

## David Burkhart 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 June 21 and 24, 2016  
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.

### **David Burkhart Interview**

This interview was conducted at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music on June 21 and 24, 2016 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.

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## David Burkhart



*Dave Burkhart in the Conservatory's archives, June 2016*

David Burkhart is an honors graduate of Yale University, where he received B.A. and M.M. degrees. His teachers include Adolph Herseth, Arnold Jacobs, Robert Nagel, William Vacchiano and Charles Geyer. Burkhart has served as principal trumpet of the Sacramento, Oakland, San Jose and Jerusalem symphonies, the Santa Fe Opera, and as acting principal of the San Diego Symphony. His five seasons as a fulltime acting member of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra include many performances as principal trumpet, most recently in Saint-Saën's *Samson and Delilah*, plus the recordings *Symphony at the Opera* and DVDs of Boito's *Mefistofele* and Puccini's *Turandot*. He has taught at Stanford University, San Jose State University and at the Menlo Summer Brass Institute. A member of The Bay Brass and the San Francisco Brass Quintet, Burkhart also performs regularly with the San Francisco Symphony, including the *Keeping Score Mahler Project* and over a dozen CDs. He can also be heard on *The Star Wars Trilogy* with John Williams, *A Brass & Organ Christmas* at Grace Cathedral and the Grammy-nominated Bay Brass album *Sound the Bells!*

*Tuesday, June 21, 2016*

**UPDIKE** Let's just jump in. Can you tell me about your early history – where and when you were born?

**BURKHART** I was born technically in Hollywood, at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital in 1954. My dad was doing his doctorate at USC at the time, and my mom was a pianist and piano teacher. We moved to Chicago when I was just five. I have twin sisters two years younger than I am, so we all loaded up in the Chevy station wagon and drove to Chicago, where my dad got a job as a theologian at McCormick Theological Seminary, which is a seminary that educates Presbyterian students for the ministry. I've always considered Chicago my home ... I have a memory of going to Disneyland, and that's about it from growing up in L.A. Chicago has been very much my home, and I lapse back into my Chicago accent when I see my old buddies from high school.

**UPDIKE** You said your mom was a pianist. Was she a professional musician?

**BURKHART** She sure was. She was a fantastic pianist. She was a child prodigy on the piano, her mother was a pianist, and she was a full-scholarship student to Juilliard, where she studied with one of the most famous piano teachers of the 20th century – Rosina Lhévinne, who was the wife of Joseph Lhévinne. She was in the same class as Van Cliburn, and it was kind of fun – all of the interesting people that we had come to visit our house in Chicago – Rosina Lhévinne came several times when I was growing up, and so did Van Cliburn. It was fun to meet all those people. Mom was a fantastic pianist. She met my dad when he was a student at Union Theological Seminary in New York, and they were both invited to a party by someone who thought that since they were both tall (my father was 6'3" and my mother was 5'11") that they would be a perfect match for each other. It turned out they were, and they both had an interest in music. My dad had gone to Occidental College, and had written music reviews for the college newspaper, and played the recorder in a recorder ensemble, and all of that. So they met and fell in love. Much to the dismay of Rosina Lhévinne, who wanted my mom to go on to a concert career – but much to the joy of both of my parents, they got married.

My mom ended up becoming a piano teacher. She had four grand pianos growing up – two of them were in our living room. We had a large old row house in Lincoln Park, which was on the McCormick Seminary campus. Two of them were in her downtown studio in the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue. We have one of them – her first piano, which is a 1932 Steinway grand – that we completely refurbished. There is a wonderful piano restoration place in Alameda started by Jim Callahan, who just passed away not long ago – he was a horn player, and personnel manager of San Francisco Symphony. He hired me when I was very young and new to the Bay Area. They did a wonderful job on the piano, and we remodeled our living room

specifically for it – with the bay window, and the whole thing. So I definitely grew up in a musical household. My mom ... we never thought of her as such, but she was a very modern woman in the sense that she taught as many as 70 students a week. Most of them pretty young, but all ages. She would teach in the afternoon, and then somehow dinner would be ready. She was a faculty wife at the Seminary, and did all these amazing things. She also taught at Wheaton College in the Suzuki program for piano, and gave recitals when my parents moved out to Galena, Illinois, to retire – she ended up giving recitals at the University of Dubuque once a year. They were monumental recitals; my wife plays the oboe, and she and I played on a couple of them. That was super fun. Whenever I went home to Chicago, she would say, “Now, be sure and bring your music, Dave, so we can play together. Just don’t bring the Hindemith Sonata!” She had a profound dislike for that piece – it’s a great piece, but it was so darn hard and she didn’t want to sit down and sight-read that thing.

I studied the piano with my mom for about five years – from the age of 5 to 10. I got moderately proficient at it and gave little recitals and that kind of thing. It was clear there was a little bit of a glass ceiling there, and that became increasingly clear. My mom did something that not everybody can do with their child, and said, “Dave, we need to talk.” I said, “What about?” And she said, “Well, it’s about the piano.” I was just ten years old, and she said, “I don’t know how to say this ... I know that you love the piano, but I really think that perhaps you could find an instrument that requires only the use of one hand at a time.” Oddly enough, I took that remarkably well, and was almost relieved. The piano, as I got better at it, became more frustrating. For some students, it becomes more rewarding and you get better and better and better – for others, it just becomes more frustrating. She said, “Do you have any ideas of what you want to do?”

I was in fourth grade, and the sixth grade teacher of our school was a Dixie land trumpet player. He used to bring his horn to school every now and then, and you’d hear him playing down the hall. I thought that was pretty cool. My parents had also taken me to hear Chicago Symphony concerts, which I loved, so I was exposed very early on to some of the players that ultimately became my teachers. In particular, Bud Herseth and Charlie Geyer, and Arnold Jacobs. My dad even took me to the Plugged Nickel – a little nightclub in Old Town Chicago – to hear Maynard Ferguson. That was pretty cool – before Maynard Ferguson was even on the map in terms of a popular artist. He was a jazz artist at the time. So I thought the trumpet was just the coolest thing I could possibly play. It allowed me to have lessons in the sixth grade homeroom, so I felt like a sixth grader, and very adult. I got a good foundation from my first trumpet teacher, who was named Lee Dreuth. He was also a golfer, so there were times, I will confess, that I would show up for my lesson and instead of a trumpet case over his arm, he had a golf bag, and was on his way to the golf course. Now in hindsight, I kind of understand that ... I’d probably rather golf than teach me, too.

**UPDIKE** Were your sisters musical as well?

**BURKHART** They were. My sister Audrey has moved back to Chicago – she lived in San Francisco for a while, and before that in Alaska, working for IBM for many years. She played piano – she has fingers that are as long as mine, and she’s 6’1” or 6’2” – a tall girl. They’re twins, but they’re very different. So she played piano, and she has our mom’s Baldwin in her apartment in Chicago. And then my other sister Debbie played cello. She studied with a guy named Karl Fruh in Chicago. Neither one of them kept it up too much past high school. Audrey came back to it, though, and is playing again. We’re having a little piano party for their birthday. You may know Marc Shapiro – he’s played with my wife and myself many times, and we’re going to have a piano party for their birthdays. We’ll just play stuff together, and have a good time.

**UPDIKE** That’s great. It sounds like you grew up around a lot of classical music, and jazz. What sort of things did you like to listen to on the radio – popular music, or other genres?

**BURKHART** I did play in youth orchestras from very, very early on. That was important to me. I went to Interlochen when I was in high school. But for listening, much to the dismay of my parents, I was into Janis Joplin and Big Brother, and that sort of thing. And any of the horn bands – whether it was Chicago, or Blood Sweat and Tears – the bands that had trumpet in them. So a lot of jazz, and rock and roll. I played in a rock band when I was in high school, and actually that’s sort of an odd reason of why I still play the trumpet. It provided the pats on the back and rewards for playing the trumpet that I didn’t always get being the classical musician. As a kid, that isn’t quite as cool as being in a rock band. All the guys in the band were much older than I was. Amusingly enough, it was called the Medieval Times, and our motto was “The ancient sound of rock and soul.” We played a lot of covers of rock and soul music, and we did some originals, and a little recording. We had the same manager as a group that was far more famous than we were called The Buckingham, which was a big popular group out of Chicago. It was great – on Saturday night I’d go out and play for four hours and have my fun, and then go home and try to get ready for a trumpet lesson with my slightly swollen lips the next day.

**UPDIKE** Where would you play with the rock band?

**BURKHART** In nightclubs ... high school gyms ... dances. Any kind of gigs we could get. For a while there it was almost every other weekend that we would go out and play someplace. The guys were a lot older – one of them was a saxophone player in the band, but also played violin in one of youth orchestras I played in. So that was really nice, to get to know him. There were some great musicians in the band – it was a wonderful outlet, where you get your props for doing something. Although – I went to Francis Parker School in Chicago from

kindergarten all the way through twelfth grade, and there was definitely a lot of support for the arts, and for music. But there was a very informal, tiny little orchestra, and there wasn't really a band. So there weren't many things like that to do.

**UPDIKE**                   And was that your first paid gig as a musician?

**BURKHART**               My first paid gig ... I have a picture of it, which is pretty amusing ... after I'd done this music and arts camp I got a call to play a garden wedding on the lakefront of Lake Michigan. The Dunlop Tires family was having a wedding. There's a wonderful picture of three trumpet players in little choir robes, two bagpipers, and a secret service agent with his hand in his pocket like it's on his gun. So that was my first actual gig. I think we got a lot of money – \$25 and all the wedding cake we could eat! That was really exciting.

**UPDIKE**                   Who were some of your early music teachers?

**BURKHART**               I told you a little about Lee Dreuth. I studied with him until the beginning of seventh grade, and at that time I told my parents I wanted to get more serious about the trumpet, and I wanted to have more regular lessons. So they said, "Why don't we ask Eddie Druzinsky?" Eddie Druzinsky was the harpist in the Chicago Symphony, and his son Robert was best man at our wedding – he and I had gone to school from kindergarten to twelfth grade together and was my best friend. We asked Eddie who I could study with, and he said, "There's a new guy in the Symphony who just joined. His name is Charlie Geyer." (At that time they were calling him Chuck.) I had no idea how fortunate I was at a very, very young age to study with a very fine player. Charlie ... I think he was a senior at Northwestern when he got the job at the Chicago Symphony. He studied with Vince Cichowicz, who was a marvelous player in the Symphony and a marvelous teacher. He also studied and worked with Leon Rapiet, who became my teacher at Interlochen when I was there. So there are a lot of generational things with music. I joke with some of the students that they're my trumpet grandsons, or trumpet granddaughters, because they studied with a student of mine!

I was the luckiest kid in the world, and for six years (from seventh through twelfth grade) he was my trumpet teacher. I think that I may have been his first student, I'm not positive about that. I know there was another guy who was a bit older than I was, Steve Hendrickson, who went on to play first trumpet in National Symphony. And there were a number of other students that he had ... I was certainly his youngest student. He was always great about bringing me along, in terms of playing with those older students. The best way to play tennis is to play tennis with someone who's a lot better than you – it's the same thing with music. We would have little excerpt parties, where we would all get together – it would usually be Charlie and four of us students, and we would read through orchestral excerpt books – every single piece that had three or four trumpets or more. About halfway through we'd all get a little tired (except Charlie) and we'd have a

barbeque, and then go back and play more. Those were great. I got to play with Charlie ... we went to the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, which is the big church on Michigan Avenue ... Charlie got hired to play, and asked me if I would play with him. There's nothing more fun than playing with your teacher – and nothing more rewarding for a teacher, as I've learned over the years, than playing with your student – no more proud moment. I have a vivid memory, (he probably doesn't remember it much) but I have great memories of doing that with him.

We also drove to Elkhart Indiana together when I was high school. I said I wanted to get a C trumpet – I was still playing an Olds Ambassador B-flat trumpet, and so he got me working on transposition. He was a real hard-ass when it came to transposition, and I'm glad he was. We went to Elkhart together, and he helped me pick out a horn, and got one for himself as well. That was pretty cool, because he was a bigshot by then, being a Chicago Symphony member. So they had all these un-lacquered horns lying there on a table, and we got to go through and play all the horns. Then they silver-plated them for us later, and shipped them to the music store, where we picked them up. That was pretty amazing. And then going to hear your teacher play is fun ... and a lot of lessons were just, "Let's play this, because this is what we're working on in the Symphony this week." That kind of thing. A lot of it was over my head, as a young student, but that's great sometimes.

**UPDIKE**                      Absolutely. Could you describe him as a person?

**BURKHART**                He was very unassuming, considering the incredible talent that he has on the trumpet. He's one of those players who can just seemingly do anything. When you watch him play, it's the most easy and most efficient production that you can possibly imagine. You would think sometimes (although I've learned over the years that sometimes it's just not true) that that would go along with a little bit of an ego. He was a hotshot young trumpet player, he was good looking with a big bushy mustache and long hair, but there just didn't seem to be much ego at all. That's one of the things that I remember about him. Also ... to this day it's a curse, I just played a church service with a friend of mine, Bill Holmes, who plays in the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. ... I asked him if he didn't mind, because we just had one music stand, if I stood on the left. He said, "Why?" and I said, "I'll tell you after." For every single lesson in the variety of houses I went to see Charlie in, he always sat on the right and I always sat on the left. So now when I teach, I always sit on the left, and the students sit on the right, and I always play better. Maybe it's just superstition ... but the problem with superstition is ... it's bad luck. I always play better when I'm on the left.

But he was very caring, and understanding, and patient and kind. He always seemed to have a solution for every problem that I was dealing with. I remember the "No vibrato for a year" rule that he gave me. I was playing in the rock band, and I got into some bad habits. I was using way too much vibrato, and he said, "OK Dave, here's your challenge. I do not want to hear you play

vibrato for a whole year.” That helped a lot, although it took a while to bring the vibrato back into it.

