Music at MIT Oral History Project

John Bavicchi

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

***with* Thomas McGah**

June 30, 2006

Interview no. 1

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library

Transcribed by: University of Connecticut, Center for
Oral History, Tapescribe, from the audio recording

Transcript Proof Reader: Lois Beattie, Jennifer Peterson
Transcript Editor: Forrest Larson

©2012 Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library, Cambridge, MA

Table of Contents

1. Berklee Department and early musical background (00:00—CD1 00:00) 1
   Berklee College of Music Classical Music Dept. —classical and non-classical curriculum—first generation American-Italian parents—father, Alexander Bavicchi, cellist—trombone study with Robert W. Gibb, Dedham H.S. orchestra director—Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 4—early compositions—George A. Wedge & harmony

2. Attending MIT (13:07—CD1 13:07) 6
   Family legacy of contracting—music at MIT in the 1940s—Naval College Training Program—MIT Combined Musical Clubs—MIT Glee Club, under Henry Jackson Warren—ROTC band—Apollo Club in Boston, MA

3. Naval service in World War II and engineering employment (32:04—CD1 32:04) ..13
   Study at Newark College of Engineering Civil and Cornell University—Civil Engineering Corps—interest in Okinawan culture—Grossier and Schlager Iron Works, Somerville, MA

4. College music study and beginning of musical career (36:13—CD1 36:13).............15
   GI Bill—New England Conservatory—Carl McKinley—Francis Judd Cooke—Oliver Messiaen—Irving Fine—composing for clarinet—Ronald White, San Antonio Symphony—Felix Viscuglia, Boston Symphony—Roger Voisin, Boston Symphony—Rosario Mazzeo at NEC—early compositions

5. Studies with Walter Piston (48:29—CD1 48:29)..18
   Harvard University musicology graduate program— studies with Walter Piston—Boston Symphony—Serge Koussevitzky—Louis Speyer—Archibald T. Davison—Otto Gambosi—John Ward—choral literature studies with Archibald Davison —Canton Choral Society— John Moriarty—conducting studies with Francis Findley at NEC—Renaissance repertoire and re-barring medieval music—Béla Bartók's use of classical form—recordings of Barkók's Concerto for Orchestra

6. European tour with Giuliana Chorale & returning to Harvard (59:19–CD1 59:19)...23
   Director Paul Giuliana— Nadia Boulanger—Walter Piston & Arnold Schoenberg—Piston's The Incredible Flutist*—Boaz Pillar, bassoonist—MITSO performance with Boston Conservatory dancers Jan Veen and Ruth Ambrose—Piston & the twelve-tone technique—Bavicchi's ASCAP sponsorship by Irving Fine—Harvard graduate degree candidacy*

7. Composing and teaching in the twentieth century (1:15:18–CD2 03:49) 30
   *Arthur Farwell—modernist composers—American Symphony Orchestra League Convention—Peter Mennin—William Schumann—Vincent Persichetti—Rivers Country Day School, Weston, MA—Brookline Music School—meeting John Corley—*Festival Symphony, op. 51*—Felix Viscuglia—interviewing Dmitry Kabalevsky for Harvard radio station WHRB—Richard Bobbitt & Robert Share—teaching at Berklee with William Maloof*

8. John Corley, MIT Concert Band Conductor, trumpeter, friend, & colleague (1:30:39–CD2 19:10)...35
   John Corley's favorite compositions pieces by Thomas McGah, Silvia San Miguel, Alain Caron—opinion of Corley's trumpet playing—Corley as an advocate for contemporary composers

Note on timing notations: Recording of this interview can be found either as one continuous file or as split up over two audio CDs. Timings are designated in chapter headings in both formats, with the timing on the full file preceding the timing on the CD version.

Contributors

John Bavicchi (b. 1922), composer, conductor has taught at the Berklee College of Music since 1964, where he is now Professor Emeritus. He attended MIT 1940-1942, enrolled in course XV (business and engineering), and sang in the MIT Glee Club. After a brief engineering career, he studied composition with Carl McKinley, Francis Judd Cooke and Walter Piston. His output includes orchestral, choral, piano and chamber music, and concert band music, written for John Corley (director of the MIT Concert Band, 1949–1999). He has been an active conductor, notably directing the Arlington-Belmont Chorale for 44 years.

Thomas J. McGah (b. 1938) is a composer and has been professor of music at the Berklee College of Music since 1973. His music includes works for orchestra, concert band, as well as vocal and chamber music.

Forrest Larson, Library Assistant at the Lewis Music Library, has attended training workshops in oral history methodology and practice at Simmons College and by the Society of American Archivists, and is a member of the Oral History Association. He is also an active composer and violist.

Interview conducted by Forrest Larson on June 30, 2006, in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 1:42:49. First of two interviews. Second interview: September 1, 2006.

Music at MIT Oral History Project

The Lewis Music Library's *Music at MIT Oral History Project* was established in 1999 to document the history of music at MIT. For over 100 years, music has been a vibrant part of the culture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This history covers a wide variety of genres, including orchestral, chamber, and choral musical groups, as well as jazz, musical theater, popular and world music. Establishment of a formal music program in 1947 met the growing needs for professional leadership in many of the performing groups. Shortly thereafter, an academic course curriculum within the Division of Humanities was created. Over the years, the music faculty and alumni have included many distinguished performers, composers, and scholars.

Through in-depth recorded audio interviews with current and retired MIT music faculty, staff, former students, and visiting artists, the *Music at MIT Oral History Project* is preserving this valuable legacy for the historical record. These individuals provide a wealth of information about MIT. Furthermore, their professional lives and activities are often historically important to the world at large. Audio recordings of all interviews are available in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

1. Berklee Department early musical background (00:00—CD1 00:00)

FORREST LARSON: It's my honor and privilege to have John Bavicchi for an interview this morning. It's June 30th, 2006. Also here in the studio is Thomas McGah. John is Professor of Music Emeritus at the Berklee College of Music [formerly Berklee School of Music, Schillinger House], and Thomas is still currently teaching at the Berklee College of Music as well. John attended MIT from fall of 1940 to spring of 1942, enrolled in Course 15, which is Business and Engineering. He was later a friend and colleague of John Corley [1919–2000], who was the conductor of the MIT Concert Band from 1948 to 1999.

Before we get into things, can one or both of you briefly explain how your department at Berklee, which teaches classical music composition, how it fits into a largely non-classical curriculum?

JOHN BAVICCHI: Well—the—what's called the classical music department at Berklee is, according to many of my pupils who've come from Europe, one of the best kept secrets in the musical world. Many people—well, the constant—the constant question that Tom and I are always asked—well, you know, when they find out we teach at Berklee—is that, "Oh, I didn't know you [laughs] taught—you taught jazz!" And, of course, my answer is: I don't even know what jazz is, which is another question. But Berklee doesn't stress the classical music department particularly, but it's essential if they're going to graduate people.

FL: How does the administration see that, as far as fitting into the curriculum? Or is it there because they're just supposed to have it?

THOMAS McGAH: Well, I think that was probably the initial impetus that caused the composition department to come into being, but it's changed—it's changed over the years because it—our department has attracted quite a few students. We have approximately—near eighty students now who are composition majors, but then there are over three hundred film scoring majors, and they have to take all of the composition courses. In order to get the bachelor's degree they have to take a certain amount of what are called traditional music courses. But yeah, it has expanded, and I believe that it is now the largest—we have the largest faculty of any music school in—at least in the country—

JB: Well, in—I was just going to—

TM: I think there are thirty—over thirty practicing composers teaching now in the composition department.

FL: Wow!

JB: Yeah, it's my understanding that Berklee is now the largest independent music school in the world.

TM: Yeah. Yeah, it's about four thousand students.

JB: Yeah, not attached to a larger university.

FL: Wow, that's very interesting. Just one more thing. I was looking on—on the web and it said that this department was initially started in, to quote from the web, "in an effort to obtain accreditation so that Berklee could grant music degrees."

JB: That's correct.

FL: Yeah.

JB: When I was—when I was hired, I was the second person hired so that they could have what—I suppose what they call core courses [laughs], you know, harmony, counterpoint, conducting, music history—

FL: Right.

JB: —solfège—all of those things, which they didn't have before because it was strictly a jazz, a commercial music school.

FL: Right. Okay. So getting on with the interview more directly here. Can you talk about where you were born, and the date and all that?

JB: Excuse me?

FL: When were you born, and where?

JB: I was born in Boston on April 25, 1922, which makes me an octogenarian in his fourth year.

TM: [laughs]

FL: So, were you born in Boston proper and you grew up in Dedham [MA]?

JB: Yeah. I grew up in Dedham, but for the birth my mother was sent to the Forest Hills Hospital, which is no longer in existence.

FL: Okay. All right. Tell me briefly about your family, your parents' professions and how many siblings you have?

JB: Yes. My father and mother were born in this country from—first generation from—my grandparents came from Italy, one from the Rome area and one from the Abruzzi, and my father was a freelance cellist in Boston.

FL: Aha!

JB: And, unfortunately, he had been gassed in the First World War with the chlorine gas and that led to immediate cancer of the liver and he died at thirty-three from cancer of the liver, caused by the chlorine gas attacks in the war. And then my mother remarried one of his best friends.

FL: Your father's name was—?

JB: Bavicchi.

FL: What was his first name?

JB: Alexander.

FL: Alexander, okay.

JB: Yeah. Alexander Bavicchi. And my mother remarried one of his closest friends, and he always maintained that he'd promised my father that he would take care of us because she had three children, and I was the oldest, and I was seven years old when he died.

FL: Your mother's first name—?

JB: Sarah.

FL: Yeah, and what was her maiden name?

JB: Nolfi.

FL: Okay.

JB: Sarah Nolfi, yeah.

FL: Wow. Okay, you were telling me about who this—her second husband.

JB: Yeah, her second husband was John Iafolla, who was in the construction business and he did—he did very well. He was a very hard worker and—

FL: Was he a contractor?

JB: Contractor, yeah, built roads and bridges and anything else that people would pay him for! [laughs] And I grew up in that atmosphere of the construction jobs.

FL: Was he musical in any way?

JB: No. No. And, as a matter of fact, my mother in her own gentle way tried to stop me from being musical because there was no point to it [laughs] financially, and, but I got along with my stepfather very well and I—

FL: Did he listen to music and go to concerts?

JB: No, no, no. Neither one of them, yeah.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: The only music they heard was music in church, which he didn't go to, but he figured he'd bought his way into heaven anyway building parking lots. [laughs]

FL and TM: [laugh]

JB: And the church, you know. But my mother was really solidly religious until her last days.

FL: So, how many siblings did you have?

JB: Well, there were three of us by my first father and two with the second.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: And we—we all get along, and we're all still alive.

FL: Any of them musical?

JB: No.

FL: No.

JB: Well, and let's put it this way, there is some musical talent in my sister and brother, both my siblings from my own father, but they didn't nurture it. My sister actually sang quite a lot in school and college; she sang Mozart operas and stuff like that.

FL: What's her first name, your sister's?

JB: My sister, Palma.

FL: Yeah.

