

A Conversation with Barbara Imbrie

Interviewed by Elinor Armer

San Francisco Conservatory of Music Library & Archives

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

Interview conducted August 23, 2015
Elinor Armer, 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.

Barbara Imbrie Interview

This interview was conducted on Sunday, August 23, 2015 by Elinor Armer at the Imbrie's home in Berkeley, California. Conservatory archivist Tessa Updike and Barbara's son Andy Imbrie were both present.

Elinor Armer

Elinor Armer has been associated with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music since 1969. In 1985 she established the Composition Department and served as chair for eleven years. She studied composition with Darius Milhaud, Leon Kirchner and Roger Nixon, and piano with Alexander Libermann. Recipient of numerous awards, fellowships and commissions, Armer has performed and lectured throughout the country, and her works are performed regularly in the United States and abroad. Armer is one of the co-founders of Composers, Inc., and a member of ASCAP. Her compositions are published by J. B. Elkus & Son, a division of Subito Music Corporation. Among her best-known works is the eight-part fantasy *Uses of Music in Uttermost Parts*, written in collaboration with Ursula Le Guin. Her many references include the Elinor Armer Archive in the University of California–Berkeley Music Library and *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*.

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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94102



Barbara Imbrie and Andy Imbrie

Throughout the interview, Andrew Imbrie Sr. is referred to as “Andrew” and his son, Andrew Imbrie Jr., is “Andy”.

Sunday, August 23, 2015

ARMER This is Elinor Armer, I’m in the lovely Berkeley home of Barbara Imbrie, with Barbara and her son Andy, and we’re going to have a visit. The date is August 23rd, 2015. Hello, Barbara.

IMBRIE Hello.

ARMER You know, Barbara and I are both Valley girls. I feel as if I’m talking with my sister, here. Barbara, could you tell us a little bit about growing up in Yolo County, and your roots there, and your early life?

IMBRIE Yes, of course. I was in Davis for the earliest part of my life, but then went to Woodland and attended the Woodland schools. I think they had quite a good educational

system, because they were the center of Yolo County, and Yolo County was probably one of the wealthiest farming counties in the state. They also had a lot of country farmers and ranchers who wanted their sons and daughters well-educated. They expected them to attend college so that they could improve their large ranches and farms. I feel that the education prepared us very well for U.C. – in fact they made a definite attempt to steer us there, taking the subject As, and all of this. So does that help you?

ARMER Yes, that's very interesting. And your father I believe was responsible for the landscaping of the Davis campus, ultimately, was he not?

IMBRIE Yes, he was.

ARMER Philip Cushing.

IMBRIE Philip Cushing, who was actually the brother of Charles Cushing, was mostly interested in the outdoors. His life was outside; he loved plants, he loved trees, he went hunting and fishing and it was quite different from his brothers. But they both loved music, which was a good thing. My mother was a music major at Mills before she came to be in charge of the music in the county for her first years, and then she began teaching in the schools.

ARMER She taught music?

IMBRIE Yes, she did teach music, but it began during the war [WWII], so they were doing less music. She was doing other things as well. We were wrapping bandages.

ARMER Yes, I remember those early war years, myself. It was very different being in the Valley. Can you tell us a little bit about your lineage? When did your family come to California?

IMBRIE Early on, the family came across country. My ancestors, I believe, landed in the Boston area in the beginning, and then they went to New Hampshire.

ANDY Basically, they came across in the mid-1800s.

IMBRIE They stopped in the Chicago area for a year or two, and then they went on and crossed over the high Sierras into Shasta County. They were in Shasta for the Gold Rush, but they were not miners – they were shopkeepers to the miners.

ARMER And probably did very good business, as such.

IMBRIE It was excellent business, I understand. And it was there that the family has some history in the museums. They decided to come here [the Bay Area] maybe in the late [18]‘60s or early ‘70s, when the gold mining was disappearing.

ANDY Now this is your father’s grandfather that we’re talking about here, right? And he had started and then sold off a number of businesses, every two or three years – mercantile businesses in Shasta County. Then he came to Oakland.

IMBRIE He set up a very large business in Oakland, apparently. It took what we call a city block. It was around 12th Street, I believe, I’m not certain about the other cross-street. They had, apparently, a very large business. My father spoke of having to have fifty teams of horses to deliver.

ARMER Goodness.

IMBRIE And so that in itself would give you an indication of what it was. That was John Cushing.

ANDY That was your father’s grandfather who started that business. I guess your grandfather continued it.

IMBRIE That would be your great-grandfather. It was John who started the businesses in Shasta, as well.

ANDY And your grandfather was Henry.

IMBRIE Right. Henry ran the business until the Depression years, and then he stopped in the early or mid-Depression. I understand it was in large part – well, his age – but also the fact that he loved to give people credit, and people would not or couldn’t take care of their credit with the store. So that stopped the Cushing store.

ARMER Let’s bring it up to your generation. Was your household musical, and did you have music lessons as a child?

IMBRIE Oh, yes. My uncle Charles would have seen to that. And he did, because I started lessons at five or six, I think, with ... did you know Dorothy De Maria? She was in Woodland.

ARMER No. That was I think before I was taking lessons in Davis.

IMBRIE No, no, she was still teaching there until recently. Isn't that something?

ARMER I had a different experience – I studied with somebody who lived on our street, and then later with Fritz Berens, when he conducted the Sacramento Philharmonic.

IMBRIE I remember that well, because friends of ours used to attend the Symphony. I think it was a shame when it stopped.

ARMER But the name Cushing is one to conjure with in the musical field. I remember when the music department started at Davis, and my family became friends with Jerry and Sylvia Rosen, when they started the department there. But I kept hearing about Charles Cushing, and after I graduated from Mills I wanted to come to U.C. and do some graduate work – he was head of the department at that time.

IMBRIE Really? I didn't know that. I didn't realize, because I thought he would hate something like that.

ARMER I may be wrong about that.

IMBRIE I think Elkus was in charge for a long, long time.

ARMER This was after Elkus. It would be something to look up. I just remember that I interviewed with your uncle, and he was very, very gracious and very responsive to the French lineage in music.

IMBRIE Anything French.

ARMER That's right, anything French. Was that characteristic of your whole family, or was that just his thing?

IMBRIE No, that was my uncle in particular, because he had married a Cerf, as you may or may not know. Her mother and father had been killed in Europe, in an automobile crash, I believe. So that when she was put in school there, and stayed on until I think her college – or even after her college years – her French was that of a native. My uncle met her I think when he was over there – is it the Lang Prize, when you go to France?

ARMER I'm not sure.

IMBRIE It's in the department. It's a prize for going to France for a year. And so after that he went every minute he could. They were on the last ship to leave France before the Nazis took over.

ARMER Do you remember the war years in your childhood? How that impacted life in the Valley?

IMBRIE Oh, definitely. We were very careful about our light at night. And we had rationing for almost anything, it seems.

