A MUSICIAN'S REFLECTIONS ON FORTY YEARS INSIDE THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND BEYOND:

THE TRANSCRIPT OF DAVID WATERS

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

CONDUCTED ON OCTOBER 20, 2004

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INTERVIEWEE: DAVID WATERS

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Oral History Interview of David Waters

Background

Native Houstonian David Waters is a Houston Symphony Orchestra musician who plays the trombone and bass trombone. He attended Austin High School and performed in the All-City Orchestra while growing up. His pursuit of a career in music led him to the University ofHouston for his Bachelor's degree in Music Education and then to the University of Texas at Austin for his Master's degree in Music.

Mr. Waters joined the Houston Symphony in 1966. He also holds a teaching position as Associate Professor of Trombone at the Shepherd School ofMusic, Rice University.

Interview

This pleasant and lively interview with Mr. Waters focuses on many aspects of his experiences as a Houston Symphony musician over the years-from labor issues to his favorite performers. He also provides insight into the world of classical music in general. The interview, which ran approximately one-and-one-half hours, took place in Houston at Mr. Waters' home in Spring Branch.

This interview is for an Oral History Class project, University ofHouston History Department. It is one of four interviews of people associated with the Houston Symphony, two interviews each by graduate students Kelly Ray and Tiffany Schreiber. The transcripts and tapes have been deposited at the University ofHouston's Center for Public History and at the Houston Symphony's archives.

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Tape One, Side One

[Begin Side One of Tape One]

TS: This is Tiffany Schreiber, and it is October 20, 2004. I am interviewing Houston Symphony Orchestra musician Mr. David Waters for the Oral History Class Project, University of Houston History Department.

Mr. Waters, you joined HSO in 1966, but before that, how and when did you know that you wanted to be a musician?

DW: Well, I started when I was eight years old. And probably in high school, I thought I would be a music major by then. I played in bands and orchestras and just about everything you could play in.

TS: Where did you go to high school?

DW: Austin High School in Houston.

TS: At that time, was there an HSPVA [High School for the Performing and Visual Arts] in Houston?

DW: No, it was before that There was an All-City Orchestra, conducted by Harry Lantz. But no it was before that The school came along after I was in the Symphony.

TS: So in high school, you started in band. Did you start with the trombone?

DW: No, I started on the baritone. They called it baritone hom. It would be the same thing as a euphonium. The euphonium is a little bit larger bore, but it's the same instrument. Half the size of a tuba. But I started baritone at age eight, but by the time I was in the eighth grade I started playing a trombone, so from then on played both of them.

TS: How did you decide trombone over euphonium?

DW: Oh, I liked euphonium a lot. But there are very few places to play it It's more for bands. You can play it very fast, and it has all kinds ofterrific parts in parts in bands, and solos too. But everything that there is besides bands that uses trombone doesn't use a baritone at alL So any kind of popular music - big bands, jazz, orchestras, almost all chamber music - has trombones but not baritones. And so, if you major in music, you naturally go after trombone because it's much more versatile and possible to get a career job playing one. The only thing you can do for a permanent job would be to play in an United States Service Band in Washington and a very few other places. And there are just very few jobs and those careers are twenty years long and that's it.

DW: (continued)

So then I got into all the other places to play trombone in, and I could tell, "Well, I might as well do that." I played tenor trombone all the time, and really just before the Symphony job came open, I started adding bass trombone. And I was taking lessons from the bass trombonist in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra.

TS: What was his name?

DW: John Clark. He was Toscanini's bass trombone player for about seven or eight years until Toscanini died in 1954. He's on a lot ofrecords. So since I was taking from him, I thought I might as well play bass too, but after that…

TS: What year was this?

DW: From about '64-'66. I was seeing him. Then in the spring of'66 I auditioned for Houston in New York when they were on tour. They had a real big tour.

TS: With [Sir John] Barbirolli?[1]

DW: Yes, Barbirolli was the conductor.

TS: Were they announcing auditions?

DW: Yes, they did. But it wasn't very organized like it is today. In the early '60s, they would fill positions all kinds of different ways, but nothing standard. They didn't have a main audition in Houston. They would audition on tour or just go by referrals sometimes. Some string players would get into the orchestra just by word of mouth only. They would show up and get a job, and if it worked out they would stay. But we have come a long way since then- that's a long story.

TS: Tell me about your audition when you were there.

DW: Well, they had a committee ofbrass players from the Orchestra, and I went down to the Holiday Inn on 57th Street and auditioned there. And I knew all these guys because I'd played with the Symphony extra before that, and I'm from here. So they heard other trombonists there - New York - and other places on tour - Chicago, Boston. And it just worked out. I was lucky, very lucky.

TS: I've heard that you audition behind a screen so no one ever sees you.

DW: Yes, but not then. That was way before that. You just sit in the room. They're right in front of you and say, "Play that. Now try it this way. Play it different." It's informal. And one at a time, and a longer audition, too. They would just hear a few

[1] Sir John Barbirolli (1899-1970) was conductor of the Houston Symphony Orchestra from 1961-1967. <http://www.houstonsymphony.org/about/history.aspx> (6 November 2004).

DW: (continued) players in an hour or two, just a very few players. But now, oh, it's a real competitive, big volume process now. It's long.

TS: Would you say this is one of the most significant changes you've seen over the years?

DW: Oh, just one of many. But, see, orchestras were all smaller those days. Smaller in number and season. Every orchestra - even the New York Philharmonic, the very top five- had a shorter season and way smaller money. People, even in all orchestras, had to do something for a big portion of the year besides play in the orchestra- either in music, if they were lucky in a big city, or just do something else to fill out the rest of the year. A lot of them taught, of course. They would play festivals and what have you, but all kinds of people had to do other jobs, totally different jobs and regularly every year.

Houston was about a half a year, and when I got in it was about thirty-four weeks or so. And scale was $147.50 a week, and it had just come up to that. It was about $90 a week just a couple of years before that.

So then the whole labor situation was that, until the very early '60s, I mean right around 1960, '62, there just was very little labor organization.

TS: In Houston, or anywhere?

DW: Anywhere, no anywhere. The scene was so different nobody would believe it today. You hear stories now, but we heard them when they were going on.

You'd have all-powerful conductors who could fire people right on the spot: "Go away right now. Don't come back!" Just like that. It happened all the time. And they fired people ifthey were getting the least bit irritated at them. If they didn't like the way someone dressed. Or didn't like a woman because she wouldn't go have a drink with him. Or god knows what, and get fired. I mean it! A friend of mine saw [Fritz] Reiner fire somebody at a rehearsal.[2] He was just a student watching him, and he'd make a little remark and that person would never be seen again. Just like that.

But all kinds of them are like that. [Leopold] Stokowski *was* like that? He fired all kinds of people. So people during rehearsals were *very*, *very* respectful. And if a conductor said something ridiculously stupid you would have to just be quiet and go right along with it like you're dealing with kings. And don't *ever* make any waves or challenge him or try the slightest standing up for yourself at all.

