

Laura Reynolds Oral History

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives
50 Oak Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Interview conducted August 5, 2015
Tessa Updike, Interviewer

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives Oral History Project

The Conservatory's Oral History Project has the goal of seeking out and collecting memories of historical significance to the Conservatory through recorded interviews with members of the Conservatory's community, which will then be preserved, transcribed, and made available to the public.

Among the narrators will be former administrators, faculty members, trustees, alumni, and family of former Conservatory luminaries. Through this diverse group, we will explore the growth and expansion of the Conservatory, including its departments, organization, finances and curriculum. We will capture personal memories before they are lost, fill in gaps in our understanding of the Conservatory's history, and will uncover how the Conservatory helped to shape San Francisco's musical culture through the past century.

Laura Reynolds Interview

This interview was conducted at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on Wednesday August 5, 2015 by Tessa Updike.

Tessa Updike

Tessa Updike is the archivist for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Tessa holds a B.A. in visual arts and has her Masters in Library and Information Science with a concentration in Archives Management from Simmons College in Boston. Previously she has worked for the Harvard University Botany Libraries and Archives and the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

Use and Permissions

This manuscript is made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Conservatory's Archivist or Head Librarian.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to:

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives
50 Oak Street
San Francisco, CA
94102



Laura Reynolds

Laura Reynolds is an active performer and educator in Northern California. She is principal oboist with the Santa Rosa and California Symphonies and a member of the Marin Symphony, and has appeared as soloist with all three organizations. Ms. Reynolds also performs regularly with a number of other regional orchestras and is lecturer in oboe at Sonoma State University. A chamber music enthusiast, she is a member of the reed trio *Trois Bois*, and was a founding member of *Citywinds*, a San Francisco based woodwind quintet dedicated to performing music by living composers. Ms. Reynolds, a student of William Bennett and Harry Sargous, holds degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (M.M.) and the University of Michigan (B.M.). She first joined the staff of the Conservatory as a student worker in 1989 and now serves as project manager and ensembles coordinator as well as oboe instructor for the Pre-College and Adult Extension Divisions.

August 5, 2015

UPDIKE Laura, I think we'll just start at the beginning. Can you tell us where you grew up?

REYNOLDS Sure. I grew up in New York State, in different parts. I was born in the central state, lived on Long Island for a while, and then moved south of Buffalo for middle school and high school years. My father was a musician, my mother and he were both public school music educators – well, my dad was a music teacher, my mom was general education – but she had a keen interest in music. My dad was the one who started me on the oboe, and then he got me studying with the principal in his high school band right away, because he was a trombonist. He chose the oboe for me because he thought I would be good. I wanted to play the flute and he said, no, there were too many flutists in the world. So it's sort of his fault. First they started me on piano in second grade, and then oboe in fourth grade. And I just always liked it.

UPDIKE Did you enjoy performing?

REYNOLDS Yes, and I performed in all sorts of things. I was on stage in musical theater, and regular plays too. I sang in chorus, and I played in band. I played piano in the jazz band – I was just completely involved in a lot of musical activities all through school. And I did the all-county festivals, and the all-state festivals. Going to all-state and being placed in the orchestra helped make the final decision – I had to be a music major. I'd always sort of thought I wanted to be a music major; I wanted to play in orchestras. I was so sure I wanted to be on Broadway in the pit. Later I realized that was insanity. But I didn't know enough at that point, so that meant I had to go to college and study all the wind instruments – not just oboe, because if you're in the pit, you're doubling all the time. When I sat in that all-state orchestra and realized – I was the fifth out of the five oboists, and numbers one, two, three and four were not majoring in music. They were excellent players, but they had already decided on law school, or pre-med – all these other things. And I thought, “Well, maybe I do have a chance. Because I really don't want to do all of those other things, I really just want to play in an orchestra. Sitting here in the leagues with these people ... maybe it's possible.” So that kind of gave me the final impetus to apply for music school. And father was in support of it, too. So that was the beginning.

UPDIKE Do you have memories of any early teachers before you went to college that you'd like to share?

REYNOLDS I do remember the woman who was the principal in my dad's high school band; I'd go over to her house. She started me on reed making right away, I was like ten. And then when she went away to college, she would write me letters with pictures of reeds; she was learning in college about different reeds. I believe her first name was Lauren – I have the letters

still. She was studying with Mark Perchanok, who was playing in the pit orchestras in New York at the time. And then I remember after she left I went briefly to a person who was a T.A. at Stony Brook University. It's awful, I don't remember his name either – but I remember he had horrible garlic breath because he was being so healthy and eating a lot of garlic on purpose – to stay healthy from all of those students. I remember that about him. And then we very traumatically moved from Long Island to upstate New York. I had had sights on going to Juilliard pre-college, and that was all ripped out because we were not commuting seven hours every weekend.

So then I started studying with Mr. Jones; he was a student teacher in the high school in the small town that we moved to, and he had just finished his oboe degree in music education at SUNY Potsdam, and happened to move to our tiny town of 7,000 people. So that was fantastic, and I studied with him. He's the person who bought me my first membership in the International Double Reed Society, which I am still a member of. When he left (because he was only student teaching) then I went to this woman (Cathy DePentu) in Jamestown, New York, who had studied with Robert Sprenkle, who was the principal in the Rochester Philharmonic. She was fantastic in terms of just showing me the broader picture of how much repertoire there really was, and what you need to do to really audition. But my parents could only afford to take me there every other week, so for a lot of it I was pretty self-motivated. It's from her studio that I went to college.

UPDIKE How did you decide on the University of Michigan?

REYNOLDS Well, actually one of the students from my high school ended up there. She transferred – she started out in Wisconsin and transferred to the University of Michigan. And I decided I would visit her and apply for that school, because she was raving about how strong the program was. So I went out there and stayed with her in the dorm, and had a trial lesson with Mr. (Harry) Sargous, who was the oboe teacher there. I enjoyed my lesson with him, but I'll tell you what did it – he said, "I'm playing the Mozart *Concerto* this weekend in Toledo. I have a ticket for you, and you can have a ride with these other members of the studio." It was an hour trip down there. So we drove; I heard the concert, and it blew my mind away. I had never heard anybody play the oboe like that. It was so beautiful. It was perfectly in tune, and he was so confident. I was like, "I have to be in this person's studio." It was just a done deal, which was very sad for my parents, because my dad at that point was working at St. Bonaventure University, and he had a full tuition exchange with a couple of other places, but none of them were really fancy music schools. We had been to visit the University of Louisville. I met the teacher there, but I was like, "Sorry, I have to go to the University of Michigan." Actually, all they ended up paying for was travel and books – not even the dorm – because I had student loans and a fair amount of scholarships, and a work study program, and all that. But he was fantastic, and it's all Harry Sargous's fault that I came to the Conservatory, actually.

