Music at MIT Oral History Project

John D. Corley

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

September 3, 1999

Interview no. 2

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library

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Transcript Proof Reader: Lois Beattie
Transcript Editor: Forrest Larson

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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 D. Corley (1919-2000) was founding Director and Conductor of the MIT Concert Band from 1948 to 1999, and conductor of the MIT Symphony Orchestra from 1955 to 1965. He was a leader among conductors dedicated to performing music originally written for the concert band, giving Boston premieres of works by Copland, Hindemith, Schoenberg, and others. A strong advocate for contemporary composers, over 50 new works were commissioned by him for the MIT Concert Band. He had been a member of the Boston Brass Quartet, and was an active freelance trumpet player. During World War II he served in the U.S. Army as Band Leader in Iceland. From 1973 to 1980, he conducted the Boston Conservatory Wind Ensemble, and was Director of Music for the Brookline Massachusetts Public Schools from 1956 to 1973. He also founded and directed the Boston Brass Ensemble.

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 September 3, 1999, in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 1:49:00. Second of three interviews. First interview: August 19, 1999; third interview: December 10, 1999.

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. Early years with the MIT Concert Band (00:15—CD1 00:15)

FORREST LARSON: So I'm here with John Corley for the second interview. It's September 3rd, 1999. This is Forrest Larson. We're in the Lewis Music Library, and today we're going to talk particularly about the MIT Concert Band and related issues. So can you tell me about the early years with the Concert Band? I know in the last interview we talked briefly about how it got started, but if you want to go over some of that again and talk about some of the early challenges and successes, those early years.

JOHN CORLEY: Well, of course, the first few years we were busy developing the band to hit a consistent sound, tone quality, and so forth. And we had—the concerts we had were not on campus so much as in the area. We played at Lasell Junior College [Newton, Mass.], a concert there. And one of the thing I remember about that concert is we played an arrangement of the *Royal Fireworks Music* by Handel, a transcription, of course. But we probably also played the Holst Suite no. 1 [in E-flat for Military Band, op. 28], an original work. [Gustav Holst, 1874-1934] And Andrew Kazdin [MIT class of 1963] wrote his *Marche Baroque* early on then. I've forgotten the date of the composition, but it would be very early, and we did that, I'm sure. We may have played even the Weber Concertino for Clarinet [in E-flat], transcribed for band. [Carl Maria von Weber, 1786-1825] We were playing transcriptions as well as whatever original works I could sneak in at that point.

Our concerts took us down to Vassar [College], over to Smith College. We combined with the band at Tufts College— Tufts University, I guess it is—which was led by Bill King [possibly William J. King], who was a classmate of mine at BU [Boston University] college of music. And we joined together in concerts out there and a concert at the [Hatch] Shell over on the Esplanade [the park on the Boston side of the Charles River]. There again, we were playing a mixed program. The overture to *Rienzi* [opera by Richard Wagner] was on that program, I remember. There again, I kept easing in whatever original works I could find.

And by 1952 or '3, somewhere in that point, we had enough original works so the suggestion came from the students: why don't we do a concert of only original works? And indeed we did. It included one of the Holst suites—I'm not sure, it could have been the second or the first, but probably not both on the same program—and Vaughan Williams's *Folk Song Suite*. [Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958] I also found a work by Samuel Barber [1910-1981], his *Commando March*, which was very spirited, could be used as a finale piece, or even as an opener. Kazdin had written *Prelude and Happy Dance*, which we called "Ph.D."

FL: [laughs]

JC: And we did that right away. I'd like to look up Kazdin's dates on that. J - K—Kazdin. *Marche Baroque* was written in 1953, and *Prelude and Happy Dance* was—oh, not until '55. His *Invention on Two American Folk Tunes* was '57. And then I'm looking ahead here. I see *Suite from the Social Beaver*, which was a film score he did for a movie made by MIT to show to prospective freshmen on the social life of the MIT student. And we used winds to record that soundtrack. So those all came

between ’55 and ’60. We were then into playing original works only, at that point. The rationale for that was, in metropolitan Boston why should we play arrangements of orchestral music when there were orchestras all around us—

FL: Mm-hm.

JC: —playing orchestral music? And then our own [MIT] Symphony Orchestra was capable of playing important works for the idiom. That was really the power behind the thinking.

FL: Right. It wasn’t so much you were against arrangements, because you did a fair amount yourself?

JC: That’s right. And arrangements, of course, we’ve grown up on that. Sousa [John Phillip Sousa], of course, he played arrangements all the time. There were very few original works for concert band that go back any length of time. There’s a Respighi; I’ve forgotten the date on it. [Ottorino Respighi, 1879-1936] I’m curious to look that up. [papers rustling] One of the few. Respighi, 1932, you see, that’s pretty late, 1932.

FL: There’s a Mendelssohn kind of overture piece—what’s that like?

JC: That [Felix] Mendelssohn Overture [*Overture in C Major for Wind Instruments, op.24*] is a jewel. And he wrote it in his teens, just a boy. He was at a summer resort which had a band, which gave daily concerts. And he wrote an overture: slow open, allegro section, and finale—and a delightful piece! We’ve used that a great deal. When I went to Iceland, on tour with the band, I knew that they were into traditional pieces to listen to, and the Mendelssohn was our opening number—1824, the date of that Mendelssohn piece.

Unfortunately, some of the other original works of that period, or the next fifty years after that point, are not so attractive. They’re kind of—well, what I would say, high school-ish, and not really challenging or rewarding for the musicians. With Andy Kazdin writing pieces for us, Ernst Lévy [MIT Professor of Humanities, 1954-1960] writing his piece for us—

FL: Yes, *Suite for Band*.

JC: Yes, which is actually a set of variations on the Swiss National Anthem. He was from Switzerland. Lévy—1954—Lévy. And Gregory Tucker [MIT Professor of Music, 1947-1971]—his piece came early on—I played—1951. Yeah, 1951. He wrote a piece for the brass choir too, 1952—excuse me, 1962—which we did at commencement with a professional group. So the seed was planted to explore original works, works that were going to be challenging, that wouldn’t waste the students’ time, and had their own sound, their own band sound.

FL: Right.

JC: Bands have had a connotation of being cheap music and, unfortunately, there’s an awful lot of cheap music been written for bands, especially for school bands. Having been a school band director and adjudicator at many festivals, I’ve seen a lot of that junk that is so well advertised and grabbed up by high school band directors, junior high school band directors, and so forth. But there again, in metropolitan Boston why

play inferior band pieces, or arrangements of good orchestra pieces, when orchestras do play them? There are only one or two transcriptions that I think sound better as band pieces than they did as orchestra pieces.

FL: Which ones are you thinking of?

JC: One, the *Polka and Fugue* from *Schwanda* [*the Bagpiper*, opera by Jaromir Weinberger, 1896-1967].

FL: I played that in high school band!

JC: Did you?

FL: Yes, yes!

JC: And with the extra trumpets on there, [sings, Bum-bum-bum…]!