ARMER Including chewing gum, which was a great sacrifice.

IMBRIE Oh, really? My mother never allowed chewing gum. I would never miss it, even to this day. What she did with any student who was chewing gum ... she had them go before a looking glass, and she said, "Chew, chew, chew – keep chewing." And they would see what it looked like, and what the teacher would see. She said, "I don't want to see that all day long." And so that was a good solution.

ARMER She was a woman to be reckoned with.

IMBRIE My father's side – on both sides, the Cook and the Cushing side, were English. Everybody there was English, as far as I know. But my mother's side was Swedish and German. You don't want to tangle with the Swedes or the Germans, I decided long ago.

ARMER Order is an important feature.

IMBRIE Andy can tell you what granny expected. But she was wonderful with children, and they were wonderful grandparents.

ARMER And you went to Davis – from high school you went to the University at Davis.

IMBRIE I did come here in the summer – trying to decide what I would do. I spent one summer in a co-op here in Berkeley. I took a couple of classes, but it was evident to me that it wasn't a wise choice to stay in a co-op – number one, there was only one dorm for women in those days. Do you remember that? Just Stern Hall. So I decided that because I'd been fortunate enough to have the PBX training, I could earn with three hours of work every day enough to help with the housing and the finances, whereas at the co-op ...

ARMER You couldn't do that. Yes, I see. Could you explain PBX?

ANDY Are you talking about a phone operator thing?

IMBRIE Yes, it was in many of the major buildings in Davis and Berkeley.

ARMER It was a telephone exchange kind of thing?

IMBRIE Yes, because you had to plug them in if they called the University. “I’d like to speak to so and so ...”

ANDY So when somebody would dial “Operator” they’d get you, and you’d have to connect them with somebody.

IMBRIE Right, right.

ANDY Was that three hours a week, or a day?

IMBRIE Three hours a day. I did that from the time I was in late high school, so that was one source of income. Rich Lowe used to come by Davis regularly, because I was on the 5-to-8 or 9 shift there. This is a friend of ours – he’s the person I’ve known the longest. We started church school together – Anglican Church school. We began when we were three years old, and then we started going through school together, all the way through the grade schools, the high schools, and U.C. Davis and U.C. Berkeley. He went off to graduate school at MIT, eventually. Anyway, that was one of the people that dropped by at the Davis place and chatted with me regularly, because it was after-hours and you could chat more easily.

ARMER You couldn’t have been majoring in music, because there wasn’t a department, really. What did you study there?

IMBRIE My major has always been history. I loved history, and I always wanted to do that. There were some very good people there, in the field. But the library wasn’t really as interesting as it should be, and has become [so] since then.

ARMER It was barely there.

IMBRIE Exactly. But in order to have teaching credentials, which is what I knew would be my lot in life, I had to take a second [degree] in English, because generally speaking your teaching credentials come in that way. I also realized that my brother was going to be coming to school at the same time that I was supposed to be leaving, but if I took a five-year

program or even extras, I would make it difficult for my parents to have two children in school at the same time.

ARMER How many siblings do you have, Barbara?

IMBRIE Only one. My brother just died, actually, in Davis.

ARMER I'm sorry.

IMBRIE He was there in the agriculture department, and was working in the fields. I think a lot of blame for his illness may come from some of the experiments they were doing, because they were using unusual ...

ARMER Pesticides and things of that kind? I'm not surprised.

IMBRIE They thought they knew how to handle it, but I don't think so.

ARMER No, they learned the hard way about those things.

IMBRIE Anyway. I did the five-year program in four, and that meant that I also had to carry a lot of extra units. And I would work in the summertime full-time but usually taking correspondence courses on the side, and then I worked full-time at studying during the school year, but I would have my little three-hour job on the side.

ARMER Is your experience of young people today that they work that hard?

IMBRIE No, I don't think it's common nowadays. I think you'll find those from the Asian communities tend to do more of that kind of thing. Now, I had some of my first introduction into the Asian community with Judge Shurtleff, and I think that one of the Shurtleffs ...

ARMERS Was a trustee of the Conservatory, yes.

IMBRIE I don't know how she fits into the Judge Shurtleff part. Judge Shurtleff was a great friend of the Cushing family. His father and my great-grandfather were in Shasta together. One of them was a doctor, and brought my great-aunt into the world, as well as other members [of the family]. So he came about the same time, I believe, to this area – Judge Shurtleff. He was settled on the Peninsula – Menlo Park, as I recall. He went into town – he was a lawyer, and a judge, I guess – he went into town [almost] every day to take care of business. The rest of the time he enjoyed this lovely spot with gardens and so forth. But he had a Japanese

couple that took care ... the man drove him, and the woman was in charge of the house. So that was my first introduction to the Japanese. Of course when this mess came around ...

ARMER The internment of the Japanese in California.

IMBRIE They had to leave.

ARMER It was a disgraceful episode in our history.

IMBRIE I could see how hard they worked, and their complete commitment to whatever they were doing. It was sort of a role model.

ARMER I'm sure a very influential one. I've seen pictures of the encampments themselves, and the Japanese that were interned there made the most beautiful little living spots with just a few stones and shrubs and whatnot. Wherever they were, they made a place of beauty out of it, it was extremely moving.

IMBRIE It was always, from what I could see, (and still is) a pleasure to see.

ARMER At what point in your life did you meet Andrew Imbrie?

IMBRIE Ah, my favorite topic. I was introduced to my dear husband by my uncle and aunt. They arranged to have us come to dinner once at their house. I was still a student then, and Andrew had just left the service. He had spent most of his time in Arlington, Virginia. Then he was shipped out to California because they were going to send him to Japan. The war had ended, or they were trying to get things organized after the war, and they were going to ship these people out to try to speak with the Japanese population in general. Although the work of his unit was highly specialized, Andrew always said (and he did manage very well), that when it got interesting, then he had to drop out. In other words, when one was talking philosophy or something of that kind he found the language difficult.

But Charles and Piquette [Cushing] asked us to dinner, and Andrew and Charles spoke most of the evening about music – various things, kinds, and so forth. I think Andrew could have cared less about my being on the spot, but nevertheless he was a gentleman and a scholar, and he took me home – my home was the Kappa House at the time [original residence of Professor Gayley]. He dropped me off, and then I'd see him quite frequently, actually, on Telegraph Avenue – you know, you would go back and forth to the donut shop, or something –

ARMER Oh yes, that used to be a nice street.

IMBRIE I'd say, "Hi!" and he'd look at me ... "Oh, yes..." Every week – remember we had the Wednesday nights at the Symphony for the students? We always had the Wednesday night rehearsals, and I went faithfully to those symphonies. And of course Andrew was often, if not always there. I'd see him in the hall or something ... "Hello!" ... "Yes...?" And so finally then, my uncle Charles was getting the Legion of Honor – I think it was Milhaud who proposed him, in fact I'm sure it was. He was getting this honor and they wanted me to come. I don't know that my parents were there, but it was a very pleasant occasion, and of course Andrew was there because the department came.