By the time I was graduating, I knew I needed to go to grad school. I did spend my undergrad taking lessons in all the woodwind instruments, and I thought the doubling way would be it, and then the last semester I realized, “I don’t want to do that.” I really wanted to focus more on the oboe, and I needed to let all of those other things go. “Now I need to go to grad school and put all of those other instruments down and basically buy some practice time.” Mr. Sargous was a student of Robert Bloom, who was at Yale where Bill Bennet’s father was a math or physics professor. And so Bill Bennet was studying in high school with Robert Bloom, but Robert didn’t have time to see him every week so he farmed him out to his students – one of which was Harry Sargous, and also Dick (Richard) Kilmer, who teaches at Eastman, and a handful of other people. So when I was applying to grad schools I asked Mr. Sargous, “Well, where do you think I should go?” He said, “I think you should meet Bill, he’d be a great person for you to study with. He’s principal in San Francisco Symphony.” I had heard some recordings of the orchestra and I thought it was fantastic. I actually didn’t even apply live, I went to Oberlin and took the audition there for David Moebis, who was then the admissions officer at SFCM. He recorded it, and I remember that I got a phone call in my dorm room from Bill Bennet, who had heard my tape. He was very excited about me coming here. I told Mr. Sargous about it, and he was very excited to send me here. So that was it. Especially then when Mr. Sargous didn’t accept me to the master studio at the University of Michigan! He was like, “You need to go someplace else! Fly, birdie, fly.” I was kind of upset about it, but actually he was doing me a favor. So then here I came to the Conservatory.

UPDIKE And what was the atmosphere of the Conservatory like – that was in the late ‘80s?

REYNOLDS That was 1989; it was the year of that big earthquake. I had been in town not even a month – well, a month and a half I guess – when that happened. That was the first earthquake I had ever felt. I was working in the library; I was a student worker, a desk person at the library. Another colleague and I were both there – just us students that day. It started to happen – we were standing right behind the little desk, and I thought, “Oh, well, this is an earthquake. I’ve heard these happen.” And the other woman – she had felt normal-sized earthquakes before, and she knew that this was no normal earthquake. She started screaming, and pulling me towards the door. Of course there were like twenty people in the little door, and there was a little fire door that came down from the upstairs part of the library – and it was coming down while the people were coming in the stairs. We were crowded around the doorway, we weren’t really in the doorway. But everyone was fine, and where I had been standing, everything on the shelf behind that was now on the floor. It was a good thing she made me move.

But it was a much smaller atmosphere – you know, that campus on Ortega Street. And honestly, I lived in an apartment right across the street, so it was all very different than the University of Michigan. It was very collegial; I had my lessons in the attic of Bill’s house on Castro Street. I

had to walk up the hill to his house. I remember I was preparing a concerto, and I'd show up huffing and puffing, because not only did I take the Muni train out to the Castro station, then I walked up the hill to 17th or 18th, and then it was a flight of stairs up to his front door, and then another flight of stairs, or two, up to the attic. We'd get there and I'd be huffing and puffing, and he'd say something like, "Well this is really good for your lung capacity, and your endurance for playing this concerto!" He made no apologies about it. And it was a fantastic place to have lessons, because you had enough space – it was bigger than any of the practice rooms that he would have been teaching in – and he had his drum machine set up there so he could drill us in rhythms – like subdivision rhythms underneath whatever we were playing. He had a huge table for all the reed making stuff, and there were a couple of cats for stress release. The lessons were fantastic, I have excellent memories of that.

UPDIKE Could you describe Bill Bennet as a person?

REYNOLDS Fantastic human being. Really down to earth. Jeans and one of those three-quarter length baseball t-shirts almost always with red or blue sleeves and a white center-part with no designs on it. I don't know, I just really liked him. I'm so sad he's gone now. He just talked to me straight on; it wasn't condescending. Honestly, having come from Mr. Sargous's studio, I thought sometimes Bill wasn't demanding enough, because he was such a nice guy. But that wasn't necessarily a problem with me because I was already demanding on myself, so it worked OK with him. I got everything I needed, and everything I asked for he pretty much provided. I have no complaints about his studio at all, it was fantastic. Like I said, he went out of his way to do extra things to provide you opportunities to further investigate.

Now, if you aren't a self-initiator, you kind of floundered in that. Some of the undergrad kids didn't do so well, because he wasn't strict enough to throw them out of the studio. If they didn't do their work for the week he didn't say, "Go away, you're wasting my time." He would always take the opportunity to try and help them practice, or what have you. But sometimes he would ask me in my lesson, "What do you understand about why this happens?" And I remember actually telling him once – I said, "You're not insisting that they meet that standard. Not that I endorse this, but if I showed up in ..." Mr. Sargous was straight up-front, he said, "You will play this, this, and this next week. If you don't get through your scales six times up and down in a variety of articulation, then your lesson is over and you need to go back to the practice room and come back when you can do it. That's on you." And it's not like Bill didn't say, "You're not meeting the standard and you need to work harder." He totally would do that, but "Go away and come back when you do it" was not his vocabulary. He was too nice for that. He was frustrated for a while, and in fact it was after Lee Wen Chen and I were in the class that graduated in '91 – he took a break from teaching after that because he had gotten so frustrated. Plus he had a big load at the Symphony, and lots of things were going on in his career and his personal life, and so he just took a hiatus from the Conservatory, which is when we had John de Lancie come in.

He did come back to teaching, and I was happy to see that happen. I remember – I ran into him maybe two weeks before the Strauss *Concerto*, and I said, “I’m really looking forward to hearing you play this,” because I would run into him in the halls occasionally here in the new building. He said, “Well, I’m really looking forward to it being over!” with a wink and a nudge – because it’s a lot of work to prepare a concerto; it’s like going to boot camp for a while. I said, “Well, I can appreciate that.” He was like, “It just seems like it’s getting harder,” which honestly, it probably was – the man survived a cancer treatment. It probably is a bigger physical demand on you after that. And then unfortunately that’s the experience that he went out on. But fortunately too – he was doing the thing that he loved to do, and he was so good at it – he was fantastic. I heard the performance in its completion a couple days before the last one, and it was inspirational to me. I heard things about the Strauss that I had never heard before. So I really feel like he continued to teach me the entire time. It’s not always that you stay in the same city as your teacher. There was a period of difficulty in separating my status from student to colleague – more for me than for him. He was always very welcoming for me to just treat myself as if I was his equal after I graduated, but that was hard for me for a long time. Just a wonderful person, a wonderful human – we had a good relationship.

UPDIKE Did you have any interactions with William Banovetz?

