Music at MIT Oral History Project

Duscha Weisskopf

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

May 29, 2009

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library

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Contributors

Duscha Weisskopf was the first head of the MIT Music Library when it opened 1949. At MIT she worked closely with Klaus Liepmann (first professor of music at MIT) to build the collection to meet the needs of both scholars and performers. She is a historian and amateur singer, and the daughter of "Willi" Whilhelm Schmid, viola da gambist and cellist, who was an important figure in the revival of Renaissance and early Baroque music in Austria and Germany. Her husband, Victor Weissfkopf, MIT Professor of physics, was an accomplished pianist.

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 May 29, 2009, in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 1:33:35.

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. Family background. Wilhelm Schmid, viola da gambist & cellist (00:14)

FORREST LARSON: This is an oral history interview with Duscha Weisskopf. It's May 29, 2009. I'm Forrest Larson in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

It's my honor and privilege to welcome Duscha Weisskopf for this interview. She was the Music Librarian when Hayden Library Building opened in 1950. Today is May 29, 2009. I'm Forrest Larson. We're in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

Thank you so much for coming. So to start off with, can you tell me what year you were born?

DUSCHA WEISSKOPF: I was born in 1924, so I'm eighty-four years old.

FL: Fantastic. Can tell you where you were born?

DW: And I was born in Munich, so—

FL: And your family's last name was Schmid?

DW: Yes.

FL: What were your parents' first names?

DW: Willi and Kate.

FL: And your father was also known as Wilhelm? Is that correct?

DW: Well, not really.

FL: Not really.

DW: I mean, that was his name, but you know, it's—it's like somebody would use a sort of nickname.

FL: Right.

DW: Will Schmid, or Willi Schmid, in this case.

FL: Did you have—you had other siblings, right?

DW: Yes. I had a brother named Thomas who was two, two and a half years younger. And then, I had a sister named Hedi, H- E-D-I, from Hedwig. She's still alive, and she was, uh, seven years younger than I was.

FL: My.

DW: So we had a lot of fun. It was a jolly household.

FL: Anything that you want to talk about? Munich, and all that?

DW: Well, you know, it was a beautiful town, first of all. Still is. And we had a very happy life, because we would go to the country a lot, and we would also go to, um, the Isarauen [?laden?], which were kind of like [indistinct]. There's the river, and all the way along the river, on both sides, there's green, free places. And also in Munich, you can bathe in the river.

FL: Oh, my.

DW: So, you know, we would go down there—and not so much bathe, because I don't think my father was totally sure it was clean, which it probably was, because the water came from the mountains. But we would walk on the pebbles and play with the pebbles, and have a wonderful time. So—and he was involved in musical life in Munich a lot, so—

FL: We'll get to that in a minute.

DW: Yeah.

FL: So were there any early musical memories from Munich that you—concerts that you went to that you recall? I know you were a young girl, then, but...

DW: I was very young, yes. I mean, my father died when I was nine and a half. But I did go to *The Magic Flute* [by Mozart] with him. It was that—the Christmas before he was killed. It was—and he used to sing to me the important parts of *The Magic Flute*, and I absolutely loved it. I also had a long light-blue velvet dress, and I was thrilled out of my mind—

[laughter]

DW: —to be by his side, you know. Go in there, and it was—of course, it was a marvelous thing. And we used to also go to the puppet theater. And the puppet theater in Munich sometimes does *Bastien und Bastienne* [Mozart]. And, you know, for children, that was wonderful. And you forget—you forgot that they were puppets. You were absolutely sure they were people. It was very nice, yeah.

FL: Was your mother also a musician? Did she play or sing?

DW: No, she did not play. She used to play the piano before she married my father, and then she thought she'd better quit. She wasn't—she wasn't very good, you know. She was just school piano.

So, no. But she was very musical, and in her later life, she helped start the Santa Fe Opera, and she used to do the chamber music personnel for Santa Fe. And then for Los Alamos, also.

FL: Oh, my goodness.

DW: So she was very—I mean, she knew all the musicians and liked them a lot.

FL: Wow. Wow. So when did you come to the United States?

DW: In 1938, just after Hitler took Austria.

FL: Hmm—So I had some questions about your—your father, Willi. As you told me, he was a professional cellist, but also played the viola de gamba. Can you tell me about his work as a cellist? Did he play in orchestras?

DW: No. He—what he thought he could do—you know, before they were married, he used to write letters to my mother. They were far apart. And he used to say, well, you know, after this hard time—meaning the Depression—is over—I can probably—no, it wasn't the Depression. It was when the money was not worth anything. In 1922, you know, the dollar used to be worth four or ten marks, and then it went to hundreds of thousands of marks. So it was a crazy time.

But he said, after this is over, I can probably get a place in one of the good quartets. But by good quartet, he's talking about the Busch Quartet. I'm not totally sure he would have gotten that, but he was a really good cellist, and quite confident that he could make a living as a cellist.

But then, since they had absolutely no money, he'd figured out a way he could marry my mother, becoming a teacher in an elementary school. And that would give him a state income, and he would be safe, and they would be happy. So that's what happened. And he then, in the late '20s, became very interested in ancient music. And you know, he was sort of a pioneer of that whole movement.

FL: That's correct.

DW: He would just be so thrilled if he ever saw the Boston Early Music Festival. He'd be out of his mind.

So, he assembled instruments, and he played. But it's still sometimes played. Harvard has the instruments, and he has a cello that was built by Eric Norman in England in the 17th century. I mean, a [viola da] gamba. So it's quite wonderful.

FL: So, I was reading that he had started with somebody named Christian Dobereiner?

DW: Yes.

FL: Yeah. And he founded the Munich Viol Quintet?

DW: Yes.

FL: Yeah.

DW: That's right. And they used to go on tours. They went to Italy and so forth.

FL: Oh, my.

DW: They played—he had such nice memories of Italy, because it's called Five Viols Travel Through Italy. And at one point, he writes about they ate at a—at a little inn called The Five Viols, meaning violets. [laughter]

FL: Yeah.

DW: He said, "We weren't exactly violets, but we ate there, anyway."

FL: So he kept a journal that you've been reading?

DW: Well, no. He—actually, my mother published a book after he was killed, of some of the things he had written. These were partly also reports to the newspapers that he worked for.

FL: Right.

DW: And he—and also, I was lucky enough to have all their love letters to each other. And they met in 1918, and these love letters went on till '21, because they couldn't get married before that. He had to—he had been badly wounded in the First World War, so it took him a long time to get better.

And he finally did, and then he was going back to college, you know. He had been studying in Rome when the war started, and so he went back home to Germany. But he'd only had about a year and a half of university. So the poor guy was—five

years of his life went into the war, what with the wounds and all that. So he, um—he was way behind, but he managed.

FL: Did he happen to know the harpsichordist, Wanda Landowska?

DW: He went to Paris once to see her, and what he said was, you know, she plays absolutely, incredibly wonderfully, but she's such a snob that, he said, you just don't quite know how to handle her, you know. [laughs] So he—yes.

But he had... he had two harpsichordists in Munich. One was called Julia Menz, M- E-N-Z, and one was called, um... I don't remember the other one's name. Julia Menz he really respected very highly.

FL: So, as you mentioned, he was a music critic. There was a newspaper, and if I can pronounce the German correctly, *Munchener Neueste Nachrichten*?

DW: Yes. Nachrichten. Yes, that's right.

FL: How long did he write for that paper? Do you know, approximately?

