris, who was already older than the others, Piston, Virgil, and then a lot of others. But one can count really
on two hands the American composers that spent, really time. I spent, if you add up the different, between ’36 and the outbreak of the second world war, I would say it was a total of three years that I was with her and this is after I’ve already finished theoretical studies with Bernard Rogers, another Ernest Bloch student, then came to New York during the depression years, worked with Sessions at the Dalcroze School, now really counterpoint, and then florid counterpoint, harmony, analysis. That was a great school over on 9 East 59th Street.

ETZ:

The Dalcroze?

DD:

The Dalcroze and New Music School was called…run by a man named Paul Buchla, who conducted the Dessoff Choirs. So with all that training, when I arrived with Boulanger that …summer…’36 she simply looked at my Psalm for Orchestra. She said, I want Stravinsky to see this. So she took me over to Stravinsky’s on a Sunday afternoon in his beautiful apartment on the Fauxbrooks St. en Oreille and we played it four hands…and at the very end there’s …just before the big F major chord comes for the whole orchestra… there are four bars of one trombone just going [sings: bum bum bum bum]. And I held it three beats and an eighth and a rest. And Stravinsky said, “would you mind playing encore une fois, encore une fois.” So we went back and we played those bars again and he stopped me. He had a stopwatch in his hand and he said, you know…but in, in rolled, you know Russian with his rolled r’s, he said, “You know, you need one quarter more before the trombone comes in…and I think you should have one quarter rest before the final chord. Also may I make a suggestion to you…that you be very careful that that tubular bell that you have…the…I like very much how you space the chord, encore une fois.” So, mademoiselle and I and we played that big chord spaced in a very unusual way and then the tubular bell plays the F so you. “Now you be sure that you hear, make them play for you this tubular bell so we hear an A-flat, we don’t want an A-natural. Wouldn’t it be marvelous when you can hear A-flat on top of A-natural.” I said, “Oh that’s certainly what I wanted.” He said, “Make a note in your score that’s what you want.” So I added that to the score.

ETZ:
That’s, that’s wonderful. You remind me of course that it was considered a normal thing for an American to, to go to Europe to make, to make his or her way I think in the ‘20s and ‘30s.

DD:

I, I wouldn’t say, I wouldn’t say it that was normal. I would say, I would say there was already this story that there was this woman…unless you’re talking about in general, American pianists and violinists going to Europe. That I don’t really think was so. I think that was so about Germany in the last fifty years of the nineteenth century…but like Mrs. Beach and Edward MacDowell, even. Germany was the place they all went to study with Raff and some of the others. But actually France, that was writers mainly, the American writers, Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, but I don’t think until Aaron started this then Elliott Carter went, you see…Piston.

ETZ:

I guess what I’m getting at is that it seems to me to have taken quite a while to develop an American… center you might say where it was, it was understood that young people could study here and study with the best in the world.

DD:

You mean in in Paris?

ETZ:

In, in, no, in in the States, in New York or Philadelphia, Cleveland, wherever.

DD:

Oh, that, that certainly did take a long time. Although to be really quite fair, and I have not read books that really document this carefully and accurately… down at the New School for Social Research, Henry Cowell already in the late ‘20s, after he had returned from tours in Germany…he went around, you know, with his strange instruments, that boomerang instrument, and then plucking the piano, you know, inside the strings…George Antheil as a young, very young boy went over to Germany. He met Hans Heinzhammer, who was at Universal Editions, he wrote his opera Transatlantique. It was performed all over Germany. So it was really Antheil, Henry Cowell, who were after MacDowell in the nineteenth century, the American composers who were the best known. Then we have Nicolas Slonimsky…
ETZ:

Who is still with us as we speak in 1995.

DD:

That's right and that extraordinary man, who went over and began to perform with French musicians, the music of Carl Ruggles… John Becker, all the composers that finally Ives’s money helped to establish the New Music Editions…and then there was Lazare Saminsky who was the director of music as Temple Emmanuel on Fifth Avenue…and I must say I was always grateful to who helped me out financially my first year in New York…Miriam Gideon, Vivian Fine, and I would also write, oh, sacred sections of the Friday night service, the Saturday morning services. And, this is all again depression years. So, Mr. Saminsky who was published by Maurice Senour and Max Eschig, French publishers, who was, he was a Rimsky pupil. He went over twice a year to conduct American works including his own works. And so he also conducted a great deal of the lesser well not definitely avant-garde people, but Edward Burlingame Hill, Emerson Whithorne, almost forgotten men, Charles Griffes. That was Mr. Saminsky’s thing. So you see there, there were people bringing Varèse - that’s Slonimky conducting Varèse in those days - but Varèse had still, he stayed on in Paris until he came to New York a little later.

ETZ:

So it wasn’t a vacuum that Mitropoulos walked into in in any sense of the word.

DD:

I would say no. No. I would say what happened was that it may, you…Yes one could think of it as perhaps being a vacuum that that happened because suddenly there was a big indifference with a capital “I” that set in about American music and I think it had a great deal to do with the fact that Toscanini was the big center focal personality. Koussevitsky was in Boston, you see, but Toscanini was right here in Carnegie Hall and then he was with the NBC and he did not play American composers.

ETZ:

What what years are these that you’re talking about.

DD:

Nineteen twenty six, seven, eight
Now were you in New York at this time? Did you...

I, we would come to visit relatives. Naturally I would go. I remember hearing Klemperer, Furtwängler, Mengelberg, I heard Yehudi Menuhin’s debut recital in his little pants, I remember...

Oh really, and that’s right here at Carnegie Hall, right?

At Carnegie Hall. Yes. He was chubby…and, oh he played that Beethoven Concerto like an angel.

Yeah.

…that’s when I knew I would never be a violinist.

A violinist…[laughs], David let’s talk about your performance of your First Symphony. The premier with the, what is now known as the New York Philharmonic, then the Philharmonic Symphonic Society of New York…

Society.

…Actually that’s the way our contracts still today read, is it, you know

really, you have [?]
ETZ:

What led up to this, you know how does a young, young kid from Rochester, what led up to your…to this performance with Mitropoulos and the First Symphony at Carnegie Hall?

DD:

Well don’t forget I’m…don’t forget that I’m already here in New York studying with Sessions, that is from from ’34, ’35, you see. So now we’re, well it’s played in ’41 or ’40 was it?

ETZ:

’41

DD:

’41

ETZ:

1941

DD:

But I had finished up with Boulanger, the second world war broke out, I had to come back, and I came back with sketches for a real first symphony. And I had written one with Sessions, which resides in the Free Library in Philadelphia, discarded that…One at Eastman School I did with Bernard Rogers. That’s in the Sibley Music Library. So now I wanted to do my real first one. The very first one that Gerard Schwartz will conduct on Wednesday nigh, the one Mitropoulos gave. So I was, again, penniless, you know, came back, my Guggenheim money was used up. I wrote Mrs. MacDowell who was …not alive anymore then. So I wrote Elizabeth Ames at Yaddo…I was told about the Yaddo Festival by Aaron Copland. So I wrote Mrs. Ames and she invited me to come with Aaron’s letter of reference and I began working. I shared the north farm with Katherine Ann Porter, the writer.

ETZ:

Mmm hmm.

DD:
And it was wonderful because I had met her in Paris. She was the last...the year I was there, she was finishing up her work there. And we shared the apartment. We cooked meals one night. She was a very good cook. Other time, I would cook. And she was working on ship...

ETZ:

And you’re a very good cook I must say.

DD:

Now I don’t cook so much. But she was working on Ship of Fools, the novel that finally brought her some money. But one night I remember that I was...while I was working on the symphony she’d come back to the little woodshed that was my studio and I would play her sketches of the, of the symphony and ask her what she thought about it, and she, she was very musical and she made wonderful suggestions. Now the symphony is done, and the problem parts, you know. So they tell me the Free Library of Philadelphia has something called the Fleisher Collection, and if you write them they will copy and Arthur Cohn, I believe, was working for Mr. Fleisher in that collection. He would go around to all the American composers and say “if you need any parts copied”...remember we had no publishers...Aaron Copland was the first to go to Alma Morgenthal of the Morgenthal wealthy family to set up something called Cos Cob Press and that, they were the first to publish Sessions, Copland, Emerson Whithorne, Edward Burlingame Hill, otherwise there was nothing. Schirmer took Ernest Bloch’s music cause he was a friend of Carl Engel’s, who was then head of the Schirmer Publications Department. So to come back to my symphony, it was done now. The parts... I heard about this collection. I wrote away to Mr. Fleisher whether they would be kind enough to copy my parts. They wrote back yes they would be...they would have to know if there was a performance.

ETZ:

Performance. Yeah.

DD:

So, the next thing I wrote Copland was “Who shall I send the score”, because in those days, you know, there were very, very few outside of Koussevitsky. So I said, “Do you think that Koussevitsky would be interested?” He said, “I think he would be very…it might be a little too energetic for him. That first movement it’s pretty...that’s pretty top-heavy-going there. I don’t think he would quite...cause he always hated my music. If the
first movement was a little too, too Allegro.” So, , “I don’t think he…but anyway, take a chance.” So I thought, what I will do is I’ll write three conductors and the first that says yes…I don’t know why I didn’t think they’ll all say no, but the first that says yes, that conductor will get it. So I sent Koussevitsky, and Aaron said “definitely.” I had heard about Mitropoulos that he was supposed to be extraordinary. He had just had that tremendous debut, and then Lenny. I had known Bernstein by then. He, we had met at, after a Boston Symphony concert. And I wrote him and he’d said “Oh I met the man. He’s a genius. He’s extraordinary. Yes, you must send your symphony to him.” And the other one was Sir John Barbirolli. The tel…the first telegram…the only telegram came back was from Mitropoulos. “I would like very much to see your symphony.” From Koussevitsky I had an informal letter about a month afterwards. It’s interesting that it…Olga Naumoff, who he married later, was the secretary. And I never did hear from Sir John. As a matter of fact my publisher sent the Psalm for Orchestra, that very piece Stravinsky made suggestions about, that was sent to Sir John here. I don’t think unless you have in records that he actually had played some American composers. I’d love to know who he played. I know he played Stanley Bate and Norman Dello…no, no, that was Bruno Walter.

ETZ:

He played a piece by Morton Gould, I know.

DD:

All right, there we are. Morton Gould may be the only one. But I could never even get an answer from him. So, you see, it was…it was wonderful when Mitropoulos answered. So…

ETZ:

You must have been very excited.

DD:

Oh! You know I thought my God this is extraordinary. So, I sent him the score at once and I sent him a letter, a copy of the letter, Mr. Fleisher’s, that the parts would be ready. And then before I knew it he had scheduled it for that date…December something…I don’t know. You have it down?

ETZ:

December 21st
DD: Yes.
ETZ: 1941
DD: Right.
ETZ: ...we have some goodies here. One is the original program.
DD: That I have a copy of. That I have.
ETZ: And...
DD: With...wasn't his picture on the cover?
ETZ: I don't know...I don't think so.
DD: Oh did they take the top, the top page off?
ETZ: These are the...just the programs.
DD: Yeah, but every program had the conductor’s...There!
ETZ:
There we go. Yes.

That’s…That’s it. You see, that’s the way…every program had.

Here’s a very fine…

That’s a wonderful picture.

Isn’t that a marvelous picture of him?

Yes. Yes.

Now this is from 1941.

Right.

So that’s what he looked like I guess.

He sure did. And there’s the man who jumped up, hit the ceiling almost of Carnegie Hall at the first…

Mr. Sergei Rachmaninoff

Boom!…my piece begins with a tuba. Up he shot and out into the corridor.
ETZ:

…I was going to ask you, what it was like to be on the same program with Rachmaninoff, and how he treated you, and how you felt, and…

DD:

Well, I loved his music, and, you can imagine how hurt I was…

ETZ:

I certainly can.

DD:

You know, an E major chord… [sings: bum, bum, bum]…a triad for the motive.

ETZ:

And psht.

DD:

What’s so terrible, you know?...Out...So, I…you know I…I just couldn’t figure it out. Now comes the intermission and he’s now up with Mitropoulos. And so I’m coming up the stairs…I think I was in tears, a little bit…and Mitropoulos took me by the hand, pulled me up...he’s inside, you know…so, he says “Now dear, don’t…don’t be upset, it’s not your music”, he said. I said, “yes.” He said “Come, come, come.” And there he was standing this big, tall man and he looked down at me and he said, “You must understand it is not your music. I just have no time to listen to American composers.”

ETZ:

Oh boy.

DD:

That didn’t help matters I can assure you.

ETZ:

Yeah.
DD:

So I took one look at him and walked out. That’s all I…right down the stairs.

ETZ:

And he was at the, the peak of his career…

DD:

That’s right.

ETZ:

And you were twenty-five, twenty-six.

DD:

No. Let’s see nineteen forty…

ETZ:

forty one

DD:

Yeah. So what, twenty, twenty...

ETZ:

Twenty-five, twenty-six.

DD:

Twenty-five, twenty-six, right. But you know what it was really, this man suffered from terrible depressions. He was not a well man. He had already…Well they…He was told that he had cancer, you see. So, with his record of alcoholism way back when…his analysis way back when with a doctor…he couldn’t compose, you know, the famous story about Dr. Dahl curing him of, of all these problems. So, when this was ex…now Mitropoulos takes me out to lunch, some greasy spoon down the street, he explains to me about Mitropoulos’s problems and how, how…what and unhappy man he was…

ETZ:
Mm hm.

DD:

And so I was not...so after...he didn't come to the performances...but I never held it against him. Now one night at Kyriena Ziloti's, Ziloti taught, as you know, at the Juilliard School piano for a long time

ETZ:

I didn't know.

DD:

He was a friend of Tchaikovski's and of course conducted Rachmaninoff's music. They were both conductors in in Russia before the Revolution. So at the Ziloti's Easter, Russian Easter party, there is Mr. Rachmaninoff. And this would now be, oh I would say, three to four years later. And we were at the...it was a long table, and he was sitting sort of on the other side, and I looked over and I said “Mr. Rachmaninoff, it’s such a pleasure to, to see you again.” And he said “I was not very nice to you, was I?” I said, “No, no, no...I...Mr. Mitropoulos explained everything fine.” He said, “But you know I heard Koussevitsky play your second symphony...much more talent than I have.”

ETZ:

Oh that’s very lovely.

DD:

Which...which, you know, touched me so much and I didn’t know whether to believe him or whether he was making it up, you know, compensation. But that was the last time that I saw him.

ETZ:

That's, that's lovely.

DD:

Yeah.

ETZ:

David, I have another photograph here of a very handsome young man
Ahh. The young, the young man.

And the inscription is from that...the very thing that, that caused Rachmaninoff to pop up out of his seat.

That’s...that’s it. See, there’s that tubular bell.

[laughs] That’s...

My God it’s nice. I still used deep green ink then.

Really?

Yeah. You see?

Yes I do.