JB: P-A-L-M-A. Palma. And my brother played the trumpet about as well as I played the trombone, maybe better. [laughs]

FL: What's his first name?

JB: Ferris.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: And Ferris and I played the trombone and trumpet duets for many, many years until I sold my trombone to study the viola, and Ferris just gave up because he wanted to make money like everybody.

TM: Just I—may I?

FL: Yeah.

TM: I'm curious about this. When did you begin taking the trombone lessons? How old were you?

JB: Well, I took them when I was a sophomore in high school because my piano teacher—my mother insisted that I have piano lessons—

FL: So you started piano first, right?

JB: Yes. I was studying with a man named Robert W. Gibb [1893–1937], who was a wonderful man, and he conducted the high school orchestra. He said, "I need trombones. Why don't you come play, learn trombone?" I said, "Okay."

TM: This was in Dedham, now?

JB: In Dedham High School. Yeah.

TM: Dedham High school. So, you started in the music education—?

JB: Right, right.

TM: —part of the school.

JB: And he—he remained a lifelong friend, Robert W. Gibb. He used to conduct festivals around Massachusetts and I would go with him when he—so I've—between him and [John] Corley [conductor of the MIT Concert Band, 1948–1999], I've had a lot of experience with—have, you know, music ed festivals in Massachusetts.

FL: So, how old were you when you started piano?

JB: How old are you when you're in junior high school?

FL: Uh-huh.

TM: Twelve, thirteen.

JB: Twelve, thirteen.

TM: Yeah.

FL: And was it something that was just kind of expected of you to do? I mean, some—some kids are just—

JB: Yeah. It was part of the—of the—what should I say—the effect of life of—what my mother thought was of—people of where we lived, and I should study piano.

FL: Yeah, yeah.

JB: And as a matter of fact, the other two studied piano, too—also, I should say. And I never went—got to be a very good pianist. Beethoven, opus 28 [Piano Sonata no. 15 in D Major] was about as far as I ever got but I—I kept the piano long enough to be able to teach with it, but as I got more and more into conducting later, I dropped the piano completely.

FL: So, was there a point in your musical experiences before college that you were even contemplating a professional musical career?

JB: Well, yes. I'd—I must say that the trombone and its limited abilities—

TM: [laughs]

JB: —got me into the world of serious music because of the Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony [Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, op. 36], and I couldn't believe that the trombone players could play like that and still be humans. [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

JB: I think I wore out the 78s. In those days, there were only 78 records, and I kept wearing them out and getting another set at two dollars a crack, and—which was a lot of money then. And I began to write pieces. I wrote—my first piece was an orchestral piece and I got the book by—Wedge? [George A. Wedge] A harmony book, I think, was—and I got an orchestration book by somebody, and I started writing the piece. And I looked at it, you know—I kept them, probably still have them somewhere, although I'm not sure of that, but I think they must be somewhere. I remember I had the trumpets building up to a climax and they got too high, so I put them down an octave. [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

JB: Of course, which absolutely ruined any climax I might have had. [laughs] I wrote about thirty—before I—before I called it—a piece opus 1, I wrote about thirty-eight pieces—

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: —and I went back and have taken some of them to use and, you know, work since then.

FL: So, were these—were you working with Robert W. Gibb on these, or just kind of on your own?

JB: Well, on my own, and I'd ask him questions and he'd laugh. [laughs] I actually wrote—

FL: So what—with your piano lessons with him, did he give you theory lessons as well?

JB: Yes. Yes. He gave me some, well, I would say rudimentary theory lessons, and I wrote the class song when I graduated from high school. And he harmonized it, I must say—I wrote the tune. [laughs] But he never said that, he said that I wrote it all. He lied. [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

FL: [laughs] And your high school orchestra, did they play your orchestra piece?

JB: Excuse me?

FL: The orchestra piece that you wrote—?

JB: Oh, no, no, no. [laughs]

FL: You just wrote out some—yeah, yeah.

JB: No, it—somehow I realized even at that age that this was a thankless task and that nobody cared! [all laugh]

TM: Oh, boy.

FL: So before college did you sing in choirs or take voice lessons or anything?

JB: I did a lot of singing, but that came after I got to MIT—

FL: Okay.

JB: Because the MIT Choral Society is what got me into the world of choral music.

2. Attending MIT (13:07—CD1 13:07)

FL: Okay, we'll get to that shortly. So your decision to attend MIT and you—did you have a planned career in engineering initially?

JB: Oh, yes. I was the eldest son of an Italian family that was in contracting, and as the eldest son I was supposed to be taking over after enough time passed. And so I was to be trained in contracting, so I went to MIT and I did well on the exams to get into MIT; I didn't have any problem getting in. And mathematics and music are closely allied, you know. [laughs] And I really wasn't interested at all, but I had no choice. I mean, in those days one didn't tell your father and mother, "Well, I'm not going to that school because I want to go to another."

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: At least not in my social situation.

FL: Were there any experiences in high school in regards to engineering and science that piqued your interest, that had something that got your imagination?

JB: In engineering?

FL: In engineering, yeah. In science or engineering?

JB: Well, I'd probably alienate anyone who ever listens to me, but I thought it was the most boring thing I ever did in my life.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: I couldn't—I couldn't stand calculus, and designing another bridge structure would have sent me insane, I'll tell you.

TM: [laughs]

JB: I didn't like any of it.

FL: That's very—

JB: And the only reason I stayed in it was because I was 1A—and I was able to get into the Naval College Training Program, so I went two more years in engineering before I got to be an officer in the Navy.

FL: Wow. So, you—you came to MIT in the fall of 1940, and you stayed through spring of 1942 and I—

JB: Right.

FL: —said earlier it was Course 15, which was Business and Engineering.

JB: Yeah.

FL: At that time, what was its academic and kind of—social reputation locally here?

JB: Of?

FL: Of MIT. Some people have described it—I mean, I guess it was known as Boston [Tech]—or as—they called it "Technology" when they said—

JB: Yeah.

FL: —referred to it—you know, there was Harvard and then there was—they called it "Technology."

JB: Yeah.

FL: Talk about, just a little bit about, just kind of how people locally saw the school, and its—its reputation and stuff like that.

JB: Well, I think the reputation was strong, but it was strictly engineering and nothing else. The fact that there was any music at MIT at all was a shock to me, and of course I jumped in with both feet. But it, generally speaking, they didn't even consider MIT when it came to anything but engineering.

FL: Mm-hm. So before you came you didn't even know that there was any music here?

JB: No, I had no idea whatsoever.

FL: Yeah. That's still not uncommon today.

JB: Yeah.

FL: So. We'll get more into that.

TM: Another Boston secret! [laughs]

JB: [laughs]

FL: Yeah, right. So, at the time, music and other arts-related activities were largely extracurricular; the performing groups were all extracurricular and there were some—some music courses offered. There were two courses, which I'll ask you about in a little bit. So, there was this organization called the Combined Musical Clubs. Do you remember? They over—

JB: Well I—

FL: —they oversaw over the—the student performing groups.

JB: Yeah. I remember singing in the MIT Choral group—was it called the Glee Club at that time?

FL: It was called the Glee Club. There's a picture of you in a 1941 yearbook.

JB: There is, yeah? And I've forgotten—was it Jackson, the conductor?

FL: Yes. I have his name here. We did make sure I've got that—that right. I think it was Henry L. Jackson.

JB: Yeah. He was a big man, like me.

FL: Or, I'm sorry. Henry Jackson Warren [director of MIT Glee Club 1939–43, 45–48].

JB: Yeah, right.

FL: Henry Jackson Warren.

JB: And he was—you know, he loved music and he loved to get people to sing and that was good. And I jumped in, as I say, with both feet because it was a musical experience and you could—wonderful thing about singing is that you can be—immediately be involved. [laughs] And there also was an ROTC band in which I played the trombone. And I'll never forget the first rehearsal; they played a couple of marches and there is one—the trombone ends the phrase, you know, *ba-pa-ta-um, pa-pa-ta-da-dum*, or something like that. And there were five trombones, and I was the only one that did it because the other four couldn't play.

TM: [laughs]

JB: And the young man who was conducting said, "Could we do that again?" And—*pa-ta-ta-da-dum*—and the rest of them—and so he said, "Oh, I see."

TM and FL: [laugh]

JB: He had nothing. It was—you wouldn't believe, comparing that with the MIT Concert Band of years later. [laughs]

TM: So that was the only instrumental group?

JB: That I knew of, but of course I was a trombonist, remember. There may have been some string things, but at that time—

FL: Yeah, I have some other questions about that later on. What kind of functions did the ROTC Band play for?

JB: None.

FL: None.

JB: None. [laughs]

FL: What was—what was its reason for—for existence?

JB: I don't know, I suppose to have the Reserve Officers' Training Corps—I mean, to have something to do.

FL: I see. And you didn't play at any military kind of functions or anything?

JB: It was—it wasn't good enough. [laughs]

FL: The—the conductor or leader of the group, was that a student?

JB: You know, I don't remember him, his name, except that he was a very young man. I mean, he was older than me, of course, but he wasn't—he was—he was probably in his late twenties at the time.

FL: Uh-huh. So getting back to the Glee Club and just MIT culture at the time, how would you describe student interest in participating in musical groups? Was it something that people really kind of went at, or did you—was it—was there a lot of kind of hard recruiting to get students?

JB: Yes. The latter. Yes, a lot of hard recruit—like pulling teeth to get somebody to sing. Yeah.

FL: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

TM: Oh.

FL: What were the—the student audiences like for the Glee Club concerts? Was there much student interest?

JB: You know, I hardly remember the concerts and I'm ashamed to admit it, but I think they did do concerts. I'm sure they did, but I'm sure the audience was not very [unclear].

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: The concerts—I mean it was a couple of years ago, so I—my impressions, of course, are hazy, but I don't remember any concerts with any full audience or anything.

FL: Mm-hm. Among the students, obviously people came to MIT to study engineering and science. Did you find other students who had just a basic interest in music and humanities? I mean, were those people kind of oddballs, or was there—did you find any supportive colleagues for that?

JB: I found a few people who became my friends because they liked serious music, and I remember one guy in particular who really knew the literature pretty well, and I told him that I'd—

FL: What was his name? Do you remember?

JB: Oh, God, no. That one—that one, I—that one I would never—

FL: Yeah.

JB: Yeah. I remember I told him about the Beethoven *Triple Concerto* [Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Piano in C Major, op. 56] and what a good piece it was and he said, "Beethoven never wrote a triple concerto," because he didn't know enough, you know. But he loved music and so we were friends. I never did go and get a recording and play it for him. [laughs] I was much gentler in those days. [all laugh]

FL: Were you involved at all in the administration of the Glee Club, and organizing and stuff like that?

JB: No. No.

FL: So, you—do you have any recollection about what kind of administrative support that it got? Was that always a battle to get money for funding, because the conductor was hired—?

JB: You know, I have no idea. I have a feeling that there was practically none.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: I mean, I can't imagine that the conductors, either one, would do it for nothing, but I don't know.

FL: Right. They were paid. I've seen some—some annual reports of the Combined Musical Clubs.

