MUSIC IS MY LIFE

Alvin Mills

Interviewed by Alex Cline

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

PERSONAL HISTORY:

Born: February 2, 1922, Chicago.

Education: Studied violin under Peter Meremblum and Julian Brodetsky; University of Southern California, 1940; B.A., music, UCLA, 1948 (including composition studies with John Vincent); teaching credential, UCLA, 1949; studied conducting with Pierre Monteux, Ecole Monteux, Hancock, Maine, 1952; M.A., composition, Mount St. Mary's College, 1960; studied conducting under Richard J. Lert, Academy of the West, 1955; studied composition under Eugene Zador, 1970-74.

Spouse: Marguerite Patterson, divorced, four children; Josefa Primo, divorced, one daughter; Grusha Paterson Mills, two stepchildren.

CAREER HISTORY:

Private violin teacher, 1935-85.

Violinist/violist, Kansas City Philharmonic, 1944-45; Hollywood Bowl Symphony, 1945-50; Inglewood Symphony Orchestra (also assistant conductor), 1955; Pasadena Civic Symphony Orchestra, 1951-53.

Music teacher, public schools, Lompoc, California, 1949-51; Glendale, California, 1952-84; Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts, 1967-68.

Conductor, Lompoc Symphony Orchestra, 1949-51; Los Angeles Doctors Symphony, 1963-65.

Conductor, music director, Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra, 1953-present.

AFFILIATIONS:

American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP).

American Symphony Orchestra League.

PUBLICATIONS:

Canciones Folkloricas Infantiles de España.

Villancicos: Canciones de Navidad.

SELECTED AWARDS:

Del Amo Fellowship, 1969.

Paul Harris Fellow, Rotary Foundation, Rotary International, 1991.

Award, City of Los Angeles, Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra silver jubilee concert, March 12, 1978.

Award, County of Los Angeles, 1984, 1993.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

Alex Cline, Editor, UCLA Oral History Program; Musician.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Mills's home, Santa Monica, California.

Dates, length of sessions: July 15, 1998 (81 minutes); July 22, 1998 (107); August 26, 1998 (81); September 2, 1998 (109).

Total number of recorded hours: 6.3

Persons present during interview: Mills and Cline.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

In preparation for the interview, Cline consulted numerous articles and artifacts from Mills's personal archives.

The interview is arranged chronologically, beginning with Mills's childhood in Los Angeles and continuing through his musical education, his years as a violinist in various orchestras, his positions as an orchestra conductor and educator, and his founding of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra. Major topics covered include Mills's main role model, Pierre Monteux, notable musicians who have been associated with the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra, programs presented by the orchestra, the importance of educating young people about classical music, and the role of music as a means of spiritual uplift.

EDITING:

Gail Ostergren, editorial assistant, and Aileen Tu, Gold Shield intern, edited the interview. They checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Mills reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made minor corrections and additions.

Cline prepared the table of contents, biographical summary, and interview history. Daniel C. Ryan, editorial assistant, compiled the index.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JULY 15, 1998

CLINE: Normally at the onset of these oral history interviews we begin by asking questions about the beginning, so I'm going to ask you about your early life. We'll get to the beginning of your interest in music and the beginning of your career perhaps before the morning is over. But the first question is, where were you born, when were you born, and who were your parents?

MILLS: All right. I was born in Chicago, Illinois on February 2, 1922. My parents were Harry Mills and Lillian [Ascher] Mills. I guess I remained in Chicago until I was about eight, and then we came to California. My father wasn't well. We really came here for his health because of the cold climate in the Midwest.

CLINE: Right. Had he been out here before and checked it out? Or was it just recommended, say, by doctor's orders that he relocate?

MILLS: More or less recommended. He had never been here before. I came here, I guess I was about eight. Unfortunately, he passed away two years later. At that time a heart condition-- There wasn't the medical knowledge that they have today. Today he would have had a transplant or valve fixed or something, but this was in 1932, in that area. So that was the time.

What it was, he had a heart condition caused by a disease that he had when he was a child, so it was nothing genetic. It was something he acquired after he was born. So that was it.

CLINE: Do you have any memories of coming out here or anything?

MILLS: Yes. I remember coming by train, and it was very exciting. It was something new for an eight-year-old to come on a train and eat in the dining car. And the wonderful scenery, so different from the Illinois area which I had been used to. Open, you know, the desert and the open fields. And the pounding of those wheels on the track was very interesting. I guess that's a rhythm that I felt even then.

CLINE: Do you remember what your first impressions may have been coming to California, to this part of the world?

MILLS: Well, it was very exciting. It was a whole new chapter, and it was something. When you come to California you see palm trees. And at that time they would knock at your door and they would have a big container of oranges. You know, everything was calm and peaceful. There was no smog. The skies were really blue, really clear. And they would have a bucket of oranges that was just picked very recently and for a very small amount. So part of that was we didn't have that in Chicago, you know. And just the sort of freedom that was out here. And of course, going to the ocean, the beach,

and all of that was very exciting.

At that time my father, he got in the movies for a little bit, doing some motion picture work--you know, just nothing--[Not] leads or anything. And he would take me to the studio. So that was exciting, seeing them make motion pictures.

CLINE: I'll bet. So whereabouts, if you can remember, were you living in L.A. at that time?

MILLS: I think it was the Echo Park district, I think, the very first. It's interesting that we sort of moved west as time went on. And it was interesting when I was first-- I started playing the violin at about ten, I guess, eight or ten. Around that time they bought me my first violin. I would practice so much, and little by little-- Living in an apartment, the neighbors didn't like it, and we were told to move. So there was a series of moves where we went from a big apartment to smaller. Finally we went to a duplex, and I think we stayed there a while.

CLINE: So do you have many memories of your father, then, since you were pretty young when he died?

MILLS: Quite a bit. I mean, I remember, yes. In the East he had been a jazz drummer, but his drums were stolen before we came to California, so I didn't know him too much as that. But my mother was a ragtime pianist. How I became a symphony conductor, I mean, I'm not sure. [laughs]

But I guess the early days--now, we're talking early days, when I was thirteen--I went to the L.A. [Los Angeles] Philharmonic [Orchestra] children's concert downtown at the old Philharmonic [Auditorium], and I saw Pierre Monteux. I stopped. I couldn't move. I said, "I want to be a conductor."

CLINE: Wow.

MILLS: It brings tears to my eyes.

CLINE: So you didn't actually grow up hearing classical music at all in your household?

MILLS: Not that much. That is true. Not that much. But when I started taking violin, of course you're oriented in that direction, studying Mozart--I mean when you get to that point--and Haydn and whatever and so forth. But I took-- It seemed to be innately in my soul to love good music, and I did.

CLINE: What made you want to play the violin? Do you remember?

MILLS: I'm not sure why it was the violin. Maybe it was just given to me. I'm not sure, because my mother was a pianist. But we didn't have a piano at that time. We were not able to. We lived in a little apartment. So I guess the violin was, shall we say, mobile. So that, I think that might be the reason. Anyhow, I took to the violin. I loved it, and I played so much and I worked.