TS: What did you hear when you were auditioning? What did you hear from the people in Houston about the reputation of conductors?

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[2] Fritz Reiner (1888-1963) was. among other things. the Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1953-1963. Centerstage Chicago. The Original City Guide. <http://www.ccnterstage.net/music/whoswho/FrtizReiner.html> (7 November 2004).

[3] Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977) was Music Director of the Houston Symphony Orchestra from 1955-61.

DW: Well, Barbirolli was a very nice person to deal with. He was very friendly, and he was close to the musicians. He had an Old World kind of great ego, but he was very nice to deal with. He wasn't mad or he didn't fire anybody on the spot. But he didn't *want* to get into the personnel problems that conductors have to get into, really. He wanted to avoid all that and just conduct. His whole world was conducting. Anything else was just kind of empty - he was just waiting to conduct all the time.

And a very, very great musical conductor. He's [Barbirolli] one ofthe legendary conductors. I could tell you about that a little bit. He - like the legendary Wilhelm Furtwangler (was a German conductor)- would *not* want to give you a clear beat. He wanted to give you general moves, and lot of style, and a lot of phrase, and a lot of impression, and *make* the orchestra hang on together to play together. But he was not going to *make* you play together with a strong beat because he knew what it sounded like, and he didn't want the orchestra to sound like that. He didn't want it tight. He wanted it very musical. And that's what he did, and there's hardly anybody conducting like that today.

So they conduct real clearly today, and the musicians are real used to that. If somebody conducted exactly like Barbirolli today, players would be all sort of floundering around lost! But they would soon hang on together and make a great sound like you would hear on his records. It's a really different thing, though. We've had a few other conductors with that kind of style but not very many at all. Very few.

TS: Would you say that the direction or having to rely on your fellow musicians [for the beat instead ofthe conductor] at that time, did that make you all feel closer, as opposed to today, because you had to depend more on each other for the cues rather than the conductor. And would you say that has changed?

DW: No, I wouldn't say that. We're just as close anyway. It's just that that's how you would play on the job. You had to really make more rhythm and more ensemble because he [Barbirolli] was just not giving it to you, and he was not going to give it to you. Didn't want to give it to you. And, he knew that people wanted more clear beat, and he would just intentionally just swim around in the air without any rhythm. And you'd have to play and *find* a place to put the beat. And it worked out just fine. It made some very great styles, I'll tell you.

There's a lot of pieces he wouldn't have been able to conduct, though, and he didn't want to conduct. He didn't. Like he could never conduct *The Rite C?f...Spring,* just never."' It would just never work right from the first few bars. But he didn't want to, so he let other people do that. It worked out just fine.

[4] A ballet score by Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971).
<http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/stravinsky.html> (7 November 2004).

DW: (continued)

He had a favorite repertoire, which was very Romantic. But not only Romantic. He could do Classical, Baroque, and Twentieth Century pieces.[5] But highly tight rhythmical pieces, he wasn't interested in at alL And so he had a great career just doing his favorite piece, which is the bulk of the whole repertoire. And he did great Beethoven, too, without giving you everything (laughs).

TS: How much input did the musicians have at this point?

DW: Not much. Not much at alL Lot more now. What happened was there was a meeting in about '62 of very few orchestras. I think it was Boston, Chicago, and - oh I have it all written down. ICSOM began to organize in '62, and everybody in orchestras were in unions in their own town.[6]

However, in most towns, the unions were run by the symphony management or other factions which were not particularly interested in the symphony musician. So, there was not much support or recourse. If you had a labor dispute, and you wanted to strike about your contract offer, you just couldn't hardly do it because the union wouldn't back you up. Unions either were not very strong or were not very supportive of symphony musicians.

But, also there was a lot of other kinds of music going on in a big way besides symphony music. So you had all kinds of popular recording going on in larger cities. And you still had Big Bands playing and touring and everything. And recording of all kinds in several cities. So symphonies being small in each town didn't have *near* the impact on their own unions that they did later.

So what happened over the whole last fifty years is that these other styles of music dried up a great deal while orchestras grew a great deaL And in every city, its orchestra began to pay a huge portion of the local union's work tax. And all the other kinds of work fell off, so the orchestras demanded of each local that they get much more service. And they began to take over their own locals, make them responsible to the orchestras, and it all improved, too. Just about every orchestra's local union is in very good shape and supports the orchestra very much because- and I'm not sure about every town- but in many cities, the symphony is now the major - by far - contributor to the local union and its income from work tax. So they listen to the orchestras now like they never did before. The ICSOM organization grew and within ten years, just about every orchestra joined ICSOM. And there was tremendous input and communication and support like never before.

'These titles refer to eras in classical music. Rough time spans are as follows: Baroque (1600-1750), Classical (1750-1825), Romantic (1825-1900), and Twentieth Century (1900-present). Sony Classical Online. <http://www.essentialsofmusic.com/eras> (7 November 2004).

[6] ICSOM is an acronym for International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians. Explanation provided by David Waters.

TS: When did the Houston Symphony join?

DW: I think it was about '64, I would say.

TS: Could I ask you to tell me about. .. around that time what was your contract like when you joined? I mean, what did you know you had rights about?

DW: I've got a good outline of it. I wrote a booklet on this. It [the contract] just didn't go into many conditions in general. It was a very minimal thing. You had so many services a week, and it didn't restrict them [management] to many, many things that we do now. Most contracts by now - this is already forty years later - have hundreds of little clauses. And every clause in these contracts has come about because of some little problem. So, in the next contract, you solve the problem by writing a clause just for that instance. So it's full of just little things that stop management from calling you up at midnight and making you come to work right then, for instance. They didn't do that, but they *could* have. If it wasn't specified, it says at the beginning they can do it. They can just do anything that the contract doesn't say they can't do.

TS: When you say "Management," do you mean the [Houston] Symphony Society?

DW: Yes. That's a big kind of a unique situation. I should stay with the labor for a while. But when it started out- you asked about the contract- it would say roughly you have so many... you have eight services a week and rehearsals can be so long. So not too much about conditions on tour, or many details about anything. So all along the way, things would come up and management would come to the orchestra. And this happened just *all* the time, every single year.

In order to change the contract ... see, here's the most important thing ever to happen. Before I got in, a new contract would be passed this way, would be ratified this way. The union president gets a meeting that we [the musicians] never heard about with the Society President. And they would write up something, and the union president would sign it, and that would be the end of it. We didn't even know whether it had any raises or conditions or changes. Nothing! We were out of it. So, we didn't have any right to do such thing either. For the union to legally collectively bargain a employer, you had to have some appointed representative. They just didn't have that. The union president would do that.

