

Music at MIT Oral History Project

Dante Anzolini

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

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Interview no. 2

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Lewis Music Library**

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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

Dante Anzolini (b. 1959) was Associate Professor of Music at MIT 1998-2006, and Conductor of the MIT Symphony and Chamber Orchestras. Currently, he is Music Director of the Orchestra of the Teatro Argentino Opera Theater, in La Plata, Argentina, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Linz Theater in Linz, Austria. In April 2008, and again in November 2011, he conducted the Metropolitan Opera in Philip Glass's opera *Satyagraha*. Along with performing standard symphonic and operatic repertoire, he is an advocate for contemporary music, and has a special interest in the works of Charles Ives.

Forrest Larson, Library Assistant at the Lewis Music Library, has received 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 November 2, 2005, in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 1:46:46. Second of four interviews. Other interviews: March 28, 2005; March 21, 2006, and November 19, 2007.

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. Conservatory and undergraduate years (00:17—CD1 00:17)

FORREST LARSON: It is my pleasure to welcome back Dante Anzolini, Associate Professor of Music at MIT, Conductor of the MIT Symphony and Chamber Orchestras. It's November 2nd, 2005. Thanks, again, for coming back.

DANTE ANZOLINI: Thank you.

FL: In the last interview, you mentioned that there had been a conflict at the conservatory [Gilardo Gilardi Conservatory of Music] in La Plata [Argentina] that almost made you give up music. Do you care to say anything about this? It was something that you kind of alluded to. Maybe I'm mischaracterizing that, but—

DA: No.

FL: Yeah.

DA: No. Okay. Now, there was this situation—1974–75. It was probably all linked to the political upheaval and problems and turmoil that was taking place in those years.

FL: That was during the dirty—the years of the [Argentina's] Dirty War [1976–1983]?

DA: It was the beginning of the Dirty War and there were many changes in the government, and many changes in the management of the conservatory. One of them, I remember, the placement of some priest—an organist, director of the conservatory in those years. And he was a very good friend of people that work in the extreme right and, you know, it was kind of like a fascist part of the internal fighting, the regime. In any event, that had something to do with the case. Another precious part of the information is the fact that already, you know, at eleven, twelve years old, thirteen, I started to develop a certain interest on particular kinds of music and particular ways of playing—those referred to the more the avant-garde then, what was considered in the avant-garde, and my refusal to become one of, you know, one more of those pianists that would play under the standard guidelines. And also the fact... factors that I was getting to be known in the conservatory as the young, bright kid who could sight-read a lot. Anything they were—[thought unfinished]. I think I told you the stories. And at the same time, because of the change of management, my... my main teacher in piano had to leave the conservatory. She was—

FL: Who was that teacher again?

DA: Carmen Scalcione [no dates found], formerly Carmen Amicarelli. Amicarelli, Francisco [Francisco Amicarelli, no dates found; assistant to pianist Vincenzo (Vicente) Scarramuzza, 1885–1968], was the son of an Italian musician, who became one of the foremost piano teachers in those decades. This woman was married to him and she was a phenomenal pianist herself. She was also the director of the conservatory, so she left the two positions, the professorship and also the directorship. So someone else came in and there were some kind of like funny situation among faculty members who stayed and faculty members who left. In the middle of those battles, usually the losers are the students, and I—there was probably the first time in my life that I suffered a big stroke [i.e., failure] and, you know, the stroke was that I went and took an exam, almost without preparation by—no teacher was, you know—[I

was] moving from one to the other myself. I was in the...my adolescent years. I don't think that I played very well in that exam, but I failed [my] exam. For the first and last time in my life, I failed a piano exam, which was unthinkable. Well, the truth is, I failed exam also because there were three teachers in the jury and the three teachers were the enemies of my former teacher, so I was punished because of her.

Also, the one other factor were...was important, and I, you know, historically remember even today, because, as funny as it sounds, those three professors played a lot less than me at that age. I mean, in equal circumstances, I was able to play [Frédéric] Chopin [1810–1849] or [Franz] Liszt [1811–1882] etudes that they would never in any dream would play. So it was another situation that even today I remember, you know, thirty years after that prepared me for many of the injustices that I happened to suffer, like anyone else. I mean, I don't want to make a point of, you know...many people suffer that all the time. But the funniest part of this story, or probably the more tragic-comic history—it's a little bit tragic because I almost—I failed that exam. They say that I had a *dis*—equivalent to an F in their numbers. I was looking at the situation with awe. I was a lot younger. I was fourteen, turned fifteen that year I think, and I couldn't believe that these people, whom I knew, were able to say—even though I knew that they were professors, but everyone knew that I played much better than any of them—that they could say that I would fail even if I didn't play so well, but it wasn't for an F. It was evidently something behind.

So then that summer I decided to quit music. I thought that, you know, if I'm failing a piano exam—and then, already fourteen I knew that I had a lot of weird muscular skills. I mean I...I think that—I hope it doesn't sound arrogant—but I really do have a very big talent for piano playing in terms of the muscular preparedness or something that amounts to. I was able to read anything and play anything at any given point, and the truth was that I was being called for playing, you know, every afternoon, every day different: piano, violin, bassoon, violin, viola. I mean I was the only guy who did a lot of chamber music in the conservatory [Gilaro Gilardi Conservatory of Music; originally, Conservatory of Music and Scenic Art, est. 1949]. We were not so many. We were three hundred people, and I was [unclear], you know, if they fail me, I mean if I can—they can go to hell. I mean I saw the political thing behind. My mother, in one gesture that I still recognize as very important, went to protest bitterly to the director. The director was then that priest.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And the guy said, you know, even though I had a very good behavior, you know, I had my personality when I [laughs] was young, too, and people said that—the guy said to my mother that perhaps the problem was my personality. I was very calm but people knew that when I got an idea I was stubborn.

FL: Yeah.

DA: But that was an excuse. The problem was that people really hated my former teacher and then I, you know, I just said the hell with them. I won't—I will play soccer the whole summer, won't prepare any shit. I had the second chance to pass exam in March, so I prepared one week, only one week. I went with that notice of one week, you know, five or six days of practice I went there and I...and I got a high A, passing the exam, and I came

back to music. Thanks to my mother, most probably. She pushed for that and she knew that I had some ideas and some—[thought unfinished]. At that point, I wasn't really into music in terms. I mean, I was too young. I mean, I wasn't thinking of a career, but funny enough, after I passed that exam I played my first piano recital as a composer and pianist, only months after. So, that was one big kick.

FL: Wow. In the previous interview, you mentioned kind of a personal crisis as you had gone off to the university to study mathematics, you know, you had been kind of pushed in that direction, because that was a so-called “real” profession. But you—it seems like also at the same time you might have been experiencing what many young people do, an existential crisis.

DA: Mm-hm.

FL: You mentioned Henry Miller [1891–1980], Bertrand Russell [1872–1970] and, you know, Gabriel García Márquez [b. 1927]. Can you talk about some of that a little bit?

DA: Mm. Those personal crises had to...probably to do, in my particular case, with the opposition...with an opposition that I never was...I was never able to deal with and, probably now, even now, is affecting me. It comes through, you know, by analyzing in therapy and things, you know—perhaps you know—the opposite viewers are my parents. You know, I always related my father to something, my mother to something else, and perhaps they are sides of my personality, extreme self-rationality and non-rationality in feeling and rationality, you know, against each other. Also, the discovery of many musics and my interest in composing started, so that moved a whole—I mean, I was already composing when I was eleven, but I finally decided to go in composition when I was—at that age when I failed that exam, then I passed it again.

And, then, you know the discovery of some writers and some composers, plus my leaving definitely the Catholic church, because I mean I was a guy who was going—who went to church every single Sunday of my, you know, when I was at my age, between seven and fifteen. Every single Sunday and did all the sacraments and, you know, I believed. And there were many things that woke me up, at least they gave me other ideas, you know, when I—I think I mentioned that in the other interview, I'm not sure, but you know when a priest at my school showed me machine guns that they were using.

FL: You didn't mention this.

DA: I didn't mention that? In my high school, there was a music teacher that I was especially considered important—I mean that in my class because I was the only musician. I mean I—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —at age fifteen, I was able to play most of the big rep...Romantic repertoire in the piano...on the piano. It's like, so my peers didn't know anything about music, so the guy took always a special affection on me, and one day he took me to—I mean, this was a Catholic school and he took me to his *parroquia* [parish] in the church, he—he showed a little group of us—four or five, you know—the...the gun machines, because he was part of a...also, you know, the same kind of gang—the extreme right, you know, fighting against the communists—

supposed to be. You know, the communists...it was worse than the [Senator Joséph] McCarthy period here in this country because you would get killed [Editor's note: Reference is to McCarthyism during the U.S.'s Second Red Scare, 1950–1954]. And that was another problem, you know—my father being very smart in those things, because he had to go through the past, you know, through the Second World War, the fascists.

FL: The fascists, yeah.

DA: And he was—they wanted—[unclear—being adolescent?] took care of my grandmother. He made me promise not to speak about my ideas, since my ideas were not precisely right-ish. In those years, also, my father—he was a truck driver. Besides the fact that he had a high culture in opera [and] music, he really didn't have a high education. Not even high school. He was working as a truck driver and he was working for, you know, one of the police departments. He himself one day...one of those days... I mean, the whole thing is boiling together in my memories because I know that...that many things happened at the same time. My father came one day to...came back to our place, came back home, and he was pallid. He was white. He was completely nervous. He had seen, in the place where he was bringing some construction materials with his truck, an enormous hole with a lot of dead bodies. It's very similar to what you would see now in the Second World War, you know, the things that they do with—to Jewish people.

