

**Oral History Interview of
Robert Deahl**

**Interviewed by: Leslie Dutton
June 16, 2000
Lubbock, Texas**

Part of the:
Leslie Dutton Fine Arts Interview Series

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Robert Deahl as he discusses his career in the music industry. In this interview, Deahl explains his background in music and his journey to becoming a music instructor. Deahl describes enlisting in the air force and playing for the air force band, and then he moves on recount teaching the trombone abroad in Germany.

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Leslie Dutton (LD):

This interview is with Robert Deahl to Leslie Dutton in his home on 25th Street in Lubbock, Texas, on June 16, 2000. Mr. Deahl, thank you so much for doing this interview. And I know that you are retired faculty of Texas Tech, and were a wonderful trombone teacher, and knew lots of other wonderful teachers, one of which I studied with just briefly, and that's Neill Humfeld. And understand that Gene Hemmle hired you. Is that correct?

Robert Deahl (RD):

Yes. Yes, that's right.

LD:

And so what I—I kind of wondered is how did you start in music, and then how especially trombone? What is your background leading up into that?

RD:

Oh boy. First of all I hope lightning doesn't strike thanks to your kind words, but—all right, how I started. One of these enterprising music companies came around when I believe I was in about the eighth grade. And the plan was for forty dollars you could have six or eight weeks of music lessons, and they would lend you a horn. At the end of the time you could buy the instrument if you wanted to.

LD:

Oh wow. Uh-huh.

RD:

And I really wanted to study the French Horn, but French Horns were about 250 dollars and trombones were forty dollars. So that's why I selected the trombone.

LD:

Well where was this?

RD:

This was in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where I was born and raised. And I went on and played the trombone of course in high school. I was lucky to find a wonderful teacher, if I can remember his name. Octavia Ferrara.

LD:

Wow.

RD:

And he had played, I believe, in Toscanini's orchestra. And Neal Di Biase, Toscanini's principal trombonist, was Ferrara's student, and Ferrara somehow came to Pittsburgh and taught at Carnegie Tech in the music department there—it was probably the best music—university music department in Pittsburgh, and it's now Carnegie Mellon University. And all three of the people who were playing trombone in the Pittsburgh Symphony also studied with Ferrara. And so, that was—

LD:

That's fantastic.

RD:

Just good luck, with an absolutely wonderful teacher—the only trouble was he smoked while I was having trombone lessons, and you could hardly see the music from the smoke. Anyway, in high school went on with the typical band and orchestra things, and trombone was my instrument. Also studied a little bit of piano with my mother who was a piano teacher, but you know how it is, sometimes studying with a parent, I learned more piano I suppose when I went off to college and did a piano minor. In high school, the band director, actually it was the band and orchestra director, was drafted in World War II. And I had done some student conducting—he had all the students conduct, and I sort of took to it I guess, and anyway the replacement that they got for him was a very nice man. He was a good piano player, but not the world's best conductor. And actually he was hired as an English teacher, but because he had some musical experience, and they were kind of desperate—

LD:

Um-hm, they said—

RD:

—during those years, he agreed to do the band and orchestra, and then eventually just the band. And a young woman came in and took over the orchestra. But during the year that Mr. Lucky was the instructor, I did a great deal of the conducting, because it seemed to work well. And actually, he kept the band even after the woman came in for orchestra, and I did the concert numbers with the band and another fellow, Bob Brandon, who unfortunately was killed in World War II, I believe. Anyways he's on the in memorium list of my classmates, and he did the marching band. So it's pretty much—

LD:

That's fantastic.

RD:

—under those kind of circumstances a student-run thing. So, music became more and more important in my life. I have to explain that all the male members of my family are engineers, my father and uncles. My brother is—actually has his doctorate in nuclear physics, but he never worked in nuclear matters at all, mostly as a mathematician and engineering, did wonderful things like moonshots and underground nuclear blast detection, which he was head of for a while, works for IBM. But when it came time to graduate, I was only sixteen years old. My father gave me the best advice probably that he ever gave, he said, “Why don’t you work a year before you go to college?” So I found a job with International Harvester Company, played once in a while in a Sunday School Orchestra and also there was a band—I forget where they were based, but the band played things like picnics for the J&L steelworkers, and this is one of the most unforgettable experiences of my life. They asked if I would come and play trombone—they needed a trombonist for the concert, so I went. And of course you have to remember that Pittsburgh was the steel capital of the world. There were twenty-three major ethnic groups in Pittsburgh. Race was less of a problem than it is now. People got along. Pittsburgh was proud of its diversity—we were head of the Czech underground movement, for example. But anyway, here we were, playing at the J&L Steelworker’s picnic. And some of the numbers were big potpourris of Italian opera—Verdi, Puccini and so forth. You can’t believe it. There were somewhere between fifty and one hundred steelworkers standing around the band singing all the arias as we played them. Steelworkers, Italian steelworkers, they knew all these arias. And so forth.

LD:

Wow, that’s an incredible education.

RD:

It was—I’ll never forget it.

LD:

And now I don’t think you could find that hardly anywhere.