JB: Yeah. Twenty dollars. [laughs]

FL: There were dues that were collected from participants, but they also seemed to get a little bit of funding from the Administration.

JB: Yeah, but I knew nothing about that.

FL: Yeah. So of the groups at the time the Glee Club seemed to be the most—the most successful, and it was directed by Henry Jackson Warren. Do you know much about him? Like, what was—was he an area professional that was brought in?

JB: I don't know.

FL: You don't know.

JB: No, I don't. I knew nothing about him except that he was a genial man and he seemed to know his business.

FL: Do you remember what his conducting was like? Was—and the quality of the singing and stuff like that? Do you remember the—?

JB: Well, I mean, I had nothing to base it on because I wasn't experienced, but he wasn't particularly flamboyant. I thought he was—I mean he didn't have any histrionics, and he never cursed people out or any of the stuff that choral conductors would love to do sometimes. No, he was a very—I thought, very discreet. [laughs]

FL: Was he—did you find him basically competent though and—?

JB: Yes. He seemed completely competent to me, and of course I started from nothing, but I did have enough music in me to know that he seemed to know what he was doing. And he knew how to rehearse, which is very important.

FL: Yeah.

TM: Do you remember some of the literature that you were performing?

JB: No, I was thinking about that, Tom. I—I really don't. Yeah, I don't remember much.

FL: I saw a program from the 1938 concert by the Glee Club and it was all classical music, including even some [Giovanni Pierluigi da] Palestrina [ca. 1525–1594, composer], and Eleanor Steber [1914–1990, American operatic soprano] was a guest soloist. When you were there, did you have any, you know, outside guest soloists and stuff like that, or was that something really unusual?

JB: That would have been very unusual at the time I was here.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: And, but he was good. I mean, for instance, he had me go and sing with the Apollo Club one time because they needed tenors.

FL: And the Apollo Club was—?

JB: It's a men's club in Boston. They had a—a chorus at the time, a men's chorus. And I went there to help with the concerts a couple of times. And he got me a [Handel's] *Messiah* job one—in a church one time. He was—he was good—good guy.

FL: Mm-hm. So, you—you got to be a pretty decent, at least, choral singer?

JB: Yes, I got pretty good. [laughs]

FL: And you said you were a tenor, right?

JB: Yeah.

FL: The 1941 yearbook says, [reads] "The principal function of the Glee Club was to provide a musical and social outlet in the form of concerts given in conjunction with neighboring girls' schools." Do you remember doing tours of—?

JB: Not tours, no.

FL: —or going to like Wellesley [College, Wellesley, MA], and stuff like that?

JB: Oh, yeah, home and home.

FL: Did you do any joint concerts with some of them, like the Wellesley chorus?

JB: I believe we did, yes, though I'd—I'm vague about it. [laughs] It didn't make a huge impression on me. But of course all the girls did, but—

FL: Hm.

TM: [laughs]

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: —but I've outgrown that.

FL: Do you know if they, the Glee Club—speaking of repertoire, was it mostly classical or did you do some popular repertoire as well? Do you remember?

JB: I don't remember doing much popular stuff. I remember doing a lot of classical and maybe some stuff from the Yale—what do they call that? *The Yale Songbook*? They—

FL: Yeah. I forgot what that's called. I know that's a—

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Right.

JB: We did—unless I've confused my decades, I think that was in existence then and we sang from it.

FL: Right. There was also a collection of MIT songs that were published about—about that time or maybe a little earlier. Did you do anything from that book?

JB: It's entirely possible. Yeah.

FL: I should have brought that up and that could have jogged, maybe, your memory, because there was stuff written by MIT students.

JB: Yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah.

FL: Do you remember if the concerts were formal affairs or were they—?

JB: I don't think so.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: They weren't—I never thought of them as real concerts, I think. More like a home and home get-together.

FL: Did you do—did you write any music for the group, or do any arrangements?

JB: No, no. I would never tell anybody that I wrote music at that time—

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: —yeah, because I didn't have enough confidence. [laughs]

FL: The 1939 annual report for the Combined Musical Clubs talks about the MIT Orchestra, and it was apparently disbanded in 1940 due to "poor quality and morale." It was—a few years after that it was revived. Do you recall anything about the MIT Orchestra and what might have been going on?

JB: No. I—if there'd been one, I don't—I didn't know about it.

FL: Yeah. There was a dance band called The Techtonians.

JB: I remember—I remember hearing about them, but of course I knew nothing.

FL: Did you ever—you never heard the group?

JB: No. [laughs]

FL: I'm still waiting to talk to somebody who actually heard them.

JB: I must admit, even at that age, I didn't give [laughs] a damn about music like that. I don't know—what a snob, huh? [laughs]

FL: [laughs] So the 1941 yearbook mentions, as they put it, "a promising string quartet"—student string quartet. Do you—?

JB: No, uh-huh.

FL: Nothing about that either. There was a group that had a long existence. They started in 1884 and they ceased functioning sometime around 1936, the MIT Banjo Club. Did you ever—do you know anything about that organization?

JB: Nope, nope. [laughs]

FL: I guess they were quite popular. They did tours, quite extensive tours. Were there other musical groups that you can recall that we haven't mentioned?

JB: No. No, but that—at that time I was more interested in the track and field team, which was—which I was on.

FL: Oh, you were involved?

JB: Oh, yes. I may still hold the freshman record for the shot put at MIT, I don't know. I held it for many years. Yeah, I used to throw the discus and the javelin and the hammer and the shot put in meets and I—you know, that was a big part of my MIT [laughs] experience.

FL: My goodness! Wow. [laughs]

TM: Gee.

JB: You know, music was my—as always, my motivation, but it was a little bit nascent in those days.

TM: Mm-hm.

FL: Did you do any freelance trombone while you were at MIT, playing in area groups?

JB: I'm sure I did. I played around quite a lot when people asked me to, but—I remember playing for some high school once. I got fifteen dollars for it, too. [laughs]

FL: [laughs]

TM: It was probably good money at that time, right?

JB: *Iphigenia in Aulis* [by Christoph Willibald von Gluck, 1714–1787] or something like that. *Pa-te-te-te, pa-pa-pa-pa*—what the hell was that piece now?

TM and FL: [laugh]

JB: No. I've forgotten.

FL: Were there other MIT student musicians that you recall that made an impression on you?

JB: No. [laughs]

FL: Uh-huh. Were you—were there any concerts on campus by outside professional groups that you remember?

JB: I'm sure there were, but I didn't—I don't—didn't know about them. No.

FL: Okay. Shortly after your time there were some funded program—concerts called the Humanities Concerts and there—they had professional string quartets come in. That continues in another guise but it's basically a continuation of that.

JB: Yeah.

FL: And there's three or four concerts in that series, and I wondered if you—if there were any groups like that? You mentioned a fellow student who knew, you know, a bit about classical music. How common was it in your experience with MIT students to have any expressed interest in classical music?

JB: It was pretty rare. [laughs] Yeah.

FL: The MIT course catalog from 1940 to 1943 mentions two actual courses taught here. There was one, G62 History of Music, and G63 Introduction to Music. Do you know who taught these courses or anything about them?

JB: No. Did—was it—did I take them? [laughs]

FL: I don't know. I didn't get that—

JB: I may have taken them, I mean, but I don't remember.

FL: Uh-huh. And it also—the catalog description has this intriguing thing. It says that "many musical illustrations are performed in the classroom" and I'm wondering—

JB: Ooh. [laughs]

FL: —what, yeah, who, what and—but since you don't recall, then—

JB: Ocarina and finger cymbals.

TM: [laughs]

3. Naval service in World War II and engineering employment (32:04–CD1 32:04)

FL: Yeah. So, you left MIT and then you were in the Navy. Were you drafted or did you volunteer?

JB: No. I volunteered because I was 1A in the draft in the Army, and so I volunteered in the Navy and then suddenly I had to go find some place to go to school, so I got into the—in October I got into the Newark College of Engineering for a year. And then the next year I went to Cornell engineering school.

FL: Right. So, I'm not familiar with the draft and 1A. Tell me about that classification.

JB: Well, everyone registered for the draft, and when you were 1A you had to go into the Army. It was wartime, after all.

FL: I see.

JB: Yeah.

FL: And according to my research, you served four years, 1942 to '46, in a Civil Engineering Corps and you were a lieutenant and you served in the Pacific Theater.

JB: Yes.

FL: Is there anything you want to talk about your official duties?

JB: Well, I was officially the spare parts officer [laughs] in charge of the spare parts for the equipment, and when we were in the invasion of Okinawa, I was put in charge of the Okinawan contingent that worked for us because it—I became known as the Gook King because I got friendly with the natives, which many of my colleagues thought was very suspicious. But I got interested in the Japanese and Okinawan culture and tried to learn the language. And so for me the war was a very enriching experience, assuming that I got through it, which I did.

FL: Yeah.

JB: A little lucky to have done so, but—

FL: So you were in the thick of combat, even though you were in a support role?

JB: Oh, sure.

FL: Yeah.

JB: I unloaded an LST full of equipment in the basin of Okinawa.

FL: And an LST is—what is an LST?

JB: Well, it's a Landing Ship Tank, is the—it's a big—it was a big, overgrown barge that could carry a whole bunch of tanks and trucks and equipment, and I was in charge of loading it and unloading it. And that was the third hour of the invasion on the beach so I, yes, I was involved.

FL: Wow. Wow. Backtracking just a little bit. When you left MIT were you thinking about a musical career?

JB: No, no.

FL: No.

JB: No I didn't. I was going to go to work for my father.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: So then he wanted—he said, "Well, that's good. We'll just get into the business earlier."

FL: So you studied for a year at the Newark College of Engineering in Newark, New Jersey.

JB: Yeah.

FL: And then at Cornell University for one year.

JB: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Did those lead to any kind of degrees or certificates?

JB: No. I lack, apparently, about—what?— nine hours of an engineering degree.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: And everyone asked me, why didn't you go back and get it? Well, [laughs] other things came up. [laughs]

FL: So tell me about this transition from—oh, well, still sticking with engineering. You were, from what I read, a structural steel designer for a firm called Grossier and Schlager in Somerville, Massachusetts?

JB: Yes, the Grossier and Schlager Iron Works. Yes, I designed the steel for buildings and bridges that they—they built the prefabricated steel beams, and I worked designing the strength of them and the, you know, the thickness of the I-beams and all of that. I did the steel for the BU [Boston University] buildings, those little towers.

TM: Is that right?

JB: I did all the steel for all those buildings. Yeah.

FL: Oh. [laughs]

JB: I mean, I did the plans for the steel from the architect's drawings.

TM: Gee.

4. College music study and beginning professional musical career (36:13–CD1 36:13)

FL: So tell me about this transition from an engineering career and deciding to pursue music.

JB: Well, for me it wasn't a transition. It was a realization. [laughs] I mean, throughout all this I'd been writing music. I'd been writing a whole bunch of pieces and trying to—and actually got a few songs sung and things like that. And when I got—when the war was over and I was still alive, I got—found out that I could go to school, and so—

FL: That was the GI Bill?

