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Weaving Practice Into History: An Interview with Professor of Music, Leta Miller

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Weaving Practice Into History:
An Interview with Professor of Music, Leta Miller

Interviewed and Edited by Irene Reti

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Table of Contents

Interview History	1
Early Life	5
Undergraduate Years at Stanford University	16
Hartt College of Music	22
PhD at Stanford University in Musicology	26
Lecturer at UC Santa Cruz	34
Assistant Professor at UC Santa Cruz	39
UC Santa Cruz as a Unique Institution: A Kind of Intellectual Fervor	41
Facilities for the Music Department at UC Santa Cruz	48
A New, State-of-the-Art Music Building for UC Santa Cruz	51
The Development of the UCSC Orchestra	67
Faculty Collaborations	70
Student Ensembles	78
The Evolution of the UCSC Music Department	81
Lou Harrison	98
Scholarship on Lou Harrison	118
More on Publications	137
Choir Director at Temple Beth El in Aptos, California	151

Editor of the <i>Journal of the Society for American Music</i>	158
University Service	163
Cabrillo Music Festival	172
Directions for the Future of the Music Department at UC Santa Cruz	174

Interview History

The Regional History Project conducted this oral history with Leta Miller, Professor of Music, as part of its University History Series. After earning a B.A. from Stanford University in music, an M.M in music history from the Hartt College of Music, and a PhD from Stanford University in musicology, Miller arrived at UC Santa Cruz in 1978. She began as a part-time lecturer, teaching a course in chamber music literature at College Eight and offering flute lessons in a tiny room with no window in the old music building. After several years teaching various classes for UCSC, including a music history survey course, in 1987 Miller applied for and was hired for a tenure-track position in the UCSC Music Department [then called the Music Board]. She advanced to full professor in 1993.

Miller is passionate about both teaching and research, and for many years was also a dedicated professional player of Baroque, Renaissance, and modern flute. Her classes at UCSC range from general education courses in music appreciation (which she confided are still her favorite courses to teach), to advanced seminars in the compositions of Lou Harrison and Renaissance performance practice. She “adores UC Santa Cruz students,” Miller said in her oral history. “I still feel exactly the same way about them as when I started. They’re inquisitive. They’re

excited.” In her narration Miller also reflects on the unique aspects of UC Santa Cruz she has experienced over the past four decades: the Narrative Evaluation System, the boards of studies, the college system, the focus on undergraduate education, and the emphasis on interdisciplinary studies. She discusses the design of UCSC’s state-of-the-art Music Building, which opened in 1997. She also explores the evolution of UCSC’s Music Department, including the unique backgrounds and strengths of many of her colleagues, the birth of the MA, PhD, and DMA in music at UCSC, and the development of the UCSC Orchestra, the UCSC Opera Program, and various student ensembles.

Leta Miller was born in Los Angeles, California in 1947; her mother was a professional singer and her father was a civil engineer. Her mother sang as a soloist, including a stint under the pioneering female conductor Antonia Brico. Miller’s childhood years were divided between Los Angeles, Hawaii, and Denver, where she played flute in the all-city orchestra and the all-state orchestra for three years. She discovered her love for music during these high school years. Later, in her undergraduate studies at Stanford University, Miller developed an equal interest in both performance and in scholarship, a dual allegiance that continues to characterize her career.

Miller found a true home in the UC Santa Cruz Music Department, which is dedicated to what Miller called “this balance between the practical and theoretical.” “When we would hire a new faculty,” Miller said in her oral history, “we were always looking not just—can they teach the academic courses, but can they also play, or sing, or whatever they do? And how do they bring these things

together? I think you'll find that—if you look at all the music faculty—I think every one of them has both a practical and a theoretical side to what they do.”

Miller's scholarly interests are also diverse, ranging from Renaissance French chansons and madrigals; to music and politics in San Francisco from 1906 until World War II; to the Jewish American composer Aaron Jay Kernis. But she is perhaps best known for her scholarship on world-renowned composer Lou Harrison, who resided in the mountains near Santa Cruz from 1953 until his death in 2003. An extensive portion of this oral history is devoted to a discussion of Miller's deep connection with Lou Harrison. “By the time I finished my work on him, which comprised two books, and several articles, and a critical edition, he was like a father to me, like a second father,” Miller told me. This part of the oral history illuminates Miller's writings on this extraordinary composer, whose archive is also housed at the UCSC Library's Special Collections Department.

These interviews were conducted in a conference room at McHenry Library on April 23, April 30, May 14, and May 19, 2015. The recordings were transcribed and edited by Irene Reti. Miller reviewed the transcript with careful attention, added several footnotes, and requested some other minor edits. I would like to thank Leta Miller for collaborating with me on every step of this oral history—from providing me with sources for background research, to securing permissions for the photographs, to choosing the musical excerpts and audio excerpt provided. I would also like to thank Leta for her generosity and patience in working with a non-musician on this endeavor. Appreciation also to UCSC staff member and violist Valerie Chase for helping with background research.

Copies of this volume are on deposit in Special Collections and in the circulating stacks at the UCSC Library, as well as on the library's website. The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Elisabeth Remak-Honnef, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Elizabeth Cowell.

—Irene Reti, Director, Regional History Project, University Library

University of California, Santa Cruz

July 15, 2015

Early Life

Reti: Today is Thursday, April 23, 2015. This is Irene Reti and I'm here with Leta Miller for the first session of our oral history that we're going to be doing together.

Miller: I'm glad to be here.

Reti: Welcome, Leta.

Miller: It's a very exciting project.

Reti: Yes, it certainly is. I'm really glad to be interviewing you. So to start, why don't you tell me where and when you were born and a little bit about your early life, where you grew up, your family.

Miller: Sure. I was born in Los Angeles, September 30, 1947, actually technically in Burbank. My family lived in Los Angeles, but the hospital was in Burbank, so technically Burbank. I lived in LA for nine years.

My mother was a singer. She sang, not too much opera—occasionally opera—but a lot of lieder. So that's where all this musical stuff comes from. My father was an engineer. My parents' names were Hortense and Morris Zuckerman.¹ I was always at the end of everything all the way through school, you know, like

¹ Hortense Goldstone Zuckerman (1917–2000), from Utica, New York. Morris Zuckerman (1913–1988), from Romania (immigrated to the US in 1926).

² Public Law 86-3, Stat. 4, the Admission Act, admitted Hawaii as a state into the union as of August 21, 1959.

³ The engineering group was called TopAIDS—Leta Miller.

seating in class. If they were seating alphabetically, there I was at the back of the class. (laughs)

Anyway, we lived there for nine years and then the family moved to Honolulu for three years, which was an interesting experience. So fourth grade through the middle of seventh, I went to public schools in Honolulu (and one semester at Punaho private school), which was really an eye opener. And then we moved to Denver—

Reti: Eye-opener because—

Miller: Well, it was such a different kind of community. I mean, in Los Angeles we lived in this Jewish ghetto. Everybody was like me.

Reti: Were you on the West side of LA?

Miller: In LA?

Reti: Yes.

Miller: Colgate Avenue near the Farmers' Market. I went to Hancock Park Elementary School. It was a very cohesive community, where everybody had sort of similar backgrounds. And when I went to Hawaii it was very different. I mean, whites were a minority, for the first time for me. To say nothing of being Jewish in Hawaii. It was a tiny, tiny community, and so it was a really interesting multicultural experience that broadened me in a positive way, but it was quite a shock as a nine year old, to be taken out there. And also, at that point Honolulu was very far from the mainland. It was an eight-hour plane ride or so. There

were no jets. This was 1957, so propeller planes. There was a feeling of isolation. There wasn't even any television in Honolulu at that time. I was there during statehood, which was quite exciting. We listened on the radio—to the senate and the house voting on the admission of Hawaii as a state.² I still can remember that excitement. People pulled over to the side of the road after the decisive vote, honking their horns and everything. It was kind of an exciting time to be in Honolulu.

Reti: What brought your parents to Honolulu?

Miller: My dad was an engineer and there was a real building boom in Hawaii. Structural engineers were needed. And there were some family things—it was a good time to move. So he took advantage of an offer to go there, intended to stay for six months, and we stayed for three years. He was part of a team, an engineering group³ that functioned for a while. And then after six months he and a wonderful man, Jim Chou, one of the partners in that firm, set off on their own and formed their own structural engineering firm, Zuckerman and Chou. (laughs) And he was very, very happy. But he worked himself nearly to death. My dad was very, very conscientious and he set deadlines for himself that were impossible to meet and then he met them. So he was getting very stressed.⁴

²Public Law 86-3, Stat. 4, the Admission Act, admitted Hawaii as a state into the union as of August 21, 1959.

³The engineering group was called TopAIDS—Leta Miller.

⁴In Los Angeles, Morris had developed an ulcer and had 5/6 of his stomach removed as a result. In Hawaii he began to experience a relapse of that ulcer.

And we finally moved back to Denver in 1960. My mother's sister was in Salt Lake City.⁵ That was not too far from Denver. My dad had an offer at Martin Marietta [Corporation], which eventually became Lockheed Martin. So that's interesting because my husband⁶ was working for Lockheed, so he was sort of following in my dad's footsteps many years later.

And then I went to junior high school and high school in Denver, graduated from George Washington High School in 1965, June. And then I went to Stanford and that was a wonderful experience.

Reti: Okay, so let's back up just a little bit. Your mother was singing.

Miller: Yes.

Reti: And did you have music teachers in school?

Miller: Oh, yes. I started flute when I was in Los Angeles, in maybe fourth grade, and continued it through Hawaii and through Denver. And yes, there was a lot of music in the schools, in the public schools in those years. There were orchestras in the schools, in addition to the bands. I played in the orchestra and in the band in both Merrill Junior High School and George Washington High School. And there was a wonderful all-city orchestra in Denver and an all-state orchestra in Colorado. It was very competitive. I was in the all-city orchestra and

⁵ Hortense's older sister was Gladys Gladstone Rosenberg (1913–2002), a concert pianist and eventually head of the piano department at the University of Utah. Gladys was four years older than Hortense. Her original last name was also Goldstone, but she changed it to Gladstone after it was misspelled in a newspaper article. Obituary in the *Deseret News*: <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/895823/Pianist-Gladys-G-Rosenberg-dies.html?pg=all>

⁶ Alan Miller (b. Dec 28, 1945).

the all-state orchestra for three years. The all-state orchestra met at the University of Colorado over an extended weekend, for about maybe five days—intensive training of 250 kids who were at the University of Colorado—this enormous orchestra.

Reti: Wow.

Miller: Yes, one year I was first flute, which was great. What a wonderful experience. We played major works. I still can remember Andor Toth, a violinist who was conducting the one year that was the most memorable for me, doing Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony with 250 kids from all over Colorado. It was a really thrilling experience. I don't know if they still do that. Those kinds of music programs have sometimes bitten the dust, certainly in California. But I don't know if they still exist in Colorado.

Reti: Yes. How did you decide on the flute?

Miller: Oh! That's an interesting story. (laughs) In maybe third or fourth grade, when I was eight or nine living in Los Angeles, we went to visit my mom's sister, Gladys Rosenberg, in Salt Lake City. My mom's sister was a very fine pianist and head of the piano department at the University of Utah. So we were visiting out there and my two cousins (Gladys's boys) with whom I was friendly were in school. For some reason we were out there while they were in school. I was bored. I had only taken piano with my mom as a teacher for a few years. And my aunt said to me, "Why don't you start another instrument?" I thought, "Okay, that would be something to do while I'm in Salt Lake." She said, "How about the

flute?" I had never heard of the flute. I didn't know what a flute was. (laughs) So I said, "Okay, I'll try that." And because my aunt was a pianist and she had played concertos with the Utah Symphony many, many times, she was friendly with a lot of the players in the orchestra. So she called Eugene Foster, who was the principal flutist of the Utah Symphony, which is a very fine orchestra. I started taking flute lessons with Eugene Foster and then I never turned back. So that's how I got started on the flute.

Reti: And did you know that you wanted to have a career in music when you were in high school?

Miller: It was looking that way. I was so interested in all the musical experiences, and I was very involved in the band and the orchestra in George Washington High School, and then in the all-state and the all-city. I just loved those experiences. But I have to give it to my parents: my mom said, "Don't make a decision right away. Music is not an easy career. Think about other things, other careers you might like to have," and so on. But I knew. I knew.

And when I went to Stanford, it was a great experience in the music department there.

Reti: Did your parents have any question about whether you, as a woman, should go to college?

Miller: No, no, no.

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: Absolutely not. My mom didn't go to college but there was an expectation that I would. It was taken for granted. No. I was from a very supportive family.

Reti: And were your parents active in the local synagogue in the various places you lived?

Miller: Yes. So—going back—in Hawaii there was a very tiny congregation that met in a private home, but a lovely, warm group. My dad actually did the structural engineering work on the building that they built, which was not erected until after we moved to Denver, but he did all that work free. He contributed his expertise. He said, "I don't want them to have to pay for a structural engineer." A number of years ago my husband and I went back to Honolulu and they didn't even know anything about him. I said, "My dad did the structural engineering work here and he actually donated his services." "Oh, we didn't know anything about that." But that's so typical of my father, that he would do these things and he would not want any credit. He would not want his name on the building or anything. He just wanted to do it.

Then we went to Denver and there was a huge Jewish community, as you can imagine. There were maybe eight or nine major synagogues. My parents affiliated with Temple Emanuel, which was the largest—and probably still is the largest—reform congregation in Denver. They had a professional vocal quartet and a volunteer choir. My mom was the soprano soloist at the temple in that professional quartet for the six years that I was in junior high and high school, but also continuing after I went to Stanford, for quite a number of years. And

both my parents were active in teaching adult education classes. They [the various temples in Denver, not my parents!] started an adult education school there that was very active. Both my parents taught in it.

I didn't tell you about my dad's background. Dad came to the United States in 1926 from Romania. His father was the rabbi in the town of Calarasi on the border of Romania and Russia and he was a descendent of the founder of Hasidism in the 17th century [*recte* 18th century]. I don't know if you know about this? Yes? You're nodding, yes.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: Yes. The Baal Shem Tov, who was the founder of Chasidism.⁷ Because he became so famous, there is a pretty good chronology of his descendants. And so my dad is a descendent. My dad was the only son in his family. He had six sisters. So he was supposed to inherit the pulpit.

Reti: (sighs) A lot of pressure there.

Miller: But he didn't really want to. Then they moved to—well, his dad came in 1925 and the following year, 1926, the rest of the family came. He was twelve at the time. His older sister was about eighteen or so. They all came over and they had a small congregation in New York. And my dad should have become the rabbi of that congregation. He told me that his father said, "It's not the greatest life and if you want to do something else go ahead."

⁷ Rabbi Yisroel (Israel) ben Eliezer (d. 1760), often called the Baal Shem Tov [Master of the Good Name] was an eighteenth century Jewish mystic and is considered the founder of Chasidism—Editor.

Reti: And his father was the rabbi?

Miller: His father was *the* rabbi. He was the rabbi in this town of Calarasi. [My dad always called it Kalarash.] And then when they came over, a lot of the residents of this town had preceded him and so they reestablished this congregation here. I may be wrong about this but I think they actually brought my dad's father over, and his family as well because he was their rabbi.

Reti: Of course.

Miller: But my dad always wanted to be an engineer. He loved the holiday of Sukkot, when you build a little shed that's supposed to imitate the kinds of sheds that would be built in the fields in Biblical times. And he loved the hammering, the nails, building things. There was a lot of prejudice about Jews being admitted to engineering schools in the US at this time. One place that he could go to school was Cooper Union, and their classes in night school were on Friday night [i.e., the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, on which Orthodox Jews disengage from everyday activities and spend in prayer and meditation]. So my dad told me that he would put the engineering books under his coat, so his dad didn't see. He'd sneak out of the house and go to class on Friday night. He said, "My dad knew but he never said anything." But my dad felt guilty about that, I think, for the rest of his life. He felt guilty about sneaking out.

So he became an engineer and he actually kind of rebelled against any kind of ritualistic practice until he got married and my mom sort of brought him back; my mom, who had grown up in the United States in a more liberal congregation,

brought him back. But my dad came back to the religion in a very different way, very philosophically. He would really ponder the meanings of tradition and of various biblical passages. He would write many commentaries for himself, never published, commentaries on various books of the Bible. He would go down to his study after dinner, writing and writing, and observing. And I must say that he was responsible for the many very deep, analytical, and truly humane conversations our family had regularly at the dinner table. He was very, very involved. And my parents ended up not only being part of Temple Emanuel, but also part of a conservative congregation in town,⁸ and also, much later, the Reconstructionist congregation. So they were very ecumenical in terms of types of affiliations and they were friendly with all of the rabbis in town. Because the rabbis all knew my dad and respected his learning.

Reti: That's very moving.

Miller: Yes. And when my mom was in Denver, in addition to being soprano soloist in the temple, she sang in a lot of recitals and she sang with a conductor, a female conductor Antonia Brico.⁹ Have you ever heard of her?

Reti: Her name is familiar.

Miller: Well, she was kind of a pioneer as a woman conductor. And she was quite fabulous but she never was hired for a major position. She had conducted large orchestras in New York and even in the San Francisco area in the 1930s, but

⁸ Congregation Rodef Shalom.

⁹ 1902–1989.

these were kind of one-time conducting things. She was passed over as the conductor for the Denver Symphony and she founded her own orchestra in Denver called the Businessmen's Symphony.

Reti: (chuckles)

Miller: (chuckles) Yes, believe it or not. It was a semiprofessional orchestra. They weren't paid. Obviously, they had other jobs. Calling them "Businessmen" implies that they were all men. I don't remember whether they were all men.

Reti: (laughs) That's kind of ironic.

Miller: I know. But see, that was the era. My mother was associated with her when they moved to Denver in 1960. And my mother began to sing in various concerts. Brico put on a couple of operas. Mom sang the role of Susanna in [Mozart's] *Marriage of Figaro* and one of the Rhine Maidens in [Wagner's] *Parsifal* with Brico. Brico was a phenomenal conductor, a phenomenal musician. She would conduct—these days you'd never see this—but she would wear a long black skirt, down to the floor. And when she was at rehearsal she would bring along her dog, this little tiny black dog in a basket. The dog's name was Satu. The dog was either on the podium or right next to the podium in this basket with her at all the rehearsals. I don't think Satu was at the performances but he was with her— (laughs)

Reti: Wonderful. Oh, I can picture that. (laughs)

Miller: She had a strong face. What a fabulous musician. Once when she was doing a concert, she was presenting choral works from [Wagner's] *Meistersinger*

and she needed people for the chorus. At that point I was in high school and Mom got me into the chorus. So I sang in this chorus under her. And what an amazing experience! I'd never been under a conductor like that. The things she would have to say would transform the musical product. But it was very sad that she was never recognized. Now I think there's been a movie about her.¹⁰

Reti: I'll have to check that out.

Miller: Yes.

I was playing piano as well as flute all the time I was in Denver. And at a certain point I had to make a decision. I put out one big push for the piano when I was in tenth grade and went to study with a pianist on the faculty of the University of Colorado in Boulder. I worked my little tail off that year and I made a lot of progress, up to doing a Beethoven Sonata that I could never have played previously. But I was never great on the piano. So eventually I just had to make a decision. And it was for the flute.

So we're at Stanford now?

Undergraduate Years at Stanford University

Reti: Yes, let's talk about Stanford.

Miller: The education at Stanford was great. I had wonderful opportunities for performance and theoretical study. I think that forged my interest in both

¹⁰ *Antonia: A Portrait of a Woman*, by director Jill Godmilow, with help from Brico's former student, Judy Collins, appeared in 1974.

performance and scholarship. I was interested in being a flute player. And when I went to Stanford the theory courses and harmony courses were interesting, but the history courses were really fascinating to me. And one reason, I think, was because of this great professor, well actually two great professors, George Houle and Leonard Ratner.

The main one who inspired me was a fellow named George Houle, a magnificent teacher, a specialist in Baroque music. His classes in Medieval and Renaissance and Baroque music were just fascinating to me. So I became interested in the interaction of scholarship and performance. And Houle was devoted to that. He felt that you couldn't really understand music history unless you were a performer and that your performance needed to be informed by historical understanding. So that you couldn't really perform the music of the eighteenth century unless you had some understanding of the wider context, of the cultural context, of the historical context. Then you could play the music in a way that would make some sense. Not necessarily that you had to abandon a modern instrument and go to the eighteenth-century instruments, but even if you were going to, let's say, play Bach on the piano, you needed to understand the context of that music in a time when the piano wasn't yet in wide use. [The piano was invented by Bartolomeo Cristofori around 1700 but only came into widespread use in the second half of the 18th century.] And how would you perform on the instrument so that you are realizing to a certain extent what the composer may have had in mind, even at the distance of several centuries.

So he was really devoted to that idea, which is one that I've also been devoted to my whole life. And it's come out in a number of ways. While I'm thinking about it, if I skip ahead to some—

Reti: That's fine. Things are not always so linear.

Miller: That's good, because I may forget to tell you about this later on. One example of how this might play out would be—let me give you an example—there's a sonata by Bach for unaccompanied flute. And it goes, at the end of the first movement, up to the highest note that was possible at the time. Now, the modern flute can go another five or six notes higher. But Bach's unaccompanied sonata went all the way up to this high A, which was almost unheard of for the instrument at the time. There may be another piece that uses it perhaps, but it's very rare. So the movement ends with this big flourish from the lowest A [imitates sound of ascending flute notes] up to the highest A. And on the modern flute there are two possible interpretations. You can arrive at the low A and you can do a magnificent crescendo up to the top and make it really loud. Or, on the modern flute it's very possible to arrive on that low A and make a decrescendo and float off.

Reti: Mm—

Miller: Right? If you try this on the eighteenth-century flute, it is impossible to play that high A softly. It just booms out.

Reti: Because of the instrument.

Miller: Because of the difference in the instruments. So from that historical awareness, I know that what Bach had in mind was a big crescendo and not a decrescendo, because Bach obviously knew the instrument. So that tells me how to interpret that particular passage. That's a good example. You asked how I became interested in scholarship and performance.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: It was the influence of people like George Houle, who would make me realize how important it was to understand historical context.

Reti: And how common was that at the time, as an approach to playing music, to have that kind of historically informed approach?

Miller: This was not unique. It was happening around the country as well as in parts of Europe (especially in England). But in terms of academia, I think that Stanford had a kind of unique niche. I don't want to play it up too much because I think there were other schools that were doing it as well. But because of people like George Houle, and the other person mentioned, Leonard Ratner, who is no longer alive, Stanford had developed a reputation for this program in which scholarship was emphasized, but scholarship as it would affect performance. There were other places where you could study music history but it wasn't really related to performance. And of course there were lots of places you could study performance without the historical awareness. I don't think Stanford was unique, but it was one of the leaders. That program was known.

I really got so interested in history that while I was a junior and senior, at Stanford, I started taking graduate courses at the same time. I had jumped into the music major my freshman year and I had fulfilled enough of the requirements that I could also take as electives some of the graduate courses. So I took George Houle's courses in performance practices of the Renaissance and the Baroque.

Another way in which Houle pulled scholarship and performance together, is that he emphasized the relationships between music and dance. And in these graduate courses we would have weekly dance labs. We met at the women's gym—and this translates into UCSC, because I've done this with my students at UCSC—(remind me to come back to that) weekly we would have dance classes at the women's gym in which we would physically learn the Renaissance dances and the Baroque dances. The Renaissance dances are fairly easy. They have fixed steps. But the Baroque dances are the beginning of ballet, so each piece was individually choreographed. There is no such thing as doing *the* gavotte. There is a gavotte that's a musical piece. But there's no gavotte dance. There's this gavotte choreographed by this particular choreographer for this particular occasion.

But we do have a choreographic notation that developed at the time. And George taught us to read the choreographic notation and to interpret it and to learn how to do the dances and we put on dance performances. Wow, can you imagine how that affected the way we would then play the music? Because in your body you can feel the moments of tension and the moments of relaxation, which you can translate then into the way you perform.

So I'm going to tell you how that translated to my UCSC classes. Every year—and I still do it every year, although the older I get the harder it is—I do two dance classes with my music history students, a Renaissance dance class and a Baroque dance class. It used to be that we had a quarter of history that was Medieval-Renaissance and another quarter that was Baroque. Now they're combined. But I still do a dance class for Renaissance dances and a dance class for Baroque dances. And I have to say they are the most popular sessions of the quarter. The kids just love it. We go into the recital hall and we get up on the stage and I teach them the rudiments.

Reti: Wow.

Miller: So it's nothing like what I had, which was weekly for six months, or whatever. But at least it's just an inkling of it.

Reti: That's fabulous.

Miller: Yes. If I retire, that's going to be gone. I don't know. (laughs) I don't think anybody else on the faculty knows how to do these dances, although they keep threatening [to attend]. Last time one of my colleagues came along. They keep threatening to come along and learn them. (laughs)

Reti: That's a great way to embody learning.

Miller: Yes. Well, it's this balance between the practical and theoretical that has motivated me, and, I will say, one reason that I was really attracted to the music department at UCSC, was because that was always a watchword. When we would hire a new faculty, we were always looking not just—can they teach the

academic courses, but can they also play, or sing, or whatever they do? And how do they bring these things together? I think you'll find that—if you look at all the music faculty—I think every one of them has both a practical and a theoretical side to what they do.

Reti: Whereas in many departments that's really bifurcated.

Miller: Yes. And not only bifurcated but sometimes there is a lot of tension between the performance faculty and the academic faculty. You can ask others in the department. We try to bridge this potential divide as much as possible. I can't say that all of our performance faculty are academics (although a few are), but our academic faculty have a foot in performance, or composition (which is again the practical end of things).

Hartt College of Music

Reti: Okay. So let's backtrack. You're at Stanford. You came back to Stanford later for your PhD, but first you went to Hartt College of Music.

Miller: Okay, so what happened my junior year is that I met my husband at Stanford. This is why I went to Hartford. (laughs) Otherwise I would not have gone to Hartford. He, Alan Miller, was a graduate student in the mechanical engineering department at Stanford. And we met at a mixer, through music, actually, (laughs) Stanford used to have this activity called Spring Sing. I don't know if it still exists. But groups would get together and they would sing silly songs that they would make up. I was a part of a row house, where I lived in a

small group of maybe thirty women. And he was part of an eating club. Do you know what an eating club is?