So we [the musicians] got down to union meetings and got the union and made a bylaw that the orchestra committee would be the bargaining agent or group that represents the union. Otherwise, they'd have people negotiating that weren't even *in* the orchestra, if they negotiated. Before that, they didn't even bother negotiating. Just said, "If you want to give them a dollar and a half, if you want to give them five dollars, OK, that's good. Sign up, and last year was a good contract, so we'll leave it alone." No changes, no nothing.

DW: (continued)

So because they were in cahoots…in many cities, the manager kind of either paid off or had some nice arrangement with the local union man, who was supposed to be independent.

TS: And who was supposed to be representing the musicians.

OW: Oh yes. But that's in the old days.

We got power also to ratify our own contract in 1964. That means power according to national labor law, so that's not something that the [Houston Symphony] Society can go complaining about. That's the law. They have to negotiate, and that's why they do negotiate, otherwise, they never would have negotiated. If they could have gotten around it, they would still be getting around it. They are forced by national labor law to negotiate *until we* get our majority voting for that contract. And until then, we don't have a contract. We don't go to work, either.

So, we had the committee officially represent the union at negotiations, and we had the power to ratify our own contract. Without that, we couldn't even begin to do anything.

TS: This was the late 1960s?

DW: The early '60s. It was just before I got in we had the power.

Then, at the same time, ICSOM was really getting off the ground, getting every imaginable orchestra to join and be in communication and unified with supporting each other. So, then we would know all kinds of stuff going on in other cities, and we found out poor conditions were common, too. Like somebody in some city is pulling some horrible deal underhanded because the union's in cahoots with society manager, and so forth. This is mostly the managing structure of the organization, not the Society that raises money and the people coming to the concerts. This is the business office which runs the symphony. Those are the people we were having the trouble with, I mean, that all the orchestras were having trouble with.

Anyway, ICSOM grew very, very successfully because each orchestra got power to negotiate. Then, each orchestra, right on down the line…we had I would say about an average of a two-year contract, just about everybody. And on every single new contract, *many, many* gains were made in salary. But many, many gains in conditions, too. Before restrictions, whatever they came up with, you would just have to do. If they planned a tour where cities were too far apart, well they might just have you stay on the bus nine hours, and then get off and start playing a concert. Or play a concert and get on the bus and go somewhere else. Things like that.

DW: (continued)

The reason that we insist on better conditions is so the orchestra sounds better. It sounds like we're trying to be pampered or plush, but you *cannot ever* sound good if you're exhausted and these kinds of things. And I was going to tell you a while ago that as these contracts got better, then…

[End Side One ofTape One]

Tape One, Side Two

[Begin Side Two of Tape One]

TS: You were saying that the contracts were getting better.

DW: Anyway, as they were getting better, still every single year many things would come up. We had power to ratify the contract, and we had power to change or make exceptions to the rules in the contract. Things would come up, temporarily, something during the year - that might be to our benefit. That might be to Society's benefit. We might all make a big amount of money if we played some sort of a situation that the contract wouldn't allow. But anyway, they would come every year with several ofthese and say "We badly need to do this and the contract won't let you do this" and try to talk us into changing the contract. Well, you have to have a meeting, and you have to discuss for a long time if you want to change the contract for this particular instance. Then you have to vote on it by secret ballot. And no matter what was in the contract, they always had more and more and more ofthese things come up. They'd have a scheme where if we could only play two concerts in a row, then we could do this. Or if we could travel just a little longer, we could do that. Or if we could rehearse too close to the concert, then we could do this. On and on and on and on!

So, we went along with a lot of those because it they were to our benefit. Other things we just said, "We're not going to do it. And we're not going to travel 'til 2 in the morning just so you can save this money, and we're not doing it. So cancel the job, that's it." We had to stick with our contract. So then maybe the next contract they would want permission and insist in their new contract that we allow so and so and so and so. So working conditions got much harder in the amount of rehearsals and amount of services allowable.

One thing we were very ahead on in the whole country - probably still are - is that we had the five-day week. Hardly anybody did. So, now we've got a lot that's been eroded. But we've still got a lot of weeks with five days and with less six day weeks than many other orchestras, even after all these other negotiations. We always wanted a set day off, so

DW: (continued) that we could plan to do something. Like if you have a University job, you can't ever tell when you're going to be off. It's hard to teach anywhere.

TS: And you do [have a University job]. You're at Rice.

DW: Oh yes. We used to have a dependable same day off every week. But now, we just have many Tuesdays off. In other weeks, we just have to change our schedule all the time. But we have probably more five-day weeks than most people still.

TS: Under which conductor did this fall, or when would you say it [the work condition situation] started to get better on the whole?

DW: Well, starting with Barbirolli, definitely. But he wasn't a person that was a problem. He was a big name conductor from England. But he would come over here and conduct his ten weeks or whatever it was and leave. He wasn't just going to live here. He had to go to many, many - he was in big demand - many other cities. I mean, Vienna, or Chicago, or La Scala, or anywhere. He was *very* busy. That's why he left the job as main conductor here in... (pauses) let's see... '67?

TS: 1968')

DW: Probably '67. I was only one year with him where he was the boss, but then he came back every year quite a bit until he died in '70. But he left because he was in such demand everywhere else. He'd made records all over the place... Philharmonia Orchestra, Halle Orchestra, London Philharmonic, just anything.

Anyway, but most conductors, the main conductor, would be a famous name would come to a city, conduct, and then leave. That's why the rest of the year the management is who you dealt with with all these problems. And some conductors were very involved in all these personnel and other conditions, and a lot of them were not. They didn't want to get into it. They just wanted to conduct and plan the musical year, but then take off to the next job.

TS: And where did the union fit into this?

DW: Well, throughout a year, we'd have our contract and we'd live by it. Ifwe ever had any grievance where you had a real dispute over something, our union has to back us up. And we made sure that they gradually did more and more. And we had to clean up our own umon.

For instance, one very big change is that- as I told you about the old days- musicians had no job security, just about none because of the way things were with the union and laws and the power ofthese conductors. Well, even ifthey [conductors] weren't abusive to people in rehearsals, they would still maybe get with the manager and decide these seven people were going to go next year. And you just wouldn't see them, and you wouldn't know quite what happened.

DW: (continued)

But now, we [Houston Symphony Musicians] were the very first to get this clause in and test it. It was about in '67 that we got into the contract- and it wasn't easy to get in, I tell you – where firing for musical incompetency had to be initiated by the conductor, not anybody else. Management tried to fire people for political reasons and many other things besides actual musical incompetency. We negotiated a clause stating that you could be fired only by the conductor. And we designed a players' committee of nine people to which a person who was about to be fired could appeal, and *we* had the last word. If we then decided that we thought he should *not* be fired for musical incompetency, he kept his job. And if this committee agreed with the conductor, fine, then he's gone, or she's gone.

TS: What qualified as a musical incompetency? Injury?

DW: No. Not playing well enough. No. Anything else is "for cause." And "cause" you don't specify. You just say "cause," and it's a legal term which *could* mean insobriety or bad behavior, insubordination, or not showing up enough, too many absences, anything else. But it's not how they played, it's everything else. That is determined not by the conductor but the management, and then you have committees that handle each situation. We've had *very* little ofthat.