JB: The GI Bill.

TM: Mm-hm.

JB: So, I went to the Conservatory, New England Conservatory, on the GI Bill.

FL: Right.

JB: And it paid for three and a half years. [laughs]

FL: Wow. And you studied with Carl McKinley [1895–1966] and Judd Cooke [1910–1995]?

JB: Francis Judd Cooke, yeah.

FL: Yeah. I'm not familiar with—I've seen those names, but I'm not familiar with them. Can you tell me just briefly about them, and things that you learned from them, memorable things you learned?

JB: Yeah, I—Carl McKinley was a very expert teacher, a very good musician, an organist and pianist, and very conservative composer, but he—I learned a lot from him. And, for instance, Judd Cooke was a cellist of sorts, but he was much more esoteric in his musical tastes and I learned a lot from him too because of his—well, he was interested in contemporary music in a way that Mr.—that Carl McKinley was not.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: And, but, you know, I ended up getting my degree in theory, not composition, because I didn't want to deal with that [laughs] so much. I wanted to write my music and—I remember—

FL: So, you were saying—

JB: I'm sorry.

FL: —Judd Cooke was interested in contemporary music at that time. Who were some of the composers that he was interested in?

JB: Well, you know, [Olivier] Messiaen [1908–1992] and—he was particularly interested in Messiaen and—well, you know, Irving Fine [1914–1962].

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: [?] Hill. [laughs] You know. [Editor's note: Possibly referring to Edward Burlingame Hill, 1872–1960.]

TM: Is there a reason why you chose New England Conservatory over, well, maybe any other conservatory or school? Was it the Boston location?

JB: Well, because it was in Boston, yeah, yeah, and I could live at, you know, at home and not—

TM: Yeah, yeah.

JB: Finances were a slight problem because I had given up a good job, you know. [laughs] And I remember one time with Cooke—the reason I went into theory, I was writing a—my clarinet concerto [Concerto for Clarinet and Strings, op.11 (1954)], which has been played quite a bit.

FL: And that's the one the clarinet—with clarinet and string orchestra, right?

JB: Yeah.

FL: Yeah.

JB: And I had a place where, oh, you know, some background noodling, and he looked it over and he said, "How did you ever have the patience to find all those notes?"

TM: [laughs]

JB: And I said to myself, "Jesus, what a question." So, I—I was, you know—I had to figure if I was going to stay—I mean, that was a very funny question.

TM: [laughs] Yeah.

FL: Composition teachers ask weird, weird questions like that; it turns a lot of people off.

JB: I mean, if I asked one of my pupils—I'd gotten into dotage, I think.

TM: [laughs]

FL: Yeah.

TM: Boy.

JB: I mean, I'm more likely to say, "How come you have so few measures? You had a whole week." [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

FL: So, you were speaking of that clarinet concerto. You've written quite a bit of clarinet music. Was there a particular reason you wrote a clarinet concerto at the time, and did you have a particular interest at that time in that instrument?

JB: No. I'd have to call it fortuitous circumstances because I became friends with a whole series of clarinetists. [laughs] And, of course, once they found out that I would write a piece that was playable, then they kept asking me. And one of my best friends, a fellow named Ronald White, was a second clarinet in the San Antonio Symphony for thirty years. He—I wrote some duets and things for clarinets and Felix Viscuglia [1927–2009], I went to school with, and he eventually became the clarinetist—the bass clarinet of the Boston Symphony and I wrote that concerto for him.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: And he played it at—the first performance was conducted by Roger Voisin [1927–2009] in Jordan Hall [at New England Conservatory] because Roger was an incipient conductor, as all BSO players are. And it was great fun. He [Viscuglia] was a wonderful clarinetist. And, you know, he taught me something about people who really want to play. I said, you know, after I'd written a piece, "Let's go over it and if something is too difficult, we'll change it." He says, "Oh, no," he says, "Some places are crooked but that's okay. I'll play them." And that's all. He didn't care.

FL: Mm.

TM: Wow.

JB: Because he didn't have—in those days they were known as the Mazzeophones. He kept his own—the regular clarinet. Rosario Mazzeo [1911–1997] taught clarinet at the Conservatory and he had all these alternate fingerings for the break between B flat and B natural.

FL: Yeah.

JB: Well, the players called them the sterling silver forest, and he had—they all had to buy one that studied with him, but [laughs] but he didn't play on the thing. Only when Mazzeo was in the room, I guess.

FL: [laughs]

JB: But he—so he learned to get around the break without the Mazzeo alternate fingerings. [laughs]

FL: So, did that clarinet—was it actually structurally different, it had some different keys to it?

JB: Yeah, he added keys, yes. Yeah.

FL: Yeah, yeah.

JB: Selmer [musical instrument manufacturer] put it out and—I mean, I don't know if they sell it. I doubt it now that Mazzeo's dead, I don't think—

FL: I haven't heard about that. That's the first—that's—

JB: Yeah, for a long time they had to—all those people had to buy it. [laughs]

FL: Oh, wow.

JB: But, he was a fine player, and he was very interested in contemporary music and he was very, very good to me, Mazzeo.

FL: Do you want to talk a little bit more about your music you wrote when you were at the New England Conservatory?

JB: Um.

FL: And, you know, fellow students that you wrote for?

JB: Well, a lot of my earlier pieces up—let me see, I think up through about, up to about opus 15—there might—about the thirty-eighth piece, I finally produced a piece that when it was played, it sounded the way I thought it was going to sound! [laughs] So I call that opus 1 [Divertimento no. 1, op. 1 for Clarinet, Trombone, and Violin (1950)]. I'd written that for myself on the trombone and a violinist that I was friendly with and a clarinetist, Ronald White. And we played it and that's the way I thought it would sound, so I called it opus 1. And up to about opus 1through opus 15 I did at the Conservatory, and I always wrote them for somebody.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: Yeah. A set of songs I'd write for a singer and, you know. [laughs]

5. Studies with Walter Piston (48:29–CD1 48:29)

FL: So there's this book by Howard Pollack [b. 1952] on—the title is *Harvard Composers*. It's about students who studied with Walter Piston [American composer, 1894-1976; taught at Harvard 1926-1960].

JB: Oh, yes. Pollack.

FL: And there is a chapter in there about you. And according to his book, he says that you entered Harvard—well, you were there from 1953 to '56, but you started as a graduate student in musicology, not com—

JB: That's all they had. There was no composition degree then.

FL: Ah.

TM: Oh, I didn't know that, too.

JB: There was no—you studied composition, but there was no—there was no other degree.

FL: Uh-huh. But he also says that you chose Harvard because Walter Piston was there.

JB: Yes, exactly.

FL: Tell me a little bit about that choice and what you knew about Walter Piston prior to that.

JB: Well, I knew the Boston Symphony played him all the time, and I liked his music, and he was there. [laughs] And I knew I had to take a special exam to get in, but I was able to fool them and I got in, and it was very rewarding to study with him. And he—I found out later, he didn't take people, except the one year he had to take them, but he took me for three more years. [laughs]

FL: When you heard his music performed at the Boston Symphony and other venues around, was there particular pieces that stood out in your mind that were of interest to you? Looks like somebody's at the door here, I'm going to have to turn the tape machine off. [pause in recording] All right, to resume here, pieces—pieces of Walter Piston you heard locally here—were there ones that really stood out in your mind that grabbed your attention?

JB: Well, yes. I—I remember his Woodwind Quintet, you know, I thought it was a wonderful piece [Quintet for Wind Instruments (1956)]. And he did a Duet for Viola and Cello [Duo for Viola and Violoncello (1949)] that I thought was sensational.

FL: I've played that. That's a great piece.

JB: Yeah. Oh, that's a wonderful piece. And—

FL: Where did you hear the viola-cello piece, the duo? Were—do you—?

JB: Well, I heard it in a church in South Boston. I've forgotten the occasion.

FL: Do you remember who the musicians were?

JB: No. [laughs] No.

FL: Yeah, yeah.

JB: And I remember that I was there because of—I had a friend who worked for WHDH-TV and he was televising the affair, and that Piston's duet was on it. And it—it knocked me out! [laughs] And his Fifth Symphony [1954] I'd heard at the time, and I thought it was great. And then, of course, when I—he'd finished the Sixth Symphony [1955, composed for the 75th anniversary of the BSO] I guess while I was studying with him, and that's an incredible piece. And, when I—

TM: Was—?

JB: Excuse me.

TM: No, go ahead, finish your thought.

JB: And I got very friendly with him and I used to go to his house. And he was working on his Eighth Symphony [1965], and I found out a lot of things about his compositions' methods, which were different from mine, which is okay. [laughs]

TM: I was going to ask about the Piston orchestral music. Was [Serge] Koussevitzky [BSO conductor, 1924-1949] championing his music as was, of course, [Aaron] Copland [1900–1990] and—?

JB: Oh, yes. Oh, Koussy [Koussevitzky] did his symphonies whenever—as they came out, they were done. Yeah.

TM: So you were having a chance to hear them and—

JB: Yeah. He wrote this piece for English horn and oh, he thought Louis Speyer [1890–1980] was one of the great—greatest instrumentalists who ever lived, and he wrote this piece for him—what is? Golly, my memory. Octogenarian. [laughs] [Editor's note: Fantasy for English horn, Harp, and Strings (1952). BSO premier, 1954, with Carl Munch conducting.]

TM: [laughs]

FL: As my dad used to say, "senior moments."

TM: Yeah, senior moments, yeah.

JB: [laughs]

FL: I have those, too, and I'm not senior! [laughs]

JB: I'm confusing it now with *Quiet City* of Copland [1941], but it wasn't that piece, it was another. But anyway, I really wanted to go study with him and I was able to get there, and musicology was the only thing. But I studied with Archibald T. Davison [1883–1961], too, and—

FL: Otto Gombosi [1902–1955]?

JB: —and Otto Gombosi and John Ward [1917–2012], and I had a very good experience at Harvard.

FL: I have some more questions about those folks, just a little bit.

JB: Yeah.

FL: So, Walter Piston's musical style, in the context of his time, might be seen as conservative but not reactionary, particularly if you look at, you know, their—people who studied with him. They certainly weren't clones of his style. I mean, they're all over. You know, you have Elliot Carter[1917–2012], Frederick Rzweski [b. 1938], David Behrman [b. 1937], Leonard Bernstein [1918–1990], Arthur Berger [1912–2003], Yehudi Wyner [b. 1929], even John Harbison [b. 1938]—and I just—that really says something about him as a teacher. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

JB: Yes. Well, sure, he was a wonderful teacher in that he never tried to impose his own style on his pupils. He never made an issue of that, which I'm sure many composers who teach do. And he never set up anything except a problem which you would solve in your own way. And he was very—the only thing he was critical of was—sometimes he would be almost cruel. Well, I remember one incident when somebody wrote a piece that was absolutely

watered down [Serge] Rachmaninoff [1873–1943] concerto and he played it for us in the seminar and it—I'll never forget! [laughs] Piston just looked at the score and looked at him, and he closed the score and said, "Oh, horns in F." And that's all he said. And I've never forgotten that.