At first I had a teacher that wasn't the greatest. I

didn't get the very best start, and I learned some habits that had to be relearned. But later I met-- I don't know who I met. I guess somebody in the apartment said, "You're not playing right." He came and told me, some person, and he was correct. So he said, "I can recommend a teacher," and it was Oskar Seiling. That was my first very good teacher. He was the teacher of Dorothy Wade, who's gone ahead, played concertmaster of many orchestras and so on. So I studied with him. And he was down-- Well, where was it? It was on Eighth Street in the Beaux Arts building, and I would go there from-- At that time I lived on Catalina Street, which was near Vermont [Avenue] and Third [Street], so we took streetcars to that point.

Once a week I would go for a lesson. They were very inspiring, and he put me on the right track. A very strict professor but very good. And I remember him yet. I remember that he was so methodical. We had music--you know, you'd buy music--and he would have folders that I still have. How many years ago was that? [laughs] And these folders were to protect the music. We would sew them, you know. This was a time when we had time. There was no rush. You could enjoy the route, as I say now. For peace of mind, to enjoy the route is a very important thing. And I think this hurrying that we do now, people don't really enjoy what they do. They

have so much-- A whole roomful of CDs, but when do they listen to them?

CLINE: Yeah, right.

MILLS: You know what I'm saying?

CLINE: Sure.

MILLS: So I think--jumping way to the present now--what will save the civilization and our music, so to speak, is having patience, because, I mean, when you think of a Beethoven symphony-- The Ninth Symphony [in D Minor, op. 125] takes around sixty-seven minutes or thereabouts. I mean, it takes time to sit and listen to that. It can't be in a capsule form. And everything nowadays is instant coffee, instant tea, instant everything, you know. And abbreviated. The *Reader's Digest*, you know, they put in a five-hundred-page novel in thirty pages or whatever. And you don't get the real essence of life it seems to me. So if we can get to the point of enjoying again and knowing that each moment is very important--

I was trying to think, how is music related to life? Every note is like a cell in the body, and that has to be in good health. Just like in the body, the cells have to be in good health to be a healthy person.

CLINE: Yeah, literally in harmony.

MILLS: In harmony, yes. Harmony is a very good-- So

consequently in studying-- If you study each note and how they relate to the next, and they do relate-- I mean, we see it in acupuncture. We're going back to what was thousands of years ago, the so-called alternative medicines, which are showing that they are valuable. We can get from the past the good things that will help us in the future, and that is what we need. It takes this quiet time to figure out where we do the thing and how we do it better and how we can keep afloat now. Because there are so many questions and difficulties in the world. Of course, this is nothing new. When you study history, history has always had a challenge. So it seems to me we have to stop. Well, there are classes now on meditation. There's yoga coming back. These are not new things.

CLINE: No, that's for sure.

MILLS: And people are realizing you really can only do one thing at a time. Now I see people driving a car and telephoning and doing both of them not too well, and then we hear that accidents can happen. So consequently you'll have to slow down. And nature tells us to slow down. You hear of heart attacks at a very early age and other things. The body is still what it used to be, so to speak; it hasn't become a twentieth-century body. So the mind and body work together. To be in harmony we have to let them breathe. That's what

music is. It's a breathing. It's a going in and out. For me it's a very spiritual experience.

CLINE: Let's go back again to the early days.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: Evidently your parents encouraged your interest in music.

MILLS: Oh, yes. I used to-- Before the violin I was a singer of popular music. I sang-- Well, those were the days of Al Jolson, Bing Crosby, those people, and they were more or less my idols. You could hear records. I had an uncle, Sam [Ascher], who had one of these old Victrolas that you wound up. You know, it had a little handle, and it wouldn't play unless you'd wind it up. I lovingly used to wind it up and play these old 78's, these big, heavy records, different things. I always had a love for music, and singing was the first thing.

Relating that to later on, when I worked with Gabor Rejto, this famous cellist, we talked about-- He said, "Well, you know--" Whether he called me Alvin or Mr. Mills I forget now, but he said, "When we want the phrase, let's sing it," to know how it would be.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: That's really the whole thing. When I worked with Amparo Iturbi and she gave a fellowship to my son, Steven

[Mills], I took him there every Tuesday. I was a teacher at that time. I'm certainly going back and forth. We would go to Amparo Iturbi's home--that's José Iturbi's sister--and she gave him solfeggio. He hardly touched the piano for six months. That's the old school from Spain and France and so forth. Do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do [sings major scale in solfège]. She worked with him and worked with him. Then I realized how important that was. And I hadn't had that. I sort of retrained myself, and I
still-- The singing, of course, but it wasn't this formal solfeggio per se. But that is a very important item.

That's why some of the musicians nowadays, they have certain fears. You know, they have nervousness. If you have some of this basic training, you don't have that so-called nervousness. Of course, you're excited for the performance, but that's all you are. I remember hearing--It was Nathan Milstein who said, "You have to have two hundred percent technique. Allow for one hundred percent maybe to dissipate under the circumstances, but the other hundred percent will get you through." And I think that's a good point. If you have a good, solid foundation as a beginning student, then you develop--and also I think it's up to the teacher to develop--this so-called avoiding nervousness and avoiding fear. I think all of the real problems are worry, doubt,

and fear. If you can eliminate those and get to a point of having self-confidence-- They talk about self-esteem. You can only get it from yourself, not from another person, because the other person is very elusive. You really can't count on anybody but yourself and your God, which is yourself.

CLINE: So when did you start playing the violin? Do you remember at all when it was?

MILLS: I guess I was about eight. It must have been after I came to California. They bought me a little violin, three-quarter size, I guess it was. And it was magic for me. I idolized the instrument. I would clean it all the time, and it really was very precious. I think, going back all those years, I think they paid $7.50 for the instrument, which had a bow and case and rosin. Nowadays a bow alone, anything, would be maybe $2,000 or $3,000 or whatever. So times have changed. That makes it difficult for the young person today, because things are so expensive.

CLINE: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

MILLS: So that's another reason why-- Later on we'll talk about how I want to help the young people with their music, going into the schools and so forth.

CLINE: So you had been playing the violin since about age eight or so, and you had been singing before that, but now, I guess, you're having some exposure to the so-called classical

tradition through learning the pieces on the violin.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: What led you to the symphony experience at age thirteen? Do you remember? How did you wind up--?

MILLS: Going to the Philharmonic?

CLINE: Yes.

MILLS: Well, there must have been something at school, tickets or something. Well, I guess at thirteen I must have been in junior high. I don't exactly remember, but it must have been that, you know, it was announced, and it was a children's concert. It was in the morning on a Saturday--no school, of course. It wasn't late.

Anyhow, I'd seen Pierre Monteux conduct. I have a picture that you saw over there, five-foot-four [inches], 184 pounds. I can just show you. [stands to demonstrate Monteux's conducting style] He stood up and he hardly moved. This is the great thing about Monteux; he minimized the motion. Of course, when you have a great orchestra they can tell; they can feel what you want. You don't have to overconduct. Now, I conduct the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony [Orchestra], which has non-professionals, so I sometimes have to overconduct to teach them. Monteux's thing is you have to teach your orchestra, and it's true.

I attended one of his rehearsals at the Hollywood Bowl

after I studied with him, in '48 or whatever, and he said, "Come to the Bowl and you'll have a lesson." So I stood at the Hollywood Bowl, you know, right on the corner there, on the edge, at the rehearsal, and I watched every move he made. And he started the César Franck Symphony in D Minor, and he's teaching them. And certain things they didn't do, a certain dynamic. And I thought to myself, "Why didn't they do it?" But even a great orchestra sometimes has to be taught, has to be shown.

