

**Oral History Interview of
Janeen Holmes Gilliam**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
February 7, 2014
Lubbock, Texas**

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This interview features Janeen Holmes-Gilliam. Gilliam discusses her time forming the Lubbock Symphony Youth Orchestra and her time working with the School of Music at Texas Tech University.

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Andy Wilkinson (AW):

Okay and I'm going to say this is the seventh of February, a Friday, Andy Wilkinson with my—
gosh we knew each other at Monterey High.

Janeen Holmes Gilliam (JG):

(laughs) Yeah.

AW:

In fact, didn't you live on 56th?

JG:

I lived on 61st.

AW:

Sixty-first, okay. But I think—what hundred block?

JG:

I first lived at 2804 and then we moved to 2702.

AW:

Okay. Yeah so I was on 2300 on 55th, 2303. And so we've known each other a long time. Janeen Holmes in her beautiful home.

JG:

Oh thank you.

AW:

And we're going to be talking about the symphony orchestra and a lot of other things but we were just now talking about what we'll do with all this, which is, we have in mind that a hundred years from now somebody will be interested in the Lubbock Youth Symphony Orchestra, they'll be interested in music in Lubbock, things in Lubbock. They'll be interested in what happens in the school of music, what happened in the school of music and I'll bet their interested in Janeen.

JG:

Oh, well you're too kind but I doubt it. (laughs)

AW:

Well and the advantage of doing what we call an oral history is that it leaves out the middle man. You know, this is not somebody saying what you did or interpreting what you did or repeating what you did, this is you and you and your voice saying it, so that's what we like to do. But I do

have to get a little information for classifying things and one bit is to get your date of birth and where.

JG:

Oh yay. (laughs)

AW:

I know. Everybody loves that part.

JG:

I know. Seymour, Texas.

AW:

Really?

JG:

Yes. August 16th, 1950.

AW:

I'll be darned. What was your family doing in Seymour? I think of it as a ranching town.

JG:

We do have a family farm there but it was my grandparent's generation that really farmed. My dad was a salesman.

AW:

And tell me your maiden name and spell it.

JG:

Drew, D-r-e-w.

AW:

R-e-w?

JG:

Mm-hm.

AW:

Was that what he did in Lubbock when we were growing up here?

JG:

Mm-hm, he did.

AW:

And what kind of things was he a salesman of?

JG:

He was always referred to as a manufacturer's representative.

AW:

Oh like so he would represent a manufacturer to retail outlets or to—?

JG:

All kinds of stuff related to the oil and cotton industry.

AW:

Oh, cool.

JG:

I never really knew what it was I just put all his invoices in alphabetical order every month. Yeah he owned his own business.

AW:

Cool. Yeah, so many of us were connected in agriculture. My dad worked for the cotton oil mill for a bazillion years, that kind of thing. Well when did you move to Lubbock?

JG:

We moved here in 1956 when I was in the first—I started first grade here.

AW:

Where did you go to grade school?

JG:

Well Bayless the first two years then they built Parsons when I was in the third grade.

AW:

So you would have gone to—was Evans open when—did you go to Atkins first?

JG:

I went to Atkins.

AW:

Oh you stayed at Atkins? You were far enough west to—okay.

JG:

Right, I forget how they divided that but it separated me and my best friend. I was very unhappy about that.

AW:

Right. So we were both Atkins Tornados.

JG:

Absolutely. I still have my orange letter “A” somewhere.

AW:

I can still remember the song. It’s embarrassing to admit.

JG:

No, I understand.

AW:

And you went to Monterey?

JG:

Yes.

AW:

When did you become interested in music?

JG:

In the sixth grade at Parsons when they took us to Atkins to decide what we were going to do in junior high school, back then. And I fell in love with the band and I wanted to do something in the band.

AW:

Did you have music around the home when you were growing up?

JG:

Yes, Mom played the piano. She played the cello in college although I never heard her play. It was a long time ago. But we always had music on. I grew up with the big band music.

AW:

That's what you listened to at home?

JG:

Ah! Loved it, yes.

AW:

Very cool. Now, brothers, sisters/

JG:

Three younger brothers.

AW:

That must have been a torment.

JG:

Yes, actually it was. (laughs)

AW:

Are any of them musical? I don't know one of them.

JG:

They were all in band. We were all band kids. Trip, the one three years younger played the French horn. John, the one seven years younger played the bassoon and marched with a saxophone. And my little brother Jerry, he's the one that did the most music of the three and he played the tuba, and he was in the Goin' Band for a couple of years. He was an engineering major at Texas Tech.

AW:

Did any of the three of them make careers out of music like you did?

JG:

No, but my little brother's son, one of his two sons, Trevor Drew is now a red-hot bass major at Texas Tech—one of Mark Morton's students. So we're really excited about that. He's going for it.

AW:

Cool. Good, good. As a performance?

JG:
Yes.

AW:
That's cool. And is he playing all sorts of things or sticking with classical?

JG:
He's sticking with classical at this point.

AW:
Good for him. (both laugh) That's a tough life because usually they don't have but one double bass in an orchestra.

JG:
I know. Well he's certainly in the right place here at Texas Tech with Mark Morton—just an incredible teacher.

AW:
Well talk about how you decided to make music your living as well as your life.

JG:
Um, Orland Butler was the band director at Atkins Junior High.

AW:
I didn't know he had a first name.

JG:
He did, Mr. Butler. (laughs) I just loved him. We had some friends that had an old B flat clarinet and so I started out on that in the seventh grade. It was so bad, it was like really bad. So bad it couldn't even be repaired enough to work so Mr. Butler got me a school alto clarinet believe it or not. Talk about an instrument that's basically extinct—an alto clarinet! (laughs)

AW:
Yeah that's what they play in the Baroque ensemble thing.