TM and FL: [laugh]

JB: [laughs] And he seemed—he seemed to like my music. And, but he wasn't—I mean, I remember I wrote a piece in which I had the double basses and the cellos on a different rhythm. And he said, "Well, you know," he said, "That's mud. If you want mud, that's what you got." [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

JB: I had some wonderful experiences with him. I wrote a—my second cello sonata [Sonata no. 2 for Cello and Piano, op. 25]. It's in four movements and the last one was a big fugue, and at the first performance, which was done by a girl named Haller. What was her first name [laughs], Christine? No. [Editor's note: Corinne Haller]

FL: I can look that up for you.

JB: Yeah. And we played it at Paine Hall [Harvard University]. And he rushed up to me afterwards and said, "It was a great piece, if you leave off the last movement!" [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

JB: And what's-his-name, from Eastman [School of Music, Rochester, NY], was with him at the time, looking very bored, you know.

TM: Hanson?

JB: Yeah, Howard Hanson [1896–1981], yeah. [laughs]

FL: Wow. So you—the Pollack book says that you studied choral music with Archibald Davison. What—what was entailed with that? Was it actual choral conducting and repertoire or—?

JB: It was partially that, but it was mostly a survey of the choral literature, for which, you know, I was an—sort of, I owed him. [laughs] You know, because I—and then it stood me in very good stead later, when I got into conducting so much.

FL: Did you do any choral conducting at Harvard? How did you—?

JB: No.

FL: So—

JB: I got my first conducting job was at—was the Canton Choral Society when I was at the Conservatory. Because my friend, John Moriarty [b. 1930], who—who went and got well-known in the opera world, recommended me for that job and I got it.

FL: Had you—did you have a conducting course at NEC, or were you just learning on the fly like so many musicians?

JB: Oh, no, no, no. I'd studied with Francis Findlay [no dates found] at MIT—at NEC.

FL: Okay.

JB: But, he was the kind of a conductor where you didn't do any conducting, you just watched him and listened, and conduct once each term, which I—and I swore that if I ever taught a conducting course, somebody would conduct every day. And that's what I did when I was at Berklee. I taught conducting for many years, and every one of my students conducted every time they came to class.

FL: So, studying with Archibald Davison, you said it was largely about getting to know the literature?

JB: Yes. And he was very good. He covered everything and—for instance, the two early Beethoven cantatas [*Cantata on the Death of the Emperor Joseph II* and *Cantata on the Accession of Emperor Leopold II*], he spoke about them, so I finally did the first one. I copied all the orchestral parts myself because there weren't any, and I did it—cantata, The Death of Joseph II, I mean—yeah. Yes. The Leopold cantata is the one I didn't do, yeah. And it was because of him and I learned a great deal about the literature.

FL: Mm-hm. And you probably learned a fair amount about some of the Renaissance repertoire because—?

JB: Oh, yes. I mean, I—for instance, I did several Dunstable [John Dunstable, ca. 1390-1453] and Ockeghem [Johannes Ockeghem, ca. 1410-1497]—I did many early pieces because of him, yeah.

FL: Prior to that, were you much aware of the Renaissance choral repertoire?

JB: No. No.

FL: No. It's such a revelation—

JB: Well, he was a revelation, yes, he was. That course was amazing! [laughs]

FL: Wow. The Pollack book also mentions that you studied with Otto Gombosi [1902-1955].

JB: Yeah. Gom-bo-shee, I think.

FL: How is that pronounced?

JB: I think he called it Gomboshee.

FL: Okay. It says that you studied—it says you studied medieval music with him.

JB: Yeah.

FL: Tell me about your studies with him, and what was involved with that.

JB: Well, his bête noire was the re-barring of medieval music. He felt that the—that the phrases—there were no bar lines, and his whole idea was that, in this course at least, that he wanted to get so—to delineate the phrases, but by barring them in contemporary measures. And we would spend—he'd have us all getting a motet and re-barring it, you know, so that we—he'd give us the music, and then he'd consult what we did with what he did, and try to show us why we did it well or not, and that was his whole thing.

FL: So, when you're re-barring, were you looking for regular bars or were you using the bars to delineate phrases, and so that there wouldn't—wasn't the same number of beats in each bar?

JB: Yeah, well the first thing was to find where the phrases ended, and then he—yes, he wanted—he was trying to get regular bars or sometimes three/four bar and a two/four bar or something like that.

FL: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

JB: But he felt that re-barring that music would help more—get it performed more often. I think that was what he was after.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: And he was a very strongly opinionated man and I enjoyed him, but he was not easy to reach the way Davison and Piston were. I mean, as—in conversation.

FL: So his—and he was known for this kind of obsession with overall structure of music.

JB: Yeah.

FL: Did some of that kind of stay with you and help you, or did you find you were kind of rebelling against that?

JB: I don't know. I mean, the overall structure and—you mean, of course, there's form.

FL: Yeah.

JB: No, it had a big effect on me because when I write, the form is the thing that usually comes first anyway. And I—my interest in [Béla] Bartók [1881–1945], obviously, was because of his use of classical form.

FL: Mm-hm. And did he introduce you to Bartók's music?

JB: No, no.

FL: Because he was—?

JB: No. Bartók's music—at the Conservatory, where the railroad tracks are now, there used to be houses. And we—I remember the first time the recording of the *Concerto for Orchestra* [Sz. 116, BB 123 (1943)] came out and there was all this smoke from the trains, [laughs] you know, there was nothing but smoke!

TM: Wow. Yeah?

JB: Soot! Oh, it was something else. It's all so clean now. And there were four or five of us, and there was this new recording on 78s of—what was it? The Minneapolis Symphony? No. Fritz Reiner [1888–1963]? The earliest recording of the Bartók *Concerto for Orchestra*, and—

TM: Koussevitzky didn't record that first?

JB: Who?

TM: Koussevitzky didn't record that first?

FL: Because it was written for—?

JB: It was written for the Boston Symphony, but it was first—

TM: He premiered it, right? But he didn't record it. Oh, I thought he—?

JB: No, the first commercial recording was 78s—

TM: Yeah.

JB: —and I think it was Fritz Reiner.

FL: Yeah, and that recording is really famous. I forget the orchestra, [Editor's note: Chicago Symphony Orchestra] but I know the Reiner recording is considered one of the great recordings. Yeah.

JB: That was the first one. And for many years, until I actually saw the score—for many months, depending how long you—you know, you have *pa-pa-pa-pah, ta-da-da-dah*—they made a mistake, they went *pa-pa-purria-pah*. And I thought that's the way it was because in those days, you didn't go back over and do a contemporary piece again. You had one shot, you know, at four minutes. So the trumpet went pa-*pa-purria-pah*, and I thought that was in the score. And I looked at the score and: what the hell is that? And we found out later that that was a mistake, but they couldn't go back and re-do it. Like Piston told me that the *Prelude*

and Allegro for Organ and Strings (1943) with E. Weakness Smalls and the BSO—E. Power Biggs, excuse me—[Edward Power Biggs, 1906–1977]

FL: Yeah.

JB: —that those two sides were done ten years apart!

TM: Really?

JB: Because they—Koussy [Koussevitzky] told them they would sneak it in at the end of the rehearsal. They snuck in the first four minutes, and to do the other side it took another ten years before they could sneak in the other side. [laughs]

TM: Amazing!

FL: Wow. So, with—back at Harvard with Gombosi—apparently, according to the Pollack book, he was an advocate of Bartók's music?

JB: Yes. Yes, he was, and—but by then I was—I was immersed, I guess.

FL: Yeah. Wow.

TM: What was Piston's attitude towards Bartók?

JB: Bartók? He said, well, he said, "You show the influence of Bartók, but it's still you, so it's okay." That's what he told me. [laughs] And it's undeniable: Bartók's influence on my music around that time is pretty clear. But, it is still me, so it's okay. [laughs]

TM: Mm-hm.

FL: We'll get into some of those issues in our—in the second interview, because I have some very specific questions about that. Did Piston—what did he—what was his take on Bartók? Did he like Bartók?

JB: No, I don't think he liked him very much. I think there's no question he respected him. You know, Piston surprised me. He thought [Gabriel] Fauré [1845–1924] was a great composer. I mean, he really thought Fauré was an—his attitude towards Fauré is the same of mine towards [Robert] Schumann [1810–1856] that people don't understand, you know.

1. European tour with Giuliana Chorale and returning to Harvard (59:19—CD1 59:19)

TM: Wow. Is that a result of Piston's studies in Europe with—?

JB: In France. [Nadia] Boulanger [1887–1979].

TM: Boulanger.

FL: Yeah.

JB: And Piston—?

TM: —who worshipped Fauré, too, didn't she?

JB: Yeah. And when I got the chance to have a lesson with Boulanger, because Piston wrote me a letter when I went to France to sing in that chorus. There was a chorus called the Giuliana Chorale and I was singing tenor; I was one of the four tenors. We did a tour of France.

FL: So, tell me about this group. I didn't know that you had even gone to Europe and all this, and I have some questions about that. So, tell me about this: how you got involved in this group and what the group is about. Then we can ask about Boulanger.

JB: Well, I got in the group because somebody said to me that there was this blind man, who was putting a group together, and they wanted to go to Europe and they needed a tenor badly, and was I interested—and I've forgotten who, but I said, sure I was.

FL: So this was a local group that went on tour there?

JB: Yeah.

FL: Yeah.

JB: And they used to meet down—in a church down Beacon Hill; it wasn't [Alfred Nash] Bud Patterson's church [organist and choirmaster of Church of the Advent (Boston, MA), 1949–1960], but some church down there. And Paul Giuliana was a very nice—nice man. He was a blind man, so he conducted like this, you know, and I got the pianist for him, too, because he didn't have a regular pianist. I got Tan Crone [1930–2009, pianist], who was going to the Conservatory with me at the time, and—she and I went on the tour with them.

FL: What's the name of this group again?

JB: The Giuliana Chorale.

FL: Okay.

JB: Yeah.

TM: Was that the director's name?

JB: Yeah. Paul Giuliana.

TM: Paul—okay, yeah.

JB: And—I've forgotten what I was going to say.

FL: So then you went on tour?

JB: Oh, we went on tour of France, yeah.

FL: Yeah.

JB: And it was my first experience in Europe. We went over on the S.S. *Maasdam* and came back on the S.S. *Maasdam*. And you could get a Heineken's for ten cents and a—and a—what is the—a Geneva for ten cents. So one could get satisfactorily smashed on about two dollars.

ALL: [laugh]

FL: So, what kind of music did you sing in that—on that tour?

JB: It was mostly—it was good, mostly good, a Monteverdi—a piece by [Claudio] Monteverdi. We did a piece by Mozart, you know, *Ave Verum* [1791] or something like that. More or less popular classical pieces, but good music.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: And there was no—there were no show tunes of any kind. [laughs]

FL: Any contemporary music or relatively contemporary?

JB: No, no. No contemporary.

FL: No.

JB: Renaissance and classical and romantic.

FL: Yeah. And then you mentioned that when you were there, you had a lesson or some lessons with [Nadia] Boulanger [1887–1979]?