I remember when I said I wanted to learn transposition (this was before I got a C trumpet) I had gotten caught in youth orchestra when I was just in seventh grade. I was at the far end of the trumpet section, and there was a guy named Tony Pons who was the first trumpet. Kind of the hotshot Italian first trumpet stud that we all think we are. I started playing, and I didn’t realize it because I hadn’t been trained to look at the part, I just started studying with Charlie and knew nothing about it. The part said, “Cornet in A” at the top. That means if you’re playing a B-flat trumpet, you have to transpose the part down a half-step. I didn’t know the difference, so I just started playing my regular notes with my regular fingerings, and it was awful. The conductor stopped and said, “What’s the problem?” I said, “I don’t know.” Tony turned to me, and in a very wise way that only a senior in high school trumpet player can say, “Whenever you see ‘Cornet in A’ pull your slide out all the way.” That was his trick – which wasn’t even a very good trick – you just pull your tuning slide out and then you’re a half-step below.

So after that I said to Charlie, “I have to learn how to transpose.” He said, “OK” and he pulled out a duet book. We played duets every single lesson, which is something that I continue to do with my students if possible – every single lesson. He opened to a random page, I remember it was an advanced duets book and it was hard just reading it. He said, “OK, trumpet in A – 1, 2, 3, 4!” I played a few of the half notes and whole notes ... I was so lost, and I was almost in tears at the end. But I got a really good, strong last note. He said, “OK, that’s a start.” And then every week ... and I would never know what key it was going to be in! I got a book, the Sachse book of transposition studies, and started working on it with him in a more formal way. Absolutely every lesson ended in some kind of sight-read duet. The good lesson about that was it taught me that transposition was a sight-reading skill. It wasn’t something that you just studied the notes and memorized and learned them; you have to be able to sight-read in any key. Of course that emphasized the importance of another thing that he worked on with me, which was all the fundamentals – the scales, arpeggios, and everything else. You could be facile in all keys. I got an incredible foundation from him without hardly even realizing it at the time. I was so young, and I didn’t know any better. I thought, “I guess this is how you do it!” And it was fine.

**UPDIKE** He sounds like the perfect teacher for that time of your life.

**BURKHART** It was pretty cool. He was young, but he was always “Mr. Geyer” to me. It’s still hard for me to call him anything but “Mr. Geyer” and he’s ten years older than I am. There really wasn’t a huge difference ... there was a huge difference in talent and ability, but there wasn’t a huge difference in age. He was pretty cool; although he was a little nerdy at times. On his answering machine I remember he recorded an answering message where he played the *Promenade* from *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and instead of playing a top F, he played a top F-

sharp [sings] and he said, “Hello! This is Charlie Geyer, and I have a very sharp F.” That was his answering machine. I have great memories of him ... I haven’t seen him for a long, long time. His brass quintet, when he was at Eastman, did a master class at the Conservatory. It was phenomenal – it was just wonderful. They played great. My wife and I took them around, and sat in on their rehearsal to listen to them, because their tour was just starting. We all went out to lunch afterwards and it was just fabulous. A really, really topnotch group. His wife, Barbara Butler, who taught with him for many years at Northwestern (now they teach at Rice) is also a marvelous trumpet player and teacher. I’ve sent several of my students from the Conservatory to study with Charlie and Barbara, and I’ve had several of their students that were undergrads at Northwestern come here as grad students. So that’s been really rewarding in both directions over the years.

**UPDIKE**                      What was it like to grow up in Chicago at that time?

**BURKHART**                It’s different than it is now. It’s much more polished and fancy and upscale. Even Lincoln Park, where I grew up, is now a pretty trendy area. The music and the culture was always fantastic ... you could study a piece, and then you could go to the Art Institute and see the impressionist painting that was painted around the same time the piece was written. My mom was the president of a group called Contemporary Concerts, so she was always bringing these contemporary musicians to Chicago from all over the globe. They often stayed with us at our house, so that was pretty cool. They were always going to museum openings, and things like that. I didn’t hear a lot of the Lyric Opera when I was a kid, but I did hear the Chicago Symphony a lot, and that was an amazing lesson in and of itself. A side story of Charlie Geyer is that he also played in a brass quintet, and the French horn player in the brass quintet was a guy named Bill Klingelhoffer. I heard the quintet but I never met him until I got out here, and he was first horn in the San Francisco Opera orchestra! He had played in Lyric Opera before, and he still plays a lot with San Francisco Opera and fourth horn in the San Francisco Ballet orchestra. So that’s been really fun. But Chicago – incredible city, incredible tradition, and of course I was fortunate enough to hear the Chicago Symphony live, which is nothing like hearing them on recording, in their real heyday – when that brass section was absolutely world-renowned. It still is fantastic, but it was really special.

**UPDIKE**                      That’s wonderful. About what age did you realize that trumpet was something you wanted to pursue for your career?

**BRUKHART**                Pretty late, oddly enough. I loved playing the trumpet, but for college I didn’t apply to any music schools. It’s conceivable that I would have gone to Northwestern, if Northwestern hadn’t been in Chicago, or my parents hadn’t lived there – everyone wants to get out of town! But I was going to go for a liberal arts education, and so I went to Yale for college. I tried to find a school like Yale that had a music school connected to it (not an undergrad music

school, but a graduate music school) and that was in a city that had nice cultural things – ensembles and so forth, like the New Haven Symphony. I wanted to be a constitutional lawyer ... I wanted to stand there before the Supreme Court and plead my cases. I went through several majors. Then I wanted to major in engineering and applied sciences – in particular, studying acoustics. And then I wanted to be in administrative sciences – I wanted to go into business. All this time, I was taking music courses. Before I knew it, by the time I was in my junior year, I had pretty much fulfilled or placed out of all the requirements for the music major. And I paid my way through school not working in the dining hall, but with my trumpet.

When I was a sophomore in college, I won the third trumpet audition with the New Haven Symphony. That allowed me not only to make a little bit of money, and give me a base for freelancing, but also allowed me to play with much more experienced, older, finer musicians than I was. I was always the kid in the orchestra. Although the first two trumpets played in a brass quintet, so when they went on tour I got to be first trumpet, which was pretty cool, at a very young age. And then the Yale Symphony was, and continues to be, a wonderful undergraduate orchestra. And there were some great players – one of them was Bill Bennett, who played first oboe in the San Francisco Symphony and taught here for many years. We played together and toured together in Yale Symphony. So there were a lot of really talented musicians who weren't necessarily musicians first. It's different for different people, what works and what doesn't.

For me, what worked in terms of the ultimate career path that I chose, was to get a liberal arts education first, and then like Juilliard and other schools have, they had a five year master's program, so by the time I was a senior at Yale I thought, "I'm making a living doing this, and I'm really enjoying it. Maybe I'll just keep going." So I did the five year master's program, and then I hung around a little bit the following year, and got my first job outside of the New Haven area, which was first trumpet in the Jerusalem Symphony in Israel. Like a lot of people you're talking to, everybody has a different path of how they ended up where they ended up. I can only hope that everybody's as happy with their path as I am! What Yale taught me was that I could do anything I wanted to if I set my mind to it, and there was no reason to fear anything. That opened up all kinds of possibilities for me, both in terms of my playing career and doing other things – not being a one-track person. Which ultimately, I think (and Michael Tilson Thomas is a good example of this) that kind of broad-based, rich education in school and life, and branching out and doing a lot of things very much informs your music making. It's super, super important. So that when you play a piece, you understand what that piece is about, and what it really means, and then you have much more to communicate than just beautiful sound and in-tune playing with good articulation.

**UPDIKE**

Are there any teachers from Yale who you'd like to talk about?

**BURKHART** I had a number of wonderful teachers. The reason I almost went into engineering and applied science is because of Bill Bennett's father, William Bennett. I took a couple of courses with him, and an independent study on acoustics. I did a research project on the acoustical properties of trumpet mutes. It was a really fun thing, and great to work with him – Bill's father was an absolute genius. But my trumpet teacher at Yale, who just passed away, was Bob Nagel – who was most famous for being a founding member of the New York Brass Quintet, but was also pretty much the top classical freelancer in New York for about twenty years. He played in a lot of contemporary chamber music ensembles and orchestras. There's a wonderful YouTube recording of him rehearsing and recording with Stravinsky. He had so many stories, and my wife and I got to know him even better after school than in school. He played trumpet at our wedding. I invited him out to play as the guest soloist with my brass quintet out here – the Vintage Brass Ensemble. He stayed with us a few times when he came out to visit also. The funny thing when he played with our brass quintet (my wife reminded me of this story) was that he just had so many stories – he could go on and on. They were wonderful stories, and you desperately wanted to listen to them. But when he was staying with us he played a really hard concert ... it was amazing – he played solos, he played with the quintet, he played trumpet trios ... he didn't practice a note the whole time he was at our house! I finally told my wife, "I've got to practice! Can you spend a little time with him? I need to sneak into my room and practice, or I'm not going to be able to get through this concert!" But he was an absolute sweetheart and a cornet prodigy.

He and Charlie Geyer have similarities in that they both have a very natural ease of playing. "Captain Bob," as we students affectionately referred to him, could do absolutely anything on the trumpet. His studio was on the fourth floor of Hendrie Hall, which is the same floor as the band room at Yale. There was a little couch outside the studio, and whenever he was getting ready for a New York Brass Quintet tour, he would practice during lunch. A couple of us students would go and sit there, and sit outside the studio and secretly listen to him practice. He was an incredible musician, and he was the one who connected me to Bill Vacchiano, who I studied with for a semester. I said to Nagel, "I really want to see if I can work more on orchestral excerpts now that I'm playing in New Haven Symphony and doing some other things." He said, "Well, you can work with me, but I'm more of a chamber player." Most teachers would not say that kind of thing – and I had worked on excerpts with him and he was fabulous at it. He said, "Why don't I just call Bill and see if you can study with him." I wasn't even sure which Bill he meant. But he called, and it was William Vacchiano, the former first trumpet of the New York Philharmonic. So I went down to New York once a week for a whole semester while I continued to study with Nagel. I said to him, "Are you sure this is OK?" He said, "It's OK with me, as long as you tell me everything he tells you, so I can learn about it!" That was very sweet, and a wonderful gesture. An egoless gesture, which I appreciated and loved.

Vacchiano was a trip – he was fantastic. I still have my books – I won't throw anything away that a teacher has ever written in, and he used to write a lot in my Arban book, which is sort of the trumpeter's bible of fundamentals and exercises. He was also big into transposition, but what he didn't know was I had had six years of training in transposition before I even got to college, so he would write above an etude in the Arban book (which are hard enough in any key) "twelve keys." The assignment was that I would learn it in all twelve keys, and he would pick one in the lesson, and that would be the key I would perform it in. In an ironic way, I disappointed him because I was already able to do that. There was a time I asked him – I said, "I need a little help with my low register," and he said, "You know, son, you should practice Tannhäuser. You know Tannhäuser? You should play that every day." I said, "Oh, you mean this one?" And I played it from memory for him. He went, "Arrrrrr! Yeah, that's the one I meant!" Kind of a gruff but in a loving way.

Vacchiano, challenged me to be better in so many ways. My philosophy with him was to do absolutely every little crazy (or so I thought-ha!) thing he asked me to do, and then if I could prove to him that I could do it, I also won the right not to do it if I decided that wasn't the style, or the way I wanted to play it. I'm so glad I studied with him.

I also studied with Carmine Caruso (no relation to the more famous Caruso). Carmine was a saxophone player, and kind of a musical guru in terms of teaching. He taught a lot of musicians, particularly brass, from tuba all the way up to trumpet.

In college, in addition to playing all my classical gigs, I was playing lead trumpet in the jazz band, and doing a lot of dance band work on the weekends. I was just playing my regular equipment (nothing special) and I have a little crooked tooth, and my tooth was cutting into my lip a little bit. Not in a bloody lip way, but it created a little callus and made it difficult to play. I was talking to a tuba player who had focal dystonia, which is a real challenge for tuba players and a lot of musicians. He said, "Why don't you go down and study with this Carmine Caruso guy?" I said, "OK," and went down there. He had a funny little studio with a big armchair on 46th Street across from Giardinelli's Band Instruments near Times Square. It was a funky little room, and he immediately diagnosed what the problem was and was able to fix me. I ended up studying with him for two years, and it really built up my strength and flexibility, and my ability to play. It was fantastic. Herb Alpert was his most famous student. Herb, who lived in L.A., would occasionally fly Carmine out to L.A. for lessons; so occasionally he couldn't see me. If I was having difficulty with a passage, or something like that, I would call Carmine anytime – night or day, he didn't care – and I would play the lick into the phone, and he would give me advice. So he was a really good trumpet mechanic. He was a genius at it.

I got exposed to a lot of people playing with them, but those were the three people. Bob Nagel, really, I studied with him for five years: all kinds of music – it was very self-directed. Some

students I find, in my teaching, aren't able to handle that very well. In other words, the student pretty much drove the lessons with Nagel. "What do you have for me this week?" ... "Well, I'm working on Mahler Five." ... Whereas other students need that program – "Here's what we're going to do." He was really fantastic. He was a super fine musician, and I've studied with a lot of orchestral players, so it was really good for me to get a soloist cornet player/chamber music player to really understand what playing was all about.