Reti: No. (laughs)

Miller: These eating clubs—I don't know if they are there at Stanford anymore, but I think they were modeled on the eating clubs at Princeton. You didn't live together but you took meals together and had social events together. So the two groups got together for Spring Sing. We made up this very silly song that was a medley. It was an election year [and so the lyrics were about the various presidential candidates]. We still have it written out with all the very humorous words. We took some prize, I think for the most original entry. Anyway, that's how we met in April of 1968.

And then he finished and he went to work at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft in Hartford. We were engaged that following December and married in June 1969. I graduated in March 1969. I graduated three months early because I had some advance credits when I came in. I was actually trying to save my parents a little bit of money. My whole education at Stanford cost (hold your breath) twelve thousand dollars for the four years. That's including room and board. (laughs)

Reti: Oh, my god. (laughs) You're killing the students reading this.

Miller: I remember saying to my parents, "So, was it worth the 12,000 dollars?" (laughs) That was a lot of money at the time. My parents were not wealthy. They took out a loan on their life insurance to help fund my Stanford education, so that puts things in perspective.

Reti: Were you the only child?

Miller: No, I have a younger brother, who went to Princeton. He's an engineer as well. A lovely guy. David. Still with the Zuckerman name.

Anyway, when Alan and I got married I moved to Hartford because Alan was working at Pratt & Whitney. By that time I was really interested in music history, so I picked up a master's at Hartt College of Music in music history.

So you're going to ask me how I got interested in teaching music history and that's where it all came from. Hartt College of Music was a huge—and probably still is a huge—conservatory within the University of Hartford. And in the music history class, which was a required course, there were about a hundred and thirty students. So you can figure that that's maybe a third of the total number of music majors. There were maybe five hundred music majors. This music history class was taught by a wonderful man, Imanuel Wilhelm, who is still around, I understand, although I haven't spoken with him [since the 1970s]. He's still in New York. A friend of mine is in contact with him and keeps telling me I should contact him. He taught this very large music history class. Obviously it wasn't a great experience to have 130 students in the same class, right?

Reti: In a graduate program, yes, that's huge.

Miller: No, this was for [upper division] undergraduates.

Reti: Oh.

Miller: Undergraduates—this was their required music history class and I was the TA for it my first year.

The second year I was there—this was a two-year master’s program at Hartt—the second year I was there they decided to try an experiment, and they broke the music history class into three sections of about forty each. And they gave me one of these sections to teach. So I taught the required history class covering Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, and Classic periods—which took up one year. I taught one section of it completely on my own.

Reti: What a great experience!

Miller: Yeah. The university got a great deal, too. They paid me \$1200 to teach that class for the whole year.

Reti: (laughter)

Miller: It was a fantastic experience. And when I interviewed for the job here they said, “Oh, you were just a TA.” I said, “No, they actually let me teach the whole class.” This was such a turn on, I cannot tell you, being in the classroom and watching the light bulbs go on in these kids’ heads, and watching them get excited about the music. And asking me, “What recording of this or that should I buy?”

I knew at that point that that’s where I was going. I wasn’t a good enough flutist to make it in the big performing world. You have to be really, really devoted and you have to really want to practice for six or seven hours a day, which I didn’t want. My back would hurt. I didn’t have that much devotion to performance and

I frankly was realistic enough to know that I wasn't going to make it as a flutist in some major orchestra. But getting into the classroom and working with these students was so exciting. That's when I really knew that that's what I wanted to do.

PhD at Stanford University in Musicology

Then I applied for a PhD. I applied to several places and so did my husband. He decided that he wanted to go back for the PhD as well. So we both applied to a lot of places and then we came back to Stanford. By that time we had a kid (laughs) so that was an interesting experience. When we came back to Stanford, our son was about thirteen months old.

Reti: So you were being a new mom and finishing this—

Miller: There was one year in between. I did the two years at Hartt College, got my degree, my master's. I was about eight months pregnant when I got my master's. The only thing that I could wear that wouldn't show that I was pregnant was that black gown (laughter) for the graduation ceremony. It covered it up. Our son was born in July 1971.

Then the following year I was home with the baby, bored out of my mind. They had me teach one course at Hartt College. I taught a music appreciation course, which was again a really great experience for me. Later on I could say I had done this general education course for non-majors in the history of Western music from the beginning of time to the present day, which now I've continued to teach

here at UCSC. But that was my first experience teaching it. So I did that for a year.

But otherwise I was so bored. In our apartment building there were these wonderful young families, bright women who were doing nothing. They would just get together for coffee and talk about toilet training. I thought, "Oh god, I can't do this." They were so smart, these women, and yet they were— One woman said, "My husband doesn't let me read." I said, "What? He doesn't have the right to let you or not let you read. If you want to read, read." It was an interesting environment. I ran away from that very quickly after a year. Back to academia, the ivory tower. (laughs)

So Alan and I debated between several schools. We went back to Stanford but we also seriously considered Cornell. And in some ways I'm sorry I didn't go to Cornell. Not that Stanford's program was deficient in any way, but it would have been a different experience for me. I would have gotten to know different professors.

Reti: Right. Because you'd already gone to Stanford.

Miller: Exactly. And I had already taken some of the graduate courses. At Cornell they had a similar philosophy of performance and scholarship interrelating and I think I could have benefitted from a different perspective. But we made the decision basically (laughter) because of the weather. Well, actually Alan liked the Stanford PhD program in material science. He felt that that would give him more of the kind of training that he wanted. But also, we had this small

child and we had this one-year of experience of getting him in and out of snowsuits every five minutes. (laughter)

Reti: Move to Ithaca, no.

Miller: Exactly. That was a big factor. So anyway, we came back to Stanford in the fall of '72. And then I went half-time toward my PhD, so that I could divide my time between being a mom and doing a PhD. We lived in married student housing. Babysitting was easy because there were all these brilliant people right in our neighborhood. We all needed babysitters and we'd all just exchange. I mean, it was a great place to bring up children. There was a nursery school right there too. There were play areas and enclosed yards. And, as I say, with these babysitting coops you knew you were leaving your child with somebody responsible. You just did your part to take care of their kids. It was very copasetic.

Reti: And were there other women in your program?

Miller: Oh, yes, lots. So then the PhD took me from '72 to '78. I got my PhD in June of '78.

Reti: And what was your dissertation on?

Miller: My dissertation was on French chansons from the provinces of the period from about 1530 to 1550.¹¹

Reti: How did you end up with that?

Miller: Well, as I told you, I loved Renaissance music. At that point a lot of people did doctoral dissertations in which they would transcribe music—because the notation was not the same as the present day. Modern notation was not quite there until the late seventeenth century. So a lot of this earlier music wasn't being performed because modern players and singers didn't read the early notation. A lot of this material had been published at the time. The first publication of music was in 1501. And during the sixteenth century a lot of this material was printed, but in what we call part books. So if you were doing, let's say, a four-part vocal piece, the soprano would have her own book and the alto her own book, and so on. There wasn't any published score. So it's not easy for modern performers, even if they could read the notation. A lot of dissertations at that time [in the 1970s] were involved with taking some of this material that was not available to modern performers and putting it into a form in which it could be performed. So again, that's unifying the scholarship with practical performance. And then of course, after you would transcribe into modern notation, you would make commentaries on the music and write 150 or 200 pages about how this music fit into a wider context. So it wasn't just transcribing the music but it was also analyzing the music, and so on.

¹¹ See Leta Miller, Dissertation, Stanford University 1978. "The Chansons of French Provincial Composers, 1530-1550: A Study of Stylistic Trends."

I got into this because, number one, I loved Renaissance music. Number two, I wanted to work with this particular professor, Imogene Horsley, on the faculty, whom I felt a lot of connection to. And George Houle was also one of my readers on the dissertation. But he was more involved with Baroque music. By the Baroque period, the notation is modern notation and the works are more accessible. So I really wanted to get into some of this early music. I was really excited about Renaissance music.

And I'd been to France, which we didn't talk about. At Stanford, they have overseas campuses. And they still do. So in my sophomore year I was in France for six months, at Tours. They had the campus—I think it's now in Paris, but at that time it was in Tours, which is on the Loire, about 150 miles southwest of Paris. That was one of the great experiences of going to Stanford, going to these overseas campuses. Do you know about their program?

Reti: No.

Miller: They bring over two of their own faculty from Stanford. So instead of an exchange with another program, they have their own campus. They bring two of their faculty, so that the credits transfer completely and you fulfilled your humanities and social science credits, or whatever, depending on what professors were there. And then they hired French professors from the country and we also had a course in French civilization. We had classes for four days and three-day weekends, so we could travel. And then there were the trips. A ten-day trip to Rome and a ten-day trip to Madrid. It was just an amazing experience.

So I was really involved with French. And when I came back from France I continued to take some advanced French courses at Stanford. I wanted to keep up my French, which ultimately I didn't do. I tried, though. And so, dealing with French music—that's why I chose the chansons, because I was pretty proficient in French and I could understand the texts and so on.

Reti: And where were your archival sources for these located?

Miller: I didn't have to go to Europe. I had already had a similar experience—we didn't talk about this—for my master's program. At Hartt I did a thesis in which I transcribed a series of Italian madrigals. I later published those. After finishing my degree, my PhD, I came back to my master's work and published those Italian madrigals that I had transcribed for my master's. At that point I had transcribed a hundred pieces by this Italian madrigalist [Giuseppe Caimo].¹² Marvelous pieces.

For the dissertation I was very lucky because there was a professor at Berkeley, Daniel Hertz, who had done a major book on the principal publisher of not only secular, but also sacred music at the time in France, Pierre Attaignant. He published, I don't know, maybe fifty collections or more of music, maybe more than that—from 1528 to the time he died in 1552.

Dan Hertz had done a book about him. And so in the process he had collected all of Attaignant's publications. So there they were, at [UC] Berkeley on

¹² Leta Miller, (Master's Thesis in Music History) Hartt College of Music (University of Hartford) 1971. "The Madrigals of Giuseppe Caimo."

microfilm. Not cataloged but the Berkeley library was so nice to me. They said, “Oh, of course. If you’d like to use this material that would be wonderful.” So I spent a lot of time up at Berkeley and they catalogued all these microfilms for me, a Stanford student, which was really nice. Bridging the Stanford-Berkeley rivalry—(laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: So I had all that material accessible. Maybe that’s one of the reasons we settled on this topic as well, is that things were accessible. Because with a young child, I wasn’t going to be able to go over to Europe and spend a lot of research time there. So I transcribed 105 chansons and then I wrote a volume of commentary on them as well. And then I subsequently published a lot of these pieces in modern editions, as well as the Italian madrigals that I had done previously.

And those editions are now available and I hope they’re being used regularly. They’re published by a firm called A-R Editions. They publish critical editions of early music. Well, not only early music. They’ve expanded to more modern music as well. But they publish what we call critical editions. That’s when a person looks at all the sources and comes up with an edition that is as authoritative as possible, without inputting a lot of editorial interpretation. Or if you put in editorial interpretation you signal that it’s editorial in some way, so that the modern performer knows exactly what was there in the original. A-R Editions is a nonprofit organization. They are devoted to publishing these critical

editions and making this music available to modern performers. So I've published both the chansons volume with them and a volume of madrigals.

Reti: Okay, we'll make sure to footnote those so that people who are reading this oral history can find them.

Miller: The chanson volume is in the series *Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*. I think it's volume 38.¹³ And the madrigals are also in that same series but it's a much later volume.¹⁴ I did the chansons first and then later did the other. And the composer of the madrigals is named Gioseppe Caimo. The chanson volume is an anthology of various composers. But the madrigals are all of the madrigals of this particular composer.

Reti: Okay, great. Thank you. So you were teaching at Foothill College and some other places in the Bay Area while you were a graduate student?

Miller: No. The teaching came after I completed the degree. While I was a graduate student, by the way, while I was doing my PhD, I also continued to perform, which is very unusual. A PhD is an academic degree. It's not a performance degree. Music also has a DMA, which is a performance degree, a Doctorate of Musical Arts. Stanford had that degree as well. But I was doing the PhD and I continued to play the flute. I played in a chamber group that

¹³ See Miller, Leta E., editor. *Thirty-Six Chansons by French Provincial Composers (1529-1550)*. *Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*, vol. 38. Madison: A-R Editions, 1981.

¹⁴ See Miller, Leta E., editor. *Gioseppe Caimo: Madrigali and Canzoni for Four and Five Voices*. *Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance*, vols. 84-85. Madison: A-R Editions, 1990.

performed all over the Bay Area.¹⁵ And I also learned to play Baroque flute. I learned to play Renaissance flute. The Renaissance flute is just basically a cylindrical tube with six finger holes and a mouth hole, and a plug at one end. The baroque flute is conical and has one key operated by the little finger of the right hand. It was made in three or four pieces to facilitate tuning adjustments. And so I was performing at the same time.

One other important opportunity came to me during my PhD work. Our department chair, Albert Cohen, asked me to be his research assistant on a project on music in the Paris Académie royale des sciences during the 17th and 18th centuries. We later published a catalogue of the wonderful material we uncovered and I extended that work to look at music and science in England, particularly at the Royal Society of London.

Lecturer at UC Santa Cruz

When I finished in '78, I got a job at UCSC, if you could call it a job. It was one course for one quarter, teaching a course in chamber music literature at College Eight.

Reti: And how did that happen?

Miller: They advertised. I saw it posted. I was just about to finish my degree and I saw it and thought, "Oh, Santa Cruz. That's commutable." I had by this time two children. My daughter was born as I was finishing my dissertation. She was

¹⁵ "Kleine Kammermusik." The name is taken from the title of a piece by Paul Hindemith. We were a mixed ensemble with flute, piano, cello, viola, and sometimes other instruments—Leta Miller.

born in 1975, Rebecca, on September 20, 1975. So she was about three when I was finishing. My son Joel, who now goes by Yitzhak, is four years older,¹⁶ so he was about seven. This was commutable. It was one course. I thought, “Well I could do that.” I also was teaching flute at a place called the Pleshakov-Kaneko Music Institute in Palo Alto. This was just two pianists who had started a lovely music school for grade school and high school kids. I was teaching flute there.

The year before I finished I also managed to get hired teaching one course at Foothill College, which was *Music Appreciation*, again this history of music from the beginning of time to the present day, in ten weeks, which I am still doing and which I still love to do, actually. As you can imagine, it’s really hard to cover that much music in a short period. It’s much more of a challenge, by the way, to teach these elementary classes than to teach a graduate class. To teach these introductory classes, not only do you have to be extremely selective and organized, but you also have to put yourself in the mindset of people who don’t read music, who may have never listened to a piece of music that is more than three minutes long. It’s a real challenge. I love it.

Anyway, I was teaching this one class at Foothill, and that was great. And then I got this one class at UCSC. It was advertised. I went down and I’ll never forget the interview, which was at College Eight. Olga Euben was the head of the search committee. She was at that point the academic preceptor of College Eight. She went on to be the director of admissions at Hampshire College. She’s back in

¹⁶ Joel Ira Miller was born on July 23, 1971.

Santa Cruz now. She's a wonderful woman. When I came in she said, "Oh, I'm so glad you found us and didn't get lost wandering in the woods." (laughter) That was Santa Cruz at the time, wandering in the woods.

Also on the search committee was Heiichiro Ohyama, a violist, who did the small orchestra here and who subsequently went on to become principal violist for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. He was a fine violist. And Bruce Bridgeman [Professor of Psychology] was the other member of that search committee. They hired me to teach this one class for one quarter. And I had a ball. It was just wonderful. So I did that in 1978.

And then the following year I repeated that class and in addition they needed a flute teacher. So they hired me to teach flute. And I taught flute in a room that was about a third the size of this room we are in right now, a tiny room with no window. I was probably in there six hours a day. And they paid me fourteen dollars for an hour lesson and eleven dollars for a half-hour lesson. Teaching a half-hour lesson was more than half of teaching a full hour's lesson. So I taught maybe six hours a day each week in this dreadful room. This room is in the old music building, which is now the theater arts classroom building, but they have since put long, vertical windows in those rooms, which makes all the difference in the world. But it was a fine experience nevertheless.

So I would drive down from Palo Alto every week, twice a week the quarter that I was teaching the class, and then once a week for the flute students. And then I was teaching at Foothill and I was teaching at this local institute. So there were all these part-time jobs, which together did not equal a full-time salary, and of

course had no benefits whatsoever. My husband was a research associate at Stanford at that point. He had finished his PhD. And he subsequently became a research professor. So I was really limited in what I could look for in terms of jobs because we were set in the Bay Area, which was a really competitive area.

Then the following year Ed Houghton [later Dean of the Arts] went on leave from the department. He didn't take sabbatical, but he became head of the UC Abroad Italy campus. The way the overseas program at UC works, I guess is that they have a faculty member who is in charge of it for a couple of years. He went to Italy for two years. So they needed somebody to replace him. I had taught this one class and the flute, but I applied for that replacement position, and I was fortunate to be hired. Ed taught the regular music history survey for undergraduates, Medieval, Renaissance, and he may have taught Baroque as well. So they needed somebody to fill in and that's the time I was asked, "Oh, you just were a TA for this class at Hartford?" And I said, "No, I actually taught the full class," in my interview.

So I was hired to fill in for him for a year and then another year. And then I made myself quite indispensable by volunteering to do all kinds of things in the department that needed doing, like helping to organize the applied music program, so that the enrollment for lessons was more standardized. I actually enjoyed these tasks!

John Hajdu, another wonderful person who's still an active scholar of French baroque music—(He changed his name. He's now John Hajdu Heyer.)—was the chair. And it was wonderful working with him. So they just kept me on, on one

or two-year appointments for seven years. For seven years this went on, that I was rehired on either one- or later two-year appointments. By the way, in 1980, as soon as I got this full-time appointment at UCSC I stopped all this other stuff—how many different things can you do? I devoted myself to the department.

I was also publishing at the same time, which was very difficult, because when you're hired as a lecturer, as I think you know, you're given a much higher teaching load than as an assistant professor. So I had a full-time teaching load. But I knew that if I wanted anything to come of it beyond this lectureship, I had to publish. And there was a seven-year rule that was in existence at the time. You could only be lecturer for seven years and then: out. You couldn't continue as a lecturer either there or at any other campus at UC, I believe. I guess the rationale was that they didn't want the University to be using lecturers instead of assistant professors because it could be exploitative, with lower salaries and higher teaching loads. I suppose that was the rationale.

But in any case, there was this seven-year rule, which I was facing. It was a very tense seven years, I must say, because I was applying for jobs all over the country but I really knew that I couldn't take anything because Alan was a research professor at Stanford, loving what he was doing.

Reti: That's hard to walk away from.

Miller: Well, was I going to take him away from what he was doing? So it was very tense. But as it turns out, we were very fortunate that the budget got better in the late 1980s for a while.

Reti: That was when the university suddenly expanded, in about 1986.

Miller: Yes, you probably know much more about that than I do.

Reti: Well, I was working in Scheduling at the Office of Registrar, facing incredible numbers of students suddenly needing rooms for classes. I was working at the Scheduling Office. I have very vivid memories of that year.

Assistant Professor at UC Santa Cruz

Miller: Interesting. So a position opened in music. So I applied. I believe there were about 135 or 140 applicants.

Reti: (exhales)

Miller: And they knew all my strengths and they knew all of my weaknesses. I was one of several people who was interviewed for the job. At my interview—this is a very funny story—I had to give a lecture for the faculty. They must have gone into June. I think it was after classes ended. For whatever reason, it was in our old concert hall and this lecture—I was told to speak to non-majors—had about six people in the audience and they were all music faculty. (laughter) We were in this two hundred-seat hall and there were six people way back there.

Reti: Oh.

Miller: And what did I have them do? As one component of the lecture, I taught them some of the Renaissance dances. I invited some of them to come up on the stage and dance with me. (laughs) And John Hajdu jumped up and he said, "Sure! I'll do the pavane with you."

Reti: Wow, you really took a risk.

Miller: Was that a risk? I don't know.

Reti: You didn't feel like it at the time.

Miller: I didn't feel like it was a risk. I was going to show them what I could do. And they loved it, I guess, because they offered me the job, which was thrilling! (laughter). They called me on Friday, June 13, which has always reinforced to me that Friday the 13th is a lucky day. (Alan also waited until Friday, December 13, [1968] to propose, to prove the same point. And here we are, married for nearly fifty years.)

Reti: (laughs) That's wonderful.

Miller: So then I became an assistant professor in 1987. And then they fast-tracked me to tenure because I had already been a lecturer for seven years. I already had publications. So I think it was maybe my second review or so that I became associate professor. I didn't wait another six or seven years. It was about four years, maybe, when I was promoted to associate professor. And then the rest is history.

But I loved UCSC's dedication to performance and scholarship because it was what I had been living for all these years.

UC Santa Cruz as a Unique Institution: A Kind of Intellectual Fervor

Reti: Now, what about the other aspects of UCSC at that time that were unique—such as narrative evaluations, the college system, and a dedication to undergraduate education—were those things that you were aware of or attracted to?

Miller: Well, when I first came, I didn't know much about them, but certainly by the time I applied for that job, I did. The students were *really* sharp, really, really bright. That was apparent to me from the very outset, when I taught that class in chamber music literature. One day I would be at Foothill College and the next day I would be at UCSC. And it was just night and day. I mean, the students at Foothill College were great. But they were not nearly as inquisitive or perceptive as the students at UC were. The UC students were fantastic. It was such a challenge. They were also outspoken. They would ask questions. They would pry; they would delve into things. It was a *wonderful* experience.

The Narrative Evaluation System (sighs) had its pros and cons. For my flute students it was ideal, because what does an A in flute mean? I could write that they've studied this or that literature and so on. And for a small class it was fine. When I was hired in 1987 and I was teaching a big class of 150 people—I mean, what did the narrative evaluation mean? I didn't even know all those people. And it was very time consuming on the part of the faculty member, especially

between winter and spring quarter, when there is only one week and you're trying to prepare for the next quarter and you're also trying to write narrative evaluations for 150 people. I took them very seriously but I must say I was not too sorry when they were voted out. I know it's one of the things that made Santa Cruz quite unique. And I know there were advantages. But I was also not sorry to be relieved of that burden.¹⁷

But on the other hand, there was a bit of nostalgia to see the Narrative Evaluation System going, because it was a unique part of [UC] Santa Cruz that made it different, and in some sense more valuable for the students. It also, I think, did pose some problems for the students applying for graduate school because I understood that some graduate departments would try to assign letter grades to the evaluations based on the adjectives that were being used. I didn't feel that our music students were disadvantaged but I did hear reports that students in other fields felt sometimes they were disadvantaged by not having a grade point average, and they might not have gotten admitted to graduate schools.

Reti: In music?

¹⁷ There has been a long history of the UCSC Academic Senate taking up the issue of the Narrative Evaluation System. In December of 1999, the Academic Senate voted to postpone a vote on narrative evaluations, partly because of vociferous protest from students. The vote was 80 to 79, with Chair Roger Anderson casting the tie-breaking vote. After additional consideration from the Committee on Educational Policy and the Graduate Council, in 2000 the UCSC Academic Senate took up the issue again, and voted 154-77 in favor of instituting the University of California's traditional grading system, which made letter grades mandatory, in addition to narrative evaluations, for entering UCSC's students in fall of 2001. In 2010 the Academic Senate voted 45-5 to make narrative evaluations optional. The Senate revised the student-evaluation policy again to allow instructors to prepare a written evaluation if they wish. Proponents said students could also request a written evaluation if one were not offered and could appeal if an instructor refused—Editor

Miller: I think there was just this general feeling on the campus by many students. My feeling was that the students that I knew who wanted to go on to graduate school got in. I spent a lot of time writing letters of recommendation for them. I didn't put letter grades on them but I would put the evaluations in context. So I never had any experiences with a UCSC student, who I felt was qualified, not getting accepted for graduate work. Most of them who deserved it and who wanted it, went on. But I know that there was some perception on the part of students and maybe some faculty members as well, that the lack of letter grades might have been holding some people back. Maybe in the sciences it might have been more of a problem. I don't know. But I'm not an expert to speak about that.

But I was excited about the campus. There was a kind of an intellectual fervor in these early years that sometimes I think has gotten a little bit lost as we've gotten bigger.

And then in the nineties, I thought—especially in the late nineties—that there was a decrease in the quality of the student body. There were times when I had to dumb down my classes a bit. My classes are difficult, but very fair. And there was one year that I remember that I was looking at the possibility that 50 percent of the class might fail. And I just couldn't do that. I had to change the way I taught. There was a kind of a dip. It might have been in the mid- to late nineties. But then it picked up again and now—

Reti: Do you have any sense of why that was going on?

Miller: I don't know. It must have had something to do with the admissions, the applicant process, how many students were applying to the campus. I can't say why. Fortunately, it was just maybe two or three years and then it turned around and came back up.

I absolutely adore the UCSC students. I still feel exactly the same way about them as when I started. They're inquisitive. They're excited. Colleagues at other institutions will tell me. "Oh, my god. The students don't ever want to take the music history classes. They just want to stay in the practice room and play their instruments and I have to fight—" I have *never* experienced that at UCSC. Never. The students are excited about music history. They get into the assignments. There're always a few who are problems. But in general the classes are exciting. They respond to me in really imaginative and perceptive ways. It's just—it's just an amazing place.

Reti: So you arrived on campus as a lecturer in 1978, which was the same year that Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer began implementing the reorganization of the UC Santa Cruz college system. Were you aware of what these changes signified for the campus?

Miller: Well, in '78 I wasn't, because I was just teaching this one course. But in 1980, when I started full time in the replacement position, yes, I became aware immediately of the change that had happened, which I think really was for the good. Things were quite scattered, divided up in funny ways. There were courses that the colleges were mounting that were far more focused than anything that the departments were offering (they weren't called departments at

that point; they were called “boards of studies in x ”). So College Five, which is now Porter, which was the arts college, might be offering very, very specific courses in music, much more specific than what the music board was able to offer. So there was a real question about how these courses fit into the major. Those courses really should have been offered by the music department. But they didn’t necessarily fit into the curriculum of the music department.