JB: Oh yeah, Piston—when I told Piston that I was going, he said that he would write me a letter to take to Boulanger, and so I did, and she arranged for me to have a lesson with her. And I showed her my music.

FL: What was—what came of that?

JB: Well, she spent most of the time talking about how [Igor] Stravinsky [1882–1971] ate an omelet different than other people—

TM: [laughs]

JB: —and conversing, with interruption after interruption, in five different languages, fluently, as far as I could tell, including Russian.

TM: Mm. Boy.

JB: But she spent not an hour but almost three hours with me, and she told me that my music needed more calm.

ALL: [laugh]

TM: Calm.

JB: But then she said—but mostly she talked about [Igor] Stravinsky.

FL: Interesting. So—

JB: And she mentioned Lili [Boulanger, 1893–1918] a couple of times, too.

FL: Yeah, her sister.

JB: She was a very vital woman. I could never have studied with her, though.

TM: About what year is this, now?

JB: God, Tom—'55?

TM: So, the fifties.

FL: So this was still when you were at Harvard then?

JB: I was at Harvard, yes.

FL: Right. So moving back to Harvard, the topic of [Arnold] Schoenberg [1874–1951] and Harvard, in 1947, his String Trio [op. 45] was premiered there, and apparently Walter Piston copied out the parts for that performance, from the score, I guess.

JB: I wouldn't be surprised.

FL: There's an intriguing thing in the Pollack book—he doesn't go into detail—

JB: What book?

FL: —the Pollack book.

JB: Oh, the Pollack, yeah.

FL: He says that Piston liked to pull practical jokes on people, and there was something that he did to Schoenberg and, he said, at Schoenberg's expense, but he doesn't say what it was. Do

you have any recollection what that might have been? I'm just curious what Piston might have done to Schoenberg.

TM: [laughs]

JB: I don't know. He was very good at stuff like that, though, yeah.

FL: Yeah.

TM: Really? Yeah?

JB: Ah, yes. [laughs] Why, you may—you may want to take this off the record, but I wrote an oboe sonatina [Sonatina for Oboe and Piano, op. 30 (1957)—

FL: You want me to take this—?

JB: No, but I mean you can do with it what you want, but I wrote an oboe sonatina and in the second movement I put *con delicatezza quartico sixty-nine*. And Piston was drinking coffee at the time [laughs] and he said, "Oh!" And he just burst out laughing and coffee spewed all over the piano bench because he—he wanted to discuss how that quartico [laughs] sixty-nine would affect the course of the music. He got a kick out of that! [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

JB: He was—he loved old-fashioneds.

TM: Is that right, yeah?

JB: Oh, yeah. When [John] Corley did his [Piston's] *Incredible Flutist* [1938], back in the days when Corley had the [MIT] orchestra [John Corley conducted MITSO, 1955–1965], which was a few years, enough to count, we went out and had drinks with Piston. He got so crocked on old-fashioneds. And he told me about the—I don't know if it was—yeah, it must have been during that time because I went to the—I took him to the rehearsal so that he could hear Corley rehearse. And he was telling me about the dog's bark—

TM: Oh, yeah.

JB: —in there and that's Boaz Pillar, the bassoon player—[no dates found, bassoonist with the BSO]

TM: Oh, is that who did—?

JB: —yeah, because they didn't know what the hell to do to get the dog's bark in, and Pillar says, "I'll do it." [laughs]

FL: So, tell me about this. The dog's barking and I'm—

JB: Well, there's a—Piston wrote a ballet called *The Incredible Flutist*—

FL: Right, yeah.

JB: —and when it was performed by what's-his-name at the Boston Conservatory, you know, Ruth Ambrose and—

TM: Well, are you talking about the dancer? The—ooh, I almost had it— [laughs]

JB: Who was like the ballet dancer who did the first—?

FL: I don't remember.

TM: Oh, God, I remember that name but—

JB: Ruth Ambrose and he were in charge of the dance at the Boston Conservatory for a long time. Anyway— [Editor's note: Jan Veen, 1903–1967]

TM: Big name, yeah.

JB: —they didn't have a dog barking, so Boaz Pillar said he would do it on the recording.

TM: There's a march. And then at the end, I guess it's like *bum-pa-dum-pum-pum*, some kind of a thing like that.

JB: Yeah. And ruff, ruff. [laughs]

TM: [laughs] And ruff, ruff.

FL: Did he want someone to play a recording of a barking dog, or somebody to imitate it?

JB: No, it was when the BSO made a recording of it, they needed a barking dog, so Pillar said he would do it, so that barking dog in the recording is Boaz Pillar, the bassoonist.

TM: [laughs]

JB: Piston told me about that at one of those rehearsals.

FL: My, wow! Wow. So, it appears that Piston had some kind of an ambivalent relationship with or opinion of Schoenberg's music. Did he talk to you much about Schoenberg?

JB: No, except that I know that he would—he respected what Bartók and Schoenberg had done, but he was not fond of their music. He never mentioned it with love; he just mentioned the effect of it and the seriousness of it. I know he didn't like it.

TM: Uh-huh.

FL: There were two Piston pieces—I'm forgetting which ones they were—that he tried twelve-tone technique, but according—I don't know the pieces but, according to what I've read, they still have tonal implications, but he had made an attempt to actually try to work with twelve-tone technique. [Editor's note: Flute Sonata (1930) and Chromatic Study on the Name of Bach for organ (1940).]

JB: Yeah. Well, I—yeah, I don't know.

FL: Ah—

JB: Jan Veen! Yes. Jan Veen [1903–1967] was the dancer.

TM: Okay.

FL: Oh, yes.

JB: Jan Veen and Ruth Ambrose [ballet dancer, chair of the Boston Conservatory Dance Division, 1967–1989]. They did the Boston Conservatory and they—he was in the first performance. He wrote it for Jan Veen.

TM: Oh, it was specifically for him?

JB: Yeah.

FL: I'll ask you later. There's an essay on serialism that Piston had published, which I have not seen yet. I'm going to try to track it down, but we can follow up more later about questions, and what he may have discussed with you about serialism. Piston, like many composers of his generation, did formal study in Europe, and they often studied with Nadia Boulanger or went to Germany and stuff like that, but you actually didn't do that. Was—and because it seemed like for a lot of people it was kind of expected that after you did graduate study in this country, to kind of finish up over there. Did you feel any—did anybody encourage you to do that?

JB: No, I'd—personally, I wasn't interested. I felt that I was developing my own style. I didn't feel that I wanted to go and study with anybody else.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: I wanted to write my music and, you know, get in the mainstream of life. I wasn't—I wasn't interested in going—I know they all did it. Irving Fine did it. Irving Fine was my sponsor to ASCAP [the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers]; in those days you used to have a sponsor. He sponsored my ASCAP membership.

FL: Did you meet him when you were at Harvard? Was—and Fine studied with Piston as well?

JB: Yeah, yeah. Yes. I met him then, yeah, and he and I got along well, and I liked his music very much. And I performed his music, and I did Piston—a choral piece of Piston's one time. What the hell is the name? Jesus! [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

JB: Oh, God.

FL: Now, Fine was teaching at Harvard at that time, right?

JB: He may have been. I guess so.

FL: There was a period of time when he taught there, but I guess he didn't get tenure because he was Jewish, or something like that?

JB: I thought he was teaching at Brandeis [University, Waltham, MA] at the time. Maybe, maybe—

TM: Later, I think he was at Brandeis. Yeah.

FL: Okay, but there was a period of time when he taught at Harvard.

JB: Well, he may—he may have been. Things are hazy, let's face it.

FL: Yeah.

JB: But he was a very nice man, and he and his wife were very pleasant. And when it came up to—when I wanted to get into ASCAP, he says, "I'll sponsor you." So, it was a—it was nothing. [laughs]

TM: He was fairly young when he died though, wasn't he?

JB: Oh yes, he died of a heart attack, what, at forty-eight or something?

TM: Was that it?

JB: Yeah. He was very young, yeah.

FL: Wow.

JB: He went to Europe and he died when he was overseas. And it was a shock.

[END OF CD1 1:11:29]

TM: Mm.

FL: This next question is overly broad, and I—

JB: It's what?

FL: It's overly broad, but I'm going to try and ask it anyway.

JB: [laughs]

FL: You were—people have described pre—American culture pre-World War II and afterwards and what a—that World War II was—brought about a lot of changes musically and artistically, and you were kind of right in the thick of that. Do you have any observations as to, kind of, what that was and how you saw it and how you experienced it? Did it have an effect on you?

JB: Well, I don't know. I mean, I—for me personally, all it meant was that I was able to go into music, so it was very important, but—

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: —but the larger picture of—I'm not enough of a historian, I think, to contribute.

FL: But, did you feel kind of personally, as a composer, that the kind of the spirit of the times—did it kind of push you in a way that might not have had that—?

JB: Well, you know, I guess like all composers at the time, I was just annoyed that people didn't—didn't want to hear contemporary music. [laughs] And I got so I almost hated records because I knew that that had stopped—you know, the need for contemporary music. Because they—people could listen to what they wanted to a thousand times, and they didn't have to have any new music. And so, recorded sound was the death knell of composers, of economic validity, let's say.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: And I was very aware of that, and so I was struggling with that, but so was everyone else. And then that might have contributed to the vitality, because of the anger involved.

FL: Mm-hm. So you—did you finish a degree at Harvard, or—?

JB: No, I never did the German exam, you—it was musicology, remember. I had to have an Italian exam, a French exam and a German exam, and I never—I was waylaid. [laughs] People had waited around for ten, twelve years to do their—all their exams, and I only had three years when I was going to try and do the German. I was studying German, and John Ward [Professor of Music 1961–1985]—not the John Ward from Oxford—but John decided that he would terminate all outstanding language exam requirements, and the candidacy was terminated. Me and about thirty other people, oh, it was—

FL: But you were only there for three years. Why did they terminate it so quickly?

JB: That's it. He decided—I was there for four years altogether, and he decided that anyone who had been more than, you know, three years—must have been three years, because that's—he did—maybe that happened after I—I don't remember the dates involved now, but my candidacy was terminated, along with a whole bunch of other people, some who had been waiting fifteen years to do their German exam. Because it was like the portfolio at Berklee: it didn't matter if you did it ten years later. I mean, it was still valid, but not for John Ward.

FL: My, my.

JB: He was—I think more people hated him more virulently for a short time than any man in the academic world [laughs], because he was chairman of the department at that time. The chairmanship rotated.

TM: Ah.

JB: Yeah. Piston was even chair for a while, but he got rid of it as fast as he could. [laughs]

2. Composing and Teaching in the Twentieth Century (1:15:18–CD2 03:49)

FL: I want to ask you about this gentleman, Arthur Farwell [1872-1952], a composer. He was an MIT alum from 1893. Were you familiar at all with his music? He was also—he ran a—this publishing house and printing press called the Wa-Wan Press, that published only American music. He was a real advocate for American composers and I just wondered if you—?

JB: No. I've never heard of him. It's too bad I hadn't.

FL: Wow. Well, he wrote a lot of music and was—

JB: Falwell?