I still use it today.

Why?

I don’t know. It’s again one of those color fetishes. Green...See I’ve got green on today.
ETZ:

And you...you write with...you still write with ink? With your scores?

DD:

...no, no, because of this damn carpal tunnel stuff that developed in my hand, it got to be too painful, you know, having to use...and then lining up with those draft ink to get the bar lines. So what I do is with...I use the black wooden pencil. I've been doing this since Italy.

ETZ:

Yeah.

DD:

And then I have it Xeroxed. It’s much easier for me to work.

ETZ:

Well the copy machines are so good today, [?]....

DD:

Well, I don’t like the computer, you know, you know, I like to have my...That’s why when I see your manuscripts, when I see the facsimiles of yours, I feel more comfortable.

ETZ:

Yeah it’s funny some conductors feel that way that that they get...

DD:

If that personality...

ETZ:

They feel the personality behind it when they see the actual manuscript.

DD:

Even my students, they drive me up the wall, I said, “Look, I don’t want to see...don’t bring your stuff to the lessons on a computer. I want your manuscript. I get a great deal more about you. I learn about you from your handwriting. So please don’t.”
ETZ:

Interesting. It’s…

DD:

These are wonderful to have.

ETZ:

Yes, you see some of the ads are quite interesting.

DD:

Oh yes. There’s that strange Mr. Wetzler, who was an old friend from Germany, nobody knew who Mr. Weztler was, but, you see, already then Mitropoulos had ways of making programs. Zirato flipped his lid. He was, you see, I spoke Italian, so I said, "Bruno, per que se arrabiato? “Why are you so angry?” He said…I can’t say the Italian word here. It’s a dirty word. He said, “this terrible German music, where does Dimitri get…dig up this terrible stuff.” I said, “Well they were old friends when Mitropoulos studied with Busoni. They were in Busoni’s class together.” He said, “Vergangnoso.” But I love Bruno Zirato. They tell terrible stories about him, but I liked him.

ETZ:

Well, this brings me to ann interesting thing from my point of view. I have here some of the reviews of this, this first concert.

DD:

Was that the…where Virgil Thomson said it was like an invasion by the Panzer divisions…

ETZ:

Yes, that was specifically Mitropoulos was the…

DD:

…the Panzer attacks

ETZ:
...the militant. But he was...there were a number of things that are interesting that crop up in his review. But first I...the thing that’s so striking to someone who grew up when I did is how many reviews there were, how many newspapers.

DD:

Oh yes.

ETZ:

It’s, it’s quite extraordinary. How many were there in, in New York in those days?

DD:

And then you have the, I can remember seven in New York and then there were the ones in the suburbs, Long Island, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens. They all had their own newspaper and they all had professional music critics, you see. And then there were the magazines. The Saturday Evening…Culloden wrote, I believe, for the Saturday Review of Literature.

ETZ:

Yes, I know that.

DD:

Yeah, oh but we we had...we had many, many, many.

ETZ:

So it’s a very different situation than today where you have, you know, one, perhaps, paper writing about a concert.

DD:

Frankly I think that’s why audiences were larger. You see, I don’t think we’re losing audiences at our Philharmonic concerts or any...I don’t think it’s due to the fact that the younger generation are not interested in music. I don’t think it’s that at all. I think there isn’t the PR. See PR...everything is...the popular culture world gets the publicity...Time Magazine, even, Newsweek, Michael Walsh, whom I knew in Rochester as a student...He writes, he’s the music man for Time.

ETZ:

...for Time.
DD: Do you... Now and then there may be a review of an Elliott Carter piece... But, but what does it mainly? It's all the pop rock world. That's what gets into the magazines. And movie page... full page ads for movies, you know. So, it's that. People don't read about what's going on at concerts, or what Virgil would do, my article on Busoni that was in the...

ETZ: Mm hm, that's in here also.

DD: You see, does anyone ask me to write an article on, on a new work of mine? When Mr. Muzzard did my Eleventh Symphony, did any paper say, “Would you like to write an article perhaps on your symphony?” No. So, you know.

ETZ: So, the the print medium was much more vital...

DD: The print medium. People read newspapers. Today they watch TV and they read... they... the younger generation are watching all these things on TV that have to do with Michael Jackson and, you know, the ones that knock themselves out. In twenty years that's all gone, you know.

ETZ: It's it's interesting to me too... how... when you have so many people writing about the same event they can afford to take a tremendously, almost combative point of view...

DD: Exactly

ETZ: ...because you have these different points of view of the same thing.

DD: 

David Diamond interviewed by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich at Carnegie Hall on October 15, 1995. : http://www.loc.gov/item/has.200217612
And also don’t forget Ellen, that as a result of what the reviewers in the newspapers were doing, on the radio discussion programs…there were lots of radios, radio stations, well they weren’t called public broadcasting but they were stations that…WNCN, WHEC or something…where you would have a review of the Philharmonic's concert. They would have a panel. Now and then I think Lawrence Moss does that, now and then on one of the stations here. But these programs were reviewed…NBC Toscanini Concerts, Boston Symphony…all reviewed on radio and the newspaper. So, people knew what was going on.

ETZ:

It’s interesting to read Virgil’s review, which is very colorful of course, and…

DD:

Mmm hmm. He wrote well, very, very well.

ETZ:

He…I actually wrote this down. I thought it was so charming in an awful sort of way, that this was the Tea Table Stravinskyism of the Nadia Boulangerie.

DD:

Well of course Virgil had to get his little prickly pear thorns…

ETZ:

hands on the …

DD:

Yeah, why he did that ’cause I confronted him. I said, “Virgil that was a nasty thing. You’re just jealous because Mitropoulos hasn’t played you yet.”

ETZ:

[laughs] and also it seems to me that, that he levels the charge of Wagnerism at this gentleman who was on the program, Herman…

DD:

Wetzler
ETZ:

Hans Wetzler…and you, although he says that your Wagnerism comes by way of D’Indy, which is pretty hard to figure, but…

DD:

I don’t know what…where he got that little idea about, but

ETZ:

…but, it’s…we could talk a little bit in a moment about, about Wagner’s…about Friedlande Wagner and Mitropoulos…

DD:

Yes, Yes.

ETZ:

…but, something I just have to say as a composer is that it was very thrilling to me to read for instance one of these gentleman’s review. It seemed to me that you were a very young man and, there was a certain amount of patronizing of the older critics, you know, and…about your First Symphony and they talked about the…

DD:

Didn’t it…wasn’t it nominated for a Music Critic's…yes.

ETZ:

Oh yes of course it was. It was.

DD:

It was nominated for the Music Critic…and I think it was Bill Schuman’s Third Symphony that won it. And Leon Barzin had to play those two symphonies for the judges and an invited audience. And then as a result of that I believe there was a review by Olin Downes saying “Mr. Diamond’s symphony is brassy and youthful and bounding, but it’s Mr. Schuman’s symphony, which was awarded the Music Critics Circle, that is a vast, large structured work and the judges decided that as gifted as Mr. Diamond is, we had to give it to Mr. Schuman simply because it was much broader.” And I agreed completely. Completely.
ETZ:

Well, the thing that interested me so much is that while I think I'm fairly knowledgeable about the history of American music and certainly composers, this is the first time I'd encountered the name of Wetzler.

DD:

My...the first time I did too.

ETZ:

And having...

DD:

He's a three line listing in any of your Rieman's that you look up. He was never really even as a young he was, he was in I would say probably his seventies or eighties when this work...

ETZ:

Yes he was in his seventies according to one of these reviews.

DD:

Yeah. So that he wasn't really a very...I think Mitropoulos performed it again...typical of Mitropoulos’s great, great good nature...in this new biography that we have that just came out...

ETZ:

the Trotter

DD:

Mitropoulos, the Trotter book, you get a feeling that Mitropoulos very often...just as he... why would he send me the telegram that he'll play my symphony, you see. There was a goodness of will...

ETZ:

a kindness
DD:

…and a kindness…this man was extraordinary and…why should he not play his old friend from Busoni times, you see…

ETZ:

Oh sure

DD:

So I think that’s why…

ETZ:

I’ve, I think a performance is always a good thing, ’cause even if it’s a…I mean everyone deserves a hearing…but the thing that I was so struck by is that Wetzler was treated in the press with great seriousness, whereas they tended to patronize the, the young composer and his First Symphony, and now on Wednesday night, I’m going to be going to hear the David Diamond First Symphony played by the Juilliard Orchestra and your First Symphony is still alive and kicking and I…that thrills me…and it also kind of gives us a sort of perspective on the…we always worry about reviews and the power of the press…

DD:

Mmmm, yeah.

ETZ:

…but the music has to make its own life…

DD:

Yes, and what made me happy about the dress rehearsal today was that the, the orchestra, which is a superb orchestra, that these young people play that symphony with such a bend and then rhythmic security. And I would say about eight of them from different sections and different times of the rehearsal, came to me to say, “Mr. Diamond, it sounds as though you wrote it yesterday”, you know.

ETZ:
And the striking thing when you think about it, not only were these young people not born in 1941, but probably most of their parents weren’t born in 1941, when your First Symphony was born…so it’s.

That’s…that’s what made me think…and Gerry Schwartz brought this up. He said, you know, “For me it’s exciting that they find”…but then the whole program is a, is a kind, you know, doing another work, The Enormous Room from the…from 1947, that Szell first did…to hear that…and, and then the Janacek Sinfonietta with all those trumpets, you know, it sounds, that sounds as though it were written yesterday, too.

Yeah.

It’s pheno…and then the Prokofiev Symphony Concertante…it’s a fascinating piece. It’s a great program.

I, I sometimes think that all really wonderful music sounds as though on the one hand it had been written yesterday and as though it was always there.

Right. It’s music that was written, let’s say ten years ago, that you hear, let’s say today, and it does…and I hate to say this Ellen, but you know…all that avant-garde stuff that was played, you know, that they constantly…they forgot all about me and other composers that were writing, all the 1950s, you know…all that stuff…it’s…nobody performs it, you know…not even Boulez gets any performances except by…well Maderna died, so…but do any of the others…does Penderecki conduct Boulez…Boulez if he doesn’t conduct it himself…and it takes so long to rehearse, you see. Now our wonderful, beloved teacher Roger Sessions, thank heavens, but why didn’t they play his symphonies in his lifetime to, to cheer him up…

Yeah.
DD:
You know how depressed he would be about that.

ETZ:
Yeah

DD:
In his modest way, but... they didn’t.

ETZ:
He’s a, such a... [break in tape]

ETZ:
...it was. Stravinsky’s face always struck me as tremendously interesting...and on this we're...you have the...

DD:
Yeah. He was another sort of jockey type body...this little man with this big head and big nose.

ETZ:
Yes, I actually saw Stravinsky, but not Ravel. I just wanted to pull out this picture.

DD:
There’s our teacher.

ETZ:
This is in your studio at Juilliard, our beloved Roger Sessions, and who we were just talking about...

DD:
What a...what a musician he was.

ETZ:
And when you think of, of his impact as a teacher. It’s just been quite extraordinary.

Yes, and by the time you got to him, he was already beginning to age. He was beginning to slow down a little bit. When I got to him he was…

Young turk.

…very, very energetic…and oh that sepulchral voice.

Yes. Well actually I have a picture that, David, you sent to me.

Oh the one I took in Florence?

Yes, some years ago, this, this lovely picture of, of Roger Sessions in the 50s when he was in Italy

Yeah, you see how fill his lips are in that ’36…

Yes.

…and in that even…and the Roger Sessions that we remember in the last three years, the lips just…they disappeared. They were…he had a line. There were no lips.

Here’s a picture that I look of him that’s on the cover…
DD: You see his lips are very different there.

ETZ: …of this particular book.

DD: Of Andrea’s book, yes

ETZ: And we can do these later.

DD: I love those books.

ETZ: But now this was in 1980.

DD: Yeah

ETZ: This is very much the way I remember him…and…

DD: Yeah, but he was full, large. Never really overweight. Just a big, big, robust man.

ETZ: A person with an enormous impact on…

DD: And tremendous culture…

ETZ:
Yeah

DD:

...with Roger you talked about all subjects

ETZ:

Absolutely, I...

DD:

Do you remember how his day began? When he would come and stay at the Empire, I was staying there then, I’d find him down in the cafeteria early...The New York Times in one hand, folded over, two parts, and just the summing-up parts of all the news. He’d read that first just to get what was going on in the world and all the news at once. Then he’d start, then would come the egg, you know with the...with the pieces of bread in the, in the glass. [?] He had his little rituals for breakfast.

ETZ:

Yes, and his martinis for lunch, too. [laughs] Or whatever.

DD:

Lunch...and then his little flask the last years of his life, the flask.

ETZ:

Yeah, he was, he was a great man.

DD:

A very remarkable man.

ETZ:

You had such a relationship with Mitropoulos though it goes beyond the, just the performance of your First Symphony at Carnegie Hall...

DD:

Well, Ellen you know...you’ve read the Trotter book, and already the book is being reviewed and I’m getting phone calls and telegrams. I would not be here talking to you. He was the one who saved my life.
ETZ:

And in small ways as well as the large public ways...

DD:

Well if he hadn’t called the police, I would…the, the sleeping pills would have done their job. He called from Minneapolis, I think they were chopping down the door. I had a cold-water flat at 544 Hudson Street. It’s still there strangely enough, that building. He called the main police center and…See what I did, I’d gotten back, I’d gone out to Eddie Condon’s to hear jazz to try to cheer myself up. I was totally broke. You know it’s terrible when you...

ETZ:

And what year was this, David? Do you remember?

DD:

This was 1946, about ’46, ’47. I was totally broke. I’d had Guggenheims, I had been helped, I had…I was being played a great deal and suddenly you can’t get a position. Morton Gould’s orchestra was not functioning, the Hit Parade was not playing those particular weeks. I was down to nothing.

ETZ:

And you had been playing…you played in the Hit Parade and you played with Morton’s orchestra?

DD:

That’s right.

ETZ:

I understand you did some time behind a counter in a drug store...

DD:

at Walgreens

ETZ:

...you know whatever was...
DD:

That’s when I’m teach...when I’m studying at the Dalcroze with Roger. Mopped the floors at four in the morning for a dollar and earned three dollars jerking sodas. So I got little sleep and ...but I got all my counterpoint done...that never, you know, took time away from the work. Maybe that’s why today I…I don’t know, people say, “You really made eighty with, with all the difficulties healthwise and all.” Remember how sick I was those years you were...

ETZ:

I do remember. Yeah.