And of course, Monteux was-- Sacred. The composer's word was sacred. He wouldn't change a note of a composer. There are some conductors that change-- Like Schumann, some of his orchestration is weak, so they do this or that and, you know, maybe double certain things or change it, modify it. Which is proper to do as far as public domain; you know, you're not tampering with the copyright. But he wouldn't touch a note. It's like sacred. I respect him for that. He was an inspiration, and every day I think of him.

CLINE: So you had this experience. Obviously this was one of the most momentous events in your life.

MILLS: Yes, yes. It started me as a conductor.

CLINE: Right. So you decided at that point, I guess, that conducting was the direction you wanted to pursue?

MILLS: To get to the details-- I'm emotional when I talk

of him, really. I wrote a letter. I guess I wrote to the Philharmonic, wherever. He was at the Hollywood Hotel--which doesn't exist now--at Hollywood [Boulevard] and Highland Avenue. Someplace I think I showed you the letter. I still have it. He wrote back. His wife Doris Gerald Monteux was the narrator, his daughter danced--Nanci [Monteux], and she was his adopted daughter--and the three of them were in the program, and of course, he conducted the thing, the *Rakoczy March*. I still remember that. Monteux was famous for the French music--you know, Berlioz. Anyhow, I wrote and said, "I'm a student, and I want to be a conductor" and so forth, "and I play the violin."

He wrote a wonderful letter back saying that he encouraged me to work hard and study and keep playing in orchestras and watch the conductor and study your violin, get as good as you can. Then he said things like when he was in Europe different orchestras had different, you know, numbers. And maybe, I think, in France there was an orchestra that had 108 [members]. I think at that time the L.A. Philharmonic had about 90 players. He mentioned that. He was saying for different works they need more players and so forth.

Everything he said was so positive. Imagine a great conductor like that taking time to write to a thirteen-year-old whom he didn't know, my family or anything, but just to encourage

music. That's the thing that we have to do, to encourage--Not having connections, but encourage people that are strangers, just like I was a stranger to him. And eventually I studied with him. That's the real weaving of my life.

CLINE: So it sounds like the experience you had was not so much just hearing the symphony orchestra play this music live, but you made some sort of connection with

him--

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: --with the role of the conductor but also with him particularly.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: Why do you think that happened? This seems like a rare sort of occurrence. Because you hear stories about people who had a profound experience going to the symphony and hearing that music played live for the first time and how that influenced the course of their life from that point on, but I don't recall too many--especially people at age thirteen--who connect with the individual on that level. It's something about his command of the orchestra that somehow reached even you?

MILLS: Yes, that's what it was. A small man. He wasn't six-foot-two. Later, there was [Otto] Klemperer, who was very tall, you know, imposing. [Leopold] Stokowski was taller, and with the hands, they were very majestic and magnetic,

and their personalities were powerful. But he stood up there [mimics Monteux's conducting style]. That's the thing that impressed me, that he hardly moved. And when he did move a bit, it seemed like from heaven. From the roof came all of this power and crescendo. And you know, playing one-- A little violin has so-- But when he gets ninety players you have this powerful--

And the music was beautiful, *Invitation to the Waltz* and this and whatever. It was geared for young people. But the *Rakoczy March*, always stirring. You know, it goes with the cellos and bass at the beginning, and then later the trombones, and it's so powerful, and the great orchestration. And it's not a long piece; it holds your attention.

So it was perfectly planned. I don't remember all of the rest of the program, but that in particular. And of course, he was noted for French music and Berlioz. Later I studied with him the *Symphonie Fantastique*.

So the thread was-- It was like planting a seed that was going to really grow. This is what it was. He did affect me like no other conductor has, except maybe-- I had an experience with Darius Milhaud later, at UCLA, that was also very electrifying. I was concertmaster of the UCLA orchestra later, in the forties, about '48 or whatever. I can digress a little? I can go on about that?

CLINE: Sure.

MILLS: What it is with Darius Milhaud, you know, he had this condition where he had to walk with-- Like Itzhak Perlman he had to come in. I don't know, they said he had elephantitis or something. He had to walk in like this [demonstrates his labored movement], and he was a very heavy man. I was concertmaster, and he came in and he handed me his crutches. He put them there. That already was something, you know. [laughs] So Milhaud, I'm right there by him. I see his face, expression. And when he raised his hand to do I think *Suite Provençale*, one of his pieces, it was like everybody was plugged into that socket that you plugged in. I remember that. It was just so electrifying. That's another conductor that really took to my heart and soul.

CLINE: And of course, he is a great composer as well.

MILLS: Yeah, we were doing his composition. And then to see a man with such physical handicaps walking, just struggling to get on the stage with-- Like Perlman does, you know. But he had--I don't know if it's elephantitis-- some disease, and he was very heavy. He could hardly walk, but when he was on the podium--seated, he had to be seated to conduct--and he raised those hands, it was amazing. It was so electric, pure electric.

Those are the things I remember, Monteux and Milhaud,

and others too. But these are the things that are inspiring, when I need an inspiration now for conducting or even composing, to show me the great soul and the continuity of music and energy. Music is energy, and it's spiritual, and it's something that-- It affects everybody.

There are different kinds of music for everything. The other day we were watching a program of the Amazons and their singing and dancing. All over the world there's singing and dancing. As long as that heart beats [taps his chest], that's your beat. That's your pulse. So that's what it's all about.

CLINE: Would you say, looking back on it now, that there was something that made you extraordinarily sensitive to music as a youngster?

MILLS: I would think so, yes. I would think that music, it's always-- Shall we say, it rings a bell, I mean, putting it in those terms. It's always touched me very deeply. I guess I'm an emotional person, and music is an emotional-- It can be used for emotion, or they can turn it off, as some people do it now in music. They don't want to show emotions I've heard on different interviews. I can't see how music can't touch the soul, even to a so-called cold person, but I suppose it can. Everything, I think, is behavior, and how we've been trained is how we react. But as far as I'm concerned--

I had one letter [from someone] that saw what I wanted

to do in many years. It came from Josef Marais--I don't know if you've heard that name--his wife [Miranda Marais], actually. And she said, "What you did--" She wrote and could feel that I was going that extra mile in emotion or spiritual projection, whatever you want to call it.

But the music, when I'm up there, it's very meaningful. I feel, of course, I have the duty to the composer. I have responsibility for the musicians on the stage and the audience. So it's all together. And we have people coming there at age ten to ninety-five. I mean, music brings us all together, and that's the thing that's wonderful as far as I'm concerned, too.

CLINE: Now, you said your parents were supportive, and of course, at the point where you started to show an interest in conducting your father was no longer with you at that point.

MILLS: That's right.

CLINE: What did your mother do, if anything, to help you continue this interest? What happened next? You said it was like a seed being planted. How did you go about watering that seed at this point, now that you'd gotten your letter from Monteux and you'd had this profound experience? What was next?