FL: In fact, I've never heard the orchestral version, only the band!

JC: I've conducted both. I've conducted, of course, the band transcription—did it with MIT many times, and the orchestra version, too. I did that with the MIT Symphony. Because you could use organ, plus extra trumpets, which was always—made for a good finale in a concert. You remember the piece?

FL: Yeah. So what was the other piece?

JC: Thrown it right out of my mind, right now.

FL: [laughs] Well, we can get to that.

JC: Yeah.

FL: So it's interesting that the idea for doing original music also came from the students—

JC: Yes, it did.

FL: —you had the support there, and it wasn't just you.

JC: Yeah. Students have always had strong input into the playing of the repertoire, and many times a student will come up and say, "We should try such and such a piece." "Do you know such and such a piece?" Or they'll give me a tape or something, of something they have played. And so it's been a joint effort to come up with the repertoire that over the years we've used.

FL: The commissioning program—how soon did that get started after you decided to do original repertoire?

JC: Let me check a date here. [pause] 1955 is the date I'm looking at. Yeah. Now the commission idea, the commissioning program—the word commission is kind of a catch-all for all kinds of things. Many times we'd receive pieces that we didn't even ask for. But they came, and they were written for us, with us in mind, and got lumped into the original works pile. Right now I'd be hard-pressed to give you an accurate list of the pieces for which we actually paid money. We did. Indeed, we commissioned these last two new pieces—were commissioned. Where I could, I would try to arrange for an honorarium, or something of that sort, to send the composer to help defray his expenses, the cost of copies, and that sort of thing.

FL: Right.

JC: We played two concerts out at Smith College—we played *a* concert out at Smith College. And two Smith College students—Smith? Was it Smith?—anyway, heard the group—we did the Schoenberg *Variations* on that concert, I remember—and liked what they heard. And they ended up coming down after the concert, "Could we write something for you?" And one was the *R.F.D.*, the *Rural Free Delivery* [composed by Joan Harkness].

FL: Yes!

JC: And the other was a piece which meant helter-skelter, and I can't remember the name of it right now. It's a catchy name, let's see if I remember—sorry to take the time [looking at list] S - T - U - V - W—*Charivari*, by Alice Webber, yes, which was a chamber group, solo ensemble, within the full band. *Charivari*. Unfortunately, we didn't get to perform that very much because it needed some very excellent chamber music players down front. And it was a difficult piece to like. I liked it, I guess, more than anyone else, because it was so different; it was so real, so new.

FL: Tell me a little bit more about it. What were some of the features of it?

JC: Slow moving, with voices weaving in and out. It was not sostenuto, or long lines. It was motifs and things. I would have to look at that score again. I'd like to look at that score again. Maybe we can arrange for that.

FL: Yeah. Another one [interview session] where we can actually look at scores. I would like to do that.

JC: Yeah.

FL: What was the harmonic idiom like? Was it tonal or atonal?

JC: Atonal. I think it was mixed. I can't remember any—it's been years since I've seen this one. I can't remember any sustained or chordal section. It was a lot of weaving in and out, like being under the surface of the water and watching the fish go in all different directions.

FL: [laughs] With the commission[s], particularly at the beginning when you started doing that, how much support did you get from the MIT Administration? Was that fairly easy to get?

JC: Well, I had a budget, and I would do it out of the budget—

FL: Out of the budget.

JC: —that was provided for the year's activity of the band. There wasn't a John Corley Concert Band Fund, as we now have—

FL: Right.

JC: —in those days. But it was done out of the band budget. But the rationale here was there wasn't that much printed music that was worth buying, yet we were still buying printed music. We had to make sure we had all the [Gustav] Holst suites [*Suites for Military Band op.28*], that we had the Vaughan Williams [*Folk Song Suite*]. We had other pieces by established composers—Europeans, American—[Aaron] Copland

[1900-1990] scored his *Outdoor Overture* for band, so we considered that an original. Howard Hanson [1896-1981] was another composer who was sure-fire for programming, always sonorous, pleasing to the ear. Roy Harris's [1898-1979] *Cimarron* was my own; I had that during the war, and when the band was deactivated I brought it home with some other original works that I had purchased for the Army band. [John Corley was director of the U.S. Army Band stationed in Iceland during World War II; see 8/19/99 interview for details.] And we did the Roy Harris a number of times. I was very turned on, personally, by what Koussevitzky was doing with the Boston Symphony on original works.

FL: Oh, so he was an inspiration that way?

JC: Yes, he was. And I heard the first performance of the Roy Harris Third Symphony—wonderful piece! I did that, conducted it with the MIT Orchestra my first or second year with the orchestra. And we subsequently did the *West Point Symphony* by Roy Harris with the Concert Band, which was not as effective as the Third Symphony or *Cimarron.*

Cimarron has to do with the Cimarron country out in Oklahoma and the land rush. And it builds up—the tension is building up in the middle of the piece as horses and riders all were lined up for the land rush and the gunshot would go off, and then there's horses and dust and everything! And it ends with a wonderful hymn, a wonderful hymn for the band, very sonorous, quarter notes, half notes. I don't think there's even an eighth note in it; it's so sustained! You see the horizon, you see the sky, and so much—so much space suddenly.

FL: Wow.

JC: After the people have staked out their property.

2. Essential qualities of well written music for concert band (20:50—CD1 20:50)

FL: Wow! So how was your philosophy of doing original music received among your fellow band conductors?

JC: Okay. Good! I had a lot of friends among the other band directors. In the early days of the New England Music Festival Association, I was on the auditioning committee for the Intercollegiate Band a number of years, used to travel around to other campuses to audition their students. And we talked repertoire a great deal as we'd be riding together with the other adjudicators. And we were sharing ideas as to original pieces. I had more than one piece as a result of somebody else recommending it.

Of course, the word got around that we were doing original works, and more than once, somebody would write to me that so-and-so who's the band director at University of Connecticut has recommended I write you about a piece I'd like to send you. Unfortunately, not all the pieces that were sent to us were pieces that we did, or wanted to do. Some of them were really quite elementary, I guess, or whatever, how to describe it. They didn't show a great depth in musical experience.

When I would be auditioning a candidate for band director at the Brookline [Mass.] Schools, I would ask questions about orchestral music: what's your favorite symphony of Brahms? What recordings do you have? I wanted people who loved music and knew music, not just Brahms or Tchaikovsky, but do you have any Strauss operas? If they had only three, there were many more than the three! [laughs]

FL: Yes!

JC: I wanted a band director who loved not just band music and band instruments and how to finger them and everything, but somebody who loved orchestra music, choral music, chamber music. And some of these pieces that were written by people for band really came through in—I doubt if they've ever heard much real orchestral repertoire.

FL: Mm-hm.

JC: I like pieces that are well-written for the instruments, too. You can tell almost immediately when you open a score if there's a piece that goes off the range of the instrument, has low notes that don't exist on the instrument, knows the range of the clarinet family, knows the range of the oboe, for example.