So, we got the players' committee clause into our contract in 1967. And so, sure enough, right after we got it in the contract, we had a conductor go after the last player in the second violins. And he's just going to start in the back of the section and fire, fire, fire, going forward, until he got his orchestra the way he wanted it to be. OK, the first person to get pointed out for firing appealed to the players' committee. So all these other orchestras were watching to see what happened because they're going to put that it their contracts, too. Well, this person played and auditioned for the players' committee, and the players' committee voted by secret ballot and *saved* that job. And, boy, the conductor was *really* mad, but that's the way it goes.

TS: Which conductor?

DW: [Andre] Previn.

TS: Previn. He wasn't there very long.

DW: No, but that was another story. The Society didn't like him. He was a good, strong conductor.

After our player's committee clause got in, conductors did a lot less trying to fire people because they had to figure out whether it's going to be worth it, see, to go through all this and lose again. Other conductors did fire a lot of people. But they had to make sure they

DW: (continued) had a very good case. This is the musician's career; a person's been there a long time, and a conductor just throws it away. So, that was a big test case.

Anyway, about the overall problem of the business is... overriding everything is a unique kind of a business. You have a publicly owned orchestra, really. They're all publicly owned. There's no private giant orchestra, like the Brown & Root Orchestra, or anything like that. It's municipal, city-owned. More or less every city owns their orchestra. They're all non-profit. And the reason for that is that no orchestra except for a very few- like four in the world, and only those do a great deal of TV and special business that others can't do- can support themselves. So that forty percent is about what most orchestras are able to earn from playing concerts. The rest of the money has to be raised somehow.

So, there's the whole problem: non-profit, you're *never* going to make a profit, just never. And to have your orchestra getting better and better, and pay enough money, and have good enough conditions and a good enough conductor that you attract the best players that you can find in the world - you have to offer all these things and be competitive. That's what we keep saying. It's not like we're sitting here want to make all the money in the world. Our orchestra will die off and go steadily downhill if we don't improve steadily and keep up with the industry, with simply our pay scale and many other things. That's a direct, blatant correlation. The orchestras that *pay* the best *play* the best because they have attracted all the best players out of people in Europe, Asia, anywhere. But, at the same time, the best-paying orchestras attract the best musicians because their orchestras are better. And it's precisely going along with the pay scale.

Throughout this length oftime I've been in the orchestra and since ICSOM began, the cities grew and orchestra organizations grew, and a great deal of this is because of the insistence ofthe organized musicians. But, overall, many other kinds of music using live musicians has fallen off, and orchestra music has grown, in a kind of a big cycle. And people would say it's falling off right now.

TS: In Houston?

DW: Everywhere, everywhere. Because oftrends like electronic music, trends away from live music of all kinds. Trend toward very, very small groups. And the styles... even electronic instruments are a huge factor in replacing live musicians, no doubt about it. Even Broadway is having a huge problem with them... they're trying to have synthesized orchestras and fire all the live people. Definitely. They just had a big, horrible fight about that. Anyway, during all this time, it has happened that cities grew in very different ways. Every city has a very different atmosphere, kind of people, and tradition, and so forth. They're all different. But most all these orchestras grew. Many orchestras that didn't use to be in the top twenty-five, let's say, grew also, and there's a lot more than twenty-five, and cities that just had very beginning orchestras have pretty substantial orchestras now.

DW: (continued)

So, what we have now is several organizations. ICSOM is the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians. This is comprised of fifty-two major orchestras. ROPA is the Regional Orchestra Players' Association, with fifty-seven orchestras and seven associate orchestras for a total of sixty-four. OCSM is the Organization of Canadian Symphony Musicians, with twenty orchestras. So all these different organizations are in touch with each other, and that's really great.

The overall problem, though, is how you're going to- in every city- solve the underlying problem of how to have a successful growing non-profit organization. So every city has to have some style ofraising its own money. We had a lot of oil people here, and we tried to appeal to all of them. Every city being different, you have different industry there. So, some giant industries have leaders that like the symphony and support it very directly. And we've had several of those. In most cities, the trend began with very few leaders paying the bulk of the difference between forty percent and the total budget. They would also be much more in control of their own almost private arts organization, where it was less broad-based, less city-wide. That was the case here, just like anywhere else. You had a very small Symphony Society with a few very interested people but not very diverse. Well, we kept trying to get these people to see that you *must* spread out and have a huge support base and you've got to go after all kinds of people. This kind of change has happened very gradually.

TS: When was this?

DW: Just all the way through, as a trend. And also, things change. The economy changes, and some of these great supporters die. Then you have to evolve with... have all kinds of new blood coming in. People move here from somewhere else. We've had new heads of corporation world headquarters moving here, and also certain people in those organizations support us. So you have your donors. And you have corporations- you're trying to build corporate support. And you have foundations. We've been very good at getting foundation support.

TS: Which foundations would you say?

DW: Different grants. We have the Wortham Foundation, and the Ford Foundation ... there's quite a few. Houston Endowment.

TS: People with long-standing connections?

DW: It would be an organization with a huge philanthropic amount of money that the person running it is many generations down the line - currently running it. And we work with them. And they're good supporters and interested in us, but they have a lot of demands, of course. You know, they're not going to throw a lot of money our way if they don't think we're doing our job and successfully running the organization.

TS: What kinds of demands?

DW: Well, they don't want you to be in debt! They want you to have a good budget and be financially sound. And then they're not just giving you a million dollars so you pay off the debt. They want you to use their money for this season. And then every orchestra is trying to build a bigger endowment. And naturally, a lot of people want to give money to an endowment and *not* to anything else because it'll stay there, and you'll live off of the interest instead of using it up for direct labor costs. Most people that give money to anything don't ever want to just see it used up directly. They want to have it sit there and grow. And they specify and so forth. But we're naturally wanting to raise our endowment, and have, a great deal. But, now you've got two or three campaigns going on all the time. You can't raise only the endowment. You have to raise money for this week's concert really.

TS: What about educational events to encourage young people to be interested in music as a hobby or a career?

DW: That is a big, big, big important issue. I mean a *real* important issue. And what happens is that orchestras should do *much* more of that. I mean there could be an orchestra do *nothing* but educational work, *nothing*. But we're all the time struggling to keep the budget up and keep it increasing. And to do this long-range educational work - which would ensure audiences into the future- it's always, I'd say, short-changed because we don't have enough extra millions of dollars to have educational programs to educate people in schools to learn about classical music. We just don't have enough. Oh you could have a massive public area just to change the entire image of serious music in the country. We're not able to do it.