While he was out here visiting us one time he was already in his upper 80s, and I asked him, "Would you be willing to coach my students at the Conservatory in their brass quintet?" He said, "If they'd be willing to have me!" And I said, "Well, I think they'd love you." So he came in, and he just lit up the room, and inspired the students. My favorite thing that he said to the brass quintet ... they had, as a lot of student groups do with brass quintet, a very orchestral approach to chamber music. It's kind of like a brass section, minus everybody but the five members of the quartet. They were playing a contemporary piece, and it was pretty much "loud" – there was no contrast at all. He stopped them, and said, "I'm not sure what to say, but ... nobody really likes being shouted at." I talked with one of the students about that not long ago, when Nagel passed away, and he remembered that vividly. That was Mark Grisez, I had him come do a master class with the trumpet class here. He used that in the master class that he did for the students. So that was kind of fun, too – he was both son and grandson for me, because he studied with me and indirectly had studied with my teacher by being coached by him.

So those were my crazy Yale days, but it was marvelous. I got to do such a variety of music as a freelancer – and I did do some teaching. I taught at a school called the Neighborhood Music School, which was mostly grade school and high school students. I also did a program in the summer where I taught inner city youth in band. So I did do some teaching – not a lot. I did some teaching in high school – one of my first students who I taught – I was a senior in high school when he was in fourth grade – came up to me at an alumni event and said, "Hi! It's Brendan." You flash through all of your students ... he said, "Brendan, from Francis Parker." ... "You mean little Brendan...?!" I had sold him my Old Ambassador B-flat trumpet, and he still had it. We ended up working out a trade. I gave a talk to his class – he's a school teacher – and he wanted to give me back the trumpet. I had it refurbished, and now it looks brand new. I used it in a couple of Bay Brass performances – it was really fun to play again.

**UPDIKE**                      Wow, that's great. So in your years at Yale, you were playing orchestral music, jazz, dance bands, chamber music....

**BURKHART**                Anything ... the phone rings. It was a great way to learn. I was no snob when accepting the jobs. I played with a lot of great players. Every now and then I got in trouble. I showed up for a dance band job, and I got there on the bandstand.... These wouldn't be rehearsal bands – you would just play the gig. I showed up, and they had this big, thick book of

music. The guy would call – “Number 237!” And I would start frantically leafing through, but they were halfway through the piece by the time I’d gotten the music up! So you kind of learn to fake the parts. Then there was another one – the director would say stuff like, “*Tie a Yellow Ribbon* – first note, C! – Two, three, four!” And they would just play! There was no sheet music at all. That was quite an eye-opening experience, and I was caught a little bit behind at the beginning, but I figured out how to play the game and catch up, and do it OK. That’s a thing that I would certainly say to my students – “Don’t be a snob. Take absolutely everything that comes your way. You’ll always grow; you’ll always learn something from that experience – be it a classical one, a rock one – older players, younger – you’re the first trumpet in a crappy orchestra – you’re the fourth trumpet in an amazing orchestra – who cares?” I think that was really important for me. I didn’t realize it – like I didn’t realize what I had when I was studying with Charlie Geyer from 7th through 12th grade – I didn’t realize necessarily that I was getting schooled in all of these gigs that I was playing, but I was. It was like what some people call the “freeway philharmonic” here, except it was in the snow in the wintertime near New Haven. Playing in the Bridgeport Symphony and the Hartford Symphony, and all of this. Although New Haven – I really got lucky with that one because that was a really good orchestra and it still is – with a great repertoire, great conductors, great guest soloists. When Doc Severinsen came to be the soloist for the orchestra the first two trumpets were on the road with their brass quintet, so I got to be first trumpet – that was pretty cool. I was all of about 19 or 20.

**UPDIKE**                      What years were you at Yale?

**BURKHART**                I started in ’72. I got my bachelor’s in ’76 and my master’s in ’77. Back before some of my students’ parents were born!

**UPDIKE**                      What was the new music scene like at Yale at that time?

**BURKHART**                Oh, it was phenomenal! There were so many great composers. Jacob Druckman was one that comes to mind. We would play concerts – they took the orchestra to Carnegie Hall to play these concerts – so we played an all-Druckman concert in Carnegie Hall. How cool is that? And then there were collaborations with composers. There was one that I particularly remember – Robert Morris wrote an incredibly cool quartet that was a rigid twelve-tone piece that sounded like bebop. Boy, I worked so hard. *Not Lilacs* was the name of the piece. It was just a fabulous piece. Even the improvised sections weren’t improvised – everything was written out in these twelve-tone rows. Everybody thought I was playing a head tune, and improvising. That was the goal of the piece, and we were just playing a really cool jazz tune. So those kinds of things were spectacular.

I played under Aaron Copland, and on the jazz side we had Benny Goodman. I remember him coming in to listen to our jazz band play. There were two jazz bands – there was a kind of a

traditional 18 piece big band, and I was the lead trumpet in the 13 piece band. We all thought it was the cooler band, because it was more improvisational, a bit more contemporary. He came in, and he didn't care for the way the saxophones played at all because they played in a very bebop, avant-garde style. He said, "What is all this noise?!" We thought, "Oh, boy, that didn't go over so well!" It was amazing, and in a way we almost took that for granted. That was the good thing about that school – you had the Yale School of Music there, but I wasn't in the School of Music, I was in the liberal arts college. But the Yale School of Music, the New Haven Symphony – all that stuff was right there. There was a wonderful show that we did at the Yale Rep Theater with Estelle Parsons called *Man is Man*. William Bolcolm wrote the music – he just kind of wrote it out by hand, there was nothing formal. I still have it; there was a little cornet solo for one tune. The piano player never had any music, he just faked it. I finally had him write it out on a paper towel after a show, and I still have that paper towel! So that was cool. That's important, too, for students to work with student and pro composers, and to be exposed to more than the standard orchestral excerpts that they would play – a wide variety of music with different ensembles, not just brass-like instrument ensembles, but others as well.

**UPDIKE** That sounds like an incredible experience. How did you come to join the Jerusalem orchestra?

**BURKHART** I did my five year Master's, and I continued to play and freelance in New Haven after that. I played in a wonderful brass quintet – New England Brass Works. I just started taking auditions when they came up. I had already gotten really lucky on a couple of them. When I was a senior in college I had applied to audition at the Metropolitan Opera, and I was way over my head. They didn't accept my resume, so I called them and said, "I'm first trumpet in the Yale Symphony orchestra! What about letting me play?" They took pity on me – or were amused, or something – so I ended up going. I remember I really worked hard, and felt I was really, really well prepared. But in *Carmen* there's a low trumpet solo which is, oddly enough for me, a transposition nightmare. I played a wrong note. The note sounded good, I played it convincingly, but it was the wrong note. I'll never forget – I walked out of the audition, and I was so mad at myself. As the elevator doors are closing, the personnel manager runs at me and says, "Where are you going?!" I said, "Well, I'm leaving. I played a wrong note. It's over." He said, "No, you're in the finals!" It was a good lesson – it's not about right notes or wrong notes, it's bigger than that. Thank goodness I played my wrong note with a beautiful sound. I didn't get the job, but it encouraged me, and I had hope to play in a major orchestra.

I auditioned in New York for the Jerusalem Symphony in January. I didn't hear from them, but in April they called and said, "We'd like to hire you." I said, "Great! When do I start? In September?" They said, "No – now." Their trumpet player, who was a guy named Chuck Lirette who played in the Pittsburgh Symphony, had taken a leave from Pittsburgh to play there and had decided to go home early. So I scurried around, and my then girlfriend (now wife) took me to the

airport. We didn't know whether this would be the big breakup – this happens to musicians a lot. But anyway, I just scurried around and got over there and started playing first trumpet. That was a really great learning experience. It was a full-time orchestra, a lot of really great pieces. A lot of great conductors and soloists. Because it's Israel, there are a lot of people who want to donate or contribute their musical talents to the country. We would see amazing conductors and soloists come through. That's how I got to know Glenn Fischthal, who was first trumpet in the San Francisco Symphony for many years, and my colleague here at the San Francisco Conservatory. He was first trumpet in Israel Philharmonic when I was first trumpet in Jerusalem. I did that for two and a half years.

A few months after I got over there, I was pretty disappointed that my girlfriend wasn't there with me, and it turned out there was an oboe opening first in the Beer Sheva Orchestra, and the second year in the Jerusalem Symphony, so we played together the second year. Then we decided to come back. We're not Jewish. People would always ask me, "You're not Jewish – why are you here?" I would say, "I don't know – it's a gig!" It is a beautiful country. My dad, who's a theologian, came over with my mom, and we took them all around Israel to show them the sights. My dad could tell us all the Bible stories about each of those sights, so that was fantastic. Then we both decided to come back. I was a finalist in the Boston Symphony auditions. That was crazy. I flew back on a Saturday night, played four rounds, including two for Ozawa, on Sunday. The students have no idea now how spoiled they are with the internet! I had to write out some of the excerpts by hand from the score because there were no excerpt books for Bartok and I didn't have the parts. That audition encouraged me to think that maybe it was time to come back, and we were a long way from home. The first audition I took in the states was for first trumpet in the San Jose Symphony. I won that, and that's how we ended up in California.

**UPDIKE**                    Is there anything you'd like to say about living in Israel?

**BURKHART**                I could go on and on. I try to encourage my students when they're in their 20s to not be afraid of doing stuff like that. In your mid 20s you can do that, in your mid 30s you can't. It's true with music festivals too – it feels a little bit like music camp. To get that kind of on the job experience from a musical standpoint was phenomenal. We also had a brass quintet. The orchestra didn't perform on Friday nights because of Shabbat – or Sabbath – but we did as a quintet. Every Friday afternoon the sherut, which was like a fancy cab, would pick up the members of the quintet at our homes and we'd go to a kibbutz. We were in the Golan Heights one year, that was pretty crazy. We would play a concert, and stay overnight. The next morning we would do whatever they did – if they were going to pick fruit, we'd go out and pick fruit with them and bring a big basket home with us. And then we'd play a concert with the Symphony on Saturday night. So we got to know the people and the culture.

I was the only one that wasn't Jewish in the group, but I was the only one that was crazy or brave enough to give the announcements about the pieces. I wanted to give them in Hebrew, so I had one of the guys in the orchestra help me with it. I got pretty good at Hebrew, but not fantastic. Because I was talking about music, I was using words that even someone who had been in Israel for a while normally wouldn't use. I remember there's one piece called *Music Hall Suite* by Joseph Horowitz, and there's a movement called *Trick Cyclists*. In Hebrew, that's *L'itsan al Ofanayim* as I recall. If you say a phrase like that in front of a group of people, they assume you're Jewish, and you've been in Israel for ten years. So people would always come up to me afterwards, and I would have to admit that I didn't know as much as it seemed like I did. I learned at Yale that there's no reason for stage fright, or to be embarrassed about public speaking – but public speaking in another language is a whole other ballgame.

To see the sights, and to live there, is so different than just getting off a tour bus to visit a place. There were some magnificent days musically. I remember touring Israel with what became the Israel Sinfonietta playing the Brandenburg Concerto. They picked us up in a big car, with the conductor Mendi Rodan, and Claude Frank, the pianist, and myself. We played six performances in a week. I remember the day it snowed in Jerusalem and absolutely everything stopped. It was so beautiful. I remember Christmas Oratorio on Christmas day in Jerusalem. There were some very religious Jews in the orchestra who opted out, they didn't want to do it, but I was so excited. We played the entire piece – how many people can say that? I've got a handful of things like that on my list of things I've gotten to do over the years. I'm a big proponent – and this is one of my philosophies of life – that I try to never say, "I have to do," something – it's always, "I get to do those things." If you have that philosophy, I think it goes towards appreciating what you've received in this world. I wouldn't trade it for the world – in terms of on the job training, there was nothing like it. By the time I finished my two and a half years in Israel, I had done (for example) 25 performances of *Pictures at an Exhibition* – five different runs, with five different conductors. You can study the piece to death, but when you play it again and again, it's no big deal. The Israel Philharmonic used to do 12 performances of their repertoire. So when Glenn Fischthal came here to San Francisco Symphony, he already had all his stuff in the bank. Fantastic.

**UPDIKE**                      So San Jose was a big change.

**BURKHART**                San Jose was a big change. A little desert-like. Jerusalem was far different from Tel Aviv – it was beautiful. About 3,000 feet above sea level, so the weather was great – very much like San Francisco, actually. George Cleve hired me, and I was excited to be here. That same fall, which was the fall of 1980, there was also an opening for first trumpet in Oakland Symphony, and so I won that audition. Calvin Simmons was conducting that orchestra at the time. We worked out their schedules, and I was able to play both orchestras that year. And then I ultimately decided to go with Oakland Symphony. I didn't mention it, but all these conductors

over the years that were crazy enough to hire me to play with their orchestras – I have so much to thank them for. Whether it was college people, like John Mauceri, or Bill Harwood for Yale Symphony, or Otto-Werner Mueller at Yale Philharmonia Orchestra, or Eric Kunzel, who hired me in New Haven Symphony, or Murry Sidlin, who conducted the orchestra after him, or Gary Bertini, who hired me for Jerusalem Symphony, or George Cleve or Calvin Simmons. All these people gave me tremendous opportunity, and I learned so much from them.

There are as many different ways of conducting as there are conductors. Each one of them has their own strengths and weaknesses, and their own styles and approaches to music – often the same pieces that I played. That was fantastic. I am deeply indebted to each one of them for saying, “I’ll take that guy!” I don’t take that for granted. That was wonderful. I always got along with George. He had a reputation for having a little bit of a temper, but we always got along great. I remember some absolutely wonderful performances and rehearsals with him. He was great with Mozart, I did some of the Midsummer Mozart concerts as well. Great with Mahler, Beethoven, and Brahms – a lot of the Germanic repertoire. And then Calvin Simmons – any of us who played in Oakland Symphony consider ourselves honored to have been a part of a career that was sadly cut very short very early. Periodically, when I see people like Stuart Gronningen, who was first horn in Oakland Symphony when I was there, we talk about what Calvin would be doing now, and how he would be the conductor of the San Francisco Opera, or the Met.