So it was quite diversified. And whereas there may have been some positives to this organization, there were a lot of negatives, at least in what was told to me. This was more what was told to me than what I actually experienced. But the music curriculum became a lot more focused. There was also the problem of independent majors. I think people got majors in unusual things such as, say, sound art or aesthetics, which were partly music and partly something else. And then what did they do with those majors? Because if they wanted to go on to get a job, or go on to graduate school, they would be asked, what did that major mean? And when they would say that they had a few courses in music, and they had a few courses in art, and they had a few courses in this and that, it was difficult for some of those students to move forward and be accepted in other programs, or to be accepted in jobs, because they didn’t have in-depth training in one area. Those problems don’t exist today; in fact, interdisciplinary majors are now encouraged and can be highly beneficial in securing employment or entry to graduate school.

This was part of the early experimentation of the UCSC curriculum, which had positives but also had negatives. I don’t know the details of Sinsheimer’s actions.

As a matter of fact, I didn't even realize until you said it that he was responsible for that reorganization. But I think I can see the reasons for it, in retrospect. The very first thing that Linda Burman-Hall said to me when I was hired was, "Be careful what you sign because one could get on to committees for guiding independent majors or independent studies, and get highly involved in a lot of administration without realizing what one was committing to."

So I think the reorganization focused the programs. On the other hand, though, it made UCSC more like everybody else. And one thing I forgot to mention—you asked about UCSC's dedication to undergraduate education and was that important to me? And I have to say, yes, yes, yes, yes. Because I actually adore teaching these courses for undergraduate music majors. I also adore teaching these big general survey courses because you're exciting people about music. You're building audiences. People want to buy recordings. They want to come to concerts. And so you're sort of spreading the gospel, which I loved—and still love. And UCSC was ideally positioned for that role because of its dedication to undergraduate education. So that was one of the early attractions for me.

On the other hand, obviously UCSC suffered in many ways from its emphasis on undergraduate education, in terms of financial growth—you know, bringing in big contracts from the government and lots of overhead and so on—which many years down the pike came to be a problem for UCSC and is now, I think, largely corrected. But this dedication to undergraduate education was one of the things that attracted me in the early years.

Reti: We are a research university but we also have always placed an emphasis on teaching, and not every [UC] campus has.

Miller: Absolutely. That's really important. And I, many years later, served on CAP [Committee on Academic Personnel] for four years and was chairman of it for two years. And I could see this emphasis on teaching in the evaluation of files. Unfortunately I think in recent years some of that devotion to teaching has been lost a bit, which I think is a shame. But we've always, right from the start, had student evaluations. I welcome student evaluations. I remember being extremely nervous about my first set of evaluations from that chamber music literature class. I remember reading them and the first one said, "Oh, I loved this class but there was too much twentieth-century music." And the second one said, "Oh, I loved this class but there wasn't enough twentieth-century music." (laughter) I thought, "Okay. I guess I included the right amount of twentieth-century music."

But importance was placed on those evaluations right from the start. I believe I had evaluations at Foothill College as well, so I think other places were doing them. But somehow I feel that at UCSC they were taken way more seriously than in other places. I applaud that and I still feel that this devotion to teaching is really, really important.

Reti: Well, thank you. So we'll pick it up next time.

Miller: Wonderful.

Reti: So today is April 30, 2015 and this is Irene Reti. I'm here with Leta Miller for our second session of the oral history that we're doing together. So, welcome, Leta.

Miller: I'm glad to be back.

Facilities for the Music Department at UC Santa Cruz

Reti: Thank you. Today we're going to start out by talking about the facilities for the music department on this campus. Tell me about the old music building, the building that you found when you came here.

Miller: Okay, I believe that I mentioned last time that I was teaching flute in a very small room.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: Okay. The music building at the time when I came was what is now the theater arts building. There were actually three separate buildings. There was a classroom building—two floors, the basement and a main floor—which is now the theater arts classrooms and offices, secondly, the recital hall, and finally, what we called the “choral room.” There were two classrooms on the upper floor of the classroom building, a fairly large one and a relatively small one. The third room, which was equivalent in size to the smaller one, was a piano-teaching studio. Then downstairs were teaching studios and practice rooms. Across the hall from the classrooms were some more practice rooms. It was in one of these windowless practice rooms that I was originally teaching flute in 1979, as I told you, for something like fourteen dollars an hour. They have since, after music

vacated this building for its new facilities, transformed it to theater arts. And people thought these rooms were impossible, so they added very long, open-able windows.

There was no particularly good soundproofing in these buildings, which is a real problem for a music building. Before I came, they tried to put carpet on the walls in order to reduce the sound bleeding through from one room to the next—which was only partially effective. I remember sitting in Room 102, which was the large classroom, and trying to give an exam. And on one side we were hearing the piano, and on the other side we're hearing a French horn, and downstairs we were hearing a trombone. I mean, it was cacophony. And in the practice rooms, very similar. Although one could function, there was a huge amount of bleed-through from one room to the next. Putting the carpet on the walls apparently made some difference, although that was before I got there. So it must have been worse in the beginning.

Then across the courtyard from that building was what's now the Black Box Theater, which was our little recital hall, about 250 seats. The acoustics were really quite good for music but it was a very small hall. And there was no green room.

Reti: What's a green room?

Miller: A green room is where the artists hang out before the concert and chill, and contemplate what they're going to do when they get on stage, and have a little privacy, and have a little time to go over their music and their scores, or

whatever they want to do. Often a green room in a fancy venue—a place like Davies Hall—in the big halls, will have different kinds of facilities for different ranked people. So the conductor, for example, will have a bathroom attached to the green room and other people will just have a dressing room, and so on. But there was nothing for our space.

Finally, there was a separate room attached to the recital hall by a little causeway. You had to go outside to get to it, but it was a very short distance. And it was very strange—we called that room the Choral Room, but it housed the gamelan. (laughs) So I guess the chamber choir also rehearsed in that room. Maybe it was used exclusively for the chorus before the gamelan arrived. But the gamelan was housed in there in glass cases. So that's what we had to use as the green room. So people would stay in there—that was a decent-sized room, actually. But it wasn't private. The performers would hang out there before they would go on stage. Then they would have to walk outside. If it was raining there wasn't any cover. But it was a very short distance.

Reti: Yes, but you with your instrument.

Miller: Yes, exactly. Your flute would get cold or your violin might get drops of water on it, or whatever. So the facilities were not terribly adequate. And then our offices were in a totally different place. Our offices were in Porter College. I was in two different offices in Porter College at various times, one of which is now a conference room. So we were dispersed. But we got good athletic exercise walking from place to place.

Reti: (laughs) Yes, that's quite a walk up the hill there.

Miller: It was. But it was beautiful. And then there were an additional set of practice rooms in the woods outside of Porter. Do you remember those?

Reti: Yes.

Miller: You do! There was a little wooden building in the woods; I don't think it's there anymore. There were maybe four or five practice rooms there. The kids loved to practice there. I do remember at one point the provost of Kresge [College], whose house was nearby, was quite annoyed by the noise coming out. I believe one was a percussion practice room; so I can imagine that the provost was bothered! I don't even remember who it was, but we had to make sure that the kids were practicing at reasonable hours because it was really disturbing her family and herself. So it was pretty quaint.

A New, State-of-the-Art Music Building for UC Santa Cruz

So for a long time new facilities were needed. And Ed Houghton is really the one who is responsible for getting us this new music building. He was dean for a while. The building was really his achievement. He pushed for it and he managed to get the music building funded. Now, the state will only fund—I hope I'm right about this but this is what I was told, at least—the state would only fund rooms that they considered classrooms, with a maximum size of about five hundred. So they would not fund a large recital hall, let's say, of 1500 people. That larger facility was on the plans. The new music building, as you know, has a classroom building and it has a recital hall that seats 396. But there

was a 1500-seat concert hall planned as part of that project, which would go where the Performing Arts parking lot is now. But that would have required private donors. And there was never enough money raised for that project. I'm not involved with development, so I don't want to say why. But millions—I think at the time the new music building came up they were talking about twelve million dollars—would have been needed for that. I'm sure it's much higher now. So that never came about.

So the new facilities. Do you have the year in which they opened?

Reti: 1997.

Miller: The new facility is amazing. I know people don't like the architecture. It's been compared to a prison because there aren't any windows in this recital hall, and inside, the hallways are not too beautiful, with concrete block walls and cement floors. But those were all compromises that we needed to make in order to prioritize the acoustics. We thought, "We can always get some kind of minor capital improvement grant to put down better flooring, or to put up wall coverings. But if the acoustics are not right to start with, you can't fix them."

So in the classroom building on the lower floor, on one wing are the practice rooms down one hallway, and there are quite a number of them. Several can accommodate grand pianos; others have smaller pianos in them. At the end of that hall is the electronic music studio, which is a state-of-the-art facility. And they didn't want windows because they want silence. So they're buried inside

the hillside. And that part of the facility is locked with a combination lock because there's a lot of valuable equipment in there.

Down the other hallway are four classrooms, two of which I think are approved for thirty-five students and the other two for thirty (or maybe it's thirty and twenty five). Anyway, two slightly larger than the others. And a fifth, quite large classroom that can double as a small recital space. This large room, Room 131, has forty fixed seats and a large area in the front of them where we have moveable chairs and we can accommodate another, at least twenty people. I once had a class of ninety in that room by having enough moveable chairs in there. And that one has curtains that can be opened and closed, which changes the reverb time dramatically. And so we use that, not only for larger classes, but also for small student recitals. We have an informal student recital series on Friday afternoons and they play in there. It's lovely.

The classrooms are separated by—there's eleven inches between one room and the next—three inches of wall on either side (that's six) and five inches of air space between them. You absolutely cannot hear a sound from one classroom to the next.

Reti: Amazing.

Miller: The doors are extremely heavy [makes sound of great effort]. Oh, my God, it's a huge push opening the doors. (laughs) Just to tell you about the acoustics, when the building opened, I remember that there was a water leak outside one of the classrooms and the facilities people were there using a very

noisy shop vac to mop up the water and you could not hear a sound in the classroom, which was on the other side of the door. So that's how separated the acoustics are. Fantastic.

The acoustics are so good that you don't know if somebody's inside a room and I have occasionally gone in and opened the door and accidentally interrupted a class that's in there. But this is wonderful. That's all in one wing of the building.

Then upstairs on the second floor are applied music teaching studios and the faculty offices. Oh my, we had quite a debate about the fenestration of faculty offices. Do we want to have operable, or non-operable fenestration? Which means: Can you open the windows? (laughs) Some of us emphasized that we would like to be able to get some fresh air by opening the windows. Other people said, "Well, that lets the noise in or out." Some of us also did not—those of us who really would like to open the windows—did not trust climate control to work properly. Indeed we have had some problems in the building that some rooms get really hot and some rooms get really cold. I have often have been very grateful that we have open-able windows in the faculty offices. But they're separated from the rest of the building, which required fixed windows. So next to them in another hallway are the applied music teaching studios, where the violin teacher, the horn teacher, the oboe teacher, teach their lessons. Those rooms do not have open-able windows because there's constantly noise coming out. It's pretty good but sometimes we have problems with some of the rooms getting too hot or too cold. This is a problem for keyboard instruments, and especially for early keyboard instruments such as harpsichords and

clavichords—they go out of tune if you look at them cross-eyed, much less if you change the temperature. (laughs) So that's in all one in wing.

And then the architect, whose name was Antoine Predock, had a vision of getting the building set into the edge of the meadow and having the meadow sort of extend up over the building.

Reti: A green roof situation.

Miller: Well, I was told that he actually proposed thatched roofs and the university said, "We think that's not going to work in terms of getting to the parts of the equipment that might have to be stored up there, that we might have to adjust and so on." But he did do something about having the two wings of the building separated by an atrium. There's a kind of—it's not really a tunnel—there's a hallway— This is the most beautiful part of the building. It has glass windows along the hallway that look out into an atrium. And you move through this hallway into the other part of the building, where we have the noisy activities: the recital hall, the ensemble rehearsal room, the percussion studios. The percussion studios—there's a drum studio and a percussion studio. They can make lots of noise on their side of the building and not bother the classrooms. It's great. And the ensemble rehearsal room is a very large room that also has variable acoustics because of draperies. But the people like the acoustics in that hall the least of any of the rooms. It's a little drier than what many people would like.

Reti: "Drier" acoustically means?

Miller: People, I think, would prefer a little more resonance in that room, no matter whether the curtains are all the way open or not. The percussion rooms, on the other hand, were designed to be very dry. They want it extremely dry because they make a lot of noise and need it not to be overwhelming to the ears. And in fact, if you go into the percussion studio, where we have our marimbas and xylophones and bass drums and timpani, there is heavy padding on the walls and there's basically zero reverberation, which is exactly what you want for a percussion studio.

Within the large ensemble rehearsal room—which can accommodate our orchestra, and our large chorus, and our wind ensemble, and our jazz ensembles—there is a glassed-in recording booth. The person sitting in this booth can see right into the ensemble rehearsal room and can record from there. And also the booth is connected to the main recital hall (which I haven't gotten to yet) by closed circuit TV. We have a camera at the back of the stage, so you could do a conductor shoot or an audience shoot. We also have a camera that's out in the audience that can look at the stage. It's all connected aurally to the recording room, so all our concerts are recorded that way. The person is sitting in the booth and they see through the camera what's going on.

Reti: Deluxe!

Miller: It's beautiful. It's very nice. So we record everything that we do. I suppose there's an occasional time when some artist doesn't allow us to record. But that would be the exception. We generally record every concert.

So then, as you exit the ensemble rehearsal room, you go down to the green room area, which has two dressing rooms and two bathrooms. And then we go into the stage area. And the recital hall is our *pièce de resistance*. It's wonderful. First of all, it's beautiful in terms of the way it looks as well as the way it sounds. It was really the envy of various other campuses. People from [UC] Davis came down to look at it, when they were going to build their hall. People from Stanford were down looking at it. Because we got a fantastic acoustical engineer [Ron McKay]. He was quite exceptional. He took us around—I was on the committee that helped develop the building specifications. I didn't do the detailed—Peter Elsea, who was head of our electronic music studios, was really heavily involved in designing it, as was Tom Listmann, our building operations manager. In any case we went around with this acoustical engineer to about three or four different other places—in LA—out-of-town places.

Reti: At universities?

Miller: Yes. We went into halls and we tested out the acoustics and we saw what we liked and what we didn't like. I took my flute along, and I got up on the stage, and I played. And they all listened and they said, "Oh, I liked the sound of Leta playing on this stage but not on this stage, and here's what we can do and what we can't do."

So we came out with an absolute gem of a hall. It's magnificent. You play in that hall and you feel like a million-dollars as a performer. So you can adjust—we

need to get the specifications—but I think from about one second to three seconds, the reverb.¹⁸ So you can make the thing sound like an old European cathedral, if you want to do Gregorian chant. And—for new music if you want it somewhat drier, you can close all the curtains. There are curtains all the way around the outside. So by closing and opening those curtains you can create this variation in reverberation time.

And there are no standing waves. Acoustical spaces have to be broken up and walls need to be non-parallel. So the spaces are broken up by putting things on the walls or adding curvature to the walls, or not having the space be exactly rectangular, and so on. I'm not an acoustical engineer. So it's best if I not get into details and make mistakes!

Reti: But this acoustical engineer was hired by the architects to work with you?

Miller: Hired by the university and he worked with the architect. Sometimes there was disagreement but the acoustical engineer just said, "Look, we need this for the acoustics," and the architect worked with that.

The architect had some other plans that were too expensive, unfortunately, to implement. He wanted some kind of tower, a bell tower, I think. And in one place he wanted a glass wall, which would have been just gorgeous. And I'm so sorry that they had to fill it in. Because now it's this big concrete block wall, and I

¹⁸ For technical specifications on the UCSC Music Building, including the Recital Hall, see <http://music.ucsc.edu/facilities/recital-hall/technical-info>

keep looking at it every time I walk in that building and thinking, "If that were glass, how beautiful that would be." But it was too expensive.

The other problem with expenses was that there was a lot of opposition to this building because it was going to be on the edge of the Great Meadow.

Reti: Yes, I remember that.

Miller: You remember this. There was a Long Range Development Plan which said, "Thou shalt not build anything on the meadow." Well, this was sort of on the meadow. It is on the edge of the meadow. When Predock came out, he spent a long time sitting in the meadow and looking at the site from that vantage point, from the bike path that comes up from the front of campus. And he just looked at the site. And he put in this beautiful columned walkway that's non-functional, just really attractive. If you come up the bike path you see these lovely columns. But from the parking lot what you see is the blank walls of the recital hall. Well, you can't have windows in a recital hall. That lets noise in and out, right? You need quiet. We don't want to hear the cars coming. And our recital hall functions not only for concerts, but people doing recordings in there as well. I've done quite a few recordings in there, as have Linda Burman-Hall and Nicole Paiement. It's a great place to record because you can't hear anything from outside. You can have a truck coming outside and you don't hear it. So you need a blank wall. I've often suggested, only half in jest, that we have the art students paint a slug orchestra on that wall, but no one seems to have taken me up on that idea.

So people debated that: “What are we going to see? We’re going to see a blank wall, and it’s going to be this tall, and it’s not going to have any windows and it’s on the edge of the meadow.” We had students lying down in front of the trucks and cutting—somebody cut electrical wires at one point. (sighs)

So we had to lower the building down into the ground further than it was originally slated to be. We had to drop the building. This cost—I was told at the time that it cost something like an extra million dollars to lower the building this much. (Note: This figure is hearsay and from my memory; I don’t have exact numbers.)

Reti: I would believe that.

Miller: And so we had to make compromises. We cut the lobby of the Recital Hall. The lobby is half the size it was supposed to be. It should have been twice that big.

Reti: You can tell, when you get a full house. It’s quite crowded in there.

Miller: Right. Everybody said, “Well, they’ll go outside.”

Reti: That’s a very exposed area.

Miller: Yes. We had to cut out the wall coverings and floor coverings within the classroom building. We had to fill in that proposed glass wall with concrete blocks. We had to make all these savings, in part to make up for lowering that building, in part to meet the university’s budget. Plus, we hit the water table! When it rains a lot, we get water backstage downstairs. It happened even this

December. We're in the fourth year of a drought but we had a very wet December, as you can remember. And I remember observing down near the pit—because the recital hall also has a pit, which our older one didn't have. So that we can have an orchestra down in the pit; we can have operas on stage. That pit is covered over by a pit cover that goes up and down. It's motorized. But I remember going down there and hearing the water rushing underneath there.

Reti: (gasps) Under the floor!

Miller: Yes, I mean it was like a river flowing. It was (laughs) like hearing the Mississippi River under there.¹⁹ And a couple of years ago we actually had a good amount of water that went into the pit. The problem was—there's an alarm system—but it happened during campus closure [for the December holidays] and nobody was there and nobody heard the alarm and came to check.

Fortunately our two \$70,000 Steinways were okay. They are stored in the pit. But the pianos were slightly raised up, on the pit cover, and so the water did not reach them. The pit cover goes up and down and we store the pianos down there in the pit, if they're not being used, because people like to sneak into that Recital Hall and play on the pianos, when they're not supposed to. We now have very secure locks. The doors automatically close and lock because we have found people in there when they are not authorized to be there.

¹⁹ Miller added the following comment during the editing process: "A bit of hyperbole here; and in fact that "river" was part of the design, to take care of run-off, I am told."

I can tell you stories about people being in there without permission. I'll just tell you one amusing one.²⁰ Karlton Hester, who is our jazz guy, loves to practice at midnight or 2:00 in the morning, and he goes into the Recital Hall sometimes, which is fine. He's a faculty member and he's got a key. He was in there one night, and he hears somebody snoring. (laughs) And he looks around and a homeless person, was up above the stage, behind some of the curtains, lying down (Karlton is on the stage and he looks up behind him.) This guy was up behind the stage. He wasn't doing any damage, fortunately. Karlton called the police, of course, who came and gently removed the guy. Fortunately he was harmless. But people like to go in there. Students think, if a door is left open, that they can go in and practice on the piano.

Reti: On a \$70,000 Steinway.

Miller: Yeah, and we've got two of them. (laughs) When we inaugurated the building—Linda Burman-Hall runs a Balinese gamelan ensemble, and at that point I was playing in her ensemble. So I was part of that. We started playing with the pit cover lowered, and the gamelan ensemble was sitting—this was about twelve people or something—sitting on the pit cover. And we started playing from down below, as the pit cover came up to reveal the performers. It was theatrical—and very funny. It was an amazing sight.

Reti: (laughs)

²⁰ Again, I am now recounting second-hand a story told to me by Karlton Hester, who should be contacted if anyone wants to hear the tale "from the horse's mouth." Apologies in advance to Karlton for any errors in my retelling!—Leta Miller.

Miller: (laughs) So we love this new Recital Hall. The only thing is that occasionally, if you have vocal music, sometimes it's difficult to understand the text. That's the only drawback that we've found over these years. And we find solutions to this problem. But it's not a big problem. For the most part, it's just fantastic.

Reti: Do you know why it's hard to understand the text?

Miller: Probably the amount of resonance. The engineer also put in seats that mimic the sound absorption that a person would take up. So the acoustic does not change from the time it's empty to the time it has people in it, which is a huge advantage for performers.

We also have clouds over the stage. Those are just hanging reflectors that bounce the sound back to the performers on stage. There are several different positions for them. You can put them quite low, or you can put them higher, depending upon the size of your ensemble. This does not make a huge difference in the hall, but it makes a huge difference on stage, as to whether the performers can hear each other. So if you have a small ensemble and you bring those clouds down, then the performers can hear each other much better. So it's really a very exciting space.

And then in addition to all of these buildings—which are all connected—and of course, unlike our old place, you can get from one end to the other without going outside (laughs)—there is a separate gamelan studio. The architect, in particular, was enamored of gamelan. He loved gamelan music and he wanted to make a

very special space for it. And Linda worked with him to come up with something.

It's a separate building where we house two gamelan orchestras. One is Balinese. One is Sundanese, which is from the western part of the island of Java. The main gamelan tradition is from central Java. Though Sunda is West Java and has its own gamelan tradition, it's quite similar to the main Javanese tradition. So we have a set of instruments from Sunda. And we have a wonderful man, Undang Sumarna, who has been with us for a long time.²¹ He teaches the gamelan and plays the drum. The drummer is the leader of the ensemble. And then we have a set of Balinese instruments, and Linda Burman-Hall has run a Balinese ensemble for many years. And all of these instruments are housed in this space. The front of the gamelan building is all glass, and you can open the doors all the way, and the sound comes out onto the patio. The idea was that people could sit out on the patio and hear a gamelan concert outdoors, because that's how gamelan is done in Indonesia. It's an outdoor ensemble and it's usually accompanied by dance. The Balinese instruments are much louder than the Javanese, and they're intended to be played outdoors.

Reti: My goodness. So we really went from being paupers to being queens.

Miller: Very lucky. And the theater department got to inherit and remodel our old buildings. They have fixed them up. They had a big 500-seat theater but now they got this 250-seat black box theater as well. They hung up all kinds of sound-

²¹ According to the UCSC *General Catalog*, Undang Sumarna began teaching at UCSC in 1978—Editor.

absorbing materials to make it dry, because they didn't like our resonance. Of course, for speech it was way too reverberant.

You cannot have an effective multipurpose hall. It doesn't work. What works for speech and what works for music are entirely the opposite. For speech you want it very dry, so you can understand the text. And for music you want it very resonant. So this business of a multipurpose hall means it's good for nobody. Unless you have extremely variable acoustics, where you can make it—I suppose it's possible, with curtains and drapes—I should not speak so definitively—that you could change it enough.

But they dried up the old recital hall and made it appropriate for theater. And then they have a new media theater that's an additional building. So I think their facilities are quite good now.

Reti: Great! Well, it's very exciting and it certainly makes quite a statement about the importance of music on the campus, as well.

Miller: Yeah, I hope so. Well, you know, music and theater serve as outreach for the campus. I think they are appreciated but I don't know if they are appreciated to their full extent. The research that's done by most faculty is quite invisible to the general community, except for an occasional lecture here or there. But concerts and plays are what bring the general population of Santa Cruz to the campus.

Reti: Yes, I know when I speak with community members and I ask them if they know the campus, the one place they know is the Performing Arts area.

Miller: Yes, they go to Shakespeare Santa Cruz and recitals. Yes.

And while we're talking about the facilities, one thing that the new facility permitted that really could not be done effectively in the old facilities, was opera. Nicole Paiement could tell you a lot about the development of the opera program, because she and her husband Brian Staufenbiel, one of our two voice teachers, were instrumental in developing this extremely successful program, probably one of the most successful parts of our program. Doing a full opera every spring—it's not unheard of for conservatories or for huge places like the University of Michigan or Indiana, which have enormous music programs. But for a liberal arts college campus, it's very difficult. And you can't do it without an orchestra pit. I mean, I suppose you could, but the problem of balance between the instruments and the voices is difficult to overcome. I have watched operas at the old Cabrillo Theater, and it's difficult. The orchestra needs to be down, needs to be softer. You never amplify operatic voices; and student operatic voices don't always have the power yet developed to project over a full orchestra—especially the male voices which take some time to mature. And so, the orchestra needs to be down in a pit. You also need fly space for scenes.

Reti: Fly space?

Miller: Fly space. You've got to be able to hang things above the stage.

Reti: Sets.

Miller: Sets. You need to be able to bring things down. You need to have curtains that go in and out. You need to be able to have a lot of backstage area, so you can bring in various kinds of sets and so on.

So the opening of the new building allowed that part of the program to develop, which has become extremely successful. There's an opera circle in town, consisting of people who are avid supporters of the UCSC opera program. The voice and orchestral faculty have done some amazing things and the productions have actually won some awards. It's just quite incredible for a school of our size and a liberal arts part of the University of California.

Reti: Yes, I didn't realize how unusual that is. Sometimes you don't appreciate what's right in front of you.

Miller: Exactly!

The Development of the UCSC Orchestra

Reti: So let's talk about the professionalization of the orchestra.

Miller: The orchestra has had its ups and its downs. When I first came here, it was extremely small. It takes a lot of energy to develop an orchestra. And you can't just do it out of the music students, unless you have a huge number of music majors. You have to reach out to other areas on campus.

Reti: And we don't have that huge a program.

Miller: No, we—I don't know what the current numbers are but for many years when I was here there were probably about one hundred undergraduate majors

spread over the four years. They are pianists, and guitarists and singers as well as orchestral musicians. They're not all instrumentalists. And you can only use three flutes, for example (single wind players). You can't use ten flutes in the orchestra. And there was no graduate program at that point. So the orchestra struggled along, limped along. At one point there was an attempt to link the director of the UCSC Orchestra and the Santa Cruz Symphony [that is, to have one person conduct both groups]. That didn't work well at all.