FL: Mm.

DA: And that happened in Argentina and it was a very...it was a huge thing, you know, when you were kind of like, you know, adolescent, going into your young years, and seeing all these disasters happening we did. Potentially, it's just like feeling conflicts, I mean, internal conflicts by definition are part of our—our background, I mean, everyone's is, when you are fifteen, fourteen, sixteen. So these all boiled together, you know. My discovery of some music, as I said; the political turmoil; my willingness to maybe quit my...the opposition of my realities of you know, rational versus non-rational. By sheer chance, the fact that they discovered big mathematical talent when I was fifteen, sixteen, I was given calculus classes and our—we had a very good mathematician as a professor in that high school, you know, he was a very good [unclear] and he invited me to go in math. And I liked math, but I wanted to do some doctorate like—I like pure math. I mean, not the application to technology or anything. It's just that I had...I like those worlds of ideas, so I pursued that, not being completely sure that I would do anything.

Then I was trained. I mean, I was always facing the opposite, you know, I was trained to be practical. And, since the entering in that university application process was difficult and I had to pass an exam and I passed that exam very well—I mean really, with high notes...with high—but then I thought, you know, I would...I mean, with music, I would never have a job. With math, doing that, I would never have a job, so it's better that I study some...[though unfinished]. Computing was then in the beginnings—1976, you know, in Argentina, we had a computer that was as big as this library. One computer, and we were punching cards.

FL: Oh, yes, I remember those.

DA: Remember those times? So I...so at that point, I entered in the university, since I was one year younger than everyone, and I look a lot younger, even, you know? And I already started playing piano in concerts, and then I, you know, studied with the viola and composition. I was doing one zillion things. Way too many. Then, all of a sudden, they invited me to teach at the high school—me being even younger than the last year of high school students. So I did all those things. I started in a tango orchestra and—that was a collapse. I mean, I couldn't handle anything anymore. It was too much. But by age seventeen, I was doing math in the university, piano in the conservatory, viola in the conservatory, composition, surviving playing viola already in the conservatory's orchestra, doing a lot of chamber music, smoking a lot—normal cigarettes. [laughs] Normal cigarettes—I didn't know anything about marijuana until I was lot older!

FL: [laughs]

DA: But I had to quit soccer because I didn't have any time. You know, in the meantime at age fifteen, I almost became a pro. My teacher said...my teacher said, "Either piano or soccer. You cannot do both." And I chose for piano. I think that I liberated my whole life, and I still play soccer and I had some—I used to have some very good skills, and now I'm, you know, I'm there. And all these things together made me think...rethink music composition life. Those years, I discovered [Bela] Bartók [1881–1945], [Arnold] Schoenberg [1874–1951], [Charles] Ives [1874–1954] and I had a teacher who—his name was Enrique Girardi [no dates found]—

FL: Right.

DA: —gave us a lot of elements, but, see—for instance, the freedom and the craziness, the beautiful craziness of Ives. We didn't have much information about him. I mean, it was for me a fable—it was a big history to get his Piano Sonata [no.2], which I bought when I was eighteen, nineteen. Didn't get anything. I mean, I tried to read it and I did, somehow. I still have the same score here in Boston, the same one that I bought. I didn't have any access to the sym—the Fourth [Symphony no. 4]. I heard the Third and Fourth Symphony and almost cried. I couldn't believe that. I mean, it was a revelation. But then, the truth is, that not having any access to these kind of, side of things, I pursued the Second Viennese School kind of road [Editor's note: The Second Viennese School refers to the group of 20th century composers, led by Arnold Schoenberg, 1903–1925]. And that, eventually, got me in a position that some years after people told me, I mean, some of my composer friends, even here on the faculty—Evan Ziporyn [MIT Kenan Sahin Professor of Music] told me something about it—I mean, it was—you know, you would—it was like you trying to cut your hair and smile at the same time. Impossible.

The—then there was these magic numbers in the other side of my brain and my need for rationality, and my despise for everything that remotely approached sentiments or feelings. Therefore, it was a fear—a schizophrenic choice in which I tried to do the safe part and also, eventually, got me to the wrong spot. I remember that my last piece, written when I was twenty, was a viola sonata, because I played the viola and played the piano, and it was—I showed it to this big teacher, [Girardo] Gandini [b. 1936].

FL: Yeah.

DA: Girardo Gandini, and he was smiling and grinning and saying, you know, “Wow. There’s a big Second Viennese School in Berisso, my home town, and you are the guy.” And I see this score now and I think it is a pretty good example of a Bergian [Alban Berg, 1885–1935]—post-Bergian, I would say, you know? Nothing bad, I don’t think. I mean, but it didn’t—I went to the limits of that mentality and I didn’t know—I mean, I didn’t know what to do next. I didn’t know. The language problem was impossible for me to solve then. I mean, had I lived in this country, for instance, where you had so many in a big umbrella of one zillion different things that you can have access to, maybe I would have sensed many possible answers in all directions.

FL: So Gandini didn’t kind of show you other options?

DA: No, no! He doesn’t have them, even today. I mean, today he’s in [unclear] esthetics.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I mean, I—

FL: He was very involved in avant-garde music in Argentina there was a group that he organized, I have it written down here. What’s it called now? Let’s see here. Grupo de Experimentación Musical.

DA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That one. That one. But he formed it then.

FL: Yeah. And I would have assumed that he would have had a...a kind of large...a sense of a larger, you know, contemporary musical world.

DA: Honestly, maybe he did or he tried, but I didn’t—[though unfinished]. There were two aspects to it: One is that he quit the conservatory and he went back to Buenos Aires. I was in the smaller city. I couldn’t take private lessons, I didn’t have the money. And then a friend convinced me—Osvaldo Golijov [b. 1960]. Osvaldo convinced me to go back to composition and take some lessons. And I went with my sonata, my viola sonata.

FL: Right.

DA: Because then, when I was young, I mean, Osvaldo and I were part of the group of young composers and the most known, you know? But, I quit. And then I said, “*Basta!* [Italian: Enough!/ Stop!] What I want to do is I want to be a conductor.” And he [Osvaldo Golijov] didn’t quit. He kept composing and eventually became who he is now. I mean the—in fact, you know, I remember a concert in the theater where I’m the music director now [Teatro Argentino, La Plata, Argentina]. It’s funny, you know, I went as a kid—I mean, I wasn’t a kid, I was sixteen—and [Sir] Peter Maxwell Davies [b. 1977] was there because [Girardo] Gandini invited him. And there was a concert.

FL: Ah. Wow.

DA: So there were big people coming and somehow we were in touch but, you know, I don’t want to be held [holding] responsible anyone for my failures. I mean, it was me; it was essentially me that I couldn’t handle my own needs.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: I tried to be practical again to the rational side and I tried to be—then, I know, I said, “Okay, I play such and such. I don’t want to be a pianist.” I always loved the orchestra sound. Always, always, always, you know. One of—as I said to you in the—I think in the other interview, I used to hear the radio and I—you know, one of the first things—*Men and Mountains* [by Carl Ruggles (1924)]. I heard it in the radio and, obviously, the most...the biggest important buy of the year was my radio with the CD...with a—sorry, then we didn’t—[laughs] with a cassette recorder.

FL: Right.

DA: So I still have some cassettes from then in my office here, of *Men and Mountains*, the first stupid time—

FL: That’s the Ruggles’ *Men and Mountains*, is it?

DA: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Yeah.

DA: So, you know, that kind of music—what was the access? By the radio, maybe, sometime. Low social class family, you’re not going to be able to buy records and they don’t...they didn’t even have them. I couldn’t solve the difficulty and I quit composition. I kept doing math. Then I quit math, too. I said, “*Basta*, I cannot handle it. It’s boring. I like it, but it’s boring.” So, that was—.

2. Opera and other significant musical works and the beginning of professional conducting career (25:18–CD1 25:18)

FL: So, we’ll pursue some questions later on related to the legacy of Arnold Schoenberg but I want to change the subject radically here.

DA: Mm-hm.

FL: You say that opera is in your blood.

DA: Mm-hm.

FL: Are you meaning particularly Italian opera when you think of that?

DA: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Yeah. Tell me about your childhood exposure to opera and your parents’ interest in it.

DA: I think I told you the story of my father being, you know, who he was, one of ten children and the only one who didn’t pursue music.

FL: Right.

DA: He always asked me to—he asked me when I was small to play this *Traviata* [*La traviata*, three-act opera (1853), by Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)]. I had to find a nice simple version. And I studied that and it was one of his loves. We lived in the same house—the same house, I think I mentioned that, too, two families, my uncle’s family and my father’s family. We

were six people in a smaller place. I mean, this was a hole. A little bigger was the room for my family and a little bigger for their family in one and, you know—.

FL: Wow.

DA: So, there was a piano in the other one, because my uncle had only one daughter and she was a pianist. The first sound that I heard of the piano was that one. And the tradition of my grandfather being their father, my uncle and my dad's, you know, being Da-Da, the musician, so that came through and my uncle had a phenomenal tenor voice. As much as I hated the guy because he—there were big problems in my family, you know, in that partnership—

FL: And your uncle's name was.