ARMER Excuse me, Barbara ... Andrew was working in the department?

IMBRIE Yes, because this was the time after ... I thought you knew that he came here, studied, '46, got his Master's with [Roger] Sessions, and then with Eddie Cone. Eddie Cone said that he was responsible for getting Andrew's scholarship or fellowship at the American Academy in Rome. So Andrew went to Rome in '47 and stayed there for two years, through '49.

ANDY There is a wonderful story that you tell. He had been hired before that, right? And then he had to go off. I think you should tell that little story.

IMBRIE That was a riot. Oh my goodness, yes, I had completely forgotten that. Andrew was in Italy for those two years, and I might say that it was not an easy two years, either, because of the conditions – the Italian situation was quite desperate still.

ARMER You were not married to him at this time?

IMBRIE No. When we returned in '53, it was still difficult. In the Academy [in Rome], somebody put a thermometer up on the wall – one of our scholars – it never went above 52 degrees. Now, can you see living in that year round?

ARMER Not Valley girls like us.

IMBRIE I was suffering, I can tell you. Anyway, the conditions for Andrew were even worse three or four years earlier. But he said he got his studio – he finally decided the only warm place was going to be in the furnace room, so that was his studio. The rest of the time I don't know how he managed. But anyway, when we came back, then he had a very nice studio in one of the walls where they had a separate little fire and he could feed the wood to it – so he was not in as much trouble as I was in the Academy itself. Those two years were really I think very important to him, and he did a lot of writing and was very happy.

Bukofzer came over midway between year one and year two – Mr. Bukofzer was chair of the music department at U.C. Berkeley. When he came to visit, Andy [Andrew] took them to dinner – or they took Andrew, I'm not sure which. But they met for dinner, and Andrew asked if he could take another year because he'd like to stay another year in Italy. Bukofzer said, "I think we can manage without you."

ARMER Oh, my goodness. Left-handed permission.

IMBRIE I think it's a kick. Oh dear, dear, dear.

ARMER Can I ask where you were during this time?

IMBRIE '47 to '49? I was still in school. Because I'd met him in '46, I guess, and then I was still in school from '47 to '49, although I might have met him in '47, early on, before he left or something, I'm just not absolutely positive.

ANDY What year did you graduate high school?

IMBRIE '47.

ANDY And then college was '51?

IMBRIE And '52, with the graduate [degree] – our certificates in those days, you had the five year program normally, and you couldn't teach without that kind of certificate, really, unless you taught in the lower schools.

ARMER What did you plan to teach?

IMBRIE I liked history, but what happened is, our certificates allowed us [to teach] 7th grade through junior college. They really needed teachers, so fortunately the place where I was practicing teaching gave me a job right off. It was with the ninth grade; which was not easy, I must say, because we had people there who were not that intent upon learning.

ARMER It's a rough age.

IMBRIE It is, but it was also a rough school district. Although after the war, they had all the money they wanted in the world for improving the education, and they were trying.

ARMER Richmond prospered, and in fact was created because of the war.

IMBRIE The shipyards, and the oil. Even Ford had a company there.

ARMER You know Barbara, because we're talking about the period where your life and Andrew's life sort of converged, perhaps you can answer a question that I've always had about a rumor that I heard from our mutual friend Roger Levinson.

IMBRIE Good old uncle Roger, as we called him.

ARMER That's right – that when he was in the Navy, Andrew liked to play jazz on the piano.

IMBRIE Oh, yes.

ARMER Can you say a little about that? Did you ever hear him play jazz?

IMBRIE He wasn't in the Navy, he was in the Army. Army Signal Corps – although he was working on the codes for the Merchant Marine on I think both oceans. Let's see, he loved jazz, and he even wrote some jazz. [To Andy] What did you record that we all want to hear someday?

ANDY I have it somewhere, I don't have it here, unfortunately.

IMBRIE Bob Commanday and he did a little show of jazz.

ANDY Apparently the show never got performed, because the war ended before they got it together, but they had the book and the music.

ARMER Like a little musical.

IMBRIE Lots of fun, I love the music.

ARMER Well that would be fun to lay hands on.

IMBRIE It is great.

ANDY Dad used to trot that out at the dinner parties. He'd sit down and play selections from that, and people would be surprised.

ARMER That's great fun.

IMBRIE Even when we lived in Japan he did a little of that. Not so much, though. We were both too busy absorbing the Japanese culture, and we only had the year.

ANDY I remember asking him once or twice, “Wouldn’t it be fun to do more of that kind of thing?” “Well,” he said, “It’s really not what I’m interested in.”

ARMER So he really didn’t feel like pursuing it.

ANDY I mean, it’s not that he couldn’t do it, it’s that he was more interested in ...

ARMER One has to focus, eventually.

IMBRIE Well, right. And certainly there are lots of things that I think he left unfinished that he probably would have enjoyed trying to finish. He did work up until October here, and then he finally said, “No, I can’t do what I’d like to do.” So he stopped at the end of October.

ARMER October of what year?

IMBRIE Of the year he died, 2007. He died in December, so it was just a very short period of time. He was trying to finish this piece for Harvard, they commissioned a piece. He got through the first movement, and then he couldn’t ... it was with the well-known clarinetist, Richard Stoltzman. Of course I think of one of the best is our good friend up in Washington – he’s a local boy. Bill Smith. I call him “Overtone.” His name was Overton, but we all called him William Overtone.

ARMER William O. Smith. He was a student of Milhaud as well.

IMBRIE They were all together. In fact, Bill was kind enough to come down when we had the festival for Andrew – the few-months-long festival. The Borromeo [String Quartet] played at the Conservatory, and I thought they were great, I’m so glad they’re coming back. Did you get to hear or see any of that?

ARMER No, I didn’t.

IMBRIE That’s too bad, because the Borromeo really had a very exciting new approach to learning music. This is something relatively new to them – Andy, help me.

ANDY They play directly from their computers. So instead of having sheet music, they have a foot-pedal to advance the page.

IMBRIE I think that's important for teaching. They also have a method where they can put it up on the wall – project it. So they've had great success with that, and I think it's kind of amazing. As I say, I'm glad they're coming back.

ARMER It's almost like concerts with subtitles.

IMBRIE They did the piece with Stoltzman in Boston that way, and it really eliminates the hassle. Stoltzman was throwing his stuff on the floor, or he would knock over something, yet the quartet was playing – no problem at all! You weren't aware of it there because there was no attempt to show you, or describe [the process]. But here, they were trying to make a point of the way it could be used.

ARMER Do you think – this is sort of a musicological question, and it's almost impossible to know for sure – but do you think that Andrew's penchant for jazz informed his later music at all? I certainly remember it as always being rhythmically very energetic and alive and interesting.

IMBRIE I wonder. I just wonder. I don't know – what about you? [To Andy] What do you think?