DW: Yes, I know exactly, because he used to write for a Bavarian paper called *Bayerische* [German word]. And then in 1933, when Hitler fired all the Jews from all official, you know—and that was considered an official, don't ask me why, job. That place at the *Munchener Neueste* became vacant, and my father took it, because he was in terrible trouble. This was after the Depression, and the Depression just had come to Germany, and there were six million—as you know from Hitler—six million people out of work in Germany in a population of, I think, sort of 50 million. Unbelievable.

So, he did take that job, and he only worked for them a year, because then he was killed. He was forty-one in April and was killed in June of '34. Yeah. It was unbelievably horrible.

FL: So, was your father also interested in some of the modern composers? [Paul] Hindemith and [Arnold] Schoenberg?

DW: Yes, he was. In fact, I have Hindemith's signature in a guest book. And they called each other du, you know, too, which was nice. Yes, he knew him, and he also knew a Swiss composer named Willi Schuh, I think? No, Othmar Schoeck. That's it.

FL: Oh. Uh-huh.

DW: Yes, yes. So, these were people who were around, and he highly respected them. And I think his favorite was the old music. Also, you know, personal. And I was amazed as a little kid that there was an English composer—

[laughter]

DW: How could there be an English composer, but anyway—so, and then his—his great favorites, of course, were Bach and Mozart. No contest. He worked with a guy named, um... yes, Faza—Wolfgang Graeser. And Graeser is the one who first reconstituted [J.S. Bach's] *The Art of Fugue*.

FL: How do you spell his last name?

DW: G- R-A-E-S-E-R.

FL: Okay.

DW: But he died very, very young, which was a tragedy for my father, because they had been going to try to publish a book on that work.

FL: Right.

DW: And he killed himself. He was an extremely gifted, very young man, and just didn't—couldn't last through seriously producing in one field. You know, he learned Chinese. He was a fantastic mathematician. He was all over the place.

FL: My, my.

DW: But yes, he—my father, I must say, sort of deified Mozart and Bach, but he also liked some of the moderns.

FL: What did he think of Arnold Schoenberg?

DW: You know, I'm sure he must have written about him, and I don't remember. I'm sorry. I could look it up.

FL: Well, if some other stuff that, after this interview, that comes up that you think might be relevant, because here's a chance to, for the historical record, more things about your father than what are out there.

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: He was a significant person, particularly in the field of early music in Germany at the time.

DW: Yes, he was. And of course, [Christian] Döbereiner was a wonderful teacher, and there was quite a lot of early music in Munich. And again, I don't—I can't think of the man who is the best known of those people.

But my father could also be quite critical. For example, the Hindemiths—he had a brother—would put on old music, ancient music, performances, you know, and my father's eyebrows would go up very high, and he would say, "They have no idea of what they're doing."

[laughter]

FL: Are there other musicians in your family, either amateur or professional?

DW: Not really, no. I have all these—I have four children, and the most musical is—is Matthew, who plays, um, guitar and the banjo for—mostly. And he and his wife sing a lot. And my grandson, their son, plays the clarinet and plays, uh, guitar. And then, another grandson plays guitar, so that's about as high as we have come. [laughs] I'm still hoping.

FL: Yeah. So tell me about, um, you had piano lessons as a young girl?

DW: Well, up to a point. I—I—They—My father had already died. My mother thought it would be a good idea for me to learn the piano, and I sort of said I hate the piano, you know. So I laboriously took a few lessons and learned basically nothing. And then I tried to also learn the cello, and I was very lazy about practicing, so that never went anywhere, so I was a total loss.

My brother also, I think, took piano, and then played the violin for a while. And my sister Hedi also took piano and also, you know, just got—was a pupil, so to speak.

FL: Did you have any voice lessons?

DW: No.

FL: Because—

DW: My father's sister had voice lessons and sang wonderfully. And then her daughter, to this day—she's seventy-six—sings in a church choir.

FL: Fantastic.

DW: She's lovely. Nice woman.

2. Education and memorable musical performances (16:57)

FL: So you sang in choirs, so at some point—when did you start singing in choirs?

DW: Yeah, well, I—I sang at—I went to the Cambridge School in [of] Weston, and so, I sang in that a lot. And then in college, I really didn't. But then when I got here [MIT], you know, Klaus [Liepmann, see p. 15] was doing *The Messiah*, so I was very pleased to help him do *The Messiah*.

FL: And I have a question about that later in the interview, so that's—that's good. So, which college did you to go to?

DW: I went to Smith [College], and I absolutely loved it. It was a wonderful experience. And I majored in history.

FL: What part of—what area of history were you interested in?

DW: European intellectual history, what else is new? Yes.

FL: Yeah.

DW: But we had—we had a wonderful music department at Smith. I mean, it was extraordinary. One of the people who was there was Alfred Einstein [musicologist 1880–1952]—

FL: Oh, yes.

DW: —who had been a critic in Munich before my father, and knew my father. And I sometimes went to see the Einsteins. He always was very cute, because people would, you know, sort of recoil when they heard his name, and he said, "I'm only the cousin!" [of Albert Einstein][ed. note: actual relationship is uncertain]

[laughter]

DW: Nice man.

FL: Wow.

DW: But that was the other thing. Um—I can't recall his name, I'm ashamed to say. I'll look it up when I get home. The head of Smith was extremely conscientious and alert

to hiring refugee professors, like Alfred Einstein, so that they would have some sort of way to live in the U.S. Once they had escaped, you know, people came here and didn't know what kind of a job they could get.

FL: Yeah, wow.

DW: So he was very wonderful and conscientious about giving them jobs.

FL: Wow. Were there any, um, concerts that happened at Smith when you were there that you recall, or any particular events that—

DW: Well, there—yes. I mean, there were wonderful concerts all the time. And of course, mostly I went to the chamber music concerts, and the Budapest [String] Quartet would come, and—there's still nobody like them, in my opinion. But, um, so I would go to all those, yeah. But I don't recall a specific one.

FL: So of your choral music experiences, is there—I know you said you sang *The Messiah* with Klaus Liepmann. Was there any other, um, stuff that you did that are particularly memorable?

DW: No. You know, I wasn't very good—I mean, I have a normal voice, but nothing to boast about. But that's a wonderful story, too. The Koreans, you know, I have some—I used to have a Korean relative, and "If you can talk, you can sing!" is their conviction. You know, "Don't give me you can't sing. You can talk, so sing!" You know, it was wonderful. [laughter]

Anyway, so we—my brother and I used to sing all the time. You know, I mean, driving around, wherever, all the time. And then, I was thrilled when I went to Smith's, because at the time, they had a chapel requirement. You had to go to chapel I think it was every Wednesday morning, and we got to sing hymns. And of course, I'd been brought up Catholic, so we had never sung hymns in our lives.

FL: That's right.

DW: So, I got there, and I thought, "Whoa, is this fantastic!" Just, it was great.

One—one thing I do remember, which I should maybe cite. I remember going to the Great Mass in C Minor by Mozart at the cathedral in Salzburg. You know, it was—I'll never forget it. It was just unbelievable. The cathedral is a—is a baroque, beautiful baroque building, so—

FL: Do you remember who was performing?

DW: No, sorry.

FL: That's okay.

DW: But I was there during the '37 festivals, and you know, Lotte Lehmann [soprano], all these really great artists. [Arturo] Toscanini [conductor]. Everybody was there, and we would hear constant conversation about how he was, what he did, where he went, how it sounded, about all these people. So we were very much tuned into that. But they didn't take us, because the seats, of course, were ridiculously expensive.

FL: Yeah.

DW: So I would—my—my way of interacting with that summer was to go to the Mass, and it was totally unforgettable.