DA: Mario.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: He still lives—

FL: Did he immigrate to Argentina after your father?

DA: No, first.

FL: First.

DA: My father was...went to Argentina—that's a funny thing—as a tourist.

FL: Yeah, you told me about that.

DA: And he stayed there.

FL: Right.

DA: I wasn't supposed to be—I mean, anyway, it was weird. No, my uncle did that after—right after the [Second] World War. This uncle was the chief of the tanks in the Italian side of [Erwin] Rommel [1891–1944; German Field Marshall during World War II] thing in Egypt. So that was my uncle.

FL: Wow.

DA: So, he after leaving the tanks he and went back to Friuli [Italy] and then he immigrated to Argentina.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: Like I said, big, big tenor voice, and in those days, in the sixties and seventies, all the immigrants from Italy would gather every other week to have big *mangiate*—big gatherings for eating—and—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —obviously, it was always known that anyone with a voice who would sing a capella, no accompaniment, if we didn't have any piano, songs. Neapolitan songs, Northern songs, and especially all [Giacomo] Puccini [1858–1924] and [Giuseppe] Verdi. That was part of the informal training in that Italian neighborhood. I have to confess then that I had big ambiguity

about opera because sometimes I hated it deeply and sometimes I loved it. I went to my first opera performance not to listen but to sing.

FL: That was *The Magic Flute* [K. 620 (1791), two-act opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)] that you said—

DA: *The Magic Flute*. I didn't know any opera at all. I didn't go to the theater, but the first time I went I went to sing. And it was imprinted in my genetic code—to some extent it's part of my training. Now, many times, I refused to go to opera houses or concert halls. I didn't feel like—and I said, “I won't go until I conduct there.” And I did [laughs] in many places. And then I ended up conducting in those places, you know, in Europe, for instance.

FL: So what was the first professional opera performance that you actually went as an audience member that you actually saw?

DA: I remember it was *Traviata*.

FL: Uh-huh. And where was that?

DA: It was in Argentina.

FL: Yeah.

DA: Then, you know, they went back and forth because, for instance, when I was fifteen in those turmoil years, I was also, you know—since everyone knew that I was a... a phenomenal sight-reader, all singers contacted me to accompany. And I started accompanying professional singers, and I had read in the famous Scherchen book [*Handbook of Conducting*, by Hermann Scherchen] that that was one of the schools that you have to go through, you know, in order learn the right tempi for your—you know. It was funny, because without doing opera, I was in all these singers' world, all of a sudden. Then, [claps] another clash. After twenty, I was hired in the theater as accompanist with the choir—

FL: Right.

DA: —and became assistant conductor. And I started learning things there. The things that I heard when I was a child—so it's mixed, because then, also, those crazy statements by [Pierre] Boulez. Remember?

FL: Yeah, about bombing the opera houses and things. [Editor's note: Referring to misunderstood comments made by Pierre Boulez in 2001.]

DA: Being in that area of the thinking post-Webern [Anton Webern, 1883–1945], I had my ambiguity between what I had in my blood, what I heard as a child, what I sort of like in my mathematical world of going through Webern and Boulez. So, then—then for some years, when I was so involved with serialism, I didn't want to hear opera. Didn't feel—then the big discovery. Then I learned about *Wozzeck* [opera by Alban Berg] and then I bought the big—the—when I heard it I went bananas! Couldn't believe that that was possible.

FL: And you've had a chance to conduct that, right?

DA: I did a semi-thesis and I—you know, big working at Yale, and at Yale I conducted many rehearsals when we were preparing. I didn't conduct a full opera.

FL: I see. Mm-hm. Oh.

DA: No. Not yet. I did a good work of, you know, like one hundred pages analysis on the piece.

FL: Wow. Of the traditional—

DA: And I—sorry—now that I remember, I did conduct for my final exam in the master’s the three pieces.

FL: Oh, of the Berg, yeah. [*Three Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 6]

DA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I conducted the, you know, the Berg, the *een-ta-da-ta*—and the last scene of the drawing of [claps]. You know the three pieces?

FL: The orchestra pieces or the—?

DA: Yeah.

FL: Yeah. What’s—I forgot the opus number on that.

DA: Mm, you kill me.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I don’t remember, it was opus 9, everything, no? [*Three Pieces for Orchestra*, op. 6]

FL: I—

DA: [unclear]

FL: —yeah—it sounds like it, yeah.

DA: Well, the three pieces were—remember the—the prelude, the one that has the, you know, Marie [Editor’s note: possibly referring to the role of Marie in Berg’s *Wozzeck*], and at the end the drawing of [claps]? Yeah, I did that.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I remember I had a recording.

FL: One last—couple more questions about opera. Do you now have some traditional or some favorite traditional operas, things that you really gravitate to from the traditional repertoire?

DA: Oh, yeah, yeah. Traditional yes.

FL: Yeah.

DA: Yes. I mean, I still—I listen to some *Bohème* [*La bohème*, by Giacomo Puccini] and, believe me, I still feel like crying.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: Some *Traviata* moves me deeply. Some—I mean not the whole piece but there are some—I mean I just conducted again, you know.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: But *Bohème* for me is—*Carmen* [by Georges Bizet, 1838–1875]. There are some passages of *Carmen* that I will always remember. I mean, there are some traditional pieces that I love so much and it's a weird, unreasoned, irrational, completely childish love.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: More than childish. It's something...something like passionate.

FL: It came as a real surprise to me, when I found this side to you. Yeah.

DA: Why?

FL: Yeah. It just—but it's—

DA: For instance, there are passages of *Gianni Schicchi* [by Puccini] that integrate both the rational and the non-rational—I mean, in *Gianni Schicchi*, if you know the comedy, it's a beautiful comedy that Puccini so—such a smartly planned comedy. It's beautiful! I love that music. I love *Carmen*. *Otello* [by Verdi] for me, there are some passages of *Otello* that—those dark—you know, the Iago, the darkest moments of, you know, *Otello* about to kill. And those moments are for me so significant that I—I mean I still like, you know, play the thing, and honestly, they move me as much as the first movement of the [Béla] Bartók *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste* [Sz. 106, BB 114]. Or [Gustav] Mahler [1860–1911] Fourth [Symphony no. 4] or Mahler Ninth [Symphony no. 9] or, you know, or some pass—I mean the big chaos of the second movement of [Charles] Ives' Fourth [Symphony no. 4].

FL: Mm-hm. Yeah.

DA: And it's a kind of the same crazy excitement that, you know, and—I mean, I don't—I don't feel that—or, you know, some of...some passages of the [Albert] Roussel [1869–1937]'s Third Symphony [in G minor, op. 42], the [Igor] Stravinsky [1882–1971]'s *Rite of Spring*, the [Luciano] Berio [1925–2003] *Sinfonia*—some passages I heard, you know. Andriessen, also, was a discovery only a year ago. [Editor's note: likely referring to Louis Andriessen, b. 1939.]

FL: Yeah.

DA: Some incredible moments of [Carl] Ruggles. I mean, those are parts of, you know—some incredible moments of [Johannes Sebastian] Bach [1685–1750]. Like I don't, you know I can't deny that. Or the Mozart *Requiem* [K. 626].

FL: Yeah. Yeah.

DA: They move you like crazy and as completely opposite and different as musical fish, you know, are.

FL: Yeah.

DA: Completely different!

FL: Yeah.

DA: But I have to confess it.

FL: So—[laughs]

DA: I mean it's the thing that you see, for instance, that's why I—with the time I respect more and more Ives, because Ives went to the whole spectrum of anything. You throw a cat in—on the piano. Anything! Anything. Dissonant on dissonant, consonant on consonant, you know, chord on a chord, cluster or not. I mean anything. And you see beauty in every single little thing that he wrote.

FL: Yeah.

DA: And it's as opposite. I mean, you go to *114 Songs* [by Charles Ives] and you see the entire world there.

FL: Yeah.

DA: It's—well, if the text is eclectic, you know, I admire the guy for that, and I only... I have to confess that the last act of *Bohème*, I started crying for the n^{th} time she is going to die.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And I cannot help it.

FL: Yeah.

DA: And—and when this phenomenal second movement of the Roussel *Third* [Symphony No. 3 in G minor, Op. 42 (1929/30), commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra], so incredible dissonant and the tension going and, I mean all these intervals that any—I, you—I feel a similar—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: Or the beautiful fading of the last part of the Fourth Symphony—Ives' Fourth Symphony—

FL: Right.

DA: —and this dissolving in tonality is something that make your life different. But, believe me, *Bohème*, also.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: It's strange, but it's the truth.

FL: Yeah. I see that you've conducted [Richard] Strauss' [1864–1949] *Salome* [Op. 54] and *Der Rosenkavalier* [Op. 59]. Do you have much interest in German opera? I see you haven't done any [Richard] Wagner [1813–1883].

DA: No. No, no. The *Salome*, I did many rehearsals as, you know, prepare everything—singers and the orchestra and everything—so I had... I know the piece very well. I have to confess, being forty-five, that I still have to study Wagner. I conducted one piece by Wagner, the *Siegfried Idyll* [symphonic poem for chamber orchestra].

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And, although I know very well *Tristan [und Isolde]*, opera by Wagner], for instance, to give an example, much of the German repertory is still foreign to me.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: I...in the past was because of my—one of the reasons, lack of knowledge of the language. Now that I speak the language very well, I could do it, but I don't...I'm not...I don't know how to explain it. It doesn't...I don't feel any, any special urge to acquire that knowledge.