And everything is kind of going *against* the future of classical music because schools expose or teach less and less of it. And we can't even play as many student concerts as we used to play because they won't let students out of class like they used to. We used to play *many, many* more concerts. And we still play all we can, but if a student could hear an orchestra live, twice a year for twelve years, they would really get a lot out of it. Right now, they're trying to have an average student in Houston hear us *once* in twelve years. So we're trying to go to every student in a certain grade- probably the fourth grade- come down there, but that's a huge problem. You know, that's a lot of students, and they have to all get on a bus and come there, it's just to have them hear us play once.

TS: What did it used to be like? You said you used to do it [play student concerts] a lot more.

DW: Well, we just played a lot more of them. But they would come to Jones Hall. But we also would go out to some area and play a couple of concerts in a row, in a fieldhouse or something. We would play for two large student audiences out in a school district.

TS: Where did you play?

DW: Like Spring Branch Field House, places like that. We even went to other cities and did that.

But just imagine if they could hear twice a year for twelve years. And that's a very tiny amount, but at least something would start to compound. You know, they would say "Oh, I remember the other concert, and this is similar but this is also very exciting." But they don't get anything like that. There's just such a tiny amount of coverage on TV. The radio has one station now. One station just shut down.[7] It's just not stressed hardly in any capacity.

It's a *major* problem that all cities have: to educate. It's like trying to teach the masses about literature or plays or opera. They just don't know about it, and unless you're a person going to an esoteric school, you won't learn about arts, hardly, really. And that's a big factor, that's a reason that over the years that we have not enough young people between, say, high school age and forty coming to the Orchestra. There's many reasons, but the whole education is the main reason.

So that we appeal mostly to older people. And by the time they get to be past the age that they raise children…when their kids are grown and somehow happen to accidentally have been exposed and like classical music, they come. And so all our Pops stuff, well almost all, is catered to older people. And there's a lot of reasons for that, too. But we do a lot of variety, it's not that cut and dry. We do just many, many styles. But our Pops subscription people are older, so we play older music - like Broadway age and all the American Songbook '30s through '60s stuff.

TS: What was it like when you were growing up, because you're a native Houstonian. How did your love of music grow?

DW: Well, my dad was an amateur trombone player, so I started playing bands with him. I'd go to rehearsals even before I played anything. And then while I was a beginner, I went to rehearsal. Went to all kinds of concerts they played. But then as soon as I could play at all, I started sitting in. But he would take us to the Miller [Outdoor] Theater Houston Symphony free concerts in the summer time quite a bit. And then we could go - during school - go down to the student concerts, so I did that in elementary school.

TS: This was not Jones Hall.

DW: No, but it was right where Jones Hall is, the City Auditorium. It was before Jones Hall. They tore that down and built Jones Hall in 1966.

TS: Right when you got there!

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ln May 2004, Radio One purchased Houston's KRTS ("K-Arts") 92.1, the city's only all-classical music radio station. After eighteen years on the air, KRTS carried its final broadcast in September 2004. Houston's KUHF 88.7 plays classical music and NPR News. <http://www.radioemporium.net/news/news_09_2004.html> (10 November 2004).

DW: Yeah, I opened the hall!

So, anyway, I grew up in the band world, but that's much, much more musical than most people would have the opportunity to do. And by the time I was in high school, I was pretty interested in orchestra. I played in All-City Orchestra, and then I got an idea of how all the orchestra music was. I was buying records and going to the symphony and on and on and on.

TS: Who was the conductor at the time, do you remember?

DW: Oh, [Leopold] Stokowski ... I almost got to play for Stokowski.

[End Side Two of Tape One]

Tape Two, Side One

[Begin Side One ofTape Two]

TS: So how did you almost get to play for Stokowski?

DW: I was at the U ofH [University ofHouston]. They [Houston Symphony] were going to play *The Planets*,[8] which had a tenor tuba part, which is a baritone. And my teacher was the tuba player for the symphony.

TS: Who was he?

DW: Bill Rose. And I later sat next to him for a long time [in the Symphony]. And I wasn't even in the union. So they were thinking about having me play *The Planets* part. They were talking about it, but they got somebody real quick, and I didn't quite get to do it. But it would have been really good, but it would have been a *real* challenge because I really didn't know how to play *The Planets* at that time. I could play a lot of things, but that was very different. And it's a very big solo part, so you have to be very ready.

TS: Throughout the whole piece or just one part?

DW: About four movements, three or four movements. And I had a record of him [Stokowski] doing that with LA but anyway I went to see him many, many times, do all kinds of things.

An astrologically-inspired orchestral suite by English composer Gustav Holst (1874-1934). <http://www.musicweb.uk.net/holst> (10 November 2004).

TS: I wanted to ask you, since you're a native Houstonian, would you say that the composition of the orchestra has changed over the years, from more local people? Ethnic composition? Gender?

DW: Oh yes, it sure did. Because of the way the orchestras grew, we insisted in contract negotiations and all of the time... every time there was an audition and opening, we kept pushing for wide open, international auditions held here. Our management didn't want to do that. They didn't want to take the trouble... they fought against it. They'd say, "People won't come down to Houston. We're out in the middle of nowhere, and we've got to go get a good player. I'll call my friend in New York and next week we'll have a good player. Great."

And so with our scale getting better, they began to have auditions here like everywhere else. And of course scads of people came. But there got to be *huge* competition because all these music schools have hundreds and thousands of players looking for jobs. When you go major in music, you either become a teacher in a school system or college or you try to be a professional player. Well there's just thousands of jobs for teaching, but very, very few for being a professional musician. So there's giant competition.

We- to be fair and not prejudiced- had these auditions behind screens. There got to be so many people who wanted to come audition - this is the same everywhere - that we had to figure out some way to limit them. We just can't hear 350 players. We don't have, and the conductor will *never* have time. So we started to have them send resumes and then we'd go through the resumes and try to say, "Well, send this player back a letter saying that 'Thank you but it is highly unlikely that your experience is enough to allow you to get in here.' " We did a lot of culling like that.

Then we tried - and this is kind of a general trend everywhere, everybody was snowed under with young players - we thought it's a horrible tragedy to have all these naive players fly over to your city and waste their money, and they play ten minutes and fly back home. And, of course, it takes a lot of time. But it's really unfair to these people. They're too naive to know they probably won't measure up. Although many of them are willing to do that so they get the experience and then do it over and over and get very much better at auditioning.

OK, we tried... we'll have a taped round, first round you send a tape and anybody can send a tape. I don't care what your resume, send the tape and we'll hear it. OK, and there was even somebody going to have a company that would have a taping center. You'd go over there and fly to that place and make a tape, and that'll be your tape from then on. Well, nobody wanted to do that because they're improving all the time. They're not going to send you this old tape.

The problem with tape is that you have to be very liberal. You can't just take four tapes if you've got, say, 200 tapes sent to you. You just can't take four tapes and throw the rest in the garbage. Because you'll miss some great players that, on the tape, you can't exactly tell how they really play. You don't know if they've worked two years on one

DW: (continued) tape or if they didn't have time to make a tape- they're a really good player but they just only had one hour left and made a tape. You just don't know.