FL: Right. Now when you mention that you're looking for music that's well-written, your definition of what's well-written for an instrument is more than just the traditional expectations of instruments. So tell me a little bit more about how you look at that, because you were doing some fairly contemporary repertoire.

JC: Well, there are some people, I think, who write pieces just to explore, or to exhibit their knowledge of the instruments: how high they can go, how low they can go. Some pieces are unnecessarily difficult. Andrew Kazdin wrote some of the most difficult passages for any instrument in his pieces because he composed at the piano. He'd play it on the piano. And he might start out on the white keys, then go over into the black keys, then he'd just orchestrate that. And we used to have a lot of arguments in my living room in the early days. "Why didn't you write that piece a half-step lower?" He says, "Well, if I'd done that, what would happen at section B, for example"—you know, when it went up into the black keys, or when it was all in the white keys? It would have been all in the black keys. [laughs] So that's not a good way to compose.

There are other composers who pride themselves on not using the piano, and that scares me, too. One of the most recent pieces we did by the Greek composer [Christos] Koulendros [b. 1972], I think he didn't use a piano at all. It was all out of his head. And sometimes I wondered whether he really knew what he was writing, whether he heard what he was writing. And it was one of the most difficult pieces I ever prepared for presentation, which was fairly recently, too. He's still in the area. [papers rustling] H - I - J - K—1997, yeah, *Dance Mouflonic*, yeah.

His piece was not really complete. It was scheduled for a performance before he had finished it. And in the last weeks before the performance, as we were then in receipt of the score and parts, I could see it needed slurs, it needed dynamics. It needed some tempo indications—was my accelerando all right at this point? And I must say, I made a significant contribution to the finale of the piece because I really

wanted the audience to know that it was over and that it was exciting. And there are ways you can do that. You can take a theme and augment it, so the same notes that you've been hearing all along are now coming at you in fullest form, and twice the length, that sort of thing. You can color things with a diminution of a melody. [Dmitri] Shostakovich's First Symphony [Symphony no. 1 in F Minor, op. 10] is a wonderful example of that, the first movement. So the Koulendros piece really needed more time. I probably made a mistake in scheduling it without seeing more of it. I saw it in its early form, and I believed in the composer and still do. That was an early birth; it was not a full term! [laughs]

FL: You've probably had some other experiences with composers like that, too?

JC: I had an experience with a composer who had written quite a few pieces. And this composer had written a piece that we did quite a bit. St. Clair is his name, Richard St. Clair [b. 1946]. He wrote a piece for two pianos and a band [Double Concerto for Two Pianos and Wind Orchestra, op.8], which was very attractive, and we took it on tour. He wrote a piece called—something to do with Beowulf. That was not what it was called. [pause] I don't spot it here. Where would it be?

FL: Hm.

JC: Would it be up here?

FL: I thought I had seen on this list St. Clair someplace, too. Oh, here we go. Richard St. Clair.

JC: Yeah. He wrote a piece, *Two Scenes from Beowulf*, op. 67. That was beautifully written, wonderful manuscript and everything. The parts were good, of course. But the piece died. It just never ended, but yet the sound had to stop sometime. And we had the embarrassing experience, and very embarrassing to the composer, that when we finished the piece there was no applause. I've often wondered what could I have done on the podium to attract some? But it's not the only piece that ends softly, but the material was unattractive at the end. It needed something. Now, whether it was a slow death or something, even the program notes would have helped it.

More than once, I've taken a piece where I thought that might happen and done a poor man's Lenny Bernstein, we used to call it, where I would analyze the piece for the audience, play the opening theme, and play the ending, so they'd know how it was going to end, ahead of time. And that has saved many pieces! I did a poor man's Lenny Bernstein on the [John] Bavicchi [*Festival*] *Symphony*, and I have that on tape, and the analysis takes longer than the symphony. [Note: In a widely-popular televised series of Young People's Concerts by the New York Philharmonic in the 1950s, Leonard Bernstein both conducted and explained the music.]

FL: [laughs]

JC: [laughs]

FL: What did you do with [Anton] Webern pieces? [laughs]

JC: They're not too long!

FL: Yeah!

JC: Yeah.

3. Notable band repertoire (33:10—CD1 33:10)

FL: So tell me about some of the notable repertoire that you've conducted, that you particularly enjoyed.

JC: Hm. Wow.

FL: I know that's a huge subject.

JC: Yeah.

FL: It's not a fair question! [laughs]

JC: [looking at list] Well, I must say, I'm seeing the name Gregory Tucker. I enjoyed whatever he wrote very much. It was strong. There was a Double Concerto by Andrew Waggoner [b. 1960], for viola and clarinet, which was a challenging piece like Alban Berg. Of course, I've always been fond of [Igor] Stravinsky, and we did the *Symphonies for Winds* and we did the Piano Concerto more than once, and the *Circus Polka*, which was always an attractive item. It brings in, towards the end, you know, the Schubert *Marche Militaire*. [sings - Bee bah-bah-bum…]

FL: I haven't heard that. I'll have to listen to it. I didn't know that.

JC: Well, it's on orchestra music, but it was written for the Sousa band—not the Sousa band, but the Barnum and Bailey Circus people.

FL: Aha.

JC: The [Richard] Strauss, for winds only, there are just the two numbers, the *Serenade*, op. 7, and the *Suite*, op. 4. And beautiful music, but it doesn't use enough musicians to justify excusing so many players at rehearsal.

FL: Right.

JC: You have to keep people busy.

FL: It's more like for an orchestral wind section?

JC: That's right, exactly. The strictly band composers, well, Persichetti is strong, Vincent Persichetti [1915-1987]. Any piece he wrote was academically so right, whether the *Divertimento* [op.42], or the Symphony [Symphony no. 6, op.69, for Band], or the *Serenade*, or the *Masquerade* [op. 102]—virtuoso pieces.

FL: Did you ever get a chance to work with him personally?

JC: No, but I was in the front row when he was working with the Boston University Wind Ensemble, many years ago now, on the Symphony. He just brought that piece to life, and it was wonderful what he did. Nelhybel, Vaclav Nelhybel [1919-1996], is the creator of a lot of strong band music, finales, actually, and I've used it at music festivals connected to All-States and that sort of thing. I like very much the music of Darius Milhaud [1892-1974]. There's orchestral music [indistinct].

FL: Well besides, there's a couple marches that he wrote. What other wind music did he write?

JC: The *Suite Francaise* [op.248], which was original for band. Five movements on provinces—each movement's a different province of France where American troops had fought in World War II. And it moves, it's tuneful, it's emotional. Five movements, a lot of contrasts. We recorded that my first or second year with the Concert Band and recorded it more than once. There are two marches [op.260]. One is—these are Pearl Harbor pieces, and the second one is *Gloria Victoribus*. The first movement is— *In Memoriam*, the first march. Strong, strong pieces

Eddy [Edward J.] Madden [b.1930] is one of the most skillful orchestrators for band music. He knows every instrument so well and—very good conductor, good composer. I like very much his melodies. The Englishman, Gordon Jacob [1895-1984]—in a way, Madden is an American Gordon Jacob. The English Gordon Jacob you identify with Holst and Vaughan Williams—that same clean, strong style.