RD:

No I don’t think you could. Even in Europe, I don’t think you’d find it now. Okay. Came graduation time, I worked, decided it was time to start making some applications to colleges, and I applied for, oh I don’t know, five or six. Most of them were engineering, and one of them was music, and that was Oberlin Conservatory. And kind of a flukey thing—I had asked for an application card, or application form, and a catalog, and I didn’t get the application form, I just got the catalog. And there was a postcard in the catalog that you had to fill out and send in if you wanted an application form. So I wrote a nasty letter and said, “Hey, I already asked you for an application form.” I got an air mail special delivery letter back from, you know it’s only one

hundred and forty miles away, probably would have come faster by snail mail than air mail. Anyway could I come for an audition, which I did, and I was accepted. And went to Oberlin.

LD:

When was this?

RD:

That would be 1946. I graduated from high school in '45, worked for the year and began Oberlin in '46. Graduated in '50 with my bachelors. So that's how I became a music major and trombone was my instrument.

LD:

How was conservatory life during that time?

RD:

Well, that's an interesting question because it immediately brings up whether it's a question or not a question. Oberlin Conservatory is a part of Oberlin College. And also that there was a nondenominational theological seminary there while I was a student there that's now been discontinued. But the conservatory and the college being on the same campus is just a wonderful happenstance.

LD:

Richard Miller is there now.

RD:

Yes. If he's still there.

LD:

Oh, yeah, I don't know.

RD:

I'm not sure he is, but yes, he was—he teaches. There seem to be some people who agitated for a separate student government for the conservatory because they felt like they were being left out of the college student committees and they call it student council, I guess it was that sort of thing. So actually they did have a conservatory council. I didn't take that viewpoint. I went out for track and cross country the first couple years I was there and eventually got so busy I had to give it up. But I had enough contact with students, all men of course, who were on the track and cross country teams, that I didn't feel that I was—

LD:

Left out of anything.

RD:

Left out of anything at all. And of course you take courses in the college. And the dining hall situation then, the men went to the women's dorms for breakfast, lunch and supper. And at supper you dressed up and if you didn't have a coat and tie on you might not eat supper that night.

LD:

How about that.

RD:

So you were in constant touch with more than a hundred people in each dining hall, and you didn't always sit at the same table, you weren't assigned seats or anything so you made friends with those people where you ate, you made friends in the dormitory. I didn't see any split at all between the conservatory and the college. Most of my friends were in the college, not in the conservatory.

LD:

And do you actually have a degree or do you have an artist's diploma?

RD:

No, I have a Bachelor of Music and a Master of Music from the—it is Oberlin College, and it's Oberlin College Conservatory. So it's one institution.

DL

Okay.

RD:

The difference is that the college kids go to the library after supper and study until the library closes at twelve o'clock. The conservatory kids go to the conservatory and go and get in a practice room. Because you spent anywhere from two to four hours a day, sometimes more, seldom less, unless you had classes all day or were out of town on a trip or something. You need that much time in a practice room. And we did it. I say that's the main difference.

LD:

Yeah.

RD:

otherwise, it was just a matter of spending more time in one building than in another and working on your instrument instead of studying the books or hitting the books.

LD:

But you still had to hit the books.

RD:

For the courses, yes, for the coursework. And I did a music history minor, and the music history minor involves a European history course, and I was lucky to have a course with Frederick Binkerd Artz, who wrote *The Mind of the Middle Ages* and *From the Renaissance to Romanticism*. And he was marvelous teacher—I could teach from the notes I took in his class, just wonderful, so that was a great experience. And I studied plenty for that, although I did find out that the best way to study for his classes was not to study the book, which I did for the first one and only got a B on the test, but to memorize his notes and feed him back his material. And in a way I don't particularly agree with that but in another way, his material was so good that it was not a bad process. And the only thing is maybe you don't retain things as well if you just cram for the exam and you have sort of a photographic process, memory process that is, but to spit out the answer, and I think you tend to forget it after that.

LD:

Easy come, easy go.

RD:

But anyway, that was great. And an art course was required, and of course that's a college course. And a language course, and I chose German. And I think a couple other courses. Oh yes, a year of English was required for all conservatory students, but a second year of English or you could substitute a literature course was required on the music history minor, and I took a classics in translation course with Charles Murphy and—oh gosh there were three teachers who team-taught the course, and that also was a very exciting course, and all three of the guys are very well known. Schlesinger was one, and Murphy, Charles Murphy, and the other one was Murray, who had—I'm not sure it's Gilbert Murray but it's someone who—he left Oberlin shortly after I did and has developed quite a reputation. I'm sure they're all retired now, but I mean they were all very respected professors, and I'm glad I did the music history minor because I was exposed to those wonderful college courses.

LD:

I'll bet. Is that not a typical thing for the conservatory student?

RD:

There were not very many music history minors. Music history's one of those things that it's like a certain phase of the market I guess. Sometimes you're desperate—a school is desperate to find a music history teacher because there aren't any music history people. I'm talking back in the fifties now, forties and fifties. But then all of a sudden there was a plethora of people with PhD's in music history and they were selling used cars and things like that, so you know, it's feast or famine it seems like.

LD:

And it seems like now we're experiencing a shortage of musicologists.

RD:

I'm not surprised. I'm kind of out of touch but that wouldn't surprise me. It just seems to be something that fluctuated as one form or the other. Okay, now you asked me the differences between, and I don't know if I answered that, but—

LD:

Well, I—

RD:

I can't think of much else. It's just a matter of emphasis I think.