And then you had horribly varying tape conditions. Some of them had echo all over the place, some were dead little rooms, too close to the mike, and on and on and on.

So if you're not very liberal, it's just horribly unfair to have that system. And we used that for awhile. We'd get in a room with a committee and just play these little tapes. And then vote on every tape. If you get enough votes to keep the tape and invite the person to come in person.

That got abused, I'll tell you. There was one orchestra that took all these tapes and invited one person and threw the rest of them away and said, "Don't come." Well, that just killed it. Things like that. Then you had all kinds of people that demanded – even though they got a letter that we recommended they're too young, don't come- they would even show up without an appointed time and try to play. Or they would write back. Or they'd have other teachers or other conductors call and plead for them to be able to be heard, and all that kind of thing.

So, it finally has evolved to this. The big orchestras finally solved it, and most of them do it this way. They're pretty liberal about hearing everybody. They'll cull and they won't hear any tapes anymore. But we'll go through resumes and send out a letter saying, "You're invited and here's your time." Or they'll say, "Don't come." But if they all come, we will hear them. However, our contract used to say that to be fair, we're going to hear everybody ten to twelve minutes. Well, now we don't do that any more. We'll hear them, period, and we'll cut them off, even if it's one minute. And if they sound too bad, "Very, very sorry but we've got to go on. We've got seventy-five people lined up out there, and we know you're not going to do too well. We're trying to hire one person." So it's liberal as far as getting to be heard, but the auditions are a little bit shorter, and they will cut them off in the middle ofthe audition. So, ifthe person sounds really good, then they usually get to play more and more pieces. Then you have a pretty good idea. They might play six excerpts, depending on how long they are.

TS: Who is on the committee? If it's a string audition, is it just strings?

DW: Yes, it's usually that way. Some orchestras don't have it that way, they have a mixture. And that committee in those- it's only a very few orchestras- that committee, no matter what audition openings there are, will take care of it. Almost everywhere, strings hear the strings.

Let's say you have a bass audition. The principal bass and maybe two other principal string players and then the rest are bass players. So you have the most possible bass players. And the rest are string principals. Like that. And there's other possibilities, but that's the way it usually is. Like woodwinds, it would be about like that. But everybody else in the section will be there, and then a couple other principals. So you have seven people.

DW: (continued)

Now, then they hear all the preliminary auditions and even... I think just the preliminaries. Then, the conductor will be there for the smaller semi-final or sometimes just the final round.

And then, to get hired, you have to have total number of votes of the conductor and the committee, but the conductor has five votes and each committee member has one vote. The conductor and *some* of the committee must agree, not the conductor and the *whole* committee- we would never hire anybody! But there's a lot of discussion, and it's about as good as you can do because you can't totally override him. Let's see, yes you could. You could actually override the conductor.

TS: When could you do this?

DW: To stop someone from being hired, but you couldn't hire him if the conductor was totally against it.

TS: Does every conductor have preferences?

DW: Oh yes.

TS: Anything memorable?

DW: Yes... we used to have a conductor- this happened many times- a conductor will want a certain kind of player. And they might have a certain player in mind, like somebody in some other orchestra that they heard them a lot and so forth. And want to figure out a way they can bring him over and get him in. And, the best they can do is get that favorite person to come over here, and the person has a chance to win. But if they don't win, they're not getting in. Period.

And it's very hard to get chosen and win. It's very, very, very hard to win these auditions. We have an orchestra full of all-star audition winners, and I mean they are all- stars because many auditions don't produce any winner of a job. *Many* ofthem. It's too bad, but that's what happens. The standard won't be high enough, or the committee can't agree, or the conductor won't agree, or something. And they'll just have a stalemate. Every time I've been on one, I would agree that we should not have hired anybody at the time. Just about every time. And we come very close. So you'll have an entire round of international auditions, with all these rounds and everything, and not have a winner , and you have to go forward. You don't start over again, but you invite people that didn't get to come, for instance. And you go finding all these other people that are highly rated but couldn't come that day and so forth. But it always works out.

TS: So when would you say that this transition from local symphony to world class- with the public image and players from all around the world -when you say that this happened and why? How did this transition happen')

DW: Well, several things. You paid more money. You had a longer season. Good reputation of the orchestra attracts all these better and better players to audition, and we hire them. OK. That's one thing.

Since I've been here we've had several conductors. We've Barbirolli, Previn, and then the guests. We've had [Lawrence] Foster, then the next longer range was [Sergiu] Comissiona, and then we had [Christoph] Eschenbach. OK, with Comissiona, we started making a lot more records for the first time. And there were some very, very good records. Alright, that helps. Then, we toured before with all of these people, but they all helped. You know, you go and get reviews in New York and all this, playing Carnegie Hall, and things like that. Comissiona toured several times, and we did very well.

And then Christoph [Eschenbach] was the first to do some very, very good recordings *and* European tours. So we played all over Europe, and then we went to Japan twice, we went to Singapore once. And so these things you take great advantage of You quote people from Vienna [music critics] raving about you, and they're not going to just do that because they've heard all the great orchestras ofthe world, and they're not going to rave if they don't believe it. And these critics are *very* hard to impress. But you use all of this. And then you tell people and show them - and you have records, too - that you are comparable to all these top orchestras in the United States and Europe and other places.

Also, touring simply makes the orchestra better. We go play three big programs over and over and over in all kinds of strange conditions, and you're going to be better and better and better, very tough from doing it. So that's what happens.

So, it's a combination of the conductor, the records, and the touring. And, of course, attracting all these better players because we've had some real all-stars during the last tours that we did.

TS: So, most ofthem [the musicians] are not local now')

DW: Oh, no. Another thing... years ago before you had all these screened auditions and so much competition, many more people from Houston or Texas got in- like me. Then after, let's say 1980, for instance... you have so many people from all over the place, all over the United States, but from many other countries more than ever, that the law of averages is that you're not going to hire anybody from Texas because there's very few auditioning. There's just scads from everywhere else.

We've had a trend- we've had so many ofthem that it's a trend- of Chinese people winning these auditions. They work extremely hard. They outwork everybody else. They go to the best conservatories and the best festivals for years and years, and they're

DW: (continued) *really* good. They can play solos, and they can play everything, long before they get here. And when they show up, they win. We've got, in the past few years, it seems like a trend of more Chinese people. There's other Asians, too, but more Chinese than anything. And they have different backgrounds. They sometimes train there, or train at Julliard, or train at a combination of places.

We have a guy from Russia, a lady from Australia, we have a guy from England, two from Romania, one from Hungary, and on and on and on. It's very, very international. They happened to win their auditions.

TS: Tell me about some of the memorable tours, [like] performing for the First Lady back in 1989 for the inauguration. How did that go?

DW: That is not very memorable for me! (laughs)

TS: Do you think that it brought the Houston Symphony into the spotlight, for the people in Houston?

DW: Yes, it probably did.

