December 2007

Leonard Stone oral history interview by Suzette Berkman, December 4, 2007

Leonard Stone (Interviewee)
Suzette Berkman (Interviewer)

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Suzette Berkman: Today is December 4, 2007 and I am—this is Suzette Berkman—I have been asked to interview primarily in the arts and we have had a wonderful time doing that. I am here today with Leonard Stone, who—formerly the Executive Director of the Florida Orchestra, within the last two months, Leonard has stepped down and is exploring a whole new life. Leonard, how long were you [the] Executive Director of the orchestra?

Leonard Stone: Of the Florida Orchestra, a little under eight years, but as an executive director of an orchestra within the symphony orchestra industry, forty-one-and-a-half consecutive years.

SB: Oh my goodness. That is extraordinary. Would you like to share your recent reasons of honor—

LS: Well—

SB: —along those lines?

LS: —the parent group, the advocacy group, the resource group of the orchestra in the United States and Canada, and as you know, Suzette, I am a native Canadian and we can talk about that later, is the American Symphony Orchestra League headquartered in New York. And two years ago, at the National Convention in Los Angeles, they honored me for being the first and only, and at the rate executive directors fall by the wayside, likely to be the only, individual who managed the symphony orchestra for forty consecutive years.

SB: That’s extraordinary. If you don’t mind my saying, and we can get into that as well, a little bit masochistic given the plight of many of the orchestras, but that speaks for your level of courage and tenacity as well as, obviously, wonderful experience.

LS: And I think, commitment.
SB: Commitment—

LS: Commitment to it.

SB: —yes, indeed. Just kidding about the masochism.

LS: Well, you know, actually, that’s not that far, it is a self-penalizing process when you realize that you are trying to maintain an art form that has come under attack continuously.

SB: (murmurs agreement)

LS: Not necessarily on purpose but new technology, changes in people’s lifestyles, alternative entertainment or cultural attributes that are available to people, you know when you take a look at from the first idea of a live concert to a—can you imagine the introduction of a recording, so you could stay home, and not have to go, ah, and then, a wonderful transcription to a thirty-three-and-a-third disc so that you could get the entire symphony on one disc and then compact this, now you can put on a set of headphones with an iPod [portable media player] and take the whole eighty-piece symphony orchestra in your hip pocket with you, and yet the art form survives.

SB: Why do you think that is?

LS: I’ve asked—

SB: I have an idea myself.

LS: —I’ve asked myself that question a lot. And there must be something so intrinsically stunning and powerful and moving about this that over four hundred years, in spite of all the challenges, in spite of the changes in lifestyle and philosophy and politics and world wars and migrations of millions and millions of people, it still—it speaks to the human spirit in a way—I used to think I could explain it. I can’t explain it anymore but I know it. I feel it. And there apparently are enough people who know and feel it, even though they may not be able to explain it, that it just keeps hanging around—

SB: That’s beautiful—

LB: —and aren’t we lucky that it does?

SB: —fortunate. I think the concert hall experience of course, is unlike any other. I have an iPod and the sound quality just can’t compare. Not to mention the visual of seeing the various musicians who are playing.

LB: Well, as an aside to that, I remember when the Moog synthesizer, that’s a hard word to say, synthesizer, was first introduced and skilled people could actually emulate an entire symphony orchestra electronically and the thing that frightened me the most was how good it sounded, but then I remember after hearing a demonstration, I then went to rehearsal, this was in Winnipeg, Canada, my home city in that orchestra, which was a fine orchestra—it wasn’t the greatest
orchestra in the world, but a good orchestra—and I watched all these people working together to create that. Nobody was pressing buttons; there weren’t transistors and the wires and plugs and switches. And I thought, that’s so precious, the human element. Everything was becoming so automatic, and this was thirty, thirty-five years ago—was becoming so automatic. This was dependent upon people—living people, breathing people, getting together and committing to one another under the control and direction of a conductor, and I thought that was special and for me it made it special.

SB: And that was beautifully expressed. Well, we would like to go back to the beginning, because obviously, there was a reason why you evolved into this particular career. Where were you born?

LS: Well, 10:15 AM, St. Boniface [General] Hospital, in a suburb of Winnipeg, Canada. June 5, 1935, I made my entrance into the world. That was still the Depression—

SB: In Canada—

LS: —in Canada and the dark clouds of war were starting to rumble in Europe. My parents, Faye and Morris Stone—ah, Dad was a salesman in an electronics store and Mother was a homemaker in a small, modest home. As I look back at it now, I realize that when I came into the world and for my formative years, I was an insecure, frightened, lonely child.

SB: Were you an only child?

LS: For the first six years of my life, I was an only child and then Donna came into the family—the most wonderful of sisters—the family and I, we’ve been blessed to have Donna as part of the family, but even after that, I was an anemic child and I actually as a youngster wanted to die, and I kept on telling my parents that I wanted to die. I was the smallest of all my friends. I was always the last to be chosen on teams and I did not have a great physical stature. I mean, you look at me now, and I don’t think I am overweight but you—

SB: No, you are not.

LS: —but you would certainly think I was well-fed. I was a thin, waif-like looking kid. At age ten, I was taken to a particular doctor. His name is emblazoned on my eyelids—Dr. Sanger McEwan—and he was sad to hear that I thought there was nothing to live for, that as a child of ten, I wanted to die.

SB: (murmurs agreement)

LS: —and he asked me what I wanted to do if I could live, and I said, “I’d like to play a trumpet.” And he said, “You know, I played a trumpet.” And he said, “I worked my way through college playing in bands.” And he took me to the Shriners’ [Hospitals for Children] sick children’s hospital and walked me through and let me look at all these sick kids who were just hanging on in the burn unit, in the terminal unit, just what they would give to have what I had, which was breath and life and a tomorrow and it shocked the daylights out of me.
LS: I remember on the radio, music was always available in our home in a variety of ways, on the radio, soap operas were not listened to, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it was the classical or the musical radio that was listened to. My dad played piano, not well, but enthusiastically. He had a repertoire of about six songs that he played for years and years and we’d always say “Ah, here it comes again.” And my parents went to concerts a great deal and ultimately started taking me and then Donna as well, to concerts, so music was always available.

And I remember once hearing a radio broadcast of Harry James, and I just thought that the trumpet—it got to me, it sounded mournful and, and soulful. But I leap too quickly as to how music came into my life. This is a story that few people want to believe, but it is true. I went to a parochial school, kindergarten and then for the first two years, grades one and two, and it was a lower auditorium and an upstairs auditorium. The upstairs auditorium had a piano on the stage, an upright piano, and during snowstorms which were frequently in the Winnipeg winters, you packed a lunch or had a lunch packed for you and you did not walk home. There was no such thing as busing then. And you stayed there for lunch.

When you finished your lunch, and then what did bored children in kindergarten do? The game du jour was pushing the piano around the stage, boys would push and then girls would hang on the back and it would be a ride and then just before they got to the edge of the stage, they’d reverse the process. Well, who do you think one day walks up from the small auditorium to the big auditorium and is walking along the stage when they push it too far, and they push it off the stage and it falls on top of me?

LS: And this was a seven hundred pound Heintzman—I know everything about this piano—upright piano. And I don’t remember it falling on me, and the only thing I remember it being on top of me is I heard people yelling to get the kindergarten teacher and to get Big Mike—he was the custodian. He was a huge guy—and then I remember seeing boots and hands underneath the piano and lifting the piano up and the teacher pulling me out from underneath it. So, I’ve often said that I had music pounded into me and I was five at the time.

SB: Oh my gosh. Did you have physical repercussions—

LS: Yes, I did. My left hand ah, and part of my arm, the bones were smashed. And I kept on—my sight kept coming in and out for three days. They weren’t certain, from the concussion or whatever, that I would regain my sight permanently. And I remember my teacher running to a neighborhood doctor not far from the school. She was wearing a white blouse, and blood was pouring from my ear and my nose, and I remember seeing her blouse turning red and he wasn’t home. His office was closed, and she turned around and ran to my house. And then my mother
called a taxi and picked up my father at the store and we went to our family doctor. I had a recovery process of six weeks and the school bribed me. They had a little school orchestra and they said if I got well and came back that I could play any instrument in the school orchestra that I wanted.

SB: Isn’t that interesting.

LS: Well, considering the career that I embarked upon, yeah, it is interesting. And I owe—at that time I didn’t know that I wanted to play the trumpet. Which by the way, I tried, and that’s another bad story in my career. I wanted to play the triangle in the school band, and so I did. So, when I stop to think of the influences early in my life, of music, it was listening to my dad play the piano, listening to what I characterize now as good music on the radio, of being taken to concerts, and then having this piano fall on me and bang it into me. Apparently, my head was swollen like a watermelon.

SB: Oh, gosh.

LS: And I have full use of my left hand, there are no—I’ve never had a problem with my sight. I’ve—there is nothing lasting from that experience.

SB: That’s fortunate.

LS: It is fortunate.

SB: That really is fortunate.

LS: But I must tell you that every now and then when I walk by an upright piano, I stop and I think, you know—(laughter)

SB: You are considerably larger now and could perhaps withstand the pounding a little better now.

LS: My Hebrew name was Lavy and I remember hearing a young girl screaming “Lavy is under the piano.” So, you know—

SB: (laughing) But, you said that at that age, you, you wanted to die. Was that some, subconscious or—

LS: You know—

SB: —was that before or after the incident?

LS: Suzette, what a wonderful question. Because that was before. I never thought of that as a way of dying. I just remember I wanted to walk across the auditorium and there were chairs set up, so I walked as close to the stage because there was an aisle. And I knew they were pushing
the piano back and forth, you know they just pushed it too far. And I didn’t even get to ride on
the thing. I didn’t get my pushing opportunity. (laughter)

SB: The doctor sounds as though he had a profound impact on your life.

LS: Not only did he have a profound impact on my life, and he was my doctor until I left
Winnipeg to take on my first orchestra management was Edmonton, Alberta, but now I was age
ten. But when I came back to take over the Winnipeg, when I met him and he took me to the
Shriners’ Hospital. But when I came back to Winnipeg to take over the management of the
Winnipeg Symphony, I was then thirty-two, so this was twenty-two years after, he was on the
board of the orchestra.

SB: Oh, isn’t that interesting.

LS: And we had a really a wonderful relationship. He was a gentle man and he did have an
impact on me. But for the first many years of my life, I was insecure. I always felt—I ’m going
to be seventy-three next June. I am seventy-two as we are making this recording. But I don’t feel
seventy-two, I don’t think I look seventy-two. But most importantly, I don’t think seventy-two.

I always felt I was a decade late in my real life and development, as opposed to my chronological
life. I started dating later than most of my friends; I got married later than most of my friends. I
started a family later than most of my friends, and I retired kind of later than most people—you
know sixty or sixty-two or sixty-five—and here at seventy-two. But for the first several years,
being so insecure, I was so content to be by myself. And while I was with myself, self was
humming and whistling music continuously. I just could not be quiet in whatever I did. And it
started developing into creative things—painting, drawing—

SB: How old were you at this point?

LS: Eight, nine, ten. Eleven, twelve. I was—the guys would knock on the door to come out and
play. “The gang is going here. The gang is going there.” I could do that or stay at home, and
even to this point in time, I am absolutely content for an evening alone by myself. As a matter of
fact, even in my university days, in my bachelor of fine arts, we—one of my closest friends said
he had an idea that was going to help him understand the creative process through depth
perception and seeing while blind. And he actually had himself wrapped, his eyes and his head,
in bandages, and for six months functioned with a cane in every way as a blind person would.

I didn’t have the courage to go that far, but I went to my dean and asked if he would accept and
do it as a marking, grading process. If I locked myself into a room for a year and I had music,
my girlfriend could come and visit, food would be brought, and I would have television was
available at that time: television, records and radio. But for a year, I would not come out of that
space. They actually had a meeting about it and decided, “No.” If I wanted to do it, I could do it,
but I was certainly was not going to get a grade or recognition for the experience. So, even in
my—and that was my—

SB: What was your intent with that proposal?
LS: To prove to myself that I could be so happy being alone and being with myself. And not have to interact. Most people know me with people. Most people know me as not enjoying confrontation or wanting to be confrontational. And I thought one of the ways to really maximize that was to not get into situations that were confrontational.

SB: How would that be relevant to an academic situation? Was that to prove that the creative process could happen in a solitary way?

LS: If I had a real idea, and I’m not sure I did, I don’t remember, but as of now, I can not remember.

SB: But it does reveal a lot about you.

LS: I think it does reveal a lot about me, and about a certain insecurity that I insulated or wanted to insulate, but only having to deal only with me and have concern with only about me. It is such a paradox, because in the career I chose, I had to make decisions that affected so many, and if you stop to think about it, the decisions of a staff, the decisions of an orchestra and the decisions of an audience where I could determine so many important things about how they accessed this art form and I never, ever had a fear of making those kinds of decisions, Even if I had a gut feeling that I had was making the wrong decision but had already gone so far that I couldn’t stop it or turn it around. But it took awhile, and I remember the moment in my life and my career when I realized I could do that and I could be that. Would you like me to tell you about that?

SB: Yes, of course. But let’s first finish the academic. What school was this?

LS: I am a graduate of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. First of all, I went to a fascinating high school called St. John’s High School. And prior to that, a middle school, Machray School. What I find fascinating is again, my insecurity in starting off at a school and in my last year in both the middle school and high school being totally involved and totally dominant, and also in university. I came into grade seven, this puny, skinny, insecure kid, not a good student by the way. I was good in any subject where you could philosophize and write an answer, but not very good in subjects that had rules; math, physics, French, Latin. But by the time I graduated grade nine, I was president of my high school, of the entire grade nine. Came into grade ten, again very insecure you know, all these beautiful cheerleaders and these athletes and everything. Grade twelve, which was the final year of high school, I was editor of the high school newspaper, and the head of the international student exchange and the president of my class.

SB: My goodness.

LS: Well, I get to university, and again, feeling insecure, it was an in-city university, so I lived with my parents and drove to the university which was about fourteen miles on the edge of the city. Insecure, but in my graduating year, I was on the senior student counsel. I was the president of my faculty and the head of the varsity variety, the theater and drama club. So, I always started
off very tentatively and wound up quite strong. But in any event, I got a graduate of fine arts, having absolutely no idea what I could do with it.

When I look back now and think of the professors I had and how that experience prepared me, if nothing more than one statement that the dean William Ashley McClory, he was from Iowa. I said to him, I said “What do you hope to achieve with me?” There were many better artists in the faculty. And he said, “My goal will be to send you out after four years with your eyes open wider that when you came in.”

SB: Oh, wonderful—

LS: That really is wonderful isn’t it?

SB: —That is special.

LS: And in fact, they did. I don’t know if I realized it at the time then. Thinking that I was going to have to do something with this. I thought, Well, I think I understand the creative process, and I am a good communicator, Maybe I will help children understand art, and I got a degree in education and in fact, I did teach at a high school that had an art lab for gifted students and it was a great, great, experience. But I was a lousy teacher; I was the last one in. I was the first one out. I just—they built this lab [with] one wall all glass that looked at a stand of trees. And when the winter time—with the snow, I thought—

SB: You were watching the trees. (laughing)

LS: I thought I want to be out there, I don’t want to be inside here, and for years, the students kept in touch with me. It really was kind of a wonderful experience, and if we have time, we can talk about that, because it was all part of the creative process. But in going back to when I knew that I could make decisions, I became the assistant director of marketing and public relations for what is now Canada’s only outdoor music theater called Rainbow Stage. I already cut my teeth. All my management skills—and they presented four Broadway shows a summer, it was an outdoor dell, seated thirty-two hundred.

SB: This was non-profit or for profit?