MILLS: Well, I believe he had mentioned in the letter to continue being in an orchestra, watching conductors, and

learning that way, which I did. Then as I projected and progressed, I got into the Peter Meremblum Orchestra. Peter Meremblum was a great conductor from the Russian school of violin. He had studied, I believe, under Leopold Auer, the same teacher as [Jascha] Heifetz and those artists. So he was a great inspiration. Eventually I studied with him. And being in his orchestra--

He did movies. I guess I was maybe in one of them. And he worked with Heifetz. Heifetz would come there as his friend and play with the students, and it was a very good orchestra. They did the picture called *They Shall Have Music* with Deanna Durbin way back-- *They Shall Have Music*, I guess, with Heifetz and so forth. And Meremblum was another inspiration as a teacher, as a colleague. Later he conducted the Santa Monica Symphony and I had the Brentwood symphony, so we were talking then later as fellow conductors. I wasn't his student then. He would confide in me certain things, and I would learn.

I think I've met some wonderful people in my life that have been like mentors. Eugene Zador was one. He got me in ASCAP [American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers]. Getting into an orchestra, playing there.

And then in high school they had a contest, and they wanted a conductor. It was interesting. I studied the second movement of the Sixth Symphony [No. 6, *Pathétique*] of

Tchaikovsky, the five-four movement [sings part of melody]. I studied it and studied it and had a little score. At the end they canceled the contest. [laughs] There was no contest for some reason.

But, you see, disappointments, if you consider them as opportunities to go farther, if one door is closed, then you take another door. That's really what life is. One chapter's over, go to the next chapter. Pick yourself up off the ground and go. You see, the philosophy I have now is bless and forgive, it's good for your heart, bless and forgive, it's a good way to start. There are so many things that are irritating, frustrating, and not very pleasant in the world today and the world in the past, but we can choose to live peacefully and be more efficient. And the bottom line, if we want to be healthy, if we want to be healthy we have to bless and forgive, because people have hurt us.

People have taken away things from me. Somebody tried to take my job away years ago. Somebody tried to take my wife and did, a former wife. Somebody tried to take my orchestra away and didn't. My perseverance with that difficult experience has made me stronger and better. And I feel my music keener and deeper now that I did before. I do bless those people and I do forgive them. I feel that people that are mean, whatever way, they have that to live with. That's

their punishment. I don't have to do it. Revenge is for the Lord. So that's how I'm learning.

CLINE: So you were then progressing in your musical experience. You were playing violin. You were playing in an orchestra. You mentioned this contest in high school. Where did you go to high school?

MILLS: I went to Belmont High School. It was interesting. I lived at Third and Catalina. If you lived on the east side of the street you went to Belmont, and if you lived on the west side you'd go to Hollywood High [School]. You know, life is a division sometimes, but I'm glad I went to Belmont. There was wonderful music. There was a Chester Perry, who was a conductor of the orchestra. He had been playing flute in [John Philip] Sousa's band, so he had a lot of experience, and a very nice gentleman. And Belmont High had a famous clarinetist and musician, Mitchell Lurie.

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

MILLS: You've heard of Mitchell?

CLINE: Oh, sure.

MILLS: Oh, yeah. Well, he was in my class, and I'm still very close to him. The last contest I had in Brentwood, Mitchell was one of the judges. He's a very dear friend. In talking about Pierre Monteux--he knew I studied with Monteux--he found a book that Mrs. Doris Monteux wrote about the last part of

Pierre Monteux's life, and he gave it to me to have now. So I'm very close to Mitchell. And people like that have been very helpful. Anshel Brusilow, who was Eugene Ormandy's concertmaster for about ten years in Philadelphia, he was in the same class with me with Monteux, Monteux's class in Hancock, Maine. So all these people, when I think of them, they're very inspiring, all of them now. They help me, keep me up.

CLINE: Right. So when you were in high school did they have any band or orchestra?

MILLS: A wonderful orchestra. I went in there, and there was a young lady by the name of Helen Brown, who was the concertmaster--at that time they called them concertmistress--and I sat right next to her. I was a tenth-grader, I guess--yeah, ten, eleven, and twelve--and she was eleventh, I think, and I sat next to her. My love for music was full-blown by then, practically, and they had in their repertoire the Beethoven First Symphony [in C, op. 21]. They always asked, "What would you like to play?" I was always raising my hand, "Beethoven First," and they said, "Well, that's enough already"--you know, the other members.

But Mitchell Lurie was in the class and other ones, very good players. In fact, Mitchell-- It's interesting. Recently I talked with him. He never graduated from the school, because

he got a fellowship to go to Curtis [Institute of Music], so he graduated back there. And I didn't realize that he was lonely for our graduation, which was in 1940 in the wintertime. There was a time you could graduate in the half sessions.

So Belmont High School put on *The Mikado*, wonderful productions, and kept my music growing all the time. Also, I went to San Francisco in '39. There was a world exposition [Golden Gate International Exposition], you know, and the band went, the orchestra went, and I went as a soloist. I got a high rating, I guess, "superior." And I played in the band, too. I played, I think, triangle or something because I wanted to be in the band. But then I played violin in the orchestra. By then I was concertmaster.

CLINE: So then were you exposing yourself to or listening to other types of music besides the classical repertoire? Or was that pretty much your focus?

MILLS: It was pretty much my focus. I guess I was narrow-minded in that scope. But I mean, I was listening to the so-called modern music, too, but I was in the classical vein. I guess I-- Well, I liked some popular music, which shows later on, when I had what we called Concerts on the Green that I put on, pops concerts. I enjoy that.

CLINE: Well, you said you were singing originally.

MILLS: That's right.

CLINE: You liked Bing Crosby and Al Jolson.

MILLS: Al Jolson, right. And those songs were popular.

CLINE: And that still held a little bit of interest for you?

MILLS: Yes, it did. Yes, it did, right.

CLINE: So what happened when you graduated high school?

MILLS: I did very good in my scholastics. I was the third highest in my class. And I got a full scholarship--no, I guess it was called a music scholarship--to USC [University of Southern California], and I was there a year. Then, of course, the [Second World] War came; and that changed different things. But being in music there, I also-- It was a partial scholarship, and I had to work in the office. Then I worked in a laboratory, putting on gloves--I was worried about my hands--cleaning flasks and things, but I did it. I'm glad I did all those things, because the experience was very good. But I was there until the war, and then I thought I would get in their naval program, but like Frank Sinatra I was 4F. I have a punctured eardrum.

CLINE: Oh, really?

MILLS: When I was three years old I had an operation that took care of that ear. Nowadays they give you penicillin. And it's just like with my dad. Everything is sort of magic now. Anyhow, I wasn't in the war, so I did some, I guess, defense work. Then I got in the Kansas City Philharmonic

at the end of the war. That was in 1944. So that's how the love of music, conducting, being in a high school orchestra, being at UCLA-- Well, no, UCLA came after that. I went to Kansas City first, because I let my college lapse a bit then.

CLINE: So how did that happen then? Can you explain how you wound up in the Kansas City symphony?

MILLS: Yes. As I say, there's always been sort of a mentor. Alex Murray. Alexander Murray was concertmaster in many orchestras, and he was a concertmaster there. He was auditioning on the West Coast for violins for a section. So I went to his home. It was interesting. The first time I met him he was in a tree cutting part of the tree down, and I said, "Is this the Murray residence?" He said, "Yes. Wait a second. I'll come down." So he was a very wonderful person. In fact, one of his daughters is married to Russ Tamblin, and Russ Tamblin has done several narrations with us. This is Bonnie Murray Tamblin. So we keep in touch. Very wonderful young lady. She does remarkable things with graphics and so forth. So what was I saying? About Alex? I auditioned for him and got in Kansas City. This was I think '44. And this was a great year. I think I was twenty-two, and I was with people like Heifetz, [Gregor] Piatigorsky, Jan Peerce, Lotte Lehmann; all these great artists would come through. And also Alex Murray.