JG:
But I was thrilled, I thought that was great.

AW:
Is an alto clarinet—how is it scored? Is it scored the same as—?

JG:

E-flat alto saxophone.

AW:

Oh okay, I was going to ask if it was scored the same way as a sax.

JG:

Yeah it is. But I mean, you know there's not really a lot of use in the world for an alto clarinet player. So the summer after my seventh grade year, unbeknownst to me, my grandmother, and my mom, and Mr. Butler decided that I was going to be an oboe player. So for my birthday in August, all excited, I opened this up. I didn't even know what it was. I'd never even seen an oboe. I thought it was some sort of strange clarinet. But the rest is history.

AW:

Well and an oboe is very peculiar instrument. You have to make your own reeds—

JG:

Yes we do.

AW:

And all sorts of things.

JG:

But not at the beginning, at least you can buy some.

AW:

So you weren't whittling reeds right off the bat?

JG:

Oh, no, no, no, way too much.

AW:

What a beautiful instrument, though. It's one of my very favorites.

JG:

Oh thank you. I love it so.

AW:

It has a lovely sound.

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JG:

I remember spending an entire afternoon in the Atkins Junior High band room with Mr. Butler and a reed—just cawing the reed. So basically he started me. And then very quickly after that [I] met a wonderful man who was an oboe major at Texas Tech from Memphis, Texas named Bill Cosby. He has a little brother named Bob Cosby. They were all Goin' Band. So he was my teacher all the way through high school.

AW:

Oh he taught you through high school?

JG:

Uh-huh, right.

JG:

So he had your own teacher in high school rather than—I'm trying to think of who the band director was when we were there.

JG:

It was Rex Shelton.

AW:

Yeah, that's right, Rex.

JG:

(laughs) Yeah. You know that, I mean our band at Atkins was really good.

AW:

It was.

JG:

Mr. Butler was really good.

AW:

Well Atkins was a very good school the years that we were there.

JG:

Oh it was.

AW:

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It was the best and the brightest at the time.

JG:

Right? And so was Monterey. It was amazing. It was my experiences at Monterey that really made me not be able to give up music. Because I thought about being a music and a math major because I loved math, and I had to choose one my freshman year at Tech. Calculus and freshman music theory don't mix too well.

AW:

Yeah. You know there's a very good book called *Emblems of Mind* by Edward Rothstein who talks about the fundamental relationship between math and music. Not just that you count bars and measures and that kind of stuff but I mean how the conceptual connections. You might really enjoy it.

JG:

Sounds great. I will look it up.

AW:

If you're interested in that.

JG:

Oh I am. Do you remember Mitchell Zablutney, the orchestra teacher?

AW:

Yeah.

JG:

That man is truly the one. I mean he really changed my life—

AW:

I can see him right this moment.

JG:

—in so many ways. I simply adored him. He was so good.

AW:

Let me spell this for the transcriber. Z-a-b-l-o-t-n-y.

JG:

Mitchell Zabloutny. He was concert master of the Lubbock Symphony. He was the orchestra director at Monterey.

AW:

And his wife—what did she do? I remember her too.

JG:

Oh, I do too.

AW:

I remember thinking she was the first adult woman I ever met that I thought was exotic. (laughs)

JG:

Yes, she was.

AW:

She looked exotic.

JG:

Oh I feel so bad I can't remember her name right now.

AW:

Yeah. Was she an instrumentalist or a singer?

JG:

I think she was a singer.

AW:

I think so, too, I think so, too.

JG:

But you know when I was at Monterey, we were the honor orchestra of the state of Texas. We were that good. It was amazing.

AW:

Who were some of the people that were your classmates that have continued on that you can think about from high school.

JG:

Brian Gum, who owns the Robinson Violin Shop here. People that have continued on, I remember so many people and I think some of them are still playing but I don't know—

AW:

Yeah I just wondered if there were any that you've kept in touch with; because it was also a very big school back then.

JG:

It was. Not that have gone on to be—

AW:

Conductors or performers—

JG:

Music educators or performers, yeah, that I know of. I remember lots and lots of people. So that was totally formative for all of us. It was awesome.

AW:

Yeah well it set your standards pretty high too then for when you went to—and why did you pick Texas Tech?

JG:

We didn't grow up with a lot of money. It really wasn't a choice for me. Which is okay.

AW:

That's how I chose it. (laughs)

JG:

You know I lived at home.

AW:

Me too.

JG:

The racetrack up Boston Avenue from 61st “whoosh.” Because I wasn't going to be late for one of Dean Killion rehearsals, believe me.

AW:

Yeah. So was it a difficult choice for you to pick music or math when you got to Tech?

JG:

Not really. I was having so much fun in the band and I was fascinated with music theory. Because I had never touched a piano, we didn't own a piano. So I hadn't touched one until my freshman year at tech. That's hard for a band kid to jump into music theory. But it was fascinating, I just loved it. I just knew I had to do it.

AW:

Because being in band and orchestra, you didn't necessarily get music theory in public school.

JG:

No, not then; you do now. Kids have the opportunity, they can take theory. They can place out of freshman music theory.

AW:

Oh, that's cool.

JG:

But we did not have those opportunities.

AW:

Yeah. So you would have started at Texas Tech in '68?

JG:

Eight, right.

AW:

And that was an interesting time to be at Texas Tech.

JG:

Yes.

AW:

What was it like being part of the school of music?

JG:

Oh it was great. You know that was the height of the Killian years, and Gene Hemmle, I mean how fun was that? And Paul Ellsworth.

AW:

And what was the motto for Texas Tech back then? “We may lose a game but we’ve never lost a half time.”