FL: Wow. I—it's hard to ask somebody about their—their favorite music or their favorite composers, but just to get an idea about what—what's yours—

DW: Oh, yes. And, you know, that's another thing. My father, I loved it. They had no money, and he wrote to my mother, "I just bought all the Beethoven quartets and had them bound in real leather, because after all, that's something you need your whole life. So, don't ask what it cost!"

But—so, yeah. I'm just like my father. Bach's first, and then Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, just completely conventional. And the older I get, the more I gravitate towards those people. So, um, I'm not terribly enterprising. I—I mean, you know, I love [Igor] Stravinsky, [Benjamin] Britten, et cetera, et cetera. But if it comes to, I think, consolation, I have to go back to those totally conventional, great composers. And [Claudio] Monteverdi.

FL: Of course.

DW: Yeah.

FL: So, I have some more questions later about 20th century music, and we'll get there.

3. Coming to MIT. Beginnings of the MIT Music Library (23:40)

So, how did it come that—work out that you came to work at MIT in the Eastman Library? And they served—the subjects were mathematics, chemistry, and physics.

DW: Yes. That was—well, I'm not totally sure, but I was interviewed by Dr. [Vernon] Tate and another man whose name I don't remember now.

FL: Dr. Tate was Director Of Libraries [1947–1955].

DW: Yes, he was. Um—and I don't know why I came to MIT, but I just did. You know, I—partly it was because it was near here. We lived in Central Square [Cambridge, MA] on Chestnut Street for—in a little, tiny apartment. It was great. If you turned the bed down, you could reach the ice box from the bed. [laughter]

But—so it was near here. You know, I thought that would be a handy place to work. And sometimes I only had a nickel left at the end of the week because I got paid by the week here. So, then I would walk. So it was handy.

And they—when they were interviewing me, I think to some extent they may have gotten confused, because I thought they were asking me what my stepfather's job was, and I told them he worked at Ansco, which was a photographic corporation in Binghamton, New York. And I'm not sure that they didn't think that maybe I worked there, which I did in the summer in chemical packing. But I was not skilled—a skilled worker.

So somehow, they hired me to work the Eastman Library with Miss Chamberlain, who was the head of it. Miss Chamberlain was from Maine and

extremely strict. So, I mean, literally, you would come in in the morning, and you wouldn't dare go to the bathroom until noon. It was, I mean, you were there to work.

But she was the best training. I mean, she was wonderful. I really liked her a lot. But I was terrified of her, also. So, anyway, that's where I worked for about a year and a half.

FL: Right. And that was November 1948? That's the records that I'm finding.

DW: That's right, yes.

FL: Okay. So how does it come about that you became the Music Librarian?

DW: Well, I—you know, I must have heard—I don't know how you hear those things, but I must have heard that they were looking for one. And of course I was extremely enthusiastic immediately. You know, I thought I would be good for that. Don't ask why, but—so, I applied, and I got it.

FL: So I found some—some records that at least by September of 1949, you were the Music Librarian. I found a memo from Vernon Tate to Klaus Liepmann referring to you. So it was by—at least by September 1949.

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: When you began as music librarian, your last name was Ziegel, and then it changed to Scott. Was this related to your marriage to Peter Scott?

DW: That's right. He changed his name from Ziegel to Scott when he became a citizen.

FL: Aha.

DW: Yes.

FL: Because there's some annual reports that have both of your names—

DW: Yes.

FL: —just for clarification.

DW: Sure.

FL: Um, when you came to MIT, the Hayden Library Building had not been completed yet, and there wasn't a second—or separate Music Library. It was over in Walker [Memorial Library building], and there was a separate wing there. Where in Walker was the music collection, do you remember?

DW: I don't remember, I'm sorry to say. The only thing I remember from that year is that we were sorting the books, but this was humanities books. A librarian from the Humanities Library and I were sorting all that stuff, getting ready for the move. And I really don't remember having—I don't even remember that the kids had access to the Music Library, but maybe they did. Because there was no place to play anything.

FL: Right, right. Do you remember how big the collection was before the move. How big the music collection was?

DW: No, I'm sorry to say.

FL: That's okay. According to annual—library annual reports, the record library in Walker was very popular.

DW: Yes, yes. It was.

FL: Do you remember how many record players they had?

DW: Um, I would say about seven. Something like that. And then they had to sign up to use the room, and nobody could use it more than an hour if there were people waiting.

FL: So was each record player in a separate room?

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: And so they'd play it over speakers, or did they have headphones?

DW: They played over speakers.

FL: Ah ha. That's nice, that's nice.

DW: And then we played, you know—I don't know how that ever got started—we played from 10:00 to 5:00.

FL: Right. That's after you moved to the—the new library, right?

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: The library annual report from 1947-48 mentions hiring of a, as they put, a "competent music librarian." This was before you were hired. Was there—so that, was there actually another music librarian before you started?

DW: That's what I don't know. Not that I—

FL: I'm wondering if maybe that was referring to you, but it was from the annual report of 1947-48 . I'm wondering if you knew.

DW: When I was still working for Miss Chamberlain.

FL: Yeah, right, right. So, the original plans for the Hayden Library Building was to have a music room, as they called it, and not an official music library. And the Hayden Library was dedicated May 19, 1950. Do you recall any conversations about these plans for a music room as opposed to a music library? Did—

DW: Well, I don't really recall a specific conversation, but I think that the—the image was to have more or less of a lounge in which they could listen to music. And we had some books, but not a very large collection. And we had music—

FL: Right.

DW: —for them to play.

FL: So, um, looks like you were saying you probably—you don't remember too much about the move to the—to the Hayden Building.

DW: I don't. That's just wiped out in my mind. I'm sorry, I really don't remember the—

FL: Um, and the dedication ceremony in May 19, 1950—do you remember any of that?

DW: Well, what I remember about that was that—I think [MIT] Dean [John] Burchard talked to me about, you know, having the place look tidy and so forth, so it would be at its impressive best. And I wasn't invited to the party, so I thought, okay.

Um, you know, again, it was a different time. I mean, I think in his own way, Mr. Burchard was a real snob, but he was also a very nice man. When he was interacting with you, he was fine, but there were certain things you didn't do. [laughs] So, that has stayed in my mind, I must admit, you know

FL: So, there was a piano trio [no. 2 in D minor] commissioned from the composer, Bohuslav Martinů.

DW: Yes.

FL: Do you remember anything about that commission, and did people talk about the piece?

DW: They must have, but I don't remember it. But I think of Martinů very highly. He was—

FL: Did you ever meet him?

DW: No.

FL: But you obviously know his music.

DW: Yes.

4. Becoming Music Librarian. Building the collection (32:10)

FL: Yeah. Um, so, when you became the Music Librarian sometime around September 1949, how would you describe your basic responsibilities?

DW: Um, okay. For one, I don't think the catalog had been finished. And I was—I know I was busy making catalog cards. You know, typing them on one of those things that had a special way to attach the three-by-five cards.

FL: Right.

DW: So that was busy work, but there was lots of it. And, um, you know, to keep track of the [LP] records, to also be in charge of the—at that time, it was all boys. As far as I know, there wasn't a girl in sight. Maybe there was one, but I never, you know, interacted with that girl. So, I was in charge of the boys helping me, um, giving out records and so forth, so I could be typing while they were doing that.

FL: How many student assistants did you have, approximately?

DW: Quite a few, because there were—you know, it was mornings and afternoons, and five days a week. So I would say, somewhere like ten.

FL: Were you responsible for hiring them, as well?