Really, the orchestra didn't start to take off until Nicole Paiement came. And she was a miracle. She was just unbelievable. She jumped in with both feet. And she recruited. Her presence was all over campus. She got people from chemistry and physics and so on. She got a trombonist who was a computer science faculty member, and I think he still plays in the orchestra. [Charlie MacDowell]

Plus the quality of what she did was extraordinary and people absolutely love to play under her. Things developed amazingly. A few years ago, we hired a new faculty member, Tanya Merchant, who is an ethnomusicologist but also a bassoon player, and she went to the first orchestra concert of the year and she said, "Holy smokes! This sounds like a conservatory orchestra. I can't believe that it's this good." This was a woman who knew whereof she spoke. She had gone to a very rigorous conservatory as an undergraduate before she went into ethnomusicology.

So things were going quite well. Then Nicole just got too famous for us. (laughs) I mean, she was being recruited away by the Dallas Opera, and by the Seattle Opera, and forming her own opera company in San Francisco. She had to take off

a quarter per year to do some of these other things. And without intensive, continued effort—I mean, the orchestra stayed okay. It stayed all right. But nobody could come up to her. To replace her annual quarter of leave we could not find anybody who was as good as she was. So what can I say? Things stayed sort of stable. And now I think the orchestra needs building again. And now she has, unfortunately for us but fortunately for her, taken an early retirement, because she's she's just got too many demands on her time nationally. If she can be conducting the Dallas Opera, why should she be conducting UCSC's Orchestra? (laughs) We all recognize that but we're so sad that she's gone.

We're hiring for a new director and hopefully the person who comes in will be able to have her kind of energy.²² But it takes constant attention every single year. You finally get your students trained and then they graduate, for gosh sakes. And then you've got to get a whole new group every year. Not true of a professional orchestra, of course.

Reti: True.

Miller: In a professional group, you have the same people. Maybe you have to replace two or three people each year, but not to the degree that you do with a student group. So it's a very difficult task, and more difficult, I think, than choirs. More people sing than play instruments well enough to join an orchestra. But the expertise you need on the instruments—

Reti: And you and Nicole have collaborated quite a bit.

²² As this oral history goes to press Bruce Kiesling has now been hired for that position—Leta Miller.

Faculty Collaborations

Miller: We have indeed. That was also such a wonderful opportunity. There's been a lot of collaboration. One of the real pluses of the music department is the collaboration amongst various members of the faculty. I think I mentioned to you that as soon as I got hired, Linda Burman-Hall asked me to play in the Baroque Festival. I think I mentioned that last time.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: And then when Nicole came on, Linda immediately began bringing her on to collaborate as well. Linda tries to collaborate with all of the performers on the faculty. So she and Nicole and I did a number of projects. Nicole and I did a number of projects on our own as well, where Nicole was conducting various works. I was playing the flute in small ensembles. Sometimes there would be works for solo flute on the recording, along with the ensemble she was conducting. We collaborated in all kinds of ways. A number of recordings and performances arose from those collaborations. It was always so stimulating to work with her. She is an amazing musician, able to get the absolute best out of the players, without talking down to them at all. Addresses them with complete respect, and yet she's demanding and asks for things that create exceptionally high standards—the music quality rose to a different level.

In the collaboration projects, the ensembles were largely comprised of faculty members, but with some very advanced students. Sometimes, by this time, graduate students participated as well. Then Nicole began to form her own

ensemble up in the San Francisco area. And sometimes she asked me to come up and give lectures for her concerts. We're still very close friends. Yes, what a delight to collaborate with her. The quality of music making was absolutely exceptional. We can look through my recordings but I would say half a dozen professional recordings have myself and Nicole on them.

And the same thing with Linda. Collaboration with Linda and performing with the Baroque Festival, which I did for a number of years. And then also a number of recordings came out of those collaborations. [For an excerpt from one of them, click on the link below.]

[Sonata in G major, op. 91 no. 3 for flute and harpsichord by Josef Bodin de Boismortier \(1689–1755\), movement 1 \(Rondement—gayement\); Leta Miller, baroque flute and Linda Burman-Hall, harpsichord. \(Musical Heritage Society 514082Z, 1993\)](#)

Reti: So tell me about the Baroque Festival.

Miller: Linda should be the one who is telling you about this because I'm not positive exactly what year it started. I think it would be good to find out what year Linda came to Santa Cruz.²³ She's an amazing musician, Linda. She finished her PhD at Princeton. And interestingly, I believe the focus was on folk fiddling from the Southern United States!

Reti: Really! I wouldn't have guessed that in a million years. (laughs)

²³ Linda Burman-Hall came to UC Santa Cruz in 1976.

Miller: But she said to me, a great quote from her, she said, “People will tell you that you should become like an oak tree, that you’ll put down roots in a particular area, and you’ll grow up and you’ll become an expert in this area, like an oak tree,” she said. “But I think I’m more like bamboo. I come up all over the place!” (laughter) “In a lot of different areas.”

Reti: (laughs) That’s a wonderful metaphor.

Miller: It is, because she’s interested in American folk fiddling; she’s got an expertise in gamelan. She spends almost every summer in Bali. She’s written about Balinese music and she’s made films about Balinese music, and she’s run this Balinese gamelan. And, of course, she’s involved in Baroque music. But not only Baroque—she’s extended—she’s done recordings of twentieth century repertoire as well. She’s an incredible harpsichordist, an unbelievable harpsichord player. When you’re playing Baroque music, the harpsichord part very often is what we call figured bass. Do you know what that is?

Reti: No.

Miller: Okay. So the composer writes the bass line. And the bass line is played by the left hand of the harpsichordist and usually reinforced by a melodic bass instrument, like a cello. And there’s no right hand written. The right hand has to be improvised by the performer, or it was at the time. These days if you buy an edited version, an editor has usually filled in some suggestions for the right hand part, but that line was not written by the composer. Instead there are figures (that’s why it’s called a figured bass), figures that indicate what the harmonies

are to be, what the intervals are to be played above the bass, and so what harmonies you use in the right hand. And then the harpsichordist is free to do whatever he or she wants in the right hand.

Well, Linda is unbelievable at playing from figured bass. You can put anything in front of her and she can sight read it immediately. And she never does the same thing twice. So what happens in a rehearsal is different from what happens in a concert, because she's thinking of new ideas that she plays around with. I remember one time at a concert I made a little mistake. And she immediately imitated my mistake to make it sound like it was deliberate. (laughs) Maybe she thought it was deliberate. I don't know. But in any case, she immediately imitated it.

Occasionally those figures are not present, in which case the harpsichordist must read the rest of the score—let's say it's an orchestra piece—the violins, violas, cellos, maybe a couple of wind instruments—sometimes no figures, only a left hand. The harpsichordist is obliged to read all of those other instrumental parts and improvise a right hand that'll match. She can do it. Whether it's printed, whether it's a manuscript and things are not lined up properly. She's unbelievable. And she can do it for hours on end and never make a mistake. It is mind-boggling.

Working with her was quite a remarkable experience. We played a great number of concerts. I mean, making a recording with her was interesting. She had to do things the same way more than once, so that we could edit. (laughs) Because if she did it differently, we couldn't cut.

Reti: Oh, yeah. The tracks would be all off.

Miller: Right, exactly. (laughs) So anyway, this was a wonderful experience. We performed very often. And then she extended—the festival was called Festival of Living Music at first. It wasn't called the Baroque Festival. But it was primarily Baroque music. Then she changed the name at a certain point to Santa Cruz Baroque Festival.

Reti: "Living Music."

Miller: The Festival of Living Music. She was trying to convey the idea that old music is still alive, I believe. You'd have to ask her why she chose that name. It was there before I came.

But in any case, I think she wanted to become more specific, so she said "Santa Cruz Baroque Festival." But then she started doing Medieval music, and Renaissance music, and twentieth-century music, and nineteenth-century music at this festival. So "Baroque Festival" is not really a totally accurate name anymore. It's hard come up with a name for a festival that will allow you to expand. So I don't know, maybe she should go back to "Festival of Living Music." (laughs)

Reti: It would be more encompassing.

Miller: At this point everybody knows "Santa Cruz Baroque Festival," so I think she'd lose a lot in changing the name now. But she started that, I think, very soon after she came to Santa Cruz, which was in the seventies. Before me. She was here when I came. She, like me, I believe was a lecturer for a few years and then

moved into a ladder position. In my early years here, sometimes she would do things in Baroque costume. We all had costumes made for us. I don't remember who made them. [Photo below is of Leta Miller in Baroque costume, 1980s. Photo by Peter Troxell.]



Reti: Was that the picture you sent me?

Miller: I sent you a picture of me which my husband insisted on blowing up and putting on the wall. There's another picture of myself and Luciano Lombardi, a viola de gamba player, and Leslie Hirsch, a violinist, and Eli Hollander, who is in the film department. I believe he is emeritus at this point. He played the recorder many times, but Eli was also a crack French horn player. I believe that he even used to be a substitute for the New York Philharmonic. I mean, he was that good. He played recorder with Linda in her Baroque Festival. And these concerts were really fun.

Another group that I was involved in early on when I came to Santa Cruz was Phil Collins's Santa Cruz New Music Works. And that's where I became involved with Lou Harrison.

Reti: I see.

Miller: Because Phil had studied with Lou Harrison and he programmed Lou Harrison's music often. So when we get to our interview—

Reti: We'll do a whole chapter on Lou Harrison, for sure.

Miller: We will. We'll come back to that.

Reti: And what about your collaborations with Fredric Lieberman. Was that also around Lou Harrison?

Miller: Yes. I think we'll talk about that when we get to Lou Harrison. When I came up with the idea to do the book on Lou Harrison, I invited Fred to join me. And then I found out that he had been Lou Harrison's graduate assistant back in

1963 at the University of Hawaii. I didn't realize that they went back that far. So that's how that collaboration started.

Reti: Okay, well that's going to be fun to talk about.

Miller: Yes. But the interaction among the music faculty is really unusual thing, I think, and an important thing. In many universities there's a lot of friction among faculty members in music departments, for some reason. I guess everybody is very opinionated. But we were really fortunate to have this wonderful degree of collaboration. And we would often play music by faculty composers. We played a lot of music by David Cope. I performed a lot with Mary Jane Cope, a pianist, his wife. I performed also a lot with Nohema del Carmen Fernández, who was on our faculty as a piano faculty member, for a while.

We always have had two piano teachers. Mary Jane Cope was one. Sylvia Jenkins was another, who goes way back to the first years of the campus. Sylvia left and Nohema Fernández came in. And Nohema eventually became a dean of the arts at Irvine. I don't know if she's still in that position. I don't think so. A wonderful pianist. So there were those kinds of collaborations.

We had a faculty recital series. We called it the Wednesday Evening Series. Faculty members would perform. I would sometimes give—I counted up—sometimes I gave as many as fifteen or twenty performances per year.

Reti: My goodness.

Miller: Yeah. I was playing a lot in the earlier years. I stopped playing around 2000. I packed up my flute and decided I wanted to do musicology. I was getting tired of practicing. We can talk about that at a certain point.

But before that, I was really performing extensively in chamber music, not orchestra, but chamber music or solo recitals. I gave a full solo recital every year I was here—I don't remember when the first one was—maybe 1980 or '81 through about 2000. A full recital. Sometimes including Baroque flute as well as modern flute, which is an interesting juxtaposition, because the fingerings are often different, and in the early times when I did it I had a couple of scary moments when I almost went to the wrong fingering. I always used accompanists, of course, as collaborators—pianists, harpsichordists. I would collaborate with the clarinet teacher, with the oboe teacher. We had a faculty woodwind quintet at one point, which was myself, an oboist, clarinet, bassoon, French horn. That went on for several years. You can look at my list of performances. It's fairly extensive. It's about twelve pages of performances or so.

Student Ensembles

Reti: So let's talk about student ensembles.

Miller: Okay. We talked about the orchestra a bit. And we have two choirs. We have a large general choir and we have the chamber singers, which is about twenty-four people. And they're all music majors, so a really, really high-quality chamber ensemble, that has made a number of recordings, by the way, which is also very unusual.

The Early Music Consort was a student ensemble and it was periodic. In many institutions, there's an early music ensemble that meets each semester, all the time. We didn't have the staffing to do that, but we would do it every couple of years. We would have an early music consort. I directed it, I'd say, maybe five times. When I did it, I made a huge production out of it. (laughs) I didn't just do a little performance in Room 131. I made a huge thing with unusual lighting. The early music concerts then would have maybe fifteen to twenty students in them, a variety of different instruments—anything from guitars to harpsichords, a recorder consort, various other early instruments. And then usually a group of singers. And the pieces that I would program would often be very short. So my husband and I used to joke about the Stanford group that I was in when I was a graduate student, that you'd play a two-minute piece, and then you'd have a two-minute setup. And then you'd do another two-minute piece, and then you'd have another a two-minute setup. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: This is the problem of having a lot of short pieces on a concert. So the first time I did the Early Music Consort I did it as a collaboration with John Hajdu Heyer, whom I mentioned last time. And he said, "Look, Leta. We're just going to put different types of ensembles in different places on the stage. We'll just have it bing-bing-bing from one to the other, without any applause in between."

I thought that was a great idea and every time I did it on my own I did that. I used lighting; I would have lots of lighting cues, so we'd have to work with the lighting staff at a dress rehearsal to have the lights go on and off on the different

parts of the stage. And we'd have instruments all over the place. One time I did it where the students entered from the back of the hall, singing, while walking down the aisles, which was very dramatic. And lots of times we'd use our various early music keyboard instruments. We have three harpsichords in the department. We also have a little portable organ. It's called a positive organ. These are organs that you can roll in and out, so they have the pipes built into them. In the Baroque period they needed bellows that were worked by an assistant, but these days we use electricity of course. We also have a clavichord, which is a very, very, very, very soft keyboard instrument. I mean, if you even move in your chair while it's playing it could cover up the sound. Very soft. So it has to be, today, a little bit amplified to be heard in a four-hundred-seat hall. So we have various keyboard instruments.

I do remember one moment that was very scary, during an early music performance. Everybody was on stage and we were ready for this piece, which involved organ and a singer and a cello, I think. I cued them to start but there was no sound out of the organ. We tried again. There's no sound out of the organ. And the guy sits there and shrugs, "I don't know what's going on." I had no idea what was going on either. I sort of moved them over. I whispered, "Go over to the harpsichord." And I turned to the audience and said, "Well, the best laid plans—" (laughs) It turns out that a blower had broken on the organ and we had to order a new part from Germany, which took months.

Reti: Oh, my gosh.

Miller: Right before the concert. But, you know, these things happen.

I guess the funniest concert we did was—there’s a series of famous pieces from the sixteenth century that were based on a popular song of the time—the title of the song being “Guardame las vacas” or “Watching the Cows.” There were at least ten Spanish composers at the time who wrote sets of variations on this tune, for either harpsichord or vihuela, which is similar to a lute. So for part of this concert I had intermingled on the program different sets of variations on this tune. Since it had something to do with cows, we had a big picture of Ferdinand the Cow at the back. And we advertised our concert as, “We’re going to make wonderful moo-sic” [draws out the MOO] (laughs).

Reti: (laughs) How perfect for UCSC, with the cows right here in the Great Meadow.

Miller: (laughs) Yeah, we thought so. It was light hearted; it was fun. Great music.

We had some really fine performers. One group, the performance was so outstanding of a particular piece, that I continue to use it in my music history classes today because I have not found any professional recording that’s as good as what these students did. These happened to be graduate students at this point, master’s students. But they were exceptional. So the quality was quite high.

The Evolution of the UCSC Music Department

Reti: Great. Well, that seems like a good segue into the program itself and the ways in which the offerings of the music department have changed over time. I was taking a very quick look through some of the *UCSC General Catalogs* in my

office, and was noticing, first of all, from the very beginning how eclectic the program was—with gamelan and Near Eastern Music, and Electronic Music. Gordon Mumma—can you tell me a little bit about him and what he was doing in those early years?

Miller: Yeah, sure. There was already a pretty good electronic music program going on when I came. I was trying to remember where the electronic music studio was in the early years and now I'm remembering that it was over in the Communications Building.

Reti: Oh! Because that's where the computers were, right?

Miller: Yes. So, you see, we were even more dispersed geographically than I said before. I totally forgot about that.

David Cope worked with computers and we can talk about his work later on, if you want to make a note to do that. But really, in charge of the computer music facility was Gordon Mumma, and subsequently they hired Peter Elsea to actually work in the studios and so on. Gordon was one of the earliest faculty members here. I think maybe David Cope came a little bit earlier [*recte* later].²⁴ But those were the composition faculty. Gordon had a very interesting background. He didn't even have a Bachelor's degree. He was a full professor. But he had an extraordinary career. He composed electronic music. He was a pioneer in the area of electronic music. He was a pioneer in the avant-garde music scene, worked with John Cage. He was at the University of Michigan but he didn't

²⁴ David Cope arrived at UCSC in 1977. Gordon Mumma arrived at UCSC in the 1974-75 academic year.

complete his degree there. But then, he collaborated with a group of avant-garde composers, students from the University of Michigan, who formed what was called the ONCE Festival. This was an avant-garde music festival that took place in Ann Arbor from about 1961 to 1966, or so. And they made national headlines for what they were programming because they were on the most far-out end of the New Music scene. They had Cage there many times. After 1966 the ONCE Festival disintegrated—there are only so many years you can keep it up— Along with Gordon, by the way, in this Festival were Robert Ashley, Roger Reynolds, George Cacioppo, and Donald Scavarda.²⁵ And after this festival finished, after a number of years, Gordon went to work with Cage in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. So he was part of the Cunningham Dance Company, toured with them, composed for them, did all the electronic work for them. He did that for quite a number of years.

And then he was hired at UCSC by Sherwood Dudley, who was chair at the time, and we were extremely fortunate to get him because he brought unbelievable experience and perspective to the program, and of course was the voice of really avant-garde new music, which was well in tune with the philosophy of the department at the time.

And he intersected with David Cope really well. David Cope, at that point I think, was really writing notes-on-paper kind of music, not electronic music at first. But David Cope eventually got himself involved very much in computers,

²⁵ Miller has written an extended history of the ONCE Festival: "ONCE and Again: The Evolution of a Legendary Festival," essay in the booklet accompanying the 5-DC set *Music from the ONCE Festival* (New World Records 80567-2), pp. 13–104

but in a slightly different way from Gordon. David developed a program called Experiments in Musical Intelligence (EMI). And he taught this program to compose. People had tried this, to get computers—this is artificial intelligence—

Reti: Oh, I see.

Miller: —to get computers to compose. They would do this by implementing rules—pardon me, David, if you hear this, that I am trying to talk about your work—(laughs) but I'll try to summarize what I know, and I hope I'm accurate. People—not David, but others—would try to just input rules to teach the computer to compose. David tried a different tack. He would input into the computer a series of pieces and let the computer determine the rules for itself. So he would, for example, input twenty Bach fugues and then the computer would examine these Bach fugues and find out what salient characteristics there were. If there were things that occurred many times then they became style markers. And if they only occurred once, then they were just an idiosyncratic manifestation of a particular piece. But by looking at many, many pieces, the computer would learn what were the essential style markers. And then he would generate three thousand Bach fugues from the computer, some of which were not too great and some of which were almost indistinguishable from actual Bach fugues.

He started doing this because he had a composer's block. He was having trouble generating something that he thought was good and he needed somebody to play off against. So he decided to play off against a machine. He's made headlines from this. He's written several books about the process and he's been

written up in the *New York Times* and elsewhere. He's very famous for this EMI program.

Reti: Fascinating.

Miller: Yes, so we've had some quite distinguished composers on the music faculty—David is also emeritus. David is in town and Gordon is also emeritus and is living in Victoria, in Canada.

Reti: Okay. And then we have quite a number of ethnomusicologists, like John Schechter.

Miller: Yes, his field was in Latin American music. He retired quite suddenly. I'm especially sad that we have not been able to replace his particular area of specialty. We do have ethnomusicologists who are filling out other areas that are needed. And I think we do have a Latin American specialist ranked as a high priority for another FTE, if we are given one. I'm not sure where it is on the list. But he developed a Latin American ensemble, which was very popular with the students. And he taught courses in Latin American music, a big Latin American music introductory class. And he also taught about Stravinsky.

Reti: Oh!

Miller: So, you see, he fit in with everybody so well—because people were eclectic, interested in different areas. And he also taught a first-year theory class, which had nothing to do with Latin American music whatsoever (or Stravinsky for that matter). So he was very broad.

Reti: It's very interesting. The department doesn't seem compartmentalized in the ways that many music programs are.

Miller: It's becoming slightly more compartmentalized, but given our druthers we'd like to have people who are broad.

Reti: That's very inspiring and very much in the tradition of this campus, as it was originally conceived.

Miller: I think so. Well, that's one of the things that attracted me to it. And then Fred Lieberman was an ethnomusicologist who was involved in diverse areas—he passed away two years ago, very suddenly.²⁶

Reti: Yes, that was very shocking.

Miller: It was very shocking. He was into popular music but also Chinese music. So he worked very closely with Mickey Hart and the Grateful Dead. And he had several books about the Grateful Dead.²⁷ He taught an enormous popular music—he started this *American Popular Music* course on campus. One quarter it had an enrollment of something like 1200.

Reti: (gasps) Where did it meet on campus? We don't have a classroom big enough for that! The Upper Quarry has been closed for a while.

²⁶ Fredric Lieberman passed away May 4, 2013. See <http://news.ucsc.edu/2014/01/mickey-hart-lieberman.html>

²⁷ The acquisition of the Grateful Dead archive by UCSC owes a great deal to Fred's links to the band—Leta Miller.

Miller: Exactly. You put your finger on the problem. (laughs) There were two sections and they met in Classroom Unit II. That holds 500. There were two sections, so that's 1000. And there were about 200 students in the air at all times. There are enough people, I guess, who don't come to class, or whatever. But when they had the midterm and final exams they were out on the lawns and all over the place. Fred was trying to prove a point (about the potential for large enrollments in popular music courses). He only did that one quarter. There was a huge demand. I think we figured that that term a huge percentage of the undergraduate population was in that class. Then after that he just limited it to the five hundred who would fit in the room. It was extremely popular. It was always full. He also taught a class on the Grateful Dead. And he taught a class on the Beatles. These classes were extremely popular.

But his own dissertation was on Chinese qin music. And he was also quite a specialist in the music of India. So those were some of the early ethnomusicologists. And then, of course, there was Linda [Burman-Hall], who, as we already talked about, did Early Baroque music and gamelan. And we now have several other, newer faculty members—Dard Neuman, who is a specialist in the music of India, and Tanya Merchant, who is a specialist in the music of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian cultures. And we've just hired a young musicologist who has just finished her degree at NYU, Nicol Hammond. And she is from South Africa and interested in South African popular music. And on our composition faculty we now have Hi Kyung Kim, who is from Korea and who integrates not only Korean folk traditions, but Korean music in general with contemporary idioms—Korean traditional music is an inspiration for her own

compositions. She's also an expert in many Korean instruments. She's gotten our graduate students in composition to learn some of the Korean instruments, and she's taken them to Korea, where they've interacted with Korean composers.

Reti: Great! So over time we've gone from having just a simple BA in music, to it seems that by 1998 we had a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Music in Performance. And then by 2008 we had three minors in music—Western art music; electronic music; and jazz. But then you could also get an MA. And then the doctoral program started. It's remarkable to see how this program has blossomed over time.

Miller: Well, that's a lot of degrees, almost more than you can count. (laughs)

Reti: A lot of ways a student could go. In addition to offering an education in music, literacy in music to non-majors, of course.

Miller: Yes, well before we get into all of the degrees, I want to mention that it's really important for music to offer these really large courses to non-majors, of the type that Fred was teaching, because music is inherently one of the most expensive disciplines in any university. It's really to be equated with medical schools.

Reti: Really!

Miller: Because you have all of this one-on-one instruction. You cannot teach advanced violin to a class of thirty. You have to have one-on-one. And this is extremely expensive. So the only way we can afford to have all of these wonderful applied music faculty members—we have two voice teachers and we

have Roy Malan as a violin teacher, and we have individual teachers in all the orchestral instruments, piano, and guitar—you can't have the oboe teacher teaching trumpet, you know. (laughs) Right? I mean, that seems obvious and you're laughing, but it's expensive. So the only way to balance the expense of individual instruction is to have a lot of very large classes, so that the numbers make sense to the officials. At conservatories you have major donors who are committed to these types of programs and realize that they're going to be expensive and they fund them. But in the University of California system there's obviously a calculation of student/faculty ratio, which music is constantly fighting.

So anyway, we used to just have a Bachelor of Arts. Period. And this Bachelor of Arts very proudly said: it needs to encompass both performance and scholarship. We have courses in music theory, which are your basic harmony courses; courses in music history; at least one course at that time in some kind of world musics. But also performance requirements: you must take lessons for a certain number of quarters. And you must take ensembles. You must be a part of an ensemble for a certain number of quarters, etc. So it was a BA that linked performance and scholarship in its requirements.

Reti: Was that unusual?

Miller: Not unique, but a lot of programs wouldn't have had as much of a performance component as ours. They would have just had for the BA the scholarship part of it.

So that leads me to why we got the Bachelor of Music. Because students who would want to go on in performance, to a performance master's, let's say, sometimes would feel disadvantaged by having a Bachelor of Arts because the degree was perceived as non-performance. And Sherwood Dudley, who is a person we haven't mentioned, also a wonderful faculty member—I think he came in 1968, so he preceded all of these other people—Gordon Mumma, and David Cope, and Ed Houghton, that we've already talked about—proposed the Bachelor of Music degree. Sherwood was a specialist in music of the Classical period, the Mozart era. He really advocated for starting a Bachelor of Music. And what that did, was develop a curriculum that put greater emphasis on the performance components—so he tweaked the program a little bit so that students didn't have to take all of the academic requirements, and they had to give a senior recital, and they had to take lessons and ensembles every single quarter they were here, instead of just half the number. And then we balanced it by eliminating one quarter of history—I don't remember exactly. But we tweaked the program a little bit and we got that going. Students would have to audition for the B.M. This degree was only for advanced performers.