FL: Yeah.

DA: And I...it's something that is, for instance, there are two or three points that I consider I have to develop in the next years before I die. One is going back to the French language, because I used to speak very well and now it's my weakest language. And one is Wagner and German Romantic and post-Romantic music, which is something aside from [Johannes] Brahms [1833–1897], [Robert] Schumann [1810–1856], you know, [Anton] Bruckner [1824–1896], that I...I'm much more familiar. I conducted three symphonies, you know. I have some ideas.

FL: Right.

DA: But, with the opera world, German opera world, believe me it's—I love *Freischütz* [*Der Freischütz*, by Carl Maria von Weber, 1786–1826], for instance.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: But it is difficult for me to relate to the music, instead, you know, with Verdi, any piece, even the pieces that I don't know very well, but I relate to them in a second.

FL: Mm. Staying on the subject of opera, but moving in a different direction: There's quite a history of opera in Argentina that goes back to the eighteenth century. It seems like, although it's dominated largely by Italian opera, there is a native Argentine tradition, as well. There's some composers' names that I've dug up here: Francisco Hargreaves, 1849-1900; Zenon Rolon, 1856-1902; there's Arturo Berutti [1858-1938], Juan José Castro [1895–1968]. Are any of these composers' works—are they...is there any interest in those in Argentina? Do they get performances very often?

DA: No. Berutti, definitely not. He was a...he was also the composer of the [Argentine] National Anthem.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: Berutti. Beyond that, no one. Castro was a big name, and still the funny thing that I'm somewhat related to the family. One of my important piano teachers was married to Castro's son.

FL: I see. Yeah. He died in 1968, it says here.

DA: Yeah, yeah. This is Juan José Castro. She was married to Roberto Castro [no dates found], who is still alive, I think, and she is already—I saw her—she is seventy but looks incredibly well. Castro, Juan José Castro, see the problem is—one of the difficulties to define those interests in that society is that Argentina is such a mixture of cats, dogs and everything that you can—generally speaking, people don't care as much as Americans about their American music to give an example. It's always looking at and for Europe.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: So, most of the repertoire is essentially Italian with some Wagner, sometimes they did *Wozzeck* [opera by Alban Berg], a couple of times. I mean, you have to remember that the big building of the culture in opera there was due to [Arturo] Toscanini [1867–1957] traveling always, because everyone loved that opera house, Teatro Colón opera house is incredible, is—well, they are on strike and they’re closed now. They go over and decided to close only a week ago.

FL: Oh, my.

DA: Just to stop the—to stop the union’s definitions of labor. I mean, there was—the big things that the unions are defending that I should say are very fair, and terrible laws, defended by the government, so I, you know, that’s a given. The legislation is pre-historic. But, at the same time, there was, you know, one after the other—disaster after the other. They were canceling concerts and opera performances fifteen minutes before the—

FL: [sighs]

DA: —I mean it’s—even that was imported from Italy, I mean the big—but then, you know, as I said, it was Toscanini, Kleiber—Carlos, sorry, Erich Kleiber [1890–1956] was there many years, I mean, after he left the Nazis, I mean Germany, because he was against the Nazis. And where did he go? He went to the Teatro Colón and he stayed as music director for many years. In fact, Carlos Kleiber [1930–2004] started studying then because he was with his father [Erich Kleiber]. And there, started there. So, there was a big tradition based on the incredible skills of some people who went there to conduct for longer periods. I mean, Toscanini, when he went there, he would take a ship, fifteen days traveling, and he wouldn’t stay for two days or three, like nowadays conductors. No. He would stay for months, so that way, with all the immigrants, they built quite an impressive orchestra and quite a good, you know, scaled to Europe, school of singers. Then all singers came to the Teatro Colón and it was a big tradition but, believe me, not about creation, because music as a classical art wasn’t taken care of until the appearance of [Alberto] Ginastera [1916–1983], who, in fact, was the person that founded the conservatory where I studied [Gilardo Gilardi Conservatory of Music], for instance.

FL: Right.

DA: To give you an example.

FL: In La Plata. Right, yeah.

DA: Yeah. But creation of new operas—the guy himself, *Bomarzo* [Op. 32 (1964), by Ginastera], as I was mentioning to you, was cancelled some couple of days before the performance because the government didn’t want to deal with those sexually charged scenes and the tone of language. Oh, my God. Terrible scene.

FL: They even had some problems in the premiere in New York City. I mean—.

DA: Here.

FL: I read some of the reviews.

DA: Yeah. Here, too. Unbelievable, because that was in the sixties, only '68, it wasn't anything like 19—I mean, 1870. No, no, no. That was nineteen in the sixties!

FL: Right.

DA: It was almost parallel, imagine that, funny enough, it was, if not the same year, it was almost close to the per—the first performance of Berio's *Sinfonia*. Imagine that. I mean, how come? I don't really get it.

FL: So. Ginastera also wrote *Don Rodrigo* [Op. 31 (1964)], which is an atonal, twelve-tone work, apparently. I haven't had a chance to look at the score. And then there's another opera of his, *Beatriz Cenci* [Op. 38 (1971)]?

DA: *Cenci*, yeah, yeah. It's not—

FL: Are these operas done very often now?

DA: They did *Bomarzo* two years ago. *Cenci*, I don't know. I mean, I'm always talking about the first theater in the country. I'm the music director now of the second one.

FL: Okay. And the first one, the name of that one again?

DA: Teatro Colón.

FL: Yeah.

DA: The big, you know, name and for many years.

FL: Right.

DA: Those guys—now there is one of the theaters, one is called Avenida. I just learned in the last three or four years they have a, you know, like a private management and they do some interesting, you know—but it's a small theater. Remember, Teatro Colón is bigger than the Metropolitan [Opera, New York] as a hall.

FL: Wow.

DA: But much bigger. So, singers always fear going there because you have—you know, in order to have a voice to really, really hold a hall, you know? It's hard as hell. I mean, [Luciano] Pavarotti [1935–2007] was booed there.

FL: [laughs]

DA: I mean, and people have no patience. I mean, in the past, I mean a generation is probably now sixty-something and I'm not sure about the opera culture there, but I used to—I saw it, I mean, the, you know, critique or public were very stern. So, they wouldn't buy anything, you know. Big voices came. But Plácido Domingo [b. 1941] still loves it...the place [Teatro Colón]. But he says it's the most difficult house that I know.

[END OF CD1 48:05]

3. Classical music in Argentina (48:05–CD2 00:00)

FL: So, moving on. You said that while growing up you didn't learn much about Argentine and Latin American, you know, classical music. I mean, we were talking about opera, but also just instrumental music, and you mentioned that the piano pieces of Ginastera that you played didn't particularly interest you. When did you start to learn about the extent of the repertoire and discover other Latin American composers that you like, like [Silvestre] Revueltas [1899–1940]?

DA: Oh, well, for instance, that's a good one. Revueltas I heard only in radio broadcast and I was—I felt—I felt like flying for the next hour, but not—that was approximately when I was nineteen or twenty, no scores—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —at all. I did tell you that since I wasn't able to buy any scores and it was unthinkable buying because there was no money and—

FL: Right.

DA: —I used to make copies and then I bound the copies as if they were books.

FL: That's right, yes.

DA: I still have them. So, for instance, [Heitor] Villa-Lobos [1887–1959] we knew because guitar players played him.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: He is, you know, a known presence and everything. I sight-read some music that we had in the library but not much of it. I mean, the symphonies were not known. By the way, I heard...three days ago, I heard a performance of a phenomenal, crazy symphony, very Ivesian—the Fourth Symphony—by a—

FL: Hah.

DA: —Frankfurt orchestra. Jesus Christ, it was unbelievable. And it was on the radio. You know, the guy has a lot of weird things. I mean, he composed more than one thousand pieces, you know, so even, you know, the qualities, you know, may be uneven, whatever, but sometimes he keeps you in a big [unclear] in your head. So most of the repertoire I did not know, and I learned through [Girardo] Gandini, by listening to his playing, when he was bringing some weird music that we never heard of. It was pretty much shut off, the country then, and also, you know, the possibilities were very reduced if you didn't live in Buenos Aires, didn't have access to Teatro Colón, didn't, I mean—essentially live in a village doesn't give you any idea of what people are doing. I can give an example. I learned first the names and then the music.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: I don't know if I told you that I learned a lot about music by [Joséph] Machlis [*Introduction to Contemporary Music*].

FL: Right. You mentioned that book, yeah. Yeah.

DA: So, I learned their lives but then I was trying to look—scratch everywhere, you know, I wanted to hear the music.

FL: Yeah.

DA: So, that's that.

FL: Some of the more—some of these other Argentine composers, there's Roberto Garcia Morillo [1911–2003]—

DA: Ah, Morillo.

FL: Roberto Camaño [1923–1993] —

DA: Camaño.

FL: And then there's more, [Mario] Davidovsky [b. 1934] and Alcides Lanza [b. 1929].

DA: Lanza, yeah.

FL: And Antonio—I'm not sure how to pronounce—

DA: Tauriello, yeah. Antonio Tauriello [1931–2011] was a great pianist and conductor, who was a very good friend of [Girardo] Gandini. I saw him a couple of times and he used to—the funny thing is that he—he lives, but I think that he quit composition. I'm not completely sure, but he doesn't have any opus lately in the last twenty years. Very interesting figure and he was pretty much advanced in many aspects. [Alcides] Lanza was another guy, who—an interesting guy.