DW: Yes, yes. And, you know, they were a mixed lot, but I remember some with great affection. There was Kazi Ahmed [name unverified], who was from Pakistan. Well, from India at the time, because the separation hadn't happened yet. And then it was

separated, and he—I don't think he ever went back, and I think his father died while he was here. And, you know, I sort of thought the sacrifices they must have gone through to send him here. It was very sad.

And then, there was Mort Grosser [Morton Grosser, MIT '53], who was a unique person. Wonderful.

FL: Yeah. He's been a very generous benefactor to the Music Library.

DW: It's so great.

FL: We just got a package in the mail from him yesterday.

DW: That's amazing.

FL: Yeah.

DW: Well, he was—he was a lot of fun. And, um, various others, so—

FL: So he actually worked for you?

DW: I think he did. Of if he didn't, he was in here all the time. Um, I think he was one of those... And, oh, there was somebody from Finland, and he used to borrow a bassoon concerto by—I can't remember—by an Englishman.

And he would come and borrow the bassoon concerto time after time. I finally said, you know, what is it you like so much about that bassoon concerto? And he said, it reminds me of the—I'm now losing it—what are they? Not elks. It reminds me—

FL: Trolls.

DW: No, of the moose in my father's garden.

FL: Oh, uh-huh.

DW: It reminds me of the moose in my father's garden. That was the explanation of why he liked it so much.

FL: Wow.

DW: So we had a lot of fun. We really did. Sometimes I would get mad at them, because there was also a schedule of when we would play opera, when we would play chamber music, when we would play symphonies, et cetera, et cetera, certain days of the week. So that if people liked that kind of music, they could come in at a suitable time.

And, you know, sometimes—The kids would start out quite innocent, and would like, you know, *Carmen* [opera by Bizet] or whatever. Sort of fairly simple stuff. And then they would realize there was other stuff, and they would graduate. And in time, they would dominate, playing the late Beethoven quartets, and we I would get really mad and say, you've got to vary it a little bit. You know, he's not the only one who wrote quartets. So it was—it was a lot of fun.

FL: Do you remember a student, Lionel Kinney [MIT '53]? He had been president of the [MIT] Combined Musical Clubs. He remembers you.

DW: Does he? Yeah.

FL: That's how I found out about you, because when I interviewed him, I was—went to the archives to get the correct form of your name, and the archives told me that they had seen you last fall.

DW: Yes.

FL: But he remembers you fondly.

DW: Oh, that's so nice. I don't really remember that. There are boys that are in my mind, that I can see in front of me, but I—I can't attach any name to them, so I can't tell you about them. But there were, you know, there were also funny incidents of people sort of thinking, I own the Music Library, I can do anything I want.

And one boy once, I know he had lost his [inaudible] in a—in a taxi ride, so he said, "Can I just call the taxi company and see if they found them?" So I said, "Yeah, well, for a minute you can." Well, it turned into a ten-minute conversation with the boy saying, "You stole them," and the kid, the others, saying, "No, we didn't." And it went on and on, and I was really embarrassed for having let him use the phone. And I said, "You cannot do that." I meant, say it; get off the phone. No.

So, you know. I think they—sometimes they—they thought, you know, I was nice to them, but I didn't encourage that kind of ownership privilege. So—

FL: So, you also provided reference services, people coming in and asking questions about music, and helping people find things?

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: Were there other people who helped with that? Were there any humanities librarians that helped you with reference services, or were you the—

DW: Not that I remember. You know, um—and, you know, I really enjoyed all that. I mean, I liked getting into it. And at the time, I had some concept of what I was doing, but it was quickly forgotten with four babies in close succession.

FL: Yeah.

DW: Just wiped it all out.

FL: When you were working on cataloging—and I see from your annual reports, there was quite a backlog of things—did the cataloging department give you any training?

DW: They must have, yes. And also Miss Chamberlain had given me some, and there was a way to do it.

FL: Right.

DW: This was it and you'd better do it right, so yes.

FL: Other things about your—your basic responsibilities, um, you must have, like, ordered equipment, and supplies, and things. Did you have authority to order, um—

DW: [LP] Records.

FL: Or, um, office supplies and things like that?

DW: Well, I must have, yes. But—but it was the records that were fun. Yes.

FL: Right.

DW: And I would try to find cheaper places, um, you know, to order records, so that the money would go further. Um, I can remember when the—what is that catalog called? There used to be a catalog that listed all available records.

FL: Oh, Schwann?

DW: Schwann, yeah. When that started, smart "I" said, "That's never going to go anywhere. Nobody cares about that." I was wrong. It took off like a rocket.

FL: So, the administrative relationship with, what at the time was known as the English and History Library, which became the Humanities Library—what was the administrative relationship like? How much autonomy did the Music Library have?

DW: I think we had a lot. They—they, um, they were very pleasant and just basically let me do what I thought was right. But I would, of course, also consult Klaus Liepmann, so—and Greg [Gregory] Tucker [MIT Professor of Music (1948–1971), composer, pianist].

FL: Right, right. Who did you report to in the libraries, if you had like a supervisor?

DW: I don't remember, I'm sorry.

FL: Um, there was a humanities librarian named Burton Robie, who at some point I think after your time seemed to be more involved in some of the Music Library stuff. There were some cataloging issues that he came—that he worked with. But did you work with him at all?

DW: I knew him, and I'm—I don't remember whether I worked with him. Um, Barbara Soderberg was—came after me, didn't she?

FL: That's right.

DW: And she, um, I think she worked with him more than I did.

FL: What do you recall about Barbara?

DW: Oh, she was a delight. She was a cheery, lovely person. And her father [Carl Soderberg] was Dean of Engineering, I think.

FL: Uh-huh.

DW: But that's all, isn't it?

FL: Was she a musician? Do you know what her musical background was?

DW: No, I don't. No. I didn't know her well. I mean, I really, you know, pretty much totally dropped out once I had the baby. And we lived in Dorchester by that time, so it was a long way to come. Um—

FL: So at the time, the Director of Libraries was Vernon Tate, and I've read some—some memos. It seems like he had an active interest in the Music Library. There were things about this—this new sound system, stereo system, that he took great pride in, and various other things. What are your recollections of—of Vernon Tate?

DW: Well, he was a big, hearty kind of fellow. Um, he—you know, one of the stories I remember, he did some research on the Spanish in California, and he had a wonderful

story, saying that one of the Spaniards rode—wrote home the 16th century or so, saying, it rains so much, we can't irrigate, which was charming.

And he was a person who was interested in many things, such as the engineering of the library, certainly, of the Music Library. So, you know. But there was—there was a—sort of a real break with him. I invited them to dinner at one point, and they came. And, you know, everything was going along nicely.

And he started to tell a story. And I don't remember the exact terms of what the story was about, but in the course of that, he said, "a big, black Negro—a big, black, buck Negro" at my table. And I just about fell off my chair and, you know, found it very hard to continue the conversation. And, you know, that was—really, in my mind, made it the end of what was never a friendship, but it was a relationship to a boss. And I thought, well, I can't deal with that. So, that was that.

FL: Did you ever sense from him what he envisioned for the Music Library? Did—

DW: From him?

FL: Yeah.

DW: No, no.

5. Klaus Liepmann and the early years of the music program at MIT (45:30)

FL: So, we've mentioned peripherally—I have a lot of questions about Professor Klaus Liepmann. He was the first professor of music at MIT, who came in 1947, and he had a very active role in the Music Library. Um, how would you describe his role?