LS: This was non-profit, but it was the summer home of the Manitoba Theatre Center, summer home of the Winnipeg Symphony, the summer home of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and you had all this wonderful talent and did really wonderful shows. And I was back there two years ago, and they are still an excellent caliber. They are not quite up to Broadway, but they are very respectable. So, we were doing the Wizard of Oz and there was a photo shoot and the chap who was playing the lion, the cowardly lion, failed to show up, but the costume showed up and they had to do the tin man and the scarecrow and the lion. And so they said, “Stone, get into the lion costume.” And I said, “I don’t want to get into the lion costume.” (laughter) And they said, “Well, you can’t complete the photograph without it. So I said to myself, “Self, get into the lion costume and dominate the photograph.” From that moment on, I decided I was going to be the marketing director and the public relations director and I did, and we went into sellout activity,
and I did that in the summer, while I was going to school as a matter of fact. And that is where I got my love of the idea of running an arts organizations. I loved—

SB: So interesting.

LS: I loved the meetings with the directors and the producers and the business managers. And since I knew that I didn’t have any talent, really any marketable talent. I want to pause here and tell you that I did take the trumpet. So, um, I—my uncle got me a trumpet, my Uncle Ben, was very supportive of—my dad’s brother, older brother, any creative thing, he was a bachelor so anything for his nephew. And he bought me a trumpet and I had a fine trumpet teacher, a superior trumpet player and um, one day, I’m home practicing and my dad said to me, he said “You really love music, don’t you?” and I said, “Yes.” And he said, “If you really love music, you’ll stop playing the trumpet.” (laughter) Was I that bad? Apparently, so I gave it up. But—

SB: You were how old at that point?

LS: I started taking trumpet lessons when I was fifteen and I tried it for three years. And, had all the books. I had become deeply affected by a movie that I saw, that you may recall, called Young Man with a Horn [1950], with Kirk Douglas.

SB: Oh, I do remember that.

LS: Yes, it was a fictionalized version of the life of Bix Beiderbecke. Wonderful coronet player. Kirk Douglas played him. And again, Harry James, the sound I love, played the trumpet. But the youngster in the movie could only afford a trumpet that he carried in a brown bag. He couldn’t afford a trumpet case, and he carried it under his arm, walked around and it was part of him, and he put it up to his mouth. It was part of him. Just like a piano, you can’t carry it under your arm and it isn’t a part of you the way a trumpet can be. And I just loved to emulate that, so in a brown bag, I carried this trumpet to and from lessons, which wasn’t smart in the winter time, because when it was twenty-five below, and that thing was so cold, you had to wait fifteen minutes for it to warm up and then it never played as well as it could be. (laughter)

But there was one other movie I think that influenced me more than any other in terms of the career to want to be involved in the arts, and that was The Jolson Story [1946]. I was ten when my mother took me to see a matinee performance. And I still watch that movie; I still watch the DVD [digital video disc] from time to time. It obviously resonated with me how one entertainer, one persona, could get in front of an audience and hold that audience and command that audience. So, I had reached that point where I thought if I had no talent for the stage, I could be responsible for what was taking place behind the stage and make something happen. Because in high school, I was responsible for the variety show. I functioned as producer. I was able to get entertainers who had come to nightclubs to come and do a pep rally for the school—

SB: Sounds wonderful.

LS:—and had brought people like Cab Calloway [famous African American jazz singer and band leader] and [Frank] ‘Sugar Chile’ Robinson [musical child prodigy] to perform and—
SB: Sounds similar to what you ended up doing.

LS: In a way yes, it kind of grounded me for that experience. So, the background was a child who felt lonely, not that I wasn’t loved, an abundance of love, with the exception of a Lionel [model] electric train that my parents never bought [for] me. I felt I had everything, but most of all nourishment and love from a mother and father and sister and extended family, so it wasn’t that that wasn’t happening. But something was failing in me, I guess. To be alone, give me my paints, my paper, my artwork and then let me listen to music. And even books, starting to read books, you know. As a fifteen-year-old, I though I would read [Fyodor] Dostoyevsky and I understand it all. As a seventy-two-year-old, I am not even sure I understand it. But sure, it felt good to say I was reading Dostoyevsky you know. I wonder who was saying, “Yes, tell me another one.” However, it was where I was heading without realizing I was heading there.

SB: It just happened, it evolved.

LS: It evolved. Because, at this outdoor music comedy theater. This was now 1960, under the stars, beautiful evening. The performance was Guys and Dolls, one of my favorite Broadway shows, and there was a near sell-out crowd. And I felt partially responsible for the success that was taking place, although I didn’t have the biggest of roles, and I thought that I could do what the producer and general manager were doing. And I gave myself, in 1960, a challenge that within ten years, I would be running one of my cities’ non-profit cultural—

SB: (murmurs)

LS: —and it didn’t matter to be what. It could have been opera, theater, ballet, symphony. I never start out by saying I want to manage a—whatever came first, I would have done. And I saw an ad in my home paper, the Winnipeg Free Press, in the career section, that the Edmonton Symphony was looking for a general manager. And I thought, “Well, I am going to apply. I will want to do that.” I applied late and they told me that the position had been given away. It had been given away to a gentleman by the name of Nat Greenberg. And I have always credited my orchestra career to his life. He was managing the [Philharmonic] orchestra in Fort Wayne, Indiana and he now has this offer of Edmonton. And this is taking place in the January, February time period. And he brings his wife up to see the city. And it was one of these minus thirty, thirty-five degree days and so the (inaudible) of the story goes, she said, “Nat, if you want to take this [position], fine, I’m not moving there.” And so, he resigned the position he hadn’t even started. And it became open again.

So apparently, I—they looked at me, and I knew about as much—this was 1966—about as much of managing a symphony orchestra as I do about nuclear physics, which is zero (laughter). But I had given myself this goal, so I did move there to Edmonton, and as your notes tell you, that was my first orchestra. In August of sixty-six [1966], and ah, one day, in June of 1967, barely a year after, my secretary said, and by the way, she was the only staff person I had, Polly Keates, we ran an orchestra, two of us, and I got everything done. And I’ve had staff as large as forty, forty-five.

SB: What size orchestra? What kind of orchestra was it?
LS: It was an evening rehearsal orchestra. Everyone had a daytime job. A lot of members of the Princess Patricia’s [Canadian] Light Infantry Band who were good reed players, wind players, brass players and ah, you know, the band captain would give them time off to go to evening rehearsals or daytime dress rehearsals. It was an orchestra of about seventy. Had a British conductor, Brian Priestman, who was a fine conductor. But they never had a professional manager before. And I got the job, without being a professional, knowing anything about managing an orchestra. I could do PR [public relations] and marketing for the Broadway shows that I had done well. But Edmonton looked at Winnipeg as a being a step up, so if you came from Winnipeg, “He must be okay, and he must know what he is doing.” (laughter) And trust me, I didn’t.

But in any event, my secretary said, “This gentleman from the Hudson’s Bay Northern Stores left his card, and he’ll be back in a couple days, and he’d like to take you to lunch.” And I didn’t look to see that Dick Palmer’s address was Winnipeg, Canada. We were trying to get a new office. We were officed in this department store, great Canadian department store, the Hudson’s Bay, and so I thought this man was coming to speak to me about enlarged offices. Because I thought I would increase the staff from two to four (laughter), and we were really in a tiny, little hovel.

And he did come, and he had nothing to do with the physical amenities of the store. He wanted me to know that he was the chairman of the board of the Winnipeg Symphony. They were looking for a new manager. And since I was a Winnipeger, and I had been running this orchestra, apparently successfully. They were impressed that I had on the season Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic [symphony orchestra]. Like, how did I make that happen? Well, sixty-seven [1967] was Canada’s centennial and they um, the New York Philharmonic came up to Montreal to Expo 67 [1967 International and Universal Exposition], the World’s Fair, and were doing a cross-Canada tour, and I was able to convince them to become—not only come to Edmonton, but to be part of my series. So, you can imagine how successful the sale of this series was, not that everybody wanted the Edmonton Orchestra, which I was marketing, but that was the surest way they could get Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. So, ah, within ah, three weeks, I had resigned Edmonton, agreed to move back to Winnipeg and signed Winnipeg. And that was three years before my ten-year goal. Now I was the head of the Winnipeg Symphony. And the city had a very rich cultural life. It had the world famous Royal Winnipeg Ballet. It had the best regional theater in Canada. And the orchestra was pretty darn good.

As a matter fact, so good, that as I look back at it, [the] concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra came from it. The principle cello of the New York Philharmonic, Lauren Monroe, came from it. Freddy Ginky, who went on to be the concertmaster of the London Symphony [Orchestra] came from it. It just had wonderful—

SB: It was a full-time orchestra?

LS: It was then considered to be a full-time. They divided their playing, and this was so essential to the growth of orchestras in Canada, half of their professional life was Canadian Broadcasting Orchestra, ah, they did forty broadcasts a year, and well paid. And then the twenty-six week
orchestra season, so by putting those two things together and private teaching—but the reason for the quality of that orchestra, and it still has superb quality, there were two string teachers that were just knocking out talent one after the other—and where you have good teaching, you could end up having a good orchestra.

So, where there is a great orchestra, ultimately you find wonderful teaching. You know, so I got back to that orchestra and um, had a wonderful decade. I really cut my teeth on that orchestra. That board suffered me, they suffered my mistakes (laughter), they suffered my triumphs, but they gave me opportunity. And—

SB: How wonderful. You were there eleven years.

LS: Yes. It was a good, long run where I could get really my teeth into it. And I never thought I would leave it. I felt so committed, because, we built a new concert hall. We moved into a new concert hall. And ah, we were broad—we recorded a lot, all government subsidized. We were on the national broadcast, so we were on the network. And we did some regional touring, and faced all the challenges that an orchestra faces. Some years were good. Some years were deficit. But the quality of soloists that I was able to attract then, ah, great opera stars like Teresa Stratus, Jan Pierce, Richard Tucker. Great conductors, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Thomas Beecham. That—

SB: What a wonderful experience.

LS: That can’t happen now. You know, for a regional orchestra. They are just not available, stars of that ilk.

(noise on cassette tape)

LS: Anyway, Winnipeg, Canada, at that time was just a fascinating opportunity. There were a series of celebrations. Nineteen sixty-seven was the centennial of the country. Nineteen seventy was the hundredth anniversary of the province, and 1974 was the hundredth anniversary of the city.

So, you had all these funds available and the opportunity to do things that you otherwise might not be able to do. I remember the federal government contacting me through their centennial situation at the end of December of sixty-seven [1967], and everything was going to stop at December 31st, saying they had some money left over, that they needed to have spend. “Could I use it?” Well, that’s like asking (laughter) for, a thirsting person if they wanted water. And so, I had to put together in a limited period of time to use this. So I contacted Arthur Fiedler of Boston Pops [Orchestra] fame, and asked him if he would do a pops for us, and we really became wonderful and close friends following that. And I must have presented Fiedler a dozen times in my career after that. And he said, “But I want a soloist.”

And I was able to get the legendary Russian violinist David Oistrakh, and Oistrakh’s manager said, “On the condition that Oistrakh doesn’t know that he is part of a pops program.” So we had to bring him before the rehearsal, ah, and stop all the Arthur Fiedler pops stuff and someone would call ahead and say, “The car is five minutes away.” And then we wouldn’t, ah—no matter
how long it took him to pack up his violin and get into his overcoat and leave, we couldn’t start rehearsing anything of pops and I really think we pulled it off. He did the [Pyotr Ilyich] Tchaikovsky violin concerto and you know, Arthur Pops did “Seventy-Six Trombones” [1957, The Music Man]. Arthur Pops, I mean Arthur Fiedler.

SB: Well, he was Mr. Pops.

LS: He was. He was clearly a—and Mrs. Oistrakh was with him and she had two huge, empty suitcases and through the interpreter, I asked her what those suitcases were all about. And he said, “Well, she has the opportunity to ship these to ah, the Russian counsel in Ottawa, and they ship it back to Russia. She shops for consumer things that simply weren’t available.”

Well, these two suitcases were filled with oranges, with Gillette razor blades and with Sony, little Walkman-type, tape recorders. They’d just come out. She’s standing in the wings, and she says through the interpreter to Mr. Fielder that she’s exhausted having done all this shopping. And he turns to her and says, “You’re exhausted, he,” pointing to her husband, “he’s playing the Tchaikovsky violin concerto, and he is exhausted.” There were just so many remarkable encounters with all the artists—

SB: Could I, could I just interrupt you for a moment, though. For listeners who might not understand why you had to go to lengths to make it a non-Pops issue, could you explain that?

LS: Apparently, David Oistrakh’s manager thought if Oistrakh that knew he was the soloist on a Pops concert, he would have not accepted the contract.

SB: Why do musicians feel that way?

LS: Virtually all of the musicians who become part of a symphony orchestra, if you trace back their career, they start out studying with a teacher, they start out playing in a youth orchestra or their school orchestra and then they take lessons more seriously and the vast majority of them go to a fine school of music. Their goal is to have a solo career. Maybe one out of ten thousand gets that opportunity, if that. It’s very tough. And so they wind up in an orchestra. But their idea was one day to be on the stage of Town Hall or Wigmore Hall—

_Tape 1, Side A ends, Side B begins_

LS: —concerts. And so you get a wonderful Pops artist who has a show that they have done in Vegas or on tour with fifteen musicians and suddenly there are eighty musicians so the show is stretched out and the five violins the music is made for is twenty-five violins. But it’s not music or the arrangement that shows off the orchestra. It’s all meant to accompany the artist. And so the players inevitably think that they are into a secondary role. They don’t mind being in a secondary role in an opera pit, because the music is so integral to the opera. They don’t mind being in the pit or in—not viewed for a ballet because the music—Swan Lake or Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty is so integral to the performance.
But for a Pops concert, even though they are on stage and visible, in their minds they must feel, they must feel—and I know they feel, because we’ve talked about it—ah, they are in a secondary role. They do it because they know it brings in money and that’s necessary, but if they had their druthers, they would rather not do it. And so, when you take a look at most of the European orchestras, many of them state-subsidized where they don’t have to do that for survival, they aspire to that kind of weekly grind, preparing a Mahler symphony or a Beethoven symphony that speaks at so many different levels about so many challenges in life and challenges of man. As opposed to “Rain Drops are Falling on My Head.” You know, one doesn’t have to do too much explanation. So, the idea was to make Oistrakh recognize that he was part of a concert and not part of that kind of concert.

SB: Thank you for explaining that.

LS: On the other hand, if we had talked to him, he might have had great fun, who knows.

SB: You were afraid that—

LS: We took his manager’s advice.

SB: Sure. Thank you for explaining that. If you can just proceed then, with your experience then in Winnipeg.

LS: Well, I had [been] doing kind of the same formula of concerts, especially in the classical, for the most part, an overture, a soloist, intermission, a form movement concerto. After all those years at the Winnipeg Symphony, and it didn’t matter whether it was that symphony, I think it would have been with any symphony, it became repetitive, like rote. And so, I always looked for an opportunity to do a different kind, a one-of-a-kind, and so I started experimenting. And maybe the listener—and if the listener doesn’t remember, I’ll do a little bit of reminding. In the seventies [1970s] on television, one of the early shows of somebody doing a cooking show was the Galloping Gourmet.

SB: I do remember that.

LS: Yes, an Australian by the name of Graham Kerr. And I, thought, food is an international situation, symphony music is international. If we could bring his cooking, his personality—and he was a huge star. Ah, part of his thing was after every ingredient, he sipped some wine, to the point where he sipped too much wine and it brought that aspect of his career to an end. But I had started the process where we were going to have giant-size TV [television] or projection, which was new at the time, behind him. This was in the mid-seventies in Winnipeg and he would do a Russian dish and we would play Russian music. But through his personality, and he moved above—they called him the Galloping Gourmet because he ran from one side of the stage to the other. Well, he galloped himself into some rehab and we had to cancel that show.

SB: Oh.

LS: I did—
SB: But how unique.