JG:

You better believe that! I guess it would be fair to say, I mean I’m a radical Goin’ Band alumni, I mean the most fun I ever had in my life was those four years in the Goin’ Band.

AW:

Well you know Janeen, someone needs to write the story. I’ve done enough interviews to know that, or to be able to assert that high school band in Texas is owed almost exclusively to Texas Tech because of the connection between Prof, that came before—

JG:

Yes, Prof Wiley.

AW:

And Prof’s connection to Sousa and the University of Michigan which was the band university. So you know you can trace that intellectual connection right down to Texas Tech and the fact that Wiley was cogent enough after the Second World War to recognize all of the people coming out of the service with GI bills and he recruited them. So there’s a whole generation of Texas high school band leaders that came from Texas Tech. I just think it’s a strong story.

JG:

Oh they’re always incredible and music education at Texas Tech is, I really believe it’s the finest in the state. I mean if you graduate with a music education degree, we have a 100% placement rate.

AW:

That’s astonishing.

JG:

You’re so well trained. I taught elementary music for four years. I did get a music ed. degree I loved it—loved teaching.

AW:

Where did you teach?

JG:

In Garland and Irving. But it is great—of course, gosh, high school band in the state of Texas, as I'm sure you've been told, there's no other state where it's any harder. It's just, almost in my opinion, over the line. I mean it's crazy!

AW:

In what way? What do you mean?

JG:

Because of how much is required of the students especially during marching season.

AW:

It's still different from being on the football team.

JG:

I think it's worse. (laughs)

AW:

I think you may be right.

JG:

Because I don't think the football team—yeah it's terrible—the football team doesn't go to additional, you know drum corps competitions. There's all this stuff. UIL marching and all that stuff that happens. The kids are really super overloaded but they seem to survive.

AW:

Um-hm. Well I do remember, I worked at the grocery store in high school so I didn't really have time to continue to—I sung choir at Atkins.

JG:

Oh cool, yeah.

AW:

But I didn't have time to do that at Monterey. But occasionally I got to date a girl who was in the band and going on the band bus was absolutely the most incredible experience you could have.

JG:

(laughs) Oh yeah.

AW:

I can see why, once a student has been recruited into high school band in Texas, they're not going to leave.

JG:

No, it's fun.

AW:

It was fun.

JG:

It's way fun. Lots of work but way fun. And you know actually one of the reasons why Patrice and I wanted to start the youth orchestra program was because that group of people, that ensemble, that's your peer group. I mean every young person needs a peer group.

AW:

Yeah. And they're going to get a peer group.

JG:

Yeah, it's which one are they going to choose?

AW:

Exactly.

JG:

Well choosing the band or the orchestra—

AW:

Yeah or the gang on the corner.

JG:

Yeah that's the best. And so out of those band students and string students, but especially the band students who really get into the music, for a wind player, band is awesome. I'm a total band person. And playing in a concert band is totally unique. But as a member of a wind section of an orchestra, that's where it's at. That's the cream.

AW:

Yeah and when we think of bands the first thing we think of are percussion and horns.

JG:

Yeah. I mean certainly for a double reed player.

AW:

Yeah but you can shine in an orchestra. Well how did you choose, as an individual, between performance and education? Just the practical side?

JG:

Just a slow—yeah, a little bit. But you know, you can, I mean I was living in Lubbock, Texas. I wasn't growing up in Boston or other super famous, you know. Besides all that I just loved little children and I loved teaching them and I realized that by about my junior year is when I declared that I was going to be music ed. But that doesn't keep you from doing all the same performance stuff which is so wonderful.

AW:

Yeah and Lubbock has been, especially for its size and location, has had really I think good history with orchestra—orchestral music.

JG:

Oh I think so too. Oh, yeah, I mean because we're just not that big but what we do really is, I think amazing.

AW:

And we've been doing it for a long time.

JG:

Yes we have.

AW:

Well how did you get from Garland-Irving back to Texas Tech?

JG:

I went to San Antonio for six years.

AW:

And taught there?

JG:

Yes I did. But the most important thing that I did there, personally, was when I decided to start studying oboe again with Mark Ackerman, who is still a lifelong beloved friend and always teacher. The principle oboe of the San Antonio Symphony, he's going to retire this summer.

AW:

Wow.

JG:

And getting to study with him, oh wow that was something. And I got to play extra with the San Antonio Symphony which was just, oh my gosh, for me, that was something else.

AW:

So what grade, what level of school were you teaching while you were there?

JG:

Oh I wasn't teaching in school I was teaching privately. I've always taught private oboe students. No I didn't actually go back to the public schools.

AW:

So you were teaching—

JG:

Young oboe students.

AW:

And then playing in the symphony?

JG:

Yes. Every now and then, not all the time. And then I had two little children, I had my girls.

AW:

When were they born?

JG:

Seventy-six and '79.

AW:

Wow. And what are their names?

JG:
Jennifer and Stephanie.

AW:
Jennifer in '76?

JG:
Uh-huh, and Stephanie in '79.

AW:
Do they play oboe?

JG:
No they don't.

AW:
(laughs) Heard too much of it at home?

JG:
Yeah. I didn't want to teach my own kids. We were just trying to get through adolescence, you know how that goes. (laughs)

AW:
Yeah I do.

JG:
No but Jennifer is a very fine violinist and Stephanie is a very fine young pianist and singer. She was in the Coronado choir. You know, Brett Barns [?] serious kind of choir, it was wonderful.

AW:
Very cool. So what brought you back to Lubbock?

JG:
My husband's job and all the grandparents were here so how awesome was that?

AW:
No I know, we are so fortunate that my son and daughter-in-law moved back here several years ago when our first grandchild was a couple years old so now we have—

JG:
So jealous.