DW: Well, he was a very lively man, full of ideas, and you know, thought that of course people with the kind of education that MIT was offering should learn about music. That was a given, no arguments. And, of course, I agreed with that, so that was very nice.

And he was extremely active. He did many, many things. He taught, I think, very well. He—of course, the assignments he would give would be records that would go out all the time, you know. And I think he gave a—a thorough overview to "the boys," as it still was. And the conducting was wonderful.

He also played. I remember he played—he and Greg Tucker played, um—it's a sonata for violin and piano, and I can't think—by [César] Franck. And, you know, it was—

FL: Yes.

DW: —great stuff. And he was full of life. A little bit, on a much smaller scale, the way my husband, Victor Weisskopf [see p. 27], was. He was, um, up and at it, full of beans.

FL: What was his violin playing like?

DW: He was good. He wasn't, you know, he wasn't a great master, but he was good.

FL: As far as his role with the Music Library, it seems like he was very active in selecting records, books, and scores.

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: Was there any other administrative authority that he had as far as how the Music Library ran? Or was that pretty much—that was your—

DW: I—I think, you know, I mean, he may have—he may have had some advice for me or whatever, which I don't remember, but he was—he was extremely pleasant and easy to get along with, and, you know, we were all trying to do the same thing, so it was easy.

FL: Yeah. I mean, that shows the very beginnings of both the Music Library and the music department.

DW: Yes.

FL: Can you talk about, kind of, what that—what that felt like? You probably—did you have a sense that something was kind of being born?

DW: Well, I don't know if I had that sense, but I certainly had a sense of that it was exciting. It was an exciting job. It was—you know, we were doing stuff worth doing. It was wonderful. And Greg Tucker was a big ingredient in that. He, um—he was such a charming man, and played the piano wonderfully, and would play, you know, what's his name? [sighs] I can hear—

FL: I have some more Greg Tucker questions later, so maybe you can go in your head and it will come up.

DW: All right, yes. I hope so.

FL: —it'll come up.

DW: But it was, um—you know, Klaus was certainly very interested in modern music, in Hindemith, for example. And we would be beaming and going ahead on all burners.

FL: Did Klaus know Paul Hindemith personally?

DW: I don't know whether he did or not. Hindemith was at Yale by that time.

FL: Yeah, right.

DW: But I don't know whether he knew Hindemith .

FL: I wondered, because in Klaus's autobiography he never mentions a personal relationship, but he mentions Hindemith a few times. And I just wondered if he was being modest and not saying that knew him, but in fact he might have, and I wondered.

DW: I don't know that.

FL: Uh-huh. Did Klaus talk to you about, kind of, his vision—long term vision—for the Music Library, and kind of what—how he wanted it to be in the future?

DW: Well, he certainly did talk to me about, you know, what—what the aim of the whole music department was, which was to get these guys up to speed on music. And of course, we also had some very musical kids.

FL: That's right.

DW: So, it was—and I think he felt that it was a huge opportunity to do something with very bright kids who would, you know, be leaders of some sort in the future.

FL: Right.

DW: And that was exciting.

FL: Did he talk to you about—when he was talking about his vision for the music program and how it was different from what would be offered at a liberal arts school where there were more—well, there were no music majors at the time, but, um, he seemed to have some—some clear ideas about what was different about MIT's music program. And did he talk to you about that?

DW: I don't recall that, but, um, you know, one of the things that I liked so much about him was that he was completely free of any kind of snobism or any attitude of, you know, I know this stuff, and you'll be lucky if I give you part of my knowledge. He thought they were entitled to know anything he knew, and that, I think, is a wonderful way to teach. You know, you're not sort of saying it's a special reserve, it's mine, it's mine. He'd say, this is for everybody, try it. And that was lovely. I liked that.

FL: Did you see him, observe him, teaching in a class? You must have at some point.

DW: I must have. I remember he taught "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" [Bach] which, you know, I loved beyond words. So, he—he did have that enthusiasm that would transfer to the kids, pretty much.

FL: Did the students talk to you much about him and what they thought of him as a teacher?

DW: No, not—I mean, maybe they did. I don't remember, but they certainly—I mean, there was a lot of admiration for him, liking, because he was, um, wasn't keeping any secrets. He said, look at this wonderful stuff.

FL: So, there's a memo from Vernon Tate to Klaus Liepmann dated June 20, 1950, about a special assignment, job assignment, for you to work half-time for Klaus Liepmann. Um, and it said that you were preparing course syllabuses, translating excerpts of German and French texts, copying musical examples to be used in lectures, and preparing visual aids. Do you remember much about that—that work?

DW: Well, I thought that was for the book, but maybe not—for Liepmann's book—but that's not right, is it? No. Yeah, I remember doing some of that.

FL: Maybe some of your work eventually went to the—into the book, as well, possibly. He might have used that.

DW: He might have. I—I know—I knew he was writing a book.

FL: And that was that book called *The Language of Music* [1953]?

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: Right.

DW: Which I think is a quite good book.

FL: Yes, it is.

DW: Don't you?

FL: Yes, yeah. Um, do you—do you recall at all how that position might have come about? I mean, it looks like Klaus really respected you, your musical knowledge and your abilities, because that's—

DW: Well, yeah. I mean also, in a way, it was very convenient. I was right here. So, yeah.

FL: So you mentioned to me, also, you had translated a Hindemith vocal text for Klaus Liepmann.

DW: It must have been from *Mathis*, was it? From *Mathis der Mahler*?

FL: I think that's what you said over the phone to me, yeah.

DW: I think so. You know, I don't remember what text it was, but—I mean, I really—you know, one of the most beautiful things that Hindemith ever wrote, in my opinion, is *Das Marienleben*. And it might have been from that, but I'm not sure.

FL: Now, there was a performance of that in the Music Library with Phyllis Curtin [soprano, b. 1921] and Greg Tucker.

DW: Yes.

FL: Did you hear that?

DW: Yes.

FL: Wow.

DW: I mean, she really was a heavenly soprano.

FL: So, um, when you did that translation of the Hindemith for Klaus Liepmann, was it for, um, program notes or something? Do you know what the translation was for?

DW: I don't remember, no. I don't remember what it was for. He just said, "Do this," and I did it.

FL: So, with the Music Library collection, it seems like there was a big emphasis on recordings. Was that kind of the primary focus, and then supported with books and scores? Or did you feel like there was an equal emphasis on—

DW: No, there wasn't quite yet, because, you know, there were kids who couldn't read scores, obviously. Where would they have learned? They—they may have been in the process of learning—

FL: Right.

DW: —to read them and to perform. Um, and—um, books circulated because, you know, biographies for example, and so forth, they—they would read and enjoy it. But I think the emphasis definitely was on recordings.

FL: Um, Klaus Liepmann in a report of his—he mentions a gift to the library of complete works of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, and he was quite excited about that, and hoping that more students would learn to read scores.

DW: Yes, yes. Well, that was another thing. I loved it, because of course, I have this weakness for the classical composers. And so I was listening to some Brahms, and I said, "Well, I like it, but, you know." And Klaus said to me, "You have to be middle-aged to like Brahms."

[laughter]

DW: Which has turned out to be true.

FL: So, um, besides the core classical repertoire that was in the library, obviously there was some modern music that Greg Tucker was helping collect. Was there much in the way of jazz, or popular music, or folk music?

DW: There was quite a lot of folk music. It was—it was wonderful, because it was the collection that, um—what was the head of MIT after [Julius] Stratton? Who was the president?

FL: Um—

DW: He helped—he helped to collect folk music.

FL: Oh, um, [Jerome] Wiesner [MIT President 1971–1980].

DW: Wiesner, right.