LS: It would have been an interesting program. I did convince Johnny Cash’s management that he would do the first symphony show with our orchestra. And ah, I can’t remember why it didn’t happen, but it didn’t happen. In 1960—sorry, in 1975, the Winnipeg Symphony was broke, and it had about half a million dollar debt, and for this size of its budget, which was about four million dollars, that was too much. Along with the music director, Piero Gamba, we put together about fifteen artists, Roberta Peters, Yehudi Menuhin, Jose Ferrer, Morley Merideth, metropolitan opera star who was born in Winnipeg, Jose Greco, Nana Lorca singers [flamenco dancers], Ruggiero Ricci, violinist, Byron Janus, pianist, Jeffrey Siegel, pianist and—all donated their services and we literally wiped out the debt between a radio broadcast that the CBC paid a lot of money for and a gala ticket on that evening.

But the most fascinating part of it was Muhammad Ali [Casius Marcellus Clay, Jr.] And people would say, “Is that nuts?” or “Is that bizarre?” At that point in time, he had been stripped of the heavy weight championship because of his draft problem situation with the government and so one of the ways he earned money was he went on speaking engagements. Well you know, he prided himself on being a really quick mind with—and facile with his poetry.

So I thought if he recited poetry and I had my orchestra and chorus behind him, we could be the accompanying punctuation. He could say something and we could sing the hallelujah chorus. And he had a manager whose name escapes me at the present time, who handled his platform speaking engagements, and I actually had a contract for Muhammad Ali for thirty-five hundred dollars, believe it or not, to be a part of that evening. And it got great press. But he had an escape clause that should he be reinstated and he could fight again, and he was out. And he was reinstated, so he didn’t show.

But the evening was a great success. It was symptomatic of my thinking process about how to be ahead of the curve with different kinds of ideas. And it even happened to me, ah five years ago. And I’d like the listener to know about this, because it tells something about Leonard Stone’s thinking about where he could take something with an orchestra. I read the book Flag of Our Fathers [2000], and was totally blown away by it and got in touch with the, [James] Bradley, the author, whose Flag of Our Fathers is about the six flag-raisers who raised the flag on Mount Suribachi in Iwo Jima in the battle in early 1945 [February 23, 1945]. And his father was one of the six who wrote—who raised the flag. He was a navy corpsman attached to the Marines.

So, I called him and said, “I have a vision,” and by the way, this vision was talked about at a reception, at a post-concert reception that took place at your home. We had Bill Conti doing a Pops concert, and if you recall, Bill Conti was here. And I had asked Bill, if I could obtain the rights to do something with that book, would he—and, Bill Conti of Rocky [1976 film] fame, he wrote the famous Rocky theme and other wonderful things. If he would like to write a, kind of a major work, divide it into six parts, one part for being for each of the flag raisers, for six narrators, for visual images. Can you imagine the flag being raised on the screen?
SB: How dramatic. Yes.

LS: Orchestra and chorus. And he said he would like to do it. And we actually shook hands over the piano, your piano, in your home.

SB: I had no idea.

LS: He had regaled us by playing one of themes he wrote for one of his movies. And ah, so I called Bradley, and told him what I was about, that there were hundreds of orchestras and if this thing was created, this thing would be played often, because of this heroic thing about the Marines on Iwo Jima. And I said, “Would your father have liked this?” and he said, “Yes, my father would have liked it, but we can’t do it.” And of course, I was shattered. “What do you mean, you can’t do it?” He said, “I’ve just signed a twenty-eight page contract with Stephen Spielberg and he now owns for ten years, he has got control of this, and of course, Spielberg gave it to Clint Eastwood who did a marvelous film of it. And I thought to myself, “My thinking was right. I was heading in—

SB: (laughs) You were just ahead—

LS: —if it was good for Stephen Spielberg, it was certainly good for me and for the Florida Orchestra.”

SB: You’ve just always been a visionary.

LS: So, it never came about. But I did have some spectacular things in terms of different from the normal symphonic evening, that did come about and perhaps the thing—the two, one happened in Florida and one happened when I was managing the Dallas symphony. Because from Winnipeg, I went to ah—my wife at the time, wanted to, she was an American, a cello player in the Winnipeg Symphony, and when bicentennial year 1776 [1976] came about, she longed to come back to the United States. And so, I said, “Fine, the first orchestra that I could get in the United States, we’ll do it.” And it was the Syracuse Symphony, and it wasn’t that I wanted to spend the rest of my life in Syracuse. That was the entrée into the United States. And then from there, I spent—

SB: And you were there—

LS: A short period of time, maybe sixteen months. This offer came to go to Dallas. And Syracuse was very annoyed with me because I came with an eighteen-month guarantee. I was to the best of my knowledge, the first orchestra manager who was hired through an executive search firm. The firm was called Einstein Associates, a pretty good name for a firm that is going to find bright, young people. They don’t exist anymore. And I came with an eighteen month guarantee. Well, this whole thing—if I didn’t work out in eighteen months, they would find another person without charge. Well, in the nineteenth month, this Dallas thing, and it was a major opportunity and I did take it, but the guarantee was over. And some people in Syracuse were rather angry with me. Matter of fact, when it hit the newspapers in the morning edition, the
first call that I go, there was no such thing, this was seventy-nine [1979], February of seventy-nine, we didn’t have voice-mail, I don’t know if voice mail existed at the time. But my secretary said, “The symphony banker wants you to come to his office immediately.”

SB: Oh.

LS: And I thought, is it going to pull the plug? Or what’s going on? And I walked into the office, his name was Armond Magnarelli. He was a Democrat. And he said, “How could you?” and I said, “How could I what?” He said, “How could you move to Dallas?” I said, “It’s a great opportunity.” He said, “They killed my president. Any other city, but Dallas. How could you do that?” And I couldn’t believe how many people held that against me, that I dared go to Dallas. And so my next trip to Dallas, in the transition period, I asked to be alone one afternoon, and I took a taxi from the hotel to Dealey Plaza, and stood up and looked at the Texas Book Depository and asked myself if I was going to allow that to be an issue. I could overcome that. Even though, like everybody, I remember where I was, when I heard, and those images were burned, even though I was a Canadian and in Canada at the time. As a matter of fact, I neglected to say on that day, Friday, November 22, in Canada, I was doing the public relations for a Winnipeg visit for the next night, to a sellout crowd of twelve thousand in the Winnipeg Arena of the Stars of The Bolshoi [Opera].

SB: Oh.

LS: Who had four days earlier done a private performance at the White House for the Kennedys. And they were on route, flying into Winnipeg when the assassination occurred, and I greeted them at the airport to tell them—

SB: What was their reaction?

LS: They cried. They hugged each other. You know they were Russian, very emotional, and Kennedy kind of had that personality that superseded the international boundaries. And the presenters of the tour asked me if I would ask for a moment of silence before and that somehow got to the media, and there were assassination attempts—ah, threats, that if I got up and said something, I would be killed.

SB: I don’t understand that.

LS: I didn’t understand it either. I mean, it hit the news—

SB: It’s such emotion—

LS: —that it, that the evening was going to go on.

SB: Um-hm. (agrees)

LS: Because for Canadians, it was as big a shock as for Americans. I think even more so if the prime minister for the queen had been killed. Um—
SB: I don’t understand that thinking.

LS: And it was announced that I was going to get on the stage and ask for a moment of silence. And there were calls into one radio station saying that if he got up there—

SB: More than one call?

LS: Yes, but one call in particular to a radio station, one to the Arena, that ah, maybe it was some kook who was identifying with the assassination, that I would be shot, but anyhow—

SB: Emulating.

LS: But I did go, and I did ask for it. It was a very emotional experience. The show did go on. And ah, but what I had to tell them at the airport, that John F. Kennedy had been killed. Ah, it was quite remarkable. So, it followed me to Dallas, and I had to come to grips with that. But we were talking about moving concert experiences. In Dallas, in 1982, I had been there now three years. I had become very attached to anniversary dates. I realized that we were coming close to the fortieth anniversary to the end of the Holocaust.

So, I engaged the wonderful American composer, Benjamin Lees, who was by then a friend of mind, and I said “Ben, I’d like to commission you to do this. Would you write a Holocaust commemorative?” And he said to me, “You know, when composers are invited to write new works, they get performed where they are written, where they are commissioned and they rarely get performed often again. I said, “I promise you that this thing will have a life and it will have a life all over the world.” And I don’t know why I said that, because I have no idea what I was saying or how I could make that happen. And he was inspired by the poems of Nellie Sachs [Nobel Laureate Leonie Nellie Sachs], who had been a survivor of Bergen-Belsen [concentration camp], and she wrote a set of poems that she entitled “Footsteps.” The footsteps of hearing the Gestapo coming to the house, the footsteps of people walking into camp, the footsteps of the British soldiers who liberated the camp.

So, he wrote a work that he entitled “Memorial Candles”, which was a very touching and moving title, for orchestra solo violinist like the Fiddler on the Roof that village violinist and soprano who would sing some of the text from “Footsteps.” We did the world premiere in Dallas, under the auspices of the Dallas Holocaust Museum. It was a long work, about forty minutes. Pinkus Zuckerman was the violinist and the Israeli soprano Zahava Gal was the soloist. We did the premiere in Dallas. I had gotten some underwriting from a man in Atlanta, so we did the performance in Atlanta. We did it in Houston. I wanted to take it to my home city of Winnipeg. It was done by the Winnipeg Symphony. It was done by the orchestra in Sydney, in London, England and finally in Jerusalem—

SB: My goodness.

LS: And so, it did have a life.
SB: That’s amazing.

LS: And it’s been recorded. And ah—

SB: Who recorded it?

LS: It was an iron curtain country because the costs were less. I can’t remember exactly the name—

SB: Is it still available?

LS: Ah, yes, under—one can go under Benjamin Lees on the website and it will give its discography. I made that happen. It was my energy, my contacts, my driving and it was a major commemorative. I never got to the performance in Israel, which was my big disappointment. I would have gotten there, but ah, circumstances did not permit that.

The other performance that I am most proud of, and it happened in Tampa Bay. It happened sixteen days after nine-eleven [September 11, 2001; attacks on the United States World Trade Center]. It was the performance at the then called the Ice Palace, now the St. Pete Times Forum [Tampa]. It was called An American Anthem. It wasn’t the greatest artistic achievement, but there was something about it that was so memorable about it with a limited amount of time. I got a call from then Mayor Dick Greco saying that citizens are calling him and he said, “They need some way of expressing themselves. They need an outlet.” And he said, “What can you do?”

So, we pulled together with the wonderful help of the Fox 13 [television station] anchor John Wilson, who played an enormous role in helping and within that short timeframe, 911 and now this was nine-twenty-five [September 25, 2001], we brought together choruses, the orchestra, the Master Chorale of Tampa Bay, ah, with the highlight of the last movement of Beethoven Ninth [Symphony]. People could come in without cost, but they could make a contribution that went to one of the charitable funds in New York. A lot of money through the Community Foundation, a lot of money was sent there.

SB: The musicians donated?

LB: Musicians donated. Musicians, artists and musicians are generally so generous, even though that is how they make their living; they give of their time to do this. But I remember the review the day after in the St. Pete Times [newspaper] with John Fleming. I am going to try to paraphrase it. He said, “So, I was there. And the orchestra played the theme of The Common Man, from [Aaron] Copland’s Third Symphony. Was it the best I’ve ever hear? No. They did the Beethoven Ninth. Was it the best acoustics? Or the best setting for that? No. But I needed it, and they were there.”

And I think everybody who was there, felt the same way. They needed a statement made. Governor [Jeb] Bush was there. Members of the various clergies were there and it was a very meaningful experience.
SB: Everybody spoke. I was there as well. It was packed. And it was very moving.

LS: And you know, to have the opportunity to be able to respond, to make something happen, to use the resources and to get into the leadership role was very fulfilling. And it often offset that mechanical another classical concert, another classical concert week after week after week. So, I enjoyed those very much.

But I must tell you about some of the experiences of the mistakes I have made. I remember in Dallas in the, oh, about eighty-three [1983]. A man called me and said he represents an artist, and if I make a commitment—we had an outdoor concert series on the grounds of Ross Perot’s then company called Electronic Data Systems. Part of the grounds were on a natural bowl We kind of did an outdoor, not kind of, we did an outdoor summer season for six weeks. And he said, “I know you are looking for artists.” He said, “And if you will give me a three-year commitment, I will give deliver this artist to you, I will give them to you for fifteen thousand for year one, seventy-five thousand for year two and a $150,000 for year three.” He said, “Do you have a large Hispanic community?” And I said, “Yes, I do.” He said, “You’ll do nothing but succeed.” And I said, “Well, who are you talking about?” And he said, “The man’s name is [Julio] Jose Iglesias.” And I said, “I’ve never heard of that name before, so I am not going to do this.” (laughter) Well, that was a huge, huge error because within a year, he was such a superstar in this country; he was a superstar everywhere else.

SB: Yes. Everywhere else.

LS: It was one of my major errors.

SB: One of the few.

LS: And many people said, “[Julio] Jose who?” But you know—however, the um, I presented Pavarotti in solo recital in Winnipeg in 1972. Paid $20,000. Top ticket was $20 and did not sell out, in a twenty-two hundred seat auditorium. He was Pavarotti, and he was not Pavarotti. And if this was a video, the listener would see me move my arms. Pavarotti! However, in 1984, when I was running the Dallas Symphony, the host Republican Convention Committee because the Republic Convention for the second anointing of Ronald Reagan was in Dallas and we were asked if we could pull together a major event and together with the Dallas Opera, we got Pavarotti, and if you remember, I said, twelve years earlier, I paid $20,000. This was $380,000—

SB: Oh, my goodness.

LS: — and he produced the first million dollar classical concert box office in Texas history—

SB: How exciting.

LS: — at the Reunion Arena and it—

SB: How exciting.
LS: —was just packed. And it was the stars, not only Pavarotti and the Dallas Symphony, but every media who was going to be there for the convention had to be there. And you looked in the front, you know, and I had Andy Rooney on one side and Connie Chung on the other side.

SB: How exciting.

LS: It was exciting. So, I’ve had those moments when I simply turned what had that had not been a successful experience into a great experience.

SB: Sure. How active—what was Ross Perot’s involvement with the orchestra at the time? And of course, we’d like you to share about Meyerson Hall [Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas, Texas].

LS: Well, and that was the connection. We were, the Dallas Symphony, I always identify we, I identify so closely, I’m recording this with you just a little over two months after leaving the Florida Orchestra, but I continue to refer to it as we and mine.

SB: Sure.

LS: We were going to build a new concert hall in Dallas, and the bond election had ultimately succeeded and it was going to take place and I moved there, and I was told that this was my project. You know, run the orchestra and—

SB: Did you know that before you went?

LS: No, I had no idea before I went. So, I knew instinctively having been involved in one other concert hall projects that leadership of effort, beyond the paid people, but the volunteer leadership and image was critically important. And the then chairman of the board said, “Do I have anybody in mind?” Well, I had met Mort Meyerson, who was on the board, who loved music, classical music, had sung in a chorus when he was at [a] university in Texas, and coincidentally, was the president of Perot’s company, EDS, Electronic Data Systems. So, I went to visit Mort and asked him if he would consider chairing this committee and he said, “Yes, providing there weren’t too many meetings.” And I said, “Mort, two, three years, half a dozen, ten meetings and that’s it.” Well, that was in eighty-two [1982]—

SB: (laughing) And a lie.

LS: And a lie. About one hundred and fifty meetings after and eighty-nine [1989] until the building was opened up. But as he got more involved in it, his boss and his close colleague, Ross Perot, got involved in it, from a distance, got attached to it. Now, one thing I did learn about Perot finally, is one of his mantras was “Whatever you are going to do, do it world class.” And so if you were going to do a building, don’t cut, don’t save, do it right. And ultimately, ah, word got out that the right to name the building could be had for a $10 million gift. So Perot called me one day, and said he would like to do and that he would like to name it after Mort. And I said, “Don’t you want to name it after Margot?” who was his wife, “Or in honor of your
parents?” and he said, “No, I want to name it after Mort.” And I said, “Mr. Perot, I am going to be asked a lot of questions as to why you would name it after somebody who was not part of your family or after yourself.” And he said, “Yes, you will.” He said, “You tell them that I said that there are a lot of people who have been huge successes in their lives because of other people. And I am a success and my company is a success due in part to Mort Meyerson. And I know that this project is important to Mort and so I want to honor him.”