**UPDIKE** Calvin Simmons was the African American conductor who died in a canoe accident?

**BURKHART** Correct. He died in a boating accident in upstate New York. Very sudden, very tragic, and it really threw the orchestra for a loop. It was really difficult for the orchestra to recover from it. One could make the case that maybe it never really recovered from it, and that’s why it ultimately went under. Calvin had so much energy, and so much life and passion. I remember playing Debussy’s *Ibéria* with him, and the first note is just a high A on the trumpet. The orchestra comes in with a [sings] “Bomp ba da da ba bomp da!” It wasn’t the way Calvin wanted it. He said, “Just think ... Spain! Spain!” Suddenly it was exciting, and amazing, and wonderful. I remember him bringing Jessye Norman to the orchestra to sing with us ... it doesn’t get better than that. And of course in Oakland we did some great pops concerts. I remember a wonderful concert with Clark Terry. I called the office and said, “Who’s going to pick him up at the airport?” They said, “We have no idea – nobody really wants to do it.” I said, “Well, I want to do it! Can I do it?” So I ended up being his chauffeur – driving him around town and getting to know him a little bit, and hear his wonderful stories – and ultimately hearing his wonderful playing. It had the woodwinds and the strings marveling at his playing – it wasn’t just a brass player thing. They were just amazed at his lyricism and the effervescence of his playing. All these people ... but Calvin was very special. I still choke up a little bit just trying to talk about

him, because the limited time I had with him was just fantastic. Who knows what he could have done – what he could have been. That was very sad.

**UPDIKE**                   What year did you move to San Jose?

**BURKHART**               That was '80. The fall of '80 I started in San Jose, and then about a month after I won that Oakland Symphony audition. I quit San Jose – I played all that first season, and then I decided to focus on the Oakland Symphony.

**UPDIKE**                   What was the audition process like back then? Were they screened auditions?

**BURKHART**               Yes, they sure were. I remember the Oakland Symphony was a funny one. Three of the auditions I won over the years, I drew number 1 out of a hat. I always told my students (not to brag) – in the case of Oakland, this is a good example: I had misjudged the traffic from San Jose to Oakland when I came up. It's really bad now, but it was bad even then. I walked in as they were drawing numbers out of a hat. It was cool out, and my horns were cold. I hadn't played a note that day, and I figured – "There are 60 people at the audition, I'll be fine." I drew number 1 out of a hat. I thought, "Oh no! ...But this is what happened with San Jose, and I won, so maybe there's hope." I asked the personnel manager, "Would you mind if I took a few minutes to warm up?" I still had my coat on. She said, "No, we need to start right away." So I went out and the first thing on the list to play was the Haydn Trumpet Concerto, and so I took my horn out and said, "OK, there are three notes here – I'll just play them like they're the first three notes in my Schlossberg book (which is a book of warm-up exercises)." So I had three notes to warm up. I did it, and played through the list. What was interesting ... I don't think they took anyone else into the finals until at least about fifteen or sixteen people later. I tell my students that – the idea is that you want to play in such a way that it eliminates the competition. Drawing first means you get to establish the standard. If you establish a good one, they're not going to let anybody else in the finals for a while, until they've forgotten about you.

So that was one of three auditions that I took over the years where I drew number 1 out of a hat. But that was the scariest one, because I literally had not played that day. But it all worked out. All of the rounds were behind a screen. The audition I had taken for the Jerusalem Symphony was an old-fashioned audition. It was in a hotel room with the conductor and personnel manager in New York. You just come in and play – "What have you got?" Auditions aren't too much different today – there's just more tape rounds and things like that that you have to be prepared for. I worked with a couple of students who were very young for their auditions with their tapes. It's really good to learn how to make a good tape, and a good presentation of yourself. Usually I work on it with them a lot, and have them record, and we'll sit down and listen to the recordings together. There was one – a grad student here – I vetoed. I said, "Don't send the tape – re-record

that.” That was for San Francisco Symphony, and he ended up getting into the audition. If you listen together with a student, they can learn a lot about what a committee listens for.

**UPDIKE**                    When you were playing for San Jose and Oakland, were you teaching at all?

**BURKHART**                I taught for ten years at Stanford. I had replaced Joyce Johnson Hamilton in the San Jose Symphony. So I taught at San Jose State, and at Stanford, for about ten years. When I got the job here I had already quit San Jose State, but I was still teaching at Stanford, and then I ended up quitting Stanford also. For me, it’s much easier and more fun to focus on one school, and one group of students. Like at the Conservatory – I have fewer students with more individual attention, so I can give them all of my time and energy, and whatever they need. Not just whatever they want, but whatever they need. I really enjoyed teaching at San Jose State – I had a lot of students there, some of whom are doing very well today, in spite of me. I had a number of students at Stanford over the years ... that was interesting, because it was a little like at Yale, except there was no music school there. I’ll never forget; the students were so funny. They were really talented and smart, but I remember one student in particular – I said, “It doesn’t sound like you’ve been practicing a lot lately.” He said, “Well you know, Stanford is a very difficult school. It is immensely challenging to find the time to practice here, and still do the incredible academic workload that we have here at Stanford.” I said, “Well, I didn’t have a big problem at Yale practicing.” I just saw him wither – I laughed, I said, “It’s OK, I understand.” But it was really funny, because he tried to pull the “Ivy league of the West Coast” card, and it did not work.

I was excited to become a part of the Conservatory faculty. Glenn had been teaching here, and was pretty much the trumpet teacher here when I started. There were only really a couple of students. You’re here long enough, and you realize a lot of things are cyclical – the number of students that you have, and the quality of the students can go up and down over the years. You don’t necessarily have a lot of control over that, but for better or for worse they hired me to help bring in more students, and take more students on, and that’s what I did.

**UPDIKE**                    Was it Glenn who recommended you to the Conservatory?

**BURKHART**                And the other faculty – I had played with a lot of the other faculty members, particularly with the Symphony. I think it just kind of evolved out of that. Dave Krehbiel was there, Mark Lawrence was there – it seemed like I was the guy to have. I was doing a lot of freelancing as well – playing a lot with the Symphony, in particular.

I should also talk about my other teachers. Shall we go back and do that?

**UPDIKE**

Yes, there was Adolph Herseth and Arnold Jacobs.

**BURKHART**

I knew Arnold Jacobs and Bud Herseth through my teacher Charlie Geyer – through Eddie Druzinsky, the father of one of my best friends all through school who played harp in the Chicago Symphony. And of course I knew of their incredible reputations. I'll bet I could tell you who was playing in one note, if it was a "drop the needle" contest. Interestingly, I didn't study with him until later in life, and I'm really glad I didn't. My parents continued to live in Chicago long after I'd left to go off to college, and to Jerusalem, and so on. While I was at Jerusalem – one of my first lessons with Bud Herseth was on a piece, the Telemann Trumpet Concerto, that I was going to play with the Jerusalem Symphony. I called him up, and said, "I'm going to play the Telemann Concerto when I go back to Israel in a few weeks. Would you be willing to work with me on it?" That was really how my lessons with Bud Herseth were, and I'm fortunate that he was willing to see me. From then on, whenever I'd go back to Chicago, I'd call him up and say the same thing – "I'm working on Mahler Five right now..." I was always getting ready for some performance. A Haydn or Hummel concerto ... each lesson, instead of working on exercises or fundamentals or etudes – or as a lot of other players do, they would be getting ready for an audition and would have a repertoire list – it would always be on one piece.

My lessons varied in length from about an hour to two and a half hours with Bud Herseth. I studied with him for over twelve years, and it would always be about that one specific piece. I would always be surprised – I thought if it was a long piece, it would be a long lesson. But one of the longest lessons I ever had was on the *Parsifal* prelude by Wagner. There are only two big licks in that for the trumpet – two beautiful, soaring solos in the beginning of the prelude. I remember that lesson so vividly. It was in the basement of Orchestra Hall. Bud Herseth was still smoking a pipe at the time, and we were in the locker room down there. He set his pipe down and sat down on the bench in front of the lockers. I was playing it on a rotary valve trumpet, which is very difficult to play, but very authentic in terms of the German, or teutonic, sort of sound. I worked so hard on it, and was so excited and pumped about doing it. I played through the first and second solo, and I felt that I absolutely nailed them. I thought, "This is great. All he's going to do is pat me on the back and offer me a job!" Of course, boy was I wrong. Instead, I remember he put down his pipe on the bench, stood up, and walked towards me. As he walked, he rubbed his hands together and said, "Let's get to work." I thought, "Get to work on what?! That was glorious!" He proceeded to give me the most eye-opening, profound lesson on *Parsifal* and Wagner and Bruno Walter. He said, "When I think of Wagner, I think of playing with Bruno Walter." He said, "You are using vibrato in this, and that's appropriate, but you're using the wrong kind. If I played like that for Bruno Walter, he would say I had profaned the piece. You're using a Romantic vibrato, not a religious vibrato. Where your vibrato comes from is as if you're Romeo and you're talking about Juliet. That's a deep and wonderful love, but it's not a religious love. It's not the love of God. What you need is a vibrato that comes not from your heart, but from your soul."

I learned a lot in that lesson. I learned that knowing the opera was so much more important than knowing the excerpt – and knowing Wagner was so much more important than knowing the notes. And about Bruno Walter and the history of conducting the piece, and this whole revelation of the approach to the vibrato. Nobody ever told me that before, and nobody has told me that since. That was something that came up on the spur of the moment ... a lot of teachers dredge up what they usually say, and he was never like that. It was always tailor-made towards the moment. He then worked with me for two hours on trying to get me to do it! In an incredibly patient, understanding way. He wouldn't let me out of the room until I played it great. I played it good when I started, but I thought I was playing it great. He wouldn't let me out until it had a meaning that transcended anything I'd ever played on the trumpet before. That's one of the things I try to do with my students – a lot of teachers say, "You just need to do this, this, and this." Or, "Just play it like this, and I'll see you next week." A lot of my teachers – Herseth and Jacobs in particular – would never let you out of the room until you got it. That's so, so, so important.

The lessons with Jacobs were interesting. He's kind of a guru in brass playing, and sees a lot of different instrumentalists. His studio was in the Fine Arts building – the same building as my mom's piano studio. He has all kinds of wonderful gizmos and equipment to measure your lung capacity. I was so frustrated in my lessons with him because he never once hooked me up to one of his machines, and I sooooo wanted to be hooked up to a machine! I would play etudes and excerpts, just like any other lesson. I wanted him to say, "Let's work on breathing today." He did get me one time pretty bad, and that's when I played *Petrushka* for him. There's a wonderful solo called *The Ballerina's Dance* that is incredibly difficult because it's just you and the snare drum. It goes on for quite a while, and you need to breathe to get through it and make a nice sound that's well supported. So I played it for him, and he totally hoodwinked me. He said, "Gee, that was marvelous, Dave! I bet you could play it in one breath." I'm a brash 20-something – "Of course! No problem!" So I played it in one breath. He turned at me and looked at me with a quizzical sort of look, and he said, "Well, now you've played it twice in one breath. The first time you were just faking it." He taught me a valuable lesson – when you breathe quickly in an excerpt, you need to really breathe. The point wasn't to do it in one breath, the point was to take the breaths you need, but don't fake a breath – don't just open your mouth and pretend like you're breathing. Really move air into your lungs. I'm a big guy – I could get through it, no problem, in one breath. But that wasn't the point. So the valuable lesson, by tricking me, was that we needed to spend a lot of time moving a lot of air into my lungs in a quick space – almost a fraction of a second in the case of *Petrushka*. I did the same thing with him as with Herseth – I would call him when I came to town, and try to get lessons whenever I could. He would never ask me to bring or prepare anything, same as Bud, they would just say, "What have you got?" when I showed up. It was when I was performing a particular piece that I wanted help with.

So those were fantastic post-graduate studies and trumpet lessons. I wouldn't have been nearly mature or competent enough as a player, I don't think, to have fully benefitted from those lessons. I learned a lot about myself, a lot about playing, about music, life, and teaching, from all of my teachers – but those being the most recent lessons, I would say those in particular. With that *Parsifal* thing – I just get chills. I had no idea. What was interesting was subsequently I played *Parsifal* with San Francisco Opera, and guess what? It all of a sudden meant so much to me. I coached a couple of students on the excerpt, and was able to impart that to them. That's the beautiful thing about Bud Herseth – and I might as well tell it now that he's gone because I never shared it with anybody when he was alive – I would always offer to pay him at the end of every lesson, and he would always say no. "How much for the lesson?" ... He would say, "Dave you know this – nothing. Just pass it along." I always felt that that became my mission statement as a teacher. I had been so blessed by all the wonderful teaching that I had, that I felt a calling to pass that along – the things that I came up with from this amalgam of all these teachers. We rarely study with one person. Those are really some pretty special, and profound – long hours that went like that – with these amazing people who were so generous with their time. They were bigshots, they didn't need to see me.

**UPDIKE**  
you so much.

That's wonderful. That seems like a good place to end it for today. Thank

*Friday, June 24, 2016*

**UPDIKE** When we left off, we were finishing up talking about your teachers. We were just about to arrive at the Conservatory. How did you first become connected with the Conservatory – how was it that you became a faculty member here?

**BURKHART** I think it was because I was doing a lot of freelancing in the city, so people were familiar with me. Everybody on the brass faculty was familiar with me. Glenn Fischthal was teaching here at the time. There were hardly any trumpet students – not because Glenn isn't a fabulous teacher and a fabulous player, but just because there weren't. It goes in waves; it's a little bit cyclical with that, in terms of enrollment. They thought that they'd bring in somebody fresh-faced, and so I was able to attract some students and bring the trumpet department up to speed in terms of the enrollment, and the quality of the students that we brought in. I think that was in '88, and then the rest is history. It's been a great ride from the old school to the new.

