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(signed) Nordecan H. Pare
(date) July 7, 1976

Understood and agreed to
(interviewer)
Interviewee Mordecai Lurie

Interviewer Dennis B. Klein

Date(s) of interview June 29, July 7, 1976 (two tapes)

Setting (place of interview, people present, impressions)
I talked with Mr. Lurie at his home on but friendly evenings. During the first session, Mrs. Lurie was present and on occasion contributed her views, especially on anti-Semitism in the RPO and in Rochester. Mr. Lurie is an engaging personality; after the second session he showed me his workshop where he repairs and makes violins.

Background of interviewee
Mr. Lurie was born in New York City in 1901 where he lived a rather uneventful life. He studied at the Julliard school and played in small theatre orchestras. During one performance, Victor Wagner asked Mr. Lurie to join his and his Eastman Theatre Orchestra in Rochester; since 1926, Mr. Lurie played for the major orchestras in the local area. Though not active in Jewish community affairs, Mr. Lurie had warm relations with B'rioth Kodesh and Rabbi Bernstein, and a sustained concern for the State of Israel.

Interview abstract
Mr. Lurie provides unique insights into the operation and development of the RPO, especially the personalities of its various conductors. Particularly noteworthy are his observations on the changing sentiments of the public and orchestra management toward Jewish conductors. He also noted the way musicians participate, or rather do not participate, in Jewish life; e.g., small contributions to the Jewish welfare fund, insignificance of the "B'nai B'rioth Little Symphony".

Interview index (corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and casset recorder numbers)

_Social history ___Jewish community
_Family ___community relations
_Demographic/residential ___Religious life
_Economic ___Jewish education
_Political/civic ___Anti-semitism
_Zionism/Israel

Interview loc
a) corresponding to tape numbers, sides of tape, and cassette recorder nos.
b) including references to others in the Rochester community
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I. Biographical **
   A. New York City (1901-1926)
   B. Rochester (1926-present)
   C. Musical background
   D. Parents' background
   E. Family

II. Rochester Philharmonic
   A. Eastman Theatre Orchestra--Civic Orchestra **
   B. Other musical organizations
   C. The depression *
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   E. Conductors I: Jose Iturbi, Howard Hanson, Erich Leinsdorf,
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   E. Conductors I, cont.
   F. Dissension within the orchestra
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III. Anti-Semitism, Jewish identity in Rochester orchestra

   A. Against conductors, not players (until late 1940s):
      Laszlo Somogyi, Theodore Blumfield, Bernstein **
   B. Mrs. Lurie: Local anti-Semitism *
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   A. 1920s ambience
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      Jewish
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July 7, 1976

V. United Jewish Welfare Fund (Director, Musicians division)

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VI. Israel/Zionism I

   A. 1948 to present: interest and support **
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VII. Synagogue affiliation

   A. Background (and home life): N/C *
   B. B'rith Kodesh
1. Philip Bernstein I ♠ ♠
2. Downtown location ♠ ♠
3. Change to Brighton (1950s) ♠
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IX. Basis of religious attachment: rational, ethic

X. B'nai B'rith (1930s)

XI. Israel II
   A. "I consider myself part of it" ♠
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   C. Center of World Jewry, democracy
   D. Predicated on anti-Semitism ♠

XII. Rabbi Bernstein II
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   B. Jewish-Christian relations ♠
   C. Role during WWII

Tape 2, Side B

XII. Rabbi Bernstein II, cont.
   C. Role during WWII, cont.

XIII. Religious services
   A. Participation
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XV. Present endeavors (piano-tuning, violin-making)
   A. Customers (Jewish, esp. non-Jews)

XVI. "Jewish music"--observations
   A. Mendelssohn/Ravel/Mahler
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XVII. "B'nai B'rith Little Symphony" (1930s)--cultural development (small Jewish element; BB sponsorship incidental) ♠ ♠
Interview with MORDECAI LURIE
June 29, 1976
By Dennis B. Klein

Interview 1
Tape 1
Side 1

Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. and Mrs. Mordecai Lurie on June 29, 1976, at their home and we are on tape 1, side A. Suppose we begin, Mr. Lurie, with just a background of your life, a brief sketch. Where were you born and when, when you came to Rochester, unless you were born here?

A. Well, I was born in New York City on the lower east side in the year 1901. And, spent the first twenty-five years of my life thereabouts in that locale. After which, I was fortunate enough to get engaged by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and then I came up to Rochester in the year 1926. And, played with the orchestra for forty years and in 1966, I retired from the orchestra and continued with the . . . the work I'm doing at the present time which is camera service, mostly, also violin making and repairs.

Q. Okay. Let's go back to 1901 on the lower east side. Do you know the book by Howe that was by Irving Howe called The World of our Brothers?

A. Not familiar with that.

Q. There's a kind of a renaissance of interests in the lower east side and the Jewish community there. In fact, well my own background goes back to the lower east side. I'm very interested in that community. Do you have memories of . . .

A. Well, just very early memories. We lived on Henry Street, that's a . . . fairly well known, and outside of a brief period where the family moved to Spring Valley, New York, and a . . . a region not too far from the city, we spent three years there and then came back and moved to the upper part of Manhattan, 97th Street.

Q. On the west side?
A. On the east side, see. And, from that point . . . at that point, I got my musical education and went to high school and that sort of thing and, finally, got up here.

Q. In other words, not too many years in the lower east side then?
A. No. No. It was just the early years. The early years.

Q. Were you . . . I know that Boris Tomascefsky (spelling?) and the Yiddish Theater was a lively art there, do have . . . did you ever go to the Yiddish Theater in New York?
A. I don't believe I ever did.

Q. You don't. You don't have any recollection of . . .
A. I don't have any recollection. But, I remember the advertising, it was quite the thing. Days before radio. Days before any sort of entertainment we had in the home, why people would go to the Yiddish Theater. And Tomascefsky was the great avenue for such entertainment.

Q. There's a relation, isn't there, between him and Michael Tilton Thomas.
A. Oh, yes. He's a . . . he's a Tomascefsky. (Laughter)

Q. Yeah. (Laughter) I just found that out. So, it comes back to the ring is there.
A. He's got a real fancy name.

Q. You . . . you had your musical training in New York?
A. New York. I studied at the Institute of Musical Art which is now the Juilliard School.

Q. That was located, I think, on the west, upper west side?
A. Upper west side. I think, 122nd Street and Clairmont Avenue.

Q. That's now the Manhattan School of Music.
A. Oh, it is?

Q. Yeah, they changed it. Juilliard is now at the Lincoln Center.
A. Down, down, down . . .
Q. How . . . what years were you at . . .

A. Well, I finished my studies there in, I think, in 1917, 1918. And, then tried to get rooted into the musical profession there.

Q. Do you recall at what age and how you became interested in music, or is this something one is born with?

A. Would you like a little story, a very funny story?

Q. Yeah. Sure.

A. This has to do with a Jewish mother's illusion and hope for her children. A Jewish mother wants her little boy to study the violin. And, of course, I always think that my mother discovered I had talent. And, she discovered it when the street musicians came around and played on the landing. And, when this particular street musician put his violin down to go and collect a few pennies around from the various tenants there, I ran in and stole his violin. Ran in the house with it and hid under the bed. I was about three years old. And, finally, this man says, yelled blue murder, 'where's my violin? Somebody stole my violin. At that moment, my mother discovered that I was missing. So, she started looking for me and finally found me under the bed with the violin. That's how she knew I had talent.

Q. (Laughter) I see. But what kind of talent? (Laughter)

A. And, of course, I studied about . . . I was about eight years old when I started to take violin lessons. And, I took to it . . . I'm an average player. And, I was studying with a man who came to the house. I was doing fairly well according to the standards that he had, but in those days, it was like an itinerant teacher. The quality to be gained from that sort of instruction is limited. And, a neighbor of ours was going to the Institute, and he took musical art. And, my parents thought that maybe I ought to get into there. And, I had to take an examination to get in there. And, I just got in, see, and I studied there, and I started to really learn. Up to that point, I was just messing around.
Q. Well, by messing around you mean that this was one of these families . . . everybody . . . every family has to have a piano player, I mean, it was just one of those . . . You really weren't taking it all that seriously, it was just like . . .
A. Well, I was . . . I was interested in learning how to play. Music meant a great deal to me.

Q. It wasn't just another activity for you, it was becoming an important part of your life.
A. Well, well, yes, it was an activity but, of course, as a kid nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old, you had no illusions about it. You just, your job is to study.
Q. Yeah. I mean . . .
A. And, learn how to play.

Q. I mean, I took piano lessons, but then I wanted to out and play baseball, and you know, that type of thing. That wasn't your attitude?
A. No. I . . . I wasn't absorbed entirely in the violin, I liked to socialize among the kids and, I never went in for sports very much. But, that was a good activity. A good creative activity for me that I appreciated. And, as I got more proficient, it became more and more important.

Q. You started with the violin?
A. Yes.

Q. That's an incredibly, I mean, it's a . . . it's a very difficult instrument, and it's . . .
A. It's the most difficult . . . most difficult.

Q. Did that . . . did you ever, I'm sure you've had numerous frustrations along the career, but did you ever, at that young age feel that you just couldn't overcome the problems? 
A. No, I had hopes that I'd become a professional. You see, after I'd been studying when I got to be about fifteen, sixteen years of age, I started to feel that I was getting good enough that I could make a career of it. And, in those days, it wasn't too difficult to get into some kind of job... approach. And, I was able to get summer jobs and substitute. In those days, we had movie theaters, you know, where every little movie theater had an orchestra and had no talkies, there was all silent movies. And, I was able to do work that way. And, finally, I began to see that New York was not a place for me as far as the profession was concerned.

Q. Oh, that's interesting. I was...

A. I didn't like it.

Q. I was gonna assume the opposite, because there's so many opportunities there.

A. But the opportunities were um... controlled by clicks, small clicks. And, it was difficult to know the right people. You see? If you get into the little click, why you... you've got an "open sesame" somewheres along the line. But, I found that it was getting distasteful and I... I was just relishing an opportunity to get away from New York. Emotionally. Psychologically. I wasn't attuned to professional life in the big city.

Q. That's... part of the reason for that's because it's so high strung and so incredibly competitive?

A. That's right. And, it's so insecure. So absolutely insecure. For every job there's dozen's waiting.

Q. Oh. Yeah.

A. It's difficult to get something to latch on to that would... that you're gonna have for any length of time.

Q. I know some people who are singing... in the singing business, and they're just there... at least my friends, they're waiting.
A. So, I was just waiting for an opportunity to go to a small town and here . . . a year and a half I was waiting, a conductor of the Eastman Theater Orchestra came to New York, and he was looking around for players. And, he latched onto me through a recommendation, and here I am.

Q. Well, before we get into the Rochester scene, I'm gonna keep you back in New York for a minute. Where did your parents . . . where were they born and . . .

A. Well, they came from Poland. Suwalki.

Q. Could you spell that?

A. S-u-w-a-l-k-i. It's an . . . it's a region in Russian-Poland. What?

*A. Isn't it S-u-v?

A. Well, it's "w" pronounced like a "v".

Q. The German "w" apparently is pronounced like a "v".

A. Yeah. Yeah. I think it's spelled . . . well, it doesn't matter. Suwalki.

Q. We're close enough, I think.

A. They used to say, Suwalki Gobanya (spelling?)

*A. Well, that's the province.

A. The Province of Suwalki.

Q. I see.

A. And, that's where my parents came from.

Q. Both parents?

A. Both parents.

Q. From the same province?

A. Not in the same town, but in the same province. Yeah.

Q. Okay, what was your father's name?

A. Alexander.

Q. And, when was he born?

A. Oh, gee.
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
( * denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

Q. Now we're going back to the 19th century.
A. I don't know when he was born. He must've been around nineteen or twenty years when he came to this country in 1888. Now, you figure that out. Would probably be '68 or '69, maybe that's when he was born. Something like that. My mother was a little bit younger.

Q. What was her name?
A. Sarah.

Q. And her maiden name?
A. Sarah M. . . I don't know what the Russian name . . . the Polish name is but she had a brother who went by the name of Martin. He came to this country, and his name was Martin.

Q. Well, he Americanized, obviously, the longer name to Martin.

Q. Okay.
A. So I really don't know what the whole name was.

Q. Did they meet, I assume it was in the old world? Your parents?
A. No, I believe they met here.

Q. Well, it's quite a coincidence then.
A. Yeah.

Q. Actually not, because immigrants tended to move into the same . . .
A. Yeah. Yeah, they came to the same area, and they . . . they got married when they came to this country.

Q. I see, New York.
A. Yeah.

Q. Why did your father come to? America.
A. Well, there was a big pogrom there, where they were drafting, and also they were drafting Jews into the Russian army. See, this was Russian Poland, part of
A. (Continued) Russia. But, it was in the area of Poland. And, my father didn't want to get into... go into the army so he fled... into this country.

Q. To avoid the...
A. To avoid the draft.

Q. What role did the pogrom play in this... in his decision?
A. Well, I don't know that actually a pogrom was involved in my father's leaving, but I know it was the army the... the prospect of going into the Russian army that drove him to this country.

Q. Let me ask you if he told stories or ever related this to you, or what was so hideous about going into the army?
A. Well, it was like going into prison.

Q. Just for Jews it was so difficult, or because you had the lowest, you were the lowest...
A. Discrimination against the Jews was pilot. And they were being killed and discriminated against and every (unknown), and he didn't feel... got hold of himself, why should they go into the Russian army to maintain their precedence over the Jews to whom they were maltreating? So, he didn't want to be in the army.

Q. It's a big step to leave one's home, and it would have to be...
A. Right, and thousands of them.

Q. Yeah.
A. There was a big wave of immigration in 1888. That's when it started.

Q. That year?
A. That year.

Q. That was important.
A. Yeah. And, he came with that influx of immigrants.
Q. What was his vocation, what did he do?
A. He ... I don't know what he did over there.
Q. How about in America?
A. When he came to America, he was involved in shirt manufacturing of a sort. I really never got to the details. That floundered. And, then, he became a real estate agent for part of a family. There was an off-shoot of a family on my mother's side who were very successful real estate operators. And, they hired my father to collect rents and to oversee property that they had. And, that was a job that he had in my growing up years.
Q. I see.
A. He had that until he retired.
Q. When did he retire?
A. Oh ...
Q. Was it ... this is before you came to Rochester, I assume, he retired.
A. No, he retired after I came to Rochester.
Q. Did he come to Rochester too, or did he stay in New York?
A. No, he stayed in New York. He stayed in New York.
Q. On the upper east side?
A. Yeah that, and the house on 90 Sutton Street, yeah. I think he retired after I came to Rochester. I don't recall just the year. I imagine it was some kind of '40 ...
Q. Now, this is unusual that he got involved, originally at least, in clothing. Because Jews, Eastern European Jews tended to ... 
A. Right. Right.
Q. In this city, as well, in fact they dominated a very important industry in Rochester before ...
A. He had no education and he had no particular skills that could be of use to
A. (Continued) him, but it so happened that this member of the family was a very wealthy, had a lot of profit, and they needed him or somebody like him to collect rent and oversee the property. And, he did that very effectively.

Q. So that was a break, I mean . . .
A. That was a break for him.

Q. Yeah.

A. Sure was.

Q. I'll say. Because the clothing industry was a mess. I mean, you know, people worked almost, I mean, I don't know how the army was, but it sounds to me that it wasn't much of a step up.

A. Well, at least you're independent, at least you don't have the Russian . . .

Q. The violence involved.
A. . . . violence in that.

Q. That's true.

A. You had the freedom in this country, which is something to be desired.

Q. Do you have brothers or sisters?
A. I haven't . . . I had a brother, deceased, and I have a sister who's living now in Florida. My brother is younger, two year's younger than me, but he's been dead for oh . . . how long has Maury been dead, about fifteen years?

*A. I think it's seventeen?
A. At least ten years he's dead. At least ten years. Oh, it's more than that. Oh, yeah. Fifteen years I would say.

Q. What did he do, what was his . . .?
A. He had been retired. He was . . . he had a little small business of making little knick-knacks for business promotion. You know, fountain pens and (unknown) and stuff of that kind for business promotion. And, he was doing
A. (Continued) fairly well with that. Suddenly he died. His widow is living down in Florida. He has two sons. One in Long Island or Brooklyn. And, the other, a very successful doctor down in Florida.