SB: Wow.

LS: So, I thought it was a very noble idea. So, once he made that commitment, he suddenly got very interested. Every step of the way, he followed it, sometimes closely, sometimes from a distance. And ah, it had to be world-class. And if we needed more money and his approach was—I remember, there was—we needed an additional $4 million, and he said, “You find two, and I’ll match two.” And he always challenged us. When the building opened up, now we had voice mail in my life. And he bought the center box for Thursday night, and this was not his art form, this was not what he was committed to, but he bought it, paid a lot of money to get that box, bought the season tickets, and he attended. He didn’t attend many, but in the beginning, he attended a lot. And I would have a phone call the following morning. He’d say “Stone, it’s Perot. There’s a chip on the stair, the marble stair going up to the left balcony, that elevator light didn’t light up, somebody left paper cups or wine cups on this banister—

SB: Nothing about the music.

LS: At the time, I didn’t know that’s the man who would want to be president [of the United States]. But I knew he was a hugely successful corporate type who had the mentality to note these things and either remember them or write them down. And so, for the first several Thursdays, that was when we started our weekly concerts of the weekend, there were going to be those messages. And finally, they stopped. And I paid attention to those all those things. And he was right. He wanted it to be in Mort Meyerson’s name—

SB: Tell us about the architect.

LS: Well, the architect was I. M. Pei. And initially, he rejected the invitation to be the architect for the building. Now, in the sixties [1960s], seventies [1970s] and eighties [1980s], I. M. Pei was the signature architect of the era, no question, a giant. The chairman of the selection committee was Stanley Marcus of Neiman Marcus [Department Store] fame, and whenever the architects were invited to meet with the building committee, and it was a stunning list and I can assure you, world-wide list. They always sat beside Mr. Marcus and he started off with the same question. “Mr. Pei, why would you like to design—“or um, I am trying to think of—Philip Johnson, another great, great giant. “Philip, why would you like to design this concert hall?” And most of them, with the exception of Philip Johnson always answered the same way. “It would be an honor, it would be a pleasure. I’ve not designed a concert hall. It would be a great challenge.” Philip Johnson’s response was, and he had a high-pitched voice (speaking in falsetto), “Well you know, Mr. Marcus, I don’t know that I want to design the concert hall. I am quite rich. I don’t have to do that, I don’t know that I want to design this building.” To which Mr. Marcus took his pen and crossed his name off the list and said, “Okay Philip, you are not
going to do this hall. We have two hours, what would you like to talk about?” (laughter) Well, when Mr. Pei came and he was the only one who came without a portfolio to show of what he had done—it preceded him, you knew what he had done. So, Stanley Marcus asked that same question, and he said, “You know Stanley, I have decided that before I die, I need to do a great concert hall.” So there was no question in my mind or anybody’s mind [that] if he was going to do it, it was going to be great.

We had to list our top three choices. So I put I.M. Pei, I.M. Pei, I. M. Pei, and for the next several years, it was a very close working relationship. It’s a stunning building. It’s an acoustically great building. It’s great for the audience. It’s great for the orchestra backstage. It is one of the triumphs of my career, I think, because it was my project, in addition to many good volunteers and great other people.

(noise on tape)

LS: One thing that I would like to say, not only about the Meyerson but concert halls in general and that ultimately is going to a point in time in this recorded memoir, touch on the facilities in the Tampa Bay area. Concert halls and performing facilities are unique. I think it would be worthwhile for the listener to hear this, in so that they can bring their own experiences when they next go into a concert hall.

You walk into any building, let’s assume that you have an appointment on the eighteenth floor, you are meeting with an accountant or an attorney. And you are standing in the lobby and you are waiting for the elevator and the elevator finally arrives. And you get into the elevator and it kind of shakes a bit and a bit of vibration and you hear the noise of the motor, but it gets you up to floor you need to get to. You have your meeting, and you have a good meeting. You come back down that elevator and it’s noisy and it shakes and you come back into the lobby and the lobby is crowded. You get into your car and as you are driving, you don’t say to yourself, “Everything was ruined because of that shaking elevator or the noise of that elevator. I had a good meeting, that’s what counts.”

That’s not the case when you walk into a performing arts center. If you go into a facility, such a concert hall, a theater, you are in your seat, and suddenly you hear a buzzing. It is amazing how many of these buildings, the lights, you know you hear the buzzing in a light bulb or a fluorescent bulb or you hear a whishing sound and that’s the air being exchanged in the air handling situation. Or you know, you are in Carnegie Hall, fabled Carnegie Hall and you hear the subways running beneath the building.

So, in fact, these buildings become part of the performance. Not like the fourteenth floor where you had that business meeting. That floor was never part of your meeting. But when you’re in a performance center, that room where sound and voice and light is being presented to you, that room and that space have a way of doing things to the sound and the light that affects the performance. So they are very special, and to have achieved what we achieved in the concert hall in Dallas was spectacular. Just to end that story, I was asked by the symphony board, they wanted to put up a plaque to commemorate my commitment. And I thought about it clearly, and I said, “Yes, I would be honored. And I know exactly where I would like it to be. They said,
“Okay, where?” And I said, “In the boiler room.” They said, “In the boiler room?” (laughter) I said, “I’ve sweated this project for a decade, and that’s where I would like it to be, where the sweat is.”

Well, they wouldn’t hear of that and if you walk into the grand lobby of the Meyerson now, you will see on my name on a glass plaque and associated with others, rightfully so, but they never ceded to my wish to have it in the boiler room. I was being a bit facetious, but um, I always say to people as you are sitting across the table from me. Now Suzette, you would judge me to be about five-seven-and-a-half [feet tall]. And you are right. I always tell people, before the Meyerson project, I was six-foot-four [feet tall]. (laughter) It whittled me down to size.

SB: Leonard, I can’t let you get away from the Meyerson story until you do deal with the acoustics and the wonderful gentleman you involved in the building of that facility.

LS: You’re talking about Russell Johnson, the late Russell Johnson.

SB: Yes.

LS: And I had the privilege in, um early November 2007, to be part of a memorial service and to deliver a eulogy at Lincoln Center in memory of Russell. I started my career with orchestras in 1966 with the Edmonton Orchestra, and in 1967, moving back to my home city of Winnipeg and a new concert hall, there was [a] strange individual on the stage, saying nothing but looking around. It turns out that he was Russell Johnson, who was not the Russell Johnson, whose legend now suggests that he more than anyone else has influenced how people listen and hear music around the world as a result of acoustics that he has done. He had done the work in the room at the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg, Canada. I had had this wonderful experience with him when I got to Dallas. I simply insisted that he be the one, there were other acousticians and I really had to fight for Russell to do it. When Russell got that room, he did something that had never been done before, that was so spectacular. I’m going to introduce a word that was strange to me when I heard it—it’s called a double coupled chamber. So what is a double-coupled chamber? And by the way, it was so costly, that even Meyerson himself objected to it. Perot helped me raise the money, because he understood that this was going to make it world-class or better.

Sound, I guess, is such a fascinating thing. When you are thinking about sound in a room, you put approximately 2,000 people in a room, some are close to the stage, some are [at] middle distance and some are at the far end of the hall. When the sound is made, wouldn’t it be lovely if regardless of where you sit, everyone hears it at the same time? And when the note has been played and has finished, it should disappear. Or, when you are playing a romantic piece of music, when you would love the tale of the music to just glow and extend, the room should have the ability to glow and extend. On the other hand, if you are playing a Baroque piece of music and it’s very precise and you want it to end quickly, it should have the ability to make it disappear. So you know, it’s almost like you want the room to be a Thermos bottle, keep it cold or keep it hot. (laughter) Like how does the room know?

SB: Interesting analogy.
LS: So, he wanted to wrap the upper part of the room, out of sight beyond the room itself with a 320,000 cubic feet of space, the room was like a horse shoe—

SB: Was that different? Not to interrupt you, but weren’t concert halls at the time sort of, in a different shape, like a fan shape?

LS: Yes, concert halls in the forties [1940s], and fifties [1950], and sixties [1960s] and even the seventies [1970s], were fan-shaped.

SB: And larger.

LS: And larger. And the reason why, and I’ll get back to this double-coupled chamber, the reason why, it’s quite understandable. Halls that were built in Europe for a single purpose, a concert hall, could be built for purely for that purpose, with the stage being designed in an elevated position where the orchestra was on the stage and all they did were concerts. But when this art form came to North America, and they started building these beautiful cultural palaces in North America, not many cities had a hall that was dedicated for just the orchestra. The hall had to be one night for the opera, another week for the ballet, another week for the orchestra—

SB: Multi-purpose.

LS: So, it had to be multi-purpose, that’s correct. And the stage had to be flat, so it that it could be configured for dancers or the orchestra, so you had to bring in risers, take risers out. And as modern building techniques developed where you could start expanding large spaces without putting pillars in the middle, pre-stressed concrete and steel, etcetera, etcetera. And the need for the orchestras or the opera or the dance company to earn more revenue. Earned revenue meant more people in the seats. More people in the seats meant more space.

So, in conjunction with that and technology that permitted that, the rooms became bigger and kind of the fan shape became the choice. And that worked against the best for an acoustical sound. Johnson tried very hard to keep to the kind of shoebox, kind of horse shoe shape. He wrapped the—if you look in the Meyerson, if you look up at the ceiling which is interesting, but the upper part of the walls ah, are a façade of the beautiful I.M Pei design but a screen mesh and the sound goes through it. And the sound goes into this huge double-coupled chamber. It’s a chamber that just doubles the size, and it reverberates with such a warmth that it adds, it just adds, but, you can also shut that space off with these moveable heavy concrete doors that are on hydraulic moving systems, so you can open the space or close the space or adjust the space. So, you can make it a Mahler room, or you could make it a Mozart room just by this technology. And Russell pioneered all of that.

And I think the Meyerson was the greatest of all of his triumphs and certainly spun his career in an upward spiral that existed until he passed away. But it is a wonderful legacy. It was a pleasure to work with him. It was an honor and we became great friends. It’s one of the joys of the career is that every one of the artists I wanted to maintain a lifelong friendship with, I was able to do so. Just—
SB: That takes work, so to be commended that you’ve been able to do that.

LS: Well, I think there was both a generosity of spirit when they came, yet I never found myself falling all over them because of who they were. It was, “There’s a wonderful delicatessen, would you like to go here, would you—what can I do for you?” And it was just treating them, the persona as opposed to the artist and ah, that is so easy to relate to. So when you say it was work, I never felt it was work. It was just kind of more day-to-day fun.

SB: Who were some of the artists you’ve stayed close to?

LS: Harry Belafonte, ah, Jan Peerce, Doc Severinsen, Marvin Hamlisch, Philip Entremont, Victor Borge, very close to Victor, Jackie Parker, Itzhak Perlman, Pinky Zuckerman, on and on. But speaking of some of these great artists, I got Sammy Davis, Jr. to do the first ever pension fund concert he did for an orchestra. I had the privilege and the bittersweet opportunity to do second-last live performance of Jack Benny. He did, in Winnipeg, he did a pension fund concert, where he gave himself without fee and ah, we raised a lot of money for the musicians’ pension fund. Yes, musicians are entitled to a pension—

*Tape 1 ends; Tape 2 begins*

[Tape begins in mid-sentence]

LS: —seven days after Jack Benny did that performance with us, he passed away. And I convinced Harry Belafonte to give a month of his life in 1978, actually December of seventy-seven [1977], in reality when he was as big a star as he ever was in his career to do a cross-Canada tour with Canadian orchestras without fee to raise money for each of the orchestras. And it was my idea and it was my project and I organized it for Canada, culminating in a grand performance in Ottawa where we went back to the prime minister’s residence for a reception. The prime minister was the legendary Trudeau, Pierre Trudeau.

SB: How many orchestras?

LS: Nine.

SB: Nine. How much money, if I might ask?

LS: We raised about a million nine in 1977, which was a lot of money.

SB: A lot of money.

LS: A lot of money. It was a lot of money then.

SB: Yes, sure.

LS: So, I was always on the leading edge of capitalizing it in a wonderful way with the artists. I remember the first time I—I have to tell you two stories about my first year as an orchestra manager in Edmonton [Canada], 1966, sixty-seven [1967]. One of the great tenors of the time was Franco Corelli. So, I phoned his manager and I am so naïve, I am so wet behind the ears. I
asked his manager, I said, “Is Mr. Corelli free on such and such a date?” He said, “Well, he is available, but he is certainly not free.” (laughter) So, then shortly thereafter, I did my first buying trip. I went to New York on behalf of the Edmonton Orchestra. This was in early sixty-seven [1967], to buy a quartet of singers to perform the Messiah in Edmonton. I had a war chest of twenty-five thousand dollars with me. Today, for a quartet, that is a lot of money. But then, it was an enormous amount of money. So, I walk into the agent’s office and we sit down, and I am meeting him for the first time. And he said, “Okay. Mr. Stone, for the Messiah, how much do you want to spend?” And I said, “Twenty-five thousand dollars.” (laughter) He paused and said, “For twenty-five thousand dollars, I can get you the real Messiah.” (laughter)

And I learned then and there that every artist, almost every artist is negotiable. I also learned that I never could best the agent. It got to the point where I understood that when you called an agent, he was, or she was a career-long friend. From the minute you said hello, they knew how hungry you were or how desperate you were. They were often cooperative. But every time you ended the conversation, and you think boy, did I get a deal. You know what, they got the deal.

SB: (laughing) It was mutual, which is always nice, of course.

LS: The biggest experience in terms of money that I ever had with respect to an artist goes back to the [Morton H.] Meyerson Symphony Center [Dallas, Texas]. We were going to do a fortnight, and indeed we did a fortnight opening, and the chairman of the board was enamored with Barbara Streisand. And we were going to do a choral evening, a chamber evening, a great orchestral evening. Van Cliburn was going to be the soloist on one of the evenings. [Mstislav] Rostropovich was also the recital. Leyontine Price did a recital. And we wanted to do a pops evening, and the chairman wanted Barbara Streisand. And at the time, her music director for live concerts, and she hadn’t done any in years, was Marvin Hamlisch. So we thought if Marvin asked her to do this, she would do this.

Now, she had reached a point in her career, she was not concertizing. She was either directing and starring in film or doing recordings. So we flew Marvin to Dallas, and had a conversation along the following lines. “Marvin, is there anything that we could do that would so impress her that she would say ‘yes’ to this invitation?” Because we thought we could set any price ticket we wanted, a thousand dollars a ticket—

And he said, “Her son is studying archaeology at a university in Israel. So if you could do something related to that, that just might peak her interest.” So, we decided we would endow a chair at the—I think her son’s name was Jason and he was a product of her marriage to Elliot Gould.

SB: Correct.

LS: And we were prepared to pay all of her expenses and whatever fee she wanted and endow a chair up to half a million dollars at the university in Israel, and to name it the Jason Gould Chair of Archaeology. Marvin flew to LA [Los Angeles] to make the proposal. And here is the conversation as the chairman called me back. He said, “I just got a call from Marvin. He’s in the limousine driving back to the airport. He has visited with Barbara, and he made the proposal.” And I said, “What happened?” He said, “He thinks she cried, and said ‘no’”.