LD:

Yeah. Okay.

RD:

And there was that social aspect to it, which never bothered me.

LD:

Well let me ask you something else, and this is just a personal interest, because I love sports, and I love music. And I've seen a comparison between preparing for a sports event and preparing for a musical events, because I see them both as performances. Can you think of anything in comparison between preparing for a track race and preparing for a trombone recital?

RD:

I think that's an interesting question, and yes, absolutely. It's a matter of training. A great deal of music is physical memory, and training the small muscles and so forth, and then all of the—whatever the neural process is in addition to the muscles. And it's been many years ago, but at the time it was kind of pioneer, but there was a psychiatrist who has written a couple of books, and his daughter started studying piano, and after studying for four or five years she was playing

Chopin etudes and things like that. And the psychiatrist looked at his daughter and said, “How in the world can she move her fingers like that?” And he was fascinated with the idea. So he started studying piano himself, and he started doing things like, oh, measuring the temperature of the things in your head. And I don’t think they were X-Rays but some sort of pictures—this is long before MRIs and things like that. But anyway he was literally getting pictures and collecting data on what was going through people’s heads, their brains and portions of their brains, in the musical process. And he also came up with the conclusion that up to a point you trained your fingers and your conception of the piece, all the aspects of the musical composition, and then when you went to play it, you triggered—you pulled the trigger, as it were, that released the mechanism, and your fingers did it. Because he proved that there is no way that any normal person, at least, can read all the notes of a fast moving Chopin etude. You just can’t make that connection between your eye and your fingers, it’s not possible. And yet people play those things all the time. And he compared it to the place kicker in football. And he said, you know, the ball is there this, guy has trained, really emphasized that aspect of his athleticism, and that up to the point where he approaches the ball, his foot goes back and at the moment his foot starts to come forward, it’s out of control. It’s everything you’ve done up to that point. And comparing that very much to the musician being able to play the fast notes. So yeah, I think there’s a good similarity.

LD:

What about mental preparation?

RD:

Oh I don’t know.

LD:

You think about that recital, and backstage when preparing.

RD:

I know there’s been an awful lot of talk about that, and I think one of our teachers here, Mr. Westney, has does a lot of things in that, and I’ve read some of the things that is—*The Inner Game of Tennis* or something like that?

LD:

Yes. And then *The Inner Game of Music*.

RD:

But to tell you the truth I really never was very much involved with that. It’s okay if you feel like you need it. And maybe I needed it too, but it was something I just didn’t bother with I guess.

LD:

Well I thought maybe you had that comparison already because of running track and playing an instrument, both of them physical.

RD:

I never consciously made the connection. It was afterwards that somebody pointed out the similarities to me. And I know all those things exist but—and fine, if that helps people overcome problems or stage fright or whatever, that's fine. I just think the way I did it was to learn the music analytically as well as photographically probably, and of course the muscle memory, and then just hope everything went well. Of course the exasperating thing is that all the things you had trouble with in the practice room went just fine and something that was no problem at all is the thing that goes wrong on the performance of it.

LD:

Yes, yes.

RD:

I'm not alone in that regard, I think, among performers.

LD:

Oh, no. Well this is really interesting. Do you remember who the psychiatrist was?

RD:

I'm sorry, I don't. It was in California. But I'm sure you can find his work—it's very well known.

LD:

Okay. I think I'll have to look for that.

RD:

Okay. Well when I got out of college—go back to the trombone—I was just young enough out of high school that I could not join the service of as many of my senior classmates did join the service, they were eighteen and they enlisted. And so I had college deferments all through college. But I also had a very nice draft board, and after I finished my master's degree, and having had deferments for those six years, they said, "Well if you want to select your branch of service do it now, because you're going to be drafted next month." So I enlisted in the air force. And kind of a funny story about the air force—at that time it was twelve weeks of basic training, fairly rigorous, understand it's three now, and has been for several years. But anyway, you take a whole battery of tests—aptitude and skills and ability. Tests, as you know, psychological and I don't know what all else. Anyway, you go through four or five days of intensive testing. And

finally a few days later you get to meet with a psychologist or an expert in what you call the people who read your profile as a result of all those examinations. And I thought, having always had to struggle, should I have been an engineer like all my male relatives, or did I really do the right thing by going into music and being the black sheep of the family? I said, Now I'm finally going to find out. So I went and I sat down at the desk as the young psychologist asked me to do. And he was a young fellow, probably not too long after his doctorate out of college. And he looked at me and he said, "What's it going to be?" And I said, "I thought that's what you were going to tell me." And he said, "You're profiles are all straight across. Aptitude in, you know, you can name what you want to do." So I said, "Well I guess it'll be music." So I was assigned to the band school after basic training, and well, I was still in basic training as a matter of fact when I went down to audition at the band school and was accepted. The commander of the band school said, "By the way, do you sing?" I said, "Yes, I'm a tenor," and he said, "Would you like to be in the Sampsonaires?" This was the Sampson Air Force Base.

LD:

Oh wow.

RD:

So from that time on at least once or twice a week I'd get a little notice from the commander of the band school to get off the firing range and get over to the band school, the Sampsonaires were rehearsing or were going for a TV appearance or something like that.

LD:

That's incredible.

RD:

And made several of those while I was still in basic training, and then after basic when I reported to the band school, they said, "oh, by the way you're not going to be a student at the band school, you're going to be an instructor at the band school."