We lived in a mansion. It was interesting. The Scarrits--I believe that was their name--they were going out of town, and he, being the concertmaster, he rented their big, palatial mansion, and he wanted some help. There was an oboe player from New York that came, Joseph Rizzo, who is here. Rizzo and I were invited to live with them. Oh, it had about seven or eight bedrooms and bathrooms. And so he said, "Would you like this? You could have this suite, and Joe can be there, and we wouldn't even need the maid's room." And you'd drive in the car-- You know, it's cold in Kansas City in the winter. You'd drive your car in, and you'd be right below, and you'd come right up into the house. So we had a grand and glorious year there. Imagine going to the orchestra rehearsal every day with the concertmaster and the first oboist. So it was a dream.

Then people like Louis Kaufman--a fine violinist and concert violinist--came through. And Efrem Kurtz at the time was our conductor, and he would come by. So we would have wonderful parties there, and I'd meet everyone.

And playing violin-- I was first violinist, but it was-- Oh, and one of the thrills of that--I think I mentioned before--we were playing in rehearsal with Nathan Milstein. And Milstein I think was playing the [Karl] Goldmark [violin] concerto. His rehearsal was first, let's say, from nine to ten, whatever.

And after intermission we're playing the *Surprise Symphony* of Haydn, and we're in one of the movements. All of a sudden I hear this gorgeous playing coming from behind me. Milstein had pulled up a chair and was sitting like third person on the stand, and he's playing along with us. Well, an experience for a twenty-two-year-old to have Milstein sitting next to him and playing the same symphony, you know, I mean-- And he was so gracious. He would play all the time. He could play almost twenty-four hours a day. He loved the violin. He was a wonderful person. He was a person you could touch.

Same thing with Pierre Monteux; you could touch him. I remember in Hancock, Maine, we had a masquerade party. He dressed up as Charlie Chaplin with the cane and the straw hat, and he had a white moustache, and he painted it black to be like Charlie Chaplin. Now, he was such an inspiration, even today yet. The picture's over there.

CLINE: So how long did this experience in Kansas City last, then?

MILLS: I was there a year. A year, I think it was-- At that time I think a season was from October until May, I guess, March or May, about six months. And then Alex says, "Well, we'll drive back--" He'd bought a car there. "We'll drive back to California." He said, "But first, I have to go to Florida to visit my--" His wife's relatives. He said, "I'll

drop you in New Orleans. You'll have a week there and just enjoy it," which I did, and he went to Florida and then came back. And this was something in-- I guess back then it was '45. The war wasn't over yet, because then I came back and played in the Hollywood Bowl Symphony [Orchestra].

But music has been wonderful. Exciting. It took me to Spain, Kansas City. I've been all around the country, and it's wonderful. And this is only the beginning, because I think I told you about the CD project I wish to do. It started in 1992, which is-- It's ongoing, but I still want to record it. I'm trying to say it now so I will do it, put it in my subconscious. Well, I've gone to it, and now that I've moved and I have a nice place to work I'm going to feel more comfortable. I think this will be my contribution. *[Briefly, I start with the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which I call "For Peace of Mind," and use the music of Dvo_ák, Tchaikovsky, and others. There will be seven separate songs based on my philosophy. I will call this compositions *Here's to Your Health*.]

There are many fine conductors. I don't take anything away from any of them. I know that sometimes people say, "Well, he doesn't do that right." Well, who does everything

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* Mills added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

a hundred percent when it comes to critics? Monteux used to go every summer to Chicago to Ravinia, you know, the concerts there. He would come back chagrined. He would come back humbled. He'd come back sad. Why? Because there was a certain critic in Chicago that didn't like him and made him look like he was a beginning conductor. And I remember several other of my colleagues, Henri Temianka, complaining about critics, and

Carmen Dragon--I was a friend of Carmen--same thing. So I feel that--

Can I tell you one story about Monteux?

CLINE: Yeah, okay.

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MILLS: Well, I'm talking about critics, which-- They're around, and they're good. They have their job. But Monteux, his famous thing after that-- You know, everybody would see he wasn't so happy and would cheer him up, whatever. One of his remarks--and I'm sure he said it several times--was something like-- He said, "You know, I started as a violist," in his teens. He said, "I loved playing for Folies Bergères." He said that was a nice show to watch. He said, "I'd memorize everything so I could look at the pretty girls." And he said, "Afterwards I became a conductor, and people knew I could accompany very well," so they would hire him when they made recitals or whatever. And he said, "Now I'm a conductor," and he said, "When I'm too old to be a conductor, I'm going to be a critic." And that was his way of sort of putting them down.

Critics, most of the time they are frustrated musicians. They wanted to be a conductor or a singer or something, most cases it comes to my attention, and that's-- They have to criticize, but I think the point where they criticize that it sort of destroys a talent, I think that's too far. I mean, you say what happened, but sometimes it gets to be personal. That's the wonderful thing about the great people I've known;

they haven't been personal. They've been giving and knowing that there is no perfection on this earth. I think it was even-- George Bernard Shaw told Heifetz, he said, "Play a few wrong notes so the gods don't get jealous because you're too perfect." But what is perfect?

CLINE: Yeah, right.

MILLS: And fear, worry, and doubt are the results of being perfect and so forth. We want to do great things, of course, but that's why I like a live performance. If there's a little blemish on it, that's real life. If you go in a recording studio and you record fifty times to get it perfect, that isn't a true life. You know what I mean? CLINE: Yeah, sure.

MILLS: It's perfect, but sometimes perfection can be sterile, and it's not lifelike, and it doesn't have love in it. They say if a child doesn't have love he will die or she will die, you know, a little infant, and that's true. And the music has to have love. You have to love the music and let that love come back. It sort of radiates and goes around. That's why I say each note is like a cell, and it has to be perpetuated. You have to give it love and attention, nurturing, and you have to give it nourishment. And that's what live performances are.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And then you can sort of touch the audience.

CLINE: So you came back to California with Alex Murray.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: And I take it you stayed here at that point.

MILLS: Yes, pretty much.

CLINE: Explain the steps as they evolved from this point on, because this led to you playing in the Hollywood Bowl orchestra, right?

MILLS: Yes, yes, that was about the same time. Well, I auditioned for Leopold Stokowski at his home, and I became a violinist in what was called the Hollywood Bowl Symphony for two years under his direction. And it was interesting, going back one step farther, you say how did I perpetuate the music or keep it? I used to be an usher at the Philharmonic, and I would go to all the concerts before I was involved. And I would see Heifetz's recital. I would see Fritz Kreisler, the great Kreisler playing. All of these people were so great. Lawrence Tibbett and all of them. Jan Peerce. And of course, then, reading books.

There's a book by, I believe it's Frederick Martins, that talks about violin mastery, and he interviews the various ones, and some of them said, "I learned the greatest thing about violin by going to a singing concert," like I mentioned Piatigorsky said, "Well, let's sing it and get the phrase," and solfeggio comes from Iturbi. I think all of that's important.

The singing, that's our first instrument, the first instrument that was ever here, right here in the throat, that voice. So you hear people singing in the shower and singing in the rain. Singing is a great part of the world.

CLINE: So you were an usher. Was this at the Philharmonic Hall?