**UPDIKE** In '88, when you joined, could you talk a little bit about some of the challenges that you saw with the trumpet department – you said you brought up the quality of the applicants and the students. Could you give some details?

**BURKHART** One of the advantages of the Conservatory, and one of its challenges, is that we're in California. We're far away from what some people think is the center of the musical universe, which is New York and the East Coast. It's an expensive plane ride, and there aren't many other schools – in other words, somebody might fly from San Francisco to the East Coast, and audition for six different schools in a few days. Whereas out here, there aren't as many choices. I won't say we were provincial, because we certainly weren't, but I think people didn't know about us. This was all pre-internet, too, and that's made a huge impact on making it easy for people to find out more about us, and contact us. I have a lot of interaction with prospective trumpet students through the internet, and always offer to help them prepare for their auditions here. It's important to me as a faculty member that the people who come to audition here play at their best. I can give them a couple little tricks and tips and pointers about succeeding here in an audition. I've had some fly out for a lesson, and then we take a tour of the school and show them around. I've also had people send me a tape of themselves – I've even Skyped a few lessons with people to help them prep for their audition. All of those things have made the Conservatory much more accessible and in the public eye. I think it was sort of the best kept secret, in some ways, back then. It was a little gem – but a little gem that not everybody east of the Rockies knew as much about as they should. So I think that that was important. It's word of mouth too – little by little the word gets out. One student who attends tells others, and so it works that way also – and did, even back then.

**UPDIKE** And in terms of the department and the curriculum – were there any changes that you immediately saw needed to be made?

**BURKHART** One of the things we did right away was change the audition requirements. I tried to make the jury requirements a little more formal, and the expectations of the students. I think that students respond to that well, if they know what they're supposed to do and when they're supposed to do it – and how they're supposed to do it. That helped raise the standard, and raise the expectation with the new students of what they needed to do to achieve success here, and success in their careers.

**UPDIKE** And what was your first impression of the Conservatory?

**BURKHART** I thought it was absolutely charming, and tiny. It was a beautiful school, and a beautiful community – a beautiful vibe from the school. You drove into the parking lot, and then you didn't really come in through the main entrance – you came in through an entrance that was kind of like a lounge, with some couches and vending machines. Of course anywhere there are vending machines, there are students nearby. So that was kind of the hangout for the students – they'd often wait for their lessons there, knowing that if they had the first lesson the teacher would walk through. I had a wonderful little studio that I still get a little sentimental about when I drive by on 19th Avenue. I was on the second floor – unfortunately for the administration, above the administration offices. We were trumpet players after all, playing our orchestral excerpts at full blast! It had one little window, and nice acoustics. It wasn't a giant room, but it had a really, really nice acoustic in it. It was great. It had a view of the Golden Gate Bridge on most days – you know how that works. So you could just see the top of the towers of the Golden Gate Bridge. I always thought that was really cool. Our concert hall – we are so blessed now with all of the opportunities for the students to perform in different venues. In those days, it was pretty much the one hall – and a large room for recitals and things upstairs. The hall was not nearly large enough for the students to play the big pieces with orchestra. Even a Tchaikovsky symphony, if it's #4, 5, or 6, was pushing the envelope a little bit in terms of the ability of the hall to handle the volume of sound – and even seat all the members of the orchestra.

It's fantastic now that we have a hall. We're also in a place now where it's not just students and musicians and neighborhood people coming to concerts, but it's a downtown venue. I'm shocked and delighted to go into an orchestra concert and struggle to find a seat. It's fantastic. There's even a great following for brass ensemble concerts – for trumpet recitals. And that goes back to the internet too – the trumpet department has a great Facebook page, and it's easy to promote concerts and things like that. We actually have a following of people that like to come to those sorts of concerts. The only thing I reminisce about, which I think is going to be fixed, is that we need more dorms. In the old days, all the students lived within six blocks of the school. It was easy to go home and have dinner, and come back to practice or rehearse, or go to one of your

fellow students' recitals. People were there all the time – it's 10:00 at night and people are practicing, rehearsing, or hanging out in the lounge – by the vending machine. I think that's going to change dramatically once more of our students are living close by. That will make it more of a nighttime, as well as a daytime, place to be.

**UPDIKE** Right, a bigger campus. Could you talk a little bit about Glenn Fischthal?

**BURKHART** Oh, wow. How long do I have? Glenn and I met in Israel in 1978. He was principal trumpet of the Israel Philharmonic with Zubin Mehta. I was hired as principal trumpet of the Jerusalem Symphony, played with him, and got to know him in terms of hearing the Philharmonic, and hearing him play. He jokes that I've followed him around, because he ended up coming back to the states and going to San Diego Symphony – and I ended up as first trumpet at San Diego Symphony a few years later. Then he came to San Francisco, and I came to San Francisco. So it's kind of funny that we all have these different places, and I was following him around. He's a very mellow fellow, and yet his manner belies his intense passion for music and his intense caring about the quality and the musicianship behind a performance. And he's an absolutely stunning player. I learned a lot – I've been playing with him in the Bay Brass since it was founded, and of course I played with him a million times at the Symphony. And now he's played extra with the San Francisco Opera – so I play with him in that context. I've never studied with him, but you know how sometimes you sit next to a player and all their good stuff just slides into you, and it blends together. There are a lot of things that I do now that I didn't do when I came to the Bay Area because I've sat next to him, and learned from playing with him.

That's why I like to play duets with my students. I saw a student last night, and we're working over the summer on an individual basis to continue the progress that he made during the year. So we spent the entire evening just playing duets. We played some corny old cornet duets on B-flat trumpet, and then we played from a wonderful etude book by Charlier – a Belgian trumpeter and composer. There's a second trumpet book to that, so we played a bunch of Charlier duets on the C trumpet. I was honestly able to say when we finished, "Now you are fun to play with." He got it – that was high praise. You want to be a person that's fun to play with. I had fun playing duets with him. That was real fun. I learned from my teachers, playing duets with them, and playing with great players like Glenn, kind of like osmosis – it leaks into your playing. Sometimes it's best not to think too hard about it.

**UPDIKE** So when you started teaching at the Conservatory, how many students did you have?

**BURKHART** The first year there were four – something like that.

**UPDIKE** So you had four students, and then Glenn had additional students?

**BURKHART** Glenn had none at that time. For the first year or two, he might have been finishing up one student that he had, but I had pretty much all the new ones coming in. Now we have more teachers here, and I've learned that it kind of comes in waves. I've had as many as six students at the Conservatory in recent years, and as few as one or two. It doesn't really matter to me that much – I almost prefer the two students to the six, because one of the hallmarks of the Conservatory is the individual attention that you can give a student. Six is a tiny studio compared to the big music factories around the country, but I'd much prefer to spend more time – or like with last night, just get together for a couple of hours and play duets with a student. I'd much rather do that than divide my time. And all of us share the duties of teaching the trumpet class. The nice thing about that is that even though you might be studying with one teacher, you're exposed to the other teachers' playing, and approach, and coaching, through the trumpet class. I usually do the class at the end of the year, because I play a lot of opera in the fall, and also because that allows for me to help them prepare for the annual trumpet department recital, and their juries. So for me, that's the way it's always been, and always worked. This year we split it three ways – so we divided the year by three.

**UPDIKE** And what is done in the trumpet class that is different from individual lessons?

**BURKHART** The cool thing about that is the instructor gets to do whatever they want. One of the things I do – because I have the last class – is I ask them, “What haven't you learned so far that you really wanted to learn? What's been left out?” Everybody has their own style, and their own approach. I do a lot of trumpet ensemble playing, and orchestral section playing. This year we worked, for example, on Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*. We worked on the last movement of Mahler Three, and then the two and three-trumpet excerpts that are especially fun. I like to do it as more of a sight-reading kind of thing, because we should be able to sit down and read music – but sometimes I'll assign them that as well. And particularly because they always want it, and benefit from it, I always do a breathing class because I studied with Arnold Jacobs and he was kind of the brass guru of breathing. So we always have our breathing class, and then help them prep for their juries, which are very important here, and get the trumpet recital together. Like a lot of things, if you don't listen to the students and what they want to do – they'll say, “Gee, we never talked about tonguing this year!” And I'll say, “Great – we'll have a class on tonguing.” So it could come from them, it doesn't necessarily always have to come down from on high.

**UPDIKE** And do you have some stories about students over the years that you'd like to tell?

**BURKHART** Well, I have a few. They're all funny ones ... I could tell you the serious ones ... and I've had a lot of absolutely wonderful students. My goal with the students is that

they develop not only as trumpet players, but as musicians, and as people. I think the best thing I can do for that is try to be a role model, and try to handle my relationship with them the same way they will ultimately want to handle their relationship with other musicians and conductors that they work with.

I'll talk about students in terms of their accomplishments and achievements, but I'm very proud of all of them. It's fun to watch them grow over the years – whether it's four years in undergrad, or two years grad.

My favorite story by far, is of a wonderful student I had at the old school – Dan Eastwood. A tall, skinny, redheaded guy – a great trumpet player. He really did well – I had him as an undergrad for his four years, and when he was finally getting ready for his senior recital, I thought I would do what I always do, which is to offer some sage advice. You want to keep it simple, because it's one thing to play a full recital on the violin or the piano (those are tough) but on the trumpet, which can be a taxing instrument to play, sometimes just getting through a recital, let alone being comfortable, is a daunting challenge. He had a hard recital to play, but a lot of good pieces, and he was well prepared. I said, “Dan, what you need to think when you're playing your recital, is you need to feel like you're as comfortable as if you're playing in your living room. That you're almost inviting them into your living room, and you're expressing your ideas about the music. It shouldn't feel cold or sterile, or a hospital environment – as we often feel when we tense up.” I was really trying to relax him. So the next night, I came back to the Conservatory to see his recital. I walked into Hellman Hall, and my jaw dropped. He and a bunch of his friends had gotten a truck, and had imported his entire living room – the furniture, the rugs, a nightstand and lamp, sofas, overstuffed chairs and everything – and had artfully arranged it just like his living room on the stage – with the piano kind of slid in there, and a music stand. I had to bite my tongue the whole recital, it was hilarious. Talk about calling your bluff – and of course he played great, because he was playing in his living room! I didn't mean it quite as literally as he ended up (jokingly) taking it. I've been to a lot of very memorable concerts, but for funny reasons that was the most memorable of all. It was fantastic – it was really, really good.

**UPDIKE**                      Did he invite the audience up to sit on the rug?

**BURKHART**                Afterwards, everyone went up because they wanted to sit on the sofa. But I had no idea that was coming. I have to be careful about my advice to students, because they will take it literally!

**UPDIKE**                      Is there anything that you could say about the culture of student life at the Conservatory that you've witnessed over the past 30 years? How it might have been different?

**BURKHART** I think that there's a great team spirit and camaraderie among the students. I find that the trumpet class and the brass ensemble – there are different levels for the simple reason that we could have a freshman in there with a second year grad student. There's not an undergrad brass ensemble, or a grad trumpet class – they're all thrown in together, and I think that's marvelous because they have to learn to work with each other and be accepting of different levels of talent and ability, and help each other, and work together as a team. I think they think that everybody in a symphony orchestra is all the same age, and at the same level of playing, and they don't realize that some are on the way up in their careers, some are on the way down – some are old, some are young. The funny thing is, it doesn't mean that the young ones are always the better ones, and that's true with the orchestra assignments. Every year in the fall we have seating assignment auditions for orchestra, and it doesn't matter if a freshman wins and gets to play *Petrushka* if there was a grad student there. It's conceivable, and I can think of a couple freshmen that I had that were already in their first couple of years as good as any grad student. Learning to work together is something that's really important, and something that is handled really well at the school.

I'll tell you about a couple of students that I'm particularly proud of – besides the students who put their living room furniture on the concert stage. I've had a number of different students, and they've all succeeded in different ways. I feel that a graduate of the Conservatory – whether undergraduate or grad – is successful if they are making a living in music and happy doing it. That might mean they're teaching the trumpet. One student I had, Scott Miller, runs a band program up in Fairfield and has an absolutely incredible high school band, it's unbelievable. He was a great trumpet player, and continues to be, but is an amazing teacher as well.

Owen Miyoshi, who was an undergrad here, made absolutely amazing progress over his four years and blossomed into a very fine player, and now makes his living on the “freeway philharmonic” – playing in a lot of different orchestras, and also teaching. He plays great, and we've had a couple of opportunities (and that's the ultimate dream for a teacher) to play professionally together. I remember he and I played for the Bolshoi Ballet when they were on tour, *Swan Lake*, which has wonderful cornet parts. I was first cornet and he was second. He did a great job, and I was secretly tearing up because he was doing such a great job. There he was – sounding so great! I've had a couple of others that just had that spark.

There was one, Nora King Smith, I remember her audition like it was yesterday. We had a lot of auditions that day. It was in the little trumpet studio looking out on the Golden Gate Bridge. Somebody was practicing in the hall, and I opened the door and in my stern, fatherly voice said, “No practicing in the hall!” And it stopped. When she walked in, the first thing she said was, “By the way, that wasn't me practicing in the hall!” She had (and still has) a spark in her personality, and a spark in her playing. Even though she, like Owen, developed a lot as they came here, they always retained that spark. She and I got to play together with Chris Martin, the first trumpet in

the Chicago Symphony in a sextet by Oskar Bohme at Summer Brass Institute. Chris played first, I played second, she played third – what a treat for her, and for me.