Q. Okay. Well, let's come to Rochester.

A. Alright.

Q. Which you did. Now, you said that it was the conductor of the Eastman Theater Orchestra?

A. Yes, now this is of interest. As most people don't understand about the Rochester Philharmonic, those were the days in 1926 before the talkies, and the Eastman Theater was the great meeting place in Rochester. It was patterned on the old Capitol Theater in New York, if you remember that. It had a rising pit, big stage, and a seating capacity of around 3,200 feet. So, it was for movies and they filled that place. Now, they had an orchestra of over seventy players to play for this ... these movies. And, the overture was the great thing in those days. People who ... music lovers, so-called music lovers, would pride themselves, take pride, tell others, they love music and they always go to the Eastman Theater to hear the overture. (Laughter) That's a standard of listening, see? However, on Thursdays, the theater, the movie theater, was closed. And that very same orchestra became the Rochester Philharmonic.

Q. What year was this?

A. This is when I came. It started in 1923, the theater was built, 1922, '23. And, I came three years later in 1926. And, they still carried on that policy. And, with the addition of a few players around the city to increase the numbers of the orchestra, we had a comparatively full-size philharmonic.
A. (Continued) And, we gave this concert on Thursday afternoon, no movies that day. And, in the evening, the visiting artists come and visit the orchestra. And, on Friday, music school.

Q. How did that... how did the Thursday afternoons series do?
A. Oh, it did quite well and the city was very proud that we... we a small town could have some kind of a philharmonic. But, otherwise, I doubt very much that there would be anything here that... that... that would in any way approach the series type of philharmonic performances.

Q. Was it unusual for a city of this size to have a theater orchestra as it did?
A. In a way, yes. In a way, yeah. But, you see, there was a certain... George Eastman was behind this whole thing. He built the Eastman Theater and the Eastman School of Music as a unit. And, he gave it as a gift to the university. See, the university is still... owns that property. And, the inscription on the Eastman Theater is 'For the enrichment of community life'. And, what was going on in the theater was important to George Eastman.

Q. So, that's (unintelligible) the philharmonic orchestra something that he endorsed all the way.
A. Yes. Right. Yes, he was the mainstream of this theater, the main backer of the whole thing.

Q. Did you meet George Eastman?
A. Not personally, but we've seen him.

Q. He certainly was behind the scenes.
A. Yea, our conductor would say, 'Boys, play nice, Mr. Eastman's in the house tonight.' (Laughter) Yeah, but, he was the mainstream of the Eastman School of Music... the phil... the University of Rochester. Now, we had a Rochester Civic Music Association at that time, which was composed of people around town that have a garage to raise money for the philharmonic. But, without George Eastman we wouldn't have had anything.
Q. Well, when was the CMA formed? That came afterword, I thought.

A. Well, let's see. It was still going in a way at the time of the movies. Dramatically, two years later, in 1929, just before the stock market crashed, the policy of the theater was to close because talkies had come in. They didn't need a big orchestra any more. And, our manager decided, that is the manager of the artist's series, a man by the name of Arthur Sea, and was able to set up a plan to use most of this orchestra as a small nucleus of a future philharmonic, you see? They had all these good players, and some of them were excellent players, ready at hand, and if they were to go to the winds, why you got nothing. So, he organized this plan to use the greater part of this orchestra as a nucleus on a yearly contract, and that became what was known as the Civic Orchestra.

Q. Okay.

A. The Civic Orchestra is like the (Unknown) Orchestra that we have today. And, additional players around town and from the Eastman School, incidentally, mostly from the Eastman School, there's where the reservoir of fairly decent players was who could measure up to the standards that were necessary. See? Then, no movies in the theater which closed for a time. The Eastman Theater came back to being a cultural center. And, it was devoted to, almost entirely, to cultural events. They had travel logs and a few plays here and there, ballets, and what not, you see? And, the philharmonic had its headquarters there. The offices were in the, the offices in the Eastman Theater there. And, that... that became the plan that we've had ever since then.

Q. Well, that was a fortunate transition, then. I mean, when talkies came in.

A. Yes. Yes. It sure did.

Q. They could've undermined the whole...
A. Because, you remember, the stock market crashed started off the Great Depression. And, we were all mighty fortunate those who were left there in the orchestra, that had some kind of a job.

Q. I would assume that the Depression, though, would have still made an incredible impact. Do you recall . . . ?

A. It did. It did. A tremendous impact. You mean on the musicians?

Q. Well, on just the life of the orchestra and, of course, on individual musicians.

A. Well, I'll give you an example of how our wings were clipped due to forces beyond our . . . beyond what we could . . . any control over: As I said, we were very glad to have a job. A fund was raised to have a thirty-six week contract. And, that was terrific in those days in 1928. This was before the stock market crashed. After the crash, those thirty-six weeks dwindled to thirty-two weeks the following year; and the following year they dwindled to thirty weeks; and the following week it dwindled to twenty-eight weeks. Year, I mean. The following year it dwindled to twenty-eight weeks plus a ten . . . a voluntary ten percent contribution.

Q. Voluntary?

A. Voluntary contribution. That was written in the contract. So, you can imagine how the . . . earning power of a musician. Raises were out. You had same . . . same amount per week, but fewer weeks work. So, from thirty-six weeks, we were down to twenty-eight weeks plus a ten percent voluntary contribution. But you know something, in those days a dollar was worth something.

Q. You took what you were offered?

A. We took it, and we were glad to have it. And, then things started to get a little bit better. And, we became a little bit bolder, and we went out for a organized attempt to get higher pay. And, then, instead of asking for a
A. (Continued) higher individual salaries, we wanted more weeks of work.
See? So, it got from twenty-eight weeks plus the ten percent voluntary contribution up to twenty-eight weeks minus the ten percent.

Q. That voluntary contribution is hardly voluntary. (Laughter)

A. (Laughter) Right. And, then it got up to thirty weeks. And, then it got up to thirty-two weeks. And, when I left the orchestra in 1966, it was just about up to thirty-four weeks. And, from the '40s, the '50s, and the '60s, we were able to negotiate increases.

Q. So, how many weeks long is the season now, do you know?

A. I think it's about thirty-nine or forty weeks, forty-two weeks.

Q. And now I understand that, didn't men in the orchestra want some of the summer contracts, as the Opera Under the Stars . . . I don't know if you've been . . .

A. He wants?

*A. Sure, why not?

A. Good idea. If that's what he wants to do.

Q. I don't know if it's a good idea, I'll tell you why: I mean, it seems to me that amateur musicians or those musicians who are not . . . a part of the major orchestra, should have a chance to contribute to the musical life in Rochester as well. And, now . . .

A. That's true. That's true, but, unless you're doing it on a professional basis, especially an opera, you're not going to get very far. People won't come.

Q. I guess you're right, but the whole Hyland Bowl atmosphere so relaxed, so informal that people's expectations, I don't think, are very, very high.

A. I know, but you have no idea, if you haven't been in professional life, that the requirements, especially in a performance of that type, you have to have a high standard, you can't have an amateur standard, or you're gonna get high school stuff. And, that's totally unacceptable.
Q. Well, I can see where you're biased. Isn't this the controversy between organized musicians and those who try to pick up the . . .
A. I don't believe so. I don't believe that. No. No. No.
*A. No.
A. You're not gonna find throughout the country, any professional group that isn't organized under the union. Now, I'm not a union man above everything. But, if it weren't for the union, the ability to negotiate higher standards of the musical life of all communities in the country would be either non-existent or pretty close to it.
Q. Now the union for the RPO, well when did it become the RPO, when did it become the Rochester . . .
A. Last year, I believe. It became the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.
Q. Oh, out of that controversy, I know there was a big controversy very recently.
A. Yeah. Yeah.
Q. One thing I'm confused about that I think we should clarify is that there's a number of orchestras, for example, the Eastman Theater Orchestra, and you said a nucleus orchestra?
A. Now, the Eastman Theater Orchestra . . . you mean in those days?
Q. Yeah, now I'm going back to the '20s because of the number of the groups, it seems now, involved in the musical life of Rochester.
A. Well, as a professional musical life, there's only this theater orchestra. That's all there was. Everything else was (unintelligible).
Q. Including the Civic Orchestra?
A. Well, now, wait a minute. The Civic Orchestra was an outgrowth of the Theater Orchestra. It was the same body of players only a little smaller. The rest of them were let go. Get the idea? We had seventy-odd players and we start
A. (Continued) off with fifty-three, fifty-four players in the Civic Orchestra.
It was the same body of players.

Q. What was the impetus behind that? Why organize it . . .
A. Because, it . . . they were afraid and it was a very . . . very good fear
that if we tried to martial enough money to maintain a full-size philharmonic
on a yearly basis, we couldn't martial that kind of money. Because, it took
a lot of money to run an orchestra.

Q. Because of its size?
A. Because of its size, you see? So, we got away with it this way. The standards
were a little bit lower, but on the other hand, it was very well thought of by
the Eastman School. Because when you consider that a school of this type has
to draw upon people who are on the professional . . . looking towards a pro-
fessional career, the opportunity for their students to play in a professional
orchestra was an attraction, see?

Q. To the school?
A. To the school.

Q. Students would come and . . .
A. Right.

Q. . . . study there with that opportunity?
A. Right, you see? So, that brought students there. And, the orchestra did pro-
fessional services for the school, see? We'd have Dr. Hanson (spelling?) who's
at the head of it, and instituted (unintelligible) of concepts more than once
a year, sometimes two, three, four times a year. American Composers Concerts,
he was in the (unintelligilbe) of promoting American composers. And he was
using the Eastman School as the basis for furthering the careers of young
composers, giving them the opportunity, not only to have their works performed
but recorded. And, we were involved in that. And, he was a . . . famous for
his effort in promoting the American Composer.
Q. Including himself, I'm sure.
A. Undoubtedly. (Laughter)
Q. (Laughter)
A. Because, I can tell you, more or less confidentially, that I don't, I can't recall a concert of American composers where one of his works was not performed. And, he was rather prolific, he wrote a lot of stuff. And, at concerts his new stuff was being played. And, he had the faculty of getting universities and all educational institutions, most educational institutions around the country, not only to make him aware of their presence, but to give him honorary degrees. I don't know how many honorary doctor's degrees he's got from universities around the country, but I think if he stacked them up he'd need a room to hold them all. He's got so many honorary degrees.
Q. Is that right, I had no idea he was . . .
A. Oh, he's very well liked among the intellectual community. And, of course, he liked that because he furthered his own career that way.
Q. He won the Pulitzer Prize, I think, for, this was even before . . .
A. Did he? I'm not sure about that.
Q. . . . the college opened.
A. But, as a young man, he was studying in the American Academy at Rome. And, he, in the early '20s, made a mark with his personality. He, I always said this, was a typical American go-getter. Do you remember that term? American go-getter. He could whip up a speech at a moment's notice, and be very interesting. He had the gift of the gab. And, he convinced the right people of his worth. And, he made a mark even today.
Q. Did you . . . was he conductor of the orchestra?
A. Well, he conducted . . . he conducted the recordings that we made with him at the Eastman Rochester Orchestra. You may hear some recordings now and then.
A. (Continued) With Dr. Howard Hanson conducting the Eastman Rochester Orchestra?

Q. Now, what is the Eastman Rochester Orchestra?

A. The name of our philharmonic but for recording purposes, it's called the Eastman Rochester Orchestra. And, of course, it was paid for by the Eastman School. See? Paid for by the Eastman School.

Q. I thought the recordings, now this is my error, I think, but until very recently, I thought that recording companies, it would be quite an honor for an orchestra to be asked by a recording company to make a recording, and I thought that they would take care of the finances for that. It's their investment.

A. Except, little orchestras like us or other orchestras where the orchestra has to be paid by some other source other than the recording company.

Q. I see. Wasn't the Columbia Recording Company part of the . . . didn't they record the orchestra?

A. Yes, we did some with (unknown).

Q. (Unknown), yea.

A. They weren't all the rage, but some were. Now, as far as that's concerned, it was the Rochester Philharmonic . . . The Rochester Civic Music Association that paid for it.

Q. So, you needed local funding to help pay for that?

A. Yes! Sure. Otherwise they wouldn't be interested to talk us. They got Philadelphia, Boston, New York, all the big orchestras to record, where why should they come to us?

Q. Because you were good.

A. Oh, no. We're good, but not that good. (Laughter)

Q. (Laughter)

*A. When the Civic Music Association started, they innovated the idea of having concerts for new schools, that they didn't have before.
A. Oh, yeah. That was part of the plan.

*A. That was very important to . . .

Q. In the secondary schools?

A. Yeah, secondary, and some of the primary schools, too.

*A. That was the first time.

A. And, for that we got the Board of Education endorsement and some money from the Board of Education to help defray some of the expenses.

Q. That's very valuable, I'm sure, a very good idea.

A. They're still doing that.

*A. And, that gave them a little extra work.

Q. I know, I grew up in Cleveland and, of course, there's a great orchestra there . . .

A. Of course.

Q. . . . and, I remember as a youngster, going to the orchestra. It's an incredible experience.

A. Oh, it is. And, that was one of the reasons for the success in raising the money, maintaining the orchestra. It's doing educational work.

Q. Right.

*A. Right. (Unintelligible)

Q. The orchestra also traveled around the area here, too, didn't it?

A. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. I remember once they went to Geneva. Every once in a while.

A. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. So . . .

A. And, we go farther afield. I remember when (unknown) was with us. We went on big trips. We went down south. And, we went out there with (unknown). We went in the Chicago area. And, a . . . we went to New England, and various
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
(* denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

A. (Continued) places, but not the big cities. But, we went with Etopia, I remem-
ber he was just with pride. He brought us a lot, his reputation and his con-
nections brought us to places that we couldn't have gotten to otherwise. He
said, "We played in Carnegie Hall, not once but twice." (Laughter)

Q. (Laughter) And, when you make it twice, you know you've made it. (Laughter)

A. (Laughter) Yeah! Well, we did play a concert there and it was written up
by all the critics in most (unknown) terms. And, that's, I thought, that was
an accomplish.

Q. Well, that's what I'm saying, I mean, it was a good orchestra.

A. Yeah, it was.

Q. There's no reason to . . .

A. But of course, we . . . we didn't have the numbers.

Q. You couldn't do a Vandenaire (spelling?) opera or . . .

A. I mean it was, seventy . . . it was . . . eighty-odd players . . .

*A. Seventy-five.

A. . . . it's not . . . it's not the same as twenty players extra in the strings,
usually.

Q. What is the normal size of an orchestra? What is . . .

A. A hundred players. Over a hundred.

Q. And, the strings . . . and the strings have that . . . that sound?

A. Yes. Yeah. Because, you need that string sound to counter-balance the brass
and the wind.

Q. Right.

A. So, with these people we went places, and the quality of the orchestra was
rather good. And, hear some of the recordings that are still being played to-
day, the Eastman Rochester Orchestra. Now, we made recordings with (Unknown)
A. (Continued) he playing the piano, and this was interesting: in the old days ... the old day's of recording is different than they are today, because now it's on tape. See? In the old days it was on the wax platter.
And, you can't make a mistake on it four and half minutes, because one little flaw comes in, you gotta start the whole thing all over again. I remember one very amusing incident, we'd played with the (Unknown) concerto, and we had to break off right in the middle of a (unknown) you know, because the length of the platter had run out.

Q. These are the 78's?
A. The 78's. So, he says now, "don't forget when we come to this note, you play the down beat and don't go any further." And, everything was going fine, everything, everybody was playing well, and (unintelligible) they were playing beautifully, and we come to that note, we all finished, and he kept playing. And, and ... and he's playing alone to the orchestra. "Oh, my God!", he says. He says, "I spoiled it!" (Laughter) He was even the first to admit it.

Q. (Laughter) That's funny, though.
A. But, that's the way it was. It was very difficult to . . .

Q. What pressure that is.
A. The pressure is terrific. And, you get a little skittish on your second chances. But, now on tape you can interpretate anything, and make all kinds of mistakes you want and they can all be corrected and the end results, you'd never know it sometimes.

Q. The editor is the one who's the musician today.
A. Right. It's easy to record today.

Q. Yeah.
A. In those day's, we didn't get paid as much, neither. Now, since that time the recordings easier. But, that's a memory.
Q. Who ... who is the conductor who ... who you first played under in the Eastman Theater?
A. The first one I played under was Eugene Goosée. He was here when I first came to Rochester.

Q. He's the one that went to New York to look for players, wasn't he?
A. No. He was the conductor of the philharmonic. He had nothing to do with the theater, you see? On Thursdays in the mornings when he rehearsed, it was his orchestra, you see? Never played any movies. Philharmonic. But, the conductor, the theater conductor was a man by the name of Victor Vaugner, and he came from New York, and he came ... I was working in the theater that was associated with his antecedent. So, he came to this theater looking for players that's how he had to see me. And, but, he conducted the theater orchestra and he ... and he went up to the re ... this room, the viewing room and had to figure out what music to play and at what place in the ... in the different places along the line, you see? He'd collect the music and set up the whole program. And that was a big job. And, he had control of that, see? But, Eugene Goosée had the philharmonic, so the same body of players but on Thursdays, it became the philharmonic. See?