One of the masters, of course, is Percy Grainger [1882-1961]. His use of the saxophone choir is particularly noteworthy. He played saxophone in an Army band and obviously knew the instrument, its ranges and its colors. You need to have a full choir of saxes, the soprano sax through the bass saxophone, which gives you quite a family: soprano, alto, alto, tenor, maybe another tenor, baritone, and bass. Really, really something!

FL: Wow!

JC: I've always enjoyed Morton Gould's [1913-1996] music. I played a lot of it during the war; it was popular with the troops, and always brought down—I always had the feeling when I was playing concerts in the Army that there were a lot of people at the concert that wouldn't normally be at a concert. The fact that it was the Army and they wanted to get away from whatever they usually do, when the band came once a month, they'd come hear the band. So I must say I also used it as an educational experience, to play a new Icelandic piece that was written for us or something like that. [laughs]

[Aaron] Copland, *Outdoor Overture*, I mentioned that he did it himself, but his original work was *Emblems*, and I learned of that piece from Copland himself. I was playing at the studios at WGBH, playing trumpet for a telecast that was being filmed, and Copland was the narrator. And during one of the breaks we struck up a conversation, because I'd played orchestral pieces of his, and so forth, as a trumpeter, and I might have mentioned that I conducted band at MIT, a very good band at MIT, and he says, "Have you tried my *Emblems*?" I said, "I must confess, I don't know it." And the following Monday I went right out and ordered it. And it's a very strong, wonderful, wonderful piece. We did that on the Icelandic tour, too, and it's been emblematic of quality American music.

4. Composers John Bavicchi and Paul Earls (42:00—CD1 42:00)

John Bavicchi [b. 1922] has been an important part of music at MIT, the composer. He attended MIT briefly [1940-1942] before the war, but he graduated from New England Conservatory. But he's written many pieces and is very important as a teacher of composition at the Berklee College of Music. And it was through John Bavicchi that many composers learned of the chance to have new works done at MIT.

FL: So you first met him as a student?

JC: No, I met him [laughs]—I heard that this man, or this man heard that I had a brass quartet that was very good. That was the Boston Brass Quartet. We were kind of the Budapest String Quartet of brass quartets. And I received in the mail this quartet from somebody named John Bavicchi, for two trumpets, trombone, and baritone, which was our quartet. And I looked at it, and looked at it, and tried it, and it was going to be too hard for me to play, too hard for me to learn, and I returned it and thanked him very much for sending it. I didn't know where I'd play it either; the type of work we were doing, the type of concerts we were giving, this was a little far out.

Well, now to jump ahead a few years, I'm playing a ballet over in Boston, and in front of me is Phil [Felix] Viscuglia, who was my assistant here at MIT, doing woodwinds. And during the intermission, a man came down and leaned over the railing, looking down into the pit where Phil and I were still sitting. And they talked, and Phil turned around and said, "I'd like you to meet John Corley." And I looked up at this man and he said, "Oh, you're the guy who doesn't like my brass quartet!"

FL: [laughs]

JC: This big man is standing over me like a giant! [laughs] Looking down at me. And I said it was just too hard for me to personally learn in order to play for the types of concerts we were giving, and recitals. Anyhow, I ended up going to his apartment the following Tuesday, and [laughs] I asked him, "Have you written anything other than the quartet?" And he sure had! He had tapes and tapes. And he put on this *Concert Overture* tape, which was very strong, energy, terrific finale. And I followed the score; he had a copy of the score, of course. And I ended up programming it in the very next concert for the MIT Orchestra, which I was conducting.

Well, I ended up going to his apartment more than once and hearing a lot of his music, and he came to concerts of the MIT band and rehearsals of the band and—knew the instruments, obviously—and ended up composing his *Festival Symphony*, which was a piece that I kind of wished—I'd like to have something that I could take around to the festivals I'm conducting, with all-star high school musicians, something that could be worked up in about three or four days of rehearsals and then played. And he started working on the *Festival Symphony* and completed it in 1965. Is that '65? Yeah. And just this week I heard the *Festival Symphony* again as it was being transferred to a CD, and what a piece! And what a band that we had at MIT when we recorded that! Wow! [laughs] I was so excited to hear that symphony again, the quality of band that played it in that performance.

FL: So is this a CD that's going to get released commercially?

JC: No plans to that point.

FL: Yeah.

JC: But I have the one and only LP now. All the other copies are either non-existent or have been given out.

FL: I think we have it in the library.

JC: You have it?

FL: Yeah.

JC: Yeah, good! If you have time sometime, listen to it.

FL: I certainly will.

JC: Twenty-five minutes, twenty-six minutes. [laughs]

FL: Tell me a little bit more about the special relationship you have with John Bavicchi, and some of the things in his music that particularly appeal to you.

JC: Well, part one of your question: he's been a very close friend ever since we met, which was 1960, and has seen me through a lot of personal troubles. And has brought me in contact with a lot of musicians that I might never have met otherwise, men who've—and women—who've been important composers in the MIT experience.

His music is very challenging. It's challenging to play. He'll write what looks to be a scale, but when you come to play it you see there are intervals of a step and a half, as well as half steps and all, that you just can't rely on playing the scale of E; you've got to suddenly realize there's a G double sharp, and that sort of thing. His music is awfully difficult. Even easy pieces have a way of being challenging.

But anyone who has played them, and learned them, and played them well, will remember them. When I run into alumni, or they call me on the phone or something, I say, "What pieces do you remember you played?" "I remember the Bavicchi *Suite*," they'll say, or "I remember the *Symphony*." Or they'll remember *Concord Bridge* or some of the other pieces that have been written. There are quite a few. Oh, there's probably a dozen or so pieces that we played of his.

One of the most played pieces is the *Caroline's Dance*. The title suggests a little girl dancing. It's true, it's about a little girl dancing, but this is a memorial to that little girl. The father was a lobbyist in Washington, D.C., used to come home on weekends. And the little girl would be happy to see him and would be dancing in the man's presence and all. And she'd ask for the music, and he'd put on a recording he had of John Bavicchi's *Orchestral Suite* [sings] and on and on—that's a part of it. And she danced to that piece, always; it just turned her on.

She died of a hemorrhage of some sort, and the father commissioned Bavicchi to write a piece in her memory. And he sets the piece, which was going to be a slow opening, using material that he would use later, and then an allegro middle section, which was the [sings], the dance section, which would melt back into the slow section

which opened the piece. And it would end, just the two intervals [sings], it would end on that [sings], very soft, very slow.

Before he started scoring it for orchestra, the girl's father died. And John and I were talking about that situation on one of the trips, on one of the tours. And I asked, "How about doing it for band, and let me play it with the band?" And sure enough, he wrote it. He wrote two versions: one for the band and then another one for the orchestra. I've done them both.