FL: Yeah, Jerry Wiesner.

DW: Right. So, you know, we had a lot of that. It was fantastic. I can remember playing women's—women's voices—Russian women's voices—working at agriculture, I guess. And they had these songs that went with them, and they were just mind boggling, fantastic. But also American, also.

FL: Jerry Wiesner was very interested in folk music. He had actually done some—some, actually, fields recordings.

DW: That's what I'm saying.

FL: Yeah.

DW: Exactly. Exactly, yeah. And, you know, we had all that, pretty much.

FL: Wow.

DW: What you could get, you know, it was—and I'm sorry, I forget the name of the labels now, you know. It's been so long, but there was a certain label where you could get—I think his may have been recorded somewhere—but, no, it would've been recorded in the '30s and '40s, wouldn't it?

FL: Yeah.

DW: Yeah, yeah. It was Library of Congress—

FL: Okay.

DW: —stuff.

FL: Some Smithsonian—

DW: Smithsonian, that—that's it, right.

FL: Because he had worked for the Smithsonian [Institution, Washington D.C.].

DW: Yes, exactly. And you—and those were records that we're just amazing, wonderful to get.

FL: Yeah. Those are still considered very valuable recordings.

DW: I bet. I bet—no, they were very moving, very exciting.

FL: Was there much in the way of jazz records in the library at the time?

DW: Um, medium, I would say. I know, you know, blues—there were blues records here, but I don't remember—certainly not the stuff that was really "in" for the children—for the—for the boys, I should say. You know, I was clueless, and I don't think there was anybody out there that was recommending that we should get it.

FL: Right. So I guess at the time, there were also foreign language records in the library, I guess to support some of the foreign language classes. How big a collection was that?

DW: I don't really remember, but it was not huge.

FL: Can you tell me more about Greg Tucker's involvement in the library? He was selecting modern music materials. Was—was there any other stuff, any other things he was helping with the library, as far as—

DW: Well, he was—I mean, talk about a delightful man. He was just wonderful. So every time he came in the door, I would be beaming. And he, um, was very skilled, and had also the nice, same democratic attitude that Klaus had. You know, this was not just for special people. This was for everybody. And it was a joy to work with him, and anything he said we should have, we got. I mean, it was a given.

So—he also had taught at Harvard and at MIT, and he said he much prefers teaching here, because they don't think they're God's gift to the world. Which, you know, is literally the way he put it, which—which makes a difference. And I think it's still true to some extent. And it makes it much more fun to teach, because it's—it's, you know, "We're all the same people. I know a little bit more about this, but you know stuff that I don't know, so let's just cut all the garbage."

FL: Yeah, that's still a big ethic here at MIT, I think.

DW: Yeah.

FL: And that's—

DW: And of course, you know, my husband Viki [Victor Weisskopf] was completely like that.

FL: I have some questions about him as well. In the library, as far as reference books, did you have like the *Grove Dictionary of Music*—

DW: Yes.

FL: —and *Baker's Biographical Dictionary*? Did you feel he had enough reference material so you could answer most questions when people came into the library?

DW: Yeah. There were some I couldn't, because I couldn't find it in the book, but, yes, yes. It was—and *Grove*, of course, is marvelous. I can remember just recently somebody

saying what actually is a, um, symphonie concertante. I said, you know—I mean, I know how it goes, but I'm not really sure how you define it.

So somebody looked on the internet, and came in with, you know, a paragraph of stuff. I said, well, I'm going to go home and look in *Grove's*, and *Grove's* said it is a concerto for one or more instruments. Basically the same as a concerto, but it's, you know, extended or something. Four words or something.

FL: Yeah, yeah.

DW: So, he was very useful. Lovely.

FL: Yeah. Um, we've touched on this a little bit, um, but I have some quotes from your annual reports that are—

DW: Oh, my goodness.

FL: —that are kind of interesting. You're talking explicitly about the Music Library's role in educating MIT students and the MIT community about classical music. You talk about spreading musical taste, and you said, "Progress was made in broadening the taste of listeners largely by exposing them to unfamiliar music played in the music room." So it seemed like you really felt that you were very conscious of that.

DW: Yeah, yeah. No, no, it was great. It was wonderful. I must say, I fell down to some extent, you know. I didn't play a lot of [Richard] Wagner, for example. So if they liked Wagner, that was too bad.

FL: That's understandable.

DW: But I should've. Um, yes, I thought—you know, and it's, it's—because it's so beautiful, and it's so, um—it speaks to so many people, it's not hard to spread the word. People enjoy most of it.

FL: Right. Here's another quote of yours from 1952: "A carefully planned purchase of recordings and scores of important modern works has given the library what I believe to be a collection of unusual completeness and excellence in the field of modern music. No effort will be spared to keep up the standard, and thanks are due to Professor Gregory Tucker for his invaluable advice on what to buy." So it just speaks more to kind of your enthusiasm for what Greg Tucker was doing.

DW: Yes, yes. I mean, he's—you know, his instincts were perfect, so to speak. He really was—yeah, because for me, and I think for many of the students at the time, um, Stravinsky, Hindemith, um—

FL: [Bela] Bartok?

DW: Bartok, exactly. And the Englishman? Um—

FL: Benjamin Britten?

DW: Benjamin Britten, exactly—were what we thought was modern music.

FL: Yeah.

DW: And Greg Tucker said, "Wait a minute, something has gone on since that time." So that was very helpful, yeah.

6. Recorded music programs and concerts in the Music Library (1:06:06)

FL: So as you mentioned earlier, music was played over the—in the main listening room.

DW: Yes.

FL: The reading room in the library. Um, do you know how that got started? Was that from the very beginning? Was that planned?

DW: Uh, it must've been. Well, there must have been a time when we weren't playing it, and then that somehow came up, because I remember being, you know, I wasn't complaining, but when I would get home, I would never feel like playing any records because I had just heard records for six hours. So there was a certain amount of muttering at home, because I said, I just can't—I can't use anymore music today. So, I don't think it was always the case, but very early on it came to be.

FL: Who selected the music? Was it kind of formally programmed, or was it more on the fly?

DW: Well, it was programmed in that we said, you know, this is the time for operas, and—and this is where my, sort of, quote, "fight with the boys" would come in. Because I would say, you know, "You can't play the same stuff all the time, come on."

FL: Yeah.

DW: So, you know, you would play whatever, mixed early and late quartets, and mixed early and late symphonies. The boys would decide, pretty much. They had—they had a category, but within that, they would have a choice. Because I also thought, you know, I can't impose my taste. It's a good idea to have these various people selecting the music.

FL: Right.

DW: So, that's—that's how it worked. And of course, they loved that, because they would eagerly look forward to playing what they liked.

FL: Right, right. So how many hours a day, approximately, was music played over the—

DW: Six.

FL: Wow.

DW: Yeah. But sometimes I had the things on, too. So, so I could type and stuff in peace and quiet.

FL: Were there some—a separate study room? If somebody came in the library and needed to do some studying, but didn't want to be disturbed by the—

DW: Well, there was a room—there were listening rooms that had doors, but I would—you know, I guess I was a little bit bossy about how much work they could spread out, you know. I said, "If you come in here to listen to music, listen to it."

FL: Yeah.

DW: But, I mean, obviously they did work, also. One of the other big discussions we had was I wouldn't let them—there was ROTC in those days, and I wouldn't let them bring rifles into the library, because I couldn't stand it. So, they would leave them outside like really good kids.

FL: So, beginning in the school year of 1951-52, the Music Library was open on Saturday nights for Boston Symphony broadcasts. Were you—did you come and supervise those events?