FL: I've heard some of his electronic music, which is very interesting.

DA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

FL: Yeah.

DA: It's very interesting if you consider that this was kind of like in the historic, you know we are talking about the seventies. It's really old stuff now. [Roberto] Garcia Morillo [1911–2003] is a part of that folkloristic kind of claue. I don't—I don't—I—see the problem is, when you are young in those conservatories and you have to play an Argentinean piece, it was kind of like imposed on everyone.

FL: I see.

DA: And it was a good idea, it was [Alberto] Ginastera's idea, so everyone—you know, for instance, I give you an example: six or seven year you have a such and such and such and such and such Beethoven sonata. You have to pick one to play in the last—your recital. Such and such and such and such for *Well-Tempered Clavier* [BWV 846–893], you know, Bach. This Brahms, this Brahms, this Chopin, you know, categories—like four or five. The last one was Argentinean composer. Morillo was one of those.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: Who else you mentioned? Camaño.

FL: Yeah.

DA: Well, Camaño was much more advanced, but we didn't get that. We got Morillo, we got Lasala [possibly Angel Lasala, 1914–2000], we got some of the first [Alberto] Ginastera, we got—even [Ástor] Piazzolla was no—

FL: Wow.

DA: —and no...forget it. I mean, Piazzolla—we're not talking about any kind of avant-garde guy, you know?

FL: Yeah.

DA: So, my relationship with those guys was minimal as opposed to the music that I was by the program obliged to do, and the music that interested me—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —in my own discoveries as a young composer and avid reader didn't—I cannot relate to them. Honestly.

FL: Mm-hm. Did you play any of [Girardo] Gandini's music at the time?

DA: Yeah. Some of it. It was too hard. He's still a phenomenal pianist. I saw him compose in a—a piece and then I performed here years ago, *E sarà*, here at MIT.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: I saw him composing, literally, the piece in its first version of piano.

FL: Wow.

DA: It was a composition of some older [Girolamo] Frescobaldi [1583–1643] and some—

FL: I was going to ask you about this—that piece. So, you—it says you conducted the premiere of that. Is that right?

DA: Here in America.

FL: Yeah.

DA: The American premiere.

FL: Where was that?

DA: Here at MIT.

FL: I—I—that was a concert that I missed.

DA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

FL: Oh.

DA: I did in that concert, I did four or five interesting contemporary pieces. It was...I don't remember when was it, but I have to look into the records. And the—it was like, probably, when I came back from Minnesota; I don't remember now. But, it was an interesting piece. It's part of the seventies, you know, seventies in terms of the composition of all this stuff. But in his original way in which, you know, a highly dissonant use of older structures, and it

is quite an accomplishment. The piano version was fantastic, the first version. Then he did the orchestration.

FL: I see. I'll have to make sure that the library gets a copy of that concert. I don't think we have a CD of that concert.

DA: We cannot talk to Clarice [Snyder, MIT concert director] to see if it's in their records?

FL: Yeah. I listened the other day to his *Fantasie-Impromptu* [for Piano and Orchestra (1956) by Gandini].

DA: Ah! Yeah.

FL: That's an amazing piece. That's a wild—

DA: Where? Where did you hear that?

FL: On our LP record that we have here.

DA: You do?

FL: The Louisville Orchestra recorded that.

DA: You do have it?

FL: Yeah. It's a wild, wild piece.

DA: It's a great piece.

FL: Wow.

DA: I didn't know that you have that.

FL: Yeah, yeah.

DA: I would like to listen to it. Well, the *Fantasie-Impromptu* was composed while he was my teacher, it was in the seventies, seventy—I don't remember. He was telling me about that. That's an interesting piece and he—he got his way here in America, it was the first piece that they—they performed here.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: It was Lawrence Leighton Smith [b. 1936; conductor and pianist]?

FL: Yes, right. Right.

DA: Larry. Funny, now—then I met Larry.

FL: Yeah, at Yale.

DA: At Yale, weird, yeah. World is small.

FL: Wow. When you were studying with Gandini, did you get a sense about his view of twelve-tone and serial music, and were you feeling any kind of pressure from him to kind of write in that way, even though—at least this *Fantasie-Impromptu* certainly is not a twelve-tone piece.

DA: No, it's not. It's not. It's a post-twelve-tone.

FL: Yeah.

DA: It's a post-twelve-tone. No, no, no. He wasn't—no, no, no, I have to admit, he wasn't one of those scholastic guys who would say, "You don't compose that way and you are not in my—." No, no, no.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: He was much freer than that. No, no, no, it was my inner circling, going around the same subject. I mean, it's not—he, at least in my view, was a very interesting force in my life that wasn't exactly composing twelve-tone music. I mean, he did some, but then he got I think a lot freer. I mean, out of that necessary, you know, calculation of numbers.

FL: Right.

DA: And it was necessary for him, too, because he—the guy for—to give you an example, was a great pianist, phenomenal improviser, incredible sight-reader, and I'm sure that he needed that freedom, because he is a—well, lately in the last years, I, you know, didn't appreciate, you know, some of the compo—the compositions, but he still is probably one of the biggest figures there.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And, yeah. Yeah. As a musician general, his piano conducts sometimes.

FL: You mentioned earlier and I had on here to talk more—a little bit more about Osvaldo Golijav. You mentioned, I mean you met him as a—you were fellow students at the La Plata conservatory, and you've described him to me as somebody you see has great potential as a composer. How would you assess the music that he has composed to date? I know that's a huge subject, but you've—over the years you've mentioned some things about him. If you don't care to talk about it, we can—but be interesting to get your thoughts.

DA: No. I mean, I can say some about it. Osvaldo was a person who has been a—very important at certain points of my life, very important help and very important figure, even though I'm a year older than him. And at—we crossed paths in many...at some instances in our lives. Last one, when I came back to the States, in 1998. The...our mutual knowledge, even though in the last years we barely talk, I mean, I talk to him a year ago somehow. Our mutual understanding, our mutual knowledge maybe prevails, maybe I'm—hmm, I'm not sure if I will, if I can be objective on things that he does or he did. Funny enough, I was organizing my office and I have some scores that he gave me, even before this course went famous, and I remember the process of—because I had to stay in his apartment—because of the creation of this passion.

FL: Yeah.

DA: Because I—when I went to his apartment, I mean he...oh, he has kind of like a studio where he composes here in Brookline [Mass.]. His house is a little bit farther in Newton [Mass.]. I remember reading and seeing and discussing with him some ideas. The—what I can say is the direction that he's taken is something that for me was unexpected, and I discussed that in length with, you know, with John Harbison [b. 1938; MIT Institute Professor of Music], for instance. It's not the path that—to put it [unclear], it pleases me or something that I don't have a philosophical empathy with, or something that I, you know, I have to say that some of

the ideas behind it, I saw them in written text and that I—things that I discussed with him—I tend to agree. It's the realization that doesn't to me make it. And I feel...I feel a kind of embarrassed that I'm saying this and, because it was...it has been very difficult for me to relate to a person whom I admire and respect, and I really have to be thankful for advices and ideas and also in—at some moments in which I needed help from, you know, many points of view.

I stayed in his place when I came to this country the first time. He threatened me. He said that, "If you are not coming, I'm going to go there and take you from Argentina and bring you here, kicking your ass." You know, he said.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: I said, "I wouldn't have any money to go there." And he said, "Well, you have money for the flight?" "Yeah." "Well, then, okay you stay at my place, you eat my food. I don't care, but you come here." So, you know, it's very hard for me to be hard on his creations since I respected him always so much as a person, and I—there are some pieces that I really love and some pieces I did as European premieres. There is one called *Yiddish Ruakh* [1990, by O. Golijov] from a former, completely different side you wouldn't even recognize now or, you know, some other pieces I was going to make an arrangement for. *Yiddishbbuk* [Inscriptions for String Quartet, 1992, by O. Golijov] it is called. It is a quartet.

FL: A string quartet?

DA: Um. But it's before the *Dreams of Isaac*.

FL: *Isaac the Blind*. [*Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*, (1997) by O. Golijov]

DA: It is before that, it was two or three years before that, and I was in some of the rehearsals and thought it was many fantastic things. He didn't...he doesn't like it anymore. He told me that he...well, if I want to do an arrangement, you know, it's okay and he does—but, you know, it's old for me now. I don't—and for—

FL: You were going to do an arrangement for orchestra?

DA: Orchestra, chamber orchestra.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I would like to do it, you know, but I don't have much time now, and I prefer to devote time to my own compositions.

FL: Yeah.

DA: This subject has a lot of *dis* theme, the *dis* issue. I could talk about it for hours and hours and hours because it involves my personal beliefs on what the direction of music could be—should be—would be, maybe, in the future with his particular approach that I know very well because of our conversations and because of the same origins, you know. And the kind of like...to some extent, he from the Jewish community, me from the Italian community. You know, we crossed paths even there and then and then, later, here, you know? But I...I hesitate to keep talking about it because—[thought unfinished]. At least I have to say very positive thing that his latest developments created in me one million questions, essentially

because I know the philosophy behind. And I repeat that. I am trying to be, if one can be objective, if one can be in music objective, I have to admit that the direction he has taken is...is certain direction that in my view doesn't accomplish his spoken goals.