FL: How are they different?

JC: [pause] There's an extra measure in the orchestra version.

FL: Uh-huh.

JC: There's an extra measure in the transition from the allegro middle section into the slow section. Otherwise, they're the same.

FL: Uh-huh.

JC: The scoring is different, of course.

FL: Yeah.

JC: It's very effective. We did that in Iceland because people reading the Icelandic translation of the story I just told you, about the little girl dancing and the father dying before the piece was done—they could identify with the story line, and hear the piece. It's always been a crowd-pleaser, in kind of a memorial way. One of my band members said, "Do people really enjoy hearing that?" You know, it was sad, but it also pays tribute to the girl and the father in the way it ends, in the augmentation of the theme. It's hard to program sad music, especially for a band. People come to band concerts expecting marches and [unclear]. I think sad music is more easily programmed for orchestra.

FL: Mm-hm.

JC: And there's a lot of—many titles—that demonstrate that.

FL: I want to talk with you later in the interview about audience expectations of bands and all that. But I want to ask you more about some other MIT composers. You have done two pieces of Paul Earl's, one called *Werk* in 1972, and *Music from Icarus* in 1981. And as we know, Paul died last October, in 1998.

JC: No!

FL: Yeah, did you know that?

JC: No!

FL: Yeah, yeah.

JC: My goodness! When did he die?

FL: October, last year, in 1998.

JC: My goodness!

FL: Yeah, yeah.

JC: Wow!

FL: It was a blow to a lot of us. Anyways, tell me about these two pieces.

JC: Well, *Werk,* W-E-R-K, was the first piece he did for us. He was a baritone player, I think.

FL: Oh, really? Oh!

JC: And he knew the instrument, certainly, and it was a very effective piece, and we took it on tour more than once. It's hard to think how to describe it. But each instrument had on their music stand, each player had on his music stand, a sheet which—from which he could encode any information that he wanted: his name, the letter J might be a B-natural, or something like that, and a number could be encoded. And the reason for that is, I would—the band would be out in the audience. I would have the band standing, scattered, in the audience—not in rows or aisles, but intermixed, homogenized, out through the audience.

And we would encode a zip code, for example, five digits. And I would point over here, and these people would play their zip code, first digit. Then I would point over on the other side, and they would play their zip code, first digit, and so forth. And somehow, we had it worked out that the zip code in the town where we were playing that night would all be the same, and it would come out a unison! The zip code, their home telephones, their names, their initials, and there was a hymn tune involved in it: "Work, for the Night Is Coming," or something like that. A hymn tune by that name, I think: "Work, for the Night Is Coming." And—in fact, I think we started playing that on the stage, and the people would go out in the audience.

But I remember, we would play that tune against the encoding information. And on one concert up in Burlington, Vermont, a woman came down, and she was so upset with me for programming that hymn tune in such an awful accompaniment, you know! I apparently struck a sensitive spot on that particular hymn tune, that particular woman. That was effective.

And the *Icarus* was done out in Killian Court, and it had to do with Icarus flying too close to the sun. And somehow the dome of Killian Court figured in it, at night, and it made it nice. But we were scared because we heard a rumor that there was somebody climbing around up on the dome and they might fall off. Only did that piece once.

FL: Now, did that piece also include some of his work with lasers?

JC: I think so, yes. Yes. There again, out in Killian Court.

FL: Yeah.

JC: Were you there, by any chance?

FL: No.

JC: Huh. I'm sorry to hear of his death.

FL: Yeah. I certainly miss him. I was really curious about those two pieces. Are there any recordings?

JC: Well, I'm surveying all the tapes I have, and if there is, I shall certainly let you know.

FL: Yeah, I had gotten to know Paul pretty well. We had taught a class together [IAP course "Electronic Music Before the Age of Computers," January 1998]. I also noticed, moving on here, that in 1966 you did a piece by Jacques Ibert [1890-1962], Concerto for Cello and Winds, in 1966?

JC: Yes.

FL: Who was the cello soloist for that? Do you remember?

JC: [pause] A student. The name started with C, I think. I remember the orchestra, the MIT Orchestra. But I could look it up. I have all the programs.

FL: Yeah, I was really curious about that. I didn't know about that piece.

JC: Peter. Peter something. Peter, Peter? [Likely Carlos Prieto, class of 1953, played the Haydn D Major Concerto with the MIT Symphony under John Corley, December 1955]

FL: That's okay, there's a lot of names over the years to keep straight!

[Editors note: Alan B. Copeland, class of 1962, played the Ibert: Concerto for Cello and Wind Instruments under John Corley, November 6, 1965]

JC: [laughs]

5. Further Discussion of Band Repertoire (1:01:05—CD2 01:00)

FL: So moving back just a little bit, when we were talking about repertoire, are there particular musical aesthetic ideas that appeal to your imagination, things you're looking for in music, and things that excite you?

JC: Hm.

FL: I know that's a hard question. That's another one of those unfair questions.

JC: I'm turned on by [pause]—I'm turned on by sustained, beautiful chords, passage work. For example, the trio at the end of *Der Rosenkavalier* [Richard Strauss], with Sofie and Octavian and the Marschallin—you know, that wonderful trio toward the end of the opera, the big, emotional climax. And I always was looking for something that had that in the band works we were playing. [Edward] Madden came the closest to doing that in his suite—what is the name of that piece? *Eve of Saint Agnes*, the *Eve of Saint Agn*es has some wonderful emotional climaxes.

Giannini, Vittorio Giannini [1903-1966] has some wonderful climaxes, too. In the first movement, second movement, yeah, and even later on in the scherzo movement, the third movement. And you can feel the thing building, and to control a crescendo so that the treble instruments aren't getting too loud too soon, or that the bass instruments are going to be supportive enough, or that the bass instruments are predominant and everything else is building.

Yet I'm turned on by a really clean, articulate technique, staccato, or intelligent slurring and all, thinking back again to the Bavicchi *Festival Symphony*. On that recording, the final allegro is so exciting because of the energy, and everyone seems to be thinking the same way as to the climaxes. It's unison rhythm—it's probably all twelve notes of the chromatic scale sounding at once—

FL: Yeah.

JC: —but it rocks and rocks—[sings]—there's so much energy there. But you can't have a full program of that. It wears out the audience, wears out the musicians!

FL: [laughs]

JC: I try to think always, "I wonder what the audience is thinking?" I want them to like what they're hearing. I want them to be curious enough to hear it again; hence, doing some pieces more than once.

FL: You were famous for that. Once is not enough.

JC: Yeah.

FL: Yeah. And you weren't afraid to program things that might be challenging for the audience.

JC: Yeah, that's right. [laughs] I used to ask the audience how many liked it, how many didn't like it. And I would ask the band the same question. The audience would always laugh when an appreciable number of the band would raise their hands as not liking it, you know. And over the years, of course, I've seen a change in MIT students, a student, a particular class of freshmen, as to how many would have voted that they didn't like a piece in their freshman year, and in their senior year, "Oh, yeah, I liked this piece!" You know, I've opened the door, opened their ears to modern music and contemporary music. And many students who've written to me, and contributed to that wonderful book of memoirs that was given to me in the Fiftieth Anniversary Concert [May 1, 1999]—you know, there were letters in there, people that—I turned them on to listening to contemporary music.