LD:

How about that.

RD:

And I did that for less than six months I guess, and a band, the so-called priority band that was going to go to France. There were no air force bands in France—came to the band school to rehearse. A trombonist dropped out of that band and the director of that band asked me if I would take his place, and for some reason I said yes.

LD:

So you ended up going to France?

RD:

So I ended up going to France. We were on the troop ship, docked at Bremen. Woke up about five o'clock in the morning, went up on deck and here was this huge sign that said, "Trink Coca-Cola Eis Kalt," and I thought, Oh my gosh, they got lost at sea and we're back in New Jersey Harbor, Brooklyn Navy Yard or whatever it was we sailed from. But the cognate were just so close—"Trink Coca-Cola Eis Kalt" you know. It was funny. Anyway we had to muster on deck about six thirty or seven o'clock in the morning. Then we would line up the band people to go to the five eighty-third air force band, and somebody came on board yelling for Herrman [?]

[00:23:10] Deahl. I wasn't going to France, I was going to go on tour with the Washington D.C. Air Force Band. So we rehearsed for a couple of days in Wiesbaden, and then made tours in the summer of 1953 and '54. And I was lucky—I was playing first trombone. Not first chair but I was second chair first trombone, two on a part—with Nick Rossi, a very well-known trombonist. And after he was a career man in the service, but he became principal trombone of the San Antonio Symphony for several of years, he's now retired. And we did ninety concerts in about ninety days, and in 1953 was eighteen countries and in 1954 was twenty countries.

LD:

Where all did you go?

RD:

Well, most of the European countries, and not behind the iron curtain. And then down to Greece, and Libya. Let's see—Lebanon, Egypt and then to Libya. And then we were supposed to play in—is it Algeria? Rabat, I think that's Algeria. Anyway that was cancelled because of the riots and things like that, so we didn't play there, we went on to French Morocco, to—oh this was a big city. Famous city. There was an air force base there nearby. Oh golly, memory. Anyway, it was a very interesting experience.

LD:

Can you recall anything that made those times memorable? Was it the music?

RD:

Only that I never would have been able to see all of those places. And of course we did a lot of traveling, and we'd often get into a place and there would be an hour or two before we'd have to go for the concert. A few places we stayed more than one day, and on those days three or four of us would go out and we'd lease a Taxi and spend three or four hours. We did Rome that way.

LD:

Oh, that's incredible.

RD:

And you know, and the taxi drivers were very happy, at that time there were far fewer tourists than there are these days of course. And so they were happy to have a fare, and they would make a good price to take you around to all the—not all, but many of the major sites in Rome, and wait while you went into Saint Peter's and so forth. Didn't do the museums that way, but you know, just the principal sites, the fountains and different districts of the city, things like that. And we were able to do that in three or four cities I guess. And there's no way I could ever have afforded to have been and to see as much as I did see in as many different countries as the Air Force made it possible for me to do. And so that was probably the most exciting. I suppose you ask about the performance, and I think probably the extraordinary thing was to realize that you were playing sometimes for ninety or one hundred thousand people. And Colonel Howard, I give him full credit, a politician, maybe not the world's greatest conductor but a just fabulous politician. In France we played all excerpts from French operas and French marches—*Père de la Victoire* and *Defile* and things like National *Defile* March. In Germany, we played Wagner transcriptions, and in Italy we played transcriptions from Italian opera and Italian overtures. Not completely, but he slanted the music, and he had the people in the palm of his hands. Also sang with the Singing Sergeants, who were on tour with the Air Force Band—that's probably why I got to go, because I could sing as well as play. And it was just incredible—you'd be sitting on the stage and you knew there was an audience out there but you couldn't really see it, then then we'd stand up to the Singing Sergeants and you look out and it was a sea of people as far as you could see. It was incredible.

LD:

Were they in chairs, or were they just standing?

RD:

There were lots of chairs but a lot were standing. And one of the interesting places was outside—I want to say Heidelberg and I hope I'm right but I'm not sure that I am, but it was in southern Germany someplace. And it was an amphitheater that Hitler had built for his Hitler Jugend. And it was modeled very much after the old Greek amphitheater idea with the stage front and center and down low. And I think there were some sixty, seventy thousand seats, and it was packed. And it was up at the top of a hill outside of town, and we went up by bus. But there were thousands of people—

LD:

Just walking.

RD:

Walking up that road. The place was packed, and they loved it.

LD:

So you played mainly for nationals?

RD:

Oh yes.

LD:

Instead of for service people?

RD:

Oh no, we weren't playing for service people at all. We were playing for the nationals in the country. Mostly in countries where there were American service men, and places where there had been hard feelings between the occupying service groups, you know, and the nationals that just disappeared. It was just incredible.

LD:

So it really was an ___ [?] [00:28:24] thing

RD:

And you know I think the tour cost something like a million dollars, which is about what a fighter plane cost back in those days, it costs much more than that now, but it was a million dollars well-spent in what it did for relations.

LD:

Relations.