Q. That must have been difficult for the players for yourselves? Two different conductors with their own ...
A. No. Oh, no, no. That's not difficult. That's not difficult at all.

Q. ... with their own nuances and peculiarities ...
A. Yeah, but the music you play is different. Your style of playing is enriched when you get into real fine music. But, you're playing the same. There's no difficulty with different ... under different tutoring.

Q. A temperamental, I don't if any of these conductors were temperamental in any extreme way?
A. No, not for the most part. But, that doesn't have anything to do with our ability to coordinate what he asks us to do. A musician becomes flexible, that's part of his training, to adapt immediately to changing conditions. I'll give you an example of what happened unexpectedly. We had...as I said, the Civic Orchestra which is a small orchestra, and the philharmonic, which is the same small orchestra with additional players. Now, the programs with the Civic Orchestra were educational and we used to play radio pro...broadcasts, you see, and, accompaniments for the Eastman School, and little odds and ends all around. But, that was done by a fellow named of Harrison, what was his first name?

*A. The last...yeah. Oh, the first name? I don't remember.

A. Mr. Harrison...and, we played a Sunday night concert and he stopped off, and the concert's by (Unknown) Bates and gets us going and then he walks off the stage. Totally unexpected. It...it was a stunt, you see? To amuse people. Just before the end of the...

Q. Did you expect this?

A. No.

Q. So, then it didn't amuse you, I'm sure.

A. Well, we...we knew right away what was going on, you see? We were able to suddenly be left without a conductor and pick up the range, so to speak. You see? And, we knew what we had to do. And, it went off fine, better than if he were there.

Q. Is that right, I...?

A. He came back, he came back just before the end, and cut us off when we had (unknown), you see?

Q. (Laughter)
A. Now, that's a stunt so I was talking adaptation to changing ideas. So, if we could adapt to a thing like that at a concert, this wasn't rehearsal, we could certainly adapt to being under different direction by a different conductor. No, that isn't difficult.

Q. Now I hear stories that, you know, there are some conductors that some musicians say I can't play with him, I mean there's just... we just can't follow his speed and his, you know, and you do hear that time and again the tensions between the conductor, I mean, as a good example, right here in Rochester wasn't there with... who was the man?

A. Right. Right. Right. Chamagy (spelling?)

* A. It was Winsoff, Winsoff (spelling?)

A. It was, well... we... we didn't have so much with Winsoff, but we did with Chamagy and with Jones.

Q. With Jones (unknown)?

A. Yeah.

Q. So there is that...

A. Well, the problems with Jones was that he... he...

Q. Let me interrupt for a second.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1, INTERVIEW 1
Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. and Mrs. Lurie on Tape 1, Side B.
So, we were talking about Jones and the tensions between the conductor and
the orchestra members.

A. The problem with Mr. Jones was that a very likeable, personable, person, but
he lacked the training to handle an experienced orchestra. He'd be alright
with schoolboys, school players. And, he was conducting an experienced orches-
tra on the level of a high school orchestra. And, that didn't set too well
with the more mature players. And, his whole approach was so elementary in
handling the types of music that we were supposed to play; much of stuff that
he did we could read at sight at the concerts, you see? And, he'd start to
pick it apart and try to improve this . . . this section, try to improve that
section, stopped inordinately to make elementary corrections that were mean-
ingless. And, he wore down the orchestra.

Q. So, this is a different problem than, really, than what I was referring to?

A. Right. But, that was one of the reasons of (unintelligible) with Jones. Now,
it had nothing to do with him personally. Because off the podium he was fine.
See? But, once you get on the podium, you're a different person.

Q. Those were difficult years, I know.

A. And, then, there's where the problems start up. Now, he was second, he was
only Associate Conductor with this, Laslow Chagamy, you see? Now, to me,
Laslow Chagamy was the type of man that would, kind of, make a name for him-
self in this country. And, he was trying to exult himself in the eyes of the
players. And, the more he tried, the less successful he was. And, the . . .
consequently, there was no rapport between the orchestra and him. We got to
dislike what he was doing and how he was doing it. I'll give you an example of
A. (Continued) what happened, this actually happened, to show you what type of person he was: He had a habit of getting off the podium during rehearsal and walking in front of the woodwinds, let's say, and conducting right in front of them. While the orchestra was playing. Now, that's very disturbing to a player.

Q. It's condescending. Isn't that condescending?

A. Well, it's a . . . yes, it's showing us that they need special attention, see, and he's conducting them, you see? We didn't like it, so we told our personal manager to tell him that that's not the best thing to do, we don't like it. He ought to stop it. Oh, well, he was insulted, he says, "I can do what I like," he says, "but, just to keep peace, I'll stop it." Ten minutes later, he's doing the same thing. So, we complained again, and we said, "well, look, you'll have to tell the manager to tell him to stop it." So, finally told the manager and he come and told him to stop doing that. And, he agreed and each time he was more and more perturbed. Finally, he stopped for another ten minutes, and he did the same thing again. So, what are you going to do? We go to the union and tell . . . have the union put pressure on him, and he was brought up to the union to stop this practice. And, he said he would, and he was very much insulted about it, but he would. And, when he got back to the orchestra, he kept doing it again. Now, what . . . there's a man that's trying to impose discipline on an orchestra, and he can't discipline himself.

Q. He wasn't taking, I don't think, these warnings seriously.

A. I don't know, but he had an exulted idea of his own worth. And . . .

*A. He was a very stubborn man.

A. He was a very stubborn person.

Q. You can't get a good sound from an orchestra, it seems to me, if you can't coordinate these two vital elements.
A. So, disaffection in our emotional approach to our work and to him personally, became such an over-riding thing that two, then, quit. First player, the fellow was a year . . . in the first show is . . . then I quit, and the following year seventeen players quit! Now there's something wrong when that happens in a small orchestra.

Q. I'll say.

A. In a small town like this. And, that started the big fracas that we had. And, he was eased out, and in the meantime, Jones got the job.

Q. Not the best removed . . . not the best move there.

A. No, because Jones wasn't any better liked than Chagamy, as a matter of fact, it was a step down. Well, one thing led to another and he eased out. Now, Jones, I'm glad to say, got himself a job at Right's (spelling?) Institute in . . .

* A. Houston.

A. . . . Houston. And, there's where he could do his best work, it's an educational institution. And, under those circumstances, he fit in perfectly. He's probably making a big success there.

Q. That's good to hear, I didn't know that he had that position.

A. Yeah.

* A. Now, if you go back to the earlier days, and after Goossees left, wasn't that the time when you had all . . . appointed a big group of . . . of guest conductors . . .

A. No. That was after Uterby (spelling?) left. After . . .

* A. After Uterby? Oh!

A. The story of Uterby is interesting. At the time just before he came to Rochester, the Philadelphia Orchestra was need of a new conductor. And, it was a toss-up between Armandy (spelling?) who conducts it today, and Jose Uterby. They selected Armandy, and the back-lash of this whole deal took him to us.
Q. Why did he come to Rochester?
A. I don't know.

*A. (Unintelligible) come after Uterby left? He was here about nine years. I thought he was ... he came much earlier. (Unintelligible) and Uterby?
A. No that was after. That was after.

*A. Oh.

Q. Now, Eterbia, I suppose you have some very fine ... recollections . . .
A. Oh. I could tell you stories that you ... you don't want to take it down on tape, it's too much.

Q. Because he was marvelous.
A. But he was a great ... he was a great guy. A real human being. He was like a father to us. We'd work our heads off for him, because there was such a fine personal relationship between him and the orchestra. He loved our work. Because he loved the orchestra, and he knew was getting honest effort on our part. And, he'd make ... he'd go to great pains and pick out the best players, and just work with them you, you know. It would appear that he was criticizing them. He was too particular. He was trying to be nasty, and something like that. But, it was just the opposite. He knew that there was rich soil there, and he's gonna give them the best style.

Q. Well, that's a nice feeling to get.
A. Oh, yes. And, our first obolist today, Bob Sprinkle, was a young man came to the orchestra at the time Uterby was there, and Uterby made a very good musician out of him.

*A. And you um . . .
A. And, I know, I can tell you this much, as far as I personally was concerned, up to that point, I was a viola player. I played my instrument. But, I didn't have a smattering of the insight that's required in musical understanding until Uterby opened the door.
Q. That's something. He was a very important element in your life, then?
A. He was! He was a very important element in the life of Rochester's . . . the musical life of Rochester.

Q. As a community?
A. Yes.

Q. But also, on the individual playing basis?
A. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Q. And in your own personal developement?
A. And, to this day, there's a wonderful feeling that we have for him. He came back last year, and he opened the season with a pension fund concert. And, he saw the old faces and it was just like a family again.

*A. And, he came several years ago.
A. Yeah. He'd come back again; there's a very soft spot in his heart for us.

Q. Is he . . . he's still alive?
A. Oh yes, and he's concertizing.

Q. Oh, fantastic.
A. Yeah. And he, oh, he played Mozart, the piano concerto.

*A. Yeah.
A. And . . .

Q. He must have felt a little disappointed (unintelligible) though, when he missed Philadelphia.
A. I imagine so.

Q. You know, in Rochester, as you said, you know, is not one of the big orchestra's. That must have been . . .
A. But, you see, he was still a great mechanic . . .

*A. And, he wasn't known too well in this country.
A. Oh, he was . . .
A. He wasn't known as a conductor, anyway.

A. He had a full schedule. He was parading all over the country concertizing. And, Rochester plans better than (unintelligible). It didn't appear. We had a short season, and the rest of the year, he'd come and go. Between the seasons, he'd go all over concertizing. All over Europe.

Q. So, it worked out . . .

A. Yeah. It worked out very well for him, and he could've carried on for a longer period if it weren't for the fact that he got on the outs with the manager this Arthur Sea that I mentioned. And, Arthur Sea was a very tight . . . tightwad. He was much of a tightwad. But, you gotta hand it to him because he saved the orchestra. He saved that Eastman Theater Orchestra. And, we became a fairly good orchestra.

Q. Where does your own feelings lie between Arthur Sea and Uterby when he finally had to leave?

A. Well, of course, our sympathies were with the orchestra and with Uterby. And Uterby was doing all sorts of things to enrich to enlarge, to make more important the scope of the programs that were being offered. And, Arthur Sea was trying to keep everything provincial and small. As a matter of fact, Uterby had to pay out his own pocket for an extra rehearsal when we had some difficult work. Now, that's how far he had to go. He felt it was musically important to do this. And, the management wouldn't do it so, he paid out of his own pocket. So, that's . . . that's the relationship there.

Q. I suppose we get to the other end of the scale when we talk about Winsoff, you don't have the highest . . .

A. Well, Winsoff was psychopathic in a way, because he was irrational. I don't know what caused it, but he had some problems at home and he got divorced.

He was a pedagog, you can't take that away from him. And, great skill with the baton.
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
( * denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

*A. Yeah. The baton required . . .
A. It requires . . . It requires more than great skill with the baton to make an orchestra great. You've got to inspire the players to outdo themselves.

Q. The personalities.
A. Yes, that's right. And, he couldn't do that. Instead of drawing the best out of us, he got out of me, he never got the best. Not that I didn't try, there was an inhibiting influence that prevented me from giving wholeheartedly of what I was probably capable of.

Q. Was that a common opinion among the players in the orchestra?
A. Yes.

*A. But still he got . . . he got good performances at the concerts.
A. Yes, yes, he got good performances because we were paying attention to the . . . all the little . . . factors that make up musical text. Good rhythm, precision, togetherness, you know, everything but soul.

Q. But soul?
A. Well . . .

Q. The soul was not there?
A. No!

Q. And, it seems to me, if soul is not in the music, you don't have a good performance.

*A. Well, they still had good performances.
A. But, if you're listening to Mozart, you want to chisel . . . you want it minia-
ture . . . you want it clear.

Q. That's true.
A. You want it as (unintelligible).

Q. Mozart lends himself.
A. Yeah.

Q. That's true. That's true.
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie  
( * denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)  

A. Uh ... he was able to do things that other conductors couldn't as far as technique is concerned. In other words, I would say that, sheer technique was ... contact ... he was superior to Schubert.

Q. I see.

A. But, their point of inspiring an orchestra to play and outdo themselves, two worlds apart.

Q. In the meantime, I think between Uterby and Winstoff, there were guest conductors like Bernstein, I think Bernstein was one of them.

A. Yes. Oh, Bernstein, he was terrific.

Q. You played under Bernstein?

A. Oh, yes. He was only in his twenties at that time! And, it was amazing how he got on with the older players. He never set himself apart; he wasn't trying to say something; he wasn't trying to make himself to be the world's protege conductor; he wasn't trying to be other than himself. And, we were amazed at his intellect, and his musical insight. I remember we played ... I never played that since, the ... there was a symphony by ... what was his? Not Gary. Liestz ... Franz Liestz. The Faust Symphony. And, it's in three movements. And, Leonard Bernstein did this, and especially the second movement called Gretchen, it was ... Marguerite, you know. The tenderness, the softness, the delicacy, the imagination that he invoked in the players was something ... it was just phenomenal. He was able to do this by gesturing. So we realized that he ... he was a great conductor.

Q. How long was he affiliated with ... 

A. Oh, we went on tour for a week, and then another time, another week and that's about all.

Q. I see.

*A. Well, he was eager to become the conductor here.
In view with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
(* denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

A. Oh, I'm . . . I'm not sure about that.

*A. Well, this is what I was told.

A. Well, if that's the case . . .

*A. By people who knew, but they wouldn't accept him.

A. They wouldn't accept him, I think, in his, this might be historically valuable: At that time, the Jews were considered tolerable. I mean, to tolerate them. We don't want to get them at the head of institutions like the Philharmonic.

*A. No. No.

Q. Which Bernstein was.

*A. Yeah.

A. And, there's an undercurrent of anti-semitism even from the top of the universities down. The people wouldn't . . . they . . . Look at (Unknown) any Jew that had talent . . .

Q. Well, let me ask you about that. I mean, you're Jewish and you have talent. Did you feel that? Did you feel it?

A. I personally didn't feel any discrimination, as far as that's concerned. I'm not talking about what happens within our ranks, you see. There was no discrimination amongst us. But, when it comes to the community . . .

*A. Leader.

A. . . . effort, a community leader, a cultural community leader like . . . in an institution like the Philharmonic, to have at that time, Leonard Bernstein who was a little bit of a stormy petrel, he wasn't accepted as a (unintelligible), you see, was a little bit too much at that time. Today, of course, things are entirely different. As a matter of fact, at the university I think, there are more Jews there than there are others, you see? Both among the student body and the faculty. Things have changed. The attitudes are different.
A. (Continued) As a matter of fact, Chagamy, you know, was a Jew. I don't know if you know that. He was an apostasized Jew. In Europe, he had changed his religion in order to make a living. Because, the Jews, you know, in Germany and Austria, in Hungary, during the Hitler time.

Q. Where was Chagamy from?

A. He's Hungarian. So, he became Christian of some sort. But he's Jewish.

It's a funny thing though, that our . . . our problems in the orchestra were amongst Jewish conductors.

Q. What do you mean by that?

A. The problems we had with Chagamy, he's a Jew. The problems we had with Winstoff, he's a Jew. And we had another one . . .

*A. You had Walenstein.

A. No, not Walenstein. Theodore Bloomfield. I don't if you heard of Theodore Bloomfield.

*A. Oh, yeah.

A. Well, that was really something.

Q. Who was he?

*A. He didn't like Mordecai.

A. He was a young fellow from your town. From . . . from Cleveland. And, he married a girl who had a family here in Rochester. Somehow, he got the word . . . word got around that he was a great protege, he's a great conductor. He's a horn player. And, he had the gift of personality which would make you turn the other way. But somehow, he convinced some people that he was great. And, our orchestra's management was looking around for a . . . another conductor, and somebody said, "you'd better get this Theordore Bloomfield. He's another Leonard Bernstein. Don't let him slip through your fingers." And at
A. (Continued) that time, he was conductor in Portland, Oregon. So, Arthur Sea
was the manager and Thomas Hause, who was the President of the Civic Music
Association, Mr. Thomas Hause, who was the President of the Rochester Savings
Bank. An awfully nice person, very nice, but didn't know too much about
music and things like that. The two of them flew out to Portland, and Bloom-
field told me this himself, we got talking at one time. He says, "You know,
these two men badgered me. They wouldn't let me go. They wouldn't . . . they
wouldn't . . . they told me they're not gonna leave Portland till they get
my signature on a contract. For three days they badgered me, finally I gave in."
So, then they came back, and I'll never forget this, before they were going to
announce it in the papers that we got a new conductor, Theodore Bloomfield,
you're gonna tell the first players, announce it, and then put it in the
papers. So, they had all the first players come up at the end of the rehearsal,
12:00, up into the manager's office, we sat around this big table, must have
been about fifteen, eighteen of us there. And, he starts off speeling about
the . . . they've been looking for a conductor and so forth and so on. "And,
we finally found the man that I'm sure you will all agree is just the right man
for us. His name is Theodore Bloomfield."