AW:
—both our grandkids here and it's—

JG:
So jealous!

AW:
I'll tell you, it's—

JG:
Boston is so far.

AW:
Boston, my goodness gracious, yeah. That is a long way away.

JG:
You are very lucky. (laughs)

AW:
I am very lucky. Trust me, I know it. Although I will say that they exhaust us. (laughs)

JG:
Isn't that amazing? It's like what happened to us?

AW:
I thought I had a lot more energy than that. Of course you don't have to tell the grandkids to sit down and shut up like you do with the kids.

JG:
(laughs) No you've got to keep up with them.

AW:
So when did you get back to Lubbock?

JG:
Nineteen eighty-two.

AW:

And what did you do when you first got back? Still raising kids?

JG:

Oh yeah, the girls were little.

AW:

Right. So did you play in the symphony?

JG:

I was very fortunate because the person who was playing second oboe and English horn moved away at the end of that. We moved back in February of '82 and so I was able to re-audition in the summer of '82 and jump right back in. So except for the ten years I was gone from Lubbock, I played in the symphony since—this is embarrassing to admit—I was a sophomore at Monterey.

AW:

Really? I didn't know that.

JG:

It's scary. Do you know how many years I played the oboe?

AW:

That's a long time.

JG:

Nearly fifty years.

AW:

Wow.

JG:

I can't believe it, fifty years. Frightening. (laughs)

AW:

It's a good thing you don't put notches in the oboe or you wouldn't have anything left to play.

JG:

(laughs) Oh that's for sure!.

AW:

That's cool.

JG:

What a joy.

AW:

Well you certainly have an acquaintance with the instrument.

JG:

I think that would be fair to say.

AW:

Why don't we talk about that a little bit? I said earlier how much I love the oboe. To me it's one of those things—it's one of the instruments that I don't think anyone has come up with a digital version of.

JG:

Oh absolutely.

AW:

There's a breath in the oboe that is just not reproducible.

JG:

Right. I totally agree with you. I can spot it in a blink. It's just not the same.

AW:

And it has such a perfect range too. Like I put it on my albums with guitar because it works terrifically with a guitar. It fills in a space in an orchestra that really, to me, is—without the oboe what would you put there?

JG:

It's a beautiful, unique instrument.

AW:

Maybe cello, maybe—you know, just in the range—

JG:

Well English horn, maybe cello with oboe—clarinet, but that's a very different sound.

AW:

Right, that's what I mean. Because the oboe has, to me, a smooth—and I might say to my ear it's like a human voice, you know, in quality.

JG:

Thank you for saying that. There are many teachers that believe that and it's a big reason why you make your students sing their—just you know if—hum it, sing it, whatever but yes it's very important. Yup, totally agree.

AW:

Cool. You should write a book about the oboe.

JG:

Oh thanks, I don't think so. (laughs) I'll leave that to some others.

AW:

Well when I first ran across you again, other than I remember seeing you in the orchestra, but it's when I started back teaching at Tech there in the school of music. Did you do any public school teaching in Lubbock when you got back?

JG:

No.

AW:

Still individual students?

JG:

Yes and the girls were little and I wound up getting super involved with volunteer work of all sorts.

AW:

Like what first?

JG:

It started out with the preschool board. I discovered I really loved being involved with boards. The girls went to All Saints; I loved being on the board there.

AW:

Was Ken Bastion there?

JG:

Oh yes!

AW:

What a great guy.

JG:

Oh my gosh, talk about people that made an impact on your life, he made a huge one on mine and my girls. Yeah, those were some glory days. I loved being on the board there. Got involved with the symphony guild, absolutely loved it. Got real involved and I was on the Lubbock Symphony board for I don't know, six or eight years. [I] just really enjoyed trying to make things happen.

AW:

How did you come back to Texas Tech?

JG:

Well, I discovered with the formation of the youth orchestra that I really loved arts administration.

AW:

So the youth orchestra came before going back to Tech?

JG:

In '88, yes it did.

AW:

Well then let's stop a minute and talk about the formation of the youth orchestra. Chronologically, but it sounds like one influenced the other?

JG:

Yes, it did.

AW:

So where did the idea come from for the Lubbock youth symphony?

JG:

From my friend, Patrice Barnett who was Jennifer's first violin—

AW:

P-a-t—?

JG:

P-a-t-r-i-c-e Barnett. Wonderful friend, my daughter Jennifer's violin teacher. She was our associate concert master in symphony and her students were really, really advanced. They were wonderful and some of them were off to major music festivals and camps in the summer and one of them came back and said, I don't understand why we don't have a youth orchestra in Lubbock. All of my friends at Interlocken have youth orchestras. We just kind of looked at each other because we hung out a lot and started talking about it and those were the heavenly glory days of Gurer Aykal and the Lubbock Symphony. And we were really good friends and we talked to him and said, Do you think it's important? And he was like, "There's nothing more important." Our music programs here in Lubbock are so strong. They're so wonderful—our band directors, our orchestra directors, choir directors. But there was nowhere to pull the cream of the crop together.

AW:

Right. And Lubbock was big enough that that cream is scattered out a lot.

JG:

It is scattered out a lot. And it's not just Lubbock if you start thinking about it. I mean we had students that drove from Midland week after week to be in the youth orchestra.

AW:

Really?

JG:

Oh yeah.

AW:

So I would infer from that comment that there are not other youth symphonies in our region.

JG:

There are now. Amarillo has a fine program.

AW:

But at the time, not?

JG:

At the time not. Midland still doesn't have one, Midland-Odessa. Abilene used to have one but not anymore. But the youth orchestra program draws from just a huge area. We have some young people that drive over from Clovis, New Mexico. Albuquerque has had an incredible, fabulous program for many, many years. So it was just that simple. It was like, Well let's just do it.