RD:

Yes, between the people. We played in Olympic Stadium in Berlin, where—was it Jessie Owens, the American Black fellow who won the race? That was interesting because the Air Force Band had played there a few years before this, and Colonel Howard had come down into the stadium on a helicopter. And the Russians didn't like that, so helicopters were banned over all of Berlin. So that time we went off on stage and the assistant conductor I think conducted the air force march, I believe it was. And Colonel Hart came in on the back of a convertible, cape flying in the wind and made a circuit around the ___ [?] [00:29:27]

LD:

Oh gosh [laughter]

RD:

Up to the stage, and then the real concert began. It was interesting. And several of the concerts were broadcast by radio as well. And that is a—the Air Force Band was just phenomenal organization, I mean it's on par with a major symphony orchestra. The musicians are that good and they're probably even better today than they were then. In fact there were several people who had been in Stokowski's Philadelphia Orchestra playing in the Air Force Band because Stokowski had just recently retired from that. Yeah, a little over ten years before that he had retired from Philadelphia. And those musicians I guess didn't like Ormandy, or maybe Ormandy didn't like them. Anyway they wound up in several of the service bands, and it must have been at least half a dozen of them in the Air Force Band at that time. Wonderful people to be associated with off the stage as well as on stage. And so that was more confirmation of music, I mean I was in the music rut I guess, there was no escaping it by this point. And then, as my service time ended, I started writing for jobs. And I couldn't find any nibbles in university teaching, which I was aiming for, at all. And so somebody at Oberlin said, "Why don't you come back and get a music education degree and you can probably name the location that you want to teach in because there's a crying need for public school music teachers." And that's what I did, I went back to Oberlin to get a music education degree. And I believe about the first of October—anyway school hadn't been in session but a few weeks, I got a call from the director of the Conservatory, could I come down and talk to him after supper, and I did, and he explained how a theory teacher had something akin to a nervous breakdown and could I take his classes just until Thanksgiving break. Well of course then it was until Christmas break, and then it was to the end of the semester and this was back when the semester always went through Christmas and into sometime late January. And then it was the rest of the year. [Tape is flipped]

LD:

Just a second.

RD:

And then the following year, the trombone teacher went on a sabbatical leave, and I was asked if I would take the trombone studio for one semester, which I did. And when he came back, Tom Cramer was his name, just wonderful teacher, and a wonderful guy, and he said, "Why don't we just divide the trombone studio? Because I have theory course,—” I guess Cramer had a theory course that he was teaching and in fact I read papers for him in theory. And he said, "We'll just ask the kids." And it was split about fifty-fifty, about 50 percent of the students went back to Cramer and 50 percent elected to stay with me, and we each had a theory course to teach, so it was a full teaching load.

LD:

And this was at Oberlin?

RD:

And this was at Oberlin. And at the end of that year it seemed like everybody who was sick got well and the ones that were off on sabbatical had come back, and I was without a job.

LD:

Oh, no.

RD:

And I thought that I had applications out, and signed up with the __ [?] [00:32:51], the music—I don't know if they're still in business but it was a music teacher, an organization which tries to fit—an agency, teachers agency. And I guess I got the notices mostly through them. But sometime in early summer of 1958 I received three, well, job notices and filled out the applications and all three wanted me. And I chose Texas Tech because it paid two hundred dollars more than the next best offer.

LD:

So that's really how you got to Tech.

RD:

That's how I got to Texas Tech in 1958.

LD:

Wow. And that's—I think Gene Kenney came in '57, so just a year before.

RD:

Yes, Kenney was here, yes.

LD:

Wow, and so you came about the same time. Two hundred dollars more.

RD:

Yeah, forty-two hundred instead of four thousand even.

LD:

And it wasn't for—you know Gene Hemmle's personality or—

RD:

I didn't even meet anybody until I got to campus. I was hired through the mail and telephone.

LD:

Really.

RD:

Yes. And of course my credentials and things like that, the usual things were sent in, and I guess they liked them. It was also only a one year appointment.

LD:

Oh.

RD:

I filled in for Mr. Taylor, who had been the brass teacher. But Mr. Taylor advised them that he was not coming back sometime during that year and I was asked to stay on. However, I didn't, because Oberlin Conservatory called up and said, "Hey, we have a good junior year in Salzburg program, and would you come up to Oberlin and talk about it?" So you know I would have taken the job on the telephone on that spot, but I did fly up to Oberlin and I spent the day with David Robertson who had conceived the program—it was probably one of the best junior year abroad programs ever conceived. And would I take it on as director of the Salzburg division of Oberlin College Conservatory. And I did that for five years, until the program ended.

LD:

So are you fluent in German?

RD:

I wouldn't say fluent, but I had had two years of college German and I could get by. And I'd been in Europe for three years with the Air Force. So about the third year of the program I decided we would speak German, the faculty and the administrators of the Mozarteum would speak German rather than English. For the first two years they struggled with my bad German and we spoke mostly English. But about the third year I was able to communicate in German probably more effective than they were—

LD:

In English.

RD:

Yeah.

LD:

Oh that's incredible. How was it to live over there?

RD:

It's like living in a fairy tale. Salzburg is one of the most beautiful little cities in the world. I have to qualify that—I hadn't been back to Salzburg since 1964 until 1993 I guess it was. The city was under one hundred thousand people when I was working there—it's three hundred and fifty thousand now, and that's too bad.

LD:

Crowded.