I had two in particular from Fresno who have been fantastic – Mark Grisez and Jeff Strong. Mark Grisez went through the undergrad program here. We worked on his embouchure his first year, and at the end of that year he was already in the semi-finals of the Philadelphia Orchestra as a freshman. This is a fun thing that we've done sometimes – rather than me hogging him for four years, I had him for the first two years and then turned him over to Mark Inouye, who plays first trumpet with the San Francisco Symphony, and he ended up in his senior year getting a job as acting associate principal in the San Francisco Symphony. So he was juggling the Conservatory orchestra and San Francisco Symphony rehearsals, and everything else. He's a marvelous player. Another one – Jeff Strong, who came here as an undergrad and went on to Northwestern to study with one of my teachers, Charlie Geyer, as well as his wife Barbara Butler, went into the Marine Band – The President's Own! He played there for a number of years, and just recently won a job with St. Louis Symphony.

When St. Louis was here on tour I had him come in and give a master class. What a treat that was! The same thing with Mark Grisez – I had Mark in to give a master class. When the students see somebody in a master class who is not much older than they are, that went through the Conservatory ... I had to pry Jeff Strong away from the students after the class, because everybody wanted to talk to him. They were able to see themselves, in a way, in him. So that's real fun, to bring back a student, so the students get a chance to work with someone who is now playing professionally. Ari Micich was a grad student of mine here, and Scott Macomber was a grad student. Scott did the opposite from Jeff Strong – Jeff studied here for four years then went to Northwestern. Scott went to Northwestern for four years, and then came here for grad school. Both Ari and Scott are really doing well as freelance players. I play with them all the time. I played with Ari as third trumpet on *Pictures at an Exhibition* in the Berkeley Symphony, where Ari played first. I'm currently playing with Scott in the San Francisco Opera run of *Don Carlo*. That's really, really fun. They continue to develop as players, and they've always been great people. That's the real treat – when you're sitting next to one of your students. When I got to go on tour of Europe with the San Francisco Symphony, we were doing Mahler Two (we did Six together on another tour), and I was sitting right next to Scott. How fun was that? So that's a handful of the many wonderful students I've had. I could go on and on. It's been great to get to know them, and to continue to see them progress.

**UPDIKE**                    That's fantastic. We have this list of Conservatory colleagues here. We certainly don't need to talk about everyone on the list, but if you have some former or even current colleagues who you'd like to share memories of...

**BURKHART** I know virtually everybody on the list, but three came to mind because I've worked with them a fair amount – Bill Banovetz I knew not just from here, but I got to know him as a player – I played in Santa Fe Opera for four summers as first trumpet, and he was first oboist, so that was super fun to get to know him. He was a beautiful player. That's a fun gig because you're hanging out with everybody, and once August rolls around all the operas are rehearsed and you're just performing, so you have long days free to get to know each other and to go out together. I have some great memories of him.

Ray Froehlich, from the Symphony, is just a fantastic percussionist. I'm a huge, huge, huge fan of my favorite trumpet player of all time (no disrespect to my teachers) and that's Clifford Brown, who was a fantastic jazz player in the 1950s. Over the years I've done a number of transcriptions of his solos, and on one of my recitals here at the Conservatory I played with a little group, and Ray was the drummer, a tune called *Once in a While*, which is an extended ballad recorded by Clifford Brown. I did my best job of impersonating Clifford. So Ray and I have played together a few times in those chamber music-y kind of situations. This was an unusual one because he was playing trap set.

Floyd Cooley of course was on the tuba faculty when I started here. He and I both studied with Arnold Jacobs, so we have that in common. A fantastic tuba player – wonderful sound. There are some great early recordings, I did a lot of recordings with the Symphony over the years, but there are a number of them, particularly with Edo de Waart and Blomstedt, that he's on and sounds glorious. We played a lot of brass quintets together. And we did a number of concerts at the Conservatory – it was the faculty quintet and he was in that group. I also remember a funny thing – it was pre-9/11 when you didn't have security at airports and things like that, it would always seem on a Saturday night at the Symphony that he was maybe pushing the tempos a little bit. Then you saw this blur the moment you stood up to bow, and he was gone! “Floyd! Floyd! Where'd you go?!” Well, he had to make the 11:05 flight to Chicago, because he taught in Chicago every week on Sundays. So that was always amusing, we always needled him about that. “Were you rushing a bit in the last movement?!” On some concerts, that was a tight flight to make. So those are the three that I spent the most time playing with. They're all great people.

**UPDIKE** Could you talk a little bit about your teaching style, and how it might have changed over the years?

**BURKHART** It's changed a lot, like I suppose with any teacher – and I think it's important that it change and evolve – that you not be, “This is the way that I teach.” If you're Rosina Lhévinne (my mom's piano teacher at Juilliard) you can teach the way you want, and stay the same, and people still flock to your door. I've been teaching since high school, and all I was really doing at first was imitating the teachers I'd had. In other words, you teach the way you've been taught. And some of the teachers that I had were a good deal older than I was at the

time – they were of a more formal, traditional sort of student/teacher relationship. I’ve never had a teacher burn a CD for me, or text me – or Xerox music for me, or come running over to lend me a horn. It was a different kind of relationship. Particularly over the last ten-plus years – I can be a teacher who isn’t just repeating things that was told to them. Although I’ve had some great things told to me over the years, and I do want to repeat those. But you can make up your own stuff – you have your own ideas about teaching, and your own philosophies. That becomes important, and also the relationship with the student (I’d like to believe, and hopefully the students will confirm this) is different with every student. You need to have the lessons be flexible in terms of the students’ needs. We talked about that in terms of trumpet class – asking them at the end of the semester, “What has the faculty forgotten to teach you this year? Let’s do that.” I have my trumpet students do a self-evaluation at the beginning of the year, and at the end, which is a laundry list of the aspects of playing. We see how much time they’re devoting towards those aspects of playing. We all tend to practice what we sound good at, so it’s important to balance that a little bit. I think it has evolved a lot, and trying to get to know the students as people. I think the trumpet lesson can be a place in a busy school environment where they’re all pushed and pulled and have a million things to do – I’d like to think that lesson might be a place where things can slow down a little bit, and you cannot feel rushed, and “Go, go, go!” Instead – hear a little about the students. Maybe they’re playing the Brandenburg Concerto next week and they forgot to tell you! You want to know that. Maybe they’re having personal challenges, or other issues. I’m not a counselor, but I can try to help and offer advice. Try to help them find a little bit of balance in their lives, and in their practicing.

We can only practice and play so many hours a day. I find great peace and solace in practicing, and I like to think that they can find that too – and great enjoyment, and problem solving. I’m a big proponent ... if you’re invited to a barbeque and you show up, park, and ring the front doorbell ... and you ring and ring and ring ... guess what? They’re probably in the back yard! In practicing, we tend to just keep on ringing that front doorbell. Maybe the side door is open – maybe you smell the barbeque and go around that way – find another solution. If you try something and it doesn’t have results, then you’re probably not on the right track. I like to think that by offering them all these different solutions, that eventually they can find their own way. I didn’t realize how good my teachers were until I got the job as first trumpet in the Jerusalem Symphony. I was thousands of miles away from any of my teachers, and I was pretty much on my own. I realized that these marvelous teachers I had had (without telling me they were doing it) had given me all these tools for problem solving and quickly fixing things and getting better, and finding more musical solutions. There’s always a musical solution to a technical problem. When the students start, they tend to always be looking for the technical solution – if you start with the music, and if I challenge them, even a freshmen, on a very high level musically – “What is the phrase? What is the line? Where is the direction? What are you trying to say with the piece? What is the piece about? What’s the story?” Often their level of trumpet playing will have

to bubble up to that level of musical demand that's placed on them by me first, and then ultimately by themselves. And that as a result they become better players, and better musicians.

Sure, there are times you need to get under the hood and help somebody – I did that with a few students where it became obvious, even with some fabulous players like Mark Grisez – that there was going to be a glass ceiling. He didn't see it yet, but I saw it coming. I said, "We might as well fix this, and you'll be fine." I think there are times for that, but really driving the music and challenging them musically – they do rise to the challenge. It doesn't necessarily mean playing hard music – it could mean playing "easy" music at a really high level; which is ironically a lot of what we have to do in the orchestra. Trumpet players don't always play hard stuff in the orchestra, but boy, it's gotta be good! It's got to be super solid. I find if they can balance the challenges of difficult music with some really easy, flowing pieces, it's fantastic. The other thing is, I will not let them out of my studio without them succeeding. I'm not fond of the approach where you say, "OK, if you do this, and this, and this, and come back, you'll be fine." Even when I assign them something, I say, "Let's hear it now," and that gives me a baseline for knowing the progress they might make in a week. It sets a standard. And if they're having difficulty with something, I just won't let them out of the room until they've got it. And the challenge for the course of the week would be to repeat that.

A lot of those kinds of things have evolved over the years. I really enjoy the intellectual aspect of it, in the sense of knowing that each student is an individual and has their own challenges and goals and dreams and backgrounds. My challenge is to speak to that student, through my playing or talking, to try to really find them and find who they are, and what works for them. I don't like to be the retread type of teacher – a lot of people do that with master classes sometimes. A student will play, and before they've even played a couple of notes, the master class person is already going into the file cabinet – and then they go into their performance of being a master class coach. The students don't always get that that's going on, because it seems new to them, but you go, "This really seems canned to me." I'd rather not have it be that way, so that it's almost improvisatory. That was one of the fun things about having Mark Grisez and Jeff Strong – they're young players, and haven't done a lot of master classes. I think Mark's here might have been his first. So you watch the wheels spinning as he's thinking of what to say, and it's fresh and fun. I was pleased to see that he said a couple of things that I told him, and a couple of things that one of my teachers had told him. So those things had obviously sunk in, and they were appropriate – they weren't canned and, "Here we go!" I joke with some of the students about master classes – I say, "Play at such a high level that the person listening to you can't think right away of what to say." That's the goal. If they just say, "Try it again and use more air..." Well, duh. And of course everybody plays better the second time in a master class, so you could even say, "Try it again, but put your left hand behind your back..." Oh my God! That's the answer! ... That gives you a little bit of an idea of how my philosophy of teaching has evolved over the years.

**UPDIKE** That's great. We talked a little bit about the differences between the old Conservatory and the new location. Is there anything else you'd like to say about the move to Oak Street? How that might have changed the character of the school?

**BURKHART** From day one here – and I do see it with the prospective students that come in to audition – you walk into this building, and it's a real conservatory. It's the real deal. It's always been the real deal, but physically now it is. When the students walk out on stage of the Concert Hall to audition for us, they do the same thing every time – they look up at the ceiling. It's great, in terms of attracting the students and saying, "We're serious about this," but also at giving them the kind of facilities and environment that really feels like they're on a professional career track. I think that's the most important thing about the new school.

**UPDIKE** We'll move away from the Conservatory a little bit. Do you have some stories about collaborations with composers – local or otherwise?

**BURKHART** I used to play with a group called the Arch Ensemble for Experimental Music, and we did some recordings. I'm very proud of one that's been re-released on CD called *Night Music* by Robert Erickson – the San Diego composer. That was probably one of the hardest pieces (it was really a trumpet solo) that I've ever had to tackle. There are a lot of quarter tones in it, and he doesn't give you much help, he just writes them there. So I had to teach myself all these different fingerings to work on it. In terms of playing contemporary composers, that was amazing. When I was in school, I think I told you about a piece called *Not Lilacs*, which is a twelve-tone bebop piece that I played – Robert Morris was the composer. And I was lucky to be here, playing with both the Symphony and the Opera, in the early days of John Adams here in the Bay Area. I played on one of the first Symphony recordings with Edo de Waart of John Adams's music – which meant that we performed it a lot, also. *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* was one of the first that we did, and it was amazing. They just nail it, it's fantastic. The operas were really amazing. I got to sit in the pit for a lot of Adams's operas, and for me, that's his best music. It's very moving, it's very powerful. From *The Death of Klinghoffer*, to *Doctor Atomic*, to *Nixon in China* – it's just amazing. It's really hard, but that's OK if the net effect is great – then who cares? I could go on and on, but I've been very fortunate, particularly with the orchestras here. I played in a Charles Wuorinen album with San Francisco Symphony. Pretty inaccessible music for a lot of people, but boy, it's fantastic music. Very challenging, but very fun to play.

**UPDIKE** Are there composers you know of today who are writing pieces specifically for trumpet that are exciting to you?

**BURKHART** There are lots of them, but my two favorites are Joseph Turrin and Eric Ewazen. They both write in a style that's very accessible, but very challenging and fun and

interesting. I think both of them have a certain lyricism in their music, even in the fast stuff – the hard stuff – that I find trumpet students here really respond to, and enjoy playing. They succeed if they’re approaching the music lyrically, with a beautiful flow. They see that success – “This piece works because I’m playing it a certain way.” The pieces almost foster this kind of high level of musicianship, and ease of playing and flow. Those are the two that I can think of off the top of my head that I really like a lot. They have so many pieces, and they’re really great for student recitals.

**UPDIKE** Could you talk a little about some of the conductors you’ve worked with over the years?

**BURKHART** I’ve been so lucky over the years with conductors. I can give you a laundry list – Solti, Valery Gergiev, Mehta, Raymond, Leppard, Charles Mackerras, Gustavo Dudamel – I played *The Firebird* with Dudamel at the Symphony, and it was really interesting – even some of the most jaded viola and trumpet players (!) were going, “Hey this guy isn’t just a flash in the pan, this is for real!” He was really making music, it wasn’t just flashy stuff. He was really marvelous. I played first trumpet on *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at San Francisco Opera, which is probably Strauss’s hardest opera for the trumpet, and one of his most challenging and performed operas with Christoph von Dohnányi, who was very demanding but an absolutely incredible musician. Obviously the San Francisco Symphony people – de Waart, Blomstedt, and MTT.