DD:

Had cancer, leukemia, and all that, and somehow I got through it all. But just think if those pills...I took twelve Seconals...and six o’clock in the morning got back from Eddie Condon’s...I wanted to borrow some money. We...this was the jazz, Eddie Condon’s...I loved going to his place on West Third Street...I thought I’d borrow ten dollars from Eddie...he used to give me a fiver now and then...Sinatra wasn’t in New York. I couldn’t borrow any money from him. He used to give me a couple bucks every now and then. So, I don’t know. I was just at such a terrible state. I wasn’t thinking about music. I wasn’t thinking about the family. I was just too far gone and I just decided because I had difficulties sleeping anyways...so, I had this prescription. So, I just downed them all and having had liquor before, they got to work. But I picked up the phone before I took them and Mitropoulos was the closest person to me. Lenny Bernstein was already all over the country. He was going to Europe. I couldn’t call Lenny. You see, there was nobody. I didn’t get along with his sister Shirley, so I was stuck. And, I said “Dimitri, I, I really can’t go on and...I, I just feel terrible and will you take care of all my music? Be sure that, that you don’t let anything happen to it”...and, I said goodbye and hung up. And then I took the pills and I think it was maybe...I was getting a little drowsy but I could still hear this banging downstairs, and then this crashing into the door downstairs and up come these cops, and off they hauled me to St. Vincent and oh, I still remember the pumping. It was dreadful. Anybody who’s had their stomach pumped knows what that was like. Oooh. Anyway, that’s it. They were still...they were getting gelatinous...some, a couple of them. So, I was in for two days and luckily I didn’t get arrested and...you know if you attempt suicide you’re in for...
ETZ:
Was it a crime?

DD:
[nods]

ETZ:
...but didn’t he also...I remember you telling me once he gave you an overcoat and some clothes and...

DD:
Oh, a jacket to come to Philadelphia to hear him conduct at the, what’s the place called outside...

ETZ:
The Academy of Music?

DD:
No, the, the summer...

ETZ:
Oh, Robin Hood Dell?

DD:
Robin Hood Dell. He felt that I should have a new jacket and a pair of shoes. So, he gave me a jacket and then he gave me money to buy shoes, and then I would get his secretary, Faith Reed, would give me every two weeks a check for fifty, sometimes a hundred, until I got a next commission, you see...so.

ETZ:
And what were commissions in those days?

DD:
The Second Violin Concerto…that’s Rodzinski after the...
ETZ:

Yes, we’ll get to him in a moment.

DD:

…that great story. He managed to get twenty thousand out of Mr. Percevil, who had invented laundromats, you see.

ETZ:

Ooooh.

DD:

So he was a millionaire and so I could ask for that.

ETZ:

That was a lot of money in those days.

DD:

Plus the copying of the costs…copying costs taken care of…So, I bought myself, oh, I bought two suits and two jackets…I went to Kaiser’s…I hear it’s still down in the Village.

ETZ:

Twenty thousand…twenty thousand in what year?

DD:

…forty…let’s see I finished the concerto in ’48. So, it’s ’47.

ETZ:

That’s amazing…I mean…I imagine in those days you could have bought a pretty fancy house for twenty thousand dollars.

DD:

It lasted. It lasted, yeah.

ETZ:
That’s terrific.

As a matter of fact I did want to get an apartment because the girl I was living with, that wonderful painter, Allela Cornell, she had committed suicide and that had contributed to my…

…to your wanting to...

… to my depressions too. We were sharing that cold-water flat.

It, it struck me when I was looking at this program from 1941, December 21st, this being two weeks after Pearl Harbor, what was it like as a young composer growing up during the war? And did things change a great deal?

Well I think I told you…There again, I was very lucky…right after the symphony was done, my great friend Irene Lee, who was working for Hal Wallace in Hollywood at Warner Brothers. She had sublet to have a place in New York…she had sublet an apartment at the Gainsworth Studios on Central Park South, and that apartment belonged to Artie Shaw. So, one night she had a little party and Artie was there and he said, “What are you doing these days? I heard your symphony, you know, was a wonderful piece and what are you doing these days?” I said, “Well, frankly I’m looking for a job.” He said, “Looking for a job! You’ve got it.” I said, “Doing what?” He said, “I’m taking you to Hollywood with me and you’re going to teach me counterpoint and harmony. I’ll pay you twenty five a week.” That’s it…and that’s how I got out to Hollywood.

That’s…that’s so interesting. I mean Artie Shaw. I guess a lot of people would still recognize the name as the swing clarinetist.
Still crazy Artie and has got a new novel coming out. He commissioned some composers to write clarinet concertos but Norman Dello Joio didn’t finish his.

ETZ:
Yeah.

DD:
And I refused to write one because he insulted my beloved Lana Turner. He was married to her and he treated her like a pig.

ETZ:
Well, wasn’t he married about eight times?

DD:
That’s right.

ETZ:
So, he didn’t single her out for special …[laughs]

DD:
Well… …he made her miserable. He wanted her to read War and Peace. You don’t throw books at Lana Turner, who’s just a young evolving actress, got enough to do at the studio. We fight still. This I gotta tell fast to you. This is a [?]. He had a son by Betty Kern, Jerome Kern’s daughter…Stevie, wonderful little kid and I called him two weeks ago to find out whether his novel was finished that’s about to come out. I said, “How is Stevie doing?” He said, “Don’t bring up his name!”…talks a mile a minute…”Don’t bring up his name. That guy doesn’t walk into my house. You know he’s tattooed from his little toe to the top of his head. Doesn’t get into this door. Up his!” That’s the way, you know he…

ETZ:
[laughs]

DD:
I said. “Artie, he’s your son.” “Gotta get the goddamned tattoos off. He’s covered with them.”
ETZ:
I guess Ravel would have liked that too. [laughs]

DD:
I wonder. I think that he would have not liked. [laughs]

ETZ:
David, when you, when you went to Hollywood, this is when you met Stravinsky and Schoenberg?

DD:
No, no. Stravinsky was Paris.

ETZ:
Paris. But, but Stravinsky would have been in Hollywood then when you were there.

DD:
That’s right, and broke...broke. If Frau Mahler-Werfel were not living there...If Salka Viertel, who was Schoenberg’s great friend...See, Schoenberg at least had his job at the university, as small amount of money as they paid him, but he still had a job teaching. Stravinsky didn’t want to teach. His money, his royalties were frozen in Europe because of the war, you see, and Associated Music Publishers were not giving him big advances. After all, what was he giving them? Warner Brothers made him write little cues to see whether he could write for the movies. So there was some movie on the Norwegian quizzlings. So, he wrote those pieces which became the Four Norwegian Moods. They didn’t like the music. Korngold turned them down. So there he was without a job until...

ETZ:
Korngold was a music director at Warner Brothers?

DD:
At Warners at that time, yes. And Max Steiner, too. So these guys ganged up on him. I mean this world famous Stravinsky can’t write for the movies. So, it was not a happy time, but they were, they were friends but Frau Mahler got him some money, and Salka Viertel got many...Paul Mooney gave him a check every now and then and then would send a check.
ETZ:

And then his assets became unfrozen

DD:

And then once the war…the money released from those German…Schott was whom he
was with…When they had their factory renovated they found all the plates of his Violin
Concerto, everything was destroyed, but they did get royalties, back royalties to him. So,
he was able to get going again.

ETZ:

Good. Meanwhile you, you wrote film, several film scores.

DD:

That, that would be ’49.

ETZ:

‘49

DD:

But in ’41 I was trying to…Artie wanted to introduce me, but then Warner Brothers was
sewed up between Steiner and Adolf Deutsch, who was one of the judges, by the way, on
that Elfrida Whiteman Fellowship that I won. That’s how I met Gershwin...

ETZ:

Really?

DD:

…and when I won for the Sinfonietta…and George had died in 1937. So, had he lived I
bet you he could’ve gotten me a job like that.

ETZ:

Yeah. What was he like?

DD:
Gershwin, wonderful. Warm, marvelous. The work I submitted was under pseudonym. This was for a scholarship Paul Whiteman was giving for young Americans. So I sent in a...I wrote work...even though I’m getting up early in the morning and jerking sodas, I wrote the Sinfonietta reflecting the spirit of American life. That’s what the, the thing in the Times said...

ETZ:

And this was in the 30s?

DD:

This was 1934, the fall. And the judges announced would be Deems Taylor, George Gershwin, Robert Simon, and Adolf Deutsch, who was staff composer at Warner Brothers.

ETZ:

Hmm.

DD:

So I submitted it under the pseudonym Selva Oscura, you know the, I’d read Dante, so the obscure soul...So now, they opened the envelopes after all the scores are read and they see David Diamond, Rochester, New York, and the story goes Robert Simon, who was the critic for the New Yorker, tells me that Gershwin said, “Rochester, New York, can you imagine? My sister Frankie lives there.” And sure enough Frances was married to Leo Godovsky, Leopold Godovsky, the son of the pianist Godovsky and Leopold, the...

ETZ:

of the opera

DD:

the husband of Frances was working on Kodachrome, Kodak, Kodachrome it was called, color photography in Rochester. So they were there, you see. And I knew Frances. Ahh, so...then comes the party, now he, you know, so oh, wonderful. Now Paul Whitman gives the party and I have to get a tux. So here Mr. Saminsky gives me his tux and I had to quickly get it fixed up. I took my wonderful Winnie Lansing, the girl that I was crazy about at that time and we go to the party and there’s Gershwin chomping on his cigar and he’s...comes right for me... "Hey kid, where’d you learn to orchestrate that way?" [laughs]
ETZ:
And what did you say?

DD:
I said, “Mr. Sessions.” [laughs] That’s all, Mr. Sessions.

ETZ:
David, let’s back up …go a little forward and a little backward here to Rounds, which was…

DD:
That’s Mr. Mitropoulos’s doing.

ETZ:
Didn’t he commission it?

DD:
He commissioned it, yeah.

ETZ:
But then Rodzinski did the, the premiere performance.

DD:
Mm-mm. No. What happened was

ETZ:
That’s…Are you sure?

DD:
No. This is very interesting…Oh with the Philharmonic, yes.

ETZ:
With the Philharmonic, yes.
DD:  
Dimitri came out of...I usually met him after his rehearsals 'cause he liked to take me to lunch a great deal and sort of check on me whether I was okay. So, I met him, it was about, ooh I would say quarter of one, the rehearsal I think finished at twelve thirty-something and this man came down the stairs...I've never seen...If you've ever saw a face of despair, this was the face of despair. I said, "Dimitri, what happened? You look as...what, what happened?" He said...he had a way of taking you by the hand and pulling you on...and he led me out to 56th Street and he took me under the arm and walking and he said "I don't hear anymore. I don't hear." And I said, "What don't you hear?" The rehearsal was Schoenberg's Erwartung, and evidently the men in the orchestra gave him a terrible hard time. He said "Can you imagine that Linzer. He's trying to test whether I can hear those harmonies." And he stops, puts up his hand and he said, "What note's going on there. I've got a b, b-flat or something. What notes going on?" Can you imagine doing this...this stop the rehearsal. He said, "Dear I don't hear this music anymore." I said, "I, I don't believe it, but you, you..." He said, "It's such depressing music. So depressing." And he'd been playing Krenek symphonies, you know.

ETZ:  
Mmm hmmm.

DD:  
And Schoenberg's Orchestral Variations, Op. 31, almost every other year, every year, there was a new Krenek symphony, very hard music, tough music. And he simply...finally we got to the, to the greasy spoon. He said, "Dear, I want you to write me a happy piece. Somebody's got to be writing happy music. You, you write very good Allegros. Write me a happy piece. Make me happy." So, I, I thought, well, I'll write him a string piece. So, I heard, you know [sings]...So, he played it first in Minneapolis and then played it with guest tours and then wanted to do it and record it in New York, but because Goddard Lieberson and David Oppenheim didn't want to take time out for a string orchestra piece when they had to get a Chausson symphony recorded and something else

ETZ:  
Was Goddard Lieberson then...

DD:
ETZ:
Head of CBS
DD:
That’s right.
ETZ:
At that time even?
DD:
Yeah. And here’s Goddard, an old friend of mine from Rochester, but…he got the Romeo and Juliet music recorded but the Rounds he didn’t. So, Dimitri was very upset. So it didn’t get done by the Philharmonic because they were supposed to record it with him, you see.
ETZ:
But we have a program from the Philharmonic here at Carnegie Hall…
DD:
Mmm hmm.
ETZ:
…in 1946 with Rodzinski.
DD:
That’s right. That’s Rodzinski, but that’s after…
ETZ:
Is this Rodzinski?
DD:
Yeah, that’s…that’s right.
I never knew him.

DD:

Yeah, well I told you the story.

ETZ:

Yes. Please tell me again. I love that story…that’s a...

DD:

Well it’s by way of…well I better make the introduction. Arturo Rodzinski for years, when he was in Chicago, when he was in Cleveland still, I would send scores, Koussevitsky play…I sent the Second Symphony…nothing, nothing. I would see him at the Russian Tea Room, so…I was usually at the bar having a cocktail. He’d come in. So, one day I got off the stool and I said, “Mr Rodzinski, I sent you some scores of mine and did you ever receive them?” He took one look at me and walked on. So that was that. I left it alone. Now, next year, this time I didn’t have two martinis is the story, so I had one martini. And the bar was here and over here were the round tables and the benches, you know, where you eat. And so this time as I saw him coming in I just swiveled around on this chair and I said, “Mr. Rodzinski, I wrote you a letter last week” Oh! I must tell you before…Leonard Bernstein, who was his assistant then said “David, he wants me to read your Second Symphony.” I said, “Oh great then I can come to the…” “No you can’t, he said, keep you out…but get up, way up on top but don’t…I don’t want not a sound out of you up there.” So I get up…somehow I got up to the last, what do they call it, the third balcony or something and I try not but it did, you know, [makes noises] hear coming down the stairs, you know, they could hear. Rodzinski heard and said, “Diamond’s up there! Out! Out!” That’s all I had to hear and I think he heard about six bars and he stopped. I guess I’m really responsible for his having stopped the whole thing. Anyway, I go to the Russian Tea Room and half hour later in he comes and I said “You pig! You son of a bitch!” And I hauled off…and went flying against the bench. He wasn’t hurt, luckily. Mr. Kaye, Mr. Kaye, who was the owner of the restaurant, he got a hold of me and said “Don’t you ever come back again.” I went home and oh, Lenny called me and gave me such a…he said, “You need help!” I said, “No, that son of bitch needs help. I don’t need the help.” And here he was taking out his gun and rehearsals and putting it on the thing, you know.

ETZ:

Yes, he had quite a stormy history…
DD: He had a pistol.

ETZ: …of his own and I always…

DD: Yes, now the nice things…

ETZ: I never believed that that story with the pistol…

DD: Oh no, no I saw it.

ETZ: …is it really true?

DD: Oh yes, I saw it. All the men…Lenny saw it. Didn’t Helena when you spoke…

ETZ: Well everybody told me about this but it just seems…

DD: Oh no, he couldn’t come out. He was a sick, sick, sick…

ETZ: a little far-fetched, you know, to have a…to carry your pistol to rehearsal.