FL: That's so beautiful!

JC: Yeah.

FL: Yeah, wow! Looking at the Concert Band repertoire today, who were some of the composers who were writing serious works for band as part of their natural inclination, not just commissions? As many composers just write orchestral music because they want to, who were some of the composers writing for concert band and wind ensemble like that? Because so often, the band works are special commissions. And I'm thinking—people like Roger Nixon [1921-2009], who seemed to write—

JC: Yeah. [papers rustling] Well [pause]—

FL: And have attitudes changed?

JC: I think [Percy] Grainger was one. But this is not contemporary. We're talking today.

FL: Yeah.

JC: Madden writes for band quite a great deal. He has other people performing his music; I'm not the only one playing Madden. [pause] Well, this list, I'm looking through this band repertoire. It doesn't give me the answer, the information I need to say this well, but some composers—you mentioned Nixon, Roger Nixon.

FL: Yes.

JC: I think of him as being in a stable that—there may be a certain publisher for whom he's writing x number of pieces each year, for the market. You know, school stuff. Now, Mill's Music used to have a lot of composers in their stable. Some of them were good, like Morton Gould. But I've been, a number of years now, away from the public school scene, as to what publishers are being—as what publishers are putting out. There's Rubank, which had a certain connotation. Rubank books, you know, school material.

FL: Right, right.

JC: Now whether they had a stable of composers, I don't know. There are composers I just avoid for that reason, because everything is in the key of B-flat or the key of E-flat.

FL: Yeah.

JC: Claude Smith [Claude T. Smith, 1932-1987] is a name that comes to mind in that category.

FL: Right.

JC: And those are composers I've tried to avoid at MIT.

FL: Yeah, I remember those in high school.

JC: I don't know how many on this list of stuff that we've played once and never played again, whether that shows any of those names or not.

FL: Well, what this raises for me, this question of the—you know, there's a strong history of—

JC: Grundman is another name. [Claire E. Grundman, 1913-1996]

FL: Oh, yes, yes. Now with the strong tradition of bands in this country, military bands, high school bands, and college bands, why there isn't more—and there aren't very many professional wind ensembles and stuff. And why, with the strong tradition, particularly in college and high school and military bands, why the band doesn't have the same prestige as the symphony orchestra? You go to a conservatory and you take a music history class—they don't talk about that tradition at all. And it's quite curious to me why that is.

JC: That's certainly true in this part of the country, but I'm not sure whether it's as true out in the Southwest: Arizona. Ed Asia [name unverified] went on to get a doctorate degree in wind ensemble conducting in Arizona. The band is more common out there than orchestras. Here in the East, there aren't the professional bands there used to be.

When I was high school age, there was the Walter Smith Band. Of course, the Goldman Band [founded by Edwin Franko Goldman, 1878-1956] was being

broadcast. The Navy Band used to broadcast, and the Army Band would broadcast, the Marine Band—each of the service bands had a weekly broadcast. College bands were famous. The University of Michigan, I remember hearing them at Harvard, when Michigan played Harvard, and they were wonderful! On the football field, it was like a beautiful organ I was hearing, you know. Just because you play outdoors doesn't mean you have to play out of tune.

FL: Right!

JC: You know, I've always been bothered by some of these championship half-time shows, field bands. They learn all these maneuvers and rehearse eight days a week, or something like that, and yet they don't take time to tune, or at least tune well enough. And when I would be asked to adjudicate a band festival, an out-of-doors band festival, I used to harp on the fact that, take time to tune, take time to listen, no matter what intricate movements you're doing, and dance steps and all. I feel a decline in all that locally—I mean here in the East.

FL: Mm-hm.

JC: I'm not sure whether I answered your question.

FL: Yeah. I mean it's a tough question. It's just interesting. You open up a book on the history of music in the United States, and they don't talk about the symphonic band repertoire. They'll talk about orchestral music, and chamber music, piano music, opera, but symphonic—I mean, even the *Grove Dictionary of Music*. There's an article on military band music, but there's nothing, there's no article on symphonic band music!

JC: [laughs] I have at home books on band music, of course, that I've used for reference, you know, looking for ideas. And I have two copies of the Goldman book [possibly Edwin Goldman: *Band Betterment*, 1934]. I have a book on the history of bands. I have a book on Grainger. And I've just received within the last four weeks a list of all the musicians who played for Sousa.

FL: Wow!

JC: And I knew some of them! I'm that old that I remember. Jake Newton and Oscar Short—I played with them. And my brother [Robert Corley] will know those, when I see him later this month.

FL: Wow!

JC: The Sousa band. Of course, that was before FM radio and all that, when the Sousa band used to take a concert around the country and then play it, transcriptions of [Richard] Wagner. I think the English must have kind of led the way into original works being performed.

FL: Right.

JC: Of course, the English come in two sizes. There's the brass band and the military band.

FL: Right, right.

JC: And I have some brass band recordings—amazing! Musically not that interesting. [laughs] I have a tape that is just so ridiculous, I should make a copy of that for you. It was "A Trip to Niagara Falls," or something like that, the name of it. It was a band piece, "A Trip to Niagara" or something. I'll check that out and get that to you! [laughs]

6. Conducting the MIT Concert Band (1:17:25—CD2 17:17)

FL: Wow. Moving on specifically to the MIT band and just your work as a conductor. You were pretty famous for the method of how you introduced new music to the band and guided them through rehearsals. Tell me a little bit about that.

JC: Say it again?

FL: Tell me about when you had a new piece of music and you were introducing it to the band. What were some of the methods that you used to—rehearsal techniques, in just explaining the piece to the band? How did that work for you?

JC: Well, I think one of the most important things with a brand new piece, everyone's looking at it for the first time, and you could be wrong to start at the beginning. Because it might go well for a half a minute or so and break down. And then if you did it again, it broke down in the same spot. That's always going to be the spot where it broke down. A long time ago I learned to find the most ingratiating spot in a piece, find the spot that's going to sound well right off, even if it's a case of doing only all the woodwinds, now all the brass, now everyone including the percussion. Find a spot so it's going to sound well, even if it's only a matter of sixteen measures or so. And if the thing is repeated later on in the piece, or earlier in the piece, do it again! So you get something sounding well right away.

Sometimes it's a good idea to start at the end of the piece and do only the last few measures. Now back up and do the last twenty measures. Of course, the last two measures are going to get better all the time. End up backing up and do the last forty measures, or whatever—to approach it from the back. And then if it's possible, and time will permit, and you can talk about it, describe the shape of it: it's going to be fast, slow, fast, slow, and then a short finale, so they get the shape of the thing. Then try to run the whole thing with a minimum of stopping, so they feel like, we can learn this, so they come away from the experience not dreading having to do it next week or the next rehearsal, that this is a piece that we're getting better at each time.