SB: Oh, gosh. (laughter) Why? She just didn’t want to do a concert?
LB: I guess she didn’t want to do a concert. But now I am reminded of an even larger offer I once made in my career. We are getting ready to open up the Meyerson, and we want to introduce a summer festival and we wanted to give it a different look, a different feel. And we had engaged Pinkus Zuckerman to become the artistic director of the summer festival. And I persuaded the board, and it didn’t take a lot of persuasion, that I want the authorization to approach Leonard Bernstein’s people and offer a million dollars for five concerts over a five-year period, either at the opening of the festival or the closing of the festival. I felt that if I had Bernstein as part of it, this thing would fly without any question.

So, I got on the phone to his agent, and I made the offer. And there was a long pause, and I said, “Harry, are you there?” And he said, “Oh, yes, Leonard, I am here.” And I said, “Did you hear what I proposed?” And he said, “Yes.” And I said, “I’m thinking that it is such a large and generous offer that you have passed out and you are just pulling yourself off the—” And he said, “No, I didn’t pass out.” And I said, “It’s probably the biggest conducting offer Mr. Bernstein has ever had.” And he said, “Not really.” Some Japanese people offered him several times that to do a concert in I think a ballpark and he turned that down.

SB: Oh.

LS: So, I said, “I guess I am not in the running.” And he said, “I guess you’re not in the running.”

SB: Oh, no.

LS: So, you know when I started out my career spending three thousand, five thousand for an artist and only twenty-thousand for [Luciano] Pavarotti, and here I am prepared to do half a million dollars for a night for Barbara, and a million for five concerts with Bernstein, things did change. But after all, it was forty years. It was a lot of time for things to change.

SB: Sure.

LS: I was on the cutting edge of so many things. People might be angry to hear that I was the first guinea pig for the use of the telephone to sell season tickets. That is not commonly known.

SB: Please elaborate on that.

LS: My guru, my mentor, was a chap by the name of Danny Newman, in Chicago, and as the time of this recording, to the best of my knowledge, Danny is still with us. He would be in his mid-to-late eighties, probably late eighties. He was the inventor of the junk mail brochure. He is the one who determined that you had to get in people’s face and you had to mail them again and again and again. Then he determined that if they won’t respond to mail, then you have to call them. And since you knew who you were mailing, then you researched the phone number. And he had been looking for a willing victim who believed in this idea.

And so, in the mid-sixties [1960s], when I’m running the Winnipeg Symphony, he contacts me and I said yes to the idea, not that I believed in it or understood what could happen, because I was desperate to turn my season tickets activity around. So, I went to my board, because it meant establishing a phone room and hiring people. But more importantly, it meant invading
people’s space, calling their home, interrupting them and when are you going to call? At
dinnertime. Why at dinnertime? Because you know that they are there.

SB: They are home.

LS: And I remember the responses around the board table. You might sell funeral plot over the
phone, you might sell aluminum siding over the phone, you might sell a term life insurance
policy. You are never going to sell culture. Well, in fact, we did 60 percent of our sales that
year were over the phone, and now it is absolutely essential.

SB: Was that a first?

LS: Yes it was a first.

SB: Were you really the first? How did he hear about you?

LS: He had been given a grant by Canada’s equivalent of the National Endowment for the Arts
called the Canada Council, to service Canadian arts organizations. So, they provided him with
lists of theater companies, symphonies, so on and so forth.

SB: I see.

LS: And we became great friends and he was with me right up until the end of my Dallas days.

SB: In my interview with Judi Lisi [President, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center], she
mentions him as well, in a different context. Evidently, he began the whole concept of
subscription sales.

LS: He, yes—subscription sales did exist but in a minor way, because most arts organizations, if
you go back far enough in history of the orchestra in Florida, but generally, so much was taken
for granted. The subscription brochure was—could fit into a number nine envelope. It was
something you could stuff into a jacket pocket or a lady could fit it into her purse. It was a series
of lists of here is what we are doing on such and such a date. Newman made it like a *People*
magazine or a *Time* magazine. He introduced color. He introduced exaggerated wording. He
was a hard sell.

SB: So, he was a marketing person.

LS: He was a marketing person. I remember in Winnipeg, an English teacher at a high school
used to call me and ask if I could send her one hundred brochures. Well, one year, two years, the
third year—ah, McAllister was her name. I said, “Miss McAllister,” I said, “May I ask you what
you do with these brochures?” She said, “Oh, absolutely, I use them as examples as bad, bad
grammar, bad English.”

SB: Oh!

LS: And it suddenly occurred to me that we were using hype and double entendres. I had a dual
piano team that we described as two for the price of one. She said, “That was so crass.”

SB: (laughing) However effective.
LS: And effective. If you look at Newman’s book, which is considered the Bible of subscriptions entitled *Subscribe Now*, and Judy Lisi would be very familiar with it. I am one of a half a dozen people he focuses on who he focuses on, my brochure that he helped me produce, and some of the successes we had. Well, in Dallas, early in my Dallas career, now that there is a new technology called fax [facsimile], I thought, “Wouldn’t it be nice if we could give people—they have the opportunity to subscribe by mail. Now, we are calling them. How about they fax us? And people said, “They are not going to do it.”

Well, the first time we introduced that on a brochure and it got into the mail at the end of the week, we said that the fax lines were open on the weekend, and when we came into the marketing office on Monday morning, you had to push the door because the paper was just sprawled out and the fax machine was empty and the light was blinking—hundreds of orders had come in by fax. So, I think I was one of the early pioneers of the junk mail brochure, of the telephone calling of the fax. And now everyone, of course everyone, is into e-commerce and the iPod generation of marketing and who knows where it goes from here? I am no longer involved, but—

SB: But speaking about where it goes from here, you did have another tenure before the Florida Orchestra.

LS: Yes, I had a life-changing experience in Dallas. And it had to do—it occurred to me in the Meyerson Hall. Leyontine Price was singing, a great Metropolitan Opera star, and she—in a solo recital. And this is in May of 1991. The building opened up in 1989. And she finishes the note, and closes her mouth and I keep on hearing the ringing in my ear, my right ear. And I say to myself, “These acoustics are unbelievable.” But I shouldn’t still be hearing that a half-hour later in the parking garage. I still have this ringing. Well, to make a long story short, I had a tumor called an acoustic neroma wrapped around the hearing nerve in the brain stem and I had to have two major brain surgeries over a period of twenty-eight days. And I lost most of the hearing in my right ear. I have just a bit. But while I was in the hospital recovering, I determined that I had jumped as high as I could for the Dallas Orchestra, and I no longer wanted to be in the orchestra business. I wanted to be a consultant and set up a consulting company. And so I ended my career, which was a terrific career and perhaps in a sense one of the highlights of my life, with that orchestra in January 1993—

SB: It was fourteen years.

LS: Fourteen years, a long tenure. My tenures tended to be long with the exception of two—four of them were long, Winnipeg was eleven. Dallas was fourteen. Edmonton was seven and—I’m sorry, Calgary where I went to Edmonton, ah, after I went to Dallas. I’ll get my geography straight, and came back here almost eight. I set up this consulting company, and I got this phone call from Calgary. Well, as a native Canadian, I am now a dual citizen of both the United States and Canada. I’m always interested in what’s going on in Canada. I answered the call and I thought they wanted to engage me as a consultant and they would have been my first Canadian client. I had no shortage of clients.

Well, when I went up there, it didn’t take long to realize that they wanted me to move back to Canada and run that orchestra. And, I guess I will without being too chagrined say I did it because of an obnoxious amount of money they were prepared to give me. They made me the
highest paid arts director in Canada. The job was not worth the money they were paying. They said they wanted the man. So, I spent a little over seven years in Calgary. It was a fascinating experience. The city was on fire. Oil prices were going through the roof. That’s the oil capital of Canada.

SB: I see.

LS: Neat little orchestra. And it gave me the opportunity to bring them a new conductor, Hans Graf, who is now the music director of the Houston Symphony. And it was a gorgeous place to live, you know, beside the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper. However, just to bring the story to conclusion with respect to geography, Debbie’s parents live in Long Boat Key—

SB: Debbie is your—

LS: —my wife, in Long Boat Key, Florida. And one day, in Calgary, in June of 1999, my secretary said, “There is a gentleman from Tampa on the phone. His name is Ray Murray. He’d like to speak to you.” And she said, “You know who he is?” I said, “No.” Well, that conversation went for ninety minutes and ah, I knew then that this was going to be a very special relationship between that person and me. And it was an invitation to explore the opportunity to take over the orchestra here. And because of the close proximity to Debbie’s parents, it made sense. And the fact that as an American, she was anxious to come back, as wonderful as Calgary was.

So, that brought it to a conclusion in terms of it started in Edmonton, I went back to my home city of Winnipeg. My entrée into America in Syracuse, my huge budget and major operation opportunity in Dallas, then returning to my home country for an obnoxious amount of money and then coming back to the States and Florida. Because, well, Florida was Florida. As a child growing up shoveling snow, I used to think of palm trees in Florida. To finally get this opportunity. To come back to an absolutely wonderful orchestra. And I knew Jahja Ling, because—who was then the music director, because I had engaged him twice in Dallas.

SB: To what extent was your wife Debbie an influence? In that decision, as well—in thinking about the orchestra.

LS: Well, without mincing words, after the conversation with Mr. Murray, I called her on the phone and said, “Debbie, I just got off the phone with the chairman of the Florida Orchestra.” And she said, “Yes.” (laughter) And I said, “Don’t you want to know where in Florida?” And she said, “Florida.” So, she was very much an influence. And when I told her a little more than an hour away from her parents, she was thrilled.

SB: That’s wonderful.

LS: Calgary was probably was not too happy, because I had just signed a long-term contract. We had just built a house. But they were very gracious and we—

SB: Would you like to tell us a bit about your wife. Where you met her and—
LS: Well, yes, I would like to tell you how I met Debbie. I had been divorced for about two-and-a-half years, in Dallas, and I had been dating a lady, a lovely lady. But the dating became extended and it wasn’t serious. And one November, on November of ninety [1990], the official photographer from Neiman Marcus and he said that the store had bought a table at an event called Art for Arts Sake Ball, and would I like to come as their guest? And I said, “Yes, I would.” I said, “However, I don’t think I have an escort in my mind for a black tie event, so perhaps I’ll say no.” And they said, “No, no. Come alone. We want to have you.” And I said, “Fine.” So, about four days before the event, the host called me and said that his date had a girlfriend who was unattached. Would I mind if they invited her to fill out the table? And I said, “No, absolutely not, I wouldn’t mind at all”, but on the condition that I didn’t have to pick her up or take her home. I was going to be at the table. So, when I came to the table, Table 67, it was in the Fairmont Hotel, huge downtown Dallas hotel, with several ballrooms. And it was on a weekend where high schools were graduating and the place was just filled. No, it couldn’t have been graduation, because it was November.

But anyhow, there were balls going on in the three ballrooms. So, I come to the table and I look and see these two rather stunning looking women, and I say, “Well, things are looking up. One of them is going to be mine (laughter).” So, we sat down and everybody introduced to everybody and the lady they had called to fill up who was kind of my table date turned out to be stunning, beautiful but uninteresting as a person. Cared not to talk, cared not about what I was doing. Didn’t ask any questions. And about half an hour into the dinner, got up to excuse herself and never returned.

SB: Oh my goodness.

LS: I guess I was pretty dull or the evening was dull and she left. Well, the table host who had put this all together, felt so embarrassed that he absented himself for about an hour, going all over the hotel looking for her, during which time, his date, who ultimately turned out to be my future wife (laughter), and I started talking. And I found her fascinating and interesting. And I think she found me interesting. And I that is how I met Debbie.

SB: Isn’t that a great story? I don’t think I’ve ever heard that. Very much. Now the two of you have no children together.

LS: No. I have four children from my first marriage, but Debbie is about as wonderful and as appropriately involved stepmother as you can imagine for the four children and the grandchildren.

SB: Would you like to talk about your children?

LS: I’d be delighted. As of this recording, I have three sons and a daughter. And will have no more (laughter), as a matter of fact. My oldest son and his family live in Oregon. He has two children and he is a doctor of toxicology. He’s a professor at Oregon State University. My daughter has two children in Denver, and she and her husband own a very trendy coffee shop. She is the associate publisher and advertising director for a very successful Denver magazine called Fifty-two Eighty. My middle son, he and Jen, his wife, have a daughter. And he lives in Dallas and he is the digital online creative director for Dr Pepper and their advertising. And my youngest son, Daniel, about to be engaged, so he tells me, to Samantha, whom we adore, is in
Austin and he and his partner have a magazine publication called *Study Breaks* that is available in many southwestern universities. It’s about what’s going on for college kids, and they come out seven times a year. It’s colleges.

SB: How interesting.

LS: They were all exposed to music, but none of them are involved in music. Some of them go to concerts. But they are all different, which excites me, and they are interesting, because they are different. And, we have traveled together; we’ve enjoyed together; we’ve celebrated together and they are a joy of my life.

SB: Well, that is wonderful. Thank you for sharing that about them. It really obviously adds to knowing more about you. I think we’ll kind of end here, if that is okay, Leonard.

LS: That’s fine.

SB: And you have graciously agreed to do a second session, at which time we will explore your tenure with the Florida Orchestra—

LS: I’d be—

SB: Obviously, a very meaningful community commitment and contribution as well.

LS: I’d be delighted to do that.

SB: Well, thank you so much.

**Tape 2, Side 1 ends; Tape 3, Side 1 begins**

SB: Today is January 8, and this is the second interview of Leonard David Stone who was formally head of the Florida Orchestra, and Leonard, thank you again for all the time we have spent.

LS: It’s a pleasure, Suzette.

SB: We really appreciate it. We agreed per the last interview that we would begin with your tenure of the Florida Orchestra. We’ve talked about what you’ve done in the past, and it is so impressive. What brought you to Tampa?

LS: If I had to point a finger at somebody, it would have to be the late Skitch Henderson. He initiated the idea. I was in Calgary, where I had just signed a new long term contract with that orchestra. Calgary is in Canada. My wife and I had just built a house, and our plan was to stay there for several more years. Debbie’s parents had been living in Florida for about a decade at the point where I am going to begin the story, which is July 1999. My secretary said “There is a man on the phone by the name of Ray Murray calling from Tampa, Florida. He’d like to speak to you.” I said to Joyce, “Do you know who Ray Murray is?” And she said, “No,” and I said, “Well, I don’t either.” And he introduced himself as the chair of the Florida Orchestra and he said that they were in the early stages of a search for a new executive director and their pops music director at the time was the late Skitch Henderson. And Ray asked Skitch if, he, Skitch,
could recommend some people that the orchestra might visit with as part of the search. And Skitch said, “Start with Leonard Stone, and you won’t have to go any further.” At least that is what Skitch and Ray both tell me. And he said, “So, I would like to talk to you about being the new executive director of the Florida Orchestra.” And I said, “Well, are you offering it to me right here on the telephone?” And he said, “No,” he said, “We have to go through phases of the search, but can we talk?” And we talked for ninety minutes. And you know you can’t have a conversation with someone for ninety minutes if it is not meaningful at some point.

SB: Sure.

LS: And it was very meaningful. I liked him. I liked what he had to say. And I knew that the orchestra had challenges. You couldn’t be in this industry as long as I have been without knowing that this orchestra had its challenges. It had name changes. But the thought of coming to Florida was very appealing a because my wife’s parents lived in Florida, and as a Canadian growing up shoveling snow in the winter time (laughter), I would actually think about palm trees and ah, warmer climates. And I always had a feeling about the gentility of the climate at least in Florida, which I still do, I might add.

SB: (murmurs agreement)

LS: So we agreed that we would talk again on the following Sunday, so I said goodbye, called my wife immediately, and this is exactly as the conversation occurred. I said, “Debbie, I have just gotten off the phone with the chairman of the Florida Orchestra,” and she said, “Yes.” I said, “Don’t you want to know where in Florida?” (laughter) She said, “Florida.” I said, “It’s only an hour above your parents.” She said, “For sure.” (laughter) And so by the time Ray called two days later, Debbie and I had already figured out our strategy that we were going to take to the chairman of the Calgary Philharmonic, who was so gracious about you know, championing an extension, a long-term extension of our contract. And the end of the story is that when we were talking on Sunday, which did not go ninety minutes, but it was a pretty healthy conversation. Most of the conversation occurred during a thunderstorm.