ANDY I think so. Absolutely so. I think all of these different forms informed his ...

IMBRIE Everything effects everything, doesn't it?

ARMER It's bound to be, and certainly of course when people find out that he had these earlier interests and so on – will then start looking for it.

ANDY Actually he was very fond of the Big Band music.

IMBRIE Yes, and we would go places to hear them sometimes.

ARMER Well, and of course Andrew isn't exactly in the French line of succession, he didn't study with Milhaud, but Milhaud had the same fondness for jazz, as did a lot of the French composers.

IMBRIE I never got to finish the Milhaud day story (by Milhaud I stretch it a bit). Charles got his Legion of Honor, and at that time I think Piquette and Charles probably had something to do with this – I was seated next to my husband-to-be.

ARMER I'm sure they did!

IMBRIE I'm sure they did, too. So for some reason (I must have told your father to eat his vegetables or something) he said, "I think I'll take her to the Milhaud party." So he asked me to go to the Milhaud Bastille Day party on campus. That was our first official date, and we had a great time because of the dancing ... and, you know, the whole thing. And from then on, it wasn't long until he asked me to marry him. That was on Bastille Day [July 14th] and in August he asked me to marry him. I also found my first white hair the time I came in from that date. I plucked it.

ARMER That was probably just from the anxiety of waiting for him to come around. I'm sure you said something to him other than, "Eat your vegetables."

IMBRIE That's the family joke, because I'm always after people to eat their vegetables. That was so funny. I thought you'd enjoy that.

ARMER Well, I do, and hooray for the Milhauds and the Cushings, and everybody else. When I taught at Berkeley, I had a feeling at that time – which was much later – the vestiges of great family feeling, and a sort of familial approach to things there among the faculty.

IMBRIE I don't know what you particularly refer to in your paper [Elinor Amer's SFCM oral history interview] about some meetings or something [in the U.C. Berkeley music department] that distressed you. I can only tell you that there were a lot of meetings that distressed Andrew. I was surprised you didn't mention Dibby Davidson, because she was very active.

ARMER She was there at the time I was teaching at Berkeley, and the meeting that you're referring to I didn't go to because I was only a temporary lecturer, but the subject that came up was – should they advance a woman up through the ranks beyond senior lecturer, which Dibby was, and make this woman – whoever she might be – become a professor. And somebody who shall remain nameless spoke up and said that the gods of music were male, and that music was a male art.

I notice on your bookshelf Jane Galante's translation of the Paul Collaer biography of Milhaud. I'd like to go back in history just a little bit, and ask if you remember that Jane Galante was one of the founders of Composer's Forum. In my memory Andrew was one of the first composers to be performed in their concerts. I think that may be where I first heard his music. Was he actually a member of the Composer's Forum?

IMBRIE Oh, yes. We have a picture, I think it's at the [U.C. Berkeley] library now on campus, but we have a photograph of the founding members in front of Jane's house. They must have had a meeting there; there are about half a dozen of them. That was something I can remember because of course he would often have meetings with Jane.

ARMER Didn't they go to school together? And Roger Nixon, they were all schoolmates.

IMBRIE Yes, they were all here. By the way, you mentioned Roger [in Elinor's SFCM oral history interview] and I thought it was so good that you did, because that was exactly my opinion of Roger – I think he was of great value. We used to kid him a lot.

ARMER He was not valued enough in his lifetime. I did my graduate work with him. He was one of my best teachers, he was very good.

IMBRIE I think he was, and he did so much for the band, too. They didn't realize it, but of course my uncle also directed the band, so I was more informed about that.

ARMER That's right, and then Jon Elkus directed the band at Davis for many years. Did you know Jon's father Albert?

IMBRIE Oh, yes, because he was still in charge of the [U.C. Berkeley music] department. I remember ... we were coming out of the Elkus house, it was some kind of reception, and Andrew made some statement which was not unlike him. Mr. Elkus said to him, "Well now, listen here, you're a young whippersnapper. Just wait!" A young whippersnapper! I loved it. Oh yes, he was a marvelous man, definitely.

ARMER I never knew him, but Elizabeth was a good friend.

IMBRIE Oh, she was amazing, I really loved her dearly.

ARMER Me too. She and Madeline Duckles inducted me into the faculty club, just for my little two-year stint.

IMBRIE Did you know that I got the chorus director here, Marika Kuzma – she was planning this big show last year, and that was close to the time that Duckles had died. I said, "I think you really ought to give the dedication to her, because she's done so much for the music department all her life, and she's been able to help so many people." They dedicated the concert – they had a whole two pages about her story, and the things that she had done.

ARMER Many causes on behalf of women, too. Women for Peace.

IMBRIE Yes, I remember that. Why didn't you mention [Bernhard] Abramowitsch? He was also an excellent teacher, I understand. Wasn't he?

ARMER Yes, he was. When I was a student at Mills, the piano teachers were either Abramowitsch or [Alexander] Liebermann. Liebermann was my teacher, so we were not warring camps ... but my loyalties of course were with Liebermann.

IMBRIE I was unaware of these camps at the time. I only knew the musicologists versus the composers. Those I understood very well.

ARMER Sure, because the head of our music department, Margaret Lyon, had been a favorite of Bukofzer, and she was a musicologist, and so she continued waging that decisive war.

IMBRIE You know Margaret Lyon lived right around the corner. Her house is now being renovated beyond belief. Now, if you go by there, look in and you'll see that it's like a huge mansion.

ARMER That's lovely, it's a nice piece of property.

IMBRIE It's wonderful, but it's too close to LaLoma [a busy road].

ARMER How long have you lived in this house?

ANDY Let's see, you were married in '51?

IMBRIE We were married in '53, but our first few years were on Tamalpais Road.

ANDY This house was built in '66?

IMBRIE No, it was earlier. When we came home from Rome, just before our son Andy was born ... it was started in '54, and I think finished in '55 or the end of '54. It was built in little pieces – the person who told me about it was my dear aunt Piquette. She said one day, “I don't mind packing stuff up and down those stairs, but really, it was getting too much.” Everything had to go up and down. So we were looking for a more or less level entrance. This was being started by an architect from the architectural school ... let's see. This is terrible, I can't remember his name. They used to support a lot of musical things in San Francisco. But this studio was built by Oswald, who was a refugee from Austria. But this was built last – '68.

ANDY The first floor of the house was built in ... what would you say? 1954? '55? And you moved in when?

IMBRIE We moved in in '54 or '5. The house that you saw then wasn't the same. This piano was in the living room, but there was a wall between where you walked to the bathroom – that was a separate room. That was supposed to be Andrew's studio. It was a nice room, everything set, and he [Andrew] didn't like it because he didn't want to be cooped up in the house, or something, he felt too enclosed. So right off, before he even moved in, practically, we had to build underneath the dining room – there is another room.