AW:

So that's one thing to say but there are a lot of moving parts.

JG:

Yeah, it's like well let's just do it and how are we going to do it? And Gurer said, I'll conduct the first two years. Well, goodness gracious, talk about someone who had the respect of all the orchestra and band directors in town where it would be worth it to them to push their students to come take part. And yet one more thing every week was you know, to be with a conductor and musician of his stature. And then of course we had Doyle Gammill, beloved Doyle Gammill, who understood the whole thing, who helped us work with LISD and all the directors to get it going.

AW:

So I'm sure with Doyle—there was a very favorable attitude towards Doyle in the schools.

JG:

Oh completely. Oh and the symphony board I was like, Please, please. Because it just seemed so perfect and it was. Three types of youth orchestra affiliated with the parent orchestra being the Lubbock Symphony which is what we did. Or independent which was, not at the time, it wasn't the right decision for us to do it.

AW:

Because the more money there would be, you'd have to duplicate another set of administration?

JG:

Oh, so many different things.

AW:

Or you'd have to find a conductor and all kinds of things right?

JG:

Yeah.

AW:

And what's the third kind?

JG:

University affiliated. Which could have worked really, really well here. But then you know more than anybody how difficult it is to try to get something like that set up through the School of Music. It's not that they wouldn't love to do it, but I mean literally where are we going to do it? We have no space as it is.

AW:

Well, no space, no money, and then on top of that you've got a university is like a layer cake with little tiny layers. You've got a little of layers.

JG:

Yeah. It was just too much. So we went to work, we just did it.

AW:

And how difficult was it to get the idea across to the symphony board? Were they on board?

JG:

(laughs) "That's great Janeen, as long as it doesn't cost us any money, you go for it."

AW:

As long as you do the work, right?

JG:

Exactly, so we did.

AW:

Okay. Well talk a little bit about the history—before we get back to you coming to Texas Tech—talk a little bit about the history of the youth symphony.

JG:

We had our first concert on November, 13, 1988 and we were actually out at Lubbock Christian then because we formed it really fast that summer before. Patrice and I were just around the clock doing stuff. It was really exciting. We had to go out and convince all the band directors and put all the—

AW:

How did you select students? Did you have auditions?

JG:

We had auditions, yes.

AW:

Just like you would for a regular symphony?

JG:

And Gurer listened to them. And maestro only accepted fifty-four students. That's small but he needed to be that picky.

AW:

Yeah he set the bar pretty high.

JG:

Oh he did, right from the beginning.

AW:

That must have had a carryover effect on all those orchestra directors in the public schools. I mean to let them know that not just anyone can show up.

JG:

Oh yeah of course. And you know of course we started out with just the one orchestra but you have to have many teachers and sectional coaches. And so of course our orchestra directors and band directors—they were our teachers. Patrice and I knew—

AW:

So they had to be in favor of this too?

JG:

Oh, absolutely. We knew the whole key was everyone had to feel a part of it. And I'm pleased to say I think we did that part well. I mean it was—number one, it was all about the kids. There's no other reason to do it. It's all about the kids. But you know, our gifted teachers here in Lubbock and some surrounding places too.

AW:

Yeah. I don't see how you could have gotten it together without enthusiasm and willingness.

JG:

It wouldn't have worked.

AW:

Well what kind of arc has the symphony followed over the years?

JG:

Oh as far as the whole youth symphony program and numbers and that kind of stuff?

AW:

Numbers and there are bound to have been rough spots along the road—

JG:

Sure.

AW:

Money of course is always an issue.

JG:

Always.

AW:

And you have to have the supply because kids grow up.

JG:

They do.

AW:

They don't stay in the youth program forever.

JG:

It's a huge rollercoaster.

AW:

You're bound to have some years where the crop is a little thinner than it is other years.

JG:

Yes it is and that's when you've got to have some really gifted youth orchestra conductors to know how to program away from that weakness spot you have that year.

AW:

Yeah because it wouldn't be the whole orchestra came down.

JG:

No it was just certain instruments.

AW:

It would be one year you didn't have an oboe player or—

JG:

Right, they all graduated. Every year when the seniors stand up you just go, [gasps] What are we going to do without them?

AW:

This is kind of like being a high school football coach. (laughs)

JG:

Yeah. There they all go!

AW:

And we can't keep them.

JG:

But you know we started with those fifty-four kids. In five years, in '93 we had so many little string kids wanting to play that we expanded with the second string group and then a few years after that we started the second full orchestra.

AW:

So you had two full orchestras?

JG:

Two full orchestras and a string orchestra and it has stayed that way. And that's nearly two hundred kids involved every single year.

AW:

That's huge. Now as I recall, because we moved back here from Colorado in '79 when our son was just turning five and so we were looking at various opportunities and somewhere along in the early eighties—now he never wanted to play strings—he did play clarinet for long enough as he told me, to realize how good Benny Goodman was.

JG:

Oh I love that. I grew up listening to Benny Goodman.

AW:

Well so did he.

JG:

We were excited about the clarinet weren't we?

AW:

So I asked him on his first week of clarinet, you know I could hear the squeaking and squawking from his room, and I said, What have you learned? And he looked up and the only thing he said was, Benny Goodman was really good.

JG:

Really good.

AW:

I said, Well, if that's all you learned, you've learned something important. But I remember—that was a long way of getting around to saying I remember that there were Suzuki programs starting and there were little things like that. How did those things impact—because still in Lubbock you didn't get orchestra till junior high right?

JG:

Right, so I mean the Suzuki program, and my daughter Jennifer was part of that here, so I was—

AW:

Did you help start it?

JG:

Yes.

AW:

Oh, okay.