DW: No, no. I didn't. I—I don't know who did, but it wasn't me.

FL: According to reports, it was very popular.

DW: I'm sure. Yeah. I mean, it was a good move, but you know, since I worked eight hours a day, that was—

FL: Right, right. There were concerts in the—the library. Do you remember how that got started?

DW: Well, I'm sure it was Klaus's suggestion. Yes, yes. That's what I mean. You know, he had a wide interest and he was full of energy. He was not—he was not retiring. If he met you, he would say, "I thought of something!"

FL: So, I see that there had been a concert, I think, during your time by the pianist Ernst Lévy. Was he—at one point, he was actually on the music faculty here, but when he gave that concert, do you know if he was on the faculty?

DW: I don't know, sorry.

FL: Then we mentioned the—the Phyllis Curtin and Hindemith.

DW: Yes.

FL: There's also something you mentioned in one of your reports, and I'd never heard about this—this organization, but there was Professor Theodore Wood had a folk singing society. It was called the Lauletaan Society? Do you know much about that organization? This was my first, kind of—

DW: I don't know much about it, but Ted Wood was a wonderful singer and played the guitar. He was a great guy, and he spent a fair amount of time in the Music Library. He was friends with Klaus [Liepmann] and Greg Tucker, and um, you know, he would—there were evenings where he would perform, and I guess other people—

FL: Yeah, there were these events where—they had the events in the Music Library, according to these reports.

DW: Yes, yes.

FL: Which department was he—was he from?

DW: Humanities. Yes, he taught English.

FL: Yeah.

DW: He also—he once had Robert Frost come.

FL: Oh, my.

DW: Which was pretty exciting.

FL: Was—was that event at the Music Library, do you know?

DW: I don't remember where it was, because he would have pulled in more people than would fit in the Music Library. So, I don't know. It was in some bigger room.

FL: Wow, that's interesting. I hadn't known about—

DW: Yeah, he was—he was really an excellent folksinger. Did a lot of it.

7. The First Music Faculty: Klaus Liepmann, Gregory Tucker, John Corley (1:12:45)

FL: Wow, wow. Um, so getting back to more questions about Klaus Liepmann, as we said earlier he came in 1947. Um, prior to his coming in 1947, there was music going on. It goes way, way back.

DW: Yes.

FL: There was a gentleman, George Dunham, who was director of the MIT Glee Club before Klaus Liepmann. Did you know George Dunham at all?

DW: No. I mean, I never—I never got to the Boston area 'till 1948.

FL: I see. Um, with Klaus Liepmann, do you know what the circumstances were that brought him to the United States? Did he ever talk to you about that?

DW: Well, no, but he was—he was either half or whole Jewish and would have to have left Germany. And I don't know how he got here, and his wife, too. Only he was really nice, and was a costume maker for a theater. Um, no. But—but, you know, it's obviously a result of Hitler.

FL: Right, right. Did you know what music teaching positions he had prior to coming to MIT?

DW: No, sorry.

FL: Yeah. Um, do you know how it came that MIT hired him? There are various things out there, and I'm wondering if he talked to you about how that came about.

DW: No, he never did. He was—he was pretty future-oriented, you know, "What are we going to do next?"

FL: As a trained violinist that he was, he seemed to be particularly focused on the choral music here.

DW: Yes.

FL: Do you know why that was? I mean, it's—

DW: Well, I would suppose partly that he would build on what the boys had already been exposed to. You know, their glee clubs and all kinds of things from which they came. They were used to singing, and there—there were certainly people who played instruments, some of them very, very well. But, um, the larger number would be oriented toward choral singing.

FL: And as we've mentioned earlier, you had sang in a performance of Handel's Messiah conducted by Klaus with the MIT Choral Society. What was he like as a conductor?

DW: He was, um—I didn't think he—he was patient enough. In other words, I think a good choral conductor has to make you go over things without any impatience, you know, by explaining what he wants, and then you would try to do it. And he would be a little bit, uh, "Come on," you know, "Get your act together, do it." If you don't know what you're doing, that's hard to do, because he has to explain exactly.

So he was—he was pleasant, but I don't think he was terribly skilled in getting the best performance out of us, because he didn't quite know how to do that. But, you know.

FL: Yeah.

DW: There are probably many varied opinions about it.

FL: I've played under some conductors who talk about the music that we're rehearsing and not just, um, rehearsing specific things. Did he ever talk about why he liked the music, or a particular—particular piece?

DW: Well, it was Handel—I mean, yes, of course he would. I mean, how could you not have great respect, you know, for how beautifully Handel said so.

FL: Yeah.

DW: And he knew about the sheep [metaphor in the Messiah text]. You know, yes, he did. He did.

FL: Did you see him conduct the MIT Symphony at all?

DW: I must have, but I don't remember. I'm sorry.

FL: Is there anything else before we move on to other things? Anything else about Klaus Liepmann that you want to talk about, either as a person or musician?

DW: Not really. Oh, he had a secretary whom I liked a lot—her name was Cherry something—who was hard of hearing, which was hard on her. And sometimes, you know, we would joke. He would come in a little late. I think he liked to sleep in the morning or something. And then, at one point, Cherry saw some prints of—she thought it was his pajamas on his sleeve, and she said, you know, he must have really rushed, because he's still got the prints of his pajamas on his sleeve. And I said, well, I think older people have the impressions longer than younger people, so give him a little slack here, you know.

[laughter]

DW: But—no. He was—he was a nice man. And at one point, I think Ollie [Olga Liepmann, Klaus Liepmann's wife] got sick, quite seriously sick, and I offered to go and do some housework for him, and he said, "No, that's okay, we have somebody." Quite a human—a human person. Nice.

FL: And we were talking earlier about Professor Gregory Tucker. He came a year after Klaus Liepmann in 1948. Um, and he was—looks like he organized lots of chamber music events at MIT. Did you go to any of the stuff that he organized?

DW: I'm sure I did, but I don't—I don't recall some—I mean, I admired him very much. He was a person of substance.

FL: And as you know, he was also a composer. Did you hear much of his music?

DW: No.

FL: Do you know if any of the concerts in the Music Library, did they play any of his music?

DW: I don't remember, I'm sorry.

FL: He also wrote a lot of music for—for theater. And I'm wondering if you had gone to any theatrical productions that he might have written the music for?

DW: No, no.

FL: Yeah. And John Corley, who was conductor of the MIT Concert Band from 1948 through 1999—

DW: Wow!

FL: Yeah.

DW: Oh, my goodness. Yes.

FL: So, you knew him a little bit?

DW: I knew him a little bit, and he was, again, a very pleasant, cheery man. Huh!

FL: There was a, um—the student jazz band was called the Techtonians. Did you ever hear them play?

DW: No, sorry.

FL: Or other concerts on campus? There was a series called the Humanities Series. I guess that Greg Tucker must've started that, looks like.

DW: Yeah, well, I'm sure I heard some of those concerts, but I don't recall a specific one.

FL: What about—obviously, I think you mentioned earlier you had heard some Klaus Liepmann and Greg Tucker playing. Um, were their concerts here in the library, or some other concerts on campus?

DW: You know, again, I don't recall where those big events were. Uh, I really can't come up with where it took place.

8. Family. Victor Weisskopf physicist and pianist (1:21:36

FL: So, after you left MIT, you became a full-time mother—a very distinguished profession.

[laughter]

FL: People often forget. Tell me about your—your children a little bit?