MILLS: Before the Music Center [of Los Angeles County]. This was right across from the Pershing Square, the Philharmonic. And then I enjoyed plays, so I was at the Biltmore Theatre, and then at the Hollywood Bowl. That's what I wanted to bring in. At the Hollywood Bowl I was an usher for several years. There you have a great variety, from very serious music to pops and opera they put on. And I ushered Leopold Stokowski to his seat one night, to a box, a few years back, then later I was in the Bowl under his direction. So I thought that was interesting, how things have woven. I saw Monteux as a conductor, then I studied with him. I met Leopold Stokowski as an usher and took him to his seat with his family or whatever, and then later I played under his direction at the Bowl. So those were inspirational things that showed me that I was evolving to a higher point, and that helps your self-esteem, and it helps you know that you're really doing the right thing. You're on the right trail, so to speak.

CLINE: Yeah. So what about this audition, then? How was

that?

MILLS: Well, I was told that you would do for him-- He had a big book, like a Bible, and he took excerpts from different symphonies and overtures and whatever, and you played it for him. And that's how-- That was his audition. He asked you some questions and so forth. He had a beautiful home. This was before he was married. Was he married to her [Gloria Vanderbilt] then? Well, he was married soon after to her. But it was a beautiful home in Beverly Hills way up on a hill. I remember traveling up a circling road up there. He was very inspiring. And he was commanding; there was fear in the orchestra when he directed.

I remember one incident of a man-- And he used to conduct, of course, without a baton; everything was the hands. Tremendous, the beauty of the hands and how he flowed. It was wonderful. So we were rehearsing at the Bowl, and he looked at somebody, and he said, "What's your name?" And the man was frightened, you know, and he said something. "Oh, Mr. Wilson, you're doing so well." Here he got a compliment, and he thought he was going to be, you know-- It turned out Mr. Wilson, his real name was [Henry] Camusi, and he was so flabbergasted it came out like Wilson. So all year long we called him Mr. Wilson. [laughter] It was cute. But the character of the different conductors, you know, what they

insisted on, their severity or their lovingness or whatever--

I played under another great one, Bruno Walter, in Kansas City. He was coming out of retirement. He was a friend of Efrem Kurtz. The lesson I learned from Bruno Walter wasn't a formal lesson. He's conducting the Kansas City Philharmonic, and he's doing the Brahms First Symphony [in C Minor, op. 68], which is a well-known work. [tape recorder off]

CLINE: All right, you were talking about a lesson you learned from Bruno Walter in Kansas City when you were there.

MILLS: Yes, Alex. This was a lesson that just happened by experience; it wasn't a lesson per se. The Kansas City orchestra is a very good orchestra, and they had hired people from the West Coast and the East Coast because they didn't have enough musicians right in Kansas City. So we're playing at a concert the Brahms First Symphony, which is well-known, it's nothing new. It's not like we're premiering a new work. And something happened where the orchestra was not together. To this day I don't know what it was or how it happened, but I know it happened, and I know I was there experiencing sort of a moment of hesitation or whatever. And I watched very carefully, wanting all my conductor experience, what would this great conductor do in that difficult situation? Now, that's a difficult situation where the orchestra's apart, I mean noticeably.

The lesson I learned by watching is that he did nothing. He minimized his motions, I guess to not confuse. I like to consider this or make a comparison that a person is riding a horse--the horse being like the orchestra and the conductor the rider--and something happens, the horse starts to stumble. The orchestra was stumbling. Instead of getting panicky and perhaps pulling the reins as a beginning rider would do, as a beginning conductor would do, and making it worse, he relaxed the reins of the horse, the conducting reins, and he became very calm, and he let the orchestra right itself, like the horse got on its feet again and started doing the right thing, you know, galloping along. The orchestra did it. Then when the orchestra was on its feet, he didn't frighten it more or confuse it more. Whatever happened, I don't know.

I learned that lesson, and I put it into effect too sometimes when I conduct for young artists and they get confused. Instead of me getting more excited, I sort of do a minimum of motion. The less motion, then there's less commotion, and then it rights itself. You know, the body heals itself. The orchestra heals itself. And I found that that was the lesson I learned from him, not by him telling me but by experience.

Experience is a very good teacher. If you really want to be taught, get out in the field and work it. You can read about how to plant things in the laboratory, but if you get

in the field and you have the actual soil and you see what happens, practical experience is really important, and that's what I learned from that.

CLINE: You had this great opportunity to experience all these top-flight soloists, and not only in Kansas City but in the Hollywood Bowl orchestra--

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: --and yet it sounds like your experience under Stokowski was somewhat different. As I recall, he was known much more as sort of the taskmaster and the intimidating presence as opposed to the Monteux gracious, minimal movement, all this, this very different philosophy in conducting. How did this affect you? What was that experience like for you?

MILLS: Well, I don't like to compare people. I mean, but we always do. In other words, we're all individuals. And Stokowski did some wonderful things. Maybe you disagree. I was always interested when I played his music-- He did a lot of changing, like I mentioned before. Monteux wouldn't change a note, and Stokowski-- Like the *Romeo and Juliet* overture by Tchaikovsky, which I think is all right, he changed certain things. But I think I found out later he was in ASCAP, and I think by changing it he gets credit. Even now some of his arrangements-- You know, his estate will see these moneys and so forth. So I think part of it was that. And of course,

he was an innovator. He would sometimes put the woodwinds in front for a sound thing, and he was running up and down the aisles of the Hollywood Bowl to check sound himself. They're entirely different people, so they really shouldn't be compared.

CLINE: Well, I'm not asking you to compare them so much.

MILLS: No.

CLINE: I just wanted to know what the experience was like for you playing under Stokowski.

MILLS: Oh, fabulous, yeah. I saw all of the things he had done in Philadelphia. He had the great reputation for building the [Philadelphia] Orchestra, and that was one of the great orchestras. The way he built the cello section and basses, I mean, no orchestra had sounded like that. No, no. I respected him and was thrilled. He was able to inspire his audience and orchestra without a doubt.

CLINE: And this was another experience where you had some really famous soloists coming in to play as well.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: And I believe you did some recordings with this orchestra. Is that true?

MILLS: Yeah. That's an interesting experience. Yes, I did some recordings, and we went to the-- At that time the Republic Studios was a very good studio. Yes, we did a concert with

Artur Rubinstein, also a very great pianist, obviously. We played at the Bowl. I believe it was Chopin [Piano Concerto] No. 1 [in E Minor, op. 11]. It was a fine concert.

Then we were scheduled, I guess the next week when we had a day off or a night off, to record it. So we went to Republic Studios, and we're recording it, and everything's going fine. And I forget what movement it was, but it's also-- This is authenticated in one of his histories by [Abram] Chasins [*Leopold Stokowski*], this incident. He said, "Stokowski stops, and when he stops you don't breathe." It was quiet. And he looked at Rubinstein, and he said, "Mr. Rubinstein, you take care of your piano and I'll take care of my orchestra." Well, everybody was petrified. I mean, we didn't move. We didn't breathe. Well, he started again, and they continued, but the recording never came out. It seemed like there was some kind of animosity between them, and for some reason it boiled over at that point, because when you're recording there are tensions.