ANDY His thing was – no access from the house. He wanted to go outside – no telephones, nothing like that. So to get to it, you had to go through the garage and downstairs.

ARMER This is a beautiful room. It looks as if you maybe had performances in here?

IMBRIE Oh yes, a lot. Acoustically it's very good, and it's cut into the hillside, so that also helps. We had a choice when the plans were presented to us. We could have gone up a flight of steps and had this same kind of building up a flight of steps, and had a magnificent view – which pleased me no end. But Andrew said, "No way, we're staying downstairs because this is better for my books, for my instruments, and it's better acoustically." Well he was absolutely right, because if we'd gone up we'd have a lot more noise. You haven't heard any noise, have you?

ARMER No, it's ideal.

IMBRIE It's ideal. In fact the hill went all the way down to the place where you came in. They got a Caterpillar here to take out the stuff, and it couldn't get out. They had to get another truck in to get the Caterpillar out, it was that deep. And it doesn't move much, either, in an earthquake. The rest of the house, there's always some movement, but not this so far. You know what Bob Commanday says, and I think it's a good point, he's happy to have those small earthquakes because he thinks it's like something letting off steam.

ARMER Oh yeah, I think so too, I think it's forestalling the Big One. That's what I like to think anyway.

IMBRIE When we will all escape to the country, we hope.

ARMER Oh, lordy. Speaking of Commanday, did you have dealings with or friendships with other music critics whose names have great historical value like Frankenstein and Fried?

IMBRIE Frankenstein was a friend, as you know. Yes, and Fried has a special – you haven't heard the great Fried story in my life? Good. We went to Japan in 1959 or '60. He [Andy] was only two when we went, and when we came back he was three. Hans Popper was a wealthy San Franciscan (not the opera specialist) who used to collect art and was interested in contemporary music. When he [Popper] heard that we were going to go to Japan, he offered to get us a house because he travelled back and forth all the time – he was collecting pictures, and also had businesses and so forth. So he found this wonderful place for us – we left the airport and went directly to our house and our housekeeper, all in a matter of what was twenty minutes from downtown Tokyo. You couldn't imagine a more beautiful place – or a more interesting one. We lived there, and everybody would advise us about certain things. Andrew could get us by very easily with his knowledge of Japanese, so there was no trouble traveling.

But when we wanted to leave, we decided to go home the long way. Andrew had a performance in – I think it was Philadelphia. We thought – well, why come home and then go directly there? So we came home the long way, and took the advice of all our friends of where not to go, because already – Elliott Carter, for instance, had visited us in Japan. And the border from Cambodia had been closed to him overnight! He couldn't get in to see one of the seven wonders of the world. That kind of thing was happening all over, we didn't hear about it until the mid '60s – it started in the early '60s. Anyway, we had a chance to get into Cambodia, but there was only one flight a week that went there, and that was a French flight. We went from Japan through China – you could land and spend overnight, but China itself wasn't open, of course. Then we went to Cambodia. Now mind you, we had one week only. We had a marvelous time ... [to Andy] you kept running around ... you were very inquisitive and you kept wanting everybody's keys, because you thought they unlocked something. So here we were there, enjoying it thoroughly. One of the things you pulled with the keys was on the day we were supposed to leave on this one flight a week. He [Andy] took our keys, and was riding up and down in the elevator, having so much fun! And nobody could get him out because he had the keys ... and we had this deadline to get to the airport, and we just barely made it before they took off. It was something else.

We went on to Thailand, and then to Ceylon (which is now Sri Lanka). It was fascinating because of the Buddhas that are way up on the top of the hill. This trip was planned for us by our friends in Tokyo. Then we went to India, and started in the lower part and worked our way up to Madras and up to the Red Fort. I didn't want to go much further because of the poverty. I didn't think I could take it over on the Bombay side. Already I saw people with ankles and legs that weren't any more than this [gestures]. We were taking then a flight to get into Russia. Do you

remember there was a Russian delegation once that came and visited Cal? We had speakers from Cal and from Russia and they always said to come and visit them. Andy [Andrew] wanted to hear some of the music in Russia and also thought he could visit the Conservatory. Well that was a joke because they did not want him really – they managed to get him around, just barely. Most people were going to be out of town ... for us, an interesting situation.

ANDY This was the Cold War.

IMBRIE Of course, and where would they put us as [the only] tourists [on the plane] when we were crossing from India into Tashkent? They put us in a plane where there were no windows – you couldn't see anything. Well finally I did have to go to the bathroom, so I went to the bathroom and there they had a nice little window I could see out. Then I understood what they didn't want us to see. As far as I could see (and I stayed as long as I could in that room) there were tanks, there were rockets – there was every kind of military equipment. I can't imagine the area it took up.

When we landed in Tashkent, we would not leave him [Andy] on this part of the journey. When we left Japan we would never leave him alone, it wasn't sensible from our point of view. So we took turns when going out to concerts at night – Andrew went to *Carmen*. I think he said he was the only Westerner probably who had heard *Carmen* in Uzbekistan. Then in Moscow, where we went a couple of days later, I got to hear it at the Bolshoi. But there was a little problem, and that is at that time they wouldn't let you out without a car and a guide. That was all day long, but at nighttime there were no taxis, no cars – the only way you could get around would be the subways or the buses or things, where you had to read where you were going. Now, I'm not a good linguist, and I hadn't studied ... fortunately, your father had studied Greek with his father, so he knew the Cyrillic alphabet. And so he could get us there. You probably don't remember, but your father and you took me to the Bolshoi Theater, and dropped me off – we had to make a couple of changes on the subway. All I know is I got there, and just thinking about it now makes me nervous – I couldn't even get to my seat, I couldn't understand my ticket. I felt like a nitwit. I finally got the usher to take me down to the middle of the auditorium, and I had a seat on the aisle. I was wondering how I was going to get home. Maybe walk? I didn't even think I could do that. Anyway, I looked across the aisle, and directly across the aisle was Al Fried.

ARMER How funny! That's totally amazing. You must have burst into tears.

IMBRIE I was so relieved. I was so relieved, and not only that, he speaks perfect Russian, and he was living in the same place we were, just a different floor.

ARMER Bless his heart. What a story. What a nice man, too. You know, I own his Bösendorfer.

IMBRIE Do you?

ARMER Yes. You know when Bösendorfer had some pianos on display down at the St. Francis about 40 years ago? They invited the music critics to look at them, and he bought the little one. I bought it from him about 30 years ago for a song. He used to see me at concerts with his wife, and he'd say, "There's the girl that hijacked our piano!" He was a fine critic, and so was Frankenstein, and so was Commanday.

IMBRIE It's amusing you mentioned the St. Francis because I'm remembering that my mother, who came from Seattle to go to Mills had to come in on the ship from Seattle to San Francisco, and then spend overnight before she came across. Her father insisted that she stay ... no, not at the St. Francis! At the Palace. Because he thought that the St. Francis was a little too new and risqué for a young woman alone. She had to stay at the Palace, which was old and dull. I thought that was the funniest story, oh my gosh. That goes back to the early '20s – in fact, late teens, probably.