FL: Now, if it was a piece that the band found puzzling or curious, or maybe not even liking it, how did you deal with issues like that, at the beginning?

JC: Keeping in mind that when you work with a few players among everyone, that the others are all just having to sit there and wait, sometimes you take just little fragments of the piece, then add more instruments for that same fragment. Then finally you get so everyone, even if it's just a certain set of four or five measures, but keep everyone busy, so they're either following it, if they're not actually playing it.

You can sometimes say, I'd like to start at number 13, and we're going to go as far as 23. And play the note at 23. Play the note and hold it. Tune the note so it sounds better, even if it's a dissonant chord, or something. Even dissonances can sound. So that sound. Now go back and have the woodwinds only play, beginning at measure 13. Everyone come in on the note at number 23. And you play that much, so that all the others are following, so they'll know when to come in on 23. So there's some learning going on, even though they're not blowing their instruments.

Each piece is different. I think probably the piece I had in mind as I was saying all that was the Koulendros piece, the Greek piece that was so angular, so difficult, and so hard to find ensemble-type places. There are some times there are sections of a piece that I won't do until the last few rehearsals because they're so simple that they're not going to need much maturation time.

FL: Right.

JC: But early on, it's good to have an idea on what—if the concert is here—on what date do I want to be in condition to do the whole piece without stopping? So it can be done consecutively. Because the sooner you start doing things consecutively, the more people realize this is—we're committed to this. This is going to be done here, so we might as well buckle down and learn it. And also, it takes shape. And where you've had to work hard to get a certain climax, you can perhaps just start beating time, and they'll make the climax because it's in the parts. You come to rely on the intelligence of the musicians, and the sensitivity of the ears and all, to make the thing go.

FL: Speaking of the musicians, thinking of the MIT Concert Band, these are really motivated but non-professional musicians. Tell me what it's like working with them, and how that's different from some of the other groups that you've worked with.

JC: Working with the MIT, you mean?

FL: Yeah.

JC: Well, MIT, it's such a pleasure to work with such intelligent young people. Just because they don't play well doesn't mean that they're not intelligent. They wouldn't be here if they weren't intelligent. And they have a way of retaining, of remembering detail. If you've ended up phrasing the thing a certain way, provided I do the same thing each time, they'll phrase it the same each time. Or at least they'll be sensitive enough so I can change it a little bit and they'll follow.

I may have said this before, but one of my favorite MIT-related comments that I would make to a high school festival where I'd be rehearsing was that at MIT, if I said, "In this phrase, make that last note staccato, put a dot on it," you'd see them all take their pencil and dot that note and drop the pencils on the lip of the stand, and you'd hear the sound. But then, you'd also—in some pieces you'd see them turn a page and put a dot on another spot. And they'd know the tune came around in that other spot, you know. Always thinking, always thinking. They may not practice, there may be dust on the case, but they're thinking. It's been a joy.

FL: Wow! Wow. A lot of conductors have particular ideas for an ensemble sound that they're trying to cultivate. What were some of your ideas about the sound you were trying to get from the band?

JC: Well, I'm always looking for intonation problems. There are certain instruments that have certain notes that are always going to be sharp, or certain notes that are always going to be flat. You need to know those notes, and you need to be able to suggest an alternate fingering. In brass instruments, for example, if the note is always going to be flat, but the alternate fingering may make it sharp, what do you do to compensate for that? You push out a slide.

So, looking for the total sound, the ensemble sound, and good intonation. But also, the way it is attacked, the beginning of that sound—am I getting a different degree of attack from the brass than I am the woodwinds? Are the brass over-balancing the woodwinds? Now, not only do we hit the beginning of the chord right, but the end of it. A lot of groups can start a chord well, but they don't end together, so I hear "fingers": some drop off here, some drop off there, some drop off there. You have to wait.

And sometimes you have to actually say to them, "Release this note on the rest. Release on the eighth rest." Or at least on the end of the beat, you know. That's preordained, as to when to stop, when to start a note. And those ingredients have to be correct if it's going to sound well in the acoustics at Kresge [Auditorium]. You can hear so much in Kresge. On tour, when we'd go on tour, we were adjusting to different acoustics every day, and that was fun, too. You'd hear the students thinking about when to release, when not to release.

FL: Oh!

JC: The tour was such a great time.

FL: Were there particular colors or sonorities that you were trying to cultivate in the band?

JC: Yeah, a rich middle sound, a rich horn-like quality. I would like not to—well, there are times when a shrill note, an almost abrasive sound, is warranted. But ninety percent of the time, I think that you have to avoid an unpleasant projection, an unpleasant forcing of a high note or a loud note. In orchestra conducting, I was always asking for more, more sound, more depth, more pressure on the string. And in the winds, less sound. In band, it would be generally less sound, so that we're hearing the details from the moving parts, that sort of thing.

Lots of the time I would stop and ask the trombones, "Can you play louder?" Stop again, "Is that as loud as you can play? Now everyone, balance that, for some excitement in the sound." I must say, I never felt I really spent enough time balancing the percussion, because the percussion should be treated like a choir, so that all the various instruments playing the percussion are heard equally, that the bass drum isn't covering everyone else. There's a wood block, I want to hear the wood block. The triangle is frequently—"Hold it up so it can be heard, so it will project," you know—a lot of teaching.

FL: Speaking of teaching, how did you see your role as a teacher and educator here at MIT?

JC: Only that we were teaching players, whether it was orchestra or band, how to play their instruments, how to phrase once they could play the instrument, how to listen, how to adjust. And I would frequently make reference to recordings that they might like to consult, might listen to. We didn't take enough time to play recordings to the groups as we rehearsed them. I always wished that I had a rehearsal room where I could just push a button and record a passage, and stop to rewind and play that passage, as a school man can usually do, if he has a proper set-up for rehearsals. Even rehearsing on stage, for the many advantages it had, had its disadvantages. There wasn't usually a blackboard you could go to in a hurry to draw something out or show some relationship.

I don't feel I did enough teaching at rehearsal. But I did, hopefully, enough teaching to get through the pieces, or program in such a way that we were going to have enough time to do enough teaching. You'd look at a score and say, "This one's going to take a lot of teaching." You'd look at another score, "This will play itself." Of course, [indistinct] an example of something that would play itself.

FL: There's one question I wanted to ask you, but I might have to wait for another time. Maybe you could talk about it just briefly. What do you feel that the—what is the artistic function of a conductor, either a band or an orchestra? I know that's a huge question, but are there particular ways that you think about that? What is it you're trying to do?

JC: The artistic function. One's choice of repertoire is an important artistic decision. And to pick repertoire that if you've got a concert down here—second semester, the end of the semester—that you're aiming for, what you do back here at the beginning of the year may affect what you're able to do down there. So I frequently picked pieces for this part of the year, the beginning of the year, that were going to be good teaching pieces, that were going to make it easier to teach this piece that you hope to do at the end of the year. I say hope to do. You're at the mercy of what you have in players, of course. If you're having a year without French horns, you don't pick a big French horn piece down here. You analyze what the makeup of the group is up here and then find the piece that is going to fit that instrumentation the best.