REYNOLDS I did! He taught our studio classes for a while. He and Bill would rotate them, and I took some lessons with him on the side. Also a fantastic musician – principal in the ballet. I enjoyed listening to him. I remember going to one of his faculty recitals where he was – I think Leonard Bernstein might have just passed away and he was playing three short songs. He just totally lost it in the concert, he just started balling because he was just grieving so much for the idea of Leonard Bernstein not being on the planet anymore. So there was a window into just how feeling he was, and how much he was putting into the musicality. He was also a very warm person, and very particular. I can still see his gestures – “Well now, Laura ...” I enjoyed him very much also. But I had maybe half a dozen lessons.

UPDIKE And are there any other Master’s students from that time period who you would like to talk about?

REYNOLDS I don’t remember at what level he was, but Gonzalo Ruiz was here, and he was just getting into his Baroque experience and was working a lot with Laurette Goldberg. He’s now teaching at Juilliard in the early music department. I haven’t followed up on him recently, but he’s become a very prominent Baroque oboist. And Shelly Phillips was here too, and she runs a little music conservatory down in the Santa Cruz area. And Lee Wen Chen – I have fallen out of contact with her, but Bill told me when the orchestra went on tour to China last, that he reconnected with her, and that she’s doing great. Loren Berzsenyi was here, and he is still

playing, and I'm friends with him on Facebook. I don't remember the town he's in, but he's also passionate about music still. And Neil Straghalis recently came back into the building – Cynthia [Cynthia Mei – SFCM Alumni Relations Officer] brought him to the Pre-College office, and I saw him – he was an undergrad at that time. And then there was also an undergrad – Jeanette Tan – who went on to marry Mark Chudnow, who's one of the premiere oboe repairmen in the country, and they live up in Napa, so I see her occasionally. Her son is now professionally dancing ballet – as a sixteen-year-old in Boston. It's fantastic, all that artistic discipline is coming down through the family. I decided to stay in San Francisco after graduation, and I was working as a receptionist because Julie Karres, who had been the receptionist, had passed away from lung cancer and they were in-between full-time staffing of that. So, they took two of us recent alums and a few other student workers, and we were all rotating through that little front receptionist office. Marcuselle Whitfield was one of the receptionists – she was one of the bassoon players who was also in the Citywinds Quintet. We're all Conservatory people – Esther Landau, Alison McKee, Marcuselle Whitfield, me, and Jim Freeman – we were all working together post-graduation. In fact, I think we formed that first summer as just a one-off for some gig, and then we went on for fifteen years after that in various forms. It was only Esther and I from the original group by the time it was over. I was still working at the reception desk, so I knew a lot of the students who were coming in. I can't remember how many years I did that – it was three or five years.

I was already working in what was then the Preparatory Division as a summer programs assistant to Doris Fukawa. I still had my fingers in, so I would go to studio class, because I was welcome to go there. Peter Cooper was teaching here for a while, he was fantastic. He's now principal in Denver. And Eugene Izotov was here as assistant principal in the Symphony, and he was also teaching at the Conservatory, and I hope he will come back when he returns to the San Francisco Symphony. So I kept my fingers in the studio for a while – that meant that Liz Merrill Telling (she was Liz Merrill when she was here) and I worked a lot together – we gave a joint recital at the Community Music Center. She's now in Colorado also, down in Fort Collins, doing a lot of chamber music. We connect at conferences every once in a while. The benefit of the small conservatory setting was there was only ever five or six oboists, and we all knew each other, and all were fairly collegial. We would have reed making parties.

UPDIKE Let's go through some colleagues – some are former colleagues but I think a lot of them are still colleagues today. Let's start with Doris Fukawa, because she was who you were first working with in Pre-College.

REYNOLDS I was a student worker, like I mentioned, on work-study as part of my ability to afford going to school. I was working in the library, and I knew that summer was coming and I was going to be staying in town. I really wanted to be working more, so I just started going to all the different departments and saying, "Hey, I'm going to be around for the

summer, could you use any extra help?” I walked into what was then the Prep office, and Alice Lahl was the secretary there. She and May Kurka had worked together, I understood – for decades, probably. Alice Lahl was a fantastic woman – she loved ballroom dancing (I remember learning this about her later) – I explained to her my situation, and she said “Well you know, I think Doris Fukawa might be looking for someone to help her with the summer camps. Why don’t you give me your resume, and I’ll pass it along to her?” So I did, and Doris interviewed me, and ultimately hired me. Little did I know that she was actually firing the current assistant, who happened to be also working for Julie Karres on the reception desk! So when Julie found this out, she was not too friendly to me for a while, because she was so sad for her other student worker. But Doris told me later – she said, “Well, when I met you and interviewed you, I just saw a spark about something, and I knew it was going to work out.” She just knew. I’m so grateful to her, she definitely is the one who hired me for that job, which then became, after I graduated, I was doing reception and summer programs. Together, that helped me pay the rent while I was scrambling for students and playing work. It was what enabled me to stay in town, ultimately.

It was so mind-blowing that first summer to see these kids playing at the level that it took me at least ten more years than them to reach. Granted, it’s different between strings and winds – you get higher level string playing at an earlier age, generally speaking. That was so inspirational – to find myself in that situation moving stands and chairs for little ten-year-olds who performed with as much panache as most of my colleagues did! It was fantastic. It was a really good match to work with her. And I appreciated watching her thought process as she put the groups together – and what she listened for when she listened to auditions. I was learning both artistic management and organizational management. That was back in the days of the Mac OSs – that’s all we had in the Prep division, we didn’t have the PCs that the rest of the school had – somehow we were isolated there on our own technology island. But learning FileMaker Pro and Excel – computers were not something that were huge in my childhood – they were just coming in, so I barely knew how to type. I’m still a hunt and pecker, because I took music theory in high school and not typing class. It was another way – I’m so appreciative in hindsight – of growing all of these life skills while I was still in grad school. We work together still, she and I – and we’re friends now.

UPDIKE Who were some of the other people in the Prep office when you started?

REYNOLDS It was May Kurka as director, and Alice, Doris and I. Alice had a student assistant who came in periodically, then Alice retired after a few years and we had Lauren Zultowsky – I think was her name. She came over from the Opera staff. Unfortunately she was terminally ill at that time, so she worked for maybe two years. Then we had Martha Westland, and she was fantastic and she and I were pretty good friends. She still lives in Berkeley – she’s a horn player but she ultimately gave that up and went into IT completely ... married a violinist, the two of them live in Berkeley with two kids. I see them once every couple of years, but she

and I were close because it frequently would be just she and I in the office, and May behind closed doors. Actually, by then it might have been John [McCarthy]. I don't remember exactly who the assistant was. It might have been that John came in and hired Martha after Lauren left, something like that. But Martha and I worked well together, I enjoyed that.