ARMER You raised your family in this house, and several other places, it sounds like. So they always traveled with you, your children.

IMBRIE Oh yes. We wouldn't have it otherwise. Except, we did give you [Andy] the choice of boarding, because you weren't too happy about something or other – I can't remember what it was. One of the interesting stories from Kaiser hospital, where these boys were both born and where they had their checkups – Andrew and I didn't agree about Andy's education in the beginning – kindergarten. I taught in public schools and I thought that we should give our local school a chance. It seemed to me they had good possibilities. That was my feeling. Andrew was quite strong about the schools, so he visited all the schools in the area that would possibly be for him. He said, "I don't like it, they are not motivated. They are listless and it's not good." So we had this fight – not a real fight, but a disagreement. [To Andy] We took it to your doctor. He had taken care of almost all the kids in the East Bay, he was a well-known pediatrician. He pulled the rug from under my feet, I never thought it would happen – I thought he'd be on my side. He said, "I can tell you by what I see coming through this office that you put your children in a private school and you leave them there as long as you can possibly afford it, and even if you can't. This was Dr. Rousseau, he was a wonderful, wonderful doctor. Everybody here had had him as a pediatrician. And the kids loved him too. I was somewhat disappointed, to put it mildly.

ARMER So let's get back to Andrew. I was going to try to stroll down the avenue of pieces of Andrew's that you particularly remember during their creation and in their premiere, and so on. For example, *Angle of Repose*.

IMBRIE Oh, of course.

ARMER That was the only opera that he wrote, am I right? No? There were others?

IMBRIE He wrote a small opera called *Three Against Christmas*. It's fun, Bob Commanday conducted it. We had an excellent turnout, it was given at Cal all three nights, sold out. There was a waiting list.

ARMER What decade was that?

ANDY '60s. That was in Hertz Hall – '65.

Dad was a big fan of Wagner.

ARMER I can understand why. When I see his annotated book by Roger Sessions about harmony, and having taught harmony myself for so many years, and many years out of that book, I can really identify with his deep, deep feelings about harmony. And his deep knowledge about chromatic harmony. I love that about Wagner too, it's just all the other stuff...

ANDY I think there was more to it than that. I remember asking him, "What is it about Wagner?" He said, "When I was a kid, we didn't have the big blockbuster movies. This was my *Star Wars*, this was my *Star Trek*. This was the big grand –"

ARMER The heroes and the superheroes.

ANDY The heroes. John Williams has done all of the Wagnerian leitmotifs, and a few other *Star Wars* characters. There's something from his childhood in his appreciation of Wagner.

ARMER That makes sense.

IMBRIE What is the last one [Wagner opera] you do? It was the last of the season in Philadelphia or New York, because he [Andrew] was very young. He was seeing this, and you were supposed to be very quiet – you didn't clap, in other words. He, as a child (I think he was eight) didn't understand that. Everybody looked at him, and that was not a good thing. But then when we went to hear Wagner on one of our European times, we were going to miss that last concert because Andy had thought it was a later date. So we'd driven all night and all day to get there in time – we had to change into our dark clothes in the restrooms and we got there just in time. Now, my stomach wasn't behaving too well because it was hungry and it kept gurgling.

Andrew turned to me, as a tradition of keeping quiet, I guess, and said, “Shhh!” What could I do? Oh gosh, and those hard benches.... I love Mahler. That’s when your father said, “I’m going to teach you about modern music.” I remember he ripped out Mahler’s *4th*.

ARMER Isn’t that interesting? Jack Swackhammer was the same way about Mahler’s *4th*. That’s exactly what he did to me with Mahler’s *4th*. That was the beginning of everything for me.

IMBRIE I know, and I now can take a lot of things that I probably couldn’t have understood at all. But I like all of the Mahler.

ANDY What about dad’s stuff? Dad’s compositions. Do you have a favorite?

IMBRIE Of course I can remember the *Violin Concerto*. He was finishing that in Rome the first time we were there together.

ARMER Was there a soloist that he wrote that for?

IMBRIE I know who did it here, but I don’t think he was writing it for him ... it was the first chair of the Los Angeles Philharmonic who came up and did it when they gave the opening of Hertz Hall. It was the opening concert. I don’t know if he had written it for someone else ... Ariana Kim has done it a few times, and she’s very good. I don’t think he had anyone in mind, but he did want to write that piece. I know when we were in Rome he finished it, as I recall. Or he finished most of it.

ARMER As a pianist, did he ever do a piano concerto? He was quite a pianist.

IMBRIE He was quite a good pianist. Well, he was trained as a concert pianist. He started at four years old. His mother was very interested in music, and she went to every lesson in New York and Philadelphia – her family is from Philadelphia, his father’s family from New York. But he lived originally in New York for about seven years, and then they moved – father built a special place so that the children could play outside, and Princeton was ideal. The whole family – all Princeton graduates. It really was good, because then they were between the two families, and it made it perfect for getting back and forth.

ARMER And didn’t you say that there are some bequests to Princeton in the family name? Can you tell us about those, a little bit?

IMBRIE I think you knew this, didn’t you, Andy? Your grandfather’s brother died in the first World War. So there’s something in his memory, I know, at Princeton. It was because

of that that your grandfather married later, because he felt he had to take care of his sister and his mother, since the brother was no longer alive. I'm not sure – again, this is all hearsay for me – but I think his sister then married a French professor at Princeton, and that is why your father spoke French so well, too. Not only had he spent time in France studying, but his uncle and aunt spoke nothing but French in the house, and they went to France every summer.

ARMER Aren't there bequests in the name of your immediate family?

IMBRIE Our son John? Oh yes.

ANDY There are several bequests. There is a bequest in my brother's name, which goes to support the music department at Princeton – helping to purchase scores. There's also a table in his name in the lobby of the music building.

IMBRIE It's a beautiful marble table.

ANDY We are in the process now of establishing a bequest in Dad's name, which will support undergraduate composition at Princeton [The Prof. A. W. Imbrie '42 Music Composition Fund].

IMBRIE In your brother's name we also have the science one, too. It was John's plan ... he was a beautiful musician, and had already been playing in little groups at Princeton. But he really wanted to follow [his cousin] Andy Imbrie Dayton – he was interested in medical research. He was – imagine this, I can't get over it – but it shows you that College Prep [The College Preparatory School] and Bentley [School] are to be congratulated, because he arrived at Princeton first year, had the usual sort of course-load, but decided as extras he would take upper division courses in medical – straight As. It seems unfair that he should not be allowed to put that to use.

ANDY We also have bequests in his name at College Prep, right? In John's name.

IMBRIE It funds the student center and helps with the music program

ANDY And then also of course at Berkeley we have left most of Dad's material at the library. There's a fund there to help curate and manage that.