Well, did you ever attend a wake? We sat there, we looked at each other, we hardly moved. We didn't know what
to say. No comment from anybody. We just sat as though somebody had died.
This came as a shock to us. We weren't even consulted. Who was Theodore
Bloomfield? What did we know about him? Yet, they knew that he was another
Leonard Bernstein. So, he comes with a fait accompli and a very awkward moment
was this. So, nobody's gonna say anything, 'bravo' or 'that's nice, we're going
to be very happy,' and no, 'he's gonna be a success, and we heard about him,' and
so on . . . nothing. So, finally, with a . . . the silence seemed interminable,
A. (Continued) He finally got up and he says, "Well, gentlemen, that will be all and we'll announce it in the papers this afternoon." He smiled at us.

Q. They must've been stunned at that, the (unintelligible).

A. Well, he was with us for three years, and those were three years that were really incredible.

* A. Well, he wasn't happy either.

A. He wasn't happy?

* A. No, he . . . he was (unintelligible) he never knew that when it came to the philharmonic concert, it was augmented by students in the Eastman School.

A. He wanted . . . he wanted it open and above board.

* A. And, he didn't know that. They didn't tell him all the details, that was all.

A. But just the same, his relationship in the orchestra was the only thing that I was concerned about. Not his relationship with the management. And, he was positively insufferable.

Q. When was the . . . when was he here?

A. He was here right after Winsoff went. And Winsoff was with us for ten years from 1945 to 1955. And, then, in 1956, I think, '57, '58 Bloomfield, after that they got Chagamy.

* A. That Bloomfield was able to get good performances.

A. Yes, I'm not taking away from his ability as a student, he was a good student of conducting and music. And, he did . . . he gave an almost incredible performance of Sacre du Prantau (spelling?) of Chevinsky. And, he did it without music. That is a tour de force. We found that with all his screwy ideas about interpretation, what not, we could always depend upon him. Because, whatever he conducted in rehearsal, he did in the concert. We could always . . . we always knew what to . . . what he was going to do.

* A. He was very consistent.
A. He was very consistent. He was that kind of a man . . . of a mind. And, I liked that. But, he had peculiar ideas about interpretation and what not.

Q. What . . . yeah, go ahead. I was just gonna say that when you brought up Bloomfield, I thought you were going to elaborate on the fact that he was Jewish. That there was this . . .

A. Yes, but he had . . . he had run-ins with the people in town. He had run-ins with the orchestra. He had run-ins with everybody?

Q. Because he was Jewish?

A. Because of his manner.

*A. His attitude, his attitude.

A. Because of his attitude.

Q. This has nothing to do, then, with the Jewish . . .

*A. No.

Q. . . . feeling?

A. No, not the Jewish feeling, but he was a Jew.

*A. No, by that time . . .

A. He didn't behave . . .

*A. By that time . . .

Q. Well, why do you think . . .

*A. . . . there was a different feeling than . . . than when Leonard Bernstein came to conduct.

Q. But, when you mentioned Bernstein and then we got into this . . . notion that when leaders of the musical community were Jews that's their problem. There were problems.

A. Well, we did . . . he did have problems with it. With the management. He had problems with the Civic Music Association at large. He had problems with the orchestra.
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
(* denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

Q. Is this because of his temper?
*A. There was a different feeling then.
A. That's right.

Q. Not because he was Jewish? In other words, what I'm trying to get from you . . .
*A. Yeah.
A. Right.

Q. . . . is why Bernstein, Winsoff, and Bloomfield, I mean, is it a coincidence that they were Jews or . . .
A. It's a coincidence that they were Jews. Well, Bloo . . . Leonard Bernstein was only a guest. We only worked with him for a couple of . . .
Q. But he wasn't hired. And . . .
*A. No.
A. That's right.

Q. . . . I thought, and I thought the one reason he may not . . . or, a reason he may not have been hired was because he was Jewish?
*A. Yes.
A. At that time. I believe so. And, it's been thought of a lot of times by a lot of people in the orchestra that that was the reason. However, he wasn't considered really because he was Jewish. There was . . . anti-semitism was very strong at that time.
*A. By the time . . . by the time Bloomfield came, a number of years had lapsed.
A. Yeah, that's . . . that's . . . that's . . .
*A. There was an entirely different feeling.
A. Right.

Q. Well, Bernstein was here after the Second War, I believe, it was after Uterby, and that was 1945.
A. Right.
Q. Well, the feeling immediately after the war was not anti-Jewish, I mean, it began to swing around at the point where there was, because of the Holocaust, great sympathy for the Jews, their struggle, and their... so that, it seems to me that that feeling towards Bernstein is almost out of place considering the mood of the nation after the Second War.

*A. Not entirely, Mr. Klein. We had numbers of people living in this house, because there was no building at that time, and people were coming from other cities to work here in different professions. And, we had numerous people. Now, we had one young fellow who lived here for quite awhile, he was a student at the Eastman School. And, in addition to that, he worked in a foundry, and the anti-semitism that went on in that foundry was really very, very, virulent. And, he had... they have a blackboard... you know what I'm talking about. They had a blackboard and they'd write all kinds of (unknown) things about Jews, you see? So, there was, in spite of the war, in spite of the Holocaust, there still was a very great undercurrent of anti-semitism.

Q. Now, this is in the late '40s.

*A. Yeah.

A. Yeah. After war.

*A. That was in the '45, '46.

Q. So, there was (unintelligible) of anti-semitism?

*A. Oh, yes. Yes, there was.

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. So, that might have played into the Bernstein decision.

*A. Yes.

A. It could've.

*A. No doubt about it.

A. Then I... I... I... I have a feeling that he's too big for a city like Rochester.
Q. That might be part of it, too.
A. And, he was . . . he would certainly be here if he had gotten the job for, at least, one year. After that . . .
*A. But, they didn't want him.
A. They didn't want him.
Q. Let me explore this just for a moment, if I may. Then when Winsoff came in, he was Jewish and, they hired him, so that there must have been a change in sentiment between which was only a couple of years.
*A. They might not have known that he was Jewish.
A. Well, he didn't parade that he was Jewish.
*A. They knew that . . . no.
A. He never let people know that he was Jewish.
Q. Well, just the name alone would help.
*A. Until later on.
A. Well, of course, but other stuff . . .
*A. Later on he came . . .
A. Look, you know Chagamy . . . the question of his Judaism wasn't . . .
Q. That wasn't important.
A. . . . that wasn't of no account.
Q. It wasn't a question at all?
A. No question at all. Because, as a matter of fact, he essentially is not a Jew. See? He's an apostasized Jew. But, our attitude towards him is that his antecedent . . . his antecedents were Jewish.
*A. But as far as Winsoff is concerned, many people didn't know, but, then he became friendly, you know, after a (unknown) with Rabbi Bernstein who was interested in the orchestra. And, when their children and several children who were ready for . . . religious school activities, and they joined Kodesh.
*A. (Continued) And, many of us were surprised. You know? Because, we actually
didn't know.

Q. Who joined Bernstein, who . . .

*A. Winsoff, and . . .

A. Winsoff.

Q. And, so he was quite obviously then a . . .

A. Oh, yeah.

*A. Then we knew. That was a sure sign.

Q. I see.

*A. But, many people were rather surprised, because they did not know that they
were Jewish.

Q. Well, that's interesting. It's interesting.

A. He certainly didn't parade himself around with a star as being a Jew.

*A. Oh, no.

A. No. I don't think he had any feelings towards Judaism anyhow. Not to any
great extent.

*A. No, it was just for the children. (Unintelligible)

Q. And then when we get to Bloomfield, I mean, there's an element of Judaism
seems to have eroded or conduced entirely.

*A. No.

Q. At that point.

A. No. He was a practicing Jew.

*A. Yeah. He was . . . well, he had relatives here whom we know, and he was known
to be . . . he was known as being Jewish. And, he . . . as a matter of fact,
he . . . he came to a sisterhood luncheon and Rabbi Bernstein introduced him
as being a good Jew.

A. He was a practicing Jew.
Q. So . . .

*A. There was a difference between him and Winsoff.

A. The problem with him is personality.

Q. As far as . . .

A. He had personality problems.

*A. Yeah.

A. He was trying to make himself exulted. I'll give you an idea of what the type of person he was that set us wrong, alright? It set us off right from the start. We'd start a rehearsal at 9:30 in the morning. The orchestra gathers around 9:00 o'clock and we sit around, tune up our instruments, and snooze and what not. Twenty-five minutes past nine, quiet. No tuning, nothing. Everybody must sit quiet while the maestro comes out on the stage. I mean, that's so bad that we couldn't tolerate that. But, I always found that . . . that at twenty-nine minutes past nine, my viola got out of tune. What am I gonna do? I gotta tune my viola. So, we broke the sound. Little by little that became such a ridiculous thing that it didn't . . .

Q. Was he an autocrat, I mean, he . . .

A. Yes, he was very autocratic. Extremely autocratic. Very arrogant. Once, he came to Beth Kodesh, he wanted to park his car where everybody drives up and lets passengers off and then takes the car . . . takes the car over to the parking lot. So, he's getting out, leaving his children off there, he was gonna leave the car. So, one of the ushers said to him, 'You can't leave your car there.' He says, 'Do you know who I am? I'm Theodore Bloomfield!' He says, 'I don't care who you are, you can't leave your car there.' I mean that's the kind of fella he is. I'll give you another example: A customer of mine says; these stories are going around of his relations with all kinds of people. This woman was in the musical circle, she says, 'I gave a party
A. (Continued) for Theodore Hollenbock who conduct Oratorial Society, and to
grace the occassion, I invited Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield. So, the Bloomfield's
come marching in and when I greet them, he says, 'Now . . . ', says to her mind
you, 'Now, where would you like me to stand where I wouldn't be in the draft?'"'
There's an example of person we had to deal with. He was so . . . he wanted
to be (unknown) at every turn. And it didn't set well with people. And, all
kinds of stories come from all kinds of people that where he was (unknown).
Now, as far as musical understanding and musical authority, I'm not really
taking that away from him. He had . . . his technique . . . rehearsal tech-
nique was abominable, was absolutely atrocious, and that's one of things that
we hated about him. Because he'd stop every other bar, and we never played
through once at the rehearsal. Now that's no way to do. I remember we once
had . . . what?

*A. Mr. Klein, would you like something to drink?

A. The Philadelphia Orchestra.

Q. Yeah. Beautiful. Fine. Thank you, very nice. The air conditioning here is
fantastic by the way.

*A. Oh, yeah.

Q. And, it's not too cold, you know.

*A. Oh, no, no. We keep it at least at 74.

Q. I see.

*A. Because of . . .

Q. No, I'm sure that's the way it should be, it's perfect.

*A. Seventy-four is just about right.

A. One of the great things about music is it's flow. It's got flow. It's got
to proceed naturally. It mustn't be stultified. It mustn't be interrupted.
It's like driving a car and you step on the brake every minute, see? And,
A. (Continued) the pleasure of the trip is gone every time you step on the brake.

Q. I understand that.

A. Well, that's what happened with Bloomfield. He'd stop to make a correction and we were getting worn out, and we never got any sense of musical continuity. It was all broken up.

Q. That seems to, as you say, that takes the joy of music absolutely away from . . .

A. Exactly. Exactly. That's the trouble with him.

Q. I know I enjoyed singing in choir, in fact, I sing in the oratorial here, and I don't like the style, as you're talking about, where there's . . . I think it's really an (unknown) character on the part of the conductor. He can not tolerate a mistake that there's no sense of going on until that part is absolutely refined, and then you go on to the next passage, but in the meantime you lose the . . . the . . . reason you're there which is to create music. And, that's to me, the prize soul. I mean, you don't get soul out of that, then.

A. Right.

Q. No matter how refined and perfect you may be.

A. Exactly. That's we feel, that's what we look for in music, is the flow, the steady flow. In some of these, the rendition of music, to my way of thinking, is a steady meter where it started off at a speed and it continues of its own momentum. Music has its own momentum. If you start to try to change that momentum, it's like trying to change the plane of a gyroscope. You got to fight it, you know? And, once you do that, you destroy its smooth flow. That's what many conductors do, they have to make something out of it. It's better to let the music talk and tell its story.

Q. And listen to what there is in the music.
A. Right. Right. And, that's . . . that's . . . bad. When you make a patchwork quilt out of a great composition, the player doesn't get anything out of it except he refines a certain technique which in the course of playing, gets by itself refined. You're dealing with experienced players. You're not dealing with a bunch of kids that don't know how to play their instruments. And, when you take them back to kindergarten, you have to say, "Now, you stop this note and you finish this note, and you have to be a little bit more (unknown) on this note, and take a little off on this note." These are things that happen normally. You don't even think about them. And, to draw special attention to these elementary things is very (unintelligible). I was jumping out of my seat.

Q. Did you ever think of leaving at those times.

Q. Did you leave Rochester? I . . . I . . .

Q. You never had any intentions of leaving Rochester?
A. Oh, I like it here. Oh, no! This suits me as one of the best moves I made to come to Rochester. Because, I'm emotionally, psychologically, a small-town boy. See? I like the slower pace, of course, nowadays it's slow-paced. You should have seen it in 1926 when it was like a country . . . like the country here in the city. It was delightful. Here, I used to walk to work from here down to the Eastman Theater, fifteen - twenty minute walk. It was just delightful along East Avenue, but the pace with all the cars, it's changed.

Q. So, now its become a real urban . . .
A. Its become urbanized than I prefer. The people move out to the suburbs, well, the suburbs are like here. Its like . . . this was suburbs. This street was like suburbs when I . . . when we moved here.
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
(* denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

Q. When did you move here?
A. in '26. Well, I mean . . . this house?
Q. Yeah.
A. 1940.
Q. Where did you live before? Before this?
A. You mean, in the city?
A. Yes.
Q. So, between '26 and '40.
A. Well, then we got married, I lived with a family on Harvard Street. And, a
couple of years later, we got married. And, we got into an apartment right . . .
a block away from here, Barrington Street. And, from there we moved to
Werner Park, I'm not sure you're familiar with that.
Q. I don't know where that is.
A. That's near Cobb's Hill Drive, not Cobb's Hill Park. And, then we moved a
block away from there, and finally we bought this house in 1940. So, we
moved around . . .
Q. So, your first place of residence in Rochester was on Harvard?
A. Right.
Q. So, you have really have more or less been in this area . . .
A. That's right.
Q. . . . for your existence in Rochester.
A. Right. Right. Right. A lot of Jews in this general area.
Q. Has there always been a lot of Jews . . .
A. Yeah. More or less. The east side has always been Jewish apartments. Very
few Jews on the west side. A lot of Jews in the north side in Irondequoit, you
see? And, they're gradually coming down this way. Brighton is the most . . .
intensified community of Jews. Of course, now the suburbs are growing, people
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie
(* denotes Mrs. Lurie's responses)

A. (Continued) go all over.

Q. Is that one reason why you moved to Harvard, do you think, because...

A. Well, when I first came here, I was single. And, I got acquainted with a family in... I rented a room there.

Q. So, the fact that there was a Jewish composition... a large... relatively large Jewish composition in this part of the city, had no play into your decision to move stay... to move and stay here? Or, did it play a part, do you think?

A. Not too much. Not too much. After all, my interest was really for music, my career. And, of course, I like to be with the Jewish people. I'm more at home.

Q. So, that's what I mean, and...

A. Oh, yeah.

Q. ... this part of the city always had that.

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. So, you felt more at home...