So then we had the Bachelor of Music and the Bachelor of Arts. Meanwhile we were trying to get a graduate degree going. Linda was the real motivator behind the master's. And we did get the MA program, which was a master's in performance practice. Performance practice doesn't mean performance. It means the study of performance practices from various eras. So, for example, you would study: what is the proper interpretation of an eighteenth-century piece, looking at scholarly sources that would tell you what to do in terms of

articulation (that is, slurring vs. separation); what to do in terms of performing your trills, when you would add ornamentation, what kind of ornamentation you would add. What's the appropriate use of vibrato; what's the appropriate use of dynamics? These are practices of a particular era. And then you can create what we might call historically informed performances.

So the program was to be in performance practice. And we defined this concept broadly. Performance practice was often associated with Baroque music or earlier musics. But we felt that the concept could apply to all eras. You have to study what is the appropriate practice of music in different eras and how does that differ from today? Because what we think now of the way—of what is historically informed (I don't want to say "correct" or "authentic") in ten years we may change our minds because we may come up with new ideas and new information. And what we think right now is—

Reti: Interesting.

Miller: There have been notable changes. There's one very important article written by a UC Berkeley professor named Richard Taruskin which talks about how the present has changed the past (in addition to the obvious idea of the past changing the present).²⁸ There's an interaction. And what we think of as authentic really may not have been authentic. I mean, if we really want to go back to a nice, authentic performance practice, we wouldn't have very many rehearsals. Right? We would go in and—

²⁸ Richard Taruskin, "The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past," in *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Reti: Because they didn't rehearse—

Miller: You see appeals in the literature of the time, "Can we please just have one rehearsal for this concert?" Well, do we want to do that? No, I don't think we want to replicate that particular performance practice in which people made mistakes. (laughs) And we might deliberately play out of tune: there certainly were lots of problems with tuning in historical performances. But of course that's taking things to the ridiculous. But you can see the pitfalls and the interesting intellectual challenges of coming up with what is permissible. If we're going to play Bach on the piano, which was in its infancy and not widely used until after Bach's death, how shall we play the music? Should we make a lot of dynamic changes and use the pedal because the piano can do that? Or should we try to replicate the way Bach would have heard the sound? Because he wouldn't have heard it that way. A lot of people say, "If Bach had had a piano, he certainly would have used it." Well, of course that's true, but he would also would have written the music differently because he would have had the different capabilities of the instrument at his disposal. So it's a very tricky balance. I'm not trying to give you a correct answer because I don't think we should *not* play Bach on the piano. But where do you draw these lines?

So that was the idea of the master's program. I think the program came in the nineties.²⁹ So that was great and it was really wonderful to have master's students here because you could deal with the music on a much more

²⁹ The MA program in music began in fall of 1988.

sophisticated level. Undergraduates are great but you can get only so far even with seniors. In the master's you could deal with much more subtlety. So that was a real boon. I remember feeling how wonderful it was to have these graduate students here and to interact with them.

And after a few years, maybe five or six years of the master's program, people said, "You know, we really should try to start a PhD." Oh, my. We looked around the table and we all got along with each other. And we said, "Let's try to come up with a PhD that will involve all of us—the composers, the musicologists, and the ethnomusicologists." It was a crazy idea. But we didn't want to leave anybody out.

So we came up with this PhD program that had two tracks: a musicology track and a composition track. It failed. It was too dispersed. To get a new graduate program started at the University of California you have to do something that the other branches of the university are not doing. Because otherwise the powers-that-be say, "They could just go to Berkeley, or they could just go to UCLA and get this training. Why should we start the same program at Santa Cruz?" So you have to do something unique.

Reti: Because it's all one big University [of California] and they are looking at the big picture.

Miller: Right. To get a new graduate degree approved, it has to be approved on campus and with the Graduate Council, I guess—I don't remember what stages it has to go through on campus. But then it goes off campus and it's vetted by all

of the music departments of all of the other campuses, who comment on it. And then it goes to some arm of the Legislature that has to decide. So there are quite a number of steps. And it's very difficult. And you have to show that it's in some way unique. That's one of the reasons that we went for performance practice in the MA proposal, because nobody had a master's in that area.

Anyway, so this PhD that had two tracks of musicology and composition failed. We were really discouraged because we spent a couple of years developing the proposal. And then it was suggested in an external review, "Maybe you should just go forward in composition." Because we had some real stars in composition. We had Gordon Mumma; we had David Cope; we had this electronic music program. I can't remember who else might have been here. David Jones was here. David Jones—we haven't mentioned David Jones either. A very fine composer. He was here at that time (and still is). So we had a real core strength in composition.

So the composition faculty went off on their own, started their own proposal. And instead of going for a PhD, because people might have gotten confused with the failed proposal—they went for the DMA. Now composition programs, graduate programs in the country, are probably evenly divided between PhD and DMA—Doctor of Musical Arts. A PhD is a scholarly degree. And a Doctor of Musical Arts is a performance degree. So you can get a DMA in flute, maybe from Indiana University, for example—I don't know who offers it. But you can get a DMA in performance. Composition straddles both of those areas. It's both an intellectual enterprise and a performance enterprise. I'd say about half of the

universities in the country offer a PhD and the other half a DMA, in composition. It really didn't matter which degree we went with. So they proposed the DMA and that got approved.³⁰

And by that time we had more musicologists and ethnomusicologists. So then we started looking at a PhD in musicology. We called it cultural musicology, to incorporate both the Western musicologists and the ethnomusicologists. I was the one who spearheaded that one. We made it an unusual program, in that the emphasis was on the interfaces between European-American music and world musics. For example, the courses we offer— We offer a course in rhythm systems, for instance, in which and we cover rhythmic systems in Western music, and rhythm systems in Indonesian music, and in Indian music, etc. We do world comparisons of rhythmic systems. We have a similar course for pitch systems and tuning systems. So we're looking always on a global scale. All of our doctoral courses have this cross-cultural component to them. That has one track.

The composition program, the DMA, has two tracks. One is in algorithmic composition and the other is in World Music composition. The latter meaning that you are using World Music traditions to inform your compositions, such as what Hi Kyung Kim does with her Korean influences.

Reti: And algorithmic would be—

Miller: Computer-oriented. David Cope was really a leader. He's retired now but he was a real leader in the algorithmic track. As a matter of fact, he started a

³⁰ The DMA program at UC Santa Cruz began in fall of 2005.

summer course in algorithmic composition, which attracted a very high level of participants. Some of those participants then would come into our DMA program. So now we have all these degrees.

As for the minors, yeah, we found that some students wanted to just take part in the first year of our theory class and they didn't want to go on. But they wanted to play in the orchestra and so on. So we developed a music minor. And then we eliminated it and now we've reinstated it. It's gone back and forth.

The jazz minor was instituted after Karlton Hester came here. I helped him get that one through. His students would basically take the courses for the music major, but would have a heavier emphasis in jazz courses. They would take some of the basic classes, but enhanced by more jazz classes.

And similarly, Peter Elsea wanted to do the same kind of thing with electronic music. Because, oh my, we have so many people who want to come in and fool around with our machines. Peter had so much trouble, and I think there's still a lot of trouble, deciding who is allowed to do that. Because we have a limited number of machines. A lot of kids—they're lovely, but they just want to play around with the machines. So Peter started this electronic music minor, which is very rigorous. It uses some elements from the music major but the emphasis is on the electronic music studio.

The minors are just really for people who are taking part of the music major program, but then emphasizing specific components of the program. Those minors can come and go. So basically now, on the undergraduate level we have

the BA and the Bachelor of Music. On the graduate level, we primarily now have the DMA in composition, with its two tracks, algorithmic and world, and the PhD in cultural musicology.

The master's program has dwindled because of the doctoral programs. When we are looking at graduate admissions, we're really favoring people who would like to come in for the doctorate, and then they pick up a master's along the way, as opposed to people who want to come for a terminal master's. We have talked about whether we should continue the terminal master's. Some of the people who come in for a terminal master's turn out to be good enough that they apply to our doctoral program. But the number of master's students has decreased, and that's rather deliberate on our part because we don't have enough money to fund everybody. We want to give aid to all of the people we accept for our doctoral programs. We assure them all of a certain number of quarters of TAships and fellowships if they come here. Some schools accept doctoral students with no aid. We have never done that. They're not fully supported but we want them all to have at least some.

Reti: Yes. That's wonderful.

Miller: Well, they can't afford to come otherwise.

Reti: It keeps getting more expensive, too.

Miller: Yes. And you wonder, as well, if you're bringing these people in for doctoral programs and they all want to teach, how many jobs are there? Are you being fair to them to ask them to shell out large amounts of money if the job

prospects are not outstanding? I cannot tell you how many students have come into my office and said, “Leta, I would love to do what you do.” And I think to myself, “I am really, really fortunate. I am so lucky to be here in this position and to do something that I love so much.”

Reti: I know that, as a whole, music programs in academic settings are having to look at this question—and across the arts and humanities as well—what are the jobs that these students are going to do when they graduate and how can you justify the expense—

Miller: That’s right. Much less having them pay their own way. So we’ll see.

Reti: It’s an evolving situation. Maybe that’s a good place to stop for today.

Lou Harrison

Reti: So, today is Thursday, May 14, 2015. This is Irene Reti and I’m here with Leta Miller for our third interview in her oral history that we’re doing together. Today we’re going to focus on Lou Harrison. So Leta, tell me how you first met Lou Harrison and began doing scholarship on him.

Miller: Okay, let’s just back up for anybody reading this. Lou Harrison is a world-renowned composer who happened to live in Aptos, right near Santa Cruz, since 1953. He was a renowned local figure. As a matter of fact, I don’t know if you’ve seen this—this is just an aside—but they’ve been painting the signal boxes around town and there’s one that’s painted with a portrait of Lou Harrison. (laughs) It’s right near the medical clinic.

Anyway, I'd heard of Lou Harrison before I came to Santa Cruz because he had taught a couple of years at Stanford, where I was doing my PhD. So he was mentioned in some of my classes there. And when I came to Santa Cruz, I was aware that he lived right nearby. But I didn't know him. And I immediately got involved in performing contemporary music. At that point I was playing the flute a lot—I think we talked about that.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: Sometimes I was doing as many as twenty concerts a year, which is a lot of playing. And I got involved, not only with the Baroque Festival (which we talked about last time), but I also got involved playing with the Santa Cruz New Music Works, which is still going on and is run by Philip Collins, who is a composer and a writer. He also studied individually with Lou. So I got involved playing in some of the concerts with Phil's group. He puts on maybe six concerts a year. Some of them are associated with the university in the sense that they take place at our beautiful recital hall. But otherwise, it's an independent organization.

So on one of the concerts that Phil programmed—it might have been in '83, '84³¹ [*recte* 1985] —sometime around then—he programmed an octet by Lou Harrison. Flute, oboe, trumpet, double bass, two cellos, percussion, tack piano. Eight instruments. I went into the first rehearsal and sat down. I found myself in the first movement playing this beautiful, melody in octaves with the first cello. This

³¹ Actually it was January 20, 1985.

melody was soaring over the accompaniment figure, which was a repeating—what we call an ostinato, a repeating accompaniment figure. And then this gorgeous melody soaring up. I'd practiced the part on my own but I didn't know how it fit into the rest of the ensemble. All I had was my part. Oh! I walked out of that rehearsal just on Cloud Nine. I thought, "This is the most beautiful music I've ever played in my life! And how daring, for somebody in the mid-twentieth century, to write such beautiful melodies." Not that he was imitating Mozart or Brahms or anything. You knew it was a twentieth-century piece from the harmonies. But he dared to write a luxurious, compelling melody, which was really out of fashion. In the twentieth century, composers had to be very intellectual and they had to knit their brows, and to come up with very complex structures. Melody was sort of [shakes head negatively]. [Two movements of this piece, the ballet *Solstice* can be heard by clicking the link below. The example presents the fourth movement (not the movement discussed in this paragraph) and the fifth, which connects to it without break.]

[Lou Harrison, excerpt from the ballet *Solstice*, mvts 4–5, from the disc *Lou Harrison: In Retrospect* \(New World Records 80666-2\). Reproduced by kind permission of New World Records and Peer International Corporation \(publisher and copyright holder of the score\).](#)

So that was the start. And that's when I met Harrison, at that concert when that octet was performed. He turned out to be a wonderful human being as well. By the time I finished my work on him, which comprised two books, and several articles, and a critical edition, he was like a father to me, like a second father. We

became so close. At least that's the way I felt about him. He was always, always gracious. He never let me pay for anything. A lunch—if we would go out for something to eat, he would never allow me to pay. He gave me all kinds of gifts, which is what he would do with, not just me, but with everybody. If he read a book that he liked, he would buy a carton of them and distribute them to his friends.

Reti: Wow!

Miller: Yeah. And he did that on several occasions. That's just the kind of person that he was.

Reti: And it's not like he was an extremely wealthy person, either.

Miller: Oh, on the contrary. He was never wealthy. He always gave away—he gave things away and he gave money away. He donated. He never wanted to be wealthy. That was not his goal.

That particular piece was called "Solstice." He had written it in 1950.³² I subsequently talked with him about things like melody and he said, "Melody is the audience's take-home pay. That's what the audience gets out of it. They get to take home a nice tune."

He studied with Henry Cowell, who, by the way, is not the Henry Cowell that the park is named after.

³² Miller subsequently recorded the piece on CD: *Lou Harrison: Solstice, et al.* MusicMasters MMD 60241, 1990. The recording was reissued in 2007 on the CD *Lou Harrison: In Retrospect*, New World Records 80666-2.

Reti: I know. We always have to make that distinction when we're at UCSC, because everybody thinks that.

Miller: I know. I think it's the same family, but distant, distant cousins. At least that's what I've been told. Anyway, Cowell impressed upon him that most of the world's music is a melody accompanied by some kind of rhythmic underpinning. Only in Euro-American musical styles do we have elaborate harmonies and counterpoints. Well, not only—but that's a characteristic of Euro-American music, the emphasis on harmony and counterpoint, whereas most of the world has a beautiful melody with an underpinning of some rhythmic accompaniment, whether it's totally percussion, or whether it's a kind of repeating melodic ostinato—bom-bom-bee-bom; bom-bom-bee-bom; bom-bom-bee-bom—that kind of repetition.

Cowell was really into world musics. He taught the first course in *Music of the Peoples of the World* in the United States, and Lou had taken his course in 1935 and was very influenced by Cowell. It was his basic attraction to melody as well—but I think that Cowell reinforced it by saying, "Yes, this is great. Go for it. Don't worry about knitting your brows and making things so complex that the audience walks out saying, 'I didn't understand that.'"

Reti: Yes, I was really struck, as a non-musician, I was listening to a lot of the clips that your book on Lou Harrison linked to, and also clips I found on iTunes—I was struck by how melodic it was and how beautiful and lush—

Miller: Yes.

Reti: I always had associated Lou Harrison with percussion, with gamelan ensembles. I know he's very eclectic. But melody is another whole aspect of his work.

Miller: Yes, well, even his percussion music is melodic. Because you don't have to have just drums in percussion—you can have instruments like xylophones and marimbas and so on. And he would often incorporate pitched instruments of that type, some that were built by himself, some that were built by the percussionists themselves. To give you an example, an early piece calls for a coffee can metallophone. The percussionist has to build, or borrow from Lou, a little instrument which consists of metal coffee cans that have been cut at various lengths to produce various pitches. They're not tuned to absolute pitches. There are maybe five coffee cans, and so you have five pitches and you can make little melodic segments out of them. So if you listen to his percussion music, it has a melodic component to it, unlike a lot of other percussion music.

Reti: I see.

Miller: Yes. And he was into very intricate and elaborate rhythmic structures as well, which is also characteristic of a lot of non-Western musics, especially African musics, very interesting cross-rhythms and so on. It's much more complicated than what one gets sometimes in Western music, where the emphasis is on harmony. You can't have everything at once. So, Harrison was attracted to that as well.

He built a lot of his own instruments. He looked for percussion instruments, Cowell encouraged him to do that. He went searching through junkyards. He and John Cage and other friends would go through junkyards. They discovered automobile brake drums, which make wonderful percussion instruments, and they're now a staple of percussion ensembles. If you have a percussion ensemble in a university, you have to acquire some brake drums, because so many pieces call for them now. You can do two things with these brake drums. You can hang them up on a rack, and strike them, and then they sound sort of like gongs. Or you can set them flat on a table and hit them with mallets, which of course makes them muted a bit, and they're more like a gamelan. Of course, the ideal brake drums were made before World War II, because they were made out of spun steel, which is very resonant. And then after the war, the car industry changed to cast iron. It's far less resonant, and so they don't make as good percussion instruments.

So yes, his pieces call for those kinds of instruments, and often instruments that you would build yourself. And by the way—I keep trying to relate to UCSC—

Reti: Thank you.

Miller: —so in 1970 or so, he and his partner, Bill Colvig, constructed a series of pseudo-gamelan instruments. UCSC now has those instruments, that whole collection. He built these instruments with Colvig. The big metallophones—they look something like a vibraphone—they're made out of aluminum slabs, with coffee cans piled up as resonators underneath. Others of them have plumber's pipes as keys. Then he had suspended garbage cans. And of course they have to

be metal garbage cans. The plastic ones aren't very resonant. (laughs) It's hard to get ahold of metal ones anymore.

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: And then Bill went down to a company in Watsonville and he picked up some oxygen tanks that had been left over from World War II, and they cut those off at various lengths.

Reti: Oh, they were military oxygen tanks.

Miller: Yeah, and so you would hit those and they were like little gongs. So this whole set of instruments now has come to UCSC. It's interesting, Harrison wrote three pieces that call for this set of instruments. And you can only perform these pieces using this set of instruments. You can't use a regular gamelan. That's not what he's intended. He's got his instruments tuned exactly the way he wants them tuned. The slabs are tuned in mathematical proportions so that they sound pure intervals. An octave would vibrate in a 2:1 proportion; a fifth would vibrate in a 3:2 proportion; a fourth in 4:3; and so on and so forth. So he's tuned these slabs so that they are sounding the exact proportions that he wants.

So you would think, "Why do this?" because you are limiting the number of times you can get this piece performed, right?

Reti: Because you can't really loan out this whole—

Miller: He did loan them out! He and Bill would crate them up and they would ship them off. And finally in the nineties, I think, somebody built a second set of

these, a replica of the instruments. And I think there's even a third set now. But our building manager, our operations manager, occasionally gets requests: can we borrow these instruments? And so the person who's putting on the concert has to pay to have them crated and shipped, and guarantee that they're taken care of and so on.

Reti: And do they have to be retuned periodically?

Miller: No, because once you cut these aluminum slabs, once you cut them to length, they're not going to change pitch. That was the whole idea. The reason they came up with this idea is a fascinating story. Harrison had taken a couple of trips to Asia, particularly to Korea and Taiwan. That was in 1961 and 1962. And when he came back he started performing Chinese and Korean music in California with a group of friends and doing concerts all over California. One of the instruments that they used is called a jalataranga, which is a set of tuned water bowls. They have a set of maybe twelve or fifteen porcelain bowls and you fill them to different degrees with water so that they sound different pitches. And you hit them with very delicate bamboo sticks. So he was at a concert in San Francisco, at a place called The Old Spaghetti Factory, which was a concert venue. And they got everything all set up for the concert. They tuned the bowls exactly the way they wanted; they found exactly the intervals that they wanted. And then they put some saran wrap over them and went out to dinner.

And when they came back to play the concert, they found that the bowls had changed. First of all, they had to adjust the tuning. But second of all, they didn't make this beautiful ping. They went kind of *buh*. And it turns out that you have

to use some glycerin to keep bubbles from forming around the sides of the bowls.

Reti: Oh, my gosh.

Miller: He didn't know that. So these bubbles were dampening the sound and preventing them from making the beautiful tone they had prior to covering the bowls. So Lou said to Bill, "It would really be nice to just have some instruments that would just hold their pitch and we wouldn't have to use eyedroppers to tune them, and we wouldn't have to—"

So that sent them both off on tuning experiments. They started making harps they could tune to different proportions. They started looking into Greek music. The Greeks were very interested in mathematical proportions, and musical intervals vibrate in mathematical proportions. The Greek theorists developed very complex ideas about musical ratios. And Lou and Bill and another friend of his, John Chalmers, got into replicating these Greek tunings on a harp and then recording with them.³³ And then they finally built a set of instruments that would realize some of the tunings that they wanted to replicate. And then, as I say, he wrote three pieces using the new instruments: one with chorus; one with violin; and one a puppet opera.³⁴ The first piece that he wrote for this set of

³³ Two of their recordings on harp in Greek tunings are reproduced on the CD that accompanies Miller and Lieberman's book *Composing a World: Lou Harrison, Musical Wayfarer* (University of Illinois Press, 2004; original edition, Oxford University Press, 1998).

³⁴ *Young Caesar* (1971), originally a puppet opera for 5 singers and American gamelan (later rewritten for standard orchestra, vocal soloists, and men's chorus); *La Koro Sutro* (1972) for chorus and American gamelan; and the Suite for Violin and American Gamelan (1974).

instruments was an opera for puppets and this set of instruments. And five singers.

So those instruments now belong to UCSC. And it's very nice that Lou donated his archive to UCSC. We really have Rita Bottoms to thank an awful lot for that.³⁵ She was [the founding] head of Special Collections. Lou never taught at UCSC. I don't know why the university did not avail themselves of this wonderful resource. This was before I came. He was living in Aptos since 1953, and, of course, the campus was founded in '65. But I don't believe that he ever—maybe he taught a course [at UCSC] but I don't think so.

Reti: I don't think he did because that was what Rita Bottoms talked about in her oral history when I interviewed her. It does not seem that Lou Harrison had ever taught here.

Miller: I don't think so. He was making his living by some commissions and by getting some royalties on some of the music that he had written; teaching occasionally at San Jose State in the late sixties; and then starting in 1980 teaching at Mills College, which really turned out to be very important. Actually, he had taught a little bit at Mills in the thirties. He had been a percussion accompanist for the dance department. But then he returned to Mills in 1980 and taught there a lot, and did a lot of work there. He also taught courses in world music at San Jose State, as I said, in the late sixties. So I guess he would have been doing that

³⁵ See the section on the Lou Harrison archive in Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Rita Bottoms, Polyartist Librarian, 1965-2003* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2005). Available in full text and audio at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/bottoms>

when Santa Cruz was starting. He and Colvig also built two more gamelan, modeled directly on Indonesian instruments but with intervals tuned in pure mathematical ratios, one set for San Jose State (Gamelan Si Betty, named for Los Angeles music patron Betty Freeman) and one for Mills College (two sets of instruments called Si Darius and Si Madeleine, named for composer Darius Milhaud, who taught at Mills, and his wife).

In the later years, people came to respect him very much. But he was an outsider when he first came to Aptos, very much an outsider. It was not the way university music departments were going in the 1950s and 1960s. Contemporary composers, as I said, were typically very intellectual, not worrying about whether the audience was going to understand or appreciate. And you know, a lot of audiences got turned off and said, "I don't understand this music. It's too dissonant for me. It's not melodic." So there was this disjunction, sometimes, between what the university composers were doing, in many institutions—I'm really overgeneralizing now—there was a disjunction between the type of music that was being composed at the universities by these highly intelligent, intellectual composers, and the general audience population, who were not musically educated and were used to hearing Beethoven. So Lou was not—he was not in the mainstream.

He was also very isolated from the mainstream geographically by being in Aptos. Aptos was nothing—well, I guess there was a village there at the time but it was nowhere near as built up as it is now. And the reason he was there had to do with a personal crisis. He grew up in the San Francisco area. He graduated

from Burlingame High School. And then he stayed in San Francisco and he loved San Francisco. He started at San Francisco State but he never finished. And then he moved down to Los Angeles to study with [Arnold] Schoenberg for a year. And then he went off to New York, where a lot of his friends had gone: John Cage, Henry Cowell—they were all in New York and he followed them out there. He was really quite successful there. But he had a nervous breakdown, a very serious nervous breakdown, there in 1947. He was hospitalized for nine months. It took him years to recover.

When I started on the book I thought I wasn't going mention that. But he told me, "Absolutely, you must mention it. You must talk about it. Because this was a turning point in my career." This is the kind of person he was. He didn't keep secrets from us. When I say "us," I mean myself and my coauthor, Fredric Lieberman. Lou opened his whole archive to us. He was very frank about everything. And he never tried to censor anything that we wrote, which I think is quite rare. It's difficult to write about a living human being. I know people who've gotten themselves into trouble because the subject didn't like what was being written about them and tried to censor it. And, of course, the author doesn't want to be censored. The author doesn't want to write a puff piece. And so it can be troublesome with the subject, and sometimes with the subject's children, even if the subject is no longer alive. I won't tell you the stories but I know quite a number of them. But it was a joy—I was very fortunate to work with Harrison, because he never tried to censor.

Reti: So what drew him to Aptos, in particular?

Miller: Well, I'm sorry. I got off track. He had this nervous breakdown in New York. John Cage helped him; other people helped him. But people predicted that his career was going to be over. It was that serious. He stayed in New York for a few years after that, but he was still not well. He managed to get a position at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he was for two years. And he loved it there. It was rural. He had a wonderful relationship with the students. He was able to compose. He was away from the—I think the pressure and the stress of New York were too much for him. And in New York he had been very poor. He was living in a cold-water flat, where he had to carry kerosene up five flights of stairs to heat his water. So there was a lot of stress living in New York, and the pressure of performance was also a factor.

So getting out to rural North Carolina was very healthy. He was there for two years and then his position was not renewed. They brought in somebody else. (Stefan Wolpe). So where was he going to go after that? There was some talk of his moving back to New York but his parents stepped in at that point and bought him this property in Aptos. He tried coming back and living in San Francisco, but even San Francisco was too stressful for him. You have to understand, this nervous breakdown was extremely serious.

So they bought him this property in rural Santa Cruz County, in Aptos. And he loved it. It reminded him a lot of North Carolina in terms of its isolation and its beauty.

Reti: So he was way up there in the woods in Aptos.

Miller: Oh, you bet. Yeah, he was up on Viewpoint Road. Now there are huge, fancy, several-million-dollar-apiece homes up there. But there was nothing like that when he first moved there. It was a dirt road and he had a little shack. It was a really small house. He didn't even have a telephone. When his father passed away—they had to call—there was a café down the road called the Sticky Wicket.

Reti: Oh, yes.

Miller: And he was very friendly with the people who ran the Sticky Wicket. Jowers was their last name (Victor and Sidney Jowers). They had to call there and get a message to Lou that his father had passed away because he didn't have a telephone. He was really out in the woods. So you can imagine that he wasn't in the mainstream of the New Music world at the time.