RD:

A lot of people, they've maintained the downtown, the old city section of Salzburg very well, no note of mobile traffic. So it's pedestrian, and of course, all the wonderful buildings that are still there, it's still surrounded by those beautiful mountains. It's a fairytale place. But working there, having from eighty-two, I think, in the smallest class to one hundred and thirty-five in the largest class, that's a lot of college kids to look after and to keep out of mischief, and I had to bail one out of jail once in a while. Not very often, but once or twice. And of course I was teaching a course in music theory the way it's taught in this country, which we call integrated theory, where the sight singing and the keyboard ear training skills are incorporated with the writing skills—they don't do it that way in Europe. So because a lot of music students come and don't start with the normal freshman year theory they have to take a remedial theory course first, so they get off sequence. Well, with the junior year abroad and if you're a year behind in theory, when you go back to your senior year there isn't room to get everything in that year, so what they did was the only American course taught there was the theory course, which was sophomore theory, sophomore year theory, which I taught there. So that's a five hour course, five times a week of course, of preparation and papers to grade and all the rest in addition to all the administrative work. The administrative work involved the arrangements, getting the students there, meeting them in New York, being more or less chaperone, and I have to say I had a wonderful assistant, Amy Miller and a couple of student assistants who were very important and—well, the organization which had been set up before I took the program on, it had been set up during the first year, was just excellent. And the Mozarteum faculty were wonderful, administrators and so forth, it was great. In fact I think Oberlin got a pretty good reputation in Salzburg. There might have been a little reluctance, acceptance at first, but I think the students were appreciated and the students certainly appreciated being there. So that's what I did for the next five years. And you asked me about living there—on those rare occasions when I had maybe two hours that I could steal in the middle of the day, and I have to say that two hours for lunch is normal in almost every European country. One of the wonderful things was to get on the bus, which went up—the Gaisberg, one of the mountains closest to the city and overlooking it of course. And all the busses had ski racks in the wintertime, so you put your skis on the rack in the back of the bus, you ride up to the Zistelalm or restaurant about three fourths of the way up the mountain, you have lunch there, and then you ski down the mountain. And when you come out at the bottom of

the Gaisberg you are at the in station of one of the city buses, the one that happened to go right past my office. So I did that probably half a dozen times and I can't imagine a nicer way to spend lunch.

LD:

Oh yeah.

RD:

It was great [laughter]. And in the fall you know the leaves turn, and on the mountains. It's just wonderful. One year I lived in an apartment, which was on Fichetenweg, and it was the third house from the top of the street. And it had a balcony on the front of the house as alpine, chalet type houses are likely to do, and I could sit out there in my shirtsleeves with two or three feet of snow on the ground. But almost more interesting than that was that many times I would be above the layer of haze and fog over the city, and I could look across and just see the mountaintops coming up through the fog from the balcony.

LD:

That's incredible.

RD:

It's just beautiful, it really is beautiful. And there's just no denying Salzburg is a beautiful place, it's a very cultural place. The symphony orchestra, city symphony called the Mozarteum Orchestra, that is the professional orchestra, the Mozartum Academy also, and Mozart—I mean Salzburg is the Mozart city.

LD:

Right.

RD:

His ___ [?] [00:40:53] house is there, ___ [?] [00:40:54] house. But the orchestra had I believe a series of either thirty or thirty-six concerts in their annual series.

LD:

Wow.

RD:

And Zubin Mehta happened to be the conductor there for about three of the five years I was there. And one year they did all the Bruckner symphonies. At that time no American orchestra, well they were hardly playing Bruckner symphonies at all, let alone all of them, so I was fortunate to hear all the Bruckner symphonies one year with all the augmentation in the orchestra

with all the Wagner tubas and extra horns and things like that that they entail. We made trips off to Vienna, had tickets to the opera, were guests of the ministry of education. We made fine arts tours to Italy for about two weeks at spring break. The string students got to go to Cremona and to Mittenwald, the German—and Italian—the center for the German school of violin makers, and the Italian. Of course, Amati and Stradivarius and—

LD:
Right.

RD:
Guarneri and so forth. In Cremona, went to their museums and workshops and both of the cities, still, they're both active. The organ students got to do a fine tour of the organs in the Netherlands and especially North Germany and some of the Silbermann organs, and one that even J.S. Bach played on in one of his churches, and also eastern France, which of course is more German than French almost, with Alsace-Lorraine. But the very classic instruments, and of course the Bavokerk, the huge instrument with those thirty-two foot high pipes exposed. It was a terrific experience for the students, and I managed to go on all the tours at least once. I arranged, you know, professional guides of course, and musicologists. In fact, the fellow, Vente is his name *Die Braubanter Orgel*, and he was curator of instruments at Utrecht in the Netherlands. He was the director, he was an organist himself and he was the director for the organ tour.

LD:
That's incredible.

RD:
And he had—I got to after we went on the tour I went, I guess it was the last year that I went, but we became very good friends through association like that on the tour.

LD:
Do you still keep in touch with any of these people?

RD:
No, I'm sorry to say I don't. First of all, I was fairly young and many of the people are not even alive anymore, but they're all retired. Martin Vente is retired, I'm not sure if he's still living or not, I doubt that he is, he'd be about a hundred years old if he were. But when I was back to the Mozarteum in 1993, I went to the school and there was not one single faculty member or even a staff person, and the secretaries were mostly relatively young ladies, not a single name on the roster that I knew, or who had been there in the early sixties. It's just amazing.