MTT I got to play with not only at the Symphony, but he conducted us in his piece *Street Song* when we recorded it for the Bay Brass on our Grammy-nominated CD. That recording session – wow! We had performed the piece with him, and two years later we had one rehearsal with another conductor just to get us back into shape, and then we went up to Skywalker Ranch and spent the whole day with him on the piece. It was six hours, and he was just magnificent. Talk about somebody that wouldn’t settle ... he had a vision for the piece, and wouldn’t let it go if what he was hearing wasn’t meshing with that vision. But in a nice way. As a result, I listen to that recording, and it’s unlike any other brass ensemble recording you’ll ever hear, because he got us to do stuff that’s just impossible. But he got that out of us, and as a result the group is better, the recording is better, the performance is better, and everything like that.

Of course in the Opera, Donald Runnicles and Nicola Luisotti – I played *La forza del destino*, which was Nicola Luisotti’s debut at the Opera, and I’m playing *Don Carlo* with him this week. I played on stage for him as well in *Lohengrin* – his first Wagner opera. He’s fantastic – Runnicles for Wagner is unbelievable. You have a feeling that even though the opera may be 5 hours and 40 minutes long, the pacing is such that it just keeps going forward. A lot of times when a conductor conducts slowly, the music dies – the forward momentum dies. Just because it’s moving slow, shouldn’t mean it’s not moving forward anymore. Leonard Bernstein was great

at that, and Runnicles is fantastic at that. Calvin Simmons in Oakland Symphony, and Kent Nagano and Michael Morgan in Oakland, Carter Nice in Sacramento, David Atherton in San Diego Symphony, George Cleve in San Jose. Slatkin I got to play with when I played with the St. Louis Symphony for a number of weeks, and got to sit next to their first trumpet player, Susan Slaughter, who's fabulous. What a treat that was.

I'll tell you my Solti story, because I played with him a couple of times. I got called – and I try to tell the students this story because they need to know that you need to be ready, and that doesn't mean you need to practice all the time – it means you need to be “ready.” So I got a call about 6pm on a Friday night saying, “Dave, this is the personnel manager of the Symphony. Can you come down and play *Petrushka* with us tonight?” Now, *Petrushka* for the trumpet is a tough piece, no matter what part you're playing. In this case, Solti was conducting, and it was the 1911 version, which is the larger orchestra with two cornets and two trumpet parts. So they wanted me to come in and play the second trumpet part. The piece begins with a second trumpet solo. And then there's a lot of stuff, particularly at the end with the death of *Petrushka* scene, where it's the trumpets, not the cornets. The ballerina dances are the cornets, but some of the other big stuff is with the trumpets. So anyway, I got my tails on and hightailed it down there as quickly as I could. I was warming up, and I played the end of *Petrushka* together with the other trumpet player – Laurie McGaw – who was the associate principal at the time. Glenn Fischthal was playing first cornet, and he was using my cornet, which is hilarious! He's borrowed my cornet a number of times for *Soldier's Tale* and for *Petrushka*, and he's gotten a good review every time. So we always joke that it's really the cornet, not him, and now he feels almost superstitious that he's got to borrow my cornet – it's his lucky charm. It was time for the concert, 8:00, and *Petrushka* was the first piece. Nothing's happening, and there's no conductor. The personnel manager taps on my shoulder, and Laurie's shoulder, and says, “Maestro Solti would like to see you in his dressing room.” This means ... everybody's on stage, and the two trumpet players get up and walk off.

Solti is in his dressing room, and he goes, “My dears! My dears! I'm so glad that you came back. And you are...?” And I introduced myself, and said, “I've played with you before.” He said, “Yes, yes! We must go over this music, it's very hard.” He sat at the piano, and played with us as we did all the major excerpts that involved me – the last-minute sub without the benefit of rehearsal – including the big scene at the end. He finally stopped and said, “My dears – it will be magnificent! And good luck to you.” I didn't really know what to say, so I just said, “Good luck to you, too, Maestro!” What do you say? We ran back onstage, and he came out moments later, after the orchestra had tuned again. It was really fun in the performance, because he looked at me for every single entrance. Not in a menacing way, but in an encouraging way, which is so important, particularly when you're coming in at the last moment – you want to be encouraged! About the end of my second page, it looked like things were going to be fine, and he gave me the last cue that he gave me that night, and he gave me a little wink – like, “You're good.” And then

he went on and conducted the rest of the piece, and everything went great. That was a marvelous experience. Not everybody gets to do that. If you say, “Get to do it,” that’s important ... if you say, “Have to do it,” then you really shouldn’t be in music. Get to do it – “My gosh! Are you kidding?! Of course I’ll come down – I’ll be there in an instant!” I tell that story to my students, especially if they’re working on *Petrushka*, about the idea of being a freelancer and being always ready. Don’t have a glass of wine with dinner!

**UPDIKE** Is there anything that you’d like to say about the differences between the three conductors you’ve worked with at the Symphony?

**BURKHART** Sure. I also played with de Waart at Santa Fe Opera. He conducted a thrilling *Flying Dutchman* and did a marvelous opera by Shostakovich – with a very difficult first trumpet part – called *The Nose*. He was fantastic – and is really good with contemporary music, like Adams and things like that. Very Dutch in his mannerisms, but very much of a younger generation excitement. I did a recording of *Pines of Rome* with him with the Symphony, which was the first time I ever recorded with the San Francisco Symphony. Glenn Fischthal played the off-stage trumpet solo, which was fabulous. Edo is great, he is very inspiring and I really enjoyed working with him.

Blomstedt came in – it was a different thing, because it was more old-world. And yet I can’t think of a living conductor off-hand that I would play Bruckner with, or Brahms. He just had so much depth and understanding of the music. Nothing was in a hurry. He would always laugh in kind of a, “Ho, ho, ho,” kind of way. He was just marvelous. With MTT, suddenly it’s an American conductor, and what a great thing that is. Shouldn’t more American orchestras have American conductors? I think so. He brought with him his immense repertoire. I did the *Keeping Score* Mahler DVD with him, and I learned so much! I was almost embarrassed by how much I learned from all the research that so richly informed our performances of Mahler’s symphonies with him and from then on. The illustrative excerpts we played on that DVD – and we did a complete version of Mahler One. He is just marvelous with Mahler. Really good with Stravinsky too – obviously, he knew Stravinsky! I remember having lunch with him at our Bay Brass recording, and his music-making is so informed; not just by musicians but by art and architecture and history. He brings all that to the table, that people who are playing with him don’t always see on the surface, but when you talk to him, “My gosh, this guy really knows his stuff.” So all of those were an incredible treat for me, each in his own way. And that’s the fun thing about being a freelancer, is that you get to work with so many people, and so many different conductors.

**UPDIKE** You’ve talked a little about different recordings that you’ve done over the years. Is there anything else that you’d like to say? Your favorite recordings – or even how the recording industry has changed?

**BURKHART** It's changed a lot. Probably the recordings I'm most proud of – I told you about the recording of Erickson's *Night Music*. If nothing else because the piece was so darn difficult, and it came out great. We did it on tour of Europe also, and that helped that we had done that before we ended up recording it. That was recorded in the band room of Hayward State! It wasn't some fancy Skywalker Studio, but we did do the two Bay Brass albums – we did one of all American music at Skywalker, and that was fabulous because it was totally state of the art. And then the other one was done at Grace Cathedral – just a month and a half after a Christmas concert we had done for brass and organ. That was a funny one, because here we are in Grace Cathedral, and every now and then you'd hear the clang of the cable car bell as it went up the street! I thought we should have just left it in there – it's very San Francisco. With the Symphony it's interesting. I've done a lot of Mahler, some Strauss, some contemporary music like Adams and some standard repertoire like *Pines of Rome*. In the early days of recording at the Symphony (and by early days I mean in the 1980s) you'd play a concert for a week, and then whenever the free moment was, you'd come back and record it. Whereas now, almost everything is the "live recording." Which is never really totally live, because you record three or four live performances, and then you'll have a patch session the last day.

Probably one of my favorite recordings with the Symphony is Mahler Six. That was a particularly meaningful concert, because we were scheduled to do the rehearsal for that on 9/11. Of all pieces, that particular symphony. Everything got canceled, and they moved the schedule around, and we ended up doing the concert after all. What an incredibly moving thing for us – MTT wanted to go on – "Let's play." When we played it we realized (I get choked up just talking about it) how meaningful that was. Both to us, as musicians, to be together – it's this family of people creating this wonderful art, live – and then for the audience. You saw people tearing up in the audience. Music can do a lot of things, and that Mahler Six performance, and then the recording, was very special for a deeper, more profound reason than you usually associate with those things.

**UPDIKE** I know we've talked about this throughout the interview, but could you talk a little about some of the trumpet repertoire that is available to students – things that you see students learning towards for their recitals or juries? And then performance opportunities in the Bay Area for students.

**BURKHART** A lot of times if you drive up to 50 Oak Street around 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening, particularly on a Friday or Saturday, you'll see a bunch of students in tuxes with cases slung over their shoulders waiting for their various rides to various orchestras around the Bay Area. There are lots of opportunities to freelance, to play. There's a great Music to Go program which fosters that – whether it's a brass quintet or a trio – reaching out to the community, which is so important. And even opportunities for the students to play extra with the Symphony, the Opera, and the Ballet. I was first trumpet offstage for *Lohengrin* at the Opera, and the guy

standing next to me was a student here at the Conservatory – Jeff Lewandowski. That was his first big gig, and we were in costume and had special horns with the long bell. We had it all memorized, and we had choreography – it was pretty wild, and that was fun to get to know him. He wasn't my student, but it was still fun to get to know him away from school.

In terms of repertoire ... the brass ensemble that Paul Welcomer does is sensational. They give great concerts, and he really puts them through their paces with their repertoire. We also do periodically side-by-side with the brass faculty – it might be something that they're playing at the Symphony that we rehearse, and they get to sit beside us as we play, and they get to play. We alternate back and forth, and some of them will go out in the audience and hear the difference. I think it's really important, because you don't need to talk to them about it – they immediately hear. They sit next to you and go, "Wow! It's so easy to play in this." The intonation and everything is not an issue. Paul has an immense library – we have the Bay Brass library that we draw on for the brass ensemble concerts. The students are great – I often will give them recordings of things to listen to. I don't want a student to do a recital where he or she doesn't really want to play that piece, or doesn't really love that piece and have something to say about it through their trumpet. Usually I'll burn them a CD of a variety of repertoire I think will suit their playing – wherever they are in their development – and let them pick. And then also there are student composers here, and that's another nice feature in terms of getting brass music and brass ensemble music – there's trumpet music that they can perform, and work with a composer directly, which is fantastic. A lot of collaboration, in that regard.

**UPDIKE** Have you worked with any of your students who have been working with student composers at the Conservatory?

**BURKHART** Off the top of my head I can't remember who the composers were specifically, but I've come in and coached brass quintets on pieces, and even occasionally talked with the composer and given them a little tip or trick – "If you gave them a breath here, see what you think." But for the most part it's nice to let the students come up with those ideas, and coach them as if they were playing Gabrieli – just work with them that way.

**UPDIKE** That's a great experience for them. Do you want to talk a little bit about collaborations with other instrumentalists in ensembles that you're a part of?

**BURKHART** I play in the San Francisco Brass Quintet, which doesn't play a lot, but we have concerts here and there. I play a lot with Bay Brass – our next concert is at Stanford this July 5th. It's hard to say ... when the phone rings, whatever happens, happens! I'm doing one with my wife – we are blessed with my mom's 1932 Steinway grand piano in our remodeled living room, which was remodeled around the piano to feature it. We're doing a little recital with a wonderful pianist, Marc Shapiro. Just an informal thing for my sisters, family members, and

close friends. That kind of thing – Marc said, “How much do we need to rehearse?” And I said, “Not much. We can probably almost wing it.” The idea is that it’s not a formal gathering, where everybody’s all dressed up. It’s nice now that we’ve got this beautiful piano at home, to rehearse and play at home. My wife, Deb Shidler, is a marvelous oboist, and she and I have played virtually every piece there is, from *Quiet City* on back into the Baroque era, together – and have played at every single family wedding, and recitals together. We played the Brandenburg Concerto together, so that’s fun. And a lot of times, like tonight, we’ll just get in the car together and go play at the Opera. So that’s fun, even though she’s ten yards away across the pit – it’s still fun to go together to those things. And I’ll still hear her.

**UPDIKE**                   And you’ve told some stories from touring over the years, but are there others that come to mind?

**BURKHART**               I’ve got a lot of them. A fun thing when I was in college – in addition to a Bicentennial US tour, the Yale Symphony also went to Vienna for two weeks. We rehearsed for a week, and performed for a week, Bernstein’s Mass. Bernstein was there – how cool is that? He’s a folk hero over there. We played in the Konzerthaus over there. Ironically, I don’t know how many years later, I went on a San Francisco Symphony tour of Europe – we were gone for a month and played all over the place. We ended up in the same Viennese concert hall that I’d played so many years before. That was a real treat, to do that. I’ve done a lot of the Carnegie Hall concerts with the San Francisco Symphony, and I’ve played in Carnegie Hall with other groups and orchestras.