DD: No, no, absolutely. Oh this was his security you know. This was the great…this was his…Now, what happened was that I get a call from his wife Helena. This big bass voice says, “David, come over to the house.” I said, “What? What for? I don’t wanna see your
husband.” “You must come. Artur forgives you.” I said, “I don’t…well I haven’t forgiven him, I haven’t forgotten”… “Come over, it is something wonderful.” So, I get over to the house and I come and he’s sitting on, on the sofa with his adorable little son Ricky, who I…Is he out in San Francisco Opera now or something?

ETZ:

I think so, he’s in management there.

DD:

He’s an adorable little kid and everything. And so…Oh before that, Helena said in the vestibule, “Please don’t make any scenes because, you know, Artur did forgive you.” So, I come in and said, “Mr. Rodzinski, good afternoon.” “Good afternoon, sit down here for a minute.” So I sat down. “Now listen to me. God has spoken to me.” [laughing] I swear to God. “God has spoken to me and told me to forgive you. Now come inside. There’s a gentleman I want you to meet.” So, he puts Ricky down. Ricky goes off with the nurse that was there. And we go and I this very pleasant looking man with a very, very handsome woman. Her name was Doritha Powers. She was known as a fairly good violinist, but not really a great one. Carol Glenn at that time was considered the, the top notch and Ida Haendel from Canada was considered the big one. And so, “This is Mr. Arthur Percival and now I’m going to close the doors and you will talk and work things out.” So, Percival says, “Oh, I’m very happy to meet you, and this is my wife Doritha Powers and you will write a violin concerto for her.” All I could think is that God certainly did speak, there’s no doubt about it. So, I asked

ETZ:

[laughs] in mysterious ways.

DD:

In ways. So, I said to Doritha, I said, “Do you know my violin piano music?” She said, “I heard Mr. Szigeti play your sonata at Carnegie Hall.” “Oh,” I said, “Well, I’m glad.” “And I know your First Violin Concerto.” I said, “Wonderful, I’m delighted. So, then I will write another concerto for you, and I’ve heard you play, so I know…Do you want a really, a big-scale work? Do you want a modest work? Do you want a big cadenza in both movements…tell me a little bit of what kind of concerto do you want?” She said, “No, I leave that up to you.” And so I was waiting now for money to be mentioned, you know… How much is this going to be? If God spoke then it better be, you know…so…
A few sheckles.

So when I said, “Mr. Percevil, your wife is so amenable. I’m delighted that she will leave it up to me to write the kind of work I want. How much would you, would you pay for this work?” He said, “Why don’t you give me a figure.” And for some strange reason two-oh came to mind. So, God must have spoken this. So, I said, “Does twenty thousand seem reasonable enough? Half down and half on completion of the work and copying costs.” He said, “That’s fine. That’s fine.” And right up there drew. Now unbeknownst to me I didn’t know that there were two little sons that Mr. Percevil had…King and I forget the other son’s name, who would grow up and both become lawyers…and only in recent years did Gerard Schwartz manage to get that piece away because they wouldn’t give up the original manuscript after Doritha died...

Oh, they owned the manuscript.

They owned it. There was nothing stipulated in the contract for that. At any rate, I wrote the work...

But that was a princely sum in those days.

Yes. And so I bought myself the clothes and I was able to get a home and I gave my mother a little bit of the money and my sister a little bit of the money. And this kept me going for quite a while. I spent the year composing the…she played it, oh now comes the thing…Koussevitsky had Rodzinski over because they bought a farm right on in Stockbridge near Tanglewood. So, Koussevitsky came over and Szell came over, ‘cause they…the idea was that they would engage her to play with their orchestras. Well, to tell the truth, she had learned it by heart but she wasn’t that good enough for...

But that was a princely sum in those days.
Really?

DD:

Yeah. So, the result was that Jacques Singer, who had the Vancouver Symphony, had her play it with him and I have acetates of it. It’s alright. I mean, she gets through it but it’s not…until Gerry gets it recorded and performed with his concertmaster Ilka Tovey…Now Joshua Bell the other night, playing with Gerry, Joshua says he wants very much to see it because he heard the recording. He said, “This is for me.”

ETZ:

Oh good.

DD:

“This concerto’s for me. I would love to have the music.” So, now finally Gerry said, “You haven’t heard from Percevil”…the son, the one that wouldn’t release the parts or anything…but to Gerry he did. But he made Gerry pay a certain amount of money, you see. So I think what will happen is that my publisher will…who has a Xerox set…will just send it and make a copy of the piano rehearsal score and send it to Joshua. And let’s hope Joshua will play it.

ETZ:

Yes. I hope so. So Rodzinski did your Rounds in ‘46…

DD:

So that’s after…

ETZ:

and it grew out of that…

DD:

Yeah. So, after the God story and the commissioning it…then he, he now plays The Rounds and what a fantastic…I have an acetate of it…

ETZ:

Oh I’d love to hear it.
And Yehudi Menuhin was on the program

Yes, Yehudi played the what, the Brahms Violin Concerto was it?

I think it was Brahms…I think it was Brahms.

I just put that program away. Yes, he…the Brahms Violin Concerto.

It op…Did he open the program with Rounds?

He opened the program with Rounds and then the Prokofiev Fifth Symphony…

That’s it! And what a performance that was. Yes, that’s when I changed my whole tune about Rodzinski.

Yeah.

And I even got a little, a little weird I must say because when it was over, I go backstage and without keeping my mouth shut I say the following, “Mr. Rodzinski, God certainly loves you because that was one of the greatest performances you gave of my piece.” And he says, “And what about the other works?!” [laughs]

You don’t like the other tie, right?
I said, "The Fifth Symphony Prokofiev…" He’s like, "How ‘bout that Scherzo? Too much meowing, don’t you think?" He hates when it’s like [makes a noise]. Too much meowing.

Well he must have been a very… [break in tape]

For someone who was born in Poland but really made his major career here…’cause he was with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the…He was here in Carnegie with the New York…

Chicago Symph…And don’t forget God didn’t evidently help him out much when he was with those orchestras because, you know, they got rid of him.

Yes I think he had very stormy relations…

Oh boy! He made hell on wheels for the mangers and the trustees.

L.A., Cleveland,

Every one.

New York, Chicago.

Every one.
ETZ:
...he was also an assistant to Stokowski...

DD:
Right

ETZ:
...in Philadelphia and we'll get to Stokie in a, in a little bit, but...

DD:
And was a great opera conductor.

ETZ:
Yeah.

DD:
Really. He would give concert versions of Elektra and Fidelio since...

ETZ:
I believe he was the first to do that, wasn't he?

DD:
To start that, right. Then Mitropoulos began doing it with Wozzeck and some of the others.

ETZ:
...here are some wonderful little programs also after Rounds. Here’s a, let’s see which is first, Spivakovsky, Tossy Spivakovsky.

DD:
Oh yes, the violin and piano pieces, right.

ETZ:
This is with Jan Baer at the piano. Jan Baer. Is that the same Jan Baer who...
DD:  
I thought...at the piano I thought it was a man named Kornman.

ETZ:  
Well, this says Jan Baer at the piano. I knew Jan as an assistant conductor at the Met…

DD:  
Is this the premiere? Is the premiere, because I thought the premiere was with a pianist named Kornman.

ETZ:  
This is the world premiere.

DD:  
Oh...see my memory slipped on this.

ETZ:  
And this says the Canticle and Perpetual Motion

DD:  
Perpetual Motion. I thought it was Kornman. Okay, that’s, that’s interesting. I must look that up.

ETZ:  
And I notice, you know, one of the ways in which this would be different from a program today is that Spivakovsky did the Mendelssohn Concerto with piano on the program.

DD:  
Oh yes, he liked doing that very much.

ETZ:  
Did you see this? There’s a wonderful ad for corsets next to it.
[laughs] Girls still wear dresses like…well, at least the upper part.

ETZ:
[laughs]

DD:
Jan Baer…that’s right.

ETZ:
Yes, I knew Jan at the Met as the assistant conductor there and...Now that was in ’47… …that’s the Canticle and Perpetual Motion.

DD:
Right.

ETZ:
But here’s the Szigeti program in ’48, where he did your Sonata.

DD:
That’s right. Oh that was a great night.

ETZ:
That must have been something very special, ’cause this was the…

DD:
Oh the whole program…first time the Prokofiev sonata was played…

ETZ:
Did Brahms, G Major

DD:
Yeah…And then Bach

ETZ:
He did Bach at the end, which is kind of interesting…but he did the Prokofiev F…
DD: But wasn’t the Prokofiev the first time?

ETZ: ...it doesn’t say.

DD: I thought it was the first time in New York.

ETZ: It doesn’t say. Yours is described as the first New York performance…but…and then he did…he ended the program with a Bach solo sonata.

DD: Oh, that was so impressive, his doing that, you know, it was so sort of the great musician telling us this is the music he really loves.

ETZ: Here’s a picture of him from 1948, which is…

DD: Ah yes, I’ve got that at home, yeah. Ah, he was wonderful. This was a man who really played contemporary music, played the old, and you know he wrote so wonderfully on the Beethoven Sonatas, that small book he wrote.

ETZ: Yes, and there’s another picture.

DD: Yeah that’s very typical. Yeah, he was extra special.

ETZ: He signed a number of these to Carnegie Hall, which is…
DD:

He was marvelous. He came to Rochester to play as soloist. I can’t remember… I can’t remember who the conductor was, but he was staying at a little hotel near the Eastman Theater and he asked me to come to meet him for breakfast. So, I arrive for breakfast and he came down. He had a black eye. It was purple still completely discolored. I said, Yashka, what happened to you? He said, “Those sleeping pills. I took two sleeping pills and I walked into the damn toilet door.” [laughs]

ETZ:

[laughs]

DD:

I said, “What are you going to do about covering it up?” He said, “Ahhh, some, some girl at the, in the manicurist is going to find something.” I said, “but doesn’t it hurt? Will you be alright?” He said, “I’ll be alright. It’s not the first time I got a black eye.” I said, “Who gave you a black eye?” He said, “My wife.” [laughs]

ETZ:

Well. [laughs]

DD:

Wanda.

ETZ:

Your next big performance at Carnegie Hall was with Louisville Orchestra…

DD:

That I don’t think… I don’t think I attended that.

ETZ:

…and that was… this was 1950…

DD:

What date is it?
ETZ:

December 29, 1950.

DD:

I was…I think I stayed on in Italy in that …I don’t think I attended that, no.

ETZ:

So, you…When did you go to Italy exactly for…

DD:

You mean the first time?

ETZ:

No, I mean after this period we’ve been talking about, the 40s…

DD:

Oh, when I decided to go live there?

ETZ:

Yeah.

DD:

I received a Fulbright. I asked for a Fulbright to Italy because I spoke the language and I thought it would be good to get a professorship at one of the universities. So, it worked out and I was attached to the university in Rome and that would be…let’s see, I wrote the music for the Rose Tattoo, the original production with Maureen Stapleton in 1950. So it would be, yeah, right after that I left. So it’s ’51 that I went to Rome. I was there for the full Fulbright year then got a renewal and decided Rome’s just too hectic, I’d go to Florence. And they…I gave lectures all over Italy through the U.S. Information Service. And then, lo and behold I foolishly came back to the States, having…

ETZ:

Why foolishly?
Because, you know, they paid you in lira. They pay you in the money of the country. Now you could not at that time change whatever you had left and they gave you quite a lot of money…you could not change lira into dollars and take it back with you to the States. So, I bought up a lot of music that I wanted to, went back to the States, called Lenny about a job of some kind. And…at, just as I was getting to the, to give him my passport, one of the guys takes it away and a guy comes with a thing and puts it right against my leg and I realized it was what you call a Geiger counter. I don’t know what the hell he was doing with a Geiger counter…and did it to my violin that I was carrying, and wouldn’t give me my passport back. And so my sister had come and she got hysterical and began screaming and then the policeman came, and the customs man said, “I think you should have a lawyer. You should get a lawyer immediately.” So, I remembered that I had a lawyer by the name of Fish and he called…he knew right away what, what it was all about. He called a man named Boudin, Judge Boudin…a lawyer by the name of Boudin, who turned out to be the father of that Kathy Boudin, who with about five other girls, they were called “The Weathermen”, blew up a house on 11th Street.

ETZ:

Hmm…Near the Carters. Yeah.

DD:

Yeah. It was a good idea getting Boudin. So before I knew it I was being questioned, the McCarthy committee was already at work and I couldn’t get my passport to go back to Italy. So that’s when Lenny got me into…I played in On the Town in the ‘40s, but then I think Lenny’s…it was called Wonderful Town. It was. He said, “I’ll get Stanzik to get you in the pit.”

ETZ:

So you played fiddle in the...

DD:

Viola. I played viola in that.

ETZ:

…viola in the pit.
DD:
Yeah. So that pulled through and then the lawyers worked until I got my passport back.

ETZ:
Do you remember the exact year, or…

DD:
Yeah, ’53.

ETZ:
’53.

DD:
Yeah. And then I finally got the passport and I went back to Florence, I kept the couple on. And I was there and then my mother was dying in ’56 and I come back and the same thing, my passport’s taken away. Now I have to go to Washington. So I went down with Judy Holliday, who was married to David Oppenheimer at that time, Stella Adler and Norris Hottin. We were considered big reds. Now why…what I foolishly did…I was playing in Candide also, and a woman came down with a piece of paper. Nobody had warned me that you don’t…if you touch a subpoena, it means you have to accept it, you see. So I saw this woman, Dolores something, her name, there was an informer at work for local 802. His name was Max Marlin. We finally found that out. At the back of the theater was Lillian Hellman, who was still working on the storyline to get it approved during trials. And she was going like that. And I couldn’t connect between this woman coming at me with the thing and saying “Where’s, where’s Diamond down there?” with this thing…and there’s Lillian going like that. So I did…so I touched it and that was it. Now I have it framed. It sits on the third floor, my subpoena. So I went down.

ETZ:
So you were subpoenaed for…

DD:
So, a year before I could get my passport back from that damn Mrs. Ashley or…

ETZ:
What was that like? You went to Washington to testify before McCarthy’s committee?

Oh it was awful. Yeah, they wanted me to give names. Jerry Robbins gave names. He was down there. He gave names. Gaj Kazan, Elia Kazan gave names. I didn’t.

And the, the crime was having belonged to a particular organization or known certain people, or...