LD:

Well that's—

RD:

And of course the Mozarteum is a little bit like the University of Indiana that in addition to the faculty who do the core academic side of music courses they also tend to attract very fine performers. So the vocal faculty were all retired, or I won't say all, but mostly retired operatic singers. The woman, Frau Ursuleac, for whom Ricard Strauss wrote many of his roles, taught there. Absolutely wonderful lady. Very genteel lady, and you know, she didn't perform anymore but she would sing a few notes and it was just glorious. But you know, such a gracious person. And Max Lorenz, the tenor. Yeah, pianist Winfried Wolf was internationally known concert artist, and he was there, and loved some of his Oberlin students and pointed out that they had really incredible talent and he could spot them well because those kids that had done well subsequently. People like that.

LD:

That must have been just incredible.

RD:

It was a great experience. And living in Salzburg, it was almost an unreal sort of existence in one manner of looking at it. A small town like that with I don't know how many fine restaurants. You know, Lubbock was much better, or bigger, and it didn't have anything but steakhouses in the early years, but we've done better in more recent years. But it's a city geared toward tourism, steeped in tradition, wonderful old buildings, which they all have electricity and heat and so forth now. But the castle on the hill—they said about Salzburg if we didn't have a castle we'd have to build one, obviously. So it was, like I think I said, living in a fairy tale almost. Because it is so beautiful, and the lifestyle so different. Not completely relaxed, as you might think—it's not.

LD:

Oh I think it'd be very busy.

RD:

There's hustle and bustle, and of course the students are working, and the faculty are just as busy there as they are at Oberlin or Texas Tech or any university I'm sure. But a delightful place to be.

LD:

Cannot imagine the experiences that students would have from studying over there with such fine people.

RD:

Well it's interesting because there was a lot of controversy. A lot of the Oberlin faculty thought the students weren't getting as good an education in Salzburg as they were at Oberlin.

LD:

Really? Uh-huh.

RD:

And a lot of the faculty were afraid maybe they were getting a better education in Salzburg so that's—I think those two reasons are the main reasons it was voted out of existence after these six years. Of course when you're figuring a junior year abroad that frees up approximately a hundred beds for that year, so then Oberlin could have a hundred more freshman students, could admit that many more students. And when you phase a program out—

LD:

Then you hit a limit.

RD:

You have the same problem in reverse. So we knew it was complete at the end of the fourth year it was voted out so we did the fourth, fifth and sixth years. Also a program that complex I think takes a while for the host institution, the Mozarteum, to adapt with the one hundred extra students they had to hire some new teachers and things like that. And of course the coursework that was done over there had to fit into the NASM, that's National Association of Schools of Music in the United States, accepted guidelines. And so there was some adapting that they had to do to meet the requirements for the Oberlin students. And we had to hire or find a history teacher and he was, we got him [?] [00:48:33] from the Mittelschule, which is the university prep system in Germany and Austria. And he taught European history, and when he got into the modern aspect of it, of course the interaction with the United States began with World War I, and even the revolutionary wars and so forth. And it's interesting to have American history, I mean to see American aspects of American history taught from European textbooks, especially English textbooks. You get a little different slant on things than when you're studying in your own country.

LD:

Maybe we need to have an interview just about that.

RD:

I can't tell you much more than that.

LD:

Oh, too bad.

RD:

Except that I appreciated professor Hoffer very much, and I read some of the textbooks—the British textbooks that he used for the class. And the slant was just a little different.

LD:

Why British instead of—

RD:

Well it was written in English.

LD:

Oh, okay.

RD:

Yeah I think a textbook in German would have been—

LD:

A little much?

RD:

A little much, yeah. Conversational German is quite different from academic German. Any language.

LD:

Yes. Because I—

RD:

Okay, so now that's Salzburg.

LD:

I think about Bukofzer and trying to read through his baroque history book.

RD:

Oh, Bukofzer was nothing beside—oh was, Reese, what was his first name? The Reese, the *Music of the Middle Ages*. Gustav Reese, that one that was hard to read.

LD:

We just complained and complained, and do you know I go back to that book about two or three times a week. So—

RD:

That's a good book.

LD:

I love it. Was there any talk about having students from the Mozarteum go to Oberlin?

RD:

Yes there was, and I think it was only the last year that the Oberlin kids I think actually raised enough money to pay his transportation to America, and I think Oberlin provided the academic scholarship for him. Because the Mozarteum is a state school, so the Austrian students pay almost no tuition. Now as foreign students, we paid considerably more, and we also paid more than that because we knew that additional teachers, faculty members, would have to be hired. And we also purchased two pipe organs for practice while we were over there, and fifteen grand pianos for our students to practice on. So you know, it was not a—

LD:

With the organs, where were they housed? Were they for practice rooms?

RD:

They were for practice rooms, yes.

LD:

So maybe two rank, or—

RD:

No, they were about eight or nine rank instruments, and they were both neoclassic design, all tracker, and they were built in Austria by Rieger Orgelbau which was originally from Czechoslovakia. And after the war Johann von Glatter-Götz was his name, and he smuggled about half a dozen of his principal organ builders out of Czechoslovakia, he smuggled his parents out, and you were able to take machinery out of a country and bring it into a country if it was not operable. So he broke a few things that were easily replaceable on some of the tools and machinery and carted it across the border with not trouble and set up shop I believe in Feldkirch, and he was somewhere in the Vorarlberg of western Austria. And he has built many instruments in this country, including a couple in Lubbock Texas, as a matter of fact.