A. Right. Right.

Q. ... in terms of the city...

A. Oh, yes. I have to feel at home among the Jews. I would feel like an outsider, away from them.

Q. Away from them?

A. Yeah.

Q. Does the music field, is there any bias for whatever reason, within the field of music and orchestra?

A. I don't think so. Not... no bias. There shouldn't be any bias. Now, I hadn't felt any...

Q. I know there shouldn't be.
Interview with Mr. Mordecai Lurie  
(* denotes Mr. Lurie's responses)

Q. What about the make-up of the orchestra here in Rochester?
A. Well, we don't have too many Jews in the orchestra. There's a handful, and we were all kind of together.
Q. Oh, you were?
A. Yeah. Yeah. There were four, five, six, seven, eight of us Jews that all seemed to be about the same age, and we all grew up together and really taught each other.
Q. That kind of evolved, you kind of felt each other out.
A. Kindred . . . kindred spirit, kindred antecedents, you know. There's always more in common with people of your own kind than there is with others. Not to say that I didn't make friends with the others, you know. There were lots of others, because there were a lot of people there. Now, some of the . . . the ones that are left there, the oldest ones of Jews there still hang around.
Q. But there really weren't that many Jews?
A. No. No. It's been the small minority.
Q. Do you think that that had any discrimination in the hiring practices?
A. I don't think so. No, I don't think there's any . . . any discrimination at all.
Q. I'm thinking now of the '20s and the '30s.
A. No. No. After all, look, I got the job.
Q. That's right.
A. The conductor knew I was a Jew.
Q. That's true.
A. And, the conductor himself was a Jew.
Q. Which conductor was this.
A. This was Victor Vaugner.
Q. Oh, he himself is Jewish.
A. Yeah. He's a Jew.

Q. Well, there you are. So, you have somebody in a leadership position there who is.
A. Well, it's a subleadership... not really a... It's more that he's technically grew into it, you know. There weren't too many people who were technically qualified to handle a job like that. Although, he was no great conductor. He... he did his job pretty well. And, when the Civic Orchestra was organized, his assistant, this guy Harrison that I mentioned, he got the job. Because, he had the educational background, he was an Englishman, and he had a cultural background. He talked nicely. And, his approach was more scholastic. Especially when you're dealing with a conscious in school. Now, Victor Vaugner, he spoke with a broken accent. He was European.

Q. German?
A. What's that?

Q. Jewish-German, wasn't he?
A. Yeah. Yeah. German-Jew, and he wasn't suited to an educational approach. So, he didn't get that job. He was, poor guy, he went from bad to worse. He could hardly make a living after that. But...

Q. Did you know him personally?
A. Oh, sure. He's the one that brought me here.

Q. Okay.
A. He's the one that engaged me.

Q. I see. He's the one that discovered you?
A. He's... he's... he discovered me.

Q. Right.
A. Yeah. An amusing thing about that is that I supposed to play an audition for him.
A. (Continued) In New York. And, I was playing in some Broadway house there. In those days, they'd hire an orchestra to play for one picture. They'd perform just like they do at theater. The same picture night after night after night for as long as it would run, you see? Well, this orchestra paid pretty well, and I had a job there. And, it so happened that the day I made the appointment to play the audition, a special rehearsal was called. See? For a new picture that was being performed. So, I couldn't keep the appointment. Of course, I had plenty of rehearsals. So anyhow, the opening night, it was a night or so later, he comes down and says, "You know, I heard about the rehearsal and I knew you couldn't keep your appointment." He says, "But, I inquired about you and I got good recommendations." So," he says, "I'll be glad to have you come up to Rochester if you want to." He says, "What we want up there is people who are not trouble-makers. And, you don't look like a trouble-maker." (Laughter)

Q. (Laughter) That sounded pretty good. What do you think he meant by that though?

A. Well, he had run-ins with local people here in the orchestra. They must've rubbed him the wrong way. I don't know what it was.

Q. Yeah.

A. And, I never found out what the trouble here was. But, I got along pretty well with him, as a matter of fact, the next year I got a raise. See? So, I knew he wanted me to stay around. And, I liked the whole professional atmosphere here in a small town, because you didn't have a hundred people gunning for your job. You see? And, it was a more relaxed and friendly atmosphere all 'round. It was quiet, and it was . . . there was no turmoil. We liked our jobs. And, look, we had a forty-eight week season. And, three week vacation period. And, that three-week vacation period, we went down to Asbury Park and we played down there the, what is that, the Auditorium down there; and the Pier, Asbury Park.
A. (Continued) And, it was filled up pretty nicely. I mean, you had a year's work in. We were doing quite well. But, of course, it was short lived ... because ... the Depression started, the stock market crashed, talkies came in, everything ... everything went. In 1929, the stock market crashed that very year the theaters closed because of the talkies. They were coincidental, they had nothing to do with each other, but that was the period when there was upheaval here. And, we were really lucky that we had a job.

Q. That was only three years ... 

A. Three years after I came here.

Q. That could've changed the course of your life.

A. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.
Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Lurie on July 7th, 1976, at his home. This is Tape Two, Side A. I thought I we would begin today, Mr. Lurie, with your experiences in the Jewish Community, and specifically with the United Jewish Welfare Fund. Can you tell us when you became involved and what kind of involvement that was?

A. Well, I became involved when I was in the orchestra and, of course, the drive for funds was throughout the city, and I was approached by, oh I guess it was the director of the Jewish Home and Infirmary, to take part in the solicitation of the musicians in the orchestra. Which I agreed to do. And, that was my involvement there; every year we got the musicians, and I... I've been carrying that on to this day, I've been still soliciting the musicians in the orchestra.

Q. When were you first involved, when did you first get involved in this?

A. Oh, I guess this must be about twenty years ago. A long time.

Q. That would be in the '40s, 1940s?

A. The fifties perhaps.

Q. In the fifties.

A. (Affirmative response)

Q. Okay, because the fund itself is a very old organization in Rochester.

A. Yes, Yes.

Q. In fact, I think it began in the twenties, when you first came to Rochester, but it took a number of years before you became involved in it?

A. Well, that's right. That's right.

Q. Did you find... you mentioned last time there weren't too many Jews in the orchestra.
A. A handfull.

Q. So, that, really, your responsibility wasn't all that . . .

A. No, it wasn't very extensive. But then there were some teachers in the Eastman School and they were also solicited.

Q. I see.

A. Jewish teachers.

Q. And, anywhere else in the Rochester . . .

A. A few people around town, but who had some connection with music. We solicited them.

Q. Did you find that that day went along with this whole process, that they were willing to contribute money to the . . .

A. Oh, yes. But, in many cases among some of the young musicians who weren't too identified with Jewish causes, there was some reluctance. As a matter of fact, there's one particular fellow we selected . . . er, we solicited every year, and he turned us down. Every year. On the other hand, we found very generous support from others. I once solicited a young fellow who had been in the orchestra just a short time, and he was also studying in the Eastman School, very nice young boy. And, he'd never been approached to give anything to the UJA, and when I approached him, he was quite willing. He says, "Do you think if I gave a $100.00 that would be good?" Why, I nearly fell through the floor! And, a young fellow, I expected a $5.00 or $10.00 contribution. He gives $100.00! That I thought was phenomenal.

Q. Did he continue doing that kind of contributing?

A. Well, the next year he left this region.

Q. I see.

A. He'd been studying here.

Q. So, it must have meant a lot to him.
A. He'd never been approached, and he felt that, boy, that would be a modest amount.

Q. Isn't that something?

A. Yes. And, I was . . . it was like pulling teeth. Musicians haven't been, as a class, identified with Jewish causes to any appreciable extent. And, of course, sometimes they give very reluctantly and in very, very small amounts.

Q. Now, is that true in Rochester, or do you think nationally?

A. I think maybe worldwide.

Q. Worldwide.

A. Except maybe in Israel. (Laughter) Things may be different there.

Q. Let's hope.

A. But, musicians as a class are particularly devoid, as a class. They're so egocentric in their approach to life that causes like the UJA don't really have a terrific impact.

Q. I see. This would be true of any giving. It doesn't have to be a religious thing, could be general, you know.

A. I imagine so. It could be. It could be.

Q. Why do you think you became involved. Why did you agree to take on the responsibility?

A. Well, I felt I was . . . I'm a Jew. And, I was approached properly, and it was kind of flattering to me to be asked by this director, who happens to be my daughter's boss. And, he knew I'd been in Rochester for a long time, and he just tried to solicit my assistance. And, I saw no reason why I should refuse. And, I took it on and I've been doing it.

Q. What about the purpose of the organization and the areas that they were giving to? Is this . . . was this something you were working for?

A. Well, my feeling about Israel is . . . no two ways about that. I mean, JUA and Israel are so closely identified that if there were no local charities, no local
A. (Continued) institutions that required help, the... its relationship
with Israel alone would be sufficient for my going along and doing everything
I could.

Q. So, this was true in the '50s when you were first asked?
A. Yes. Yes.

Q. So, you felt strongly about Israel?
A. Yes, I feel very strongly about Israel.

Q. Let me ask you about that. This is an appropriate time, it seems to me, to
go into that. Have you always felt strongly about Israel, about Zionism?
A. Well, not before the State of Israel, you know, and then things became so
crystalized. And, historically, everything was happening in such a way that
we were all getting, all getting excited about what was happening. And, the
resurgence of the homeland, I mean, that's enough to stimulate most people
that have any feelings at all about their antecedents. And, the way the
thing was developing, and the humanitarian approach of the country to its
people, the way it was absorbing these... the refugees. In such remarkable
numbers. Imagine this country having to absorb fifty percent of its own pop-
ulation. I can't conceive a thing like that. And, Israel was doing that.
It didn't have a place to put them, but it took them. That was to me, the
most remarkable thing.

Q. That struck very much so.
A. That struck me as being one of the greatest things that could be. And, of course,
we visited Israel and that was like a shot in the arm. Once you go and see the
land, you see how its developing, this was in '64, I... it was a most exciting
thing. We still talk about that. And, how they rested... rested a civiliza-
tion... a homeland... out of nothing. They created a garden out of dead
sand. And, the ingenuity that was required to do this, the dedication, these
A. (Continued) things strike you, you know. And, the more . . . the more you
go to a place like that, you see what people are being . . . involved in and
what the accomplishments are, the more moved you are. You just can't forget
these things. And, that, of course, that . . . as the years went by, you
feel that your contributions, your own contributions, monetary contribution
to the UJA has to increase. It's not just for this year that we're asked to
give to the UJA, it's a way of life. I mean, we're . . . we're burdened with
this terrific responsibility. Are we gonna live up to it, or are we gonna
just shake it off?

Q. Before 1948, you'd have strong feelings one way or the other about this issue?
A. No. Of course, when the Holocaust, Hitler and the Holocaust, as it did with
many other people, it crystalized our feelings of kinship with all the Jews
throughout the world. And, with the establishment of the . . . of a place
where they could go, why it became such a dynamic and dramatic thing that
you couldn't help but feel involved.

Q. So, really the catalyst for all this was World War II, and what was happening
then?
A. Right. Right. Right.

Q. Well, let me go back, then, even earlier. Before World War II, what was your
feeling about Judaism and how was that expressed?
A. Well, when we came here, we joined the temple right away, B'rith Kodesh.

Q. You joined B'rith Kodesh right away?
A. Yeah. And, it was coincidental to the year when we came here was the year
when Rabbi Bernstein took the pulpit. The very same year, although I didn't
know him at that time. But we . . . we joined the temple. We were married
in 1928 and we joined the temple then.

Q. So, you joined a Reformed Temple.
A. Yes.

Q. Before you came to Rochester were you affiliated with a synagogue?

A. No. I wasn't. My education in . . . in New York was very fragmentary. I went to Hebrew School, but that's about all. We weren't, my parents . . . we weren't affiliated with any temple. In those days, being affiliated with a synagogue was a big deal that most of the people in our neighborhood did not do. And, when it came to the High Holy Days, there was a vacant store around on Madison Avenue there, and they'd . . . they'd rent that and make a synagogue out of it for the High Holy Days. And, they charged, whatever they charged, for admission. And, that's the way we observed the new year.

Q. That's the way you observed the new year?

A. That's the way we . . . that's the way my family observed the new year. But, we weren't affiliated with any temple. So, religiously we were kind of free and footloose.

Q. Then why did you decide to join the synagogue when you came to Rochester, then, if you didn't have any affiliations before?

A. Well, things change, you know, I got married, I had a wife and home, and it was a most natural thing to do. Become acquainted perhaps, with the Jewish Community. And, I guess we naturally gravitated to it.

Q. Well, did your parents observe the Holidays, I mean, was there a Jewish Home, were you raised in a Jewish Home?

A. Yes, we were raised in a Jewish Home, but we didn't observe. We weren't what you'd call observant Jews.

Q. But, High Holy Days you went?

A. The High Holy Days we went, yes. That was where even the non-observant Jews gathered together.

Q. Right. Right.

A. So, I just . . . it just felt . . . my wife too, felt that was the thing to do.
A. (Continued) And, Phillip Bernstein, of course, was a great catalyst. And, at that time, he was still on probation, you might say, because he was a young man and he was taking over the place from Rabbit Wolfe, who was a very learned and highly respected Rabbi. And, it's like . . . at the present time, Phil was retired now, somebody has to take his place. And, Rabbi Miller is taking his place, but it's pretty hard in the minds of many of the congregants, to fill . . . Phillip Bernstein's shoes, you see? So, at that time he was still proving himself.

Q. You said that he was a catalyst, though. I mean, how was he a catalyst? How did he . . . attract to this . . .?

A. Well, his whole personality, his drive, and his . . . his way of working with the congregation. He's . . . he's a very stable person, and he's very concerned about people. And, he wasn't sanctimonious. He was really a great guy.

Q. Now was the synagogue fairly large at that time. Did he have a chance to get to individual congregants?

A. Oh, yes. It wasn't so awfully large. No, it wasn't . . . it wasn't maybe half the size of what it is today. But, we had this converted church down on Gibbs Street which is now a parking lot. And, it soon outgrew our needs. And, he was instrumental in getting the people in the congregation, those who had the ability and the resources to start moving in terms of building another synagogue.

Q. When was this, when was he thinking of doing that?

A. It was, perhaps, five years before we moved over where we are now.

Q. Which was when, do you think?

A. Oh, gee, how long were we there? After the war. It was probably in the '50s.

Q. Okay. Okay, it was later on then?

A. Yeah.
A. (Continued) And, money was raised, and we taxed ourselves. Of course, not enough money was raised, so the plans had to be altered to fit the amount of money that we did have. The land for the temple was donated by one of our members, and the budget, I think, was cut down maybe in half. As it is, it cost . . . over a quarter of a million dollars. But, it's a showplace.

Q. What did you think about that move?
A. Oh, we thought we it was good. If Phillip Bernstein said it was what we needed . . . it was what we needed. Because, he didn't go for anything that wasn't necessary.

Q. He didn't want to stay downtown?
A. It wasn't a matter of downtown. It wasn't a question of downtown. The classes, Hebrew School, was . . . had no room. There wasn't enough room. And, the congregation was growing. We just didn't have enough room.

Q. Now, I've heard from other people that Jews were moving out of that area anyway, because there was a kind of a, you know, change to Brighton and to that part of the city.
A. But, that wasn't the reason. That wasn't the reason. Incidentally, if we were gonna move, we're not gonna move to the center of the city. We're gonna go where all the Jews went.

Q. Okay. So, you think that might have been part of that reason for moving out to where it is?
A. Yes. Yes.

Q. Now, you know, I think, that that's an interesting question. It bothers me a little bit the move away from the city, personally. I mean, for example, there's been talk recently, to get back to your field, about moving the Eastman School of Music out to River Campus at the University.
A. That would be the biggest mistake.

Q. Why would that be a mistake as opposed to moving a synagogue away from the inner city?
A. Well, you see, the university is part of the civic life. And, the Eastman School, the Eastman Theater, is a fixture in our civic life here. It's the nucleus that draws people to all the events that are going. If, that were removed, there'd be nothing downtown of any real consequence. And, it would make the decay that's going on down there, even worse. Further than that, I think its just a matter of getting the students away from the center of town, and putting them more into an academic atmosphere, but that would be self-defeating. Because, as I said before, musicians are very highly specialized people. And, to study music is a very highly concentrated endeavor. And, if you're gonna try to dilute it by mixing the highly individualized people with the mainstream of the university, it wouldn't achieve any real purpose.

Q. You know, the reasons that you give here, can be applied to moving a very important, I think the most important, synagogue in the city away from downtown. You do kind of, at least, begin that process of decay, perhaps, when it did move back in the . . .

A. Well, with the synagogue, you see, in the old days the little shuls were . . . in the vicinity where the Jews lived, see?

Q. Right. The Joseph Avenue District?

A. Right. Right. And, as the Jews moved away, they had to find other places . . . other religious institutions within walking distance. And, that's what they did here.