FL: Mm-hm. And you mentioned that you—that some of those underlying ideas you kind of share in common. What are some of those ideas and—?

DA: I'm not sure. I mean, I'm sure about a couple of things, but I don't know if the result of the creation is such that, you know...

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: It's difficult for me to organize a mental process by which I can...I can do, you know, what you do, x-y function. This is a statement. This is a result.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: I believe in the statement, but I don't see the relation with the result. For instance, he was always concerned with this detachment from, you know, the music from people. People talking about, you know, big crowds or something.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: He was always concerned with popular materials being re-used or re-worked. But, see, I do agree with that but in the more Ivesian or Bartókian way. That life that some of these guys gave to evidently popular things—

FL: Right.

DA: —was such an important element in their creations and such an important—I mean, the realizations were such incredible things! And it—come on, I mean, Stravinsky.

FL: Yeah.

DA: We are talking about, you know, big figures. You know, the way Osvaldo [Golijov] defines his—defined, I'm going to use the past, his process of, you know—searching for materials or using them, is one thing that you could agree if you see...if you see that along the lines of these people that I'm mentioning to you.

FL: Right.

DA: [Gustav] Mahler did it.

FL: Right.

DA: You know, and what are the results? Well, you know, in—I have those ideas in common. I have also ideas that, you know, for instance, this is my personal feeling, my own convictions on the twelve-tone row and its consequences destroyed my musical composition. Thus, I have a very—I am reluctant to accept the importance of such a system from the actual point of view. I mean, a current point of view and, obviously, I historically acknowledge, you know, this guy's genius in defining things, in constructing system—systems—but I'm not willing to say, as in the sixties or seventies, that this is the solution of the world.

FL: Yeah.

DA: No. I followed that creed like in a very pious believer of the church and that killed me.

FL: Mm-hm, right, yeah.

DA: Therefore, I share that with Osvaldo, and I share his worries. And I share—and I saw how his—because the funny thing is, until I composed, Osvaldo and I had similar...similar voices and directions—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —toward some goals. Very similar, too similar, perhaps. That’s why it’s gets in the point that was...it gets complicated for me to discuss about it.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: Because I don’t want to reflect on the past ghost of me or maybe a present double...split personality.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: It was as funny as people would see us as similar look in La Plata or here in.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: So it is funny to relate to the subject, Osvaldo being such a very well known composer nowadays, declared as such an important figure, and in—[thought unfinished]. Once, as I got to say to you also openly, I am very happy for him, but my schizophrenic personality [laughs] will never deny the fact that the realization of his—

FL: Yeah.

DA: —strategies—

FL: Right.

DA: —is not what I would hope for. Or, to put it more elegantly, is not something that I can relate to.

FL: Mm-hm. And you’ve been real fair. I know you said it’s hard to talk about it, to be objective—

DA: It’s very hard for me.

FL: —and I think you’ve been real good with that. I want to pick up later on some stuff you were talking about related to this about using vernacular music in art music, and I want to pick up that when we get talking more about Charles Ives.

DA: Mm.

4. Acceptance to Yale University (1:12:13–CD2 24:07)

FL: Want to talk a bit about your education at Yale University [New Haven, Conn.]. You received a Master of Musical Arts degree from Yale University in 1990. Was that in

orchestral conducting as well? Okay. And, then, you received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1997.

DA: Mm.

FL: I want to ask you about the teacher that you studied with, if I can pronounce his name correctly, Eleazar de Carvalho [1912–1996].

DA: Yeah, Carvalho, yeah.

FL: He was a Brazilian conductor and composer who died in 1996. I read here that he had been the conductor of the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and this orchestra in São Paulo called *Orquestra Sinfônica Estadual* [*Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo*]?

DA: *Estadual*.

FL: Yeah. Did you know him prior to coming to Yale?

DA: Never.

FL: But was he one of the reasons that you—?

DA: No.

FL: No. That's very interesting, so it was a real—what brought you to Yale?

DA: It was—it's a very funny story, but to put it into simple words, I was playing in this orchestra, this chamber orchestra in Argentina—

FL: And the name of that orchestra was—?

DA: —harpsichord. I was playing harpsichord in the Orquestra de Cámara, the chamber orchestra of La Plata.

FL: Okay.

DA: It was then, if not the best orchestra, the second orchestra in the country, the other one being the Camerata Bariloche [est. 1967], it's a known chamber orchestra, strings orchestra. I was playing harpsichord.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: The first cello, the guy who played continuo with me—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —was a Brazilian guy. The guy came from Brazil and he wanted to immigrate to Argentina, and then he took the position—he won the position and, you know, and he played there and at some point people knew—my friends in the orchestra being one of the youngest with—no, I was the youngest—they knew that I wanted to be a conductor, and they knew that I was conducting choirs, and they knew that I was playing piano with everyone they—you know my—all my—my goal would be. So, the guy told me once if I wanted to apply to Yale. And I said, you know, “Yale. I heard about Yale.” Well, he studied at Yale, he said to me. I said, “I think it's a big university.” “Well, you know, but I can write your recommendation.” I

said, “Well, you know”—he offered that, he volunteered for that. I was surprised. It was after a concert that I played a big *Brandenburg* [*Brandenburg Concertos*, BWV 1046–1051, by Johannes Sebastian Bach] or something, you know. So, he offered—he volunteered for it. I said, “Well, okay.” I mean, I said, “Well, I don’t know,” you know, thought about it for months. And, then, finally I got the information and I saw that they needed recommenders and they said that, you know, [unclear] if they are from Yale so I asked him. I said, “Look, I want to send my papers.” I was twenty-five already. “Would you do it?” “Yeah, yeah, of course I will do it.” And he sent a separate envelope, I never saw the recommendation. But he hadn’t seen me conducting.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: I said to him, “I mean you saw—” “Ah, look, you’re a musician, you can...you know...I don’t need to see you conduct. I mean, you play all these instruments and you—I do music with you. You play a solo. I’m sure you’re going to be a great conductor.”

FL: [laughs]

DA: It was funny. Then they sent the thing and then I was accepted for the audition, so I went to the audition and the guy who was actually teaching there was Otto-Werner Mueller [b. 1926], the guy that is in Curtis [Institute of Music, Philadelphia] now.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: But he was leaving Yale when I arrived there—was my first examination. I came straight from Philadelphia from Osvaldo [Golijov]’s house, when Osvaldo was studying with George Crumb [b. 1929]; we were, you know in our twenties then. You know, it’s twenty years ago. So Osvaldo was a student at Phil, and I came from Argentina, I stayed at his place, took the train, came to Yale and there was no Carvalho. No. There was no Otto-Werner Mueller. There was a young guy taking the examinations, and the school didn’t know what they were going to do next, as it happens in many aspects in many places in America. [laughs] So they didn’t know what to do; they didn’t know who was going to be the teacher. I did exam anyway, because for me it was getting out of that nightmare in Argentina, and I wanted to study conducting in a formalized way. My former teacher, Carlos Kleiber’s teacher, had died a year before [Carvalho]. I was in the same theater I am now, but now I am the music director. Then, I was a poor pianist, bound by some Mafias out of one or two jobs because of—I wasn’t politically correct and because of my skills. You know, there was, you know, the usual shit in all opera theaters. And I wanted to take the opportunity, so I went to do the exam. There were three hundred people, you know, we...they culled to thirty when I was there, and I won. My English...my English was terrible. This young guy told me he was convinced that he was going to be the teacher. He was assistant to Otto-Werner Mueller, and he said to me that I was the best, but I had to improve my English. I didn’t have any clue. Honestly, I thought, okay, I go to the dictation, they throw a cat on the piano and I will write every note. I don’t care. They will have to accept me because I have all the years and because I conduct.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: And I studied like crazy these pieces, and I conducted them and they took me for some reason, but I had no experience. I had to go next time passages of *The Rite of Spring* [ballet by Igor Stravinsky]. I never in my life conducted *Rite of Spring*. I was in front of an orchestra like two times before I came here, because I was a violin player and, you know, didn't have any clue. I mean, I knew how to read, obviously, because I was a choir conductor, and I heard everything because I have perfect pitch. But formal—any training, nothing! Only my teacher's private lessons before he died. So I was accepted and I didn't know who was Carvalho. No one knew who was Carvalho. Months into coming back—I left this country in February, I had to come back in September—by July or August, Carvalho was contacted. He went to Yale. I arrived and I met the guy and I was this weird student, who he didn't accept. And this was this weird guy, whom I didn't know. Besides, after being accepted at Yale, just in case, I thought. I foresaw this is going to be something, I don't know who the teacher is. I said, "Let me go to Curtis [Institute of Music, Philadelphia, PA; founded 1924]." I applied to Curtis.

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: I was accepted. In Curtis was Otto-Werner Mueller, the same teacher I had seen a week earlier at Yale, who didn't want to take the examination because he was leaving himself the university. So he was in Curtis. So I went to Curtis, and what was the big thing about Curtis? Well, everyone talked about this guy highly, very highly, Otto-Werner Mueller. Everyone said that he was a great teacher. Second, Curtis had a free ride. I didn't need any money if I was accepted; I didn't have to pay tuition, you know? It was for free. Third, I was in the age limit. You know, older than twenty-six, you can't even apply. Fourth—

FL: [sighs]

DA: —my father, the truck driver and me, coming from a third world country—I didn't have any fucking penny!