That we…well, there were several. First of all in, when I was at the Dalcroze School… I came from a socialist family, my father was always a socialist. When I got to New York, this is deep Depression years and I was always interested in the Soviet Union, you know. I didn’t know yet about those purge trials. That would be the following year. And I didn’t like Stalin. I didn’t like what I’d heard about him, but I joined the Pierre De Geyter Club. Elie Siegmeister was a member, all the kids that came to Roger Sessions’s analysis class… there was Irwin Heilner, Vivian Fine, we all belonged to the Pierre De Geyter, but I thought I would join the Young Communist League. You know Aaron Copland wrote Young Pioneers, you know, [sings: “into the streets May first”]. He won the, the New Masses Prize. Aaron got into plenty trouble, too. So we were there and Stella, I remember Stella Adler with all her great elegance she would…she said, “Why are you asking me stupid questions? Do I look like a woman who would have anything to do with Communists? Feh!” [?] She was extraordinary. Nori Hottin did belong to the Communist Party and he had gone to the Soviet Union several times. So he got into hot water. Let’s see, and then when my turn came this idiot, Roy Cohn, boy he was a monster even then. He looked up at me and he said…just kept doing this at me…”You…you and Bertolt Brecht were at Lindy’s weren’t you? Were you having dinner at Lindy’s one night with Bertolt Brecht?” We had corned beef sandwiches but Marc Blitzstein was also there and Oscar Lavant. So what is, you know, you had…Bertolt Brecht. So I said, “No, there were others there.” See it didn’t occur to me that he was giving...

Trying to get names, yeah.
Yeah. So, I, I said, “Mr. Cohn, I was a member of the Young Communist League. That was 1933, 1934, 1935. I withdrew immediately after I went to Barcelona, wanted to join the Lincoln Brigade, and they wouldn’t have me and I was informed very clearly what Stalin and the Russian Communists were doing against the American Lincoln Brigade and against Roosevelt. And I came out of that party very fast. So I don’t know what you want of me. I have had nothing to do with the Communist Party since then.” He said, “Couldn’t you tell us about some of your friends like,” and he gave names. And I said, “I have no idea.” He said, “Oh it’s obvious you’re making, you’re lying. You’re a very bad liar, you know.” And McCarthy is sitting there sweating and with these cold blue eyes looking at me and every now and then he’d go like that, you know. And then the other guy, Schine was his name…Cohn’s boyfriend it turned out. Everybody knew it was a boyfriend, but, you know, only until he died did they know that he was gay. All the time he was covered up. He was a real anti… homophobe…phobe, homosexual, you know, he’s one of those terrors. At any rate he got his comeuppance the way he died. But I didn’t give any names. But when I found out that Kazan and Jerry Robbins did…I have a hard time still saying hello to Jerry, but little by little I suppose I will. But it was a lousy time. It took a year to get my passport back. I had to keep paying the rent in Florence ’cause I had the couple there and I had taken out a lease. But it all worked out.

ETZ:

It’s interesting, sometimes one thinks that the problems, the bad moments in our lives… when you’re a person in the arts, can somehow transform these into artistic energy and it’s very interesting to see how that has not wavered at all, that…

DD:

You know, Ellen, that’s…that particular situation was the first time that actually I was unable to work, to compose. I was so depressed by what was going on in America that I couldn’t wait to get the hell out of this country. And then of course later on when I got back to Florence came the Rosenberg business, you know. Now why they had to execute them, I do not know. It’s not completely been proven that they were spies. Some say yes, some…Hiss I knew very well. I still see him. He used to come to Joe Machlis’s parties. Now I know that was a trumped-up business, completely. They had a very innocent man all those years in jail. But, you know, I was going to not come back to this country until it was all over with because I didn’t want to have anything to do with a country that would do that, during the Eisenhower administration particularly. So, I stayed on and got all that music, almost all of those symphonies that I got done, all the string quartets. I worked
because I had my ASCAP check. I had my advances from Pierce Southern, Mr. Lachond was still...he knew all the troubles I was having. So I had...well, in Italy it made do. It wouldn’t have worked in America. Then Irene Diamond, when she married Aaron Diamond she had more money so she began to help me with some money.

ETZ:

And she’s no relation, just the name?

DD:

No relation whatsoever, no.

ETZ:

So then you were basically...were you in Italy during this period where Munch did your Sixth Symphony with Boston here?

DD:

I came back for that and Leinsdorf had arranged for me to write a work for his, the Philharmonic in Rochester, the Sinfonia Concertante. And they were done. Munch did the Sixth Symphony the same week. So I flew from Rochester to Boston. Then he took it on tour, brought it into New York, and then I came home for the premiere of the Sinfonia Concertante.

ETZ:

Mmm hmm. And the Symphony No. 4 in 1958 in January with Bernstein?

DD:

That’s Lenny. Yeah, yeah. That he first did with the Boston Symphony

ETZ:

Mmm hmm.

DD:

And then he did that in ’48, I believe, with the Boston Symphony. Then...

ETZ:

Yes he had done it in ’48.
You see, now people…this is not against my wonderful old friend, and he knows how unhappy he made me. One of the things that people always say, “How is it possible that you were so close and he didn’t show any favoritism. He should have played you every year. He had the City Center Orchestra. Why didn’t he play your Second Symphony? Koussevitsky played it with such success. Why didn’t he play it the very next year? Why did he let two seasons go by?” I said, “Don’t ask me. I would ask him and he’d say, ‘I’ll do it next year.’”

ETZ:
Yeah.

DD:
Now that even went as far as the Ninth Symphony that he did in ’85 with the ACO.

ETZ:
Mmm hmm…ACO.

DD:
…“David, this orchestra stinks. I’m doing it next year with the Philharmonic.” He never did, you see. So one can have a very dear friend, but he was not like Mitropoulos. But, as Trotter says in the book, for the friendship, the close friendship we had, Mitropoulos did not play a great deal of my music, but gives the reason: his manager Mr. Gains, and then his troubles with the Philharmonic. So how could he have played me more, you see.

ETZ:
Bernstein did the world premiere with Boston of the Fourth Symphony…

DD:
with Boston and then ten years later he did it with…

ETZ:
ten years later he did it here in Carnegie with the New York Philharmonic…

DD:
and then recorded it

ETZ:
And recorded it then.

DD:
Yeah.

ETZ:
Do you remember when the American Composers did my First Symphony?

DD:
Yes

ETZ:
Which was in 1982…

DD:
Right

ETZ:
Your Fourth Symphony was on that program.

DD:
That's right. That's right.

ETZ:
So in a way, I guess as composers we would like to be, you know, played to pieces but it’s wonderful…

DD:
I was very proud of, I was very proud of that because I thought, “Finally, two Sessions students are, you know, former students, are together. This rarely happens. You know why it temporarily happened, because his other students didn’t compose much.
ETZ:
Yeah.

DD:
You know we really were the ones. Tsontakis has done some string quartets. ... Brubecker takes a lot of time. Derek Schwartz just did a new work of his. But I think we’re the ones that, at least Roger used to say to me, “Ellen and you are the ones who really deliver the goods.” With his voice, “deliver the goods.”

ETZ:
[laughs] Oh that’s nice to hear. Racing right along, see, you know, you look at this list of performances in Carnegie Hall and New York premieres…

DD:
See I didn’t know about…I forgot about some of those.

ETZ:

DD:
Yeah. Yeah. As Carnegie Hall per se, but not certainly orchestral music, you know. That’s few and far between. So, you’ve got chamber music there…

ETZ:
Well not a whole lot. These are, these are…

DD:
No, the Sonata?

ETZ:
Well, the two violin…that’s interesting that they were sort of clustered, the Spivakovsky and the Szegeti.

DD:
Oh that’s right, the Timon of Athens, the with...

ETZ:

...with the Louisville Orchestra.

DD:

Yeah, that I didn’t hear. I was away.

ETZ:

Now that was the program that William Schuman’s Judith was done with Martha Graham...

DD:

Martha danced in front of the curtain, right.

ETZ:

That kind of put him on the map as I understood it.

DD:

That’s right. No. No. It’s the Third Symphony that put Bill Schuman on the map.

ETZ:

And that was before?

DD:

Yeah. Yeah. Ahh, I would say that what it did was that...no, Martha actually was interested in Bill doing that because he had done for Tudor, I believe, a ballet called Undertow.

ETZ:

Mmm hmm, yes. I think that...yes.

DD:

And she had seen that and, and thought he wrote very dramatic music…and a good choice. Gerry just two years ago recorded Judith. It is a phenomenal work.
ETZ: 
   Yes I know. I heard it.

DD: 
   I prefer that music to his symphonies any day.

ETZ: 
   I heard that on a program, actually I believe it was in Louisville when they were doing a work of mine also and...

DD: 
   It's very dramatic, very. Yeah.

ETZ: 
   ... it was very striking. Then, I wonder about your love of Shakespeare because I recall actually playing in the...playing Romeo and Juliet with the National Orchestral Association my first year in New York.

DD: 
   Right. Right.

ETZ: 
   ...and of course you did Timon of Athens.

DD: 
   And then of course my whole career, let's say theater-wise, theater-music-wise begins with The Tempest, you see. Margaret Webster was the big director, theater director of Shakespeare in the late 30s and 40s. She and Evala Guyen had worked together at the old Civic Repertory Theater. So Cheryl Crawford the producer heard my Second Symphony over the Boston Symphony broadcast. And Cheryl said, “I think you could write the music, rather wonderful beautiful music for Margaret Webster’s production and we are going to have a fascinating cast.” I said, “Who’s going to be Ariel, because if I write the songs, it’s got to be somebody who can sing those songs.” She said, “Well unfortunately she’s a great dancer, but she hasn’t much of a voice. So you’ll have to write a kind of music that will not be too difficult.” So Ariel turned out to be Vera Zorina, the dancer,
who married Balanchine. And so, I...Zorina came down. I had a little apartment down on Bleecker Street. And she had a range of five notes. So I wrote all the songs for Ariel and then we, I wrote all the incidental cues. We worked spotted, as they call it, where cues will come here and there. It was a wonderful production...revolving stage, and Zorina had one of those Peter Pan flying things where you go out, you know, into the audience. And lo and behold, melodrama sets in after the opening of the...great opening...we tried it out in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Boston...great reviews, fabulous, everything, smash prediction success. We get it into New York...I have thirteen instrumentalists in my orchestra. So I, you know, for the overture, all that sawing away to build up the storm. How do you do it with so few strings? I had four violins first, four seconds. I didn’t have very much. But I try to make it sound. So now the local 802...God came down and talked to me or something...it’s...

ETZ:

You have a guardian angel, David. You have a guardian angel.

DD:

They declared it a musical comedy. Well if it’s a musical it’s gotta have more musicians. So I said send in the strings. [laughs]. So then Stokowski wrote and said, “Double up your winds. Rewrite it and I will play it.” He had come to a performance. That’s how I...

ETZ:

And he did.

DD:

And he did. And then you told me he’d played it twice. I didn’t know that.

ETZ:

Yes, and this was in, in Carnegie Hall, the American Symphony in 1966.

DD:

See I heard the 1949 one.

ETZ:

...and...
DD: You say you don’t have the ’49 program book?

ETZ: No. It’s…

DD: Ellen, look it up…

ETZ: it may be in the archive somewhere, but not…

DD: It’s there. I remember I came…I had just arrived from Europe. I ran right to Carnegie Hall.

ETZ: Well, I’m sure we have it somewhere. We’ll probably dig it up.

DD: He had a terrible piece on it by that Dubensky, that Arcady Dubensky, who played in the Philadelphia Orchestra.

ETZ: I didn’t know him.

DD: Yeah. I’m sure you’ll find that program.

ETZ: The thing that charms me about this particular program is that I was playing violin in the American Symphony…

DD: That, see there again, that’s a nice coincidence. I love that.
ETZ:

...at that time. It’s interesting how many connections there are in music you know. When you think of...we’re talking about Rodzinski and Rodzinski was Stokowski’s assistant and you wrote this music for some other purpose and Stokowski picked it up and there I was playing, you know, it’s a...

DD:

Right, and you know he also wanted me to go on and blow up some of the cues. He wanted to give, he said, “Why don’t you consider a musical synthesis?” And I thought, “Gee, he’s got a great idea, you know, there”...and I still haven’t done it. But ...well other things got in the way.

ETZ:

Yeah.

DD:

But he was very, he was much taken with that score.

ETZ:

He was an interesting man. I certainly...

DD:

A puzzler, he was a mysterious personality. I didn’t quite get it.

ETZ:

I had some pictures of him right here. I don’t know where they are. Here we go.

DD:

He would stage his lighting, I remember...

ETZ:

Yes.

DD:
He would get the lighting people to get behind him...and he didn’t have much hair, sort of, in certain periods of life and he didn’t begin putting things in.

ETZ:

I think he teased it, yes.

DD:

And he would say, “Now be sure you, be sure” like Lenny began doing. He said, “be sure you have one light here so that there’s a kind of halo behind me,” with this amazing...what was that accent that he cooked up?

ETZ:

...I think it was supposed to be Polish. I’m not, I’m not sure.

DD:

It was anything but. It was more British.

ETZ:

Well he was born in England, but that’s another story. This is the way he must have looked right at that time, because this is the Stokowski that I remember.

DD:

Very much so. Very much so. Yeah

ETZ:

And as a matter of fact...

DD:

Except he wasn’t smiling when I went back to see him.

ETZ:

He wasn’t?

DD:

No. Oh. He was absolutely like frozen faced.
ETZ:
Really?

DD:
Yes. Yes absolutely like that.

ETZ:
He...he could be...

DD:
Oh, he was quite distant...

ETZ:
...charming and then he could be very...

DD:
...quite distant.

ETZ:
Really?

DD:
You know what my feeling...my feeling about that is...I don't know whether I should tell this...Yes. Poor darling...

ETZ:
Tell anything.

DD:
Poor darling is dead. So, I don't think her niece will, will sue me 'cause it's in a book. When I saw Greta Garbo, I said, "What are all these stories about you're having a big love affair with Stokowski? What is that all about?" She said, "What love affair? He's impotent...He was impotent. Anyway, I'm not interested in men."
ETZ:
So much for the great…

DD:
So much for the story that they…Now everybody knows that she was basically a lesbian, you know. The great, you know, Greta Garbo. So, these days, it’s like last night I go to see Carrington at the Film Society, you know. That you can show this kind of relationships on the screen, even the sex, it’s just unbelievable what’s happened, you know. And nobody flinched at some of these scenes. And here you’ve got three straight guys in love with this strange woman Carrington, who’s madly in love with a homosexual. You know, it’s just the ending is very…I wonder what kind of reviews. Oh you did find it in the New York Times I bet.

ETZ:
Oh…well… …

DD:
No New York Times around now.

ETZ:
These are the pictures of Stokowski when he was with the Philadelphia Orchestra, I guess. This looks like the earlier one…

DD:
Yeah. See, there’s the lighting, you see

ETZ:
Yeah

DD:
You see how the, the lighting is arranged so that the…

ETZ:
the backlit…
DD:
Yeah

ETZ:
The hands.

DD:
I guess that’s from that movie that…
Off camera voice: That’s right.

ETZ:
That looks like it’s from the movie, yes. And this, actually you see he’s holding a baseball bat. There was one point, I don’t remember what year exactly, but when I was in the American Symphony he decided that we should play…we should challenge the Philharmonic to a game. And so the American Symphony players played the Philharmonic. I think we won, although I didn’t go. But …

DD:
Oh that’s a nice story, you know. I had no idea he would…Gerry said he enjoyed playing under him, but I did get a feeling that he would, he would reciprocate, you know.