He met Bill Colvig in 1967 at a concert in San Francisco. By that time he was much better, way more recovered. But the fifties were really difficult for him. When he met Bill Colvig in '67, they formed a partnership that lasted the rest of their lives. I feel so sad that they were not alive to get married because they would have been the first ones on the steps of the city hall.

Reti: (sighs) Oh, my God. Yes, of course they would have.³⁶

³⁶ Same-sex marriage first became legal in the state of California in 2008, but was halted after the passage of Proposition 8, a California constitutional amendment which banned gay marriage. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that proposition unconstitutional in June 2013, at which point same-sex marriages were recognized by the state of California. During the period this oral history was being edited, on June 26, 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to legalize gay marriage nationwide under the 14th amendment of the United States Constitution.

Miller: But the approval of gay marriage hadn't happened before they died. But he was outspoken. In 1942 he told his draft board he was gay.

Reti: Wow.

Miller: He was a pacifist anyway. He told them he was gay and he said, "They didn't want to have anything to do with me and I didn't want to have anything to do with them, and that was fine with me." And when he came to Aptos, a Unitarian minister asked him to speak out on gay issues, which he did, very openly. He said as a result of that talk he made some new friends and didn't lose any old ones. He was always very open. He didn't keep secrets. And, when in the seventies they wanted to get rid of gay schoolteachers with the Briggs Initiative, [Lou and Bill] were very outspoken against it.³⁷ And as a matter of fact, their pictures were on a poster that was on local buses. Bill Colvig told me that he got onto one of those buses and he sat down right underneath his picture and nobody even noticed! (laughter)

Reti: I love it! (laughs)

Miller: So Lou was very outspoken on a lot of political causes and a lot of his music expresses political sentiments, too. He's got tirades against atomic testing. He was not afraid to express his political views in his music.

Reti: Where do you think he got his courage to be so outspoken?

³⁷ California Proposition 6 (the Briggs Initiative) was sponsored by John Briggs, a legislator from Orange County, and would have banned gays and lesbians from working in California's public schools. It failed in the November 7, 1978 election.

Miller: Well, that's a good question. One would think that after having a nervous breakdown one would be very shy about such things. But maybe that was part of the reason for the nervous breakdown, was that he was never willing to dissemble. He always was extremely open and honest and spoke his mind and that may have caused a lot of stress. I don't know. I never asked him where he got his courage but I certainly admired him for it.

Reti: Because to be an out gay man in the 1950s was remarkable.

Miller: I think so.

Reti: I know there were organizations he was active with as well. You mentioned that in your book. It's not like he was all by himself. But it still took a lot of courage to speak publicly.

Miller: But he pointed at that Unitarian minister inviting him to speak, which must have been in '56-'57.

Reti: And this was here in Santa Cruz?

Miller: In Aptos.³⁸

Reti: At the Unitarian Church?

Miller: Apparently. I don't think he even ever gave me the name of that man who asked him if he would speak. But he pointed to that as a kind of seminal

³⁸ Harrison told this story in an interview with Stuart Norman. He remarked that it was the horrors of McCarthy that compelled him come out. For the story about the Unitarian minister (unnamed), see Stuart Normal, "Profiles/Interviews: Lou Harrison and William Colvig," *RFD: A Journal for Gay Men Everywhere* (Winter 1987-88), 67.

event in his being outspoken about gay rights. He didn't hesitate to march and say just what he thought and what he felt.

So anyway, after I met him at that first concert we became friends. At that point, I was doing research on Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, J.S. Bach's second son. But I was playing—and I told you I had these two heads: my musicology head and my flute performance head. Well, my flute performance was also bifurcated, in that I was playing Baroque music with Linda and I was playing a lot of contemporary music as well—because the flute repertoire—there's a lot of flute repertoire in the eighteenth century, which I had previously played on the modern silver flute, but once I started working with Linda began to play almost exclusively on Baroque flute. There's not much for the flute in the nineteenth century and then there's a lot of flute music in the twentieth century. Well, the flute is not very loud and in the nineteenth century when ensembles were getting larger and concert halls were getting larger, the flute didn't carry as much as composers wished. So there was more of an emphasis on stringed instruments and on piano and so on. There was some literature for flute in the nineteenth century, but not too much. But then it just explodes in the twentieth century, when there was more emphasis on small ensembles and unusual combinations of instruments. And so the flute repertoire is centered in these two areas: in the eighteenth century and in the twentieth, and going on into the twenty-first century, now that we're well into the twenty-first century. (laughs)

So I was playing a lot of contemporary music. My musicology was completely involved in early music, not only Baroque music—Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach is

a transition figure between the Baroque and the Classic Period—but also back to what I had done for my master’s thesis, editing these madrigals of Gioseppe Caimo from the sixteenth century. So this business of performing contemporary music was sort of out on the sideline—you know.

So then the next thing that happened was I began to make some recordings. I became very friendly with David Cope and with Gordon Mumma. And I made a flute recording, on modern flute, of some of their music. And there were two pieces of Lou’s on that same disc—it was an LP, one of the last LP’s before CD’s really took over. I still have it.³⁹

Then I began playing more and more of Harrison’s music. And Phil Collins asked me to do something else, as a matter of fact. He asked me to do a piece called *Canticle No. 3*, which was written for ocarina and five percussionists.⁴⁰ An ocarina is like a little ceramic sweet potato.

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: It’s an Aztec instrument. That’s the best way to describe it. Think of a sweet potato that has eight holes for your 2nd – 5th fingers on top and two more for your thumbs underneath. And it has a little kind of sticking-out projection into which you blow. It has a beautiful round sound. I had never played an ocarina. I had no idea how to get the different pitches to finger it. And Phil said,

³⁹ *The Prismatic Flute* (Opus 1 Records).

⁴⁰ Miller has recorded *Canticle No. 3*. It first appeared on the same recording as *Solstice: Lou Harrison: Solstice, et al.* MusicMasters MMD 60241, 1990. The recording was reissued in 2003 on the disc *Lou Harrison: Drums Along the Pacific*, New Albion Records NA122.

“Well, just go over to Lou’s house and he’ll lend you one.” (laughs) So I—this is a wonderful story—so I went over to Lou’s house. I hardly knew him at that point. And he said, “Oh, of course we’ll take you out back and we’ll show you some of the ocarinas and you can choose one and you can borrow it.”

So Bill Colvig takes me out to a very old shed at the outside of their house. They weren’t living in the shack anymore. They had built a larger house. Actually, it was a modular house. They had the pieces shipped down from Oregon and then they put it up. So he takes me out into this shack behind the house and opens the door. And on the floor is a pair of glasses. And he says, “Oh, my! There are those glasses. I’ve been looking for them for six months.” (laughter) And the shelves were filled with maybe a hundred volumes of *National Geographic* magazine and all kinds of odds and ends—because Lou’s mind was eclectic. He loved to read about science and geography and everything. History.

So Bill pulls down these three ocarinas and I played a few notes on them. I said, “Well, I like this one.” Lou said, “Okay, borrow it.” I said, “Well, don’t you want me to fill out some paperwork?”

Reti: A loan form.

Miller: A loan form or pay you something. “Oh, no, no. I trust you.” He didn’t know me at all. He hardly knew me. “No, no. I trust you. Go ahead. Take it.” That was—you’re beginning to understand why I decided to start writing about him.

So the next thing that happened was I did a number of recordings of his music. This *Canticle No. 3* performance was great, about maybe fifty percussion instruments that were being played by these six people. And the ocarina and a guitar. I later played it with the San Francisco Symphony. In the late nineties, maybe 1996, or so, I played that same piece with the San Francisco Symphony percussion section, with Michael Tilson Thomas, in Davies Hall. I think more people heard me play the ocarina—

Reti: How exciting!

Miller: Yeah, well. It was nerve-wracking. (laughs) Michael Tilson Thomas was probably as far away from me as you are right now. Four performances. I think more people heard me play the ocarina that weekend than heard me play the flute in my life! (laughs)⁴¹

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: (laughs) Aah! It was very nerve wracking, but fun. Anyway, so I made a number of recordings.

Scholarship on Lou Harrison

Then every year I would go to the American Musicological Society meeting. I roomed with a friend of mine, whom I had known from my days at Stanford. She was also a flute player. We had sat next to each other in the Stanford orchestra. So we'd talk as we were going to sleep at night. And she said, "Leta, why don't

⁴¹ The performances took place on February 29–March 3, 1996.

you—I know you’re doing all this nice stuff on CPE Bach, but you keep telling me about Lou Harrison. If he’s so articulate and he has so much to say, why don’t you get these interviews recorded and write something about them before he gets Alzheimer’s or something and he can’t give you all these details.”

I thought, that’s a really great idea. Her name, by the way, is Catherine Parsons Smith. She’s no longer alive. A wonderful woman. I thought, “That’s a great idea,” but the problem is that Lou was so involved with Asian musics. And I knew nothing about Asian musics at that time. Well, I wouldn’t say “nothing,” but very little. I’m always so worried about what I don’t know. I thought, “How in the world can I write anything about him if I don’t really know about Asian musics?” I felt comfortable about the other areas in which he had made huge contributions: that is, talking about percussion, talking about tuning systems, which are very complicated but I did know enough about them that I could understand. But if he’s going to start talking about various Asian musics, I felt really at sea.

So I decided to ask Fred Lieberman to join me on this project because I knew that Fred was a specialist in Asian musics. He had done his doctoral dissertation on Chinese qin music. He was a specialist and so I talked to him. And lo and behold, he had been Lou’s graduate assistant at the University of Hawaii in 1963, when Lou was a composer-in-residence there. So Fred said, “Sure, I’ll join you.” And so it began.

We asked Lou if he’d be willing and he said yes. So we started a series of interviews, each one centered around a particular topic. And as you know, since

you're doing interviews, they can wander. So we tried to keep things focused. One was on music and dance, and one was on tuning systems. And so on. But nevertheless, things wandered. And as we began to do all these interviews, two things occurred to us. First of all, is anybody going to want to read this interview from beginning to the end? Because it moves from one place to another.

Reti: Right. A transcript does not necessarily make an excellent manuscript for a book.

Miller: Exactly. The second thing was that one time coming back from an interview, Fred said, "You know, I feel like we're getting a series of stories that he's told over and over and over. We're hearing the same stories. Maybe we should talk to some other people and hear those same stories from other perspectives." Well, that started us off. We ended up getting an NEH collaborative projects grant and interviewed an additional fifty people for the book.⁴² The one who was furthest away, I think, was a guy who was on an island off of Maine. [Jack Heliker, painter]

Reti: Wow!

Miller: Yeah. So we were all over the place. And there were people that we missed. There were a couple of big people that we missed. And there was one person who died before we got to her, which was too bad. [Dancer and choreographer Bonnie Bird.] I didn't realize she was as sick as she was, or I

⁴² See Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Composing a World: Lou Harrison, Musical Wayfarer* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004; original edition, Oxford University Press, 1998). The list of interviews is on pp. 257–58.

would have made more of an effort to do the interview sooner. And we actually interviewed John Cage's wife. They had been divorced since the forties. Then she died, not as a result of our interview, but very shortly afterwards, like a month or two months afterwards. So it was fascinating. It was really fascinating.

At this point when we started working on the Harrison book, which was about 1993 or so, Lou had begun to donate stuff to UCSC. He had an assistant working with him. He was throwing things in boxes and sending them up to Special Collections. And so I felt that in addition to interviews, I really had to understand his life a little better. One way one can do that is to go through a lot of reviews and programs and make spreadsheets and charts, so that you understand that this piece comes from this period and it was written for so-and-so, etc. It turned out that the library, Special Collections, had maybe five Xerox-sized boxes of original documents that had been sent over by this guy. I think he had the nickname of Merlin. So I went up to Special Collections and I started looking through the boxes. And I'd pick out— You know how many clippings can fit into a Xerox box right?

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: They weren't complete newspapers. They were just clippings. So I'd pick out one: 1920. The next one: 1980. There was no organization whatsoever.

Reti: This was not processed material at all.

Miller: It was completely unprocessed material. And of course it was going to degenerate. Newsprint is so fragile. And then there were boxes of programs as

well. The library was so wonderful. They said, "Sure. You can work here even when we're closed." So I think I sat in Special Collections, which was not your beautiful area that you have now, but was this little room in the old building. I think I sat there from 9:00 to 5:00 for weeks, going through every article in these boxes. And I sorted them. I put them in chronological order. I spread them all out on the table. So I was basically starting the cataloging work for the Special Collections people.

Reti: Yes, indeed.

Miller: And they would take them later and put them into acid-free folders and so on. And then I would make, on my computer, notes: for every single article the date and the name of the article and a little summary of what it was. I spent weeks and weeks doing this. And as I did, things started coming into focus: oh, there was this big event in 1975, or there was a big event in 1982. I would see multiple articles about various events and then I would put the pieces in order. Doing that was the way I started getting Lou's life in order in my head. And it was interesting because I had to correct him sometimes. To give one example, he said about a summer festival at Reed College in Oregon: "Well, I was in this festival in 1948 and 1949," and I'd say, "No, Lou. You were there in 1949 and 1950. I found the programs." He said, "Really? That's interesting. I wonder what I did in the summer of '48?" Because one's memory is not accurate. My gosh, if I were asked, what year I did such-and-such, I'd have to go look it up.

Reti: Right. That's why oral history is not good for that sort of research because generally people don't remember the date exactly.

Miller: Yeah. One of my articles deals with a very famous essay that Cage wrote and published in his first book *Silence*. The essay (which has often been cited), titled “The Future of Music: Credo,” is dated “Seattle, 1937” in that book (which has become very famous). As I started looking at it and researching it, that date just seemed wrong to me. He wasn’t even in Seattle in the year in which he was said to have given this essay as a lecture. It turns out it was three years off, which makes all the difference in the world. I found documents confirming that Cage gave the talk in 1940 rather than 1937. The difference is crucial because it came *after* all the pioneering work he did in Seattle, rather than before. And it actually resulted from the stuff he did in Seattle instead of preceding it. And the whole basis for this 1937 date came from a casual comment Cage made to record producer George Avakian, in which he said, “That was 1937.” And then it became legend. It became printed in the book not as approximation but as fact. So it’s very important.⁴³

So anyway, I began documenting all this stuff about Lou Harrison. And then I decided the book ought to have a list of works. By this time Lou had a fine archivist, Charles Hanson, who was a musician and very, very, very organized. And very conscientious. We decided that we would try and compile a catalog of Lou’s works. By this time the book was no longer just a series of interviews. The book was much bigger. It was going to be more of a biography and a study of the various areas in which he worked. We have three chapters of biography. And

⁴³ Miller first revealed the erroneous date in her article “Cultural Intersections: John Cage in Seattle (1938–1940),” in *John Cage: Music, Philosophy, and Intention, 1933–1950*, ed. David W. Patterson (New York: Routledge, 2002): 47–82. For the specific reference, see pages 54–56. Most Cage scholars are by now aware of the error and cite the correct information in their work.

then we have chapters associated with the various areas in which he contributed. There's a chapter on percussion; a chapter on tuning; a chapter on dance, and so on. And at the end there is this massive Works list, which I put together with Charles Hanson.

Lou was away. I don't remember where he was; he was gone for a month in the summer.⁴⁴ So after I finished all this Special Collections stuff, or maybe it was the next summer (it could have been the next summer). Charles and I sat in Lou's house and we went through manuscript after manuscript, dating— And Lou was very good. Sometimes he would put the date at the end. When he finished a piece he'd put the date there. But sometimes he didn't. But the problem was that he reused material. Composers do this often. There's a piano piece that they write early on and maybe it doesn't get played too much. And then they're asked to write a symphony later on. And they say, "Oh, you know, that piano piece—I could use that as the second movement in my symphony if I just orchestrated it." So now you have two versions of this piece. Do you list them as separate pieces in your catalog? Because it's really the same music, it's just different instruments playing it.

Reti: So you have to cross-reference it.

Miller: Well, you certainly have to cross-reference it. Sometimes the piece is for the same ensemble—let's say a piano piece, and then another version of the piano piece, and then another version of the same piano piece. What do you put

⁴⁴ Charles Hanson now recalls that Lou was at the Dartington Festival in England—Leta Miller.

as the composition date? If you're going to list it chronologically, do you put the date that the first version was written, or the second, or the third, as the date? Where do you put it? Some works lists are organized by medium—all the orchestra pieces together; all the small sonatas together; all the gamelan pieces together. Some of them are chronologic.

I decided to do it completely chronologically but—we had to make all these decisions when we did the catalog. And finally, in the case of revisions, we decided put the last date, the final date, as the date of composition, but we put in an earlier reference. Let's say something was started in 1937, we put 1937 without numbering the entry. Each piece is numbered in the catalog. But this would appear without a number: "1937—this piece begun. Cross reference to 1970." Then you'd find the numbered listing in 1970 and you'd find the cross-reference there: "Begun in 1937, completed in 1970." It sounds minor but it's so important to organize it in a way that people who want the information can find it easily and can understand it.

So I worked with Charles and Charles ended up being employed by the library here at UCSC to process the Harrison archive, which came to UCSC a few years before Harrison died. Harrison died in 2003. So we had started our book in the 1990s, 1993 I believe was the beginning of it. And he started donating things at the end of the nineties. I don't know whether our doing the book on him and then subsequently a second book, and also a critical edition, whether that impelled him to donate his archive to UCSC.

Reti: There was also the book of poetry that UCSC helped to find a publisher for, *Joys and Perplexities*.⁴⁵

Miller: Yes, he loved to write poetry and he often set his own poetry to music. You know, it's a problem for a composer to set the poetry of somebody else, because you have to have the author's permission. And sometimes authors don't want composers to set their poetry because they think the poem is now going to become less important; it's going to be subsidiary to the music. Or they might not like what the composer wants to do with the poem. So, "Write your own poem if you want one." (laughs) And Lou did.

Reti: (laughs) Cranky poets.

Miller: But I think between that, the library helping with that, and Fred and me, my work with the book, I think Lou began to develop a warm feeling [for UCSC].

And then, I must say, in addition, other faculty members at UCSC began to be more interested in his music. Linda Burman-Hall became interested in playing some of the keyboard pieces and some of the [UCSC] composers developed ties with him—so connections developed more closely. But I don't know that it was necessarily set right away that he was going to donate all this stuff to UCSC. Mills College has a lot of his instruments. We have one gamelan that he built (as I described), the one he called Old Granddad, the first set of gamelan instruments that he and Colvig built, which they actually didn't build to look like a gamelan. They built them, as I told you, to realize pure tunings. And then after they were

⁴⁵ See Lou Harrison, *Joys and Perplexities* (Jargon Society, 1984).

finished, Lou said, “Wow, they look sort of like a gamelan. We can call it an American gamelan.” And they began to call it that. We have those. But Mills has his other percussion instruments.

He was also very close to Willie Winant, who is our percussion teacher. Willie also teaches at Mills. As a matter of fact, I think Willie was also teaching at Mills before he started with us and he has continued to teach in both places. Willie is a huge champion of Lou’s music, as a percussionist. He’s played and recorded, I think probably all of Lou’s percussion music, and he’s a phenomenal percussionist. So to have all those percussion instruments go to Mills made a lot of sense.

Reti: I know that the Harrison archive is in high demand, very valuable to researchers coming from across the country to use it.

Miller: Well, now it’s organized and [the finding aid is] online.⁴⁶ It’s processed and people can get to it. I believe that Charles was a huge help to you in processing it. You got a grant to help with funding.⁴⁷

Then there was also the audio material. This house that [Lou] had was not at all fancy. It was very plain. As I said, it was a modular structure that they had shipped out from Oregon and then they assembled it. They had a huge room, which he called the Ives Room because he was really enamored with the music of

⁴⁶ See Guide to the Lou Harrison Archive [MS132] at the Online Archive of California Web site. <http://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt2v19q32m/> There are three series in this archive: Correspondence, Music Manuscripts, and Notebooks

⁴⁷ The processing of the Lou Harrison archive was supported by the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation—Editor.

Charles Ives. He actually conducted in 1946 the premiere of Ives's *Symphony No. 3*, which had been written way back in 1902 [*recte*: 1904] but hadn't been performed. Ives got the Pulitzer for that the following year. He shared the prize with Lou. But Lou had written to Ives as early as the early thirties, when he was studying with Henry Cowell. Henry Cowell said, "If you're interested in his music, write to him." And Ives sent him a trunk of scores. So he had been close to Ives for decades. So he named one of his rooms in his house, this enormous room in which he had all his books and all his scores—I mean, I can't tell you, this was a huge room—this was the Ives Room and that's where all the work took place. A small living room, a tiny kitchen. And then, in the back, a small bedroom and bath. And then this side room, where he kept all of his tapes, recorded materials. So he had been working with reel-to-reel tapes, then later cassette tapes. CDs didn't come in until the 1990s. So he had an enormous number of tapes in this really tiny room—shelves floor-to-ceiling—no particular protection for them. So when the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake hit—⁴⁸

Reti: Oh, no.

Miller: —all of this stuff fell off the shelves, all of these tapes. And the reel-to-reel tapes fell out of their boxes, many of them. And they weren't labeled on the reels. They were only labeled on the boxes. (laughs)

Reti: (groans) This is getting worse and worse.

⁴⁸ On October 17, 1989 Santa Cruz County was hit with a 7.1 earthquake. The epicenter of the earthquake was in the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park, not far from Lou Harrison's house—Editor.

Miller: (laughs) So, dear Charles Hanson—it's so wonderful that you hired him—I guess you guys must have gotten ahold of a reel-to-reel tape recorder—

Reti: Yes.

Miller: —because he would have to listen to the reels and associate them with the empty boxes, and figure out which reel went into which box, so that he could date them and he could figure out what piece it was.

Reti: That's incredible.

Miller: Yes. And then he transferred them all onto CD. And now when you go into the UCSC Library catalog it says: "Gift of Lou Harrison." It should also say, "Gift of Lou Harrison. Thank you Charles Hanson!" (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: Because Charles Hanson processed all of this material and it was a huge job.

Reti: He was here for years doing that.

Miller: And he is the executor of Lou's estate. I get a lot of people writing to me too: "I want to find out about this piece. I can't find the score to this. I want permission to do such-and-such." I say, "You have to contact Charles Hanson. He's the executor of the estate."

Reti: So let's backtrack a bit to the Sticky Wicket. I know this was the antecedent of the Cabrillo Music Festival.

Miller: Yeah, sort of.

Reti: Tell me what you know about that, through Lou. Besides getting phone calls at the Sticky Wicket, how did he get involved with the Sticky Wicket?

Miller: (laughs) Well, they were putting on concerts there. Robert Hughes—if you really want the history of the Cabrillo Music Festival, you have to talk to Robert Hughes. And actually I have a PhD student who is doing his dissertation on the history of the Cabrillo Music Festival.⁴⁹ So he has interviewed Bob several times. And hopefully in the next few years there will be a book by this guy. I hope he'll finish it and write a book about the Cabrillo Music Festival.⁵⁰

Anyway, Hughes met Lou in Buffalo—I hope I'm right about this. Hughes was in the master's program, I think, in composition at Buffalo. And Hughes got Harrison a position as visiting composer. I think Hughes heard his music on a recording by Stokowski and then Buffalo invited him to be composer-in-residence and Lou came out there. To make a long story short, Hughes was really enamored with the idea of working with Harrison. And after Hughes went off to Europe and started studying very complex music [with Luigi Dallapiccola] and getting his mind really twisted around, he said, "No, I'm going to go to Aptos and I'm going to work with Lou Harrison."

So he did. He moved to California and he started working with Lou. And then they began to put on concerts, chamber music concerts, at the Sticky Wicket.

⁴⁹ Cameron Harrison. He is, at the point of these interviews, in the early stages of his project.

⁵⁰ For more on the history of the Cabrillo Music Festival see <http://cabrillomusic.org/about-us/look-listen/video/festival-history/>

Reti: Hughes and Harrison together.

Miller: Yes. And friends. So there would be a series of chamber music concerts. The programs for some of those are in Special Collections, of the Sticky Wicket concerts.

So that's how it started. Hughes was a bassoonist and he was also playing in the Oakland Symphony. So the idea came to start this festival. I believe some of the impetus may have come from Cabrillo [College] building a new performance hall, which is no longer the music hall. They have a new music building now. But they built this new hall and here was a 500-seat place where you could put on a concert. So I think Hughes was really one of the motivators behind it and got it started. The orchestra was at first the Oakland Symphony, with Gerhard Samuel as the conductor, the first conductor. And then it just grew from there.

Reti: I see. I realize this was all before your time, but in terms of what's come down to you—do you know if there was a connection between the Sticky Wicket and The Barn in Scotts Valley.

Miller: The what? I don't think so.

Reti: That's not ringing any bells.

Miller: Not ringing any bells, no.

Reti: Okay.

Miller: So because Lou was the most prominent local composer, the conductors of the Cabrillo Music Festival would program something by him almost every

year. So he was kind of a stimulator of the idea, but he himself cannot really be credited for starting the Cabrillo Music Festival.

Reti: Did the community of Santa Cruz shape Lou as much as he shaped Santa Cruz?

Miller: Santa Cruz is such a leftist place. I think it was just kind of a mutual coming together. It's a place that he could really identify with.

Reti: Yes, so he felt really comfortable here. And his politics about pacifism and antinuclear and gay issues and all that fit really well.

Miller: Yes. I think that's still true of the community. But I don't know what the attitudes were before 1980. Was it more conservative?

Reti: Before the university came, yes. That's why it's fascinating to me that he came here before the university and I was wondering how much he had to do with creating the place that Santa Cruz County became culturally during this period of transformation. That transformation partly had to do with the university, but Lou really wasn't a university person at that point.

Miller: That's right.

Reti: So there were a lot of cultural factors coming together.

Miller: Yes, but I think the kind of students who were attracted to Santa Cruz, to UCSC, in the early years, were those who had the same kinds of philosophies—of non-traditional education and no grades and beautiful nature and pacifism and so on. I think those were the types of students who were attracted to UCSC.

And maybe the fact that UCSC emphasized undergraduate education and was not so involved with PhDs in chemistry and so on—they were more interested in the general undergraduate population—was attractive to people who had those sympathies in the first place.

Reti: Lou Harrison's incredible border crossing, genre crossing, blending, fusion—all of that seems very in tune with UCSC's original ideals to me.