And then it was just – I started to meet the string and piano chamber music faculty, and the composition faculty – Hermann le Roux was doing a lot of Pre-College voice, and did the summer ... let me tell you about the time there were eight casts of *Marriage of Figaro* one summer! That was crazy, I thought I was going to pull my hair out and I wasn't even directly involved with that. But it's because there were so many women, and we had eight Susanna's and eight countesses. The summer voice programs were multi-generational for a while there under Hermann's direction, so we had a big collegiate factor, and we had the Pre-College factor too. So it was running two or three programs simultaneously. He brought Dick Jones in a couple of summers to do master classes. I think he was ultimately, in hindsight, trying to create additional opportunities for some of the college kids, who weren't going away to bigger festivals. There was always a large voice program in the college, and back then I think there were not as many opportunities for them in the school year as there are now. So he was doing a good service, but it was mildly disorganized, which drove me to distraction.

UPDIKE Is there anything that you'd like to say about May Kurka?

REYNOLDS You know, I admired her greatly. I thought she was a paragon of respect. She respected the children – the students in the Prep division – as much, if not more than they deserved. This is sort of a funny story, but it speaks to her tone, to my mind – when I discovered that she was writing letters to the parents who had past-due bills. The business office was on her to try and get them to become current. Somehow she shared the letter with me, or her assistant shared it with me, and it said something in the order of – and the sentence that sticks with me even now – “Please honor your child by making payments on their account to keep their education going.” Please honor your child. I will never forget that. Usually it's “Honor your parents.” But she wrote, “Honor your child, and their creativity, and their talent level.” This is what's important, let's support this. And went on to say, “If you need to talk about a solution, you're welcome to come in.” She was always willing to meet with the parents, but she really felt so strongly about the kids. I'll never forget that. That – and the other thing was, when I was getting married in 1993, her present to us was a subscription to the National Geographic magazine. Specifically because, “Musicians need to broaden their outlook.” And that you need to be aware of other things, not just music. So you should read the National Geographic magazine every month! It was fantastic.

UPDIKE Is there anything that you'd like to say about John McCarthy?

REYNOLDS I worked with him for many years. What I appreciated about him is that he let me run. He was not an over-controlling manager, but he trusted in what I had been doing up to the point that he took over, and all through this my responsibility level was increasing. Doris was training me, and things were shifting; certain parts where she had been particularly hands-on, when she saw I could do it, she just – my position title morphed over the years. I think I was still Assistant to Summer Programs when John first came on. And then I was Summer Programs Coordinator. Things were changing. I went from hourly to salaried at some point during his tenure. I appreciated how he would just basically listen to me tell him – “This is what I’m doing. I did this, this, and this, and I think it should be this way. Here’s a budget I think we should submit.” And he would say, “Fine.” I didn’t lack for his support. And when we moved down here, it was similar. I was allowed even to talk about the rooms – how I thought we should use the rooms in the summer, and how I thought we should structure . . . I pretty much had free rein. That was nice, to feel his trust in that way.

UPDIKE Is there anything you’d like to say about Hermann le Roux as a person – as a teacher?

REYNOLDS You know, I didn’t know him too much personally, but I have to say that I loved his positive attitude. He’s so enthusiastic. I have said this directly to Jimmy Kansau, so I don’t think it would be a problem to put it on this recording – it’s the same sort of wonderful energy – when Jimmy walks in the room, there’s sunshine. I don’t know how he’s feeling on the inside – I hope he’s feeling that much sunshine on the inside. But it definitely comes out, and he’s so caring about other people. And I’m sure he was like that before he ever met Hermann le Roux, but I think the fact that he worked with Hermann as a student, and saw that mirrored back, it just expanded it. And that’s what I remember about Hermann – he was just so supportive and enthusiastic, and had big ideas and big dreams, which he tried to execute. I admired that, and I enjoyed him. I was also frustrated by his lack of organizational skills – or his lack of realization of what might be required to realize that dream. That was frustrating for me, but I can’t not appreciate his enthusiasm.

UPDIKE And do you have anything to say about Laurette Goldberg?

REYNOLDS You know, I coached with her a little bit, and we had this quartet as part of the chamber music program – it was with Anne Lerner on cello, and Todd Decker on harpsichord, Lori McConnell on flute, and we did the Carter *Quartet* for harpsichord, flute, oboe and cello, which blew my world open because I would have never thought I could enjoy the music of Elliott Carter. But I did, after that piece. I think I took at least one seminar with her, and with that group we also prepared some Baroque music so we could go to competition with the two pieces. Todd Decker was her T.A., he was living at Music Sources, so we would go over there and rehearse sometimes at Music Sources. Again, if I had been more mature I might have

realized what I could have learned more, just by asking more questions. But I just submitted to the coachings and I didn't really push for anything beyond that. She seemed very knowledgeable and passionate, passionate, passionate about Baroque music, which I could appreciate.

UPDIKE Ruby Pleasure?

REYNOLDS My mother actually has the first good story about Ruby Pleasure. She came out here on a conference before I had ever been to the San Francisco Conservatory. My mother walked into the building because I was about to matriculate that fall. I happen to have an aunt and uncle who live in Foster City, so she was visiting with them post-conference and they all came into the admissions office just to say hello on my behalf because I hadn't been there. And they met Ruby Pleasure, who showed them where the housing board was, and talked to them about what I could expect when I got here. That was the first thing my mother said when she called me afterwards – "I met Ruby Pleasure, and she was so gracious and gave us all this information, and I feel really good about that." It was a fantastic first impression for my mom. When we were in the old building her office was right across from reception, and she's just always been so pleasant. I always thought that was funny about how her last name was Pleasure and it was always a pleasure to work with her. I'm sure everyone says that. I still enjoy speaking with her now. And one of our other alums from that time, Angelo Favis, a couple summers ago came back here with his whole family – he was a guitar major. It was during the summer so not many people were around, but Ruby was here, so we went upstairs to the sixth floor and had a little mini reunion. She was great.

UPDIKE Susan Bates?

REYNOLDS Susan Bates I met through Doris. She was coaching in the Prep division, and Doris brought her in for Summer Music West – to be one of the coaches in the chamber music sessions. And then it happened that when Doris became ill and had to take a leave, Susan stepped into the role of Director of Summer Music West. She and I worked together for – I think it might have been as many as five years. You'd think I'd know, because I just did the timeline last summer for the 30th anniversary of Summer Music West. But I remember we would have – because we were in the old building – we would take over one of the studios upstairs for the Summer Music West office, and Charles (Coones) would have to move in an extra desk in there, and we'd have to move the computer from the Prep office upstairs, and the printer, and all that stuff. So Susan was at one desk, and I was at the other desk, and we would alternately take turns showing up with coffee and chocolate croissants for each other. And she would be in there with the board – moving the cards for all the students and the different places where she thought the groups would be better. One year we decided to do an advanced chamber music intensive, where we had kids coming in from all over the country. We had some of them staying at the Music House, because Robin Schader was involved in that. So she was the house mother for the

summer, and she would prepare the meals for the kids who were staying at the Music House, and we had some who were with host families, and we had some local kids. That summer we did field trips to the baseball game – there were various things happening. That kind of proved that we couldn't grow this program anymore without a dorm. This was just a lot to manage with two office staff, and one house mother.