ETZ:
Yeah I was wondering if Gerry had been in this concert, but I think Gerry was too young.

DD:
I asked Gerry. I asked Gerry. He said no.

ETZ:
Yeah, he was still in high school probably at that time.

DD:
Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He said no.
But he was in the American Symphony Orchestra when he was very young.

DD:

Oh yes. He said he learned more from Stokowski than...well “Boulez and Stokowski,” he said, “are the ones that I really learned most of the, the know how to get through certain pieces and how to rehearse and all that.”

ETZ:

Now this is Gerry Schwartz, when he was a... [break in tape]

DD:

... one of the most extraordinary.

ETZ:

And, he...I know he did. He was in the American Symphony the same time that I was for quite a while, and, before he went to the Philharmonic. And I can understand that because when I look back on it I feel I gained a great deal from Stokowski. It’s hard to say what exactly, but he had a wonderful way of making music when he connected with the music.

DD:

Yes. Even, even people in London, when I was there with Gerry when Gerry did the Second Symphony, we were talking to some of the men and naturally Stokowski’s name came up and they said, “This very old, almost senile man did some recordings with us and they were extraordinary sessions. We didn’t know where his beat was, but somehow we got through and the recordings are phenomenal. And we really found this man remarkable.” Now you don’t get this out of Englishmen a great deal, you know.

ETZ:

No, I know and I’ve heard this from other friends of mine who are musicians in England. They felt the same...

DD:

So there was, there was something there for all these stories that one heard always about him, but f musicians say this man had something then obviously...You don’t have to beat like that. That’s not conducting. You can, you know.
ETZ:

How would you say, I know it’s…things have changed a great deal over your career. How would you say conducting has changed and conductors? You have a feeling for that, or…

DD:

With all the young conductors that I’ve seen come up, particularly since the decades that I’ve been at Juilliard and seen the, the most gifted ones that came out of Juilliard and those that were in my seminars that I used to have like James Conlon, Andrew Litton. They were all in my classes. I knew when I saw them in action at Juilliard that there could…it was a question of time. It’s like the instrumentalists. Who are the ones in the Chicago Symphony? Who are the ones playing in all of the big orchestras? They are Juilliard string players and brass players and wind players. This is…Now today at the rehearsal, I was sitting with Werner Klemperer and “Werner,” I said, “Did you ever hear a sound like this? Isn’t this like the Koussevitsky's Boston Symphony?” He said, “They’re incredible.” I said, “Well these are the ones…when the generation that’s in the Chicago and the Boston are now time to retire, these kids are going to be the ones…just as now Barenboim’s got the ones that…most of them...Solti had I would say three quarter were Juilliard brass players. And how…and prepared, repertoire, and, and you know their training and ear training at school.” Gerry is phenomenal, you know. He does the Miss Cox, but he had Madame Lengy. So, you know, he rattles off, tells brass players “teke teke teke”. He gives them the tonguing. He does his own bowing. You’d think he was a string player. He’s got it all. No wonder his Seattle Symphony is already so magnificent.

ETZ:

And he’s been a champion of yours, I would say, would you say first Mitropoulos…

DD:

No, I’d say first Koussevitsky

ETZ:

First Koussevitsky, Mitropoulos, and then you have put Rodzinsky in there.

DD:

Oh yes. Oh without a doubt.
ETZ:

And Lenny.

DD:

Yeah. Lenny definitely, yeah.

ETZ:

Did Stokowski pick up further things, or…

DD:

No he wanted to do the Second Symphony, but I don’t know what got in the way. I have a lot of letters but they’re very strange letters, just a few lines. That he’s not well, but he hopes to talk to me when I next get to America or something. I think he was getting too old.

ETZ:

Yeah. But now, I mean, I think it’s wonderful at this point to have a young conductor who’s taken your…

DD:

I think it’s all Schwartz’s doing, frankly. I think once he started to look into those works that he knew had had such great first performances…and like the Tom ballet that I did with Cummings…Where is that? He, you know I didn’t know him. He knocked on my door, and…

ETZ:

E. E. Cummings you mean?

DD:

Yeah. No. Gerry.

ETZ:

Gerry.

DD:
I had never met him. I knew his first wife. She was a dancer named Lillo Way. And she evidently told Gerry that I had written music for Martha Graham in 1935, ’36. Lillo had heard about this ballet, Tom, and she told Gerry to ask me where this music was. So he knocked on the door. See he had the Waterloo Festival thing. And so I said, “It’s in the Free Library in Philadelphia.” He said, “I’ll play it.” I said, “But you haven’t seen the music.” He said, “Ahh.” He got it and played it with great success…repeated it here at Carnegie Hall. That program you don’t have.

**ETZ:**

Which orchestra was that?

**DD:**

With the Water, Waterloo… …

**ETZ:**

Oh, with the Waterloo.

**DD:**

Yeah.

**ETZ:**

Was that in the summer time?

**DD:**

It was a Sunday concert.

**ETZ:**

Possibly in the summer, cause I know they were…

**DD:**

In the summer. In the summer. Yeah.

**ETZ:**

This would have been in the ‘60s?
DD:

No. This would be in the ‘80s, I would say. I have a program at home. And it was a concert…It was sponsored by some, I don’t know, organization, because people were given free seats. Some seats were for sale. I think downstairs, the orchestra was. And people were given free seats. And there were lines all around 56th Street and 57th for people to get in to that concert. It was a great program…the Dohnányi Suite for Orchestra. Wonderful things. Yeah.

ETZ:

Oh really? Well you know I knew him very late in his life.

DD:

Wasn’t he a fascinating man?

ETZ:

Oh he was a wonderful man. This is Ernst von Dohnányi, whose…

DD:

Again, a neglected…He was so neglected.

ETZ:

Yes he had a… …a strange career, really.

DD:

Yeah. There, again…

ETZ:

But he was a wonderfully gift, wonderfully gifted man.

DD:

Oh a genius. I think absolutely a genius in composition. You listen to the music today. Gerry’s played a lot of it. Starker plays a great deal of it. He recorded the Konzertstück for Cello with Orchestra with Gerry. It’s wonderful music. So what if it is…Why should Korngold’s be the only one that is considered…I think Dohnányi is much more interesting than Korngold.
ETZ:

Don’t you think we’re at a new point in the history of, certainly of American music of looking at things in broader terms, of accepting many different kinds of music, and...

DD:

No doubt. No doubt.

ETZ:

I feel really good about that myself. I think it’s…

DD:

I think audiences have made this quite clear to management. They’re perfectly happy with Shostakovich, but once, you know…I hate to say this because Elliott Carter is an old friend and …I regret that the music has become so knotty and difficult, but it takes days to work out a piece of his. That even Pierre Boulez said to me, “I can’t even program Elliott’s music, because if I do a work of mine, which I have to…maybe in Chicago I’ll be able to do something, but it takes so much time.” So, you know, if the music gets that complex then…this is where they lost their battle. You see aleatoric music, when that bar line got removed, and you have to rehearse and explain…Lenny Bernstein spent two and a half hours explaining to each desk how to sub, how to divide and play, who plays what in John Corigliano’s first movement of his Clarinet Concerto.

ETZ:

The Clarinet Concerto, yeah.

DD:

It’s all in G major. I said, “John why the hell didn’t you put bar lines in?” It’s in 4/4 time. He said, “Well that was a period where if we didn’t write that kind of music, Jacob Druckman wouldn’t get you a commission, or you…” You know, all that stuff came out finally.

ETZ:

It’s, it’s interesting. I think Dohnányi’s enjoying something of a resurgence.

DD:

Without a doubt.
ETZ:
And it was a...the special pleasure for me to have his grandson, Christoph, premiere my Oboe Concerto because...

DD:
Oh you’re very, very lucky.

ETZ:
...he’s a wonderful conductor and...

DD:
Marvelous conductor

ETZ:
You can see there’s a...sort of a chip off the old block thing.

DD:
Yeah. Yeah.

ETZ:
It’s also interesting to me you think about Stokowski and Dohnányi. They’re people that I knew when I was very young, who at that time were in their eighties, and I just love these connections in music that solidify the continuity of the tradition, you know, the...

DD:
Oh it’s very, very important. It’s exciting, too, because one realizes the natural thread, you know. It’s a kind of Ariadne’s thread that goes through music. This is why I think French and German music are so consistently available to people historically, because they listen that way.

ETZ:
Mmm hmm. They’re plugged in...
They get that thread from way back to Haydn. They get it to Mozart. They get it to Beethoven to Brahms. That thread goes right through to the present day, you know. Where it breaks is when those crazy Germans start with, you know, Stockhausen and Kagel. Then it’s all goes berserk, because there’s no thread anymore.

ETZ:

Well it’s interesting to me though as a sort of a post-war, World War II, American composer that World War II delivered us Hindemith, well Bloch was already here, but Schoenberg, Bartók, and that in a sense that rope of tradition sort of passed here, that line.

DD:

Oh absolutely. Absolutely. And Martin#

ETZ:

Martin#. We could go on and on, yes.

DD:

And we could have had others, you know, with the ones, the so-called famous ones that they now, you know, consider the holocaust composers.

ETZ:

Yes that were…

DD:

You know, Ohlman and all those others who, Schulhoff…

ETZ:

Right, who were killed.

DD:

who were take...dragged off and gave concerts in the concentration camps. If they had just gotten out a little sooner, you know. Hindemith tried to warn them, you see. Mrs. Hindemith tried so hard. But they didn’t have the realistic sense that things were gonna go badly for them.
ETZ:

I think it’s very hard to…

DD:

They had jobs also, you see, and the, the committees hadn’t gotten after them yet. Schoenberg tried hard to get Schulhoff to come. Einshammer tried to get all the ones that Universal was publishing. They wouldn’t budge. Tanzmann got over from Paris.

ETZ:

It’s interesting, I remember hearing Isaac Singer say that when he left in 1938 I think it was, '37 maybe even, that is was a question of taking a new ship and everybody said, “Oh wait and you’ll have this wonderful experience.” And he felt the urgency that he would take whatever was available right then and get out.

DD:

Just get out. Right. Right.

ETZ:

And this was, of course, you know at least a year or so before…

DD:

Oh absolutely and you know what Frau Mahler and and Werfel went through. I mean they were stuck up there in the Pyrenees and the Gestapo could have taken them right away, you know. But by some miracle they thought she was a rather interesting frowsy old lady. So they put her up in some little hotel and he had had a heart attack, so they had a doctor brought in and the next day some…evidently a man, who knew quite a good deal about her…got them in a cab and they were taken off to the airport, and that they got over.

ETZ:

David, did people know she had written music?

DD:

Oh yes. Oh yes.

ETZ:
Were they…

DD:
I used to have her songs sung in my classes. They’re great, beautiful songs.

ETZ:
Oh I know that. I think they’re they’re lovely, but I mean, she was a pretty big talent and…

DD:
Yeah but he put the damper down. He wouldn’t encourage her.

ETZ:
I can’t…

DD:
Really you know all the things I read about him and now with the De La Grange…I’ve read all the other volumes in French because it’s finished. It’s just the translation that’s taking time. He was a terrible human being.

ETZ:
Mahler?

DD:
Yes. Yeah. I mean this was a…this was a real, not evil, but malicious man. I mean a real woman hater, a resenter of women. Maybe Freud was right about him, that his impotency and all the other problems he had was probably due to real fear of strong women. But she was evidently…she had…like this film last night, Carrington…it was hard to figure out how a kind of lovely, strange young girl like that could have wound all these men, both gay and straight, around her little finger. You see, there are women who are…Garbo was like that. Dietrich…wooo. Look at, now that we know the truth about Dietrich it’s extraordinary. Men and women. Just would tie them around her little finger.

ETZ:
I, I never found out how to do that myself. [laughs]

DD:
[laughs] You have to start in Hollywood.

ETZ:

[laughs] Right. Here’s a wonderful program we have from 1985, where the Copland Statements, Schuman Symphony for Strings…

DD:

I got Dmitri to play the Statements.

ETZ:

…and this is, this is much later then, and this is when…when Bernstein conducted your Ninth Symphony.

DD:

Yeah. Oh do you know, it suddenly comes back to me…I never finished my story about how, how Mitrop…how we met.

ETZ:

Okay.

DD:

Yeah, you know, I was about to tell you, what happened was Aaron Copland said, “You’ve got to meet this wonderful man.” Lenny Bernstein already said, “This is such an extraordinary man, you must…” So Copland said, “David, we’ll go to one of his concerts together and then I’ll introduce you to him because he’s got to know, and bring a score of your Psalm along. He’d be interested in that piece.” So we went to that concert. And the concert was over. And Copland said, “Now we should begin to go to…he’ll probably come out of the stage door.” We get down that aisle that leads to that back door that you come out. And sure enough just as I was getting there with Aaron, down comes Mitropoulos. There he was with these thick rubber-soled shoes that he always wore, and saw me and again like with Ravel, boom, he’s looking. And where are the eyes, on my…this time it’s an ochre color turtleneck sweater I’m wearing.

ETZ:

[laughs]
“Where did you buy that wonderful sweater?” So I said, “Down here on 6th Avenue.” “Oh it’s wonderful.” So, “This is David Diamond.” “Oh! I know your music. I have your Psalm for Orchestra.” So I was hoping he’d say I played it or I’m going to play it. And that’s how we met.

That’s lovely.

See. So then I knew that when I got, you know, eventually the symphony that it would go to one these three. And he would be the one that I would send the telegram to.

That’s a nice story with the telegrams. It’s an illustration of how different the world was, too, I guess.

Yeah. Well he was a man with a sense of responsibility and a mission. A young composer writes him, but he was out with…I wasn’t the only one. Look how wonderfully he treated Morton, Elie Siegmeister. You go through that list of American composers alone, let alone the Europeans and Krenek and all the others, and Hindemith. You know, those are phenomenal programs. So he got into hot water with Zirato and all the others and Judson, that monster. But you know, he’d paid a terrible price but I’m glad that this book clears it all up.

He must have had something special in humanity. I remember…

He was a saint.

Did you know…
DD:
You know he was a Saint Francis man.

ETZ:
Really?

DD:
Yeah.

ETZ:
Did you know the mezzo-soprano Alena Nicholaidi?

DD:
Yes, as a matter of fact, I met her through him.

ETZ:
Mmm hmm. They were, they were very close. She was a Greek mezzo, who sang at the Met and she moved to Florida State University when I was an undergraduate there. And for some reason or other the, the day that he died, she and I were roommates, I think it was some place in North Carolina, we were there to perform in a music festival...and I remember she got the news of Mitropoulos’s death...

DD:
That was a terrible day.

ETZ:
And it was as though, you know, a beloved friend of the family...

DD:
Oh sure, yeah.