LD:

Oh really?

RD:

Yeah.

LD:

Do you know which ones?

RD:

I take that back. He associated with Otto Hoffman—

LD:

Oh, okay.

RD:

From Austin and there were a couple of Hoffman instruments here in Lubbock. But yeah, Von von Glatter-Götz has—if the name is Rieger, it's his instrument, up until about ten or fifteen years ago. One of the most fascinating was not quite in the United States, it was in Haiti, but because of the humidity and the bus problem, especially termites, it had to be made out of such woods as ebony and things like that that termites don't bother.

LD

Um-hm. Oh wow.

RD:

And I don't know, it was just fascinating being associated with von Glatter-Götz, who has many instruments in Europe. And when he built one, oh gosh, it's in eastern Austria in the wine-producing country, why am I having trouble thinking of the name of that. I think it may have been a Rust, I'm not sure, R-u-s-t. I think it is, because the city where they build platforms above their chimneys for the storks who come back and nest there in the winter. And anyway he went back a couple centuries to when it was a tradition for a church instrument, if the people like the instrument as well as the monetary price for the instrument, if it was in a wine district, as this was, then they also had to supply as much wine as it would take to fill the largest pipe of the organ. So he wrote that condition into that contract. I thought that was kind of interesting. Yeah, that's the wine area south and east of Vienna right up to the Hungarian border. I'm sorry, I can't think of what that district is called but it's—

LD:

I should know that.

RD:

—Especially known for its red wine, whereas the Danube portion of Austria is—

LD:

Is white.

RD:

Known for its white wine. __ [?] [00:54:28]

LD:

I'll have to go home and look it up, because that's—I don't know very many of the German wines, and so, mainly Spanish and French.

RD:

Well it was interesting. I was able to travel out there, I made just one trip, and in addition to Rust went on to another town which is very, very close to the Hungarian border, and of course the towers were still up and the barbed wire had not yet been cut. There were rows and rows of coiled barbed wire, several feet high. But it was interesting to see the little white-washed houses, the stucco, white-washed, and they all had tile roofs, many of them, and they all had a shuck of corn hanging, which is fertility and good luck. I think in fact if you look right over here—

LD:

Oh I see it, uh-huh.

RD:

There's one hanging in our kitchen. And Austria just generally is just a beautiful country. I mean Innsbruck is famous for the Trapp family. Of course Trapp family were from Salzburg. And oh I forgot that—*The Sound of Music* was filmed—

LD:

That's true.

RD:

While I was there.

LD:

Oh!

RD:

And so I talked with Julie Andrews, and I guess the most exciting event that happened while they

were filming it was one day I had gone out to check the attendance at the Frohnburg, which was the house that was used as the Von Trapp family house. It is not the Von Trapp family house, the Von Trapp family house is on the other side of the river, and rather gray and not very photogenic. And the Frohnburg was the Mozarteum dormitory. And it's a beautiful manor house from the seventeenth century. And had been modernized of course, but it sits on an alley where there's no motor traffic allowed, and so that's all the exterior scenes of the Von Trapp family house were filmed at the Frohnburg. And anyway I had gone to the Frohnburg, our dormitory, to check on attendance one day, and this Austrian little boy, I guess he was maybe somewhere in the vicinity of ten, eleven years old, decked out in his lederhosen, shoes and leather cap and so forth, walked up to me, and I had my dog Rudy, a large Dalmatian that crossed the ocean with me ten times, spent five years in Austria with me. And he was with me, and I saw this boy coming right for me. And what you have to understand about Salzburg is that *Ich weiß nicht*—I don't know, in Salzburg is pronounced "*Iwasnit*." Dialect. And that's true all over—all of the areas have their dialects. So I was obviously going to be hit with somewhere near Salzburg deep dialect. The kid walked up and said, "Hey mister, can I pet your dog?" It was the little boy from the Von Trapp family in the movie. But he was so well made up I thought he was Austrian all the way through.

LD:

I love that move.

RD:

Oh, it's a wonderful movie, yeah. And a lot of it was filmed in Germany. Most of the mountain scenes are in Germany, and the inside of the house was a studio thing in Munich. Munich's only ninety miles from Salzburg. We went to Munich for several concerts each year, including the opening of the—the reopening of the Munich Opera, which was quite nice. I didn't get to the first performance, the tickets were incredibly priced.

LD:

Oh, I can imagine.

RD:

But I went and saw the same cast and everything the next week for a lower price. It was just wonderful. *Meistersinger*, it was. Well that's Salzburg.

LD:

Well I know that I'm about to run out of tape, and so what I'd really like to do is maybe we can continue this interview when you come back from your little vacation?

RD:
Right.

LD:
So we can get the Texas Tech story.

RD:
Yeah it might be nice to get back to Texas Tech and Lubbock, where I spent some thirty-one years after I—

LD:
I love these stories of Germany and I have lots of other questions for you. So, if we can end here and then pick back up maybe in a week or so?

RD:
Okay, that'd be fine.

LD:
Great. Thank you very much.

RD:
Thank you.

End of Recording

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