UPDIKE When did the Music House start?

REYNOLDS I don't know, but that summer was 1995, so it had to be in the early '90s. I feel like it was '92 or '93. Merritt Schader was a student in the Prep division – a pianist. It was the same time as Amy Schwartz. It was because Merritt Schader's mom was commuting with her down from Oregon every weekend that their family finally invested in a property so they would have a place to stay, and could stay for longer periods of time. And somehow that morphed into the Music House. You should ask Susan Bates about that, she could probably wax rhapsodic about the Music House. It was just kitty-corner to the property on Ortega Street, so it was very convenient.

UPDIKE Is there anything that you'd like to say about Deborah Berman?

REYNOLDS Debby Berman ... she and I shared many a conversation about Hermann le Roux. Ultimately I think that's when his separation from the Conservatory happened, was under her tenure. A pleasant person – I enjoyed working with her. I didn't see her all that much because as dean she was sort of two steps away from me. But we were in some meetings together. Really, I had a closer relationship with Kay Coleman, who was the assistant to the dean and the president. And she was my supervisor when I was a receptionist – Kay was. In fact, I still meet Kay for lunch on occasion. So that was really my closest relationship in the administration office. I remember one time – this probably is on file somewhere – Kay invited me on Colin's behalf to speak to the board about being a recent alum and how I was making a go of it. I remember I read off the paper and everything. That was the first of my forays into speaking to boards, because now as a member of three different orchestras, I've been in to talk to each of those boards about what it is to be an orchestra musician in the freelancing scene, and what it is to be an oboist particularly – and oh yeah, there's this reed making thing – let me tell you about that. So I won't forget that my first board appearance was for the Conservatory board. But Debby wasn't here yet, I don't think. Actually, I don't remember ... she must have been if Colin was the president. She was the first dean after he was, right?

UPDIKE I think so. Is there anything you'd like to say about Colin?

REYNOLDS Yes. I have appreciated his support over lo these many years. When Summer Music West at one time was under deep scrutiny – actually, we had an interim dean for

one year, I can't remember his name – but he was the one who set us on the path of, “You should have a summer chorus, because that is so financially relevant.” It turned out we got ten people in the summer chorus – it wasn't so financially great. But it was a good idea. But Summer Music West was under scrutiny, so we were going to meetings to try and talk about what we should do with it; how we should configure it, how could we keep it going. And I'll never forget Colin saying that in his mind Summer Music West should be sort of like the Settlement School in Cleveland in the summer, in that it should be a place of high quality music education for local students who perhaps can't afford to go to Interlochen or Idyllwild or Aspen, or any of these places that are great summer camps, but you have to fly there and you have to pay room and board, and it's a huge amount of tuition. So it was important to him that we keep something affordable and high quality right here. That is the reason why Summer Music West survived, for which I am eternally grateful. Sadly, that piece is now missing from San Francisco proper – there's not a high quality chamber music summer camp, yet. I'm sure someone will fill in the hole, but I'm sad to see that go. I always appreciated Colin's even-keeled approach. I'm sure he lost his temper, but I never saw it, and his steadfast work ethic. And – hello! He got us to this building. And always so friendly, and always so supportive. He was a good leader for us.

UPDIKE Is there anything you'd like to say about Bonnie Hampton?

REYNOLDS Bonnie Hampton – I worked with her during the Rowell Cello Seminar, she took it over from Irene Sharp. I just really enjoy her as a musician and as an educator. I don't know her personally, but I know her work, and we are lucky to have her.

UPDIKE And could you talk about Irene Sharp?

REYNOLDS Irene Sharp was passionate about the Rowell Cello Seminar, and actually I was in school with her daughter, the youngest one – Robin, the violinist. That was my first introduction to the Sharp family. Robin had won the concerto competition for the Conservatory. Her mother is a very demanding personality, and there is a little bit of history that maybe Susan will get to. We had that summer in 1995 where we realized we needed an offsite experience if we were going to have this kind of advanced camp. We actually looked into possibilities for that, and it became unfeasible with the cost. But Irene Sharp picked up the idea, and then California Summer Music came into being. My two cents – it was a total spinoff of Summer Music West. They have a composition intensive, they have chamber music and private lessons – it was basically the format of the advanced chamber music intensive that went on under Irene Sharp's direction. I think Susan was working there for a while, and Andy Luchansky and Tim Bach – a fair amount of our faculty. But it was at the Robert Louis Stevenson School near Monterey. Now I think it's at Sonoma State. That was the place that I had been researching for – could we afford to take our camp offsite? The information went from one place to the other – gee, I wonder how that happened? But she's a passionate educator, Irene Sharp – a very passionate educator. And

her students all spoke very highly about her. So aside from the fact that that was a little weird, that California Music spinoff, and aside from the fact that I was still not a very recently graduated person when her separation from the Conservatory happened, and I was the person left to collect her keys at the end of the Rowell Seminar ... that's a little intense. But I admire her. I admire all these people, for one reason or another!

UPDIKE Is there anything that you'd like to say about Paul Hersh or Mack McCray?

REYNOLDS Characters, both of them. I mostly met with Paul Hersh while brokering with him for room use in the summer. "Can we use your studio while you're gone this summer for two piano groups in Summer Music West?" That was mostly how I got to talking with him. And Mack – I've worked with him in a variety of ways. We had a thing for a while with the Northern California Music and Art Culture Center, which is a Korean Cultural Center that one of our alums – Youg Sook Kim (who was a voice major) – created a summer program where she brought all these kids over from Korea, and she brokered a situation with the Conservatory that they were doing it in our building – or part of the program was in our building – and I was the point person for that. She would hire some of the Conservatory faculty, and Mack and Meikui were doing that. He could tell you who the other faculty members were. So I dealt with him a little bit in terms of the room use, and what kind of administrative support – and gelling that schedule with the Summer Music West schedule, and the Rowell Cello Seminar. We dealt in that way. Also, I've worked with him as a pianist in collaboration with Citywinds Quintet. He did a premiere of David Garner's work with us, and a Poulenc *Sextet* one year. I remember rehearsing – actually, I haven't been to Mack's studio here in the new building. Is that giant stuffed elephant still in there?

UPDIKE Yes.

REYNOLDS OK, so the giant stuffed elephant was in his studio at Ortega Street, I remember that. I remember rehearsing in there, and just looking at the elephant sometimes. Of course I've been to many staff parties where he's created some song with fantastic lyrics; roasting the person who was retiring. He's quite a presence.

UPDIKE And Alexis Alrich?