Now Calgary is on the edge of the Canadian Rockies [mountain chain], and our home was on a ridge of land leading to the Bow Valley, and not long before Ray and I finished the conversation, the rain stopped and a double rainbow crossed the valley. And I said to Ray, “This must be an omen, there’s a gorgeous rainbow. There are two of them, one for me, one for you.” And he said, “It’s bashert.” I said, “Mr. Murray, that is a Jewish expression.” And he said, “Yes, I know.” I said, “Well, do you know what it means?” And he said, “Yes, fated to happen.” And so, in our minds, this was going to happen, but then I had to go the procedure. I had to meet the committee. I had to meet the players. I had to meet the board. And I did all of that on three trips through August and September and October.

And one morning, where it was already getting chilly in Canada, frost on the ground in October, ah, pretty close to Halloween, I got the call. And I can’t use exactly the explicit colorful language. But it went something like this. He said, “You were the unanimous choice of the search committee. You were the unanimous choice of the players. You were the unanimous choice of the executive and the unanimous choice of the board, so if you screw it up, you know
whose fault it is.” (laughter) And then he went on to say—we arrived here on the twentieth of January.

SB: Now in that week between the two conversations, I’m curious. I have to ask, Did you do research about the Florida Orchestra or did you already know about it?

LS: I had a pretty good—the Calgary Orchestra budget was in the same category as this orchestra, Florida Orchestra, so I had a pretty good file of ah, American Symphony League statistics and brochures and online news stuff from the league there in the news online service. So I knew quite a bit. I only made one call relevant to it. And it was to a former employee of mine, Doug Kinsey, who had been with me in all my years in Dallas, and it was to ask Doug if he thought a turnaround in subscriptions could occur in a symphony orchestra that was fragmented by the Bay, in three different locations. He cautioned me that, from his vantage point, and by then he was a premier consultant in the field, which he still is, from his vantage point, that would probably be if not the biggest challenge, among the biggest challenges I would face.

SB: That’s very interesting.

LS: And he referred to it as the identity crisis. He said, “You know who owns this orchestra, and to whom does it belong?” He said, “If you remember Leonard, I grew up in Gainesville.” He said, “But people ask me where I was from and said your orchestra is the Florida Orchestra. Where in Florida?” And it was a valid viewpoint then, and I am sorry to say it is still a valid viewpoint.

SB: How unique is the three city situation in terms of orchestras?

LS: There are two other orchestras that function in a way like the Florida Orchestra. The New Jersey Symphony. While its offices and its main hall are in Newark, it has series in Princeton, New Brunswick, Redbanks, and it is viewed by the state as their orchestra hence the New Jersey Symphony, not the Newark Symphony, and they get the largest single chunk of one kind of funding [that] comes from the state because they are statewide. Similarly, the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra. They have Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. And they tour the state as well, and they get a large grant.

Other than those two, I don’t know of any orchestra that straddles. I go back to thirty years ago, there was a Minneapolis Symphony and a St. Paul Orchestra and just across the Mississippi River one from each other. And they became the Minnesota Orchestra, and St. Paul accepted that they would develop a chamber orchestra which they have, a very fine chamber orchestra. You had Oakland and San Francisco, and Oakland went out of business perhaps twenty years [ago] and has never come back. And there is a San Jose Orchestra. But I don’t think there is anything quite like three geographically independent cities so close to one another, each vying for its own identity.

SB: Well, clearly, it was a factor that you learned from Doug Kinsey and it continues to be a factor.
LS: Yes, and I would characterize that as perhaps one of my two most deeply felt disappointments that I wasn’t able to burst out of the season ticket bubble that the orchestra had. Because, if you remember from our previous conversations, I had huge season ticket gains. And all the magic and schemes and strategies. They just weren’t applicable here. And I just hope that my successor has got a deeper hat and can pull out other rabbits. I’m hoping that. But it was a problem. On the other hand, it has about eight thousand season ticket holders, and that is not all bad.

SB: How does that compare to other orchestras this size? And I would like to discuss the size, the type of orchestra.

LS: There doesn’t appear to be one constant way of counting, and I’ll tell you what I mean by that. An orchestra can have a series of twelve classical concerts. And you can purchase them at units of six, which is the case of the Florida Orchestra. Now the Florida Orchestra doesn’t do what I’m going to tell you some orchestras do. If you purchased twelve, some orchestras say that is two units of six so you are two subscribers, not just one, so you get an inflated number.

So it’s not always possible to know because we have, I think we probably had about a thousand people who had the full Masterworks Series, so by somebody else’s method, you could say that is two thousand people, because you know, there are seven. But now the trend now is clearly the mix and match package. There is no consistent measuring rod as to how many they have because I guess the only way is how many households or how many individuals are subscribing regardless of the size of package.

SB: Subscriptions are down pretty much all over, in all of the art forms, from what I can tell.

LS: Yes, there are bright spots of triumph here there, but on a whole, it appears, and I am not an expert on this, it is just an observation, it appears that what drove people forty and fifty years ago to—the heartfelt meaning of “I have my tickets, my seat, my armrest. This is my night” was special. As a matter of fact, the gentleman who changed our habits of going via a subscription, his name was Danny Newman. He just died in December, 2007 at the age of eighty-eight. He was the subscription guru of the world. He wrote a book entitled Subscribe Now! [1977], which has sold fifty thousand copies. And for a narrow book on the sale of subscriptions, all of the world printed in I think, fourteen different languages, and I am pleased to say that he used his work with me in Canada when I managed the Winnipeg Symphony for some of the book. I didn’t know at the time, that we were being used as a guinea pig. You are sitting across the table now from one of the people who helped introduced the idea of telemarketing in the arts. So when you get a—

SB: That’s impressive, Leonard, my gosh.

LS: —telephone call in the middle of the night that interrupts you, you can blame Leonard.

SB: Or three or four.
LS: I remember when I brought that idea to the board of the Winnipeg Symphony in 1967, seventy-seven [1977], eighty-seven [1987], ninety-seven [1997], 2007, that was forty years ago. You notice I was counting on my fingers. (laughter) I can remember to this day the answers I got. You can sell funeral plots over the phone, you might sell aluminum siding, you might do term life insurance; bet you could sell a swamp in Florida for a home. But to the arts, never. Well, it reached a point, I would say about a decade ago, where the majority were being sold and renewed on the phone. It used to annoy me when people I would know, were subscribers and loved us, and hadn’t renewed and when you challenged them, they would say, “We are waiting for the phone call.”

SB: Wow, that is interesting.

LS: Well, Suzette, I do have one experience to share with you. In Syracuse, when I introduced the idea of calling, and periodically I would go into the calling room to look at the charts, just to review and see what is going on. And one of our callers had been calling a lady. I knew nothing about this lady other than there were about a couple dozen calls. And I’m thinking that is such a waste of time. And I decided I was going to call and see if I could bring it to a head or shut it down. And I finally asked her, and I can’t remember her name of course, and this was 1979, February 1979. And I said, “Well, are you going to subscribe?” And she said, “No.” (laughter) And I said, “Why have you been telling the callers to call you at such a time on such a night, that you are thinking about.” She said, “I am all alone, and I was lonely. And this is only communication that I have.” I felt so sad.

SB: Oh, how interesting.

LS: And I actually said this to her, “May I call you from time to time?” and I did. Ah, you know, this is the story you think of, well one day you read an obituary in the paper that so and so had passed away and left five million dollars to the orchestra because somebody cared enough to call.

SB: You never know.

LS: But you know, we were providing therapy to this lady.

SB: That is really interesting.

LS: Subscriptions are down, even though virtually all arts organizations offer exchange rights to different days, different days, different times seems difficult. The average subscription now in the United States, is down to less than six.

SB: Oh, my.

LS: And what is frightening—I remember in Dallas, the main line series was twenty-one. Then we refined it down to fourteen, so you could twenty-one or fourteen. Then we made it seven, so you could do twenty-one, fourteen or seven. And this very same Doug Kinsey said to me, he said, you know, “Where do we go from seven? To four? From four to nothing?” You know, we
are giving people a way to get out. And they are getting out, on the basis that they will wait for the review. If the review is great, they will go.

SB: You really do think the review is that meaningful?

LS: I do think the review is that meaningful. What is hurtful to the orchestra, the Florida Orchestra and every other orchestra is that it’s like taking the raisins out of the cake and leaving you with the crumbs. They will buy or only go for the tickets for blockbuster concerts, which you can sell anyhow. You need them for all the concerts. And that isn’t happening.

SB: How unique is the Florida Orchestra in offering an exchange situation. In other words, if I purchase six tickets, and I can’t go this one night, I can exchange it for pretty much any other concert.

LS: You can, what the Florida Orchestra has, and I don’t know whether this is a benefit or not. If you want to go and see that concert, but can’t go the night you have the tickets, you can go on two other occasions, but you have to go to a different city. And to some people that seems to be a challenge, and to other people, you know, crossing the bay for me was day-to-day business.

SB: Sure.

LS: I just didn’t think anything of it.

SB: But can you then—if I can’t go that weekend at all, may I change that ticket for another concert?

LS: Yes. Yes, you can.

SB: Is that unique?

LS: Not any more. If it was here—if it wasn’t placed before I came, and the marketing director who was here when I came, and I am proud to say, her name was Jeanette Hicken, was very savvy and she knew what she was doing. And this was a way of making it as easy and as accessible without as many difficulties. The concern now, is that with so much e-commerce going on, if you take a look at the age range of the orchestra’s audience, it tends to be a more mature audience, and their comfort or lack of comfort with technology (inaudible). But I would dare to say another generation now, 80 or 90 percent will be ordered on line.

SB: What is the percentage now, just roughly?

LS: I would say maybe 10 percent.

SB: Okay.

LS: I remember when I first heard that tickets were going to be computerized, I was horrified. I wanted to be able to hold a bunch of tickets. Now the tickets are on a hard disk in a machine, sitting somewhere else.
SB: Incredible.

LS: But it does change.

SB: The single ticket buyers, is it conceivable that—you know, especially younger people don’t make a decision as to their activity for that particular weekend or that particular night, even. And you know, they want to make a last minute decision. Are the single ticket sales making up for the loss of subscription?

LS: It’s a real good question. On rare occasions, certainly, when you have the repertoire that people want to hear, the soloist people want to see, but on average, I would say no. You have to hit it—I used to have a rule of thumb, and I still think it’s a good rule of thumb. When you open up your campaign for a particular night or event, if you can’t get 10 percent of your box office in your first day, trouble in River City, you know, it’s not going to happen. And most of that time, I found that to be the case. I remember early in my career, I was told by a treasurer, “Leonard, you are never going to win. If it sold well, somebody’s going to say it was always going to sell well; you didn’t have to spend that money. If it didn’t sell well, somebody is going to say you should have spent more money.” But the fact of the matter is that history shows me, that if it doesn’t get out of the box right away, throwing more money at it is not going to help solve the problem.

SB: That’s interesting. Very interesting. Obviously, you had some very unique situations here, and I don’t know which ones you encountered after you got here. Would you like to reflect on that?

LS: Yes, situations that I never had in any of the other areas, I was always landlocked. I never had to deal with the hurricane and the threat of that. I never had to concern about a traffic crash on a causeway. But it’s interesting, with the technology available, with the musicians sitting in the midst of sixty cars sprawled on the causeway, calls and says, you know, “I’m not going to be there by the time the concert goes.” And I remember Jeff Woodruff who was the orchestra general manager at the time, said, “Well, if you’re sitting on the highway, play the violin over the phone and phone it in.” (laughter) That always did concern me, and I always—when I’d be backstage before the concert, I am watching the personnel manager counting, because about 40 percent of the musicians lived in Tampa. Almost an equal amount in St. Petersburg, and very few lived in Clearwater. But the rest lived elsewhere.

SB: Elsewhere (agreeing).

LS: And a lot of traveling to get to—and the unknown. So the threat of hurricane, when the hurricanes three years ago, that was when we had four—let’s date that for the listener, that would be 2005. They started mid-summer and we had two of them by the time concert time opened up. We cancelled some outdoor concerts. We cancelled some subscription concerts.

One of the funniest, didn’t seem funny at the time—my first year here, Jahja Ling was music director and we were doing the Beethoven Ninth at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, and
of course, everybody is waiting for that glorious fourth movement, and with this great master chorale, which is a blessing to have a chorus of that caliber. And Jahja is in his element, conducting his one hundred and forty piece chorus, this wonderful orchestra, this soloist. And they just start the choral aspect of the fourth movement and the fire alarms go off in Tampa Bay, in the Performing Arts Center. And they are loud. They are meant to be loud and they proved their point. And of course, we stopped, and we ah—I ran backstage, as did my marketing director and Mr. Woodruff and we said to the house manager, Mike Shimon, I said, “Can’t you turn them off?” And he said, “It has to recycle out, and then have a time when it is aware that there is no fire (laughter), so then it will settle down, Something tripped it off. We don’t know.” So Mr. Woodruff went on the microphone from back stage and said, “We are going to try and reschedule the concert within a fifteen minute period and if not, we will offer a refund for those—and not go through with the concert. About fourteen minutes into it, the alarm stopped.

SB: Oh, my goodness.

LS: But by then, some people had lost faith—

SB: Oh my goodness. That’s memorable.

LS: —it was a huge shock. Arguably the most glorious piece ever written, the Beethoven Ninth, and ring, ring, ring, this thing goes off. (laughter)

(noise on tape)

SB: Well, Leonard that is really interesting. Tell us about catastrophes. How does that rate with other catastrophes?

LS: Well, you know, as if it isn’t difficult enough to raise the money, have the orchestra cohesively brought together, the right conductor, the right soloist and you have a successful marketing campaign. And most of those things are within your control. Because you are making choices. But then there are things that aren’t in your control. And I remember one night in Winnipeg, Canada, the house manager of the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall comes running back stage and he says, “You are going to see a lot of police and a lot firemen running around the hall. We’ve had three bomb threats about the concert tonight.”

And that had never happened to me before. You know, you always think about it, what would you do? And ah, we had to lock down the facility. I had to go out on stage and tell everybody that there is a facility problem that’s being worked out. And as I was talking, but they are going to see firemen running around and police running around, and I said, “There’s been a threat to the facility, and we just have to secure it.” Well, I actually went to bomb threat school. I actually took two evening, a two-evening course run by Civil Defense, what to do, you know.

SB: Was this required?

LS: No, it was available. And I thought—I only had it one other time in my career. And, ah, how to get on the stage, and how to get people not to panic and to get up and to leave and not to
trample each other and do more damage. They are almost inevitably hoaxes and you don’t know if it somebody who hated the orchestra and for some reason or other wanted to interfere or interrupt the process. It wasn’t a catastrophe for me, but it was for the person I am going to talk about. Somebody died in the middle of a concert in the second balcony of the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall. And Canada has an interesting little service called St. John Ambulance. They are paramedics trained, volunteers, and they go to all public events. And these four paramedics lifted on a stretcher, while a concert was going on—

SB: Oh, my goodness.

LS: The orchestra members told me that they were absolutely aware of this stretcher being carried out of the balcony. And when I came backstage after the concert was over, I went to Maestro Gamba, and told him what happened and he said, “Was the music that bad?” (laughter) I’ve had snowstorms develop that prevented artists from coming, that prevented artists from leaving. I sent the Metropolitan Opera Baritone Morley Meredith from downtown Winnipeg to the airport on a Skidoo, a snow sled, because he had to get—the planes were flying, you just couldn’t get to the airport. And I had somebody take him—I mean, three-foot snowfall and the streets were clogged. I’ve had floods stop concerts, not during the middle of a concert, but backing up into the concert hall so you couldn’t perform. I had two Israelis, a soloist and a conductor, and I had a call to my home personally, which I thought was interesting, from a person who identified themselves from a radical Arab group.