Q. Okay. Oh, okay, but . . . but B'rith Kodesh is Reformed, it doesn't require the walking.

A. That's right. That's right.

Q. So, that doesn't seem to answer in this particular . . .

A. But, in as much as we needed larger quarters, there was no space downtown that was available, that would be suitable. And, in as much as we're moving, why not move into where the . . . most of the Jews are?
Q. My response to that, my personal response to that is like the function of the Eastman Theater that despite the fact that people have moved out and perhaps most of the people who buy subscription tickets would be living in Brighton today, people come into the downtown and still go there. They still park their cars, they walk in, have a good . . .
A. Yes, but it's not only the people from Brighton that come to the Eastman School . . . Eastman Theater. They come from way out . . . out of town.
Q. Okay.
A. They come from all parts . . . from Irondequoit. The west side.
Q. I mean, if you have a good thing, you're gonna travel.
A. Right. Right. But, to please the whole spectrum of the city, a place like the Eastman Theater should be centrally located.
Q. I see what you're saying. That's where that may differ from the B'rith Kodesh. Where you have just a circle, just a segment of the population.
A. That's right.
Q. If that moves, then it makes sense that a synagogue could move.
A. Sure. Beth el did the same thing. Now Beth el is a very large synagogue. I think it's even bigger than B'rith Kodesh, I'm not sure. But, these two . . . that's a Conservative Synagogue. Now, originally, as far as I can recall, their synagogue was on Meigs Street and Park Avenue. And, they had a fire. And, when they had the fire, why they started thinking about building another synagogue. Or it may be that before the fire, they had already commenced that.
Q. I see.
A. And, they were in the process of moving away from there, because their quarters were too small. And, the Jews, of course, that attended there were out in Brighton already.
Q. Okay.
A. So, they decided to build out there, and they're, do you know where they're located?
Q. They're on Winton Road.

A. Winton Road, yeah. Opposite the Unitarian Church.

Q. Yeah, I've seen it out there. It's a . . . large, quite large. There's one counter-trend to that, at least that I know of in Rochester on the subject of synagogues and shuls. I mean, there still are a couple of synagogues in the Joseph Avenue even though Jews are in very small numbers there.

A. Right.

Q. And, that seems to be a counter-trend to this kind of movement out of . . . out of . . .

A. Yes. Well, there's one . . . the (Unknown) Street Shul, that is a landmark. That's being preserved as a landmark.

Q. I'd like to see that actually.

A. See?

Q. Yeah.

A. It was the biggest imposing structure in that region, see? There must be some Jews still living there. But, very, very few.

Q. I think they have to . . . I think they have to travel. Now, it's interesting. In the (Unknown) Street Shul, they did move. The congregation did move. They were, I think they joined with well, I forget the name . . . another synagogue. They joined with another group. So, that's one instance of having to move to out.

A. Yes.

Q. But I think there are a couple of . . . a couple of synagogues still functioning in that area.

A. Well, there could be.

Q. Now, the B'rith Kodesh was comprised of, certainly in the 1920's when you came to Rochester, of German-Jews, primarily of German-Jews.

A. Yes.
Q. Having yourself come from a Eastern European background, did you feel any of that . . .

A. No, because I hadn't been identified with any particular facet of Jewish expression, in New York, when I lived there. So, the prejudices and the narrow thinking that I might have enjoyed, I might have experienced, was not there. And, it was a new segment of people that we got acquainted with who belonged to B'rith Kodesh, and they weren't necessarily of German extraction. So, little by little, this new element was infurtrated into the congregation. And, pretty soon it superseded the old German-Jewish antecedents. There still are some who are there, but the whole complexion has changed.

Q. So, you didn't feel any of the differences, or . . .

A. No. No. I wasn't subject to these narrow feelings about German . . . German Jews against European Jews. Of course, the (Unknown) feel very keenly about the . . . all the others.

Q. I know.

A. You know there's animosity there.

Q. Right.

A. But, our's are impervious to all of that. That didn't bother me.

Q. Were your parents . . .

A. My parents came from . . ., they came from Russia-Poland.

Q. Did they feel some of the, in America, you know, the district, the regional Jewishness and Jews from other regions especially with (unintelligible) Jews, you know . . .

A. We never made contact with (Unknown) Jews.

Q. Right.

A. They never had contact with (Unknown) Jews.

Q. Do you think that was deliberate on the part of . . .

A. No. No. But there weren't any around in New York that I knew of.
A. (Continued) We never heard of (Unknown) Jews until I came here. (Laughter)
Q. They have a really . . .
A. Yes, they have the Light of Israel Temple.
Q. That's right. That's right.
A. The Light of Israel Temple is (Unknown).
Q. Okay.
A. And, their whole mode of expression is entirely different.
Q. Now, your contact with even this group is not very . . .
A. No. I had done some work for them, you see, I'm a piano tuner.
Q. Right.
A. And, one time they had called me, several times, to work on the piano in their little temple.
Q. Oh, in the temple.
A. Yeah. And, as a matter of fact, Rabbi Cohen, I believe was his name, had me tune his piano at home. But, at that time, I wasn't aware of any distinction between (Unknown) and (Unknown) here in town. It was later that I got to feel that there was a difference. And, the temple has been doing very well, as I understand.
Q. Who do you . . . how did you feel that difference later on?
A. I didn't feel it emotionally or intellectually, but just historically perhaps, that we know there's a (Unknown) temple here and these people observe, they have different chants, different ways, different manners of observing weddings and holidays, and religious services, and what not. But, as far as the details are concerned, I'm not too familiar with it.
Q. So, when you became aware of the differences, it was more of a curiosity more than . . .
A. Right. Right. Right.
Q. . . . any deep feeling that . . .
A. It was just the knowledge that there are some Jews here that worship a little bit differently than the way I was accustomed to.

Q. When you came here, there was already in motion, effort to unify the Jewish Community. I mean, before the 1920's certainly before the first war, there were some deep divisions in the Jewish Community. Not only in terms of their ethnic backgrounds, but their religious observance. And, it would be so strong that they wouldn't mix with one another. This is what I was referring to before.

A. Well, as a matter of fact, you know, when we moved to the new temple, Phil Bernstein was going to get the baby that had been thrown out with the bath-water back into the bath . . . bath back into the temple, you see? And, little by little he was getting back some of the traditional ways of observing the Sabbath, back into form. Now, for instance, we had Sunday morning services. We didn't have any Friday night services in the old temple. You see? We observed the Sabbath on Sunday morning. Well, we got away from that. Phil brought it back to Friday nights. You see? And, Sunday morning was for the Sunday School, that sort of thing. And, little by little the practices that had been lost to the establishment of the German approach was being reconstituted along the traditional East European approach.

Q. I think Phil himself was Orthodox in background.

A. It could be . . . yes. I believe so.

Q. So, that brings his own background into . . .

A. But, he never went to the point where it was B'rith Kodesh was gonna be anything but a Reformed Temple. But, the point I want to make is this, that as he was bringing back these old customs, why, there was a segment in the congregation that didn't like it. Too Jewish. So, this small group detached itself from B'rith Kodesh. And, they organized themselves in a new temple.
A. (Continued) And that's Temple Sinai. If you heard about Temple Sinai?

Q. I heard of that, but I didn't know that was the . . .

A. That was . . . that was the beginning of it.

Q. When . . . when

A. It's a small . . .

Q. When did this happen?

A. This happened maybe five years or so after the temple was established out there on Elmwood Avenue.

Q. This would be, then, in the '50s?

A. Late '50s, yeah later '50s. Sure.

Q. Yeah.

A. So, that's the way . . .

Q. Did they separate themselves as a group?

A. A group, a young group. Of course, the temple was getting too big and it was getting too Orthodox to suit them.

Q. Yeah. How did you feel? Did you feel that was happening?

A. I could feel that these customs were coming along, but it didn't bother me.

Q. Again, your background was such that you could've adapted . . .

A. Right. I adapted to it. I adapted to it.

Q. So, you felt it happening, but you accepted it.

A. That's right.

Q. What Phil Bernstein says is okay. (Laughter)

A. (Laughter) Phil Bernstein said it, it was okay. And, of course, there's always justification, I mean he always had a reason for doing these things.

Q. Which he would explain.

A. He felt that we were getting too far away from Judaism. Rabbi Lansburg, who was the Rabbi during the period of the real development of this temple, was
A. (Continued) of German extraction, and he was getting away from Judaism completely. And he was Christianizing the whole service. And, when Phil came in it was already in the process of getting back.

Q. Through Wolfe.

A. Rabbi Wolfe, yeah. And, he furthered that process. But, as far as I'm concerned, the trappings of the Orthodox approach, everything about the Orthodox approach is not to... too meaningful to me. I'm more amenable to perhaps the intellectual approach. The reason... the rational approach rather than the traditional approach. The ethics of Judaism are much more meaningful to me than the practices of the Jews to appease the deity.

Q. Well, I suppose that's a logical transition to the B'nai B'rith.

A. Well, as far as the B'nai B'rith is concerned, I was kinda pressed into that by... who... the then... publisher of the Jewish Ledger. Joe Biden who passed away, and he got me as a young fellow interested in taking part in a local chapter of the B'nai B'rith. But, it didn't set well with me to... it didn't set too well with me, I kinda was led into it, because I was being used. I was being used by this man, to... he wanted to further his own reputation, and he was a very dynamic organizer. And, he was organizing things that were all going to one purpose: to edify this man himself. But, that was short lived, I didn't stay with the B'nai B'rith too long. Here in town, B'nai B'rith had lost it's... it's true place in the American scene in Jewish organizations. In other cities, it was very important, but here it seemed to fall apart. I guess it was due to the local leadership.

Q. Well, when did you become involved with the B'nai B'rith?

A. Oh, this was in the '30s, I guess.

Q. Okay.

A. It was a long time ago. Yeah.
Q. It seems to me that, you know, when you were talking Judaism and you were attracted to its ethical appeal that that's why it would be a good transition into the B'nai B'rith because it is humanitarian in (unintelligible) . . .
A. Oh, yes. Yes. Right.
Q. . . . and, you know, it has that outlook and attracted Jews like yourself who . . .
A. Yeah, but you see, I'm not a belonger.
Q. I see.
A. See, I'm not a belonger.
Q. That's the difference. That's the difference.
A. Yeah.
Q. Yeah.
A. I . . . I . . . being a musician, you know, that's the way of life. Musicians are so egocentric, you might say, that we're not belongers. We don't go along with a cause, unless it's something so all extensive or far reaching like the UJA . . . Israel. I mean, that's . . . that's something there, that's something else. The magnitude of that alone is, you can't be impervious to that. You're kind of swept up . . . what happened in the last week with the rescue of those Israelis? I mean, to me, that was a gigantic thing.
Q. That was an incredible thing, wasn't it?
A. Incredible. I mean, it brought to me the same things I did . . . that came to me at the time when the '67 war was going on. The incredibility of daily reports of successes, the Israelis, we can expect that.
Q. What was your reaction to the '73 war, the young supporter war?
A. Oh, gee. Poor Israel. Poor Israel was just torn apart. The victory in his fingers, torn away from him. Just to appease the Arabs. Just so they wouldn't look too bad in the eyes of the world. And, of course, everything Israel does is okay with me, because they're fighting for their lives. They're doing such
A. (Continued) a magnificent, humanitarian work in the world. And this last incident, it seems to me that Israel has pointed the way, has done what other nations didn't have the nerve to do. There's nothing wrong with fighting for your life. And, this rescue operation had such daring, and such imagination that you get to expect this thing from a little nation like that. What big nation would have attempted to do a big thing like that? All the big nations were embalmed in (unintelligible). They just didn't have the guts, didn't have the imagination to pull off something like this. They couldn't . . . they would've been a failure.

Q. I noticed the reaction in England. The British feel they never could have done that themselves.
A. No, they're right.

Q. They have respect for what this small country has done.
A. Yeah. So, I believe that, I could feel that they would've liked to do it. Britain, France, and the United States, and maybe others would have liked to do it, but Israel really pulled the chestnuts out of the fire for the rest of the world. And, I've got great respect and I . . . I'm just thrilled with this thing.

Q. Now why, if we can define this a little bit more, why do you feel so strongly about Israel?
A. Well, they've done against all odds with such idealism, see, developed a civilization there that's willing to sacrifice for each other. In re-establishing what was their right, and of course, they've gone about it in such a fine way, you might say, giving thought to even its enemies that it's a beacon light for international behavior: I think that's very important.

Q. As you talk about this though, you had . . . didn't bring in the fact that this is a Jewish State, and I'm sure that's . . .
A. Of course, I'm identified with it. I'm being partial.
Q. Is there a reason that you did mention: that as opposed to just . . . it's assumed that that's the fact that that's a Jewish State? I mean, would you be . . . would you have as much support for another evolving state if it were not Jewish?
A. Oh, I might if it did things that Israel is doing.
Q. Did the same things?
A. Yeah. I would. I would.
Q. So, maybe the element of Judaism is not all that important when it comes down to the Israel State?
A. It's not the religious element of Judaism, but after all, it's my antecedents; I'm part of it. I consider myself part of it. I take pride in it. So, there's some native approach to it, I mean, I'm not impervious to it just . . .
Q. Right.
A. I just didn't pick up Judaism because gee, they're doing a swell thing. I'm part of it. I was born into it. I consider that important.
Q. Now if. . . there are some criticisms that I've heard, at any rate, about how much support American Jews give to Israel to the neglect of Jewery in America. Do you think that's true? Do you think more money is given, a great deal of money is given to Israel, perhaps at the expense of what can be done here in this country for . . .
A. Well, I don't know if it's at the expense of. But, certainly we know that Israel is in dire need, and it's gonna be in dire need for a long time. She's got enemies at her doorstep every moment of the day. How long she can last and be (excuse me) and live the kind of national life that she's hoping for is overshadowed all the time by her enemies that just want to get rid of her.
Q. And, that's not the case in America? That there's a priority of concern here?
A. Right. Right. There is the concern for all these institutions, they're getting
A. (Continued) I don't know if it's a fair share, but they're getting a share of the UJA funds. And, they've been doing that, they've been getting this share for a good many years. Whether it's enough... it's never enough, but it's a matter of priority.

Q. Do you think that Israel is necessary for the survival of world Jewery?

A. Gosh, I can't contemplate what would happen, I hesitate to contemplate what would happen to world Jewery if Israel were to disappear. It would be... we'd be the wandering Jew again.

Q. That's interesting.

A. And, that would be, I think, the worst thing that could ever happen to Jewish people. Because, the thing that Israel stands for today and accomplishments that have come about, humanitarian accomplishments, the resurrecting of human lives, pointing the way to ethical conduct with nations, democracy, why Israel is a cradle of democracy! If that should go that means that the democratic nations would permit it to go. And, that would mean that, I hesitate to contemplate what would happen to Jews all over the world.

Q. It would affect American Jews, do you think?

A. It certainly would.

Q. How would it, how would you think it would affect us?

A. Oh, this anti... incipient anti-semitism all over the world and in this country and that would have a tendency to flare to the surface, and who's to say how Jews would be treated? In the highest places to the lowest places.

Q. Now, you have been to Israel in '64, you mentioned, in 1964...

A. Yeah. Yes

Q. ... would you ever think of moving to Israel in any point, or have you?

A. No, I'm not a pioneer. You see? At this stage of the game, I'm not ready to pick up... still, I'm American, you see? I have great admiration for what
A. (Continued) they're doing over there, and I take great pride in their accomplishments, but to go there and live and change my whole pattern of life, I'm not ready to do that. See? Perhaps younger people would.

Q. Did you think about it when you first went . . . went on that first . . .

A. No, I never thought of doing that. Because, well, I don't have the enthusiasm that perhaps organizational . . . the organizational mind would have, see? I don't have an organizational mind. I'm not a member of a brotherhood that's all fired with an idea that we're going to do something as a body, as a group, you see? And, it's that organizational thinking that propels people to go. If you join a kibbutz, you know, take part in the . . . that type of life. I'm not ready for that. I'm still an American.

Q. So, you are willing to identify strongly with it and support it in what ways you can . . .

A. Right.

Q. . . . but the limit, for you at least, is to stay here in America . . .

A. Right.

Q. . . . and consider yourself an American.

A. Right.

Q. Right. So, you have kind of dual loyalties; it seems that way.

A. Well, it's not really dual loyalties. You can't say that it's dual loyalty. For instance, you take the Irish that come . . . came over from Ireland, they still have a great feeling for what's going on in Ireland. They're Americans. Would you say they have a dual loyalty?