DW: Oh, sure. Well, Matthew actually, who's the oldest, went to MIT as an undergraduate. It was funny, because his counselor at Newton High School said, "You haven't got a

Chinaman's chance of getting into MIT. Try not to be wrong." So he did, and he—he loved being here.

It's also interesting that at the time—I don't know how it is now—they—I don't think they had sort of a core curriculum. He was a biologist, and you know, when he got ready to graduate, I asked him whether he knew, roughly, when Napoleon was alive. He thought very hard, and said, "Uh, I think around the turn of the 18th to the 19th century," which was pretty good.

But the only course he had taken, you know—what to me meant a lot, history—was Darwin, Marx, and Freud. That was it. [laughs]

FL: Oh, wow.

DW: So, you know, it was kind of funny. Anyway, he has—he then got to be a graduate student here and met his wife as a graduate student also. I must say, they didn't get married for fourteen years. And we thought, you know, when they get out of here, they'll have to get post-docs. They can't possibly get them in the same place, but they did. Finally, they had to get a job. They can't possibly get them in the same place, but they did.

FL: Fantastic.

DW: So fourteen years later, they did get married, and they have two lovely children. So I'm going to see them this summer.

FL: Wow. So what's his—his profession?

DW: He's a geneticist at Stanford Medical School.

FL: And his wife?

DW: Is also a biologist at Stanford Medical School.

FL: Wow.

DW: They're both in the National Academy, so I'm pretty proud of them.

FL: Wow.

DW: So, anyway—and then, the next one is Becky, and she's a weaver in New Hampshire, and her husband teaches at Tuck, which is the business school at Dartmouth. And then there's [? Moni, ?] who is a kindergarten teacher and is married to a wonderful man, and they have four children who, thank goodness, live in Needham [MA]. And so, I see them a lot, and the two oldest girls went to Brown, and then their two boys, one of whom is at UNH [University of New Hampshire] and one is going to UMass [University of Massachusetts]. Charming children, just great.

And then, the last one is Duncan, who so far has been in the Far East for twenty years and living in Hong Kong. And he's now moving to São Paulo, Brazil, which at least is in the more or less same time zone, so I'm grateful for small favors.

FL: Yeah. So what profession?

DW: He's a businessmen. He works for Adidas [Adidas AG], and he's married to a Turk, a Turkish girl, who's a Muslim. And, um, they have two darling little girls. And, you

know, I wish I had been there when—Osli [name unverified] is her name—went to her parents and said, "I'm going to marry an American, and we're going to live in Hong Kong."

So anyway, they're great children. I love them dearly. I sometimes, you know, write one or the other a letter saying, "It's a letter to one of my four favorite children."

FL: So, you were later married to the physicist, Victor Weisskopf, who was a significant figure in 20th century physics. Um, he came to MIT in 1945 and retired in 1974. He was also a fairly accomplished pianist.

DW: Mm-hm. He was.

FL: Can you talk about him as a pianist, and do you want to add any comments about that?

DW: Well, I mean, mostly I have comments about him as a human being, because he was a completely outstanding human being who—who would confront people as if he were very glad to see them and very interested in what they had to say. Everybody. And that's a great virtue. Not many people have that. So, that was the best thing about him. He was a real miracle.

And he—yes, he played the piano very well and had the same sort of predilections as I have. You know, mostly—I think to some extent on the piano, his favorite composers were Beethoven and Schubert. And he had a sort of romantic approach to playing the piano. Um—

FL: I read that he was also friends with a composer, György Ligeti?

DW: Yes, he was.

FL: Did he play any of Ligeti's music?

DW: No, too hard. Um, he also was friends with a person from Cambridge, a composer—well, I'll call you if the name occurs to me.

FL: Okay.

DW: Who's also a very good composer. You know, American contemporary, still alive. So, yes. And he—in his youth, at one point, he was working with a physicist in Leipzig, but as a side job he would review concerts in the papers.

FL: Wow.

DW: So, that was fun.

FL: Do you know what his musical training was and who he might have studied with?

DW: Oh, he had—he had a teacher in Vienna whose name was Mr. Thornton. But because Viki knew him when he was—when he could only speak German and French, he called him Mr. Tornton. So "Mr. Tornton" must have been a lovely man.

And I don't think he ever really went further with it, because his—his parents, uh, advised him. He said, "You know, I can either be a musician or a scientist." And they said, "Well, if you're a second rate musician, you're not going to go very far, so

why don't you be a scientist?" So, he was *not* a second rate scientist. We—we know about that. [laughs]

FL: He had to be accomplished enough. He was—played violin and piano sonatas with Eugene Lehner, who played with the BSO [Boston Symphony Orchestra].

DW: Yes, he did. Yes. Oh, he—I mean, Lehner was so wonderful, you know, because he was—he basically did most of his work on the viola, but of course, he wanted to play the violin. So, Jenö Lehner they would say, "Now we're both amateurs. I'm playing the violin, you're playing the piano, we're fine."

FL: Yeah.

DW: The reason he got to know Lehner very well is that his—Lehner's wife, Lucca, is Danish, and Viki's first wife, Ellen, was Danish.

FL: Right.

DW: So they were very close, and that got to be a wonderful friendship, and it continues with their children still.

FL: Wow. Um—

DW: But they, you know—they were concert goers. Viki went to everything he could get his hands on.

FL: On the phone, I asked you if Viki had known Albert Einstein [1879–1955, physicist] as a violinist, and you had some comments about his use of Albert Einstein as a violinist.

DW: Well, yes. He—I don't think he played the violin wonderfully, but he did play it. And what Viki said is, you know, "He's kind of a second-rate violinist, but he's one of the greatest physicists that ever lived. So, we'll take him as a second-rate violinist."

FL: Do you know how often he played with Einstein?

DW: Not very often, I don't think. No, no. But... but Einstein used to have people come out to Princeton for that particular purpose, to play with him.

FL: Right, I've heard about that.

DW: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Were there any MIT colleagues that he played music with? There's lots of faculty that played music.

DW: Yes, there was, and I'm trying to think of his name, a violinist, also a physicist. And I can't think of his name right now, I'm sorry. He may also have been from Harvard. I'm not quite sure.

FL: So, to wrap up things, are there any topics that I, um, that I failed to talk about that you wanted to mention? Or any stories or anything you wanted to relate?

DW: Well, um, you know, sometimes the kids would ask me who was—who I thought was the greatest soprano that ever lived, you know, or questions like that, which is fun. And I can remember I would say [Amelita] Galli-Curci, and then they would all be

suddenly listening to Galli-Curci which was good for them, anyway. I mean, she was a miracle.

Um, so, the only person that once appeared at the Music Library who was rather unusual was Alfred P. Sloan. He came in, and I knew that there was a lot of excitement about his coming. You know, I suppose—I mean, the Sloan School must have come from somewhere. It came from him.

So at the time, you know, I knew he had something to do with cars. I was totally clueless about the fact that he was running the General Motors Corporation, which was the largest corporation in the U.S. I forget—I had no idea. But I was polite to him, and he wanted to see the Music Library, so I showed him around. And, you know, it was getting a little bit embarrassing, because I didn't know his name, but there he was.

So after a while, he looked at me, and said, "This is Mr. Sloan." I thought, okay. [laughter] How do you answer that? You know, so "This is Mr. Sloan" turned out to be a big benefactor to MIT, it turns out. So that was a jolly story.

FL: So, I want to thank you very much for your generosity of coming in today, and you had a lot to contribute here. This is just fantastic.

DW: I don't know. I forget names and letters, but I do the best I can.

FL: Yeah, all right. Okay. Thank you very much.

DW: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]