Memorable to me are playing with the best soloists and conductors. I got to play a concert with Artur Rubinstein on Ima Hogg's ninetieth birthday. And he played two concertos and he was eighty-four years old, I think. He played a huge, huge Brahms concerto and on the second half... maybe it was the other way around... played Chopin F minor concerto also. It was unbelievable! At that age, most people have joint trouble. Not him.

TS: When was this?

DW: I don't remember the date. It was the early '70s, with [Lawrence] Foster. You can look up whenever Ima Hogg turned ninety.[9]

TS: Did you have lots of concerts for her?

DW: Oh yes. She was in the audience all the time. She was a promoter of young talent, too. She would find soloists and really support them and give them opportunities. She was there in 1913 when we started the Symphony. She's the founder, I mean one of the founders. Just an amazing story.

In '83, we got to play and hang out with Leonard Bernstein for about a month. He came here because he was getting his brand new opera played, and that was just *amazing*. Now, he didn't conduct us but once. He didn't conduct the opera. But he was hanging around there, and we got to know him. He conducted a concert only in Miller Theater.

[9] July 10. 1972 was her ninetieth birthday. Handbook of Texas Online. <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles> (10 November 2004).

DW: (continued) But he was around there finishing the opera during rehearsals, and we got to really hang out and know him. And it was *just* incredible.

TS: What opera was that in '83?

DW: His opera was called... he had an older opera from the '50s called *Trouble in Tahiti.* And this new opera was called *A Quiet Place,* so he kind ofput them together and had them on one night. And they were related. It was the same family much later and so forth. Then, we played it nine times it was a big event. But he later re-did it and combined them into one opera and one title called *A Quiet Place.* And they weren't separate, but he had the older opera included as a flashback. Anyway, that was just great to see him in action. I mean, *just incredible,* the things they could do.

And we had many, many other conductors come through who were just legendary, and we got to play for them. I got to play for [Hans] Schmidt-Isserstedt, the great Paul Kletzki, and Ernest Ansermet. Oh that was an incredible deal. Ernest Ansermet. . .*oh my god!*

TS: What was that like?

DW: He was just an incredible conductor at age 84. He had premiered manfc, many things by [Igor] Stravinsky, and he had the Orchestre de Ia Suisse Romande. [0] I'll tell you the program- it's unforgettable. He did *Rhapsody E-.pagnol.* He did *Six Antique Epigraphs* ofDebussy, which he arranged. And he did Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments.* And he did Brahms Third [Symphony].

TS: All in one night. . .

DW: Yes, it was really something!

We played for Charles Munch, a great few concerts. One great guy I thought was one of the best was Raphael Fruhbeck de Burgos.

So our strongest music director has been Eschenbach, since I've been here. He just did some amazing things, just was more powerful and involved with a piece than anybody I've ever seen. And an inspiration... He would play a piano concerto and take a break and walk right back and play a *huge* Bruckner or Mahler symphony by memory - the whole night by memory. But he was a soloist, too. Phew. So, it was really something to keep up with him

TS: What would you say his relationship with the musicians was like, compared to some of the others?

[10] A professional orchestra in Geneva, Switzerland. Orchestre de Ia Suisse Romande website. translated version. <http://www.osr.ch> (30 November 2004).

DW: It was very, very good. It was very good because it was an accident. It just happened that the way he treated people was very demanding. He got more people fired than anybody. But the way he did it, and the way he's very involved and committed, and, diplomatic, I would say, and interested in handling everything in a humane way. That and everyone had great respect for him and got along very well with him. It was a really good … with these particular musicians, it was a very, very good relationship. Very unusual. He went away from here, and he does not have that anywhere else, I can tell you that. Chicago, not *anything* like this relationship. Philadelphia, *much* worse. They're at war over there.

Here, it was really going well. Not only all of that, but every time he came to town he would have a chamber series that he would play in. And no matter what's going on, he would have a lot of rehearsals and do a chamber event that he was in on with the principal players, depending on the program, see. So, boy, when he came to town, it was *really* busy (laughs). Day and night!

TS: What have been your most memorable performances, favorite pieces?

DW: Oh, golly. Playing Bruckner with Eschenbach was a very, very good thing all the way around. And, I like to play most anything by [Serge] Prokofiev, and Christoph [Eschenbach] did those Prokofiev pieces very, very well. We toured with the Fifth Symphony and he did excellent *Romeo and Juliet* suites.

[End Side One of Tape Two]

Tape Two, Side Two

[Begin Side Two of Tape Two]

TS: You were saying Prokofiev…

DW: He [Eschenbach] did a great thing by [Olivier] Messiaen called *Turangalila.* (laughs) Try to spell that one! And just an *amazing* piece. Just incredible. Several composers we've had conduct. We played for [Aaron] Copland several times.

We did a piece a few years ago that had the biggest ever bass trombone part. I mean a featured big solo in it. And it was written by…it was composed by the conductor Michael Tilson Thomas.[11] I think the name of it is *From the Diary of Anne Frank,* because that's what it is about. And it was very well composed and horribly dramatic.

[11] Conductor of the San Francisco Symphony. San Francisco Symphony website. <http://www.sfsymphony.org> (30 November 2004).

DW: (continued)

And so Lawrence Foster, who used to be our music director. .. his little baby grew up, and she was the narrator, and reading only words by Anne Frank. It was incredible. I had a big solo in the middle of the long piece. It's just a dramatic few minutes there to culminate the feeling of fear and horror. I played it Saturday night real well, but I didn't hear the narrator's words real well. On the next two nights, though, I could hear right what she said. She said, "People all over Europe were waiting... many were waiting to die." Then my solo starts, and I was very bothered by that. Usually we're not affected by that. We can always play. That's the first time I heard those words clearly, and then here's my cue (laughs).

TS: Now was this at Jones Hall or the [Cynthia Woods Mitchell] Pavillion?

DW: Yeah, it was there [Jones Hall]. It was really good. Very powerful stuff.

Let's see, and I like to play [Carl] Nielsen, too. Any Nielsen. We don't really play much of him. And I like to play [Jean] Sibelius, too. And we had a great conductor do all of Sibelius's in a set over two or three years.

TS: Who was the conductor?

DW: The great Alexander Gibson, who was a real follower ofBarbirolli. He didn't look like him, and he didn't act like him, but he *really* conducted very similar. And, he was a great musician and a great Sibelius conductor.

TS: What would you say about the acoustics over the years in the different venues?

DW: Oh, well, that's something unfortunately you can't do much about. You just show up and play. We have a pretty fair hall [Jones Hall], which looks much better than it sounds. It's too long, and it sounds too distant. You don't get impact like you should.

Anyway, before touring, we don't know how our hall compares until you go to Carnegie Hall, and then you say, "My god! This is how halls should sound."