Miller: Well, yes, and—

Reti: That's why it seems so odd to me that he wasn't actually teaching here.

Miller: (sighs) In retrospect, right? In retrospect it seems that way.

Reti: But we weren't there at that time, so we don't know what it was like.

Miller: But even in later years we didn't really have him come and teach here.

He was very independent and I don't know that he really would have liked to have a university job. I just could not imagine him coming to faculty meetings. It is just inconceivable to me that he would have had the patience to do that. He wanted to be on his own. He wanted to be composing by himself. He wanted to be able to read what he wanted when he wanted. He wanted to be able to go where he wanted when he wanted. I just cannot imagine him doing any of the bureaucratic tasks that go along with a university job.

Reti: He was not a bureaucrat.

Miller: Not at all! I just can't imagine that he would even have had the patience for it.

Reti: Okay. That makes sense.

Miller: Yes. Plus, of course, he didn't have any degrees. When you hire faculty members at a university, you advertise for a professor and they want them to have a PhD or whatever. I mean, he didn't even have a bachelor's degree. Of course, we did talk about Gordon Mumma, but he was a real exception.

Reti: Okay. That makes sense. That's very helpful.

You wrote in your book, "His most fervent desire was to establish connections, to speak through the medium of live performance, moving listeners worldwide to universal understanding through sound." Do you think he achieved that desire?

Miller: Certainly in his own music. Yeah, he certainly did. But also he was very frustrated at times that the world didn't come along with him.

Reti: Yes, I was inspired by what you wrote about his passion for Esperanto, which to me conveyed so much about the world he wanted to see.

Miller: Yes! He wanted the universal language. And, of course, music has often been described as a universal language. And yet, it's sort of a generalization. It doesn't always work because musics of different cultures that are so different from each other may not speak coherently in other societies. If a Westerner is listening to a piece of gamelan music—does that speak to that person in the same

way as it does to an Indonesian native, who says, “Oh, that represents this particular passion.” And the Westerner says, “Huh? I don’t hear that.” And similarly in the reverse. So it’s a little bit of an overstatement to say that it’s completely universal. But there are universals about it. And obviously you don’t have to have an understanding of the language in order to understand and enjoy musical sounds.

Lou loved to blend things together. He didn’t blend all of the world’s musics together, but certainly he became interested in various Asian musics—Korean music, Chinese music—but also to a certain extent, Indian music. To a lesser extent, but there’s certainly some influence there. Also some other Asian cultures. He would try to blend the music of those cultures with his Western musical training. And he did it in different ways. He did it by sometimes combining instruments from different cultures together. But in his latest works he was actually using compositional procedures from Asian musics, especially gamelan music, in his compositions for Western instruments. So there are pieces for completely Western instruments but they are structured by using the compositional processes that you would use in a gamelan composition, various heterophonic layerings—of melodies moving at different speeds at the same time. An underlying, slower melody with an overlaid ornamentation of various layers, what we call heterophonic texture. He would take all kinds of ideas out of gamelan music and apply them to pieces with Western instruments in his most mature style. So that’s a very sophisticated type of fusion.

And then, of course, he loved to combine instruments. Once he started writing for the gamelan, which wasn't until the late seventies, then he wrote pieces for French horn and gamelan, and saxophone and gamelan, and piano and gamelan. You have to retune the piano so that it matches the gamelan.

And then one of his latest pieces is just the opposite. It's for a string orchestra with a pipa solo. Pipa is a Chinese lute, a very loud, a plucked lute.

Reti: I listened to that one. That was beautiful.

Miller: Yes. The name of the instrument comes from the fact that it goes pi-pa; pi-pa; pi-pa when you pluck it. So that's a Chinese instrument with a Western orchestra. But the gamelan is an Indonesian orchestra and he often combined with Western instruments. So he loved to do those things. People will tell you who know a lot about gamelan, that his pieces strictly for gamelan (without Western instruments) are influenced by his Western training. "Oh, this music sounds more Western than a piece that would have been composed by a traditional Indonesian composer for those instruments." So he loved to combine those. It was his way of joining hands around the world.

He loved to make these conglomerations. He loved to cook, too. And he made soups that were conglomerations. There was always a pot of soup sitting on his burner and he and Bill would just throw into it whatever was available at the time. And that was very similar to the musical compositions, of mixing them together to make something that's greater than the sum of the parts.

Reti: So he was into fusion cuisine way ahead of his time as well.

Miller: (laughs)

Reti: That's wonderful. Well, thank you. I think that's probably a good place to stop for today.

Miller: Yes. I think that's great. Wonderful.

More on Publications

Reti: So today is May 19, 2015. This is Irene Reti and I'm here with Leta Miller for our fourth session of her oral history. So Leta, let's start by talking today about some of the articles that you were writing about John Cage, Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, Charles Ives.

Miller: These were all sort of an extension of the book on Lou. I wrote the first book on Lou Harrison in 1998 and then actually wrote a second book on Lou Harrison, published in 2006. And that second book was actually completed in its first draft just before he died. And the reason that second book came about was because the University of Illinois Press started a new series of composer biographies and they wanted them to be very short, up to two hundred pages maximum, functioning as an introduction to a composer for the general population. So when that series started, I said, "Would you be interested in a book on Harrison?"⁵¹ I had just done the big book, which was published by Oxford (though it was later reprinted with an updated catalog and a few corrections by the University of Illinois Press in 2004). And they said, "Oh, we

⁵¹ Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison*. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

would love it.” So I asked Fred if he would join me again and so the two of us did the little Lou book, the shorter Lou book. We finished the whole thing by 2003, when Lou passed away. He had read the first draft of it. He passed away after the first draft, so we had to change things into the past tense. He actually told me that in some ways he liked the shorter book even better than the longer book. What that shorter book turned out to be was a retrospective and summary of his life because now there wasn’t going to be any more, in terms of the musical compositions.

Reti: Why did he like the shorter one better?

Miller: I don’t know. He never really said. I think probably because we got away from a lot of the detail and just got down to the essential areas in which he made contributions, and made summary statements. So there was not so much detail to wade through but there was a kind of a distillation of what he had done.

So meanwhile, in the interim, I had also started writing articles. These articles were really an outgrowth of the work on Harrison. He was very close friends with John Cage, so I began to extend into John Cage’s work. And I think we’ve talked a little bit about some of the articles that I wrote. I wrote several articles that had to do with John Cage and his early work, before he moved to New York in 1942–1943. But before 1942, he was on the West Coast, first in LA and then briefly in San Francisco, then in Seattle, and then back to San Francisco. And during that time he had intersected with Harrison a lot. So I wrote several articles about Cage in Seattle, and the percussion ensemble that Cage and Harrison formed. They staged joint concerts in San Francisco every year—

percussion ensemble concerts with their friends and so on. So I wrote several articles on that.⁵²

The other figure who loomed large for Harrison was Henry Cowell, who was his most endeared teacher. Harrison would quote Cowell constantly during our interviews and he was a huge influence on Harrison. So then naturally I began to extend into Cowell's work.⁵³ And other figures at the time. Charles Ives was very revered by Harrison. I think I told you that Harrison performed the premiere of Ives's *Third Symphony*, which got the Pulitzer Prize.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: These articles were natural extensions of the book. So then, as I began to get into that area, then I really became interested in the San Francisco scene in general. Because a lot of musicology, frankly, is centered around the Northeast and maybe Chicago. There is a lot written on New York and Philadelphia and Boston and Washington, D.C. And there're a lot of institutions there with musicological PhD programs and a lot of scholars in that region. The Northeast sometimes sees itself as the cultural center of the country.

Reti: Yes.

⁵² In addition to "Cultural Intersections: John Cage in Seattle," referenced above, see these four articles: "The Art of Noise: John Cage, Lou Harrison, and the West Coast Percussion Ensemble," in *Perspectives on American Music, 1900–1950* (New York: Garland, 2000): 215–63; "Cage's Collaborations," in *Cambridge Companion to John Cage* (Cambridge University Press, 2002): 151–68; "Cage, Cunningham, and Collaborators: The Odyssey of *Variations V*," *Musical Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 545–67; and "Henry Cowell and John Cage: Intersections and Influences, 1933–1941," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 47–111. The last article won the Lowens Prize from the Society for American Music.

⁵³ Miller's writings on Cowell include "Henry Cowell and Modern Dance: The Genesis of Elastic Form," *American Music* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2002), 1–24; "The Cowell–Ives Relationship: A New Look at Cowell's Prison Years" (with Rob Collins), *American Music* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 473–92; and the article on Cage and Cowell cited in the previous note.

Miller: And all that watershed, that backwater out on the West Coast doesn't always get as much attention. So a friend of mine, the same person who had suggested the Harrison project to me in the first place, Catherine Parsons Smith, published a book on music in Los Angeles, from about 1880 to 1940. And I thought, "Oh, I think something similar could be done for San Francisco." She didn't suggest it in this case but I was using her book as a stimulus. And so I began looking into music in San Francisco and that resulted in my 2011 book published by the University of California Press, *Music and Politics in San Francisco*.⁵⁴ My dates started at the 1906 quake and ended with World War II. I wasn't going to do the whole history of music in San Francisco from 1849 to the present. I mean, that was just too much.

But 1906 was quite a turning point because 4.7 square miles of the city were destroyed. There was a rebuilding and after the rebuilding many institutions took shape. The symphony took shape. It started in 1911. The opera started in 1922–23. The ballet started in the 1930s. The San Francisco Conservatory started with a piano school in 1917 and then became the San Francisco Conservatory in 1923. So a lot of the musical institutions in San Francisco took shape in the first quarter to the first half of the twentieth century. So that was my focus. The book covers more than Western classical music in this period. There are chapters on Chinese music, jazz, racial issues, and much more.

⁵⁴ Leta E. Miller, *Music and Politics in San Francisco: From the 1906 Quake to the Second World War* (University of California Press, 2011).

The starting point was easy because of the earthquake. The ending point was a little harder because all of these institutions had natural stopping points at different dates. So the ending is kind of ragged, as I note in the book itself. And I take each topic to some kind of a logical turning point.

I discovered, in the process, that San Francisco was quite a different city from today. Very conservative, very Republican, very Catholic. Those were the dominant characteristics politically and religiously. Very white. Very, very white until World War II. During World War II, there was a big influx of the African American population from the South coming in looking for jobs. There were jobs in the shipyards, both in Los Angeles and in San Francisco. So there was a real influx of African Americans. The African American population increased from .5 to 5 percent. So a huge increase there, which really changed the shape of the culture, including music—

And then after World War II, of course, the political complexion of San Francisco changed radically. Now we think of San Francisco probably as the most liberal city in the country but it certainly was not that before the war. And there was a lot of racism. There's a chapter in the book on the Chinese music. The Chinese population was discriminated against in very awful way. That's been written about. But I talked about the Chinese musical scene. There was a lot of Chinese opera going on early, before the earthquake. Then it stopped for a while but then it rejuvenated in the twenties. Harrison was influenced by it, and Cowell was influenced by it, and Harry Partch was—they would attend the Chinese theater in the twenties. So I talked about that.

There were issues of racial discrimination against black performers in the musician's union, which turned out to be a fascinating topic. There were segregated musician's unions throughout the country. We normally think of that as being in the South, but in the North as well there were Black unions and white unions, or what they called "Colored" unions. And in San Francisco there were big battles between the white and the African-American groups. I don't know that they were physical battles, but verbal battles. This was a case of jobs, right? There was a big African-American population in Oakland, but not so much in San Francisco until World War II.

In any case, it was very interesting because the San Francisco Local Six Union was very cooperative with my work. This was embarrassing history for them. And they did not want to shunt it aside at all. They said, "This is great. We're glad you're uncovering it. We're glad you're bringing it to light." I ended up writing a long article on segregation in the San Francisco Musician's Union and they actually posted it on their Web site.⁵⁵

Reti: And were you granted access to their archives?

Miller: Absolutely. They had, unfortunately, thrown a lot of stuff away. But whatever they had—they said, "You're welcome to come and work here." It was really refreshing. They were not trying to cover it up. They were trying to expose a difficult past and that's the only way you can actually rectify it. Of course, none of the people who are working there now were involved in those racial issues.

⁵⁵ Miller, "Racial Segregation and the San Francisco Musician's Union, 1923–60," *Journal of the Society of American Music* 1, no. 2 (May 2007): 161–206.

Anyway, that's what I was writing articles about. There's an article about that but there's also a chapter in the book. The book came out in 2011. We were pushing for that year because that was the centenary of the San Francisco Symphony. We wanted the book out when the symphony was making its big celebration. So yes, I gave talks in San Francisco about the early years of the symphony and so on. So it's very exciting stuff.

Reti: Yes! And was the information you were uncovering, the politics you were uncovering—was it new to a lot of the people who came to the talks?

Miller: Oh, yes. I think so. I went through many archives. I went through the minutes of the San Francisco Symphony meetings, the handwritten minutes of the board meetings and so on. I'm big on archival research. I dug up a lot of stuff. And I talked to this wonderful man who was part of the union [Earl Watkins], who had been a very young guy at the time when this discrimination was going on in the forties. He was great. I interviewed him.⁵⁶ He was dying of cancer and I think he died either right before or right after the book came out. So I was able to do some interviews as well. There are also chapters on the symphony, on the conservatory.

The conservatory is the outgrowth of a piano school that was founded by a woman named Ada Clement. That was another whole area of investigation. So I've also done lectures now at the San Francisco Conservatory about their

⁵⁶ For a photo of Watkins in 1947, see Miller's article in *Journal of the Society of American Music*, referenced in note 49, p. 177—Leta Miller.

history, a lot of which they didn't know about. It's fun to uncover all of these treasures.

Reti: Yes, a great project. And then that took you into some of your more current research.

Miller: Well, I finished that and I thought, "Oh, no, what am I going to do now?"
(laughs)

Reti: (laughs) Spoken like a true lover of research.

Miller: (laughs) So I really went in a completely different direction and wrote a book about Aaron Jay Kernis, composer. He's been out at the Cabrillo Music Festival quite a number of times. I noticed later on your list we're going to talk a little bit about the Cabrillo Festival.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: But Marin Alsop has brought him out as composer-in-residence about five times, I think. I loved his music. And he has a very interesting connection to UC Santa Cruz because his wife, Evelyne Luest, graduated from UC Santa Cruz in 1982, soon after I came here. And the first task that I did when I came here, was I was asked to serve on a jury to select a concerto soloist for the orchestra. And they had students competing. Who was going to play a concerto with the orchestra? And Evelyne Luest won the competition. She's a fine pianist. She played the concerto with the orchestra. I believe that Heiichiro Ohyama may still have been here at that time. So maybe it was '79 that I was on that committee. In that case, she is now married to Aaron Kernis.

So they came out here for the Cabrillo Festival on one of their trips to California—they seem to come out frequently in the summer to this area because Evelyne’s parents live in this area. And so I gave them a tour of the new music building. I love Aaron’s music so this all hung together very nicely. And so in the same series as the second Harrison book I published a book on Kernis. And that just came out last year.⁵⁷

Now the editor of the press said to me, “Well, would you like to contribute another title?” The University of Illinois has a really wonderful music catalog. And the short biographies are very popular because people can read them very quickly and they can get an idea of what the composer is all about without having to dig through huge amounts of analysis and detail.

Reti: And they also provide clips of some of the music?

Miller: Well, this is interesting. For the Harrison book, which was actually the first book in this series, they said to me, “No written musical notated examples.” The idea was that people who were not music specialists, who were general readers, would open the book, would see musical notation and say, “Oh, this book is not for me. I don’t read music. It’s for specialists.” So they wanted to get away from that.

But how can you really deal with the music in any depth without having some kind of musical examples? So that was when Fred [Lieberman] was still with us. (I miss Fred. He had such great ideas.) He said, “What if we had a CD in the

⁵⁷ Leta E. Miller. *Aaron Jay Kernis* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

book and we did analysis by timings. So we would make a diagram of this piece, for example. And on the diagram we showed various timings when things happened. "Here comes the entry of the brake drums," or whatever, you know. So we did that for the second Harrison book. Actually both Harrison books have CDs in the back. And if you look inside the second book there's analysis of the music using timings on the CD.

By the time I did the Kernis book, they didn't want to do this anymore. There are various problems with it. First of all, CDs are now on their way out. Everybody wants streaming. Second of all, CDs get lost. They fall out of the book. I know the library usually catalogs them separately and puts them in the recordings area. So they become separated from the text. But by the time of the Kernis book, UIP was allowing notated musical examples. So things change. In the Kernis book there are maybe ten musical examples.

But Aaron Kernis liked the idea of a CD. He said, "Well, maybe we can start a Web site and mount some examples on there," which we've done. So it's a different situation now. There are lots of examples out on YouTube that one can find. There are lots of commercial recordings of Aaron's music and you can go onto iTunes and for \$.99 buy the track. But we mounted on a Web site some recordings that would not have been easily available elsewhere. And sometimes they were live performances. The trouble is, of course, is you have to have permission.

And I have to tell you that getting permission for those Harrison CDs. Oh, my God. Twenty tracks on each one and for each track I had to get two permissions

because you have to get the permission from whoever owns the right to the recording and also from the publisher of the score. And those companies are different. So you have to have two sets of permissions per track. Both companies want to charge you, of course. I cannot tell you how much trouble it was. The most trouble was one little track that I wanted to get that had been issued on a CD by a small company in New England that had subsequently been bought up by SONY. And this little company had no more control. Even the artist who was playing on the CD could not get his own CDs. He was out of copies and he could not get more. SONY had bought this label but they didn't want to advertise; they didn't want to distribute these recordings that they thought would have very small market. So they buried it. I finally did find the right person and got the permission, which they gave without charge. But finding the right person to talk to at SONY was months and months and months of frustration. (laughs)

Anyway, so now I'm working on another book in that series. As I said, after I finished the Kernis book, the editor said, "Do you want to do something else?" So I'm working on a similar book on Chinese American composer Chen Yi. That's one current project.

And the other is a little bit of an extension from my San Francisco work. I became very interested in the philanthropic endeavors of Phoebe Apperson Hearst, who was the mother of William Randolph Hearst. She was very wealthy, from her husband George, who made his money in gold and silver mining. She was extraordinarily wealthy and she was very philanthropic. She gave a lot of money

away, a lot to the University of California. I don't know if you know about that. Not here, but [UC] Berkeley.

Reti: Isn't there a Hearst Auditorium?

Miller: I believe you are thinking of Hertz Hall, the music performing space at UCB. That hall is named after Alfred Hertz, second conductor of the SF Symphony, who left a large bequest to UCB at his death. It's all described in my San Francisco book, by the way. I talk about Alfred Hertz in quite some detail. He was an incredible musician. But regarding Phoebe Hearst: There is a Hearst Gymnasium and there is a Hearst Mining Building. The Hearst Mining Building she paid for and erected in memory of George, her husband. The Hearst Gymnasium is very interesting because it started out as a building for women students. The women students didn't have access to recreational facilities that the male students had. So in 1900 she erected Hearst Hall. It's not the present building. It was right off of campus. This was a building for women, for them to not only have recreational opportunities, but for them to have meeting opportunities, for them to come and have luncheons and also enjoy cultural activities. She was caught between this old-fashioned women's and men's spheres and the New Woman movement of the early twentieth century. So, still—"Come and have teas and lunches."

But she immediately started a musical series there. And she paid for people to come and perform. She also brought in big stars who happened to be in San Francisco, some big opera singers. And she brought them there. Obviously she

paid for them to perform. For students and faculty—there was a series of these concerts.

Then she had this building moved onto campus. She, of course, equipped it with a Steinway grand piano. And it still had some concerts, but it also upstairs had a huge recreational facility. Then this building burned down in 1922 and William Randolph Hearst replaced it with the present Hearst Gymnasium, which is still named after her.

Phoebe Hearst also endowed the first scholarships for women students, in the 1890s. Students got \$300 a year but it was really a lot in that time period and it allowed these students to study without having to work outside in order to pay for their room and board. So she endowed a number of scholarships for women. (These \$300 scholarships still exist and the recipients are known playfully as Phoebes.) She started a high school for girls in Washington, D.C. that provided a place for the kids of congress people and senators to go. She was a prime mover in the PTA movement, in the kindergarten movement. She founded kindergartens in San Francisco, in South Dakota, in Washington. She was really involved in education, even though she herself only had an eighth-grade education in rural Missouri. But she taught herself French. She loved opera and she tried to found an opera school in San Francisco, but it didn't materialize until many years after her death.

Well, that was more than you wanted to know.

Reti: No, that's fascinating!

Miller: She was a major name. She was the first female Regent. She was appointed Regent by the governor in 1897, and she served until her death in 1919. But she was the first and only, for a long time, female Regent of the University of California.

And when she died she was called "California's Greatest Woman." She had a huge amount of money. William Randolph had *none*, because when George died he left it all to Phoebe and left none to his son, who, I think, he was afraid was going to be a spendthrift. And Phoebe kept funding William's newspaper endeavors. "Oh, my God. Will wants to buy another newspaper. I don't know if I want to pay for this one." (laughs) When she died, he owed her something like ten million dollars. That was just what he owed her, other than what she had given him. And then, of course, she left it all to him. And he built San Simeon. But he was also quite philanthropic.

So that's going to be an article, I think. Soon. (laughs)

Reti: Wow, so you have shifted your focus from performance in music to all of this fabulous research and publishing.

Miller: Yeah. I packed up my flute around 2000. Did I tell you this?

Reti: You did mention that you packed up your flute and shifted your focus. I'm looking at this quite prolific publication record here.

Miller: Well, it became prolific because I didn't have to spend so many hours practicing the flute!

Reti: All that energy got released in other ways.

Miller: Yeah, I figured I had done enough performance and I really wanted to concentrate on scholarly research. It was a lot more relaxing than the stress of performance. And I'm happy I did. I never turned back. I wondered if I would miss the playing.

Reti: I was wondering.

Miller: What I did was I founded a small choir in Santa Cruz after I stopped playing the flute. I founded this group called Ariose. That's is an old English word for melody, or melodic, or melodious. So I founded this group. It was a sixteen-member *a cappella* choir, and I did that for about five years. And that helped feed my need for making music. I felt okay about doing that because I had been conducting choirs since before I moved to Santa Cruz, actually.

Choir Director at Temple Beth El in Aptos, California

So maybe that segues into Temple Beth El.

Reti: Yes, let's talk about that.

Miller: When I was finishing my PhD at Stanford, we were members of a temple in Redwood City, Beth Jacob. And it had a wonderful cantor there named Hans Cohn. We were members of the congregation and he needed a choir director. I guess somebody must have left. I think the previous choir director moved to Israel. I believe that's what happened. And so here he had this doctoral student who was a musician and I'd played the flute with him on a couple of occasions.

He said, “Would you like to direct the choir?” I’d never directed a choir but my mother was a singer, as I think I told you.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: And so I knew a lot of Jewish music and my Hebrew was okay. It’s not great but it’s good enough for proper pronunciation of choral works, with a little help with translation of texts. So I got the experience of doing the choir there at Beth Jacob, which was a lot of fun. And when we moved down to Santa Cruz, Rabbi Rick Litvak here asked me if I would like to start—there was no choir here—would I like to start a choir at Temple Beth El, which was not in Aptos at that time. It was on Bay Street at the tracks, after you cross Mission, coming from the university.

I said, “No, I had too much to do.” Maybe there was a little incipient choir but I didn’t have the energy. I wanted to put my attention into the university. I said no for a long time until there was a need of a change. I had recommended one of our voice teachers at the university and it was partially successful. He was a wonderful singer but the choir was not thriving. So after a while, when he left, I took it over as a volunteer in 1992.

I conducted that choir for thirteen years, without any pay. I didn’t want any pay. I’m not trying to tout myself but I didn’t want to take any money from the temple. It was an act of love, not a job. But it also turned into a job. I expanded this choir. Right away I put the finger on a lot of people I knew, and we grew quite quickly to about thirty-five members. It was a pretty big choir for a

synagogue or church. It took a huge amount of work for me to sort through music, decide what was appropriate for the group. This piece is too hard; this piece is not in the right style—the congregation would not appreciate it. So I spent loads of time looking for music. And then a lot of the singers didn't read music so I would have to make rehearsal tapes. I would have to sing onto tape the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass parts for each piece and then make these tapes available for choir members. (laughs) I'm just trying to give you an idea of what was involved. And my voice is not very good, so they would laugh at me, but that's fine. And then the rehearsals and bugging people if they weren't coming. These are volunteers. You can't force them to come.

Reti: Right, you can't fail them from the class. (laughs)

Miller: Right. But we would sing once a month. And then the rabbi said, "Well, how about doing some kind of interfaith thing." I thought, "Well that's a great idea." So I think I did this four times, or maybe five times—we got together with four or five churches: Holy Cross, Resurrection Church, Saint Andrew in Capitola, I think; First Congregational Church on High Street. I may be missing one. Anyway, they all came to the temple on a Friday night. We had two massed pieces that we all sang, 120 singers up on the *Bima*, singing these pieces.

Reti: Whoa! The choreography alone would be challenging.

Miller: We had to rehearse them. Can you imagine the rehearsal? And there wasn't enough parking— And then, instead of the sermon, each choir sang two musical pieces as a musical sermon. I did this about four or five times. It was one

heck of a job to arrange it. But it was so worth it. The community relationships were so wonderful.

So I did that and then after thirteen years I guess I decided to leave while the party was still going on. Because what was happening was that all these wonderful people I had recruited were getting older and they were saying, "Hey, Leta. I can't make this rehearsal because I've got to go visit my kids in Washington. My daughter is having a baby." Or whatever. You know, they were not tied down. They were retired. I was going to have to start recruiting. And I didn't have the energy to recruit again.

Oh, I should tell you that we also commissioned pieces. We commissioned three pieces of music that were written for us and then published. And we made a CD. We did it ourselves and it sold in the temple bookshop and it's still there.

There's a really interesting story behind one of the pieces that became a favorite of the choir and the rabbi. One of the pieces that we performed was setting "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," which is the Priestly Benediction. It was written by a man named John Rutter, who is a very well-known British composer of choral music. And of course it was all in English. (Rutter, of course designed it for the Anglican Church.) And we sang that piece and the rabbi said, "I just love that piece. It's wonderful." And it is. It's a great piece of music. One Yom Kippur afternoon—we have about a two or three-hour span after we've been through this long service and before we go back for the afternoon concluding service. And we're fasting so we don't have anything else to do. So my husband said, "I

wonder if we could take the original Hebrew words and set it to Rutter's music?" And so—I give him full credit, my dear husband, Alan. He started doing it.