FL: Farwell. F-A-R-W-E-L-L.

JB: Farwell.

FL: And was in his time a national figure, speaking out publicly a lot about what it meant to be an American composer, and that you didn't have to come from Europe in order to be a composer. But also you didn't—his thing was: you didn't have to imitate what was going on in Europe. And he was really following in the footsteps of Dvorak's admonition to American composers to be—

JB: To use what was here.

FL: Yeah. To use—and Farwell did a lot of research on Native American, you know, Native American Indian music. Spent a lot of time, actually, with them. He—he grew up in Wisconsin and knew Indians just as a child and so it was very natural for him to—to do that.

JB: It's too bad I didn't know about him. [laughs]

FL: Wow. I was—I was kind of—kind of hoping that maybe you had run across his stuff. See how we're doing on time. Okay. Let's see. There's lots of topics here.

When you were coming of age as a composer, the so-called modernist composers of the early twentieth century were still new to lots of people at the time. There was Carl Ruggles [1876–1971], Charles Ives [1874–1954], Dane Rudhyar [1895–1985], Leonard Bernstein [1918–1990], Henry Cowell [1897–1965] and [Edgard] Varèse [1883–1965]. How—can you talk about—with your fellow local composers how your—kind of listening to that music and the issues that those composers were—and their ideas that they were pushing?

JB: Well, you know, there wasn't—at the Conservatory, which everything was based on for me in those days, there wasn't a great—great interest in Ives and Ruggles and all of those people that came on later.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: They were much more interested in Bartók and Messiaen, and Schoenberg and [Paul] Hindemith [1895–1963].

FL: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

TM: Stravinsky, maybe, too?

JB: Stravinsky, yes of course, yeah. And the—what's the word I want? The emergence of Ives and Ruggles, for instance, is much later, as far as I'm concerned.

FL: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

JB: It wasn't—it wasn't a big topic of conversation in those days at all. And a piece like *Sun-Treader* [by C. Ruggles (1926/31)] I had no idea existed, you know. And Henry Cowell's, you know, *The Banshee* [by H. Cowell (1925)], for instance?

FL: Yeah.

JB: I mean, I didn't know about pieces like that until they made recordings of them. You know.

FL: Wow.

TM: Hm.

FL: Yeah, that seems to—the other composers and people from that time have talked about that, and it's not that they weren't out doing it, but it was—it looks like they kind of had their own kind of subculture there. They knew each other.

JB: Yeah, yeah. And, for instance, if I'd know that if I'd written to Ives, I could have gotten a copy of his songs, I would have done it. But I didn't know. [laughs]

FL: When did you first hear the music of Carl Ruggles?

JB: Oh, God. [laughs] I don't know. I can't answer that. Yeah.

FL: Does—I—personally, when I hear your music I think of Carl Ruggles.

JB: Oh, really? [laughs]

FL: There's a certain affinity with strong, bold, contrapuntal lines and dissonant harmony.

JB: Yeah well, no possibility there. [laughs]

FL: Yeah.

JB: No I mean, it—for me it's very recent that I've gotten to know Ruggles. Only from the recordings that have come out.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: Yeah. You know—and somebody like Cowell, I mean, if it weren't for the recordings, I wouldn't have known his music. I mean, that *Ancient Desert Drone* (1940) which is so boring, and then *The Banshee*, which is so interesting. Stuff like that I would love to have heard when I was in the process. But I was very much at a—well, I was at a conservatory, let's face it. Yeah.

FL: Mm-hm. Oh, after you were finished in the Conservatory, who were some of the either local composers and other people, you know, outside New England, that you got to know? You must have had some collegial relationships with composers at large?

JB: Well, I got to—I met a lot of people. I went to the American Symphony Orchestra League Convention every year, and I met a lot of composers and—I mean people like Peter Mennin [1923–1983] and—

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: —you know, [William] Schuman [1910–1992].

TM: [Vincent] Persichetti [1915–1987]? Did you meet Persichetti?

JB: Persichetti. Yeah, Persichetti had a huge effect on me. When I conducted the Berklee Concert Band I did his Sixth Symphony [Symphony no. 6 for Band, op. 69]. And I got to know—because he was ever present at—you know, the "West Point Symphony"? Who's that? [laughs] Used to play poker all the time.

TM: It's not [Norman] Dello Joio, is it?

JB: Huh?

TM: Dello Joio?

JB: No, Dello Joio—

TM: Vittorio Giannini?

JB: Huh?

TM: Gianinni?

JB: No, neither one of those, much—much—

TM: Morton Gould [1913–1996]?

JB: Yeah. Morton Gould.

TM: Ah. Morton Gould.

JB: Morton talked all the time at the conventions. He loved to talk.

TM: Yeah, yeah?

JB: He was a very amusing fellow. Always with a young woman on his arm. [laughs]

TM: [laughs] Oh. Well, he wasn't talking all the time.

JB: Well, no.

ALL: [laugh]

FL: So, after you were done at Harvard and before you started at Berklee, tell me about your work as a composer and what you did for employment.

JB: Well, I taught at the Rivers Country Day School [Weston, MA] for many years, and from there I went to be registrar of the Brookline Music School [Brookline, MA], and that's where I met John Corley [conductor of MIT Concert Band, 1949-1999].

FL: Ah-hah!

JB: Well, that's not where I met him; that's where I got to be so friendly with him.

FL: Right. He has a funny story about how the two of you met. I'm curious to hear your version of that.

JB: Yeah.

TM: [laughs]

JB: Yeah. [laughs] I put some stuff in a brass quintet and I sent the brass quintet to him—and he told me it was impossible. [laughs] And, then I had—I put it in the symphony I wrote for his band [*Festival Symphony*, op. 51], and the kids were playing what he said was impossible twenty-five years before or something.

TM: Oh, really? [laughs]

JB: That's a little joke between us. [laughs]

FL: Well, the way that John Corley described it to me is: he sent the parts back to you—

JB: Yeah.

FL: —and then he was playing in the pit for a ballet—

JB: That's right.

FL: —and you came up to him and you said, "You're the guy who sent my quartet back."

JB: Yes. That's right.

TM: [laughs]

JB: Yeah. He loved to tell that story because I—I'm a large guy and I was looming over the—he was playing beside Phil [Felix Viscuglia, 1927–2009; clarinetist], you know.

TM: Oh, really?

JB: Yeah, he was playing trumpet and Phil was in the band. It was, you know, Virginia Williams [E. Virginia Williams, 1914–1981; founder of the Boston Ballet] and Bevy [Beverly Anne "Bevy" Lewis, Bavicchi live-in companion] was dancing in the hall they used sometime—what the hell was it called? Jesus! Jacques d'Amboise [b. 1934; ballet dancer, choreographer] was one of the guests and—anyway—yeah—and we decided to have a drink after that. [laughs]

FL: And then he describes that you went over to—or the two of you got together and he played, I guess, the *Festival Symphony* [op. 51]or some piece that really struck him, as John described it, "very bold and strong music," and I guess you were fast friends from then.

JB: Yeah. I wrote the—the first piece I wrote for him was the *Festival Symphony*. Yeah.

FL: But he said that you played some recording of some piece, played a tape or something of one of your pieces. Or maybe he just looked at the score. I'm not sure.

JB: Well, I hadn't written any concert band music when I first—

FL: There was something he—unless his memory was mistaken, but he described going over to your house and listening to some recording of your music that really struck him as—

JB: Oh, yeah. It might have been my Toccata [for piano, op. 23] or something like that.

FL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Wow. You got a question?

TM: Yeah, yeah. I—we've been talking about the Harvard—your Harvard experience there. Not too long ago, John, you told me about an interview that you conducted on the Harvard radio station.

JB: Oh, yeah, yeah. I had a program with WHRB [Harvard University radio station].

TM: Yeah. And maybe you'd like to talk a little bit about that and about the visitor that came from Russia.

JB: Yeah. The— Dmitri Shostakovich [1906–1987] and [Tikhon] Khrennikov [1913–2007] and Dmitry Kabalevsky [1904–1987] came on an American tour. The BSO was doing their music and [W]HRB sent me over to get an interview with Shostakovich. And there was arranged—I went over to the Copley Plaza [Boston, MA] to do an interview with Shostakovich, only to find out that I had to have the interview with Kabalevsky, who was the leader of the expedition, and I wasn't allowed to talk to Dmitri [Shostakovich].

TM: Oh, you weren't allowed to talk to him?

JB: Yeah.

TM: Hmm.

JB: And Dmitri [Shostakovich] was around, but he kept crawling around a wall like a scared rabbit. I couldn't get over it.

TM: Poor guy.

JB: And I talked to Kabalevsky, and, you know, I made up some questions. I have a transcript of that. Yeah.

TM: But was he conversing in English or was it the translator they had—?

JB: No, he was conversing in English. Yeah. Yeah.

TM: Oh. Hm.

JB: I later did an interview with—who was it, [Francis] Poulenc [1899–1963]? Which somebody translated, although he could—he understood the English very—perfectly well. I think it was Poulenc.

TM: And were you—well, these programs, were you part of a staff?

JB: Well, I had an hour-long program about contemporary music every week on WHRB. And what I did is to talk about the pieces, and I'd bring in a clarinetist if—to talk about what contemporary composers had done and what was difficult. And it was a lot of fun. And I'd get an interview with, you know, with a composer or with a conductor that I—whenever I could. And I'm sure Piston came on that thing for me, and [Irving] Fine may have, I don't remember.

FL: How long did you do that program?

JB: At least a year, maybe two years. I don't remember. Gets all hazy. [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

FL: So it was a way for you to get to know the Boston area composers probably pretty well, then?

JB: Yes. I got to know—I got to know a lot of people and I wish my memory of names is as good as it used to be, even though it was bad then, but now it's really gotten antediluvian.

TM: [laughs]

JB: I can't remember names too well.

FL: So, what led to your teaching at Berklee? That was 1964, is that correct?

JB: Yes.

FL: Yeah.

JB: I was at the Brookline Music School, and I got a call from one Richard Beverly Bobbitt [Dean of Berklee College of Music, 1960–70s], who wanted to know if I was interested to come in and interview for a possible teaching at Berklee College of Music—Berklee School of Music—and I said, "Sure." So I went and I had an interview with Dick Bobbitt and then I had an interview with [Robert] Bob Share [former Provost of Berklee College of Music]—[laughs]—and I was hired on the spot to be the second classical teacher they had; classical was their word for it, yeah. And [William] Bill Maloof [1933–2009] had been there—they got him the year before and then I came the year after. And the two of us taught everything in the whole program and set up most of the programs, most of which are still there now, between us. And I found out Dick Bobbitt [laughs] didn't like Piston's book at all! He was all ready not to hire me because of—because I was a student of Piston's. Piston's harmony book [*Harmony*, 1941] he thought it was awful. [laughs]

FL: So which book did he prefer? Which theory book?

JB: I have no idea. [laughs]

TM: Do you know how they heard about you, John? Did somebody recommend you, or do you know?

JB: Let's see if I can find that. I'm trying to remember. [pause] No, I didn't know Bill at the time. I don't know. Somebody must have been talking to Bobbitt and mentioned me. I don't know.