IMBRIE That's not what the fund is entirely for. Obviously that's part of it, but it's to encourage composers to donate their scores to libraries.

ARMER That sounds like Jane Galante's doing.

ANDY That was her influence.

IMBRIE There's a scholarship in Andrew's name at the Conservatory. It was my understanding that the scholarship would be open for any department or any musician.

ANDY We do get regular thank-you notes from recipients of that award.

ARMER I think that's wonderful that it's not department specific.

IMBRIE I think it's better to have it open, in that kind of situation. I don't think you can have it open at Cal because it's too big.

ARMER And there are too many other things. The Conservatory at least is all music.

ANDY And then of course you have that scholarship at Mills for your mother.

IMBRIE Oh yes, that's true.

ANDY There is a scholarship at the Academy of Arts and Letters. There's a composition prize – the Andrew W. Imbrie Composition Prize for Midcareer.

IMBRIE Andy [Andrew] and I decided this together, because after all, the prizes for the students are something like two dozen now. It's just unbelievable.

ARMER You have to be under 30 to apply.

ANDY In all fairness, they probably need it more.

ARMER Of course they do, but every now and then ...

IMBRIE Exactly. We just thought that there were also enough gold medals at the end of your career. We had seen this one man – I think he was from Oregon – who had received an award in midcareer. We saw what a difference it made for him. Some people were so blasé, but he was so elated. We thought that would be nice, to serve an award in midcareer.

ARMER Well, we were talking about Andrew's pieces, but we were also talking about the Conservatory. I was hoping you could tell us about when Andrew's association with the Conservatory began.

IMBRIE I thought it was right from the very first from his tenure here. I'm quite sure that when we were married he was going to the Conservatory once a week. In fact, I know it, because I didn't have a car.

ARMER It's interesting to me because I wasn't aware of there being much instruction in composition, per se, in those early years.

IMBRIE I guess there must have been something.

ARMER But at the same token, Milton Salkind was a great recruiter of high profile performers and composers to work there.

IMBRIE The two of them – I remember them with such pleasure. In fact, Andy [Andrew] wrote something for her [Peggy Salkind]. They did a four-hand piece with the Marin Symphony by Andy [Andrew], but that was some time ago. Andrew wrote for her and I think a student not too long ago – I mean by that within ten years.

ARMER My recollection, of course, from the time I was at the Conservatory, was that once we formed a department in composition, which was in the mid '80s, Andy [Andrew] was one of our composition teachers, sort of adjunct, and he didn't come to the school anymore, but especially for graduate students – they would come here and study with him.

IMBRIE That happened regularly. Also, other graduate students would come – some not necessarily connected with the Conservatory. He would never allow a Cal student to pay for any kind of lesson because he said he [the student had] already paid his dues at Cal. They could come in freely. Most people he charged absolutely nothing – or so little that you couldn't imagine it.

ARMER There were several who did graduate work with him from the Conservatory, but also I think they came here to U.C. We only go as far as the Master's degree, and some of them came here for their PhD.

IMBRIE I didn't know what they were coming for, but I know they were coming. He was very happy to have them here. One time when my cousin was sitting with us on the porch outside – we were having a little tea and cake or something. One of the Conservatory students came by for his lesson on a motorcycle, which was unusual for that time. Something about a trip came up, and so my cousin said, "That's lovely, dear, where are you going?" And he was talking about another kind of trip!

ARMER Oh dear!

IMBRIE Oh dear is right! Oh, my gosh. On his motorcycle.

ARMER Do you remember any of Andrew's students who particularly stand out in your memory, who have gone on to become ... I won't say household names, but....

IMBRIE I can't be too good about names these days, it's not my strong point, but I know there was a boy at Yale for quite a while – I think he's just retired, who's very good.

ANDY Steve Mackey, who's now department chair at Princeton, was a student of Dad's.

IMBRIE That's right. It seems to me all of them have had very good careers, actually. There aren't many who haven't been involved – in fact, quite a few of the names you mentioned in your papers I remember came here. For a while he had a bad arm injury, as I recall. I think you said he took care of your dogs and cats?

ARMER Oh, Dan Becker! That's right, Dan did study with him. For a while, Dan was chair of our department. And we shared an office, which was fun because I used to be the chair, and he was my student, and then we reversed and then he was my boss.

IMBRIE I like it better when they're boss, then you can kind of nettle away at them. A much better position, right?

ARMER Exactly, it's like being at home with family. Family that you get along with.

IMBRIE I remember he was here. I'll probably wake up at night thinking of all the people I've missed.

ARMER Well, we don't want you to lose sleep.

IMBRIE Wasn't there somebody in Chicago? Laura.

ARMER Laura Schwendinger [in charge of composition at Madison, Wisconsin]. That's right, she was at the Conservatory for a while.

IMBRIE And she was here [U.C. Berkeley]. She's in Madison, Wisconsin now.

ANDY There's also Leslie [Wildman].

IMBRIE That's right, Leslie is in New York now with a dance company. It's nice – these former students when they're in town come by to visit. Of course there is Andrew's student Hy Kyung Kim, who is now a senior professor at U.C. Santa Cruz and who has been very active in promoting his music. And another student Ariana Kim is a graduate of the Conservatory and now teaches at Cornell. Rich Festinger is chair of the music department at SF State University, is in charge of the Morrison concert series there, and is active with Earplay. And Kurt Rhode founded the Left Coast Ensemble and teaches at U.C. Davis. One of his earlier students is Bob Goldberg who founded Composers Inc.

ARMER Do you have any memories of visiting the old Conservatory, or even visiting the present one?

IMBRIE I remember the one by the water, close to the ocean – all of us loved that hall. That auditorium was really great.

ARMER Hellman Hall. I remember when they laid the cornerstone for that.

IMBRIE I don't remember the cornerstone, but I certainly remember early on. And of course Andy [Andrew] got his doctorate there.

ARMER His honorary degree, that's right. I remember that very well.

IMBRIE A very nice occasion for us. I don't know whether you want to know, or remember much – I don't know a lot about KPFA [Public Radio], but they were instrumental in doing things. Even today, Sarah Cahill plays Andrew's music occasionally on KPFA.

ARMER I do remember them, and I miss them very much. And also, the old KQED [Public TV] did a lot for local composers – the local new music scene.

IMBRIE And of course some people still are trying to do that sort of thing. You remember Bob's [Commanday] ... what was it ... after he retired as the Chronicle critic ... what was that called, Andy?

ARMER S.F. Classical Voice?

IMBRIE That's still been quite successful, hasn't it?

ARMER It's invaluable. As a matter of fact, I remember when he started that he said it to me – "It's because the current critics don't cover the beat." And so he did that, and it was particularly interesting because he would choose people who were specialists in whatever was being done on any given concert, to review those concerts in some knowledgeable way.

IMBRIE And they wouldn't focus always on the big names.