And there's other halls that sound really good, too, and they're not very famous. But once in a while you run into some great hall. There was one in- if I'm not mistaken- Elmira, New York, on the second floor of a bank. Funny little place. A wooden hall, very totally wooden, and it sounded *great.* It sounded just better than Boston, it was just, *man!*

So we played in Boston a few times, and that's a very, very, very good quality live hall, liver than Carnegie. So what happens is we just play with a better tone than ever.

DW: (continued)

And every time we tour, we have a little group of supporters from here go, especially Europe. And they really tell everybody over here, "You should have heard them in Switzerland. You have no idea. My God, this orchestra sounds incredible!" In a good hall, see. They go to Vienna - well that's one of the most legendary halls ever built - and they just rave about it. Well, we've been saying that forever, but people just think we're complaining about nothing. But they hear us in these best-of-the-world halls. And they know that if our hall sounded as good as those, everybody that goes to the Symphony would just be more impressed and would come more, really.

But that's a... unfortunately, every time a city builds a new hall, they do in such a way that it's a great gamble. I mean a *rea/long* shot. Because they never will copy some hall. And if you did, you would know exactly you're going to get. So they'll have designers and acousticians, and great architects, and so forth. They do never really know what it's going to sound like until you have it. And most of the time, it backfires- most of the time. So, look at New York, who has the most power and money and everything in the world. They build Philharmonic Hall in the early '60s, and they've been trying to get that thing to sound good ever since – ever since. And they finally *gutted* it and just started almost over, and they still don't have what everybody would agree is a great hall. They'd rather go to Carnegie Hall, down the street.

What happens is when a hall opens up, everybody plays concerts, and everybody's happy, you know, and it's beautiful. And not for a while do you really get the answer. And you compare, and you go play somewhere else and you compare and you get all these different people... and you finally realize from audience people that really compare, too, then you finally get the real answer: "Well, this is so-so and that's all." And even if it was a terrible hall, nobody would admit it the first night. But, that's what happens, and there's just so many factors, that ifl had $400 million and was going to build a hall, by gosh I would copy *to the inch* a hall that I knew how it sounded. Then I know what I'm going to have, and you'd just wait and then you know when you go in there what it's going to sound like.

But they just don't do that, and some are really... anyway, when you do have a good one, then the audiences just have such a great experience there. I mean these halls are like a great violin. It has a tone of its own, and everybody sounds good in it. You can just make an announcement up there, and that sounds great. It's just... it's hard to explain until you really go there and you think, "Man, where have I..."

TS: How does Jones Hall rank?

DW: It's fair, and that's all. It's *too long.* If you boarded up about three-fourths to the back and make it shorter, it would immediately be better. Every time you have the back of the shell pulled up, and if you played on top of the raised pit, it sounds better because it's shorter. It's too long. And there's a lot of things I could argue about that, but the proven halls are very rectangular shaped. They never fan out in the back of the hall,

DW: (continued) they're very rectangular shape. And, some of them are tall and oval, but they're never deep either, ever. Ifthey're deep, they just can't compare.

And there's some exceptions. There's some strange shaped halls, and they sound really good here and there. But ifyou design one with a few common shapes, it's probably going to work with, you know, some variety. But anyway, there's many factors. At the Musikverein, which is everybody's favorite hall, it's very small and narrow. It's so narrow that everybody on the sides of it is facing across the hall and turned like this (turns his face at an angle) to see the concert. Just ridiculous. They could at least angle those chairs. There they are, looking at the people over there looking back at you, that's it. And the thing has many gold, nude women sculptures, all over the place.

TS: Where is this?

DW: Vienna. Look at New Year's Day Concert during the day- that's it. It's a gorgeous hall... we just need to buy a bunch of these statues and maybe our hall will sound just like this! (laughs) But, it's really ornate and everything, but it's not really big. It is *great.* (whistles in awe) So, we just wish that people could hear us at our best because that's where you play your best. There's no doubt about it.

TS: What reflections do you have about your time in the Symphony in the city of Houston?

DW: It's been a very, very lucky thing. And I mean really lucky. There's scads of people- just probably thousands- that wish they had my job. And they never will have the opportunity to have my job. But I've got to play with all these great players in the orchestras and all these conductors and all these great soloists. My god, we've got a big line-up coming this year. And we really get to hear them, know them, and shake their hands, talk to them. It's just great. It's just a lucky bunch of high experiences.

There's a lot oftrouble we've been through, too. Lot oftrouble I could tell you about. But it's in a way... it's not as stable as a whole profession as it should be, but it's about as stable as it could possibly be under the circumstances, you know.

And, there's, oh you know, you can always say that we know a lot of things that should be done better. But, just looking at the musical life, you come to work and it's going to be a wonderful thing to walk out there and play a concert, no matter what it is.

And I like the variety. It's been a lucky job because- except for a few years ago- we always had a lot of opera throughout the year. Played all the operas, until maybe four years ago, I forget when, and that was just a great variety and a whole great repertoire. We heard these singers and international opera conductors, and that's a big wealth of music. And then we have the Pops world, all this popular stuff. So we have a Pops season. And then we have even specials, where we have a subscription season. Three concerts in a group nine times. But now we're getting one night specials where you have somebody come in. We had Johnny Mathis a couple ofweeks ago. You know we've

DW: (continued) played for many, many famous people like that. We used to play for Henry Mancini, and oh, Doc Severinsen or Victor Borge... I could just go on and on. I just loved that whole popular thing. And a lot of people actually don't care that much for it, but, that's a big part of the job.

So we've had variety. Every month you have maybe nine kinds of music to play, just constantly different. You have to be really ready. You go to work, there might be a TV camera face right on you. And you have to start playing, and there's this guy shooting your face for twenty minutes or something. You have to be ready for anything, but the variety is what's good. Many large city orchestras don't have this variety at all, like Chicago and New York play no opera and hardly any Pops ever. Just play more and more and more symphonic repertoire, but I'd rather have the variety. We play a big variety ofthe symphony repertoire anyway, and they just lack all this variety and they wind up repeating war horse pieces much more than we do. Just all of them. So I'd say it's been better than anywhere because of that.

TS: And what about your relationships with the other musicians over the years? Are they some of your closest friends?

DW: Oh yes. They're just very good friends. That's a big part of the whole thing. You have fun with these people, and it's just very enjoyable. I'd say with the people I've played the most with- the trumpets and trombones- we've all just gotten along real good. And the other sections are... yes, we've got real good friends throughout the orchestra, but every single trumpet and every single trombone you have to play intimately with all day, every day. I mean, it's lucky that we get along good. You might not. But they're very nice to work with.

It's like a family. You know, people go to each other's house, or give each other gifts, or go to your family important things, and it's mostly close.

TS: Is there anything else you'd like to add right now? I know we could talk for hours! May I follow-up on any questions I may have or schedule another interview if necessary?

DW: Yes, sure.

TS: I can't tell you how much I appreciate your help. This has been so much fun to talk to you.

DW: Good! Good!

TS: Thank you so much for your time.

[End of Interview]

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