FL: Yeah.

DA: So I wanted to be accepted at Curtis, and I did the examination and I was the best in the written; I was the best in the oral. I went to the semi-finals, and we were kind of like five or six, and the guy took for the finals, two or three. He didn't take me. I was very upset because I saw the others and I thought, "I am bad, but these guys are not better than me." And I was really upset and I was—when I finished the semi-finals, I was walking around and I talked to Osvaldo [Golijov], who was waiting for me in Philadelphia.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: You know, he said, "Go and talk to him!" And I said, "What the fuck. I mean, I don't want to talk to this idiot. I mean, you know, believe me, I'm bad. You know that I am very [unclear] but these guys are not, they don't exist," I said. You know? "You have to go talk to him!" I said, "I don't feel it." "You should." "Well, you know, I'm going to be around, if the guy wants to talk to me." Otto-Werner Mueller, himself, saw me talking on the phone and called me. "Could you please come here," he said. See? Here's this German guy, he says, "You were the best." And I was looking at him like I wanted to kill him. I say, "What?" "You were the best." "Then why"—I didn't have, you know, not even the simplest

skills in English to articulate a smart or intelligent answer to such a complete, out of place comment—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —in...at that moment, and the guy didn't even fucking know that I was coming from a poor country, the poor family, and that was my chance.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And I said, "Why"—I didn't finish the sent—I didn't want to even know how to present the question: why didn't you choose me? I mean, that was simple, if I was the best. And he read that in my eyes, and with his very thick German accent he said, "I learned that you are accepted in Yale. In Yale, you will have my very good student as a teacher." The guy that took the examination. "Maybe after a year, you can come here or at Yale. In the meantime, you have to prepare yourself with your English, but you were the best." I was so—you have no idea. One of those big upsets, like when I was fifteen and that exam—

FL: Yeah.

DA: —couldn't believe, I mean, the guy was saying that I was going to have this youngster teaching me. Actually, then I learned that the guy—the guy that was going to teach me—is a good conductor and he had made an okay career, had conducted last year here in Boston in the New England Conservatory.

FL: What was his name?

DA: Alasdair Neale [no dates found].

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: He was assistant to the San Francisco Symphony for many years. He's my age.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: But then thinking, when I was younger, you know, thinking that I was twenty-five or twenty-six, and someone twenty-six years old is going to teach me at Yale? I thought that people were crazy. Then I was reading about Yale, you know, trying to learn English and I said, "Jesus, Yale University! This is big." When I arrived to, you know, the place, and I saw all these buildings, saw all the history, I said, "I will never make it. I cannot make it here. Come on. People have to be one million times better than me." Well, I did make it, but then, Carvalho was called to Brazil and then I learned that Carvalho was this big Koussevitzky [Boston Symphony Orchestra music director, 1924-1949] student, this [Leonard] Bernstein Fellow [Tanglewood Fellowship]—

FL: Right.

DA: —this Julliard [The Julliard School, New York, NY; est. 1905] teacher—

FL: Right.

DA: —this Boston, Chicago Symphony conductor—you have time?

FL: No. I'm just making sure that the tape recorder is still going, so, yeah.

DA: Yeah. And then I learned that this guy, this Brazilian guy was going to be my teacher. I lost a bet in Curtis because I didn't went to the final. The guy said to me that I was such and such and such. I was in great upset, so okay, you know. I applied to three schools. Northwestern University in Chicago; I wasn't accepted there because of—they had only doctorate. I didn't have the level to go to a doctorate, so. Accepted in two, passed in one, came to Yale. How? No clue. I didn't have any money. I applied to scholarships and I—a week before I left Argentina I had one scholarship to cover the half part of my tuition.

FL: [sighs]

DA: So, essentially I went there and didn't know how to eat—no, how I was going to eat, how I was going to pay for anything and just came, you know, with two packages and tried to survive.

5. Eleazar de Carvalho, studies at Yale, and other musical influences (1:25:36–CD2 37:49)

FL: Wow. Whoa. That's—that's quite a story. So, with Carvalho—how do you pronounce his name?

DA: Carvalho.

FL: Carvalho.

DA: The “lh” it translates into “lio” in Portuguese.

FL: Oh, okay. Okay. He was—you've described him as a mentor to you, not just as a teacher.

DA: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

FL: I know it's a big subject and in the next interview when I get—I want to talk to you more about conducting, but can you tell me some of the important things you learned from him?

DA: Many. Way too many. I—firstly I have to admit it, and I said that even to him, I wasn't sure about his teaching. I didn't understand his style. Way into the first two or three months, I even tried to communicate with this Otto-Werner Mueller in Julliard because I wasn't sure I was going to continue. I have to admit it. I didn't—because I was kind of—I didn't understand my...the relationship. But then it grew and grew into something that he then—you know, his own family found out that I was his musical son in the last years. It was a—and he always presented me—I mean, that's why when he died, when he was like really terminally ill, they called me to replace him in Brazil. Traditions, first and foremost. The link, you know, [Serge] Koussevitsky [1874–1951], [Arthur] Nikisch [1855–1922], [Pyotr Illyich]Tchaikovsky [1840–1893] even, you know?

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: The link to [Gustav] Mahler, the link to—all things that he explained about his studies at Tanglewood [Lennox, Mass.].

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: A certain very respectful, constant sacrifice—you know, work for learning. Some phenomenal things that I'm still trying to understand and only in the last few years I could apply myself. I mean, the way he did conduct was old-fashioned, and the old-fashioned meaning that nowadays you get so many performances in which time is a [snaps fingers] repetition of the clock, you know, or the metronome guided. And he knew how to create, to stretch time, to stretch music, to stretch tempi to underline things, to—not to make a judicious, in the worst meaning of the word judicious—not the positive part—the negative one, you know?

FL: Right.

DA: The—the ludicrous emptiness. [laughs]

FL: [laughs]

DA: To put it in a funny English. Not to do that. I mean, that's...that's...mainly, he's, you know, he's the main teaching to me from the artistic point of view. Then, the bond was big, I mean, at certain point already in my second year he would sit with me for hours alone discussing a score—hours. Obviously, I insisted like crazy, when I was convinced that the guy was what he actually was and that I would understand, I always insisted for more lessons, for more hours, for more—and while the guy was there in New Haven [Conn.], he didn't care to spend hours and hours and hours and hours talking about pieces and talking about this particular detail, this particular thing, this particular—and it was for me revelatory.

FL: So some of those details you were talking about, were they strictly—I mean, were they more issues with the score? Did it have to do with actual performance issues? Probably both, but tell me about some of the kinds of details you would get into with him.

DA: I can give you an example. Well, I can give you many. This is really—for instance this week. This week my assistant at MIT is conducting the rehearsal because he is conducting the concert in December [2005].

FL: Oh, he is?

DA: Alexey [Shabalin, assistant conductor and strings coach of the MITSO].

FL: Yeah.

DA: Alexey chose Tchaikovsky's *Fourth* [Symphony no. 4].

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: Tchaikovsky's a composer that I didn't conduct much, honestly, nor [do] I feel related to many things. I mean, there's one piece that I loved when I was a child. One piece—*Romeo and Juliet*. The symphonies, practically, I learned with Carvalho, and I conducted them for him there at Yale. And this is one of—one piece of information like, you know, my studies of, you know, the Mahler *Fifth* [Symphony no. 5 (1901/2)] or this *Rite of Spring*. And those very different pieces. Tchaikovsky, for instance—we were studying Tchaikovsky and he loved Tchaikovsky, [Eleazar de] Carvalho, and he said, “Look, remember this. I studied this with Koussevitzky, who studied then with Nikisch, who consulted Tchaikovsky himself. That's our link. Now you are receiving this from me.” He always said with this grandeur,

you know, kind of like presumptuousness—“we are”—but I loved it. I mean it—now, after years, I didn’t give the importance of, but I wrote a lot of comments. You know, this is written like that, but, you know, Koussevitzky did *da-da-daa-da*, because Nikisch told him and really, Tchaikovsky approved it. Many things I know with this you don’t hear. I mean, you hear nowadays a performance—I was, as I said, I did a rehearsal—the first part of a rehearsal for Alexey when he wasn’t here, even though I wasn’t conducting, and I was reading to the MIT students the comments that Tchaikovsky himself had written—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —in the manuscript that Nikisch took and Nikisch gave to Koussevitzky, who gave it—gave them to Carvalho, who gave them to me in New Haven. I mean, that small anecdote is part of what real history is—

FL: That’s right.

DA: —in the most sublime.

FL: Right.

DA: Let’s say that Stravinsky now, you know people might not be right in terms of—that the traditions are a bad example or bad ways of, you know, performing. No, no, no! The traditions, maybe there are ideas that you can re-take, rethink and, you know—*Rite of Spring*. He conducted—he showed me the score one hundred and four times. The one hundred and fifth time I played in the orchestra for him in the viola section, I was the sixth viola, struggling with all these rhythms myself with—I’m the same guy who played for him at Yale, my first big hit was playing the solo part of *Petruschka* [ballet by Stravinsky].

FL: Wow.

DA: So, well, the piano I had no problem, but with playing the viola in an American college, you know, professional school, it was hard for me. I had to practice like crazy, but we went, you know, bar by bar. And he said, “No, look, I conducted this and Stravinsky was present at Tanglewood. So, I consulted with him these things. You know, I like this and this and this and that, and I went and I talked to him,” you know. That’s another example.