ARMER That's right, it was real criticism. It wasn't just, "I liked it," or, "I didn't."

IMBRIE That's right. And as I say, it also, I think, took in a lot of our musicians into a very interesting part of the musical life.

ARMER It did. I remember he asked me to write a few things, and I just thought it was a wonderful experience.

IMBRIE The one I remember is good old Jules Langert.

ARMER Oh, Jules is a prize! Jules turns out to be a really good critic.

IMBRIE Well, he's always spoken well. Jules went down once with us, to a Composers' Forum I guess – it was a program in Southern California. You remember they had them in different districts all the time? Well Jules was in the same car – I was there and maybe there was one more person, I can't remember. But we were traipsing down in the foggy dew, you know how it can get in the Valley.

ARMER Tule fogs.

IMBRIE Exactly. My father used to say, "You have to get behind a truck or something and stay there until you can see." But Jules said, "What do you mean by 'tules'?" I said, "Well, it's the things that are growing by the wayside, usually with water associated. I use the words every once in a while still, "Pack" for "carry." I must have used that. So Jules made up this thing about packing – he said, "You won't know this is the English language, I'm sending it to my mother – she won't understand it. Pack those tules out of the slough."

ARMER I love it. Good old Jules! He's such an East-Coaster.

IMBRIE I know. He went someplace with us, I think it was desert-like. All I know is, he sent something to his mother on a postcard with a donkey in the middle of the desert, saying "Greetings from California." Good old Jules.

ANDY One thing that I think might be interesting for the Conservatory audience – how did it come about that Dad was writing in his later years now – these pieces for Jean-Michel [Fonteneau] and these Conservatory people? Remember the *Sextet for Six Friends* and a number of those later pieces where Jean-Michel was involved?

IMBRIE Well, you know that originally Jean-Michel was part of the [Nicole] Paiement group of contemporary musicians?

ARMER I don't know, but I do know that any association with the Conservatory would have yielded your dad any number of really good performers to choose from. That's one of the reasons any of us like to work there who compose, because you have the pick of the crop.

IMBRIE Especially now, because it's blossoming so with the new spot – a great location, it gives them access to so much more than being isolated. Although isolation has its value too.

ARMER It was a different culture, and a different era. Many, many wonderful things happened there, and then wonderful things are happening now that couldn't have happened there.

ANDY Remember that Hi Kyung [Kim] organized all of these Pacific Rim concerts.

IMBRIE Very active. She also arranged all these trips – we went back and forth to Korea and China and so forth a lot.

ANDY That's how dad ended up writing the piece for the Korean koto-like instrument. That was fun.

IMBRIE Did you not hear it? It was done here at Cal.

ARMER I don't think I heard that.

ANDY Maybe that was it, through Hi Kyung ... there were several of those collaborations.

IMBRIE They did things at the Asian Art Museum, and in Asia. That was really great fun, getting to have a little more knowledge of Korea. And actually, I'm just trying to think now ...

ANDY He took a couple trips there.

IMBRIE He was there maybe three or four times. I didn't go with him for the first big long trip, where they went all up and down [Korea], because of the eye surgery. But then I went with him the next couple of times. Actually, one of Hi Kyung's favorite people is a drummer from Mills.

ARMER I know who you mean – William Winant.

IMBRIE He is good. He's really good. I think that's the best thing at Mills now. What else are we holding back, dear? I've never been known for being quiet, it's not my style.

ARMER What advice would you give to young composers today?

IMBRIE I still think it's a very rich and rewarding life, and I don't mean rich in the sense of money. But I think it's really one of the best ways you can spend – I think in the creative arts in general – it's one of the best ways you can have a life. And I think Andrew felt that way, too. He did have other opportunities – he was also asked, for instance, when you talk about California, he was asked to be other places. I think maybe partly because of me (he knew that I would prefer to be here) but also I think he adopted [California] –

ANDY I really think Dad's forte was composition, but you can't ignore the fact that he was considered to be one of the best teachers that they had. It's kind of rare, certainly in the engineering field, if you have good researchers they tend to be lousy teachers. So I think it's kind of rare to have somebody who was such an extraordinary composer but considered to be one of the finest teachers. If there was advice to the composition students, I think he would have said, "Be a teacher. Pass your craft on, don't just write – also teach, and do it well."

IMBRIE I think it's great too that he let it be known that he loved those things. Outside of his family, he loved composing and he loved teaching. He really enjoyed both of them.

ARMER Like Joseph Campbell said, "He followed his bliss."

IMBRIE I think that's true. He really felt that very strongly. I was trying to remember ... *To a Traveler*. He wrote that for the family who supported music so much ... I don't know what's happened to them now. Fromm. When the younger brother died, they asked him to write that piece. Norman Fromm. They asked Andy [Andrew] to write that piece, and I thought it was particularly fitting, and that he should choose that wording and the music itself, I think it really is – when you say 'favorite pieces' – this to me is.

ARMER That's good to know. I myself remember the service [Andrew Imbrie's memorial] as being one of the most satisfying memorials that I can remember.

IMBRIE Oh, how nice of you. I think you can thank Bob Commanday, also didn't Andrew Imbrie the Elder speak briefly? I guess he just read a quote. And your talk was very good, dear. Everybody kept asking me if you were a lawyer.

ANDY I'm not sure that's a compliment.

IMBRIE I think it's because you stood up, and were positive. Your granny always thought you should become a lawyer. That was not because of anything but your argumentative qualities.

ANDY Argumentative – again, not a compliment.

IMBRIE No, no, no. It is good because you don't take anything at face value, and that's wise. I think that's what's needed in probably most fields. If you don't question things ... and you're in the right field.

ARMER And Andrew was in the right field too.

IMBRIE For him. I also am trying to get them – I think at Princeton they're going to do it – to give his first teacher a lot of credit, because she started with him when he was four years old in New York – she'd come to the house or the apartment every week – maybe it was twice a week sometimes. And she encouraged him and kept with him until he went to the Curtis Institute.

ANDY She was so proud of him. Her name was Ann Abadjian. Norehad was her husband's name. I remember them very well, because they were alive ... they were another set of grandparents for me when we were on the East Coast because we visited them quite frequently. Every time we were in New York we would get together with them. Later, when she was on her own, of course we'd see her. She was so proud of Dad.

IMBRIE And she was the one – I think it ought to be emphasized that she was the one while training him to be a classical pianist, had also encouraged him to write music. So we had these little pieces – you know, the lion or the tiger walking across the zoo in Central Park – we'd have the canary and the something or other.

ARMER My teacher did this too, and it's extremely rare in piano teachers.

IMBRIE And they don't get credit. They talk about the other names, and the other people with whom he studied. But they rarely, unless I keep yelping, give her credit.

ARMER Well, I'm glad you did.

IMBRIE She really deserves a lot. A wonderful person. And as you say, almost second grandparents for you. She always came to all the performances. Those were happier days, but I have no complaints at the moment.