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

MILLS: And it seemed to have been-- It's in the Abram Chasin book, I believe. His book mentions that particular item. And it's true, because I was there. It wasn't exaggerated one bit. Those are the kind of times when you're playing and-- You do the best you can at recording as well anyplace,

of course. But to have that happen when you're so keyed up to play and make this-- A recording is forever, so to speak, and then-- So this was another experience with some of the giants that don't agree.

CLINE: And there's been, of course, all kinds of flap over the years about the acoustics in the Hollywood Bowl.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: How challenging was that as an experience, playing in the orchestra there? Was this a constant battle?

MILLS: It was difficult to hear, yeah. It made it difficult. Then, of course, the morning rehearsals were usually difficult, because the wind would play havoc going through. And of course, you have to have the clothespins on the stands and-- Playing outdoors is-- I guess there's more wind in the morning. For some reason the evenings, maybe less.

But I remember playing in the pit. We put on an opera, and I remember the harpist had an electric heater there, and her strings were popping like popcorn even so, you know, because of the dampness. And I remember there was a piano out, and I put my hand on it, and it was just wet. So the outdoors is very difficult for acoustics. When I did some Concerts on the Green, and we did-- As a matter of fact, we did *Rhapsody in Blue* [by Gershwin] with Michael Bays, who is a very fine student of Bruce Sutherland. We did, as I say, *Rhapsody in*

Blue, and we didn't have a very good sound system, so-- It's very challenging, and it's a little frustrating, of course, but I love doing the outdoor programs, because more children can come. They would sit in the audience and sit on the lawn right before me, and little six- and seven-year-olds would conduct even as I was doing it. And of course, it doesn't bother you. And they would bring their lunch on the lawn and enjoy it. We had that for two years, and then of course it was a matter of budgeting.

CLINE: Yeah, right, as always. So this was about 1945 when the--

MILLS: The Bowl.

CLINE: --Bowl orchestra was happening?

MILLS: Yes, yes.

CLINE: And then what happened after this experience? You moved on. Your education certainly continued.

MILLS: Yeah. Well, I was in the orchestra, and I met a wonderful gentleman by the name of Purcell Mayer who was in the Philharmonic, and we got to know each other as a musician and then as a friend. He played the Bowl, too. He said, "You know, during the regular year I'm a teacher in Glendale." And he said, "I've observed you, and with the politics of music and all of the things that go with it--" I don't have to enlarge that idea. He said, "Your personality and your character isn't

for that," he said, "whatever that involves, because politics aren't always so nice." And he said, "You know, you're always interested in teaching."

As a matter of fact, I didn't mention my teaching started when I was about thirteen, also. I was in Virgil Junior High School--this is a very important item--and I played. I was studying, playing pretty good, and there were three of us in the front that were quite good. We studied with nice, very good teachers. Well, I was with Oskar Seiling, that teacher I was with. And Donald Bennett said, "The three of you are so good. Why don't you help some of the children in the back." We had a very big orchestra. "See some of the children in the back. They can't afford your teachers." I don't know what I was paying at that time, maybe five dollars an hour, which was a lot. He said, "Why don't the three of you--" It was Bob Anderson, Gene Paul Stanley, and myself. "The three of you study with good teachers; why don't you help them?" So I said, "Okay." I had been selling newspapers, you know, to make a few pennies, because my mother was a widow all those years working hard in the May Company [department store] to support me. I sold magazines, I sold newspapers. And when you sell a magazine or a newspaper you'd make--what?--two cents? You've got to sell a bunch of them to make money.

So when I had a chance to become a teacher, that rang a bell. There was another mentor, a mentor that helped me and said, "Teach." So I started at fifty cents a lesson on Saturdays. I had a bicycle, and I tied the violin on the back of the bicycle so it wouldn't fall off. I actually tied it on and I went to the houses. I started at fifty cents, and then I had a dollar, and then I had three dollars. When I got up to two dollars and fifty cents, five lessons, I was wealthy. I was enjoying it, because I loved music and I was helping people. And that's how I started teaching. When I went to Spain years later they found out that I was a violin teacher, and I had a pupil or two there.

I've always loved to teach. And Monteux's admonition: the conductor has to teach his orchestra. And he does. You teach them what the composer wanted. You teach them the history and the style of the music. I mean, when it's Mozart, it's Mozart. It isn't Brahms. I mean, you have to know that yourself. A good conductor has to learn all the time, because there's new music being written all the time. Like the late Henri Temianka said, "How could I learn about all these Bach cantatas?" I mean, it's overwhelming. It's true. I mean, you're always in the process of learning. That's the good part of it. That's why the conductors live a long time, besides the physical, but I mean the idea that we have to learn.

The great thing we all respected about Monteux was his memory. He had all the things memorized. But he was wonderful, and he said, "If you can't memorize, you don't have time, then you use the music." But his memory was faultless, superb.

CLINE: So you continued teaching private violin all the way through this?

MILLS: Yes, I did all the way through. The price went up from fifty cents. [laughs] I enjoy teaching. As I say even in Spain, when I went there in '69 on a [Del Amo] Fellowship, I was teaching. You know, a little extra.

CLINE: And then it was suggested that you--

MILLS: Go to UCLA and get a teaching credential. And I took Purcell Mayer's advice, knowing the politics of music, and sometimes it didn't work out if you did-- If you weren't very strong-skinned-- A sensitive person could be hit pretty hard sometimes, as you know. So it was good advice. Then, by getting a credential--I went to UCLA--I was able to take care of my family in the meantime. I got married in '57, and then children started appearing, and I had a responsibility not only to myself but to my wife and my children.

CLINE: And did your mother remarry?

MILLS: Yes, she did. She was a widow I guess about seven years the first time, and she married a very wonderful gentleman by the name of Roscoe Evans. He was in the postal service,

and he was a great stepfather, and he put me through UCLA. I mean, it cost money then, not like now, but he was very supportive. And of course, he was proud. By then-- Well, let's see. No, from '45 to '48 I wasn't-- I was doing studio work then. I was doing freelance and teaching privately but then working on my degree, which-- I guess it was '49 I got it from UCLA. Then I started teaching in Lompoc, California, and then Glendale.

CLINE: There were some musical figures at UCLA as well at that time. When did you encounter them? Since you were there for your teaching credential, I presume that this was a separate sort of situation where, for example, Vincent and these people--

MILLS: Well, John [N.] Vincent [Jr.] was the head of the [music] department, and when he came there he was reorganizing it. He was a wonderful conductor and composer. In fact, I did his compositions later, when I was in ASCAP. I became his colleague after [being] his student. Vincent was there. Then Boris [A.] Kremenliev was there. And then, of course, we brought in, like I say, Darius Milhaud.

And Aaron Copland came in as a guest and had a workshop. He was a very interesting man, and interesting when I was a student there. I played under him. I guess he had a composition workshop, and I had a composition I played for him, whatever. But then later, when I was working in the

movies, I did the *Red Pony* suite with him, and he conducted. That was a very wonderful honor. He was a very wonderful composer, as far as I'm concerned, and conducted very well, made it clear. That was a wonderful experience doing that. I think we did it at the Republic Studios. So I did meet these people there.

CLINE: So you've got the violin part of your life going full blast. You've got your interest in conducting evolving. You were working with these people. And yet you also have an interest in composing. When did you start composing?