The most challenging tour of all was Mahler Six, and I remember we were supposed to play in Chicago on Tuesday night, and Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. on Wednesday night, and Carnegie Hall on Thursday. This was in March – and I grew up in Chicago, so I knew what it could be like in March in Chicago. Sure enough, it was like that. We were supposed to leave on Monday, and all the flights were canceled. We ended up flying out on Tuesday – the bus arrived at the hotel, which was on Michigan Avenue, down the street from orchestra hall, at 6:15. Our concert was at 8. The truck arrived with the instruments just in time – there was talk of borrowing instruments – and boy, were they cold when they came out of the truck. We played ... Glenn Fischthal was playing first trumpet – glorious. He is one of those players ... everybody else is fiddling around, trying to adjust to the hall, and Glenn just plays the easy, unforced, singing way that he plays, and it works everywhere he goes. The next night in Kennedy Center – guess what? More travel issues, more challenges, we just barely rolled in for the concert. Mahler Six three nights in a row in one city is a challenge, but imagine it in three cities, with all the travel. Sure enough – Carnegie Hall, we had the luxury of getting there at 4 in the afternoon before the concert. The orchestra was marvelous every time. It built – as MTT likes to do during a tour. We continue to rehearse as we’re performing, in a way, and it continued to build – great performances along the way, but a phenomenal performance in Carnegie Hall on that Thursday

night. But what an exhausting tour – it couldn't have been snowier or more Christmasy in March than it was. Tours are always fun. For me, at least, I have to take care of myself – take care of my playing, figure out how to sneak into the hall, and when to practice, and things like that. You want to be totally solid, and always at your best, so I'm always trying to find a good place to practice. Sometimes I'll just take my horn out outside, and just start practicing. Who's going to hear you? Who cares?

**UPDIKE**                    How have you balanced the roles of being a teacher and a performer over the years? Has it always fit into your schedule?

**BURKHART**                I think it's always meshed. The challenge for anybody that does both, is to stop being a teacher when you perform or rehearse. Not that you're trying to teach other people, but obviously when we're teaching, we're analyzing different things, thinking about them, and then we just have to perform. Charlie Geyer was like that with me when I was growing up – he'd say, "Hey, we're playing *Don Juan* tonight, let's work on it a little bit today." If I was Charlie Geyer, I wouldn't want to hear me play *Don Juan*! I try to stay away from working on pieces that I'm playing. I'd just as soon have my own ideas and memories of a certain way of playing something. But if you are playing, and the student's coming to the concert, it is nice to work on the piece, and then they can hear you perform.

**UPDIKE**                    How much do you practice these days?

**BURKHART**                I'm blessed – or cursed, depending on your point of view – with loving to practice. Even if I'm tired at the end of a long day, if I go down there and start, I'm good to go. I've always practiced for an hour, an hour and a half, every morning. I've always been a morning practicer – and then I'm less stressed during the day because I've already done it. Sometimes – like tonight – I'm playing *Don Carlo*, and that's four and a half hours long – and I get there an hour and 15 minutes early to warm up. I'm not going to play on the morning of a big show if I don't have to. That's a good thing for students, too – although they almost always need to practice more, not less – knowing when not to play is a good thing. If you're hurt or sore or too tired to be productive. Bud Herseth used to tell me – practicing more than an hour at a time becomes almost worthless. There comes a point when you're not 100% devoted to what you're doing. You're not concentrating as much, you're not totally in the game, and it becomes repetitious. I switch it up – I used to do a little routine, and now I realize that as long as I'm playing in a good way, with a singing, flowing style and easy production, I can play anything I want. It's a weird thing – it's not like you have to practice this exercise or that exercise every day – there's no magic in what you can do. I usually dive into the music pretty fast, rather than doing long periods of exercises, or anything like that.

**UPDIKE** Has your preference of the type of music that you play changed over the years?

**BURKHART** I played a lot of jazz in college, and even to support myself during those times – big bands, and things like that. That provided me with opportunities to meet people. I've gotten to sit next to a lot of cool people over the years. Cat Anderson played with Duke Ellington's orchestra for many, many years – unbelievable trumpet player. I got hired to play the Ice Capades, of all things, for two weeks. I showed up, and I sat down next to him and said, "You're Cat Anderson!" He goes, "Yes! I am." He had gotten hired to tour with the Ice Capades, for some reason. They opened every show with an Ellington medley, which featured him. The spotlight would come down on him, and he would play a great solo. No matter what he played, he improvised totally different every night, he would end on the G above double high C – which is way higher than most people can ever dream of playing. It always was just crystal clear and pure. I'm not sure how I got into this story, but it's a great story. I asked him if he would be willing to come over and do a master class at Yale – and I asked my teacher, and he said, "Yeah, that would be fantastic." He ended up coming in and playing. He said that when he played with the Ellington orchestra, they were expected to substitute for each other when a player was out, so he was able to imitate every person – you think of him as a high note player, but he can do absolutely everything. You close your eyes, and, "Oh my God, that's Rex Stewart!" Or, "My God, that's Cootie Williams! That's Shorty Baker!" And then he says, "You want to hear Armstrong?" And he played *Rockin' Chair*. I'm a huge jazz guy. I'm not a fantastic improviser at all, but at least I'm smart enough to know that and not get myself in too much trouble. But I did play a lot of jazz, and I kind of miss that. I've done some transcriptions on recitals here, which is fun, too, for the students to come in. They expect me to play the Hindemith Sonata, and see me there playing Clifford Brown. That's kind of fun, to show some diversity.

I've played a lot of Baroque music, I love playing piccolo trumpet. And I like tackling new music, I think that that presents really interesting challenges. Particularly with all the freelancing that I'm doing now – the phone rings, and you don't really ask what piece you're playing – you might ask what mutes it will use, so you bring the right mutes, but you just go, and have the fun of the fact that it's different – different people, different conductors, and composers.

**UPDIKE** Are there are any festivals, or programs at the Conservatory that you participated in?

**BURKHART** I've played recitals here, and with the brass ensembles a couple of times as a soloist, but not too much, really.

**UPDIKE** Do you have any thoughts on how the musical culture of the Bay Area has changed since you arrived?

**BURKHART** It has changed. When I started out here, there were a lot more church choirs and professional choirs – a lot more Christmas Oratorios and Magnificats and B Minor Masses and Messiahs, and things like that going on. And of course the school had their own Sing-It-Yourself Messiah at Davies Hall, which I wish we would bring back – that was a lot of fun, and whoever was the star trumpet player got to play, which is exciting for them in Davies Hall. And of course I played with several orchestras in the Bay Area that went bankrupt – Oakland Symphony went bankrupt, San Jose Symphony nearly went bankrupt, Sacramento Symphony went bankrupt, San Diego Symphony ... people began to think that I was the reason for all of this because I played with all of them (!) but San Diego Symphony the year after I was there went under. Some have come back, but some haven't. It's a real struggle, and students need to know that. We need to be realists about this. It's tough to get a job. But you don't always have to get a job – you can be a freelancer and do different things. The regional, smaller orchestras are really struggling. There are still a lot in the Bay Area, and in the greater Bay Area, certainly. So there are a lot of opportunities there, and there are a lot of freelancers who sort of cobble together a career from the “freeway philharmonic” where they play in many different orchestras. Orchestra schedules are designed so they don't conflict with each other.

There was a lot more recording work – freelance recording work. There isn't quite as much of that anymore, either. But overall, particularly because this is such a big area and there's such a strong interest from the public in cultural things – art museums (SFMOMA just reopened) or music, or dance, or opera. Opera's amazing – there's a tremendous following. It's a huge opera house, and you look up and there are 3,000 people. It's amazing – that's fantastic. Those are just a couple of ways that it's changed.

**UPDIKE** Where do you see a lot of your students moving on to after they finish their degrees at the Conservatory, and what advice do you give them as they're going out into the world?

**BURKHART** Some stay here. Some will continue to study. Some will go elsewhere to study. We have this marvelous professional studies degree here, and have had a number of students who have done their two-years master's here, and then just aren't quite ready for prime-time yet. They're great, but they need a little extra focus. The nice thing about that program is that it's a really focused program on what you want to do – whether you want to be a soloist, or in a brass quintet, or work on auditions and get prepped for them. One student, in his freshman year, instead of taking an audition for “Joe's Philharmonic” in the middle of nowhere for third trumpet – I wanted him to audition for Philadelphia. And he did great! So the students are already in the process of taking auditions along the way. Some of them will do things like go to New World Symphony – I have one student who's been playing with them lately. That's a great thing. Various festivals – things like that. We recently had a student who won a job up at Travis

Air Force Base. He lost a little weight, he cut his hair, and he played great! Not necessarily in that order. That's a great way to hone your skills, and at the same time get a lot of performance practice. So they all kind of go their different directions.

**UPDIKE**                    Would you like to talk a little bit about your interest in local history outside of music?

**BURKHART**                I lead a secret life. 25 years ago now, as Sacramento Symphony appeared to be about to go under, I was playing first trumpet with Santa Fe Opera, and then I took a leave of absence to play the *Ring* with Donald Runnicles at San Francisco Opera. Not everybody gets to do that, and that was a really good run! We did four cycles. Then I was faced with ... do I go back to Santa Fe? My wife was playing here not there, and Sacramento Symphony was struggling ... "Maybe I'll just do something totally different, and just clear my head." I'd been making a little bit of beer as a hobby – I made it for parties. I thought, "Well, maybe I could get a job at a brewery, that could be fun!" Fritz Maytag is the great grandson of the founder of Maytag Washing Machines, and owned Anchor Brewing Co. – he had owned it since 1965. He's a great music lover, and sponsored a chamber music group called the Anchor Chamber Players. I'd played extra with this group, and had met everyone. The musician that ran the group – I called her and said, "Do you think there's a chance that you could get me an interview with him?" She said, "OK," and I got an interview with Fritz Maytag. He asked me to tell him about my qualifications, and I handed him my resume. It was all these orchestras I'd played with, and all these great trumpet teachers I'd had. He looked at it and chuckled. I didn't know it at the time, but I was the perfect prospective employee for him – a complete clean slate. I didn't know anything about beer, and I wasn't going to tell him anything about beer. He said, "I'm not sure what to ask you, based on this resume. Why don't you tell me about the history of the trumpet, in about 10 or 15 minutes?" So I told him about the history of the trumpet, and then he just sat there for a moment and thought. He said, "I wonder if you could tell the story of our brewery the way you tell the story of the trumpet we might have something here."

So he thought about it, and a couple of months later I got a call back and was offered a job as both working in production in the bottling line and the racking room where you fill kegs, and giving tours. I'd come up at the end of the day with yeast all over my uniform, and then give a tour of the brewery. That brewery goes back to 1896, and so I started asking questions. I said, "Who are the original owners?" He said, "We're not exactly sure." I said, "Well, do you have any pictures?" ... "No, we don't have any pictures." It wasn't that nobody cared – nobody had time. You're making beer, not going to the library. So anyway, I just started on my own, on the side, researching the history of the brewery, and found all kinds of wonderful things. This was all pre-internet – I was sitting there in the library with microfilm of newspapers, and found some great stories and pictures – I found pictures of the owners in an old book called *Men of*

*California* – which, I’m sorry to say, excludes half of the human race. It was from 1902. That got me interested also in San Francisco history.

I started collecting little things that interested me – I have an old collection of San Francisco beer and whiskey bottles from pre-prohibition. And I started collecting stereoviews. Stereoviews are little cards with two pictures on them, side by side. The pictures to the naked eye look almost the same, but in fact they are taken with a stereocamera, which has two lenses. The lenses are about the same distance away from each other that your eyes are. And so basically what you get are two pictures, like a picture taken by each eye. When viewed through a stereoscope, these side by side pictures come to life as three-dimensional images. If they’re good photographs (and I’ve seen a lot of bad ones) they don’t look like a pop-up book – they look like they have true, genuine, three-dimensional depth. So I started collecting for fun, because they were cheap! I could get them from fellow collectors, or at a flea-market, or Ebay. I started collecting, and before I knew it, I had about 600 stereoviews just relating to the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. And so when the 100th anniversary started to roll around in 2006, I thought, “I wonder if I could write a book.”

I had never written a book before, but one thing I learned from the Francis Parker School – which is where I went to school from kindergarten through 12th grade – and from Yale, is not to be fearful of doing anything new. If I was determined to do it, I could figure it out, and I would learn. Just like with the trumpet – if I was having an issue, I could figure it out, and not be afraid of it. So I decided that maybe I could tell the story of the earthquake in 3D through these stereoviews – if they were in the right order, and had the right story behind them. So I researched and wrote this book, and self-published it. I fooled everybody because I called my publisher Faultline Books, which sounds really cool! I got a lot of people that would contact Faultline Books (which is secretly me) and go, “Would you publish our book?” But I didn’t want to go into the publishing business. I just wanted to publish my book!

My lovely wife supported me on this, and it was a huge project – a six-figure project. And yet it opened doors to me as far as being a part of the earthquake anniversary – meeting the earthquake survivors – giving talks and getting to know history people around the Bay Area. Getting to know more history about San Francisco. It just opened up a whole new world for me. Subsequently I’ve been involved in five more books – a reprint of a rare 19th century cocktail book called *Cocktail Boothby’s American Bartender*, which is by a San Francisco author and mixologist from the 1890s. And thanks to Fritz Maytag, I was involved in four books published by the Robert Mondavi Institute up at U.C. Davis about California agriculture. I did a lot of the background research and prep, and helped the people that wrote the forewords, and provided all the images for the books. Kind of a behind-the-scenes editor for those books. So it’s just blossomed, and it’s super fun. I have the security of working at the brewery in terms of health care and all that wonderful stuff, and the enjoyment of doing something that’s totally different.

People are surprised sometimes, when I work at the brewery and come to play the opera – they say, “Aren’t you exhausted?” But it’s a totally different thing, so it doesn’t tire you out in the same way. Although if it’s a 4 and a half, or a five hour opera, I usually try to take the day off from the brewery! You’ve got to be truthful with yourself about your limits of endurance. So it’s been super fun, and my next project book-wise is to do a history of the Anchor Brewing Co., which I’ve been researching for years. So that’s going to be really nice. We have a good publisher and it’s going to be a really fun project.

**UPDIKE**                      That’s really exciting, that’s great. We’re at the end of our questions. Is there anything else that you’d like to say? We’ve gone over a lot.

**BURKHART**                    I think it’s been great.

**UPDIKE**                      Thank you so much, Dave.