Q. I would be inclined to say yes. I think they may have a dual loyalty.

A. Well, not on a national . . . not in a national way. But, you can't forget your antecedents. You can't forget the emotions of the . . . that swell up, you know, relationships with the land you came from.
Q. Now, before . . . before the 1940's, before World War II, did you consider yourself, did it ever even cross your mind that you are a wandering Jew?
A. No. No. I felt very secure.
Q. Okay.
A. I felt very secure. Most of the Jews felt very secure, because the patterns of discrimination of that kind, were letting up. I . . . I didn't really feel any stings of anti-semitism personally, you see. Although, in . . . in some ways it was ever-present, you know, but I wasn't stung the way people are stung.
Q. Yeah. Yeah, right.
A. So, that . . . that . . . I felt secure.
Q. Okay. So that with World War II it . . . it made people think that there's something to think about and at that point, the notion of the wandering Jew and what would happen if you didn't have the security of a homeland came into your mind. Do you think that Rabbi Bernstein was a factor in this?
A. Oh, yes. He had a great influence over all our lives here as Jews in this community. Because, he wasn't sectarian in a sense, he wasn't parochial. And, his relationship with the Jewish Community was as a kind of a bridge bridge between the Jewish Community and city, and the rest of the country, you might say. He was a goodwill ambassador, you might say. And, he took part in all kinds of civic . . . civic adventures. As a matter of fact, I remember the Knights of Colombus was building the Colombus Civic Auditorium . . . the Civic Center on Chestnut Street. Well, he and all the Jews contributed to that. It was an ecumenical adventure, because it was for the city. You see? It was for the people of the city. And, likewise, I think the Catholics contributed to some Jewish causes here, I don't know if they contributed to the Temple B'rith Kodesh but they . . . when it came to anything that the Jews
A. (Continued) were doing which had to do with the some civic relationship, they were there to help us. So, there's always been a good feeling between the Christians and the Jews in Rochester. As a matter of fact, that's one of the things we pride ourselves on. And, Phil Bernstein was an ambassador for that.

Q. So, in many ways he was a leader . . .

A. Yes.

Q. . . . with the Israelis cause, as well as . . .

A. Oh, yes. You remember his position during and after the war?

Q. The . . . which war?

A. The Second World War? Why, he was at the head of the resettlement of all the refugees.

Q. Okay, one second . . .

END OF TAPE 11, SIDE 1, INTERVIEW 11
Q. This is Dennis Klein talking with Mr. Mordecai Lurie, and we are on Tape 11, Side D. Now you were telling us about Rabbi Bernstein and his involvements.

A. Yes, well, he was the head of the Jewish Champlin's of the (Unknown) Forces. And, after the war why, he was assigned to the (Unknown) I believe it was, to see the re-establishment or the establishment a place for the displaced persons that were left alive. And, it was a gigantic job. He had to see that they went where ever they could go. He had to open doors for them in the various countries for all these displaced persons. And, he did a terrific job. And, of course, he's well-known for that. And, his feeling for the Jewish people is unbounded.

Q. Which he conveyed very strongly.

A. Very strongly.

Q. Did you have any personal relations with Rabbi Bernstein.

A. Well, we knew him quite well. He was . . . he grew up with a group of people, young fellows, as a school . . . as a sophomore of a high school kid, you know, with one of the musicians that I was palling around with in the orchestra. And, several others around town, so he . . . he was kind of close to me through that group.

Q. I see.

A. But, we were very close to him in every other respect. My wife sometimes would have a point of discussion about some point that he raised in the sermon, and she'd disagree with him, and he'd write her a letter and further expound on his point of view . . .

Q. That's something, though.

A. . . . and, they kind of took opposite sides about things. But, we always, my
A. (Continued) wife always respected him, and he always respected her. And, we
... lots of communication ran between this family and him through the years.

Q. Through that way? And, I mean, through letter . . . letters . . .

A. Letters and contact . . . I used to play at the High Holy Days, you know.

I play (Unknown).

Q. Oh!

A. You know I play (Unknown - Colhindray?)

Q. Oh, yeah, sure, I know.

A. Yeah, ya see? So, I was kind of . . .

Q. You used to play the . . . yourself?

A. Yeah, solo. I used to play the viola solo. The (Unknown). You know, are
you acquainted with the Brooks (Unknown)?

Q. Yeah. I am.

A. Yeah.

Q. The wild one, where people are standing and . . . getting tired after twenty
minutes, isn't that the one?

A. Well, no. No. No. That's the beginning of the service. That's the beginning
of the (Unknown) service. The . . . night before. . . the night of Yom Kippur.

Q. Yeah. Right.

A. You see?

Q. I think I'm aware of that.

A. And, sometimes it used to be sung, and before I came, why it was a cellist who
was a member of the philharmonic who used to play the (Unknown) on the cello.
And, then he stopped playing and I was asked to do it.

Q. How long were you doing that?

A. Oh, I was doing it for a number of years. A long time.

Q. You enjoyed that?
A. Oh, yes. You kinda looked forward to it.

Q. It's a nice thing.

A. Yeah.

Q. Yeah. It's a good piece of music, too.

A. And, then of course I had . . . oh yeah, it was cut, it was just a short portion of it.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. Not the whole thing. It's too long.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And, this was . . . went on for about three or four minutes before the service started.

Q. Oh, I see. Okay, I was . . .

A. And, then after that the choir would sing the (Unknown) in a different arrangement, which was quite nice. But, when I quit the orchestra, I stopped playing that. I didn't want to play any more. As a matter of fact, I think before I quit the orchestra, why, I stopped playing it.

Q. So, you were part of the service as much as . . .

A. I was part of the service, yes.

Q. . . . along with Rabbi Bernstein and the . . .

A. Yeah.

Q. That must have been a great honor.

A. Oh, yes. I enjoyed doing it. I . . . I felt close to him. I felt close to the temple because it kind of satisfied my need for association and the . . . the approach to the services was very nice. I like that . . . the Reformed approach. As it became more and more Orthodox, it became a little more . . . I found myself a little bit out of step with it.

Q. Oh, I see.
A. For instance, the chanting of the... the singing... the congregation chanting all the time and the singing. I'm not used to that. And, I couldn't really get into the spirit of it.

Q. I bet a lot of people felt that way, too.
A. I believe so.

Q. They... but you, you said before that you were able to adapt to some of the changes...
A. Right.

Q. ... and so, this one was just another thing to adapt to.
A. Another thing that we didn't have when I joined the temple, we didn't have a cantor. See? Now, Phil Bernstein says we gotta have a cantor. So, he got a cantor.

Q. Because before that, the organ was the only instrument that was in the...
A. Yeah, but it wasn't... there was no cantorial singing by a cantor. We had a choir, we had the singing there. But, there's no cantor that... that did his share of the...

Q. Now, it's a fundamental part of the service.
A. Yeah.

Q. These changes, though, you... you weren't bothered by too much apparently.
A. No. The only thing I was bothered by, was when the cantorial singing lacked standard. And, the first cantor we got was very good. But, he didn't stay very long. Then, in the interim period, we had another cantor and that was very poor in my (unknown). Till finally, we got Richard Allen who incidentally gave his farewell recital last night.

Q. Oh, I didn't know he was leaving.
A. Yeah, he's leaving. To Philadelphia.

Q. He has an excellent voice, I think.
Q. He was great.
A. Tremendous.
Q. He did soloes down at Eastman.
A. He's a musician.
Q. Yeah.
A. He's an opera singer.
Q. Oh, I see.
A. He's schooled in the fundamentals of musical expression. And, he's got a magnificent voice. The power and the sensitivity...
Q. We did Sir William Walton's Belshersire's Beast (spelling?) down at ...
A. Oh, yeah.
Q. He was the soloist.
A. He's very capable.
Q. Yeah. I'll say, he's very good.
A. He's coming back to sing some operas here, I think, was it ... Tolska, and something else. But, I'm gonna miss him because he's pretty hard to replace. Now, with that kind of singing, being a musician, I can't overlook that, you see? I have standards that must be met.
Q. That's not really. . . so, you're discomforted with that that the degree of discomfort may not be too large but, in that it's there, it's really more of a musical thing than a Jewish . . .
A. Right. Right. Right. I've no . . . cantorial singing is good, as long as the singing is good.
Q. Okay.
A. But that's an art in itself.
Q. One reason I like going to B'rith Kodesh services is because the music is arranged by Sam Atler. Samuel Atler. I think he does some interesting things
Q. (Continued) with the music. Now, have you heard his arrangements at
B'rit Kodesh . . .
A. I heard some of it, yes.
Q. I think they're quite good.
A. Yes, well, now that's a standard. If the singing is good, it must be on a
professional basis.
Q. Yeah.
A. I can't stand singing that is not on a professional basis. Because, that's . . .
it doesn't move me.
Q. Right.
A. And, when the singing is good, I enjoy it.
Q. Let me ask you, do you have . . . do you observe any other holidays besides
the High Holy Days?
A. Well, practically not.
Q. And, this has been pretty much true through your life?
A. Right.
Q. What about when you were involved with the RPO, the Rochester orchestra, when
High Holy Days came along, did they allow the . . .
A. They were very nice that way. They made sure that we had nothing, no services.
No professional services to play, no rehearsals, no concerts, when we had the
High Holy Days.
Q. Oh, they arranged it that way?
A. Right.
Q. Even though there was just a handful of Jews in the . . .
A. Right, because we wouldn't gone . . . we wouldn't come.
Q. Right.
A. You see? None of us would have come.
Q. You wouldn't have gone?
A. I wouldn't have gone.
Q. You would have gone to temple.
A. Right. Right. I mean, that was . . . that's the least they could do for us.
Q. Right.
A. See? There would have been a big protest if they had done something, because we would consider that they'd do it just out of spite.
Q. Right.
A. See? But, they always made arrangements so that we wouldn't have rehearsals or concerts that night.
Q. So, there was never any . . .
A. A concert would be out of the question, because nobody would come to the concert.
Q. (Laughter) Right.
A. (Laughter) The Jews support music, you know?
Q. Yeah. Yeah.
A. And, if there's gonna be . . . not gonna be a concert, why have them rehearse it?
Q. Right. I find it interesting that Jews do support music but again, there's just a small number that in fact perform. That perform it.
A. Well, proportionately, I think there's a larger number of Jews in the musical profession, because there's one area where anti-semitism is not so strong. You see? 'You can't get ahold on by true worth in the musical profession without getting . . . feeling the sting of anti-semitism.
Q. So, you think there are, then, proportionately a fairly large number of Jews involved?
A. Oh, yes.
Q. Okay. Because the reason I raised that question is because we go back to the
Q. (Continued) Rochester Orchestra and in that there's a small number of Jews there.

A. Yes, but proportionate to the Jews in the population, there's a lot.

Q. Yeah, that's true.

A. You see? We have a small population of Jews here.

Q. Yeah, that's right. I think you're right. So, there wasn't anything unusual about that?

A. No. No. No.

Q. Okay. I wanted to ask a little bit now about your endeavors, now, in that you are tuning pianos. And, you mentioned too that you make violins?

A. Yes, I make violins and violas. And, I'm still in the process of making bows. Bass bows and other kinds of bows ... mostly bass bows.

Q. Have you always been doing this or is this something new?

A. Well, it's a hobby that I picked up, you see. It dates back to the time I was a little kid, maybe eight, nine years old, in elementary school. We had shop classes, and I was fascinated with the use of a hammer, a chisel, a saw, you know? All these tools that fashioned something. In other words, there's an innate urge to make something. And, we made little coat hangers, and candle sticks, and you know, that kind of stuff. But, I liked to work with wood. And, of course, after I got into high school it evaporated. You never had opportunities. Not till we, I got married and we lived in a flat where I had a nice, light basement. And, I said to my wife, "Gee, we got a nice basement here. I wonder if I couldn't start to make something." See? I got a workshop, see? So, I decided, I think, I'd like to make a violin bow. And, I didn't know if I had any capacity to do it, but I'd try. And, I went to the violin maker in town, that I knew, and he agreed to get me some tools, and some wood, and what not, and I set about making it. And, it turned out pretty good.
A. (Continued) So, he says, "you know, you made a bow and it came out pretty good, now why don't you make a violin?" I said, "I think I will!" He says, "But I can't teach you. You get a book and I'll tell you what book to get, and you read that book, and that will give you all the information you need." So, I got that book, and that was like a bible to me. It stimulated me so that I was dreaming about it... making this violin from scratch. Well, the pride of accomplishment is there and finally the thing came to fruition, and it wasn't so awfully good. But, then, I had learned an awful lot... procedure and the handling of wood, and shaping, and carving, and...

Q. The kinds of wood.
A. The kind of... manipulation that was required. So, I made another one. And then I made some violas, and, of course, I always enjoyed making them, because you never know how it's going to turn out.

Q. Is that really right?
A. Right. You don't know how it's gonna turn out. But, on the basis of previous experience, it... you have a very confident hope that its gonna turn out good.

Q. How does... I mean, how did Stratavarios get it down to a good...
A. Well, you know, every artist has his own individuality, and Stratavarios was the greatest of them all. His... his modeling, his shaping, his... well the total quality of his instruments while not absolutely superior, when I say that, I mean other violin makers made violins that sounded as good as Strat's, but they were contemporaries of his. Then, it's just that the sheer excellence of design and finish and, of course, placed him in a position of pre-emptness.

Q. So, there is some control that you can...
A. Oh, yes.

Q. ... you can...
A. You get to know what principles are.

Q. . . . you get to know it.

A. Now, I believe . . . they talk about the varnish, secret varnish, you know. What secret Stratavarios had that others didn't have, that put him apart.

Q. Right.

A. I don't believe there were any secrets at all. Because, he had the same materials that others had, and he . . . his sources of materials were the same. So, the only difference was that it was in his handling. In his appraisal of what he was doing. In his shaping. In his judgment of texture. That's important. You work on a hard piece of wood, you say, now, this is a hard piece of wood, I must alter it, I must modify it to be consistent with the type of sound that I can get with this hard piece of wood. Now, if I'm working with a soft piece of wood, I've got to modify that. On account of the softness, you see? And, I believe that's what he understood. In the appraisal of the material that he was working.

Q. He had a real feeling for this, and that's . . .

A. Right. Right.

Q. Do you think you have a knack for this?

A. Oh, I have a knack for it, but I'll never be a Stratavarios.

Q. Well, who knows, maybe twenty years from now . . .

A. No. I'm not gonna make any . . .

Q. . . . you'll find people playing Lurie Violins, you know.

A. Yeah. Oh, I have . . . I can show you a viola that I made.

Q. That would be interesting to see one. Yeah, sure.

A. Well, of course, I got into that and I found that . . . that early indoctrination with a hammer and a saw and a chisel; it all paid off because I found myself with a new interest in creativity. See? Now that I'm out of the orchestra,
A. (Continued) I have a new field of creativity. And, I enjoy it. I like to work with my hands.

Q. You're also tuning pianos, too.

A. Yes. Well, that's an outgrowth. That's an outgrowth. I was interested in the mechanics of the piano. And, of course, I never dreamt that I'd... that it would ever become a career.

Q. So, that's what it is?

A. That's what it is, yeah. I found, incidentally, that the year after I quit the orchestra and I was doing this full time, that my income tax that following year in piano service was greater than the money I was earning in the orchestra. So, I follow along, and it's a whole lot easier than to play. And, there's a challenge all the time. You're peeped with problems, and it's interesting. And, you're meeting people. That's a great advantage of doing this kind of work. You're constantly meeting new people.

Q. In the piano tuning?

A. Yes. You see? All your customers out there are people. And, the piano is a means of getting together. But, you're actually dealing with people. And, if you have a good relationship with people, then you can get along very well.

Q. Let me ask you this question: we talked last time about some of your close friends that you have in Rochester, and your colleagues in the orchestra, and they tended to be Jews.

A. Yeah, we gravitated together.

Q. You gravitated together?

A. Yeah.

Q. Are you finding that pattern true in the customers that you have, you said that the people, you enjoy talking with people...

A. Well, that's different, you know, that's on a business relationship. I don't make friendships among my customers.
Q. Well, you enjoy that aspect of your work, it's meeting the people.
A. Oh, yes! But, as far as chumming around and making . . . becoming buddy, buddy with people, that's another story.
Q. I see. Okay. That's different from the orchestra and your feelings about . . .
A. Right. Right. But, in the orchestra we were thrown together, we'd go on tour together, and somehow we gravitated together. We had the same interests, it's like an unwritten law, you know, we gravitated together. Now, we weren't exclusive. Of course, we had some of the other boys that were friendly with us, too. And, on tours for instance, we'd . . . we liked to play poker. So, we had a group that played poker. Well, we had others besides ourselves that would play with us. We were not exclusively Jews.
Q. Right. So, you were not exclusive.
A. No.
Q. Not at all, then.
A. No, we weren't exclusive at all.
Q. But, there is that element of gravitation that's . . .
A. Right.
Q. . . . almost inexplicable.
A. Right.
Q. But, in your businesses today, in the tuning of pianos, that doesn't tend to hold, I mean, you're . . .
A. No. Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, I could say that my business relations with the non-Jews perhaps are of more lasting quality. And, of course, they're more extensive. Many more non-Jews than there are Jews owning pianos in Rochester.
Q. Just by statistics.
A. By statistics, yeah.
Q. Right.
A. But, I find that some of the nicest relationships, the nicest relationships
I've had, not exclusively, but most of them are with non-Jews. And, I don't
know why that should be.