REYNOLDS Alexis Alrich – she has the longest tenure in the Summer Music West composition intensive. I think she taught it for something like ten years. So I worked closely with her in the summers. A great nurturer of young composers. Also, not so constricted by what would be easy. One year we had a kid who wanted to write for timpani, and I was like, "Really?" She said, "Oh yeah, just call up Jack Van Geem, maybe we can hire one of his studio assistants

who can bring up all the instruments. I promise the students won't touch them!" So we did, but she had to encourage me to do that before I realized that this was something that we should grant this twelve-year-old. We did, and it was a fantastic concert. She had classes of ten or twelve kids every summer writing pieces that were six, seven, eight minutes long for large and small ensembles. She was working in the Prep division too, she was close with June Bonacich. She's in Hong Kong now, or something. Her husband is a journalist, so that's why she left the composition intensive. Then we went on to Clark Suprynowitz, and then Arkadi Serper, and now Daniel Wood, who's done it for the last few years. But she left a big legacy with those ten years. And before her it was Dan Becker, actually. He was the first person to teach composition in the summer for Summer Music West, and then when he decided to leave we had a couple of different – Ron Levy and Peter Lewis – and finally we landed on Alexis, and she did it for ten years.

UPDIKE Would you like to talk a little more about Esther Landau?

REYNOLDS Yes. She and I met in our remedial ear-training class with Scott Foglesong, which I never dreamed I would ever be in, but it was a fantastic class and I'm so glad. Sonja Neblett was so funny – you come in as a student, entering as a grad student, and you have to take the ear-training placement test – you go in there and do sight-singing and dictation. She gave me (I thought it was particularly cruel) a sight-singing in tenor clef, and it had accidentals all over the board. I had come from the University of Michigan where they teach moveable do. In moveable do, you have to know what key it's in in order to know what to call everything. By the way, I hadn't had any ear-training or musicianship for two years because I finished it up in my first two years of undergrad and I was so happy about that that I never did the other ear-training class after that, which was apparently a mistake – remedied in grad school, thank God!

So here I am – I'm not great in tenor clef. Treble and bass clef – great. Tenor, I know how to read it, but I'm not facile in it. And then I'm looking at the key signature and I'm thinking through my options of what key this could possibly be in, because I have to know that in order to know what to call do. But then there's all these accidentals – not just the ones that you would expect if it was a typical harmonic or melodic minor scale, so I'm just staring at the paper. And Sonja says, "Have you had sight-singing?" Which led me to say, "Why yes, but it's been in moveable do! And I don't know what key this is in, and I don't know what to call any of these notes!" She was like, "Well, why don't you just use the 'la' syllable then?" And so I didn't do very well on that, and I ended up in Scott Foglesong's remedial ear-training, which I was feeling bad about.

But there were all of these other wonderful people in the class, and what do you know – at the Conservatory at that time anyway, it's fixed do, so you go by the note name – if it's a C it's do, if

it's a D it's re – suddenly it's so easy to call the note whatever it is. You lose a little bit without doing moveable do, but you gain facility. It was a fantastic class. We sight-sang the Bach *Magnificat*, which I had never listened to before then and now it's one of my favorite pieces. I could sight-sing every movement with all the syllables. I met Esther Landau in that class. We never actually played chamber music together until graduation, but she was also doing a work study – she was working in the Music to Go office, and she eventually became the manager there. Then she became manager of our woodwind quintet. Now she's a big time development director – she was at the Walden School – the summer composing place – and just recently she went to the Pomeroy Rehabilitation Center out near the zoo. She's still teaching on the Pre-College faculty. I think it was fourteen years we played together in Citywinds. She and I learned how to play flute and oboe – to this day, each time I sit down with a new flute player, they're like, "Wow, it's really easy to play with you." I thank Esther for that! Because we worked painstakingly on how to blend our two sounds together – what are the intonation tendencies, how can we adjust to that – we created the ability to play together, and it transfers. Plus she's a fantastic woman, generally speaking. I count her among my friends still.

UPDIKE And Jim Freeman – does he teach at the Conservatory?

REYNOLDS Jim Freeman is the founder of Blue Bottle Coffee.

UPDIKE Oh, that's right!

REYNOLDS James Freeman. When I knew him he was Jim Freeman and he was studying with Rosario Mazzeo, and he was obsessed with the clarinet – and he was also obsessed with coffee. So I think he just turned those around. But we had a very intense chamber group there for a while. I think he was with us for three or four years. When we would go on tour he would bring his hand-grinding machine, because he wouldn't mechanically grind any coffee beans. I remember we went on tour to Gualala, and they were having this huge rainstorm, and we were having a morning children's concerts in some elementary school. And when we arrived from our host family, we were looking for Jim. It turns out he was in the kitchen, offside the multi-purpose room – he was actually in the kitchen grinding his coffee in the little square box – boiling the water on the stove and pouring it through ... he could only have his own coffee.

UPDIKE Is there anyone else right now that you can think of that you'd like to talk about? Colleagues at the Conservatory today, or people that you worked with a lot over the years?

REYNOLDS I'd say a few more words about Kay Coleman, and how wonderful she was. What a fantastic support to Colin. I was very sad to not have her presence here anymore. I'm glad to still see her. A great, organized person who loves music, was so supportive of all the

students and staff, and just a lovely person. I also enjoyed the leadership of Mary Ellen Poole when she was here, I thought she did a great job. I was in on the committees that interviewed her when she was coming here. I was fond of her. I could go through every office and tell you something about someone, because a lot of them have been here ... I've been here longer than a lot of them. And some of them I really only have a working relationship with, I don't really know too much about them as people. We're lucky here at the Conservatory, we're a fine group of people – artistic, yes – temperamental, sometimes. But generally a good crowd of human beings. Outside of that I don't think I need to pull out any particular names.

UPDIKE Let's talk a little bit more about Summer Music West, and about the programs. What were the programs when you first started working for Summer Music West?

REYNOLDS There have always been sort of the three main areas – the voice area, the string and piano chamber music, and composition. During the early time, I think flute was always in there. Yaada Weber was on the faculty when I came on. I remember in those early years we were always trying to beef up the woodwind side of things, but we never had brass. Even at the end, we had a horn for a woodwind quintet – that was about it. So those pieces kind of morphed. At one point we also had an early childhood component, like we were doing Orff classes and pre-instruments. It was called Pre-instrument and Music Sharing in the Prep division. I think we were trying to expand on the pre-instrument – sort of a “stick your toe in the water” type of class for the summertime, where they would come every day for just a week. We tried that for a while – it wasn't overly successful. I think we still have those Orff instruments, the Conservatory had them and we were trying to use them. I think they're still probably in the cupboard somewhere. And then we had on the voice side – before I was there they were doing musical plays, like *Pinocchio*. Eileen Duran I think was the name of the woman who was running that part, so there was always a little musical theater. But then it switched to Hermann, and it was this multi-generational ten to twenty-five aged kids, and it was a different opera every summer, and it was multi-casting opera.