ETZ:
It was just...And and it struck me, you know, this was...
DD: It was
ETZ: …a man that many people really, really loved.
DD: It was a nightmare. As in the book it tells the last page...He calls it recessional. Trudy Goth and I are ready to leave Florence. He invited us to come to the dress rehearsal and stay for the first performance of the Mahler Six. And we got the telegram he had dropped dead. Ah it was a terrible day. Terrible, terrible day.
ETZ: Yeah. David, I'm happy to see that we have...our latest entry here is your Ninth Symphony, but that you didn’t get hung up on that number and you're still going strong.
DD: Yeah.
ETZ: Are you working on a twelfth perhaps?
DD: And the Ninth Symphony, remember, is dedicated to Dmitri’s memory.
ETZ: Yes I do.
DD: And that Lenny chose to conduct it was very interesting to me considering that we now know the facts of how Lenny also did a little bit of knifing in the back.
ETZ: Of Mitropoulos, you mean?
DD:

Yes, in order to get the job. It’s the one bitter, bitter pill that I have to live with now that we know the truth. It’s just…but Lenny never forgave him for not inviting him. He couldn’t. Dmitri wrote…my letters are…Lenny’s letter to me, quoting Dmitri as to why he couldn’t have Lenny come as the pianist and as his assistant…because Mr. Gains there said, “We cannot afford to have another young American come out here…”

ETZ:

This was Boston? Boston Symphony?

DD:

No. This was Minneapolis.

ETZ:

Oh, Minneapolis.

DD:

Yes.

ETZ:

Okay.

DD:

“…because you are playing too much modern music and he’s just going to insist on doing more of it. So it’s just out.” You see. And Lenny would not accept that. He said, “That’s a lousy excuse. Lousy excuse. Why didn’t he have me come later then?”

ETZ:

So you feel that was…

DD:

He never forgave him. Lenny never, never forgave. He remembered every, everything that he felt conductors or managers had done. He never forgave even that Boston man who tried to get Koussevitsky to make him change his name to Leonard Burns, you know, Todd Perry. He never forgave Todd for that.
ETZ:

When you look back on your career so far, and I know we’ve got much more coming out of you, what do you see as sort of like the highlights for you or for us as Americans or people who love music. In the last say fifty years or so, looking back at the material we’ve just been talking about…

DD:

You know, Ellen, that’s a good question you ask me because at the age that I am now it’s living constantly with memories of the dead. And for me those dead…I happen to have been blessed because one, being born in Rochester and ours was a great cultural center in the ‘20s, remember. We were the first to have a theater orchestra. Ruben Mamoulian was directing the stage productions. We had a full orchestra overture before, before Radio City Music Hall or Roxy. We had this. Whatever the silent movie was, there was a ballet interpretation of…I still remember Ernest Schelling, who was as you know the, one of the conductors here. His piece called Victory Ball, that piece still should be played today. It’s an extraordinary work. I can still see that, and it was performed when they showed The Big Parade, that great silent movie with John Gilbert about the First World War. And so what was the ballet? It was based on Ernest Schelling’s Victory Ball, and it ends with these soldiers coming from both sides of the stage and this terrible battle. Then a few years later, All Quiet on the Western Front comes out. So memories of, for me are a man like Mamoulian that I meet that makes it possible when I get into Hollywood to get to know Garbo and some of the others…Bette Davis is in Stock Company in Rochester. I meet her. I run her laundry to the Chinese laundry. Her mother, the hell on wheels…I get to Hollywood. I wanna see if she remembers me. “Ahh! What ever happened to you hair? Where’s all your hair?” She had remembered all this hair…one remembers. Now they’re all gone. The only one alive that I loved and adored was Olivia De Havilland. Why? Because I wrote the music for Romeo and Juliet, which brings me back to the music that you played. That is not the music that was used in her production on Broadway. She wanted to do…she knew that music, but when they began cutting up my long cues, you know, the balcony scene is one long line. Just, just two minutes is all that’s wanted. I said, “No, no, no. I don’t want that touched. I’ll write a whole new score.” So I wrote a whole new…little short cues for everything, you see. So other than Olivia, who is today big as a house, but …we, often I meet with her in Paris and we do this sort of thing. Isn’t it awful. Our friends are all dead. If I didn’t have my children, my grown children, what would I, what would I…I can’t go back and live in the states. You know this is what goes...So to me, it’s like
with Sessions, with Lenny, Mitropoulos, it’s my God, even though they’re all gone, what human beings they were. Everyone. I was blessed to be born in Rochester, to have had my childhood meetings with them. And then, like another kind of thread it goes through. And somehow I wind up in Hollywood and thanks to Artie I can find those people again, you see. Then I go back and write for the movies. And then I can’t get a job. I come back from Italy. Howard Hanson still remembers me as that, you know that modernist. “David, you’re so talented, why must you be such a modernist.” So I quit. Went to New York. Studied with Bernard Rogers, [who] said, “David, you won’t be happy. Howard does not like music which is progressive. Go with my blessing. Roger is a great teacher.” And there again, then I meet you through Roger. I meet you. Now Peter Mennen, a former Eastman person. Bill Schuman, they said, “You should give David a job.” And so I come to Juilliard and I’m still there.

ETZ:

Do you ever think about legacies, I mean, what you’re leaving. I remember meeting you and I had already of course played your music.

DD:

I remember we had a great meal with your husband at a Hungarian restaurant.

ETZ:

Oh yes, of course.

DD:

And that cucumber. I went crazy for the cucumbers. Yeah.

ETZ:

[Laughs] They make a great cucumber salad, don’t they. But …I think that there’s a sense of not only the past, but the future. And I remember very, very much your encouragement and you know how warm you were, and…

DD:

Oh Ellen, you were so clearly the more gifted…You knew the ones. They were all constipated, you know. Ughh. They could just barely squeeze out a piece, you know. Here’s Ellen with this flowing…Even Tsontakis, he just wasn’t writing music.
ETZ:

Well at any rate, but I think there’s a wonderful sense of participation in the future, and you know, when you think of the people that have not even been born yet who are going to be playing your music and…

DD:

Well that you know one can never be sure about. I can only hope that…that that will…you know that’s unpredictable. Who really knows what will happen.

ETZ:

Sure.

DD:

I, however, am not one of those people who think that classical music is going to disappear. I mean I think I’m smart enough to know that it, it makes no sense from just a philosophical or historical or, or even a cultural sense that popular idioms are going to, or electronic…I can remember when Rosalind Turek was told by Milton Babbitt that in a few years she was not going to have a career because everything would be on tape. There would be no necessity. He told me, he said, “David, unless you seriously sit down and think very carefully about the twelve note technique and serialism and how important it’s going to be to the future.” I said, “Milton, what are you telling me? I know Schoenberg. I knew Schoenberg. I asked him whether I can study with him.” He said, “Twelve notes are not for you. You’re a young Bruckner. What do you need with twelve notes? It’s not for everybody. Anyway, I want to know. I have people who want to study twelve note music. If they don’t tell me why first note is B-flat and why twelfth note is a H,” which is a b-natural in German, “they cannot come into my classes.” You see, that…So I tell Milton this. He says, “Oh that’s right I forget, I forget.” You know. Today, Milton, he presents me at the academy, gives the most wonderful introduction, and he presents the gold medal to me.

ETZ:

Yes. Yes.

DD:

And reminisces. And today I’m worried sick about Milton. We never became enemies cause of this. I said, “Milton, I don’t have problems with twelve note music. I love your
music very much. I have trouble with Elliot’s music sometimes, but I have, I never had anything…I think Philomel is a phenomenal piece. But even you say today you couldn’t write another piece like that and you’re not interested in tape anymore. You haven’t been for years. And yet you can tell Rosalind she would be out of work and that I should think about serialism. And look how it’s all…who’s really won the battle?” And he said, “You have.” Now to get that from Milton was really something.

ETZ:

That’s interesting.

DD:

So that makes us even closer friends. So now he’s in the hospital very sick and I’m worried.

ETZ:

Yeah me too. I like Milton. I guess nobody ever knows how it’s going to come out because it depends on where you slice it, where you are.

DD:

But it is not going to disappear in favor of technocracy. A big, big TV screen with a full symphony orchestra or that theater up here, you know, down near the 70s, that shows you a triple screens, all that stuff. That is, has got nothing…listening to a symphony program that way is not going to do it. Audiences don’t want…

ETZ:

Yeah.

DD:

They don’t want that. They want live sound, live people on the stage.

ETZ:

I, I agree with you that …a lot of people worry about the direction of things…

DD:

They shouldn’t.
ETZ:

…and, that you know, this is going to stop and that. I don’t think so because I think it’s so intrinsically interesting.

DD:

I think the financial worries are realistic. That I understand. But I don’t think the financial problems have anything to do with a lack of interest in classical contemporary music or classical music of the past. I think it has to do with yes, a certain amount of generational gap…but I see plenty of young people going to the Philharmonic. Plenty. Plenty. And there will me more.

ETZ:

We had a wonderful young people’s concert here a couple of days ago and it was nice to see little tots around, and …

DD:

Sure. Sure.

ETZ:

I personally feel, I love the theatrical tradition that when Carnegie Hall closes down for the night, they leave the light bulb on for the, the spirits of the theater that are there…

DD:

That’s great. Sure.

ETZ:

…and I feel that…it’s all in there in some way in this mix that the people who’ve been on that stage in the past, the music that’s come out from there in the past, and the music that’s to come in the future, I think it’s, it’s somehow or other all there.

DD:

You’ve hit that point which perhaps is a mystic point. But it’s that very point I think that it’s all about. What will keep serious, so-called classical or long-haired music, they used to call it…what’s going to keep that, always, is the fact that it’s a mountain of masterpieces now. And CDs have only hammered that in more, because now we have through CDs of the
works. Imagine we have a revival in Spohr. We’re going to hear his Odyssey Symphony because Botstein actually heard the CD of the Odyssey. He would have never known it otherwise.

ETZ:

I don’t know it.

DD:

Phenomenal. All of those symphonies of Spohr. We’re going to begin hearing those, because otherwise how did we know them…two violin concertos out of…

ETZ:

And the double, double quartets.

DD:

Sure, you see. So what is it? CDs are doing that and that is enhanced even more, more music from the past. Just think we know all of Bach now thanks to CDs, Haydn. Everything’s being completed. The operas we never knew before

ETZ:

David when you were, [break in tape]

DD:

Kids, like baseball does. Kids want autographed baseball things, you know.

ETZ:

Yeah. Well I was always sorry looking back that I hadn’t saved those letters from Dohnányi.

DD:

Yeah. It’s too bad.

ETZ:

It’s just very, very super naïve of me to…
DD: Did you correspond a great deal with Sessions?

ETZ: No.

DD: No? Oh that’s too bad.

ETZ: No. Of course at that time, you know, the telephone was a…

DD: Of course.

ETZ: I talked a lot with him on the phone.

DD: Even Milton said the same thing. He didn’t do…keep any of them.

ETZ: Which brings me to the question I was about to ask you. You mentioned all of the CDs and how today we have the works of Bach on CD and we have symphonies of Spohr coming out and things that were only rumors even a few years ago…

DD: Library, library scores…you saw them in the library and said, “when can we hear it come alive.” All right, so you sit at the piano…you know, I would get some idea of them, but that we can hear these pieces. You know you hear Spohr and, you know, they were…he overlapped Beethoven. My God, it’s not to be believed. And yet they talk about Brahms being the continuation of Beethoven’s…It’s Spohr who’s the continuation of the Beethoven symphonies. Now wait ‘til they’re heard. You’ll see. They’ll change that.
ETZ:

When you were very young how is that you, did you learn like Beethoven symphonies by playing them four hands or…

DD:

Four hands and playing in the orchestra. See because when we went to Cleveland to visit relatives my mother immediately enrolled me in the Cleveland Institute. So that’s how I met really Bloch. I played viola because I had a big, big paw. So, I was sent up on the third floor to play the viola in the first reading of the Concerto Grosso No. 1.

ETZ:

Hmm, really?

DD:

I can still hear him screaming…

ETZ:

Really?

DD:

“Zehr fausa! Zehr fau!” Somebody was playing out of tune and I didn’t know what the hell zehr fausa…I thought zehr fausa…It sounded like an animal of some kind, zehr faus. It’s false. The note’s false. That’s why I invited Suzanne Bloch’s daughter to be with me at the YMHA, because Gerry did his Episodes, very little played. So Suzanne began reminiscing and I brought this thing up about the Institute. She said, “Oh Mon Dieu.” She, when I, “This little red head over here. Yes, he was playing in that orchestra.” That’s the, that’s the joy of, you know…So I learned music. Then, later on I was in the regular orchestra at the Cleveland Institute and we gave two concerts a year, one at the Dutchess Theater and one at the …at some hotel I forget…Oh yes, the, the Stillman Hotel. And the Rakoczy March, when I heard that orchestration, and I always brought the pocket score. I would just put it down there. I remember Mr. de Ribeauquier. He was the conductor. “David what do you have between your legs?” And of course the whole orchestra would explode with laughter.

ETZ:
...orchestra laughed, yes.

DD:

I said, “My score.” [laughs]

ETZ:

[laughs] But, you know, even if you played a lot of concerts in a year that still is not a whole lot of repertoire. So you probably were getting it mostly by...

DD:

Sibley Library. I lived in the Sibley Library and that is still one of the great libraries. And what I did was, just the moment I would see Schoenberg, out would come…and that Barbara Duncan, the librarian in the ‘20s, she would bring back the very first editions of all the new works of Schoenberg, Berg. Now these names...

ETZ:

These were from Europe at the time. Yes.

DD:

From Europe. All the Universal scores. And of course I would take them right out, have special permission to take them out and go to right to my room where I had my practice studio. And I would just, you know, as "des chiffres" I would sight read as much as I can. And if I could I would find out when the orchestra would rehearse with a man named Paul White. I said, “Paul do you suppose there might be parts somewhere?” because the Eastman Theater Orchestra had a lot of contemporary music...“Do you think we could read through some of this, just...?” That’s how I heard, the first time I heard the Webern Six Orchestra Pieces...read...we didn’t have all the instruments but I certainly got an idea of what was going on. And then my discovery of the Kammersinfonie, Opus 21. That I did at the piano. But it was the damnedest thing, you know, trying to figure out, except for the second movement which has one melodic line the whole row at the top...the rest was this. So what I did was...like when I invented these, you know, the four line business...I would take a red pencil and start with the, the pitches and just follow them through. Little had it occurred to me read the pro...you know the introductory notes. It would tell you a little bit. It didn’t say much about the twelve note technique, but it would tell you about the Klangfarbenmelodie, you see. So, another colored pencil would show me where the
harp…and always that clarinet coming back to an E. So I asked Mr. Rogers about that and he was the first to explain what the row was.

ETZ:

It’s interesting that that technique of the colored pencils is still used, you know…

DD:

Now they do that. Sure.

ETZ:

It’s like…yeah.