Reti: Right there?

Miller: At home. We were looking at the score. We were at home and we were looking at the score and he said, "Well, this will work here." And of course the number of syllables is not the same in Hebrew and English, so we had to kind of make little adjustments in the rhythm of the music, although we didn't change any pitches.

Reti: So your husband—

Miller: He was singing in the choir. He's an engineer.

Reti: I know he's an engineer, but he's also—

Miller: Yeah, he sings and reads music. He's got perfect pitch. So he started figuring out how this might work, how the Hebrew text might fit with the music notation. Then I jumped in and said, "Okay. Well, I'll help you." And we developed a version that went Hebrew and then English. Each line of the text had been set twice by Rutter, so we did it once in Hebrew, and then in Rutter's English, and then Hebrew-English; Hebrew-English. So then we performed this piece at one of the services. And of course, the rabbi was just going, "Whoa! This is fantastic. My favorite piece. And now it's got a Hebrew text as well."

So when we went to make our CD, of course we wanted to include this piece. I said, "Well, we better be careful because of copyright. You're not allowed to

mess with a piece. It's one thing if you're going to do it in a temple for thirty people. But if you're going to record it, even if we're not going to sell the recording widely, I don't want to violate copyright." Absolutely. And as a matter of fact, I was really careful when I was director of the choir that I always purchased copies of our music. I didn't photocopy, which is violating copyright. Anyway, so I wrote to the publisher: "May we have permission to do this?" And they wrote back after a while and said, "Absolutely not. We're not going to allow you to do this."

The rabbi then got involved in this. He wrote to the publisher and he said, "We're not translating this. We're putting it back into the original."

Reti: (laughs) Oh, ho.

Miller: "And can we please just ask Mr. Rutter what he thinks." Nobody had consulted the composer. This was his American distributor in North Carolina, or wherever. So we wrote directly to Mr. Rutter, who, of course, came back and said, "Of course! You're welcome to do this. I welcome it."

Reti: And what were the pieces you had commissioned?

Miller: The three pieces we had commissioned—two of them were by a woman named Alice Parker, who was really very well known for taking folk tunes and putting them in very inventive settings. And the other was a commission from a woman named Elaine Broad, whose music we liked and we commissioned her to

write a piece too. So those are the three pieces we commissioned. And I think they're on our CD as well.⁵⁸

Reti: Great. Did you have anything more to say about how Jewish cultural perspectives or Judaism inform your work as a scholar or as a performer. I know we started your oral history with you talking about your early life and your family's roots going back to the Baal Shem Tov. But in terms of your more recent life—I know you are very much steeped in Jewish community and Judaism.

Miller: We are. But it hasn't really affected my scholarly work too much, except in the book on Aaron Kernis, because Jewish themes have been prominent in a lot of his work. So that was really interesting. He's not ritualistic. He's not observant. But he's very aware of his Jewish heritage. So he has written a number of pieces—he's got a Holocaust memorial piece that is just phenomenal, called "Lament and Prayer" written for the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust. In 1989 he went to Poland for a filming. He was honored as a young composer and he took the opportunity to visit Auschwitz and Birkenau. And he was so moved in a very dramatic way by that experience that he later wrote a piece called "Colored Field," which reflects his experience at Birkenau. And that piece won the Grawemeyer Award.

The Grawemeyer Award is the largest composition award in the world, maybe, at least in the country. It's an award from the University of Louisville. There are awards in various fields and there's one in composition. It is on the order of

⁵⁸ The music for the Alice Parker pieces is published by Transcontinental Music (an arm of the Reform movement) in New York. The pieces are: Alice Parker, arranger, "Kuma echa" and "D'ror yikra."

\$200,000 or so. It's a very large prize. That piece won the award. He has other pieces that were inspired by Jewish themes, including his Third Symphony, which is an hour and ten minutes long, a very massive piece for orchestra and choir, and is a setting of texts from a thirteenth [*recte*: eleventh] century Sephardic poet [Solomon Ibn Gabirol, ca. 1021–ca. 1058] in English translation. It's an amazing piece of music. So with all of my Jewish heritage—I was able to relate in a meaningful way with Kernis about Jewish influences and we talked a lot about them. So it came up in that way.

There were really two strands in my growing up—my mother, with the music, and my father with Judaism. Those are the two strong influences on me. And we continue to be very active at Temple Beth El. It's a wonderful community. It's an amazing synagogue. It's very different from many others because it's so welcoming of all viewpoints. I'm talking about Jewish viewpoints and I'm talking about viewpoints in terms of sexual orientation and in terms of political orientation. It's an open-arms community. The clergy there do whatever they can to make everybody feel welcome. Of course they don't always succeed with everybody. But it's far different from many other congregations that I've known. Beth Jacob in Redwood City was very similar. I think that's what attracted us to it.

Editor of the *Journal of the Society for American Music*

Reti: Great. Thank you. Let's backtrack for a moment. We did not talk about your editorship of the *Journal of the Society for American Music* beginning in fall of 2000?

Miller: Yes. That was a wonderful experience, actually. When Catherine Parsons Smith suggested that I do interviews with Lou Harrison as a book, that turned my life around from CPE Bach and Baroque music and Renaissance music, to looking at contemporary music and looking at American music. And she said, “Yeah, the Americanists! They’re all so friendly. You should come to our meeting.” (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: The big society is the American Musicological Society. The Society for American Music is a small society and it has a reputation for being very friendly. And indeed, the first time I went to one of those meetings it was quite amazing. They have a brass band that plays on Saturday afternoon and in the evening they have a banquet with dancing afterwards. They have tours of the town. It’s a very friendly and welcoming community. So I became really involved in that society, gave papers there, and became friendly with a lot of people.

And then I was asked to edit this journal. The journal has an interesting history. The society had a journal called *American Music*. *American Music* was published by the University of Illinois Press, not the same division as the book division, with whom I’ve worked a lot, but the journal division. They’re both part of the press but they have separate staffs, different people running them. Well, the society, from what I understand (and I wasn’t directly involved) felt that it could get a better deal in terms of royalties, page limitations, and some other matters; so negotiations ensued. At that point other publishers expressed an interest in possibly publishing the journal instead. The society eventually changed to

Cambridge University Press, which of course also has a wider distribution network. The University of Illinois Press owned the title *American Music* and wanted that journal to continue under that name.

So there was a split. And the *Journal of the Society for American Music* was founded. *American Music* continued but it just was no longer associated with the Society for American Music. So JSAM began in 2007 with vol 1, no. 1, but in many ways was a continuation of the old *American Music*. *American Music* continued as well and now both journals are doing fine.

And then after the first JSAM editor, who was there during the transition, they asked me if I would edit the journal. I thought about it for a while because I had nice relationships with the people at the University of Illinois Press. I had had nothing but wonderful experiences with them and I didn't want to get anybody angry.

It was a huge job to edit that journal. It comes out four times a year. There was always something to be doing. It had an acceptance rate of about 30 percent. So there were a lot of articles that were always in flux, were being reviewed. We'd get two reviewers for each article. Sometimes if they disagreed then we'd have to get a third reviewer. So there was that. And then there was the problem of rejection letters. People were disappointed if they were rejected. I took a long time with those rejection letters because I've been rejected. I know how bad it feels. I like to do it as graciously as possible.

And then, once an article is accepted, I took a very hands-on role about editing. I really was in there making changes. So there was all of that and then reading page proofs, and reading copyedits. Oh, it was really a huge job. But it was very gratifying. I learned so much about areas of American music that I knew nothing about. Articles on music computer games, on rap, and on popular music topics that were way out of my field. But I was reading all these articles. It was a wonderfully enriching experience.

Reti: Sure. And did you get any kind of assistance from the university, like grad students?

Miller: Yes, that was very nice. I said to the Society that I couldn't do it without having an assistant. So I went to the dean of graduate studies, who was very nice. I had been—remember we talked about the PhD program?

Reti: Yes.

Miller: Okay, so the PhD program had been recently initiated and I had worked very closely with the Graduate Studies people in getting that PhD program through. Our PhD program was just beginning and I made the argument that if we could offer an assistantship to somebody, it would really help one of our early PhD students. It would give him or her prominence nationally. So they were very, very nice. The graduate dean gave me \$7000 a year for three years to fund an assistant. And it just turned out that in our first entering class I had a guy who was just perfect for the job. His name is Mark Davidson, and he just did

his orals defense yesterday and passed! So he will be Dr. Davidson in a couple of weeks. (laughs)

Reti: Hooray!

Miller: And he was perfect because he was systematic; he was very organized. He was very willing to do work that's often not very interesting. You have to be willing to do that for a journal, you know, proofread in a very detailed way. And so I offered him to be my assistant, and he was thrilled, of course. And it gave renown to UCSC, to the music department, that we were the head of this journal and the assistant was part of the journal. And as a matter of fact, Mark was so successful as my assistant that the next editor kept him on in a more advanced role, as the copyeditor for the journal, and he's continuing with that. And then pretty soon Amy Beal, from our faculty, became the book review editor for that same journal. So it looked like the whole journal was coming out of UCSC. (laughs) That gave a lot of prominence to UCSC and I think it helped attract doctoral students to our program and prompted a lot of respect for UCSC and the amount of research and the quality of research that's going on here.

Reti: Fabulous.

Miller: So that's the story of the journal, which is now thriving. And by the way I'm really happy to say that *American Music*, the journal, is *also* thriving. So the argument that was made at the time was that there was room for two journals in American music. And both of them are thriving and there now is no animosity. There's mutual respect. And articles that are rejected by one journal sometimes

get fixed up and revised and then ultimately published by the other. It's gone in both directions, so everything is very copasetic and happy now.

Reti: Are the journals moving towards online access?

Miller: They're both online. I'm not involved with *American Music*. But I think they are as well. And JSAM, the *Journal of the Society of American Music* has been online from the start. Cambridge makes a nice offer sometimes. It has the first article in each issue free for downloading.

Reti: I'm thinking of the tremendous potential for offering clips of music as part of the articles. This is something we are doing in oral history with the *Oral History Review*, published by the Oral History Association and Oxford University Press.

Miller: Yes. When I was editor we started offering the opportunity for audio examples. And several authors took us up on it and mounted audio examples that are clickable links from the electronic version of their articles. I don't know that it's continued—I'm not sure. It's a little bit tedious to do it and you have to have an author who's very dedicated. But yes. Yes, we've thought of that too.

University Service

Reti: Okay Well, this seems like a good place to segue into talking about some of your committee work at UCSC. I know you told me that being on the Committee on Academic Personnel was a wonderful experience. Tell me why.

Miller: Well, I've been on a lot of committees at the university. UC is committee happy. I'm very impatient with wasting time in meetings. But some of the committees are really crucial. And CAP is one of them. Committee on Academic Personnel makes recommendations on all of the merit increases and promotions at the university. So you're looking at every merit increase, every promotion, and you're making a recommendation to the body that has the authority to make the decision. Sometimes that's the dean and sometimes that's the vice chancellor. And in the case of tenure, it's actually the chancellor. But very rarely do any of those three people go against the recommendations of CAP. CAP makes a recommendation and normally that recommendation is what carries. A lot of actions go to the vice chancellor. If the vice chancellor is going to disagree with CAP, generally he or she will come back to CAP and say, "You know, I've read what you recommend but I'm planning to do thus-and-so instead," and give the reasons, out of respect.

The committee meets every Thursday. And one has to look through all of these files before meeting. So you get a one course relief for serving on the committee. It looks at about two hundred personnel files per year.

Reti: Whoo!

Miller: So I was on the committee for two years and then I chaired the committee for the next two years. So for four years I was on. I think I saw the personnel files of almost everybody on campus at that time.

Reti: That would be eight-hundred people.

Miller: (laughs) Yeah. That's right. So I knew a lot about people I would meet at cocktail parties. and had to be careful to be very discreet. It was fascinating work. One thing that really impressed me was the enormously high level of the faculty at UCSC. I was, of course, seeing the achievements of people in the sciences and the social sciences and the humanities, in addition to my own little arts perspective. And it was really impressive, quite amazing work that people were doing.

After my first year as chair, somebody asked me in the Academic Senate whether there was prejudice against women in terms of advancement, or whether there was bias in terms of the sciences versus the humanities. And I, having sat through all of those meetings, could say anecdotally, no. But this person was skeptical. So I decided to see what I could do to document my feelings that everybody was being treated equally. I started an elaborate documentation project in which I tracked all of the two hundred actions that we saw in the next year in terms of gender, areas of specialization, academic divisions, etc. I made graphs and could show by the end of that year, when I submitted my report to the Academic Senate that, in fact, there wasn't any discrimination on any basis. Each file was looked at for its own worth.⁵⁹ It was really a wonderful experience.

And I was acting dean for a while. What I was going to say about CAP will segue into that. It was really wonderful—this was a committee in which you felt that everything that you did was absolutely vital and worthwhile. And the other

⁵⁹ Miller served on the Committee on Academic Personnel from 1998-99 (W only); 1999-2000 (F, W only); 2000-01 (chair), 2001-02 (chair).

people who were on CAP were selected very carefully. They had the highest research records. It was quite awe inspiring, very humbling to be on this committee.

It took me away from teaching a bit. And I love teaching, as I've told you before. So I had course relief. I needed the course relief in order to have the time to do CAP and still be able to do a little bit of research here and there. But I was missing the teaching.

And somewhat later I was asked to be dean. I thought about it for a while and I thought I'd try it. I was acting dean while they were planning to undergo a search. I think it was nine months that I did it.⁶⁰ I think I did a pretty good job. I was organized. I was attentive to what needed to be done. One thing that was really nice was that I was able to interact with other departments within the arts division. We had a search, for example, in film, at that time. I went to the presentations of their finalists. And I was struck by how much overlap there was between research in film and research in music. I came back to my colleagues and I said, "We really need to get together with the film people and do some joint work, some joint sponsorships of speakers, and so on." It didn't go anywhere. But it was nice.

The problem was, number one—as I told you—I'm impatient with meetings. (laughs) And there were so many meetings when I was dean. Oh, my god. I just would sit there. I don't know how people—I admire people with a lot of patience

⁶⁰ Miller served as acting dean of the division of arts at UC Santa Cruz from January through June 2006.

who can just sit there and not fidget. But I have a lot of trouble with that. And number two—this is the most important thing—I was too far from music. I even taught while I was dean. I insisted on teaching a class or two. Crazy. People told me I was crazy. But I think I would have gone crazier if I had not taught. (laughter) But I was too far from music and I was too far from the students. Dave Kliger, who was executive vice chancellor at the time⁶¹, asked me several times if I'd stay on. (laughs) And I said, "No, Dave. I just can't. I need to get back to music. I need to get back to the music students. I need to get back to the classroom."

David Jones took over after me. He did a fine job. And now we went through a search and we have Dean Yager, and that's been very successful.

I guess I was dean when we had Chancellor Denton. So that was a difficult experience.⁶² That was very difficult. I interacted mostly with Dave Kliger and that was wonderful. He was great. But the few times I interacted with her were difficult. And then she killed herself; it was extremely traumatic.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: Chancellor Pister was great, very supportive. But Chancellor MRC Greenwood was perhaps the most supportive of the arts. She was unbelievably attentive to music. She took people through the new music building. She

⁶¹ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor David Kliger* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2011). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/ucsc/campus-provostexecutive-vice-chancellor-david-kliger>

⁶² Chancellor Denice Denton was the ninth chancellor of UC Santa Cruz and served from February 14, 2005 until her death by suicide in June 2006.

attended concerts. We were really, really sad when she left. And actually, I think she misses us too. I think she didn't realize how wonderful it was at Santa Cruz. And when she came back for Denton's memorial service she said to me, "Oh, I'm so sorry I left Santa Cruz."

Reti: I have a wonderful oral history with her that we just published last year.⁶³

Miller: Did she say that to you too?

Reti: Yes, there were many things she missed about UCSC. She really loved this campus.

Miller: Yes, she did. And we really wish that she had stayed. She was marvelous. Of course, George Blumenthal is wonderful as well. We are very lucky to have him.

Reti: So was there more you wanted to say in terms of committee work besides CAP?

Miller: Oh, I was on a lot of committees. The Committee on Research was also a wonderful experience. Again, one feels like one is doing something really important because you are helping support people's research by giving out money, which is always a nice thing. (laughs)

Reti: Oh, yeah. (laughs)

⁶³ See Irene Reti and Randall Jarrell, *From Complex Organisms to a Complex Organization: An Oral History with UCSC Chancellor M.R.C. Greenwood* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2014). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/greenwood>

Miller: People always like to get money. And, of course, in the arts a little bit of money goes a long way. The sciences need huge amounts of money. But you give a musicologist \$2000 and whoa! (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: Right? So I was on research committee (COR) several times and that was great. I was also head of the Arts Research Institute. I don't know if you know about that?

Reti: I'm not familiar with it.

Miller: Ed Houghton started that. He was dean for quite a while before he retired. My term as acting dean was right after he retired. At one point when he was up for review to continue as dean he negotiated with central administration for more support for research in the arts. He said, "I want an arts research institute." And they gave a [fund] that could be distributed for grants in the arts. And so he asked me if I would head up the Arts Research Institute, which I did for about four or five years. Again, it was just a wonderful experience of giving out money to worthwhile projects and we funded a great number of really important endeavors throughout the division. And it's still continuing. We still have that source of funding for arts faculty, as well as Committee on Research Funding.

Reti: Great.

Miller: So I've done my share of administration. (laughs)

Reti: Yes, indeed. And you were also chair of the music department, if I remember correctly.

Miller: Oh, yes. As soon as I got tenure they said, "Okay, how about being chair?"

Reti: (laughs) That's often how it goes.

Miller: (laughs) Yeah. Not a smart thing to have taken on. But I did. And I did it for three years. The first year was okay. The second year was getting wearing. The third year I couldn't wait to be finished. It was a time of dramatic budget cuts. There had been this expansion we talked about in the eighties. And then in the early nineties, there was a real retrenchment. And we had to cut, I don't know, 12 or 15 percent, which sounds like nothing now, but it was very dramatic. I was in the role of chair and it's never fun to cut. So that was difficult. And the extra pay for being chair was very minimal. Now there's a little bit more of a financial incentive. I didn't care about the pay. But the stress was very substantial. And, of course, it took away time from being able to do one's research and teaching. I don't really know how I did all that research, and the temple choir, and the interfaith thing, and the committees. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Miller: And being chair. I don't know how I did it. I did sleep. (laughs)

Reti: I was going to say, how did you do all of this?

Miller: (laughs) Plus two kids.

Reti: Right.

Miller: Supermom.

Reti: So your daughter is a conductor.

Miller: Yes.

Reti: And your son is a rabbi. I don't think we talked about that.

Miller: Yeah, he's working as a counselor now. And my daughter is a conductor in London. They're off on their own now. When they were growing up it was a juggling act.

Reti: Yes, from the minute you were in graduate school.

Miller: And you know, I never—I think this might be an interesting thing to get on tape—I never used my kids as an excuse for not being able to attend a meeting or whatever. I did try to set up my teaching schedule—if it would work—earlier in the day so that I could be available after 2:30 in the afternoon. It didn't always work but often it did. But other than that, if somebody needed a meeting set up, I felt strongly that I should not use my children as an excuse because I thought that would reinforce stereotypes against women and against women's advancement. I did notice that many of my male colleagues would use their children as an excuse: "Oh, I'm sorry. I have to watch my kids that afternoon." They didn't worry about it. But I worried about it because I didn't want it to reflect on me as a woman. Maybe I was too concerned about it. But I made a strong point of avoiding that.

Reti: I can understand that. It's considered endearing when a man watches his kids. But when a woman wants to do it, it's like, oh, she can't really do her job. It's a stereotype.

Miller: Well, it was the stereotype. I don't believe there was anything conscious there at all on the part of my colleagues, but I didn't want to reinforce that stereotype.

Reti: That makes sense. Okay.

Cabrillo Music Festival

So I want to talk about Bud Kretschmer and also a little bit about the Cabrillo Music Festival, where you were on the board.

Miller: Yes, actually this relates to the library because the person who recruited me for the board was Marion Taylor.

Reti: I was going to ask you about Marion.

Miller: Oh, yes. Marion Taylor was the music librarian when I first came here. I think she did social sciences as well. It wasn't just music. We have never had the luxury of having a staff person in the library involved with just music. But Marion was great (as were Paul Machlis and Ken Lyons who followed her). She was a violist. I don't think she played in the orchestra but she was very involved in the Cabrillo Music Festival. She was on the board. And even while I was a lecturer, she said to me, "Leta, would you like to be on the Cabrillo Music Festival board?" Which I did, and I did that for two or three years. It was very

nice. Dennis Russell Davies was the conductor at that time. He was fantastic. It was quite a wonderful experience. I don't know that I had a great influence on the board except I do remember speaking up in one instance very strongly. There was a time that Dennis was asked to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra at their summer festival, and doing so would have meant moving the dates of the Cabrillo Festival. And there was a big debate about whether they should do that. At that point I stood up and said very strongly, "You have a fantastic musician conducting this festival. That should be the priority. Move the dates. Keep Dennis." And they did. I don't think that the decision was directly related to what I said but I did feel very strongly about prioritizing artistic quality. Yes, so I was involved for a couple of years and then I just got too busy.

But I did interact with Bud Kretschmer. Bud was just a wonderful guy, a pianist, and one of the original founders of the Cabrillo Music Festival. I believe I mentioned that I have a graduate student who is doing his dissertation on the Cabrillo Music Festival.

Reti: Yes.

Miller: And he has used your oral history of Bud.⁶⁴ And Bud also began to donate to the music department. He gave money for scholarships, especially for piano scholarships. He also gave money that funded the plaza out in the front of the music building, so we have the Kretschmer Plaza there, with a plaque

⁶⁴ See Irene Reti and Randall Jarrell, *Ernest T. Kretschmer: Reflections on Santa Cruz Musical Life, 1962-1992*, Volumes I and II (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 1992; 2000). Available in full text and audio at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/kretschmer>

acknowledging him. And he was just a delightful man. He made his money in his family's wheat germ business, Kretschmer Wheat Germ, as you well know. He was just an amateur pianist. And he was a very good friend. Another person I miss.

Reti: A true mensch, really.

Miller: Absolutely. Very kind.

Directions for the Future of the Music Department at UC Santa Cruz

Reti: I think that brings us to our final question. We are recording this oral history in the 50th year of UCSC. There's been a lot of thinking about where the campus came from and where it's going, as people do during anniversary years, and hopefully that process will continue and not be something that we just think about this year. So I always like to ask people I'm interviewing what directions they'd like to see the campus take in the future, how they feel about where the campus is now.

Miller: That's a very broad question.

Reti: It is a broad question, so you can answer it in any way that you like. You can be thinking in terms of the music department, or UCSC in general, or both.

Miller: The music department has always had a dual commitment to scholarship and performance, from its founding. That was one of the reasons that I was attracted to it. I hope that in the future that commitment will continue. There is a tendency in many music departments to separate performers and scholars. Often

there are bad feelings. I hope that this commitment to the interworking of the performance faculty and the scholarship faculty can be strengthened. I see indications that many of my younger colleagues feel the same way, which makes me feel very, very good. But it needs constant attention. One has to make a commitment, not only in terms of the faculty getting along, but in terms of the curriculum that is required of the students, that the students continue to be required to both perform and excel in the classroom. So that's my hope, that that will not change, for one thing.

On the other hand, we're moving in some really interesting new directions now. And I think there are some really positive changes taking place. Much more movement toward multiculturalism, and not only in terms of the faculty members themselves, but in terms of the topics that are studied, the topics of seminars, the lectures for our colloquium series. And both the PhD and the DMA have helped that trend because one of the tracks of the DMA is in world music composition, which involves using musics from other cultures mixed with Western culture in terms of compositional style; and also the PhD, of course, is founded on cultural musicology. So that has led to the hiring on our faculty of more ethnomusicologists. I applaud that trend. But interestingly, the ethnomusicologists are also really well grounded in Western music, so that they have both. Did I talk to you about some of those new people?

Reti: A bit.

Miller: So, for example, there is Tanya Merchant, who works in Uzbekistani music but also plays the bassoon. And has a degree from a major conservatory,

Curtis, in bassoon. And then there is our latest hire, Nicol Hammond, who works in South African music and in popular music but also has done choral directing. So we're bringing these people in who are multivalent, in some sense. They are interested in a variety of areas. I think this breadth is really crucial and I hope it continues with new hires. We have people who are crossing over between the two programs as well, such as Ben Carson, who has a degree in composition, but is working in musical perception and often teaches courses in the PhD program. So this kind of collaboration and this kind of crossing of sub-disciplines I think is very important. I think it's characteristic of UCSC and the spirit of UCSC and I'm really hoping that that will continue.

Another thing, if the department can forge more relationships with other departments outside of the arts division, I think that that would be an area to explore. There have been some preliminary ideas batted around but it's not easy to do. There's been talk between music and engineering, for example, because the engineering school started this gaming program. And games have to have music. And some graduates from music schools are writing music for games, which is good employment for them. And actually that program requires the students to take courses in the arts.

John Schechter retired and he had a specialty in Latin American music. There is such a large Chicano-Latino population here on campus. I would like to see another Latin American scholar hired. We've had such cutbacks in positions that we haven't been able to fill some of the holes, but I do believe that the department has placed a very high priority on a scholar of Latin American music

as an upcoming hire, and I would like to see if we can hire somebody there and then forge relationships with Latino and Latin American Studies (LALS) and the social sciences. I think these cross-departmental alliances could be extremely valuable.

I think there is a movement in these directions but there's also a lot of inertia. It's really hard to get these kinds of programs going. But my hope would be that we look at the possibilities and we explore the uniqueness of Santa Cruz. It's fine with me that we got out of narrative evaluations, which were so time consuming. But I don't want us to become just like everybody else. Let's highlight our multicultural heritage, maintain our openness to different points of view, and enhance our historical commitment to pluralism.

Reti: Well, thank you so much, Leta. Is there anything else you want to talk about?

Miller: No, Irene. This has just been fantastic. I'm so honored to have been one of the people interviewed and I hope I've contributed something that might be useful to somebody. (laughs)

Reti: I'm sure you have. I really want to thank you for all you've put into this.

Miller: Well, thank you for doing this. It's a great project.