One year I chose *George Washington Bridge* of William Schuman [1910-1992] because I wanted a big sonorous sound, and the discipline of the length of note, whether it was in the staccato section, or big half notes—when to cut off that half note. I was using that up in here a great deal. We never did it down here because we had some other piece that was going to build off what we learned in this piece up here. I'm not sure that answers the question.

FL: Yeah. It's a big question that there's no real easy answer to that. It's a question I thought would be interesting to ask you. Tell me about the MIT tours, how that got started, and what was the function of the tours.

JC: In the early years, we used to take a weekend, do a weekend concert, for example, at Vassar [College], which might be down—drive down, rehearsal in the afternoon and concert at night, stay overnight, and come back. And then that sort of thing grew into

driving somewhere on Friday afternoon, playing a Friday night concert, and then driving the next day to somewhere else and having an afternoon rehearsal and an evening concert, and then playing an afternoon concert on Sunday, and coming home. It started out small like that.

Then as it developed, we would be gone for sometimes two weekends, and the time in between, which would give us maybe seven or eight days in which to do six or seven concerts. I always thought there should be a certain balance between the number of miles traveled and the number of notes played—a ratio of some sort. It would have been crazy to go to Chicago and play one concert. We ended up playing a number of other concerts, which might be high schools, or MIT [alumni] clubs, plus the big concert that we were going to do at a certain college in the Chicago area.

The committee, or students anyway, who would organize the tour, would find out what high schools might be appropriate for the band to visit on tour and line them up geographically so that we weren't going from Boston to Pennsylvania, to upper New York State, and then down to Yale. Fixed it so we'd do things in line, in a line that made sense. When we went to Canada, more than once we'd go to Quebec City, then come back by Sherbrooke, Three Rivers—Four Rivers? I've forgotten the name of it. And end up in Montreal, that sort of thing. More than once we would play some high schools in Vermont, then go to Montreal. Each year it was different. And I have files of each year. I say each year—there may be some missing years now, because we would sometimes go back another year.

FL: What were some of the memorable places you went?

JC: I mentioned Quebec City. The French concerts were always—the Canadian concerts were always well-attended, the ones at Quebec City in particular, because we'd go there during their Winter Festival. That was great fun. We played at New York; we played at Town Hall. We did the Bavicchi *Symphony* at Town Hall.

FL: Wow!

JC: And we were reviewed in the newspaper. And the reviewers, I remember, asked that we come back. We played out in Long Island. We'd go out and do high schools out in Long Island, then end up coming into New York City, at the Brooklyn—gee, I've forgotten now the name of it. But we did a broadcast over WNYC from somewhere in Brooklyn. It was a school in Brooklyn. We went up the Hudson River, played concerts, all the way up to Albany, having started out in New York.

But I used to urge the committee to find concerts so that the last concert would be the best one, the biggest one, the most important concert, the finale concert. And sometimes it was in New York, sometimes it was at Yale. University of Pennsylvania was another finale concert. Washington, D.C., a finale concert. We went to Florida more than once; played even at a hospital in Florida.

Of course, we played at Astronaut High School in Titusville, Florida, the day we saw the Shuttle blow up [NASA Space Shuttle *Challanger*], which was an experience. We were supposed to give a clinic in the afternoon—a concert for the school in the afternoon, and then I was to do a clinic with their band in the afternoon, and then a concert at night. When we got there, they had cancelled school, and the

concert, however, was continued. We did do a concert that night, with a packed house! People were standing. And this gentleman who was lighting his pipe out on the steps said, after the concert as we were coming out, as I was coming out, he said it was a great concert. And I stopped and talked with him. I said, "It must have been difficult for everyone to hear music." He said, "Well, we just had to do it, to get away from the TV, get away from the radio. We lost seven of our family today." He said, "We appreciate the fact that you played the concert to get our minds off the tragedy."

FL: Wow!

JC: And that summer, while I was sailing out in the harbor with Ira [Paul] Schwarz [1922-2006], the composer, I told him about that experience. And I said, "Ira, how about writing a piece about the Shuttle disaster?" And that's *The Challenger* [full title: *Challenger: Ron McNair*], which is another piece that one of the students said, "Does the audience like hearing that?" And I don't know because it's a tragedy. [Ronald McNair, MIT PhD 1977, died in the Challenger explosion]

FL: Mm-hm.

JC: If it doesn't leave you limp at the end of the piece, you failed somehow. I used to have to consciously take deep breaths so that I wouldn't go numb while conducting it, you know.

FL: Wow! One more thing I want to ask you, and then we can decide if you want to take a break and come back, or do another interview. But on a lighter note, the annual Halloween Concerts?

JC: [laughs]

FL: Tell me about some of those—how that got started and some of the memorable things that happened at those.

JC: You know, I don't know how it got started. It wasn't my idea. [laughs] And when I tried to stop it, and didn't do it one year, we had to answer a lot of questions. The idea was to do a concert in those acoustics, and the band would be in costume.

FL: This was in Lobby 7, right?

JC: Lobby 7.

FL: Yeah.

JC: Well, it was fun initially to find music that could go in those acoustics. I used to do, actually, Gabrieli sonatas for brass, with double choir, triple choir. Giovanni Gabrieli, ca. 1554/57-1612 or Andrea Gabrieli, 1532/33-1586]

FL: Right.

JC: Some of the Percy Grainger stuff would go well in Lobby 7. Some pieces were near disasters. I don't remember whether I started some pieces over if they didn't start out right. But we would demonstrate to the audience, you know, play a staccato chord. Boom! And you'd hear it ring! The band—it was always amazing the way they'd get through the concerts. Memorable experiences? Oh, they're all lumped into one now.

But we did more than once *Jericho* [by Morton Gould], with the off-stage trumpets: the wall came tumbling down, that sort of thing.

FL: Did they always have costumes and stuff? Was that always part of that, that Halloween Concert?

JC: Yeah, yeah. I remember once, Jim—Jim? Jim [James] Bales [Ph.D. 1991] came dressed as an octopus. He played the tuba. There's this octopus playing tuba!

FL: [laughs]

JC: I think I have a picture of that.

FL: Didn't that make it in the student paper or something? I've seen pictures of that.

JC: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Wow!

JC: One girl, one of the saxophone players, came dressed as the Shuttle, but she didn't discover until she got to the concert that she couldn't sit down in it! You know, she had [laughs] the—I've forgotten how that was solved. There was always something else on my mind—people not showing up in time, or music missing, or something. I dreaded that concert, really. To find the right pieces, getting them ready in a matter of three weeks or so. You know, we'd have to audition, seat the band, and all that. And there was a Family Weekend concert in front of that, by two weeks.

FL: [laughs] Oh, wow! This looks like a good place to take a break, so why don't we do that?

[End of Interview]