DD:

But you see it was really in the library all the time…or, I did terrible things. I stole money from my mother. I would take it and, you know, no money and yet I would steal. Why? To do what? I saw a catalog of Elkan-Vogel and it was all the Debussy, Ravel, Rouselle, these names. And it said, to be sent on trial. You can, you know, send…and you have to return it by two months or something. So, I had my sister type it out and instead of saying, “Sabina can I have some money to pay…” I just said, “Well you see, it says on, they’ll send it on trial.” So, I would get all these scores, Satie, you know, Things Seen Left and Right Without Eyeglasses for violin and piano. So I had to orchestrate some of those, you see.

ETZ:

Well as a matter of fact we did not get to an orchestration you had done of Satie…

DD:

…of Schoenberg…and Schoenberg, too.

ETZ:

Oh really?

DD:

I did the Opus 19 pieces, sure. [?] showed them to me, loved it.

ETZ:

…Mitropoulos actually did…
DD:

He did the Messe…he did the Messe des Pauvres and the Passacaglia.

ETZ:

Right. On…in 1951.

DD:

And now Gerry’s…right. Now Gerry’s going to do the Messe des Pauvres, I think, at his last concert at the New York Chamber Symphony. Leinsdorf conducted them a great deal. And I wrote at the age of 19, I wrote my Hommage à Satie and I put it away, I, you know…so French. I was a little embarrassed, you know. It was the first piece I had played in New York City before I came to study here. And Gerry said, “I want to see that damn piece.” I said, “Gerry, it is awful. You’d swear it was written by Debussy.” He said, “I want to see it.” So now in January Koch is bringing out all my orchestrations of Debussy, the fugue that I did of Ravel’s, that he left out of the Tombeau de Couperin.

ETZ:

Oh!

DD:

It’s going to be done with the fugue, because Ravel told me he was going to begin it with a flute. So I did it. Sounds exactly as he had done it. The Passacaglia, the Debussy Hommage à Haydn and the Ravel Hommage à Haydn, which were originally for piano. So this…and then my little Hommage à Satie. Gerry decided it’s good enough. “If Koch says it’s good enough you’ve gotta say…” I said, “Gerry, it still doesn’t represent…” He said, “Forget it. You wrote it when you were 19. So it’s got to be in.”

ETZ:

He’s right.

DD:

He’s right. I’m accepting it as long as…

ETZ:
…another thing that I would like to touch on a little bit is the piece that Bernstein premiered here with the Philharmonic on…The World of Paul Klee. And, and I think it’s…

DD:

Oh my God. I forgot about that one.

ETZ:

It’s kind of interesting to people who are not musicians to hear a composer talking about the rest of the world and, you know, I think they think sometimes we’re off in an ivory tower.

DD:

Yeah.

ETZ:

But you’re clearly someone who, for whom literature has been very important all of your life.

DD:

Oh, Rochester again. Sure.

ETZ:

…and the movies, or whatever.

DD:

Rochester.

ETZ:

…here’s a, here’s a case of of a…now Klee in 1960, I guess he was just being discovered, had really just in the past ten years been quite well-known in the States.

DD:

You mean as a painter?

ETZ:
As a painter.

DD: 

Actually, no, Ellen. When I was quite small, I remember going to the home of a women. Her name was Kathleen Cunningham, in Rochester. And we had a marvelous...a patron and his wife Hildegard Watson, great friends of E. E. Cummings and of Virgil Thomson, Mrs. Hildegard Watson, Dr. Sibley Watson. He set up our Genesee health service in Rochester, but he was also a real medical doctor. He was among the first who truly, truly made film, that can be called avant-garde. You may have seen it as a matter of fact. It’s called Lot and Sodom and the other one is The Fall of the House of Usher.

ETZ: 

Mmm hmm. Yes.

DD: 

They have, they have them at the Museum of Modern Art.

ETZ: 

...at the Museum of Modern Art.

DD: 

Now for the photography...He had seen The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, but in his home on Sibley Place, when we were invited...Cummings was invited once to come and show some of his paintings at the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester...I was invited to come for tea to meet Cummings, and there in the little room...the house is still there, the Klee's have gone over the Memorial...There on the wall were these very small Klee paintings and there was the little heart-shaped girl doing the dance of the grieving child. She’s in the shape of a heart with a feather.

ETZ: 

Sure. Sure.

DD: 

And when I saw that...So when I chose the pieces to illustrate in those...when Jakov Schalomoff commissioned, you know, we all had to write pieces for his Portland Junior Symphony. That’s how I got to write them. I thought immediately of The Dance of
the Grieving Child and the Pastourelle...They had the Pastourelle and the Twittering Machine...they owned that one. And that one fascinated me, you know, with that little bird on the top. And now comes another crazy story, you see. Now I'm living in Europe. I'm in Italy that particular summer. This was the summer of...four...no, ’49, actually it was. And Felix Klee, Klee's son, was in Florence. I thought well I haven’t seen his father since we played in quartets together cause when I was studying with Scherchen in Neufchâtel, he...

ETZ:

When was this?

DD:

This was 1938. The piece Gerry played the other day. That was the one that Scherchen gave the premiere of and I wrote that in ’38. And that...as matter of fact Klee would come very often to lessons that Scherchen...Ben Britten was in our conducting class as a matter of fact. So I would go over and I usually brought my violin because he played, you know, not as bad as Einstein, but he played fairly well. So I played second fiddle, he played first, and we played Haydn quartets. We played Girovetz, the first time I knew about Girovetz...sounded like, like Haydn and Beethoven mixed. And he was an adorable man. And that’s how...I still have a Klee today in my house. I have one call "L'oeil." It’s just a big eye. Then the next thing I knew Clifford Odets...after I got to meet Clifford through Stella Adler and Aaron...Clifford bought about fifty Klees and had them in his apartment on 70th Street. And then the Museum of Modern Art gave a big show. So I was, you know, really taken by this man’s work and...I love the...I love his painting

ETZ:

Yeah, I like it too.

DD:

Maybe that’s part of what’s childlike still in me that, that goes...I like less the ones that are just cubes, you know, the chessboard sort of ones like...I don’t like Mondrian very much because it’s just too, too abstract, geometric. But give me the Klee of the angels and the strange creatures, you know, and the birds. They’re child...they’re kind of childlike paintings. He was also very childlike. And then don’t forget his paintings were based on...if you’ve seen his diaries, he took the Bach Chaconne opening line and wrote the music out and then underneath worked out Klee-like little designs that mirrored the shape of the [sings: bum, bum, bum, bum, bum]...absolutely.
ETZ:

Mmm. I haven’t seen that. I’d love to see that.

DD:

He was a musician every moment of his painting. So that, there was my attraction for Klee, you see. And so it was inevitable that when Jakov Schломoff asked me to write a piece I thought, what idiom? I can’t write my usual modal idiom and anyway by then I was already introducing more chromatic…ah, Roger and I had quite a good deal after the Second Symphony of his and I saw that he had moved out of completely diatonic…and Aaron Copland, he said, “David will you get out of those white notes all the time. Come on. Put a few black ones in.” You know, I…Well, now I am going to find the right idiom. The character I need is chromaticism. And I decided since each picture has to be framed, I would begin each picture with a frame. So what do I have, a twelve note row for each one. See. So each picture one is the retrograde of the original row, the other is the inversion. So my first twelve-note piece is really The World of Paul Klee.

ETZ:

Wonderful. That’s about the same time that Gunther wrote his…

DD:

As a matter of fact, there’s a Time Magazine review of both our pieces, pictures of both of us…I think Leinsdorf may have done his, and …Tommy Shippers I think or somebody…Yeah Tommy did The World of Paul Klee. Mine got the rave review and Gunther’s got…Oh I’m afraid not a very good review. And…the result is his Klee pieces are played more often than my Klee pieces, which shows you that the lousier your piece does, it gets more performed.

ETZ:

[laughs]

DD:

No sense.

ETZ:

There’s always some…
DD:  
 No sense to any of that.

ETZ:  
 …silver lining there

DD:  
 Yeah a good review doesn’t make a damn bit of good.

ETZ:  
 Well, do you want to say anything about the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York premiere of your Seventh Symphony here at Carnegie…

DD:  
 Oh! Oh boy! You know what…

ETZ:  
 …with Ormandy?

DD:  
 …all I remember is it was the worst snow storm that ever hit the city. I’ve never known anything like that night. And here I have Greta Garbo on my arm to get her out of a cab and into the auditorium, you know, and it’s blowing and here’s this big Scandinavian, you know, I thought she could handle wind, but after all she was getting on in years…and on my other arm was Mrs. E. E. Cummings that I’m taking to the concert. And I tell you, to get those two women into the auditorium with the wind blowing, the cold…Finally we get in. Of course, the…it wasn’t full as it usually is for Philadelphia New York concerts. So it wasn’t…

ETZ:  
 And the reason?

DD:  
 The snowstorm, this horrendous snow…but the…
ETZ:
Oh just the snowstorm. You don’t think it was…You don’t take it personally? [laughs]

DD:
No because I remembered how great the Philadelphia performances were.

ETZ:
Yeah.

DD:
It was unbelievable.

ETZ:
We have a picture of Ormandy here from about that time. What was it like… …That’s a nice picture. Who took that?

DD:
I thought he was the most wonderful…the way he worked out the rehearsals, the way he got everything clear…the general rehearsal pattern. Yeah. You know there’s some people say that when he would be walking around Broadway they would think it was me and…I don’t quite see…maybe the baldness…

ETZ:
Oh, I don’t see that at all.

DD:
No, but I don’t…and then others would say, “Oh you look just like Leinsdorf,” or something.

ETZ:
No. No. But his brother Martin certainly looks like him.

DD:
Isn’t, isn’t he…you know he’s still playing with Gerry’s orchestra, yeah?
ETZ:
He’s still playing! Yeah he’s still playing.

DD:
It was the most clean, beautiful exciting performance that I...I really ...

ETZ:
January 30th, yes, would be winter time.

DD:
Yeah. And it was...Oh you mean in New York?

ETZ:
Yeah.

DD:
Ohhh.

ETZ:
Bartók, Two Portraits...

DD:
It was so great, that program.

ETZ:
...your Symphony Number 7

DD:
Right.

ETZ:
Mozart Concerto in B-flat with Rudolph Zircon
Right. It was a great program. And poor Rudy. All he kept…When we were…

ETZ:
And then the Beethoven Concerto?

DD:
That’s right.

ETZ:
Number 4

DD:
That’s right.

ETZ:
Boy, that’s a…

DD:
Because when we back, when we went back Ormandy said, “Where’s Garbo? Why didn’t you bring Garbo back?” I said, “She’s out in the corridor. She’s freezing.” He said, “Bring her in. Bring her in.” So I go out. She says…she took one look at me and went in to the ladies room and stayed there. [laughs]

ETZ:

[laughs] My goodness. Anyway it’s been a wonderful history at Carnegie Hall and I hope it will be many, many, many years to come.

DD:
It’s, it’s extraordinary, you know, to do it this way. I would never have gone back in memory, collectively thinking this way, you know, unless you do something like this.

ETZ:
Yeah. It’s a…

DD:
But it’s amazing to see, you know, that their programs are…I wasn’t even aware that…I forgot about those performances, even. Especially that second Tempest performance.

ETZ:

Yes. Yes. Well I couldn’t forget that one since I was sitting there playing.

DD:

Making all da-da-da-da-la, the opening storm, all those strings.

ETZ:

Yeah. I had to have a massage after that, David. What are you writing now?

DD:

Orchestrating my opera. But it’s a sad time because as you know Christopher Keene died.

ETZ:

Yes.

DD:

The real funeral was just yesterday and the memorial will be on Wednesday, the day of the concert.

ETZ:

I know that Juilliard, Joe Polisi told me.

DD:

We’re going over… we’re going right over to the…it’s 5:30 is the memorial and then we’re going over to the hall. We were supposed to listen to singers for my opera which is for the Spring of ’97. The opera’s called The Noblest Game and …Julius…

ETZ:

The libretto is…

DD:
By Katie Lockheim. She was President Roosevelt’s cultural adviser all during his administration and a beautiful poet. And I had started operas, On the Wings of the Dove, and I told you about Ben Britten taking my idea for Billy Bud. He had already played through my settings. They were published. And then he said, “How are you going to write an opera on Billy Bud and with no woman.” Next thing I know a telegram…”Sorry, he’s writing an opera on with Ian Forrester on Billy Bud.” So I wrote him a letter. He never… We never talked again after that. So I said, “No more public domain stuff for me. I’m going to get an original libretto.” So I asked Mrs. Lockheim if she knew of any interesting story that might turn into a good opera. I said, “I want a realistic. I don’t want grand opera stuff. I want a real, if possible a contemporary subject.” So she said, “My God, let me think… but I think I have something.” And she thought of this woman who, very beautiful woman in Washington, who had an affair with a senator, which an autistic child was the result of this affair. And this child functions in the opera in a very strange way. Doesn’t sing a note, doesn’t speak a word. But at certain things that happen in the opera, that child is there. Now Julius Rudell and Gunther commissioned it for the city opera. It was supposed to be Beverly Sills, who would sing it. Now I swear to this day, this minute, I never knew Beverly had retarded children of any kind.

ETZ:

Yeah.

DD:

She read the libretto and said, “Rudell, you tell David Diamond he’s a monster to have a librettist put a child like that into an opera. He knew I was going to sing in it. Anyway! I will not sing any of those filthy words that she’s got in this damn opera.” There’s one f-word and one s-word in it. That’s all, you know. And those are spoken in anger at a certain terrible, strategic moment. So today when I see Beverly, you know, or see Rudell…It’s too involved. But anyway Christopher Keene…said, “I want to read it.” He read it, said, “My God, I don’t believe it. It’s foolproof. Get the music to me at once. I got him the, the vocal score and he said, “Is the orchestration done?” I said, “No. I wouldn’t think of orchestrating an opera until I know when…” He said, “We’ll do it…two years from now. How ‘bout that?” So I got started and developed carpel tunnel. Couldn’t work for a year. So that was the year they did Marilyn and Lukas’s instead of mine and it was not a very successful year. And then my hand got better after partial surgery. So I got going again. And now I’m doing little four pages a day and it will be done this spring. But how sad…
ETZ:
Oh it’s very sad…

DD:
Gerry Schwartz will conduct…

ETZ:
Good.

DD:
But how sad that…that he will not be there.

ETZ:
Yeah it’s a…

DD:
And Katie died in…a few years after completing the libretto. She was ninety something. So these…that’s what I’m working on now.

ETZ:
That’s, that’s a full plate.

DD:
Yeah.

ETZ:
Anyway David thank you very…

DD:
Oh, we’re finished.

ETZ:
very much. Unless there’s something else you’d like to add. It’s…
DD:
Oh no. My God it is five o’clock.

ETZ:
I’m afraid I’ve …

DD:
And I’m not hoarse either.

ETZ:
talked you out here. This has…

DD:
I enjoyed it I must say.

ETZ:
…been nice.

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