JG:

So I was also involved with the Suzuki program and oh my gosh, I mean those kids are amazing. I mean and they needed this youth orchestra program.

AW:

Yeah, because they had to have somewhere to go. Did you have an age limit?

JG:

No.

AW:

So if their chops were good enough?

JG:

If you're that good, you can play.

AW:

That's amazing. So when did you have time to sleep?

JG:

Uh, I used to do without that pretty well. But one of the most fun things was, is that after we got in the youth orchestra program in the late—I guess early nineties or something, because I became education director for the Lubbock symphony. We built this LSO symphony school. Margie Sharp was the head of the Suzuki program here and we integrated all of it. We were all so excited, it was so much fun. You know the cradle to grave type approach that music had. It was really fun.

AW:

You and I, being musicians and knowing musicians also realize that organizing musicians is a whole other category, of getting your hats all in one line.

JG:

No joke.

AW:

How on earth did you get that integrated thing to work?

JG:

It was hard. I'm not going to tell you it wasn't. It was hard. I have cell numbers; you wouldn't believe how many cell phone numbers I have. Thank goodness for cell phone numbers.

Remember? They sign contracts and all that stuff and then forget. It's like, Remember, you've got to be here. Oh yeah, oh yeah, I'm coming. Patrice and I just chased them down. It was worth every minute of it.

AW:

Well would it—and this is conjecture on my part, but I suspect that—I mean I know that musicians are the most the incredibly selfless and cooperative people when there's a goal. For

instance helping kids or doing a benefit or something. When you take that away and it's a normal thing and then you have the normal competition and the normal feelings of, you know somebody is getting a better deal than I am and that sort of thing like you have with any group of people. But the fact that you're working with children, did that make it in some ways more harmonious? Maybe not?

JG:

Maybe, not to a large degree though. I can tell you with those string players, oh my gosh, the integrity of your entire program rests upon the integrity of your string chair auditions because they are after each other. They may all be friends when it's over but let me tell you when those chair audition spots come up, they're very competitive. And that's not just Lubbock, that's universal.

AW:

The nature of the beast.

JG:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah and plus in an orchestra, it's not an orchestra without strings.

JG:

Oh no. And then all of our wind and brass percussion coaches—I mean those were our symphony principles. It was very important so we had to, you know, we had to pay them—it was important that we paid them at the same rate that we were getting paid in Lubbock Symphony.

AW:

Mm-hm, so did that put a burden on financing the—?

JG:

Well, lots of grant writing, yeah.

AW:

Where did you go to find grants for a program like this? I mean I know a lot of grants are aimed at—

JG:

Oh thank God for C.H. and Helen Jones.

AW:

Oh okay, that makes sense.

JG:

Thank God for them.

AW:

Because they've always been interested in arts and education.

JG:

Yes and children.

AW:

Right. That's good. I didn't know.

JG:

Yeah, without them—and the Lubbock Symphony Guild was a major financial—you know when they'd give the gift—in fact there were many times that I wish I'd named it the Lubbock Symphony Guild Youth Orchestra. I mean they did more than anyone else.

AW:

Yeah. Well has—and I want you to throw in any other things that you think about that I'm not asking but—also I've watched closely because I was involved in the initial board's establishing the Underwood Center and the Arts Alliance when it got its legs back under it again. We have such a competition in this town for dollars and energy in the arts that I don't think we had so much before. Before, we didn't have very many things. Has that been a factor in trying to keep a program like this, a heritage program, alive?

JG:

Sure. It's hard.

AW:

Is it—in some ways you'd think maybe it would make the pie bigger too but there's still I know a lot of competition. So that's been something to deal with, has it not?

JG:

Constantly. Always will be.

AW:

What about students? Are there as many students in today's world that are interested in it as they have been?

JG:

Yes there are.

AW:

Good.

JG:

I think that's wonderful. I mean the youth orchestra alumni files must—oh it has to be thousands at this point, I'm sure it is.

AW:

So if you were to list some high points over the years since '88, what would those be? For the youth orchestra I mean.

JG:

Oh my gosh, some of the first side-by-side concerts we did with the symphony, oh my gosh, to watch those kids, the thrill of their life sitting next to that symphony player. It was incredible. We used to tour, it was fantastic.

AW:

I didn't know that.

JG:

We toured.

AW:

Really? Was it students and the—?

JG:

Oh yeah and did side-by-sides with the other youth orchestras. Waco has a youth orchestra, we did that. Abilene did, we did Amarillo. We took the kids up to Colorado Springs once. It was fantastic. Eric Freed [?] was a wonderful—he was our conductor then and I loved working with him. It was so great.

AW:

Yeah I think in the dictionary by the word understated is Eric's picture. (laughs)

JG:

Yes, what a marvelous musician and human being. Just love him.

AW:

That's got to be an enormous practical issue, to move those kids?

JG:

(laughs) It was but it was fun. We just figured out how to do it and without—oh Robert Meineke and [inaudible] right there by my side. They loved it. I twisted their arms into going and conducting you know, many things. I picked on Robert a lot. Could not have done it without Robert Meineke, I mean talk about a rock. Because he was the orchestra director at Lubbock High School and for whatever reason a whole lot of those Suzuki kids were in his orchestras.

AW:

Well and that was the time when Lubbock High was becoming the magnet school.

JG:

Yes, so they were all there for the academics, so you know, great numbers of Lubbock High students were in the youth orchestra.

AW:

I guess as an orchestra person you could be excused for saying that probably the academics went to orchestra as opposed to band? (JG laughs) We shouldn't say that.

JG:

No we shouldn't say that. But it was great. I mean Robert taught me. What a wonderful lifelong friend and teacher. I'd never taken a group on tour. He taught me how to do that and helped me do it and we had so much fun. And the kids—the first place we went was Fort Worth and it was only the second year of our existence.