Mahler, through Erich Kleiber—when Erich Kleiber was not that old, he, in his way to Buenos Aires, he would pass through Rio de Janeiro—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: —where my teacher was a tuba player.

FL: Yes.

DA: The tuba player—he picked that instrument—he said to me, because he wanted to put the instrument aside, play the big pieces.

FL: Now, that’s Gandini, right?

DA: No, no, no, no.

FL: No. I forgot who.

DA: Carvalho.

FL: Yes, right, but the tuba—your teacher, the tuba player?

DA: No.

FL: That's—

DA: My teacher was a tuba player.

FL: That's right, I'm forgetting who—I remember reading one—okay, the same time he was a tuba player, that's right.

DA: So, he would play the music for the tuba in the orchestra, and then he put the tuba and he'd get the score and study how a conductor conducts a piece without a tuba. And he was...he went there and talked to the conductor and said, "Well, how would you do this, how do you?" That way, he got to know Erich Kleiber.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And those things that Kleiber passed to him, he passed to me. I think that that's the most important—one of the two most important things in education. One is to give, you know, this old...give people the history, you know—your own history and someone else's—this kind of knowledge. Essentially to—as he said to me—the Greeks used to say, "I'm not telling you that. You don't have to imitate me. The best thing I can do for you is I have to show you how to find yourself, how to find your own way. That's my function." And one thing that I saw through the years is that Otto-Werner Mueller, as opposed to Carvalho, every time that I see a conductor who studied with him, conducts exactly the same way in the gesture, the same approach. And look, Carvalho taught Zubin Mehta [b. 1936]—

FL: Oh, my.

DA: —Claudio Abbado [b. 1933].

FL: Uh-huh.

DA: Abbado, Zubin Mehta?

FL: Yeah, they're very different.

DA: Nothing to do. I mean, absolutely nothing. He taught some at Tanglewood, [Seiji] Ozawa [b. 1935], when he was young. I mean, he had very different students, many of them are great conductors and they are now old and, you know, we were supposed to be the...the latest...the last generation of his students, you know, before he died. But he always would make emphasis on that, you know. You don't have to do. You don't have to even think. I mean, I'm just...I'm helping you to find yourself.

FL: Yeah.

DA: To find you, inside you. And those two things were very important to me, extremely important.

FL: Did he nurture your interest in contemporary and modern music?

DA: Mm. No. I was already completely convinced. We shared the same interest.

FL: Yeah.

DA: For instance, he said, “Okay, I know your personality now. You do the *Kammersymphonie* op. 9 [by Schoenberg].” That was my first exam. The second exam I chose [Alban] Berg. The third exam I chose a *Passacaglia* op.1, the [Anton] Webern.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: He loved [Charles] Ives. I was his assistant for a performance there. He loved Ives’ Fourth and I did some rehearsals for him, and the—for instance, he did *Jeux Venitiens* [Venetian Games for chamber orchestra (1960/1)], the piece by [Witold] Lutoslawski [1913–1994].

FL: Oh, yes, right.

DA: And I loved it so much I said, “I want to do it. I want to do it in the rehearsal.” So, in that way—it’s not that he nurtured it but we share the same—we were in the same boat, essentially.

FL: Yeah.

DA: In St. Louis, he did—

FL: That’s somewhat rare in the conducting world, so you’re very fortunate.

DA: But he did that in St. Louis in the few years that he was there. He was almost—he had so many battles because people didn’t like that he will perform [Luciano] Berio when Berio was unknown.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: In the sixties he became St. Louis Symphony Orchestra—St. Louis’s conductor and he would perform—the Second Viennese School wasn’t known in St. Louis. Absolutely! He was the first guy.

FL: Wow.

DA: So, you know, in that regard, he did much more for contemporary music than many conductors nowadays, and he already died ten years ago.

FL: Yeah.

DA: And he was resisted. He loved teaching [Richard] Strauss. Given, you know? It’s a given. He loved [Gustav] Mahler. It’s a given. He loved some [Giacomo] Puccini, yeah, but he did in every single concert an American or a new piece, pieces that were not even—I mean, when he saw...when he showed me the programs and— Gee, you would, I mean if you see...you have to...maybe you have to look into that, in St. Louis, when he was a conductor. And he told me, you know, he had many meetings with the board and with the executive secretary, because people were refusing to play that music because it was atonal, because it is not bliss in the ears or whatever. And he said to me, “My function as a conductor is I am an educator, and I have to bring the new music. If not, who is going to happen—people, when I die, who is going to play this music?”

FL: Yeah.

DA: What do they think we should be doing? The [unclear—inversion?]? The piece that he loved the most, he always said that and clearly, the piece that he would conduct until he died was Beethoven's *Fifth* [Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67], as cliché as it sounds. He always said that clearly, and he loved Tchaikovsky, but he said, "Our function is to present new music every single concert." The monuments, yes, I love them, but they were...there were not many guys with that mentality. I mean, I happened to be with the two biggest, say, influences in my formative years and my young professional years. Now, being forty-five and people still think that I'm young as a conductor, was Carvalho with that mentality and then it was [Dennis Russell] Davies [b. 1944].

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: Dennis is the guy that has performed about five thousand new pieces.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I think, or four thousand something. I mean, the guy is crazy, but he's the only decent human being in this profession that does his job, really.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And he's serious and he's—and, you know he's clear, and [claps] I mean, those are guys that maybe are, you know, Carvalho didn't—I mean he conducted, you know, big orchestras, too, but he was never in a big director—music director of one of them. But, in the history, they will prevail.

FL: Yeah, yeah. Otherwise the orchestra is just going to be a dinosaur and it'll die.

DA: That's probably one other aspect, I mean, I also was foreseen that, *phhh*, ten, twenty years ago. That's probably the truth. Also, we have to renovate the orchestra, maybe. Maybe we have to re—new—I mean, we have to do things, changes. We have to. It's our obligation. But that's the example, not the—you know, the people that will play for the end time the same symphony.

FL: Yeah.

DA: And they don't even have to educate kids, but they do have to educate the audiences. Even if you accept—look, I mean, you know. I'm getting, you know, maybe the older I get, I think, you know, I like to do the monument, you know, once per concert, but be one and one, one and one. If you have the orchestra, do a monument and do a completely new piece, you know. Constantly. Try to.

FL: Yeah.

DA: That's what the guy did and, as I said, I was already convinced. I mean I didn't need anyone to nurture that interest but, yes, I have to admit that the two guys that I had a real relationship with—the two guys had that mentality.

FL: Mm-hm. Now at Yale you also were the Associate Conductor of the Yale Contemporary Ensemble and worked with Jacob Druckman [1928–1996].

DA: Jacob, yes.

FL: How was your working relationship with Druckman? Was he a mentor at all?

DA: Great. Yeah, it was great. He was...he saw me from the start. I mean, I...he knew—I mean he asked, because he knew Carvalho and Carvalho knew that I liked, you know, I have my interests—and said, “Well they are looking for someone who can read pieces,” and said, “Any piece, anywhere.” You know.

FL: Mm.

DA: New music. Yes. So I went to the first rehearsals and he saw me conducting and he was impressed and he wrote all these glamorous reviews of my work and was my recommender, you know, in those years. [laughs] It was funny because Jacob—as Jacob was a great musician—great musician. His conducting skills were a little bit limited [laughs], so he would call me sometimes, “Rehearsal on Monday,” you know, ten o’clock or eleven. Call me Friday, 9:00 PM, said, “Dante, I need you to conduct tomorrow. I’m leaving town.” I mean he was so...it was so—it was funny, because sometimes I was talking to some friends and [they] said, “Ah, yeah, he was leaving town because he [laughs] couldn’t conduct that piece.” I said, “Well, I don’t care. I got to learn it. I got to learn.” So many times I prepared difficult pieces for his own concerts and he would come back and do them. It was very nice and I have no regrets about [laughs], I mean, Dantes work, like—sometimes—crazy. I had to really, literally learn pieces during my sleep time.

FL: Right.

DA: But it was such a great school because, even though I always loved that kind of activity, I didn’t have that possibility in Argentina; I never would play new music.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I did some new music in Argentina. I offered myself to compose [unclear], essentially I was the only idiot that would do that, you know.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: No one would do it and I loved it. And then—now I had this or, you know, [in] 1987, I had this organized way of doing it. I said, “Fantastic! New composers, new music.” I mean, I’ll do it, anything, just give me the—and we share many comments on the music that we were doing and—

FL: What were some of the highlights? Do you need to go?

DA: No, I don’t, but I wonder about you.

FL: I’m fine. I just want to make sure that—it’s a two-hour tape, so.

DA: Oh! Wait. Yes. Someone is waiting for me after 1PM, the president of the orchestra.

FL: Oh, okay. So it’s like we need to tie it up.

DA: Sorry.

FL: Okay.

DA: She’s waiting for me.

FL: Okay. So, we'll pick up next time a little more about Jacob Druckman, some other Yale stuff.

DA: Oh, yeah.

FL: And we want to talk about Ives, and there's a whole bunch of issues about contemporary musical esthetics, so that we'll re-schedule another interview and if you—

DA: Right.

FL: All right.

DA: Yale is very interesting. You will see—I will tell you some stories. Yale is very interesting, many things. Great. Thanks.

FL: Thank you so much for your time today.

DA: Sorry for this but I have to leave.

[End of Interview]