SB: When was this?

LS: This was in Calgary, this was in the late nineties [1990s], and we had substantial amount of security. Perhaps people in the Tampa Bay area aren’t aware of the amount of security we had around our facilities for the first month after 9/11 [September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks], but we did.

SB: What type? You mean—

LS: Both uniformed and plain clothed people.

SB: That’s very interesting.

LS: If you remember, we performed the National Anthem several—usually, orchestras perform the National Anthem at the beginning and the end of the season. We performed it for several weeks, and the audience needed it and felt good about it. We had the flags on the side of the stage. Perhaps one of my most unusual situations and it wasn’t so much a catastrophe, but it was a mindset at the time in Winnipeg. My private office had an entry into the general office and then a door that went out privately to a hallway. So I could come into my office without going through the general office. My private door opens, and my secretary comes in and she says, “There are two plains clothes Royal Canadian mounted police sitting in the outer office. They want to visit with you; I just want you to know.” (laughter) And ah, I have no idea what she thought or why they were coming. But it turned out that—well, we had the great Russian cellist, who died in 2007, Mstislav Rostropovich. Perhaps in his time, the greatest classical music alive,
then. Composers wrote for him. He was a giant and a humanist, challenged the Soviet system and he won.

But in any event, they came into the office, and one of them walked up to my telephone and this was before I had a push button, this was the old dial, and he dialed three times and he said, “Can you count clicks?” And I knew right away, he’s going to ask me to spy. And I said, “I’ve never done that before.” And he said, “Do you think you can do that?” And I said, “Why?” He said, “Well you’ve got these”—he called them Ruskies. I had Rostropovich, and about two months later Vladimir Ashkenazy, two of the greatest cellist, pianist, greatest artists of their time. And he said, “We want to know where they go, who they meet with and if they make any phone calls.”

SB: Oh, my goodness.

LS: I said, “You’ve got to be kidding.” And interestingly enough, Suzette, I even know the man I called. I might not be sitting here across from you if I didn’t do what I’m going to tell you I did next. I said, “Can I excuse myself for a minute?” They said, “Sure.” I went into another office, and I got Barry McFadden, the orchestra’s attorney, on the phone, and I said, “Barry, I’ve just been asked to spy on these two Soviet artists we’ve got coming by the RCMP.” And his response was really interesting, he said, “Leonard, who knows who asked them to do it? Let’s assume it was the Americans, and one day, you may wish to go to America or move to America. And you don’t want anything in your file that shows you weren’t cooperative. Cooperate with them.” And it sent a chill through me. And I said, “Okay, I’ll try to. I don’t think I can count.” You know I don’t have hearing in one ear, now, but then I had good hearing in both ears. I said, “I don’t know if I can count, but I’ll kind of keep my eye on him.”

So, we had a great weekend with him. He was a great human being. And about a week after, they called me, and they said, “Did he have any unusual visitors?” I said, “No.’ He said, “Did he leave the hotel when he wasn’t with the orchestra?” I said, “As far as I know, once.” He said, “Where did he go to?” I said, “He went to church.” He said, “Which church?” I said, “The Russian Orthodox Church on Mountain and Main Street.” He said, “Well, what hotel is he at?” I said, “Downtown at the Fort Garry [Winnipeg Hotel].” He said, “Well, that’s about four and half miles away.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Well, did he drive?” I said, “He walked.” This was mid-February—I said, “But he’s a Russian, you know, winter, so what?” They didn’t bother me about the other one, Ashkenazy. But, ah, they wanted me to spy.

SB: That’s very interesting.

LS: I felt that I didn’t. I just answered the questions asked. But I had a wonderful experience the year after with Rostropovich. We had him again, and he then he did a solo recital the day after and it was the twenty-third of December. And a couple days before Christmas. We had a private dinner party at the home of the chairman of the board, a gentleman with a fascinating name, Harding St. George Brock-Smith [Harding St John Brock-Smith]. Doesn’t get more British than that. We had lots of vodka for Rostropovich—after every, you know, pinching, hugging—he loved the ladies, I can tell you that. He said, he referred to me as Leonexcha, an affectionate, charming, he always pinched me, “Leonexcha, can I make long distance call?” I looked at
Brock, and of course. Well, there wasn’t direct dialing then, this was the early kind of seventies [1970s']. And the call, he wanted to call Moscow. And he wanted to call [Dmitri] Shostakovich.

SB: Oh, my goodness.

LS: Because he either lived above Shostakovich or Shostakovich lived before him. And so the call had to go from Winnipeg to Montreal, Montreal to London, London to Helsinki, Helsinki to Moscow. It took a whole series of connections, and they were being dropped, and they finally got through, and he talked. Of course, I don’t know what he said because he talking Russian, but tears were streaming down his cheeks. And when it was all over and he hung up, I said, first of all I couldn’t believe he was talking to Shostakovich, I mean, you know, the composer of our time. I said, “So, what did you talk about?” He said, “Well, in code, we were wishing each other Merry Christmas, and I was crying and he was crying.” And I was imagining these two giants of our time—

SB: Incredible.

LS: Yes. It was just amazing.

SB: Incredible.

LS: I don’t know that, yes, I did have a catastrophe. The first time I ever did an outdoor concert.


LS: No, not in Tampa, in Winnipeg. In a gorgeous park, the Assiniboine Park [Winnipeg], the zoo, the aviary, but we had about fifteen thousand people. This was the most glorious night. This was Labor Day in the mid-seventies [1970s]. Mitch Miller conducting, he had only been off the Sing Along With Mitch [television show, 1960s] show about six years, so he was still popular, it was a free concert, very heavily underwritten, and I went on stage and welcomed everybody. We were so proud of what we had achieved. Within about two minutes, a thunderstorm blew up out of nowhere. And I am on the sound system, appealing to people, “Don’t leave, it’ll pass over.” Well, it was such a record downpour; I think people were being washed. Music was whipped all over, flying over the park and whatnot. And the image everyone had was “Poor Leonard, he looks like a wet chimpanzee, on the stage, appealing to people not to go.” And it was Noah’s flood. So, downpours, snowstorms, bomb threats.

SB: It sounds like you got off pretty easy here, even with the hurricane, even with the, you know, fire scare.

LS: Here we did have, and we did have to get the police involved. And we actually found out who it was. A person, a man, did not like the English accent of our then-marketing director and threatened to do her harm, and very frighteningly so and left considerable messages at the office. And you know the person I am talking to in our office and she was so frightened. And we did trace it down to somebody in a trailer, in a mobile home park, and he was visited and made
aware of the fact that this was tantamount to a threat, that this was actionable. It never happened again.

SB: That’s very interesting.

LS: Yes, so we only lost two park concerts and two regular subscription concerts.

SB: This sort of leads to your duties as executive director. Obviously, you are where the buck stops.

LS: Yes.

SB: And I think the listener would want to know the other responsibilities that you have, or had.

LS: If you break the orchestra down in terms that you are putting an event on the stage, and there has to be a group that is responsible for the physical aspect. Assembling the musicians, the music that is in front of them, the facility where they rehearse, the facility where they perform. That logistical stuff, then breaking that down and hauling it across the Bay to another concert hall and after that breaking it down and taking it yet a third, that’s a massive logistical operational end. Then there is a unit that does nothing but sell what’s on the stage, so the marketing end, from single tickets to subscription tickets, to promotion, advertising, feature stories, the patron service, taking care of the season ticket holder, the single ticket buyer, putting all of that mechanism in place. And then there is [a] unit that raises money to help support all of, because a ticket barely covers 45 percent, sad to say that it has reached that point in the margin. And so you’ve got the—

SB: Is that the norm all over the country?

LS: No, that is not the norm all over the country. In the larger orchestras, the orchestras whose budgets are four and five times what the Florida Orchestra is, the percentages are even lower. However, they have endowment funds that are fifteen, twenty, thirty times larger than our endowment fund. So they get it from that aspect, or they—you know the New York Philharmonic, I don’t care what kind of crises can happen to that orchestra, it is an entity of the world. It is going to survive. Orchestras in the middle range are more difficult.

So you have the people who operationally put it on the stage, the people who sell what is on the stage, the people who raise money to make up the difference that tickets don’t cover. And then the administrative wing, including finance and my unit that are an umbrella over all of it, and its relationship to the board, which has the fiduciary legal responsibility, because we are incorporated by the state [of Florida] as a charitable entity. And then just running all the day-to-day financial affairs, accounts payable, receivable, payroll, ah, keeping records of your contributions and so on and so forth. I, as the head of all that, each of these areas has a person in charge and then sub-people reporting to them, the people in charge report to me. So if you take a funnel, they are all in that funnel that comes into the narrow neck and that’s me. You characterize it as the buck stops with me, and there are never enough bucks (laughter).
SB: How large would you say the staff was when you were there?

LS: The staff was thirty-one when I first came and I got it down to twenty-seven. And it is now as we are sitting here speaking on the eighth of January, 2008, the staff is now down to twenty-four.

SB: Okay.

LS: That is a reflection of the challenges—

SB: You refer to this orchestra as like a middle orchestra. Can you explain that?

LS: In the United States, orchestras are categorized in four different areas and it is all budget related. If you have a budget of fifteen million and more, you are category one. Between fifteen and five, which is a large range I might add, is category number two. And Florida Orchestra is in that category because it fits right in the middle. Then it goes down to about a million, one. Then the fourth tier are the community orchestras where, you know, a combination of part time people who teach music in the day time and want to play for the joy of it in the evening, margins could be anywhere from fifty thousand to two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand.

SB: So the category is based on budget versus numbers of musicians even though they are directly related.

LS: They are related and it has nothing to do with quality, interestingly enough.

SB: Okay. That is very interesting.

LS: Although, I would say—

_Tape 3, Side 1 ends, Tape 3 Side 2 begins_

LS: The orchestra can turn quality around with money, and I will give you this example. If somebody goes to a museum and says “We want you to become world-class, and we are going to give you one hundred million dollars to salt your endowment. And let’s say it spins off seven million dollars a year of interest. Go out and become world-class.” Well, the Mona Lisa is not available the last time I inquired. But if you gave the Florida Orchestra that kind of endowment with seven million dollars, the quality of musicians that they could attract by doubling their annual salary—and that is not to demean the quality of this orchestra, this city or these cities, in my judgment, has an orchestra far superior than the amount of dollar support it gets out of this community.

SB: Why is that, do you think?

LS: I think it goes back to a commitment—and I’m not sure if that commitment initially was on purpose or just happened accidently. When the orchestra decided that its first music director was going to be Irwin Hoffman, it was setting a standard immediately. He would not go below a
certain standard. He always—and then he was succeeded by Jahja Ling. Irwin had come from the Chicago Symphony. Jahja from the Cleveland Orchestra and Stefan [Sanderling] had this fabulous experience in Germany. So the board and the management have kind of imposed a minimum standard by the quality of the leader.

SB: Okay, okay.

LS: It’s interesting though, in recruiting musicians, you always want to recruit better. So the people who are there are the lowest quality denominator, as it were. And you want to strive—but their ability to get in is determined by the voting by those who set the first standard.

SB: Would you say that there is a glut of musicians? In other words, are the conservatories kind of cranking out high quality?

LS: Yes, the conservatories and really regarded schools of music that produce finished students who want to make an orchestral career—now they all would like to be soloists in Carnegie Hall, that’s a given. When they are five years old and somebody says, “You are a genius.” But really, they end up in an orchestra. They are producing about three thousand a year for about five hundred openings.

SB: Oh my gosh. For instance, if there is an opening at the Florida Orchestra, say for principal. And again, for the sake of the listener, the principal is the person who leads that section.

LS: Right.

SB: Okay. Say there is an opening for concert master, heads the violin section, first violin. What, how many people would apply?

LS: You picked—

SB: Or you choose another.

LS: Well, for the concert master, in many cases, the conductor already knows who he wants—

SB: Okay.

LS: —so he invites.

SB: I see.

LS: But let’s say you had a principal cello. The cellist who leads the section gets 25 percent more than the minimum wage that is mandated by the contract

SB: Which is approximately what, thirty?

LS: Thirty, let’s use that.
SB: Okay.

LS: And that’s without benefits, without pension, medical plan, social security and all that. And you might get twenty-five to thirty who send in their credentials. Now, virtually all the times in which these ads are run in the International Musicians magazine, which is where we are obliged to run these, there is a line that says “Qualified applicants will be invited.” In other words, you will want to take a look at where [it] is this person studied? Who are the teachers? What experience? Because you have—you can only hear so many in an hour, you only have so many available hours for this. And for woodwind instruments, you generally get more than for string instruments.

SB: Well, that is interesting. Why?

LS: Well, the day that American university football teams start marching the band to violas, (laughter) that will change.

SB: Very interesting.

LS: But now you get flutes coming out the kazoo, clarinets and oboes and what not. So, at the end of the day, while the buck does stop with me. I have to rely that artistically speaking, we have hired a conductor and a support team that are going to make all the decisions.

SB: Is there a—I am sorry to interrupt. Is there a committee and do you get to participate at all?

LS: I have the right to participate in the way which I like least to participate. I have a veto right because of money. I can say, “Sorry, you can’t go in that direction, because financially, I am not going to let you go in that direction.” And you know, you bear the scars for the rest of your career because you couldn’t do that. I mean, Suzette, it is all upside down. When I ran the Winnipeg Symphony in the late sixties [1960s] and most of the seventies [1970s], I had some of the world’s greatest artists. The other night in Sarasota, I was at a dinner party with Itzhak Perlman [violinist]. I reminded him that the first time I hired him, I paid him $2500. And he looked at me with a generous smile, and he said, “I was robbed.” I said, “You really were, because I got two performances from you out of that.” (laughter) He said, “For sure, I was robbed.”

SB: What would he make today?

LS: I don’t think I should say.

SB: No, I just read an article recently that—

LS: Substantially more.

SB: It was pretty substantial. And, but just for the sake-
LS: Not what A-Rod [Alex Rodriguez] makes at the New York Yankees or Roger Clemens [New York Yankees]. But not only was I able to afford artists more freely at that time, they were available; they were more available at that time. And the jet airplane has changed all that, because these great artists would sail from Europe on an ocean liner and do a tour of the colonies as it were. Now they can be here today, and Africa tomorrow, or Australia, and it has changed completely.

That, I think, is the biggest challenge I had, and I think my colleagues in the field would say that as well, is dealing with the board in the right way. How do you motivate the board? How do you respond to the board? When is your silence equal to a no? When someone asks you a question, and you don’t respond, what are you saying to them? Because you are hired by the board, you are responsible to the board. Working with the volunteers, who can’t understand why you can’t do this, this, this or this. Sometimes you can and sometimes you can’t. And knowing that you are not always making the right decision and I know that. But sometimes you just have to make a decision. You don’t want to make one that is wrong, but you just can’t stand still. Although every now and then, just standing still and letting the wind blow by is not such a bad idea.

SB: Would you like to give us some examples? Can you? Is it too close to home?

LS: Yes, yes. No, no. When I first started my career, among the great violinists, the two greatest of the era might have been Jascha Heifetz and Yehudi Menuhin. And if you were in my city in Winnipeg, you would have gotten a brochure that said on the cover of it, “The only time this era ever, anywhere in the same season, Heifetz and Menuhin.” And you would open it up and you would find out it was Jeremy Menehin and Daniel Heifetz. (laughter) Jeremy—Daniel Heifetz was not related to Jascha and Jeremy Menehin was Yehudi Meuhin’s son. And the board made me reprint that brochure. And I knew when I did it, that I was wrong (laughter). I couldn’t resist. The devil made me do it. Right? I couldn’t resist, you know, because who else in the business was going to be able to say that? First of all—

SB: Did it help with ticket sales?