AW:

Oh really? So you were already doing that in '89?

JG:

I couldn't believe it. I got to meet so many other wonderful youth orchestra managers and there was this one lady that became my mentor in Fort Worth. She was just something and she said, "You have to put those kids on the bus and come here." And I was like, Oh my gosh, there's no way. I don't know how to do that. She took me through step by step. She said, "You will see the

magic happen for your group. They will gel the minute you put those kids on a bus and leave town and take them somewhere.” It was mind blowing. I just watched it happen.

AW:

So the impact went beyond the trip. When you got back to Lubbock you had a different group?

JG:

Completely different. And then the other thing that we started doing which was so incredible is that every Labor Day weekend, we took all those kids to Ceta Canyon for a retreat and that was magic. I mean incredible, gelled the groups every year.

AW:

So when you'd do your retreat did you do music?

JG:

Oh yeah, complete. Jump start on rehearsals. We'd just work them to death. We kept them—

AW:

So it wasn't just like we're going to do rope climbing or that kind of gelling?

JG:

Oh, no. We did some of that but oh, no, they were in rehearsal.

AW:

Cool.

JG:

Constantly. Gave a little tiny, mini concert when the parents came up on Sunday to pick them up. We didn't use the whole weekend we just used enough to—so the retreat and the tours and of course the solo competitions for the kids—magnificent young musicians, just blow you away. You just can't believe how good they are. So happy for them, and just so proud that we could provide that kind of an experience for them.

AW:

So, low points?

JG:

Fighting for money.

AW:

Were there times that were worse than others?

JG:

Yeah, there were.

AW:

And what caused those? The economy or something else?

JG:

I guess, yeah. We were not allowed to get our own corporate sponsors or do any annual fund stuff.

AW:

It had to be for the symphony and then you got part of it?

JG:

Yeah. That became quite difficult.

AW:

How did you resolve that? Or did you ever get it resolved? Is that still the way it's done?

JG:

No it's not, Andy. In 2009—? Yeah, beginning in '09-10 and since then—I always kind of knew in my gut this would happen—the parents and all the teachers and conductors—they left and they're independent now. It's Youth Orchestras of Lubbock. It's exactly the same people but they're independent now.

AW:

So now it's the independent model?

JG:

Yes it is. And it's just like, you know, an adolescent going off to college. It had to happen it was just a matter of when it was going to happen. Their hands were too tied. Actually that's when I went back to Tech.

AW:

Really?

JG:

When we developed the coordinator of admissions and scholarships. That was really fun to develop that at the school of music. No that was the second time I went back to Tech. I went back to Tech before in 2001 for the admission and scholarships.

AW:

Yeah because that's when I started teaching songwriting in the School of Music and you were there.

JG:

Yeah. And then I was back at the youth orchestra for two years for the twentieth anniversary concert, but then after that is when they made the decision. It was time to be independent and I totally supported them. Nothing was ever going to change unless they were allowed to go get sponsors and they're doing great. They're doing great. I mean it's still a fight, but they're doing great. Just as many kids and all the same teachers.

AW:

Well it's easier to roll up your sleeves and get into the fight when it's your own stuff you're fighting for.

JG:

Right. And the parents did that, so power to them. So and that's when I came back to work with Bill, which was such a thrill, and Friends of Music.

AW:

Bill, what a piece of work he is, isn't he?

JG:

Isn't he? He's awesome.

AW:

So what has it been like at Tech in the two installments that you were there?

JG:

Oh, what fun. It's—gosh the School of Music has changed and grown so much. I'm so proud of it.

AW:

In what way? Numbers or diversity or programming?

JG:

I don't think—well yeah, numbers. We're maxed space wise with our number of music majors. It's been fun to watch the graduate program grow.

AW:

You have to wrestle for classroom space, I know that.

JG:

You do.

AW:

Yeah if you take a break in the middle of your class you might come back and find—

JG:

Somebody else is in there. (both laugh) It's been great. I mean we have been raising lots of scholarship money. We still need so much but it's so much better. It's been a real privilege and a lot of fun to help make that grow.

AW:

Let me ask you a little bit about that direction, because I know one of the difficulties in any arts program—you know the engineers, they have civil and mechanical and electrical and they have all their stuff lined out and they have their own colleges to do that, departments and what have you. In music, especially in a multi-purpose university like Texas Tech, you have lots of different things that you have to put under one roof: performance, education, theory, composition. It really amazes me to think about the job that Bill or whoever has to do to balance those different needs and it's not like they can be independent. You can't have somebody teaching composition if you don't have people performing and singing.

JG:

Right. It all has to work together.

AW:

What have you seen in the department, the School of Music, over time since—let's just start with 2001.

JG:

Um, it's not that we haven't always had incredible faculty members of enormous expertise, but maybe I just didn't have the opportunity to be around them as much as I was when I went back to doing admissions and scholarships. And I'm sure the talent was equal, but to me, I am amazed at

our faculty and who they are and what they do and how they teach and their students that they are producing—wow. The quality is really something.

AW:

Yeah, I think you're right too. I mean we could make a long list of the people that go way beyond Texas Tech in terms of their abilities.

JG:

I hope that everyone else's respect for the Texas Tech School of Music—I hope it has grown a lot. It should have.

AW:

How did becoming part of the new College of Visual and Performing Arts, was that a plus?

JG:

Sure. We need that college, yeah. Oh I think so. Of course it brings up the, you know—

AW:

Competition.

JG:

Yeah, the competition. Who gets what share of what. And I mean, music deserves to get more. It has that many more students. Obviously that's how I would feel, but it's true. The School of Music and the numbers of faculty and students and class hours and all that stuff.