Then we had random things, like we would add the master class of Dick Jones in the brochure and people would sign up just for that. One year we had a piano pedagogy master class – Mack McCray did that with Evelyne Brancart, we brought her in. That was also under the Summer Music West umbrella. But we always had some version of chamber music for the ages nine to eighteen. And it used to just be session one and session two, but it became apparent that the needs were very different for the different age groups so one was called Chamber Music Readiness. And then we started to realize that the kids who were under age twelve – it needed to be more than a half-day program for them. Then we started including lunch, so we had 9-3:30 and that was called String and Piano Academy, and that lasted for a long time. That year with the Advanced Chamber Music Academy I think we had Strings and Piano Chamber Music, and the Advanced Chamber Music Intensive. We have all the brochures, so you can go through and see

what all the different offerings were. But the idea was to always have a composition section, a chamber music section, and a voice section – and variations on a theme through all that. We were trying to tighten up the budgeting, and tighten up curricular issues, and keep the quality emerging higher and higher, as possible. And trying to increase the wind section. So Esther became a coach for Summer Music West, and Roman Fukshansky (clarinet) was for a while, and Yueh Chou (bassoon) – depending on what our instrumentation was. It was a great opportunity for a lot of the Pre-College kids, who before this comprehensive model that we have starting this year, the chamber music option was fairly limited. Out of the hundreds of kids in the Prep maybe forty were doing chamber music because we had limited spaces for them in that model. So, if they didn't pass the audition and get a placement, then they were stuck with no chamber music all year – but maybe they could come to Summer Music West. A lot of times, what would happen is they would come to Summer Music West for one or two years, and then they would pass the audition to get into the Prep chamber music program. So there was a little bit of a feeder. Now we're just going to have chamber music for everyone who's accepted, period – at every stage of their development, so that issue is no longer really there.

The Composition Workshop – it gave them more access to a short period – actually it went in a variety of lengths. One year I think it was six weeks, one year it was five weeks – now we're down to three weeks. I think it was five weeks for a good portion of time – three weeks to really get to writing the piece and have it be mostly completed; that last week to really proof and finalize, and get the music into the hands of the players. Actually, we had them collaborating with the chamber music, so that the kids who could handle the parts from the chamber music course would be assigned – and we'd get as many kids as possible, so they're playing music of their peers, and then we'd supplement with a couple of professional level players, so there was always one professional level player in each group to sort of corral the troops to give a decent performance of the kid's work. But that was a good collaboration, which is continuing in the Pre-College right now, last year also – where primarily the students are playing the composer's works. I think that's fantastically useful and important. So there were variations on a theme.

And then when Hermann exploded into eight casts of *Marriage of Figaro* – that's a whole institution just in itself. So I think we just kind of hit the wall with that, and we had to take a break from voice programs for – I don't know how many summers it was. But that was the opportunity where Wendy Hillhouse introduced Baker Peeples and Ellen Kerrigan to John, and we all sat down to discuss a Gilbert and Sullivan option. Because musical theater wasn't really getting much enrollment, the chorus thing had kind of flopped – we wanted something for a teenage vocalist. Classical training, not belting it out. He introduced us, and then boom – after a little bit of discussion Gilbert and Sullivan Scenes was born. And we are still doing that, as it's a collaboration with Lamplighters. So it's just able to stand on its own two feet, and we just provide the administrative support for it, and the facility support. They provide all the artistic content, and the costumes. It's thirteen or fourteen years that we've been doing it – very

successful. The kids love it, they come back year after year after year. And then they go to sing in the Lamplights main stage chorus. It's a good thing.

UPDIKE Are there any students from the Summer Music Program who you'd like to mention?

REYNOLDS You mean who became famous?

UPDIKE Anybody.

REYNOLDS Teddy Abrams always comes to mind, because I vividly remember his audition. He was ten, and I remember the mom calling, and I said, "Well, he's really not old enough, but if you insist he can audition." He came and played his clarinet audition for James Freeman, and James came into the office afterwards with his eyes in giant saucer-size. He said, "Oh my God, that kid just played the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto* – he's fantastic! Who's his teacher, because he should be in the Prep division!" He ultimately did become his teacher, but Teddy came through Summer Music West a couple of summers, and as we all know went on to greater things and is now conducting professional orchestras. But I like to say, "It started in Summer Music West." Danny Stewart is also a conductor, he came through Summer Music West. Ethan Filner, who is now our strings ensemble coordinator for the Pre-college came through Summer Music West. Zakarias Grafilo came through the Prep division and Summer Music West – he's with the Alexander String Quartet now. Gabriela Lena Frank came through the composition intensive – now a famous composer. I'm sure there's more that we don't know about what happened to them, but there are some fantastic people.

UPDIKE Do you have some favorite performances that stand out to you over the years? I know you mentioned the timpani....

REYNOLDS Yeah, I do remember that one. I don't remember what they were playing, but that first concert – we were on the Hellman Hall stage – the kids were so small and the audience wasn't that big so we set up the audience chairs on the stage of Hellman Hall with the piano on the side. So there was a little tiny string quartet. At that time, I was stage manager and was doing everything on the backside, and we didn't have a summer stage manager so I was doing the moving of the chairs and stands for these tiny people, and making sure you have the tiny chairs, so their feet aren't swinging. I just remember that first summer, this tiny little string quartet. I don't know who they were – I could look it up. Hearing their performance – I hadn't really been floating in and out of the coachings like I did in later years, so I had no idea what to expect, really. I typed up the program, I knew what they were going to play – and when they played it my eyes were just popping out of my head, and my jaw – I had to lift it off the floor because it's in tune, it's in time, they're cuing each other – they're ten years old! How is this

possible? I'll never forget that. I'm sorry I don't remember the names of the kids, or the piece, but that was just an eye-opener.

And then – the first time you heard these pieces by young composers – I had come up through a music school, I had heard compositions newly composed, but never by anyone that young with that much emotional content coming straight through and having an impact. I'm just so grateful, which is why I still work in the Pre-College now. It's nurturing. It's as nurturing to us as it is to them, and I don't take that for granted. I have to say, as a performer myself I have been involved in or witnessed so many performances in the last thirty years – I honestly wish I could remember more details of more of them. What I'm grateful to hold onto is that so many of them are fantastic – so many of them give me something, whether it's for my own performance or listening to someone else. I'm just grateful that that's my perspective, and that's my lot in life, as they say. The musical life treats me well and I appreciate it!

UPDIKE Is there something that you'd like to say about the move from Ortega Street to Oak Street – how it might have changed the character of the school?