FL: So, to backtrack a little bit at the Brookline Music School, John Corley was involved with that as well, right?

JB: Well, he was the Director, because he was the Director of Music in Brookline.

FL: Right, right. So what did you teach at the Brookline Music School?

JB: Nothing. I was the registrar. I did the bills, and all of the stuff of running a music school.

FL: Ah. Wow.

JB: Yeah.

FL: Wow. Did—

JB: I—I—you know, I was so happy to get that job because I could leave Rivers. I shouldn't say that, but it got very boring teaching those kids. [laughs] It paid well but—

FL: At the Rivers School were you the conductor of the orchestra?

JB: Well, I formed a chorus. They didn't have enough people to have an orchestra, but I did form a chorus. That was one of the reasons they hired me.

FL: Mm-hm.

JB: And we had a good group. I was there for several years. They used to be in Brookline. Then they moved out to Weston, where they are now, while I was there.

8. John Corley (1:30:39–CD2 19:10)

FL: Right. I think we'll end the program or the discussion today talking a little bit more about John Corley. I'll have some other questions in the next interview about him, but it goes without saying that John Corley was a significant colleague and friend. You wrote pieces for him in the MIT Concert Band, including a piece called *Corley's March* [op. 54], which was the last piece he conducted at his final concert on May 1st, 1999. Can you talk about John as a conductor and as a musician? I know that's—there's a lot there. I know that's a broad question but—

JB: Yeah. Well, anyone—any contemporary composer that John Corley came in contact with—I mean, he was our—he was our champion. [laughs] He did everything. He did—he didn't have any preconceived notions about what was good and bad, and he sometimes did some pieces that I can't imagine why he did them, but they were new and they were written for him and he did them. And he could make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, I tell you. He could get the most god-awful piece and get some music out of it.

TM: [laughs]

JB: And that's what he did with my stuff. I mean, he made it sound—he made it sound good.

TM: [laughs]

JB: He was a—he was a great conductor because he got everything out of the music. He was a—and he loved the music—he loved the music.

TM: Passionately, yeah.

JB: He was a—in Tom [McGah]'s piece, *The Black Sun* [1985], he loved that piece so much I was jealous.

TM: [laughs]

JB: Yeah. I mean, I was his best friend, I knew that. But he really loved Tom's piece, and it's a great piece. And Silvia [San Miguel]'s piece, he loved that. And Alain [Caron]'s piece. Boy, did he love those pieces! He loved contemporary music in a way that only somebody who's lived with it can get to know it so well. But he got everything out of those pieces! And only twice did I know him to let somebody else conduct, because he couldn't stand the piece. [laughs]

FL: So, talk about the conductor/composer relationship with him when—when he—when you wrote pieces for him was there—talk about kind of what that was like for you.

JB: Well, as the years went by, he'd just tell me to write a piece for next year [laughs] and I did. And, basically, I mean, the *Festival Symphony*—he started out by wanting a piece for—

FL: And that's opus 51, right?

JB: Fifty-one, yeah. He wanted a piece for piano and band, he wanted a piece for organ and band, he wanted a piece for chorus and band and he wanted a piece with antiphonal brass and band. And so he asked me which one I would do and I said, "I'll do the one with antiphonal brass." And I did that. And he had the brass out in the corners of the hall and [Jeronimus] Kačinkas [b. 1907] wrote the organ and band piece [Transcendental Expressions for wind orchestra and band (1964), and Maloof wrote the chorus and band, but then he wouldn't—he didn't want it done or whatever. I don't know. Oh, no, we had trouble with the conductor of the—the chorus, I've forgotten who it was. Klaus Liepmann? [first Professor of Music at MIT]

FL: Yeah.

JB: Yeah, he wouldn't—somehow he wouldn't let that happen. [laughs] And, [pause] piano and band, I don't know who ended up—but any way, he was always after new pieces and he—he had this credo of never doing arrangements.

FL: Right.

JB: Yeah, which, of course is—that made he and I immediate friends. [laughs]

FL: Well, he was a national leader in that movement among concert band conductors to do that.

JB: Yeah, yeah. And for many years we had hopes of an Oxford Press-MIT Concert Band Library but it never—never came to fruition.

FL: I think he had mentioned that, yeah. Did you also write the music for Maloof's *Percussion*, Opus 55 for John Corley? [Editor's note: Question is unclear; referring to Bavicchi's "Music for Mallets and Percussion, op. 55 (1967).]

JB: Yeah.

FL: Yeah. How about the Suite No. 2, Opus 60?

JB: Suite No. 2, Opus 60? Suite No. 1.

FL: Or is that No. 1? The information that we have here is wrong, it says No. 2 on the—

JB: Oh, yeah, it's—

FL: Okay, I'll correct that.

JB: No, no. Wait a minute, Opus 60 is Suite No. 3. No. 1 is Opus 19, No. 2 is Opus 30-something. [Editor's note: Suite No. 2, op. 26]

FL: Right. So this should be No. 3, then?

JB: Yes, yeah. That's been wrong for years, yeah.

FL: Okay.

JB: No. He asked me to write that, yes. Yeah. Every piece of concert band he asked me to write, oh, except *Band of the Year*[: *An Overture for concert band,* op. 66 (1974)]. That—the Massachusetts commissioned—

TM: Music Educators, is that the—?

JB: Yeah. They asked me to write that.

TM: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JB: Yeah. They had a conflict—they wanted the—they had that band thing and, what, eight or ten or twelve high schools played in one afternoon.

TM: Oh, like a festival kind of thing.

JB: Yeah. That's the only piece that I ever wrote that John didn't say write it for me.

FL: Did you write any solo trumpet music for him?

JB: I wrote, well I wrote *Icelandic—Icelandic Musings* [for Trumpet and Small Orch. (1997)], is that what I called it? The piece that Greg Hopkins [b. 1946] played with the concert band after John died at—what was left of it, you know. You know about that, that group? [*Rembrance of JCD*, for concert band. Trumpet solo played by Greg Hopkins.]

FL: No.

JB: Oh, they tried to survive. I don't know if they're still surviving but the department wouldn't support them, and so they—

FL: So, which group is this?

JB: Well, they call themselves the MIT Concert Band.

FL: Oh. Oh, I'm sorry, yes. Right—I know. Okay, I didn't know which group you were referring to. The concert band is still continued but there's now the MIT Wind Ensemble, which is—

JB: I know, which is the official one, which is a funded one, the other one—

FL: Right, but I was asking about a solo trumpet piece.

JB: Yes, I did, for the MIT Concert Band after John died. They wrote me to write a piece in commemoration of Corley, and it was done a couple of years ago.

FL: Uh-huh.

JB: And with—Greg Hopkins played it.

FL: Yeah, but you didn't—when John was alive you didn't write any—?

JB: No, no. He didn't—he—I wrote a piece for two trumpets, chorus, and string orchestra when [William] Bill Seymour conducted the Cecilia Society [*Three Psalms*, op. 50 (1963); first performance, 4/23/1963], and John Corley and Jake Newton played the two trumpet parts, but that—that's the only solo thing I wrote. He was a hell of a trumpet player. He could really play.

FL: I was just going to ask.

JB: He could play anything. He was really good. Oh.

FL: Did you hear him play a lot?

JB: Oh, I heard him play a lot.

FL: Do you have any recordings of him as a trumpet player? There's one that he loaned me but he was kind of past his prime and it was kind of a slow piece, but it—but it would be really great to hear a piece from his—

JB: Well, I have—I have—I have the *Three Psalms* [op. 50] with him and Jake Newton and there's a clam on it that he owes me. [laughs]

TM: [laughs]

FL: Wow. Is there any way I could—?

JB: I'd be delighted.

FL: And if maybe the library could make a copy and—?

JB: Yeah, I—it's been transferred to CD. I'll see if I can get somebody to copy it for you.

FL: This clarinetist, Sherman Friedland [b. 1933], wrote a really interesting and moving tribute to John Corley. It's actually on the web, describing him as a trumpet player—describing him as a virtuoso trumpet player, and I have to take his account seriously because Sherman was no mean clarinetist himself!

JB: Sherman was a wonderful player and Sherman went to high school when John—Brookline High—when John was there.

FL: That's right. That's right.

JB: And it's because of John that I knew Sherman so well, because I had no reason to know him otherwise, and I wrote many pieces for Sherman.

FL: Right. Because that recording that he did that has your Clarinet and Piano Sonata [op. 57] and it has a piece by you on it, too.

JB: Yeah, yeah. And I did the Second Clarinet Concerto, Opus 87, I did for Sherman and John Corley, the MIT Concert Band.

FL: So, which piece is this, again?

JB: My Clarinet Concerto No. 2 is for concert band and clarinet.

FL: I was just going to ask because in Sherman's web site he mentions a clarinet concerto that he played when there was some concert in Florida.

JB: That's it.

FL: Around when the shuttle—

JB: And we were watching the *Challenger* go up [*Challenger* space shuttle disaster, January 28, 1986].

TM: Oh, yeah.

FL: Yeah, yeah. So, that was actually—that's not an arrangement of the—your earlier concerto, it's a—

JB: Oh, no, no. It's a completely different piece, and Sherman played it I don't know how many times with the concert band. I could find out. I've got a record of it.

FL: Now, Sherman never went to MIT, right?

JB: No.

FL: Okay. It seems like he—obviously you knew him in Brookline but it seems like there was an ongoing professional relationship you had.

JB: Oh, yeah. No. He kept—Sherman was part of our—yeah, our what? Entourage, you know, forever. And he—when he went up to Montreal to teach at Concordia [University, Montreal, Canada], it sort of—it didn't disappear but it didn't become so frequent. We used to see each other all the time. But he got to be chairman of the department. John went up there and conducted the Concordia Orchestra one time as a guest conductor and I went up there—many times I did a piece of mine.

FL: Uh-huh. So, I think this is a good place to stop, and for the next interview I want to get into more details about your music and some other issues about contemporary music, but it would be a chance to really talk—and your interest in Bartók and the course you taught, you know, Bartók on chamber music. So, we can get more into detail there. I think this is a good place to stop here.

TM: I think one other thing. You know, we were talking about how John Corley was such an advocate for contemporary composers. Well, this gentleman right here—a lot of composers in Boston owe an awful lot to John Bavicchi, who has introduced us to other—to performers and conducted our music and with his choruses. So, I think that would be something to explore, too—John's assistance for us.

FL: Yeah, and I also want to ask you more the next interview about your work as a choral conductor and your choral music. And also, is there a way I could get a recording to listen to, and maybe a score of a couple of your vocal pieces? I only have recordings of instrumental music—

JB: Sure.

FL: —and Tom says that your vocal music is quite different. But if there is a way we could get that—?

TM: Mm-hm. That's good—

JB: Easy, easy.

FL: That would give me—so I could ask some more intelligent questions for the next interview there.

JB: Sure.

FL: But this has just been fantastic. I really want to thank you for your generosity today and I'm looking forward to this next.

JB: Get it backwards!

ALL: [laugh]

[End of Interview]