Q. Now, you mentioned that . . . you mentioned that the . . . that the (Unknown)
the (Unknown) group called you in and had you . . .

A. Yes. Yes.

Q. So, there's an example of a Jewish Organization that called you in, probably
because you're Jewish . . .

A. I don't know that they know I'm Jewish.

Q. So, you . . .

A. I don't know that.

Q. I see. That never even . . .

A. I don't know that.

Q. . . . entered into it.

A. No. I do work for churches too, I mean, they could ask for Christian tuners,
but they're not concerned with that.

Q. That's true. That's true. So, they're asking for a piano tuner . . .

A. That's right. That's right. That's right. The concern of one's religion
is not there in this kind of work.

Q. Let me, let me end by asking you what . . . a kind of a funny question,
actually. Do you think there is such a thing as Jewish music? That there is
music with Jewish feeling, a technique, that you can identify that must be . . .
that must've been written by a Jew. This must be played . . . this must have
been played by a Jew. Do you . . . has that ever crossed your mind in your
appreciation of music?

A. I don't believe so. Because music is such a universal form of expression that
it's . . . it's pretty hard to identify a Jewish composer as writing music that
A. (Continued) stems from his cells. You see? Rather than his education.

Now, in the past we've found composers of Jewish extraction that are tremendous.

You take Mendleson, for example. He's a Jew. And, I'm very, very fond of his music. And there's... Revel's grandmother was a Jew.

Q. Right. Well, I think, it was Mendleson's grandfather who was Moses Mendleson the Jew in Berlin in 18th century.

A. I'm not sure. I'm not sure about that. It could be.

Q. But, there are others. Revel's relations, too.

A. Well, his grandmother was Jewish, see? So, he had some Jewish in him.

Q. Well, when you listen to Revel, though, does that come into your appreciation of his music.

A. Not because of his Judaism, no, no, no, no.

Q. There is, of course, very ethnic music that...

A. Ah! That's different. That's different.

Q. Yeah. Do you like that... the Jewish music? Does that have a particular impact on you?

A. Well...

Q. I'm not only talking about the music in the synagogue; I'm talking about, well you know...

A. Well now, you take some of the music that's written by the Israelis today, some of it... it's... most of it, has nothing to do with one's emotional feeling about Judaism. It isn't religious in any sense. It doesn't have any ethnic connotation that I could discern. It has modernistic byways. And these things are devoid of any thing that has to do, to my way of thinking, have any connection at all with one's blood. It's a trend of the times. They're all righting that way, and the Jews are among them.

Q. Okay.
A. (Continued) There's nothing that would typify and say, now that's Jewish. If it's a Jewish theme that he has in mind, that's different. Then he's trying to recapture something that has it's emotional outpouring, yearning, whatever it is that you call Jewish feeling, you see? If it's religious, then it's hard to say what Jewish music is. Because you hear so much that's so diverse. It isn't all in one pattern that says . . . it isn't all droopy, for instance. It isn't all sad.

Q. Yeah, right. Right.

A. Some of its very martial in character. And, its Jewish, its Hebrew. Do you distinguish between Jewish and Hebrew?

Q. I . . .

A. Because there's a distinction there.

Q. Yeah, I would kind of . . .

A. Yeah. Jewish has to do with East Europe.

Q. Oh. Okay.

A. Because of the Jewish religion . . . Jewish language.

Q. And Hebrew would be . . .

A. Hebrew has to do with Israel.

Q. With Israel.

A. See? Yiddish is a corruption of the German language. And, it grew and it started in Germany went to Poland and Russia. And, that's indemic there. But there's Israelis that never . . . don't understand Yiddish.

Q. So, it has its own ethnic . . .

A. That's right. That's different. That would be . . . Yiddish, and of course, a lot of music had been written that emminated from there with the yearning, the crying, the outpouring, the hopes for the future of the Jews of that period. The suffering and the deprivation is embodied in that kind of music.
A. (Continued) Alee Alee (spelling?) for instance. You know the song, Alee Alee?
Q. Yeah.
A. Oh, it's such a crying thing. It typifies the soul-searching of the Jews from East Europe. God, why has Thou forsaken me? That sort of thing.
Q. That would be a Jewish...
A. That's a... that's... would you call that Jewish music? Well, that's popular music. Popular music. See, that's different.
Q. I see. You have to modify that a bit.
A. Yeah. That's... that's different.
Q. Yeah.
A. But, there's nothing that shows up as a fundamental, secular background for a Jew writing Jewish music. It doesn't ooze out that way. It's an intellectual study to learn process.
Q. Which transcends the...
A. Yeah. Yeah. There are other Jewish composers that... there's Rubengoldmark. He wrote the Rustic Wedding Symphony. A very famous work. He was Jewish. And, Marla, Gustav Marla. He was Jewish.
Q. So, do you think his music is...
A. Oh, I'm crazy about his music.
Q. I am too. Do you think there's a Jewish characteristic, though, in his music?
A. No. No. No. I don't think it's anything characteristic to Jewish.
Q. How do we know, why is it important that we know that Gustav Marla was Jewish?
A. It isn't, it's just that we like to take pride in it.
Q. Yeah.
A. We like to take pride in it. We like to take in (Unknown) was a Jew. One of the greatest violinists that ever lived. (Unknown) He's not thought of too much any more, because others have taken his place. But, when you hear the records that he played, the perfection, the style, the warmth, it makes others
A. (Continued) Look like amateurs, by comparison.
Q. Yeah. Yeah, that's interesting.
A. And, Fritz Chrysler was Jewish.
Q. Isaac Stern.
A. Isaac Stern. We have a lot of examples in today's musical culture of Jews having made it great. And, of course, we like to think of them, and take pride in them . . .
Q. Take pleasure.
A. . . . in their accomplishments. But, there's nothing particularly Jewish about their style, it's more universal.
Q. Of course, in Marla's own lifetime, he had to leave Vienna because of the anti-semitism there.
A. Right. Right. He wasn't appreciated in his time. But, his works are being played more and more and more now.
Q. Is there a revival?
A. Yeah. Because they're great.
Q. In fact, Howard Hanz, you know on WXXI?
A. Yeah. Did you hear him today?
Q. Yeah. Today. Yeah. He had his program on Marla.
A. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I'm very fond of Marla. His works are so interesting, the byways of the . . . the . . . his melodies and his harmonies. The unexpected turns.
Q. Oh, yeah. That's the thing I like.
A. And, the artistic, the artistic integrity of all this.
Q. My favorite is his First Symphony. I think that is, talking about the unexpected turns . . .
A. Yeah. Yeah.
Q. . . . it's just (unknown) draw out that music.
A. Well, there you are.
Q. Yeah. Very good.
A. And, there are a lot of others that are . . . that have been on the scene.

Writing Jewish music . . . I don't know that there is such a thing. Really, such a thing as Jewish music.
Q. Some people have claimed that Marla's cynicism, for example, in that he had to live in an anti-semitic Vienna, and was conscious of his Judaism, that that . . . there may be some connection between that feeling of social context that he expressed through his music.
A. Oh, undoubtedly.
Q. Therefore, one identifies Jewish elements in his music that way.
A. That's right.
Q. So, you see there's an argument that can be made for Marla as being a Jewish composer.
A. But, the question is, does it have any direct musical value as far as Judaism is concerned? I mean, does it point to something historically Jewish or historically Hebrew?
Q. That's interesting.
A. I don't think so. I think it's more German.
Q. Except . . .
A. Innately German music.
Q. Except, if he were not Jewish, I doubt if his music would have as deep a cynicism. You know what I'm saying? A deeper width . . .
Q. That's true.
A. If you have an intense life, you're apt to write intensely.

Q. It's almost a necessary ... it's almost a . . .

A. Right.

Q. . . . a . . . (unknown) I mean, you have to suffer to . . .

A. Well, the more intense your life is, the more intense your works are going to be.

Q. . . . your expressions are going to be.

A. Right. If everything was elegant and free and easy, and you had no inner conflicts, then everything you did would have no inner conflicts, and the conflicts in music show the dynamics of it.

Q. Is it (unintelligible) then?

A. Sure.

Q. I agree with that. It's almost a shame though, that . . . some people, I myself I think a little bit, feel this way, that American culture is not regarded as rich as European culture because the level of conflict and of turmoil in our society has not been as deep as it has been in Europe.

A. You're talking about literature?

Q. Literature, art, and music too.

A. Yeah. It could be.

Q. You know that the American culture is criticized of its lack of depth, and its imitation of European . . .

A. It could be. Imitation, yes, I believe so.

Q. That seems pretty strong.

A. Yes. I believe so.

Q. Okay. Thank you very much. I enjoyed this.

A. Thank you. So did I.

Q. Yeah, will you tell us about the JU. You were going to say . . .
A. Well, some years back we had a director of opera here at the Eastman School. I think his name Emanuel Balaban. And, he was able to start the... a little symphony under the sponsorship of B'nai B'rith, incidentally.

Q. Interesting.

A. It was called, The B'nai B'rith Little Symphony. And, it was quite a good little orchestra. And, we got all the good players. The first players from the philharmonic to play in it. But, it was sponsored by B'nai B'rith at the same time it was handled through the JY. You see, we had our rehearsals there at JY.

Q. You were playing in this.

A. I played in it, yeah.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And, it was... it was handled through the JY. Tickets were sold...

Q. You called it The B'nai B'rith...

A. It was called the B'nai B'rith Little Symphony.

Q. So, you had that...

A. You had that connection.

Q. ... connection.

A. I almost forgot about that?

Q. When was this, when did this happen?

A. This was in the '30s.

Q. How long were you a part of this?

A. Well, it lasted for a few years, and then it kinda folded up. But, maybe two or three years. We gave a few concerts. And, it was quite good. But, the JY on... after it was built, on Andrews Street, it was the home of this.

Q. I see. Who was the conductor of this.

A. This Emanuel Balaban.

Q. This is just a... this gentleman.
A. Yeah. Yeah. He was a good conductor and a very nice fellow. He was also Jewish.

Q. Well, everybody in this group was Jewish.
A. Well, all the players in the B'nai B'rith Little Symphony weren't.
Q. They were not?
A. No.
Q. Oh!
A. But we had all the Jewish boys in it. (Laughter)
Q. (Laughter)
A. We had some others that weren't, after all, we only had five, six Jews in the whole orchestra. And, we had something like eighteen in this little symphony.
Q. I see, so there were other ... non-Jews. But, when you were asked to do this and you decided that this would be a good thing to be a part of, was there a Jewish thing involved there, or was this just another orchestra's ...
A. It was ... it was not so much Jewish as artistic. We wanted to ... there was no little symphony here in town, and it was.an opportunity for a cultural development ... sponsored by, in this case, B'nai B'rith. See? And, I mentioned this Joe Byben, who was the leader, he was trying to do things that would give him a reputation, you see? And, this was one avenue for him to get a reputation.
Q. Well, that was a pretty smart move.
A. Why, sure. It was a benefit to everybody. We didn't make any money out of it. We felt that we were doing something cultural: And, that ... that was good.
Q. Was ... was there anything ... was the music that was played have a Jewish ... 
A. No. No. No. No. It wasn't conceived to be formed for the semmenation of Jewish music, at all. It was a cultural development, along the lines of good
A. (Continued) music written for that small orchestra.

Q. For a Jewish audience.
A. No. No. For a universal audience.

Q. It was at the JY?
A. At the JY.

Q. But everybody came in and listened to it.
A. Right. Right. It was a universal thing.

Q. So, the element of Judaism then, is very small. I mean, you played at the JY what was called the B'nai B'rith Symphony . . .
A. Right. Right.

Q. . . . it wasn't more than that, there wasn't . . .
A. It wasn't pointed toward the development of Jewish music.

Q. I didn't know there was this . . .
A. Yeah. It didn't last very long.

Q. Was this at the same time that you were in the B'nai B'rith, that you were a member.
A. Yes, I believe so, yeah. During that time.

Q. So, besides the B'rith Kodesh, this B'nai B'rith for a short period of time, was another way for you to express your Judaism and to become an . . .
A. In a way, but I wouldn't say it was an expression of Judaism. It was an identification with a cultural medium that I liked.

Q. That you felt comfortable with.
A. I felt comfortable with. And, incidentally, it was sponsored by B'nai B'rith. If it was sponsored by the Catholics, I would have gone for it too.

Q. You would have gone for it too?
A. Sure. Because, you see, being a musician at heart, that would appeal to me.

Q. But it did bring all the Jews from the orchestra into this . . .
A. Oh yes, yes. It brought us together. But, not consciously as Jews.

Q. It may not have happened though, if the Catholic Organization sponsored this, that . . .

A. But it didn't. The fact was that it didn't.

Q. That's right.

A. You see? The fact is that the Jews sponsored it.

Q. Which is . . . that's something to take pride in too.

A. Right. Right. You see?

Q. Yeah.

A. The fact is, that's the way it turned out. But, it wasn't because of our deep devotion to Judaism.

Q. And, and . . . as if you were giving something to the religion or . . .

A. Right. Right. Right. It had no such connotations.

Q. Just a nice way to get together and play some nice music.

A. Right.

Q. Did it sound or seem funny that the name of it was called the B'nai B'rith Symphony. That sounds kind of funny to me.

A. No, because B'nai B'rith put up money for that.

Q. Right.

A. You see?

Q. But it just sounds . . . it sounds . . . well, not universal to call something B'nai B'rith Symphony.

A. Right. Right. Right.

Q. Where as you called something the Rochester Symphony than you have . . . everybody's there . . .

A. Yeah, well, we didn't think in those big universal terms. (Laughter)

Q. (Laughter) Right.

A. We just wanted to get this little symphony rolling, you know. And make some
A. (Continued) music out of it, and maybe make some kind of a reputation for
the conductor and this little orchestra. Hoping that, perhaps, we could
play another place or two.

Q. Whatever happened to this conductor?
A. Well, he remained a few years and then he went away. He went to New York at
the Juilliard School.

Q. Oh, that's nice.
A. He was a very nice guy.

Q. Well, we had a false ending last time. In music, there are a lot of false
endings. Aren't there?
A. Yeah. Yeah. You see, we actually expected too much from our adventure.
People tried to start a string quartet, let's say. You know, with the
hopes of developing a clientele or a repertoire and getting engaged and that
sort of thing in a professional way. These are short lived. They don't
amount to anything.

Q. Some get off.
A. The interest in chamber music is very small.

Q. In this town?
A. Throughout the country. But there are a few ensembles that can make a go of
it.

Q. And, there have been, I think.
A. Yeah, but very few. And, they have to be, you have to devote all your time to
it. You have to be an artist.

Q. Isn't it really done, though, for the musicians. I mean, isn't it done to re-
fine a technique and to work on a smaller level?
A. Well, it's good if you do it for that purpose. Sure. Because four people
get together, four solos.

Q. Exactly.
A. And, they have to play the best they know how. And, when you do it just for the love of it, that's the way to do it.

Q. That's another thing. That's what I'm saying.

A. But, musicians are a little selfish that way I suppose. Because look, they're trying to make a living. And, you're trying to make a reputation, that's part of your living.

Q. Well, there's a small group in Rochester they called the Ellis String Quartet, do you know anything about them?

A. Ellis?

Q. I don't either, by the way, I mean, I heard the name and I know one player in it . . .

A. Are they connected with any school, any institution?

Q. Well, the RPO. It comes out of the RPO.

A. Oh! They're members of the RPO? Oh, I see.

Q. Now, I don't know if you've heard . . .

A. They're members of the philharmonic?

Q. Yeah, have you seen a concert down there, in the past year for example. Because there's one guy who's in it, who you can see, you can spot him because he plays first . . . he plays second violin, but I think he's the principle.

A. Principle second violinist in the orchestra?

Q. Yeah.

A. Oh, my God.

Q. Do you know who I'm talking about?

A. Yes. (Laughter)

Q. His hair is . . . Well, he's . . .

A. He's the most disturbing influence in that whole ensemble.

Q. Oh, you don't like him!

A. Oh, god! The way he moves around.
Q. Let me put this off.

END OF TAPE 11, SIDE 11, INTERVIEW 11