REYNOLDS Yes. From a personal perspective, they put the summer programs on hiatus because they were moving in the summer. So I was actually laid off for that time, and had nothing to do with the actual “pick up and move.” I packed up some boxes before I went on leave, and then I unpacked them when I came back. But it was tangible – the difference in the tenor of the program, the Summer Music West program in that first summer, which was 2007; we were on hiatus in 2006. The quality of the performances, and the attitude of the kids – the environment was I think in some part responsible – a concert in the Concert Hall – a far cry from Hellman Hall, and some of those kids had been in both. I think the profile of the school obviously went up, and so we got a huge applicant pool those first couple of years – extremely inflated. In fact in voice we were turning away as many girls as we were accepting. That's not so much the case right now, it's sort of come back to normal after eight or nine years. There's not so much of a, “Oh, I've got to check that out!” factor. But I really believe that all of the performances, and the level of intent of the students, rose upon moving here. It's a good thing.

UPDIKE This might be similar to the last question, but – do you have any thoughts on how the Conservatory is different today than it was even when you were a student here?

REYNOLDS It's more formalized. I'm sorry to say that the first time I ever drove by the Conservatory, I was on spring break in 1987 or '88 – I was here visiting my aunt and uncle, and with Bruce (Chrisp) who was in school with me. We drove down the street and were like, “San Francisco Conservatory of Music? Look at that place! It's like a giant Taco Bell – I've never even heard of it!” That's what we both said to each other as we were driving in the car. Fast forward two years – we're both enrolled at the Conservatory. What are the chances? But having

come from the University of Michigan, the Conservatory was a bit of a shock in many ways. First of all, the culture of California was – at least at that time – so much less rigorous than the culture at the University of Michigan, in terms of – you would show up for orchestra rehearsal at the University of Michigan, you would be in your chair no later than ten minutes before the start of class. And probably a half hour in advance, like you would in a professional orchestra. I had that time frame in my head, I walked into Hellman Hall twenty minutes ahead ... there was no one in Hellman Hall. There was no one in Hellman Hall besides me and three other people at the start of class. They just all started wandering in at the time. I was like, “What?!” That was weird. And the classes were not so rigorous at that time – highly dependent on the teacher. It didn’t really bother me because I was here to study with Bill, that was my focus. If Bill wasn’t here, I wouldn’t be here. So it didn’t bother me, and I knew what my goal was. But I think now it’s a different story. I think now there’s a much higher ratio of higher level academic teachers, and a much bigger ratio of what’s offered, both with undergrad and graduate students. The halls are certainly more impressive. I was lucky to have Hellman Hall, but many people had to do their recital in Agnes Albert Hall, which was like a carpeted living room. Now, that’s not the case, so that’s much better. Generally speaking, I’m pleased that the Conservatory has continued to invest in improving itself over all this time. It’s necessary, and we’re struggling to adjust to the twenty-first century. It’s necessary and it’s painful, but we’re doing it.

UPDIKE Is there anything that you’d like to say about what you’re doing today outside of the Conservatory?

REYNOLDS It’s the three-pronged approach to a career in music, that’s my elevator speech. The education – and I’m involved in that two-fold, both directly teaching and administrating educational program in the Pre-College, but I also teach at U.C. Davis; I’m a lecturer in oboe there. And I teach at Sonoma State University and have a private studio out in my apartment. I have at least a half dozen private students – whether through an institution or not, and I’m a member of three regional orchestras. I’m principal oboe in Santa Rosa Symphony, and California Symphony, and second in English horn in Marin Symphony. So: education, administration, and performance. I perform a lot, and the Conservatory has benefited me greatly in my career in their flexibility of my not always being here because I have a performance somewhere. That’s why I’m a part-time staff member – it allows me to do all of these things. I enjoy the teaching, and I’m on the faculty in the Pre-College when there are oboe students, and I work in the chamber music division when possible. But I’ve always mostly been on the administrative side of that – which I have a keen understanding of how to support, so it’s a great fit.

I love just talking about oboe playing, and reed making, and all of that – so the teaching is a great fit, but I have to admit, my number one, absolute love, is to sit in the middle of the orchestra and contribute to that experience – make a contribution. And if I can’t be sitting in it, playing it,

please let me have a ticket to the concert! Because I'm just an orchestra freak! I really love it. I'm one of the few people I know amongst my colleagues who actually pays to go to concerts. They're like, "I work in the orchestra, I'm not going to go there in my free time." And I'm like, "But they're playing Mahler! Come on!" So, I'm just so grateful that I can continue to support my orchestra habit, and have a fair degree of success about it. I've subbed a fair amount with San Francisco Symphony, and the Opera and Ballet a little bit, and the Santa Rosa Symphony is in the Green Music Center, which is a fantastic acoustic experience – so nurturing. And getting to play there is a privilege that I earned. Actually, that was my first job out of grad school – my first performance job was winning the audition for second oboe/English horn in Santa Rosa. I played that position until just last year when I won the principal chair.

UPDIKE I know that this has come up throughout the interview, but do you have any final thoughts on advice for young musicians, or just the importance of a musical education for young musicians?

REYNOLDS Well, the importance of a musical education can be extended to the general populous. I really wish that for everyone – some sort of music in your life. Because it helps you reach places that you wouldn't want to go normally. It helps you deal with your experience. Your experience of life can be interpreted with the help of music. The importance of a musical education – in terms of, if you want to become an orchestra member, should you go to a conservatory or university? Well, of course – you need to get the construct, you need to get everything you can about the history of music and the pressure and inspiration of other high level players to push you beyond where you might normally go. Of course it's important. And to get into a place such as the Conservatory, in a city where the orchestra is two steps down the street, not to mention the Opera orchestra – not to mention the Ballet orchestra! They're all within blocks. Avail yourself of that! And if you do matriculate in a university where there are professional organizations nearby, don't stick your head in the practice room the entire time.

You've got to go out and hear what's happening right now, because that will inform – it will help you become a more efficient student, it will help you become a more efficient assimilator of the reality – to speak in higher terms – and help you figure out what it is you actually want to do and express with your version of a musical life. A musical life – and Bonnie Hampton I think is one of the main proponents that I've heard speak in these terms – there is no detriment, detraction, there is no negative consequence for having a music degree. It's not that you should get a music degree so that you can be better at something else – no. I think you get a music degree because you want to have a musical life. You want to contribute to music and the power it has in the world. That in itself is great. You want to be in an orchestra, you want to be on the opera stage – those are the reasons to go to music school. But if you can't be principal oboe, or English horn with the San Francisco Symphony after graduation – only one person gets to do that – it doesn't mean you don't get to play music in your life, or make money being a musician. You can, it's

just not going to be the way that you thought it was. I had to come up against that time and time again. I took something like fifty national auditions for orchestras. I came close a couple of times – I was runner up. Runner up is not the job. Is that – pull the plug, failure – put down the oboe and “Oh, I wasted those degrees”? No! But it took a long time for me to actually be OK with it – I have a music career, it just doesn’t look like how I thought it was going to. That’s fine. I still have to tell myself that, but it’s fine! And like I said, I’m so grateful. I have high level music experiences in my life, which I wouldn’t have had if I hadn’t gone to music school.

UPDIKE Thank you so much for doing this.

REYNOLDS Thank you for asking me to, Tessa.