LS: It is so long ago, I can’t remember. Heifetz wasn’t doing concerts anymore, but how did I get? It wasn’t a lie, but it was very misleading. I knew it was the wrong thing to do. I then had a dual piano team, Boyd and McBeckett. And I ran the ad in big letters, “Two for the Price of One”; (laughter) and I knew I shouldn’t have done that, either. And I got my knuckles wrapped. As a matter of fact, I told you about Danny Newman who put verve and life into brochures. He made them breathe, they became interesting. And I would get a call this call from an English teacher at the high school asking if I could send one hundred brochures year after year. And one year, we didn’t get the call and that disturbed me. So I called her, and I thought she was distributing these for potential take home to your parents. And she said, “Well, I’ve been using these as examples of bad grammar and poor English.” She said, “I just decided not to do it anymore.”

SB: You, you—your memory is just beyond belief, Leonard.

LS: But I can’t remember what I had for lunch yesterday.
SB: Oh! Share with us now, you are kind of, you have officially retired from the Florida Orchestra.

LS: I have, as of October 1, 2007.

SB: How do you feel about that?

LS: I had a one-day feeling and it left me at the end of that day. And that was not a very good day feeling. I got up as usual, quite early. I had a lovely breakfast with Ray Murray, the chairman emeritus who had hired me, and we had planned for weeks that that’s what we would do after. And then I went and had a haircut and ran some errands. I was okay, because I was busy, driving here, driving there. I came home about eleven o’clock, and by one o’clock I’m walking around saying, “What am I doing here? (laughter) I don’t belong here.” And I could hardly wait until it got dark and the day was over.

But then I started other initiatives. And I, ah, I can tell you the truth, I do not miss it. I don’t miss the responsibility. I don’t miss the day-to-day challenge. I am thrilled to see that some of the things I left in place, my successor is running very well with them. And that thrills me no end. And I am almost to the point now; let’s see, again, I am counting on fingers, October, November, December, about three-and-a-half months where I am actually starting to sleep beyond 6:30 in the morning.

SB: Oh, that is great. I’m glad for you.

LS: I had lost the ability to do that.

SB: You, you always had the reputation for being very creative, problem solving, actually brilliant, I’ve heard, used as the term, in terms of your creative ways of your promoting—

LS: Keep talking, I don’t want to interrupt this lovely strain of yours.

SB: You shared with me a new venture of yours, actually two new ventures of yours. I would really love for you to share that, if you would.

LS: Well, about nine months ago, when it was clear that the property tax roll back was going to occur as a result of legislation taken by the houses in Tallahassee. And it became clear that anybody receiving charitable monies from their counties and their cities was going to receive less, because they were going to have less to distribute. The managers started talking, from various arts organizations, at least in the orchestra world for sure, but I think others as well. In our collective effort to see if there was anything we could do to prevent this roll back from occurring. There was nothing we could do. But in the process of the concern, we started saying to each other, “You know, it’s too bad we have never gotten together under better circumstances. You know, here we are panicking.” It is not a new idea, to have a state-wide service organization. But there hadn’t been one—there’s one for I think, museums and for theaters, but there hasn’t been one for orchestras.
It would be astonishing for the listener to know that between the professional orchestras, where people are paid to play, and the youth and training orchestras that have a substantive program. There are two in the Tampa Bay area; there are over fifty-five orchestras in this state, who do not talk to each other, who do not share information with one another, who don’t know what your best practices are. And I can tell you what our best practices are. Whose marketing directors, accounting, finance people, never get together to talk about things that they could do in common and resource sharing.

And suddenly, people [are] starting, pointing a finger at me, saying, “What are you going to do in retirement? You will drive your wife nuts and this way you will have something to do.” And so almost by default, a group got together in Sarasota, consisting of Orlando, Jacksonville, Naples, Sarasota, and me representing the Florida Orchestra and Tampa Bay, to explore whether this should happen or not. And in the exploration, they all started pointing fingers at me. And I said “Yes, I would do this.” I had been one of the cofounders of the organization of Canadian Orchestras when I lived in Canada and I had been on the board of the American Symphony Orchestra for many years. So, I had a sense of how this could operate. There are three or four state organizations in the United States: California, Illinois, I can’t recall exactly the others. But this will be a first time, and we have thirty-one orchestras so far.

SB: Signed up?

LS: Yes, all—

SB: Of the fifty-five?

LS: Yes.

SB: Wow.

LS: All anxious, all wanting to get something going. When the listener hears this, they will know that March 1 and 2, 2008, we will have had our founding convention. So that is—

SB: That’s exciting.

LS: And I am the everything, I’m the—I lick the stamps, lick the envelopes, well you don’t like stamps anymore, do you, they sell the—but I do lick the envelopes, trying to raise the money and market the effort and organize it from all levels. It’s legal, it’s accounting.

SB: What would you say your mission statement is?

LS: The mission statement is rather simple. It’s organized to promote—it’s organized to help individuals enhance their abilities to present and promote symphonic music in the state [of Florida]. Both through professional, youth and training orchestras.

SB: That’s very impressive.
LS: And who knows, we’ll probably be approached by the choral societies to ask, and why not? But we are starting off you know, carefully, because one person can only do so much. But it is surprising how much you can get done, if you are left alone, and you know, nobody bothers me.

SB: That is a tremendous goal that you have, and continuing along the lines of what you have always done.

LS: I have people calling saying, “Can I be on the board?” And the former chairman of the Florida Philharmonic [Orchestra], the one that was in [Fort] Lauderdale, in Boca [Raton], and Miami, called me and said, “Not only would I like to be on the board, but I would like to host your second convention in Boca Raton.”

SB: Isn’t that exciting? That’s just great.

LS: So, yes—and the other aspect to it, might that be my commitment to my writing? You said there were two.

SB: Yes, it is. Sure. That’s the other exciting news.

LS: Well, I’ve always enjoyed talking, as your listener by now must know. And I always liked to tell a story. And I have now written my first novel, and as I showed you a copy of it hot off the press that I received today, January 8, as we are having this conversation, it’s my first novel. And I loved everything about the process. I joined a writers’ group, in Largo, but people come from all over Florida on Saturday mornings to be part of this. It’s really a—there are so many wonderful writers who’ve retired here from—ex-newspaper people and media people, professors and teachers. I worked with them for five years and they hammered me into shape. That’s five times, about two hundred Saturday mornings.

SB: That’s amazing.

LS: And from that group, I found a mentor who could guide me. So, I have written my first book, which is a very personal book. It’s about a World War II story that touched me deeply. I was only nine when it happened. And now, I am in the midst of researching a—

SB: Could you explain what happened when you were nine?

LS: Well, I was home living with my parents, living a very comfortable life as a nine-year-old. But while I was doing that, the largest airborne battle in history was being fought in Holland, made famous by the book and the movie *A Bridge too Far*. I became at the age of sixteen, very enamored with that story, so enamored with that story that I actually moved there in 1956, forgave a year of school, with my parents’ full support and financial cooperation. And that was in 1956.

Well, every year, they have a memorial service. It’s the only battle of World War II that has continuously annually held a memorial service at the cemetery where the dead—it was a tragedy.
It was the last—the battle for Arnhem, the Bridge of Arnhem, was the last Allied defeat of World War II. It was also the last German victory of World War II. In any event, at the memorial service, I saw a veteran, at least I thought he was a veteran; it turned out that he was, standing in front of a grave marked unknown. And I had a feeling about him. And we spent many hours together after. And I like to say his story became my story. My story became his story. And so this book, which I entitled Red Devil Rising, he was the red devil—that was the name the Germans gave to the British paratroopers. And it is his story, told through my eyes. And my recollection of what happened to him.

SB: The research that you did for this book, we don’t have time to really get into, but I do know personally, that it is so impressive.

LS: It was substantial. I’m researching my second one, which is to be a novel on the true confessions of Leonardo da Vinci. The wonderful thing about doing that is [that] very few people can prove what I’m going to say happened or didn’t happen. But I found I can let go of some things a lot easier that I did the first time. I did research for twenty novels for the first time, by the time you slim it all down to get it to one book. I would say that ninety percent of material that I found that I thought was important at the time; I just let it drift away. So, I am not going to be as eager-beaver this time around because I think I know how to apply—I wish I had that skill when I started running orchestras, you know, knowing what really is important and what I could let go of.

SB: Well, these are acquired skills, obviously, with time. And you put in so much time. It occurs to me that the listener would be curious if you are a musician.

LS: I am not a musician, and I can’t remember whether this is part of the earlier story. I say to people, “A seven hundred pound upright piano knocked music into me.”

SB: Oh, yes.

LS: We did tell that story.

SB: Yes, we told that story. And I may have asked you then.

LS: Yes, the piano fell on me. No, to this day, having spent forty-one and half years running an orchestra, I still cannot read music. I cannot play music. I know when it is badly done. I know when it is well done. I don’t have the nuances to know the difference between excellence and super excellence. That is beyond my ability. No, I am not—

SB: But your skill obviously, managing, maybe, maybe that is a skill that can be transferred from other—but I tend to think that you must have had a profound understanding of music to have been in that career for so long.

LS: Well, it was always in the home. And it was always in the synagogue in the choir. The idea of man making a sound was always around. And it, I was always around it—and you know, when I go into an elevator sometimes, I wish I wasn’t around it (laughter).
SB: Well, we have had some discussions about your thoughts about the arts, and the future of the arts, and who the arts appeal to, and maybe you will share that, and we will sort of end there.

LS: Well, this is a challenging time, and it seems to me that all forty-one years of my career, everybody was saying it was a challenging time. It is likely that there will always be a Florida Orchestra, because someone will stand up and say that it is too precious to let it go. And even if your finances aren’t what they should be—you know, it’s never by intent, you sometimes choose music and it didn’t work. The audience didn’t want to buy it. Okay, give us a chance to hang around for next year and we will try other stuff.

So, I think it will always be around. Will there be an amalgamation? Will there be ultimately, twenty, twenty-five years down the road, a more gigantic orchestra that will embrace Orlando, Tampa, St. Petersburg and Sarasota. Because you have all these orchestras, and if a musician hears this, they will get angry. And I am not speaking, you know, about getting rid of jobs. But, if we are both playing the [Johannes] Brahm’s symphony, we’re both spending 75 percent of our budget to prepare it. The beauty of this orchestra is that we get three; we cut three cookies out of the dough. You know, we do it three times. I think it will always be around in one form or another.

Orchestras go down, orchestras go—now, who will the consumer be? I don’t think there is a ten-year-old alive, Suzette, who thinks that telephones never had a camera. When you think of the technology that you can hold in your hand, with your phone. Will orchestras now adapt to the iPod [portable media player] generation? We now say that you’ve got to come in to the hall and that is where you can acquire us. But the youngsters are walking around now with a concert hall over their ears, now.

SB: Sure.

LS: And, are they going to change us? On the other hand, I would argue, that there is something special about making up your mind; you are going to go to a particular place. It’s that sense of occasion. I even enjoy going to the movies. I like the idea of buying the ticket; somebody tears it. I buy my popcorn, I find my seat, and the lights go down. There is something special about that.

SB: Absolutely.

LS: And I know the music is better when the orchestra and artist can connect through an audience. Now with the iPod, that connection is so individually personal, you know—

SB: Sure.

LS: That that doesn’t happen.

SB: That’s very special—
LS: And how do I say “Bravo” when I hear a symphony on an iPod. Who hears it? Somebody looks at me and thinks I am nuts.

SB: So, you are encouraged. You think it will go on.

LS: I think that the silent films were going to supposed to destroy concerts—

SB: Very interesting analogy.

LS: Then talkies for sure were going to destroy us. Then records, my god, you could have it in your home. And finally, the long-play record where you only had to flip it over once and get two movements on each side. And then television was going to kill us. That never happened.

SB: (murmurs agreement)

LS: Then the compact disk. Then the surround sound. So, we seem to—I guess the conclusion, we are kind of coming to the conclusion. There must be something so wonderfully precious about this art form that it has survived four hundred years. I guess I would leave the listener with one word, why?

SB: Thank you. That is—Yes.

LS: Yes, I am asking myself, why, why we didn’t come to an end. We are still here.

SB: Well, I think what you left me with was hope. Thank you.

LS: I think there is hope.

SB: Yes. Selfishly, I would like to see it go on and on, obviously, because—

LS: Debbie, still. Me, it doesn’t bother me anymore. When Debbie walks into a concert hall, if she sees somebody wearing flip-flops, [and] shorts (laughter), she, well, you know her style, her dressing.

SB: Very elegant.

LS: She thinks you are insulting the art form. That you are not dressing for the occasion. So it isn’t as meaningful to you. Well, you know, the person sitting there might be loving it just as much as you.

SB: I’m so thrilled to see jeans and flip flops. They are there.

LS: It has changed.

SB: It is just the most wonderful thing to see.
LS: You know the story, and it is not improbable, it’s true. Everybody says the audience is getting older. The Chicago Symphony did a marketing study in the early sixties [1960s] and their average age of their subscribers was fifty-one, was the average age. They buried that in the vaults and decades of management forgot about it. Well, in the mid-eighties [1980s], they renovated Orchestra Hall to a certain extent, and did a new survey, fifty-one and a half years.

SB: Oh, my gosh.

LS: So basically—

SB: Interesting.

LS: —it never changed.

SB: Very interesting. Leonard, I can’t—oh, I am sorry.

LS: Well, I was going to say, we appeal to a mature audience. We always have and I guess we always will.

SB: Perhaps, yes.

LS: You know, Jim Gillespie, the—

SB: But, young people have to be exposed, because those fifty-one year olds say they heard it somewhere. So, that’s the hope.

LS: Schools, I mean, you know, I wish there was a governor of a state who had the courage—the evidence is empirical, the Mozart effect. And Mike Huckabee [former Arkansas Governor, U.S. Presidential candidate] is speaking about it, one of the candidates, music or arts in the schools. Not that I would want to see Mike Huckabee as the president, but ah—

SB: We won’t go there.

LS: But I liked hearing that. If you just took a fraction of the money and put it into arts and music in the schools, and had the courage to go with that for a generation. The SAT scores—

SB: Wouldn’t that would be incredible.

LS: The proof is there.

SB: Yes. There are studies to support it.

LS: Absolutely.

SB: Leonard, your information, the wealth of knowledge that you bring to this interview and have brought to it; I just can’t thank you enough.
LS: Oh, Suzette.

SB: It’s just amazing.

LS: But, you know, you get it out of me. I have said too many people since we did the first one that—I said to Malcolm, I said, “You know, Suzette just does it wonderfully.”

SB: Well, thank you.

LS: “Did you know, Malcolm, that she had a PR [public relations] company?” He said, “No, I didn’t,” because he’s all about that.

SB: Yes, he is. You should clarify Malcolm, since you mentioned him. Malcolm owns a—

LS: Are we still recording?

SB: We are, (laughter) and I can’t erase.

LS: This reminds me of President [Ronald] Reagan, when he had his Saturday chats and he thought he was off the air and he jokingly said, “I have an announcement. We have just started bombing Russia.” (laughter) Remember that?

SB: Oh, no.

LS: On one of his Saturday radio programs. (laughter) Well, Malcolm Teasdale is the founder and chairman of Teasdale Worldwide, an international—

SB: And has been very helpful to the Florida Orchestra.

LS: —marketing firm. And so, I shared with him that you need someone to keep you on track which you did in interviews.

SB: Well, thank you.

LS: And you pulled it out of me, and you made it very comfortable to do this.

SB: Well, my pleasure totally, and I hope, the pleasure of the listener. But I would be very surprised if not—

LS: The only thing we didn’t have between us is a confessional booth.

SB: There we go. (laughter)

LS: I kind of felt that this was a confession. (laughter)
SB: Well, thank you again, Leonard, and God bless. And good luck in the future. It sounds very exciting.

LS: Thank you so much Suzette.

SB: Bye-bye.

*end of Interview*