AW:

What do you see, going forward, the future to look like? Let's start with the youth symphony. Now it's an adolescent—how does it go beyond that and what would it look like five or ten years from now?

JG:

Yeah it's an adolescent. Because of what I know about the leadership—my other great love that I've said nothing about is Ballet Lubbock but I was just as involved with them.

AW:

Well we can go back and talk about it.

JG:

No we don't have to do that. But I'm so proud of Ballet Lubbock. It's amazing. I foresee the youth orchestra on the same path, they're just years behind. They're doing such a great job of

getting their own grants and getting, you know, corporate sponsors and it's just going to keep growing.

AW:

Well at some point, if all goes as intended, we'll have a nice new performance space.

JG:

Oh, everyone's praying, right?

AW:

Yeah. And that's—I hear people say, Well, what are we going to do with the old one? And I always, say, It's going to fill up too.

JG:

Oh yeah. For years I spent fighting for rehearsal and performance space over there. It will fill up.

AW:

What about the School of Music? What do you see happening?

JG:

We've got to have a new building. We have to have more room. We have nowhere to go.

AW:

And there's no place to add on to that one.

JG:

Nope. We need a Sybil Harrington like they have in Amarillo.

AW:

Well speaking of praying, that's a good thing to put on the list.

JG:

Exactly.

AW:

Okay, tell me, I didn't know you were involved in the starter ballet. What got you interested in ballet? Did you dance?

JG:

No. Oh how I wish, no. I would loved to have danced. My daughter Jennifer who was also the Suzuki violinist, she had to play all the way through high school. She played for Robert Meineke by golly at Lubbock High School. Well you know the dance program was also at Lubbock High School. Well she started out when she was little doing both.

AW:

My daughter took some ballet at Lubbock High and I was—of course I went to see—

JG:

Western or Union dancers, did she do that?

AW:

I don't remember. I just remember going to watch things they were doing at the school. And I was very impressed by the teachers.

JG:

Oh yes. Valerie Hill—wonderful.

AW:

Valerie—we're friends to this day because of going to watch—I was very impressed by watching her work with these gangly little kids. And like my daughter had never had ballet before.

JG:

Aw that's wonderful.

AW:

And to see her take what was in some was an old person now in that kind of part—

JG:

Yeah. I think every young man and young woman ought to have a year of ballet. I think it's that important. But Jennifer was very blessed. She was a very gifted young dancer and a very gifted young violinist. Remember Barbara Barber?

AW:

Um-hm.

JG:

She was Barbara Barber's student before Patrice Barnett. In the seventh grade the choice had to be made. It's serious for these kids, there's just not enough time. And she chose dance and that

was great with me. And my younger daughter danced too. They both loved it. So thirteen years of our life was with Ballet Lubbock. Loved it, loved it.

AW:

So that got you interested in Ballet Lubbock?

JG:

Oh yeah, yeah. Just loved it.

AW:

Can you say no to anybody? (laughs) I just wondered.

JG:

I've been told that I can't but I'm working on that in my retirement, Andy. (laughs)

AW:

Oh you'll be like all my other friends who have retired and I say, What's it like? And they say, "How did I ever have time to work? Because I don't have any more time."

JG:

I don't know, I guess I had a lot of energy. But I just love kids and the arts. I just think it's the greatest thing ever.

AW:

What's next for you? I mean retirement is not really retirement, you're just changing gears to do something—

JG:

Well I don't know. I'm in that transition right now. I'm so thrilled to have the time to really practice again. I mean I want to keep playing as long as I can. I adore David Cho and I love playing the oboe and English horn and I just, I don't know how much longer I can play. I've had three hand surgeries in two years. So I've worked hard and I'm trying to physically take care of myself and keep playing.

AW:

This is a technical question, because as not being a horn player I don't know. Is one of those instruments more critical for the mechanics of your hand than the other?

JG:

Well the English horn is just like the oboe's big sister. I mean and the keys are spread apart and the truth is, I probably should be playing it less, but I won't because it is my love.

AW:

Do you love it more than the oboe?

JG:

I do.

AW:

And why, tell me?

JG:

Oh gosh, the gorgeous sound.

AW:

Yeah it is a pretty big—

JG:

Oh I love it. You know, getting to play Schindler's List with Itzhak Perlman for the encore when he was here. I mean I—I was like, Breathe, you can do this. I was so scared, but so determined. I mean, the thrill of my life. Because that's the gorgeous instrument you hear with him, and wow.

AW:

How are your hands now?

JG:

They're so much better and now I have time to warm them up, heat before I practice, cold after. I'm just at an age where I guess I'm just forced to take care of myself, Andy.

AW:

Remember you're talking about someone two years ahead of you. The problem is my mind and my whatever else has not caught up. I still think I can do.

JG:

Yeah, so do I, so do I.

AW:

What should I have asked you about this morning that I haven't?

JG:

Oh my goodness, I can't imagine. You are too kind and too sweet.

AW:

No, no, this is very interesting. Well I'm going to go ahead and say thank you and we'll stop it because there will be other things that will come up that I'll ask you about. I can call you up and we can sit down again or if you think of things that you'd like to talk about again let me know, or other people that you think should be interviewed. I would love to do that too. But also, let me throw out that if there are things—you've printed up some nice things that I'm going to carry with me that I'm going to put in the archive, but we would also like to have photos—like casual kinds of photos, casual kinds of things. Recordings—things that document the history—that we can add to. Because again, fifty or a hundred years from now it will be very interesting for someone to look back and see the evidence, that kind of evidence. So no hurry on any of that but kind of put that in your head as something that would be a nice thing to round out the archive.

JG:

Got ya. Will do. Thank you, Andy.

AW:

Thank you Janeen.

[End of Interview]

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