MILLS: I might have been about sixteen, I think. I think there was a contest or something, always-- You know, if you have a contest or some kind of a workshop there is an incentive. We need incentives, you know. Put up a sign and say, "Contest. Young composers, sixteen to thirty" or whatever. It was a contest, I believe. So as a matter of fact, I worked very hard, and I know at that time-- It was a very poor composition. But anyhow, it was doing it and doing it, and it prepared me. I think I was about sixteen. Then, of course, always being interested in music and the composer and so forth and meeting later on Copland and Milhaud and all those people--

Then I met Roy Harris, too. He was at UCLA. He was a friend of Vincent, so he'd conduct the orchestra there. Roy Harris was very inspiring. I worked under him I guess at

UCLA as a student. Then later I invited him to conduct the Brentwood-Westwood orchestra, and he did several of his compositions. We rented them, and he did them. So I came in contact with him, too.

CLINE: Did you study composition formally with Vincent?

MILLS: With Vincent I did, yes. And I guess I did some with Kremenliev and later with Zador, some, yes. But I've always been interested in composition and arranging and so forth.

CLINE: And Vincent was very involved in the study of modes. This is one of his big things.

MILLS: Yes, he was.

CLINE: Did that have any influence on you at all, his particular approach? Or was this something he kept out of the classroom, so to speak?

MILLS: He more or less kept it out of the classroom. He did that with-- Interestingly enough, the Mills Music Publishing--you know, the one in New York--they always ask me am I part of Mills. I said, "Well, if I was I'd be out on my yacht now." [laughter]

No, composition has always been very close to me, and then, of course, studying the composers. And even now in studying Dvo_ák-- He wasn't a rich person, and he had to make his money as a teacher, also. It's very interesting, I mean, just learning, just getting that part of his life, because

we're doing Dvo_ák and I want to feel closer to Dvo_ák by studying him. That's another way you get a little closer to the composer.

CLINE: So at the point that you graduated from UCLA, you're moving full on into teaching, and you wind up in Lompoc, which I know leads to another orchestra experience.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: But I wanted to sort of stop that there and go back and ask you about the experience of studying with Monteux in Hancock, Maine. When exactly did this happen in your life?

MILLS: I think it was '46 and '47, right in there. I think it was. Although I saw a paper, I guess it was '51, so maybe it was then. Maybe it was then. I have to look that up a little bit. They had a paper from Hancock, Maine, and I think it was '51. I just ran across it. It's interesting; when you move, you run across things. And it mentioned different conductors coming to Maine from all over. There were some from Canada. "Alvin Mills comes from Southern California"--you know, that was important. Studying with him: unbelievable.

CLINE: Where were you at the time that you went to Hancock, Maine to study in this program?

MILLS: I guess I was living at home in Los Angeles.

CLINE: Oh, you were in L.A. then?

MILLS: Oh, yeah, I was. Oh, yes, L.A. How it happened is I always-- At one time there was the Standard broadcast. There was no television, and radio was-- Every Thursday the Standard Oil Company of California, I guess it was, sponsored--I guess it was an hour or two, whatever--a program of classical music. And they would have the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco [Symphony Orchestra], I guess was it Seattle [Symphony Orchestra] or Portland [Symphony Orchestra], one other, but mainly these two. And they'd be on every Thursday, and you'd listen. I mean, it was mandatory for me-- And hearing Monteux--

Then they mentioned that the San Francisco Symphony was going on tour. Wonderful. And they'll be in Los Angeles. It's a big city. Sure enough, I went backstage and reminded him that I sent the letter. And then Mrs. Monteux, of course, she was the power behind the whole throne, you know, and I talked with her. She said--I guess I actually talked with her--she said, "Well, Mr. Mills--" I said, "I hear he teaches." And I thought, "Well, I'll go up to San Francisco four hundred miles away." You know, "I'll go up there some way or another, by train or whatever." She said, "Well, he doesn't teach there in the summer. He teaches in Hancock, Maine," which is like thirty-five hundred miles away. I said, "Well, I'll go if I have to walk." So she said, "Write to Dr. Joseph

Barone in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Give him your background." I'd been in the Hollywood Bowl, you know, all the things. And, "You should do it."

So I wrote to him, and sure enough I was accepted. I think there was about twenty. The first year they had only taken like ten or fifteen, but that year I went there. And we did all the Brahms symphonies, all the Beethoven. I still have his notes, which I use as if he told it to me yesterday. Just being in a class with all these students from all over. Anshel Brusilow was a student about eighteen [years old] then, and later he became concertmaster of Ormandy's orchestra in Philadelphia. We were very dear friends. I still call him in Dallas, Texas, [where] he lives now.

So every lesson we would meet in the morning, the twenty of us, and there would be two pianists playing, let's say, Beethoven First Symphony, four hands. And you'd stand up and conduct as if you were conducting the orchestra: cueing the violins, the oboe, give dynamics, and whatever. And Monteux would be sitting there writing. Barone, his assistant, writing. And they'd tell you what you did and what you should do and what you shouldn't do. That's important to know. And you'd learn from every other one, too, whether you were conducting or not. That was the morning, let's say from about ten o'clock to twelve thirty.

Then we'd have lunch. All the students eat together. You had room and board with the townspeople, which was wonderful. You're talking and living and enjoying scores twenty-four hours a day. And then we'd have our wonderful lunch outdoors, the summer, in Frenchman's Bay in Maine. That's a vacationland anyhow.

Then in the afternoon, I don't know, maybe two o'clock to four thirty, we'd take our instruments--most of us played--and the pianists would still play the piano, I played violin, and we'd be the orchestra, to do in the afternoon what he told in the morning. And it was practical. I mean, there it was.

He'd tell you this-- "Be sure at this point, don't look at the oboe player." He said, "Don't bother one--" At that time it was mainly men in the orchestra. He said, "Don't bother one man." He says--you know, he's playing a solo--"Look at the cellos and don't bother him, don't intimidate him. Psychologically he'll take care-- If he's there, he must be good. You work with the pizzicato. You do the accompaniment so you don't bother him." And lots of times he said, "When one person's playing, you hardly conduct; you just let them do it." And that was his idea. I mean, if they're good enough to be hired, they can play it.

So you learn not to bother and to respect the orchestral

player, not to treat them like they're a worker and they're a lowly person and you're God, you're the conductor. Never that. Also he said, "When you stop an orchestra, you tell them why you stopped." If it's for your sake, then you say, "It's for my sake." Don't cover up, in other words. Honesty was his whole thing. Like I say, you respect every note of the composer, and you respected the feelings of the players.

In the Beethoven Ninth, [which] we studied, he said--This is one example I always remember. I guess it's the last movement, the fourth horn plays a solo. He says, "Usually fourth horn doesn't play a solo." You know, it's the first horn. He said, "He'll always miss it the first time." He's telling us by his experience. He said, "Don't stop because of him." You go eight bars later or ten bars, and you say, "Why don't we fix the violin bowing." Now you're talking to a whole section of twelve, fourteen, sixteen players. "Let's change the bowing." Now you go back so the horn player has a second turn, but you don't say. So you go back to before that. He said the second time he'll get it. Now, you see how psychologically he's preparing an orchestra to play well, to be on his side? Not that he needed that. But he's feeling, because he played viola in an orchestra, and he didn't want to be treated badly like some conductors do. They're mean. Some are mean.

CLINE: Well, this is obviously radically different from the stereotype temperamental, sort of [Arturo] Toscanini type of conductor.

MILLS: Oh, yeah. Throw a baton. Throw a watch at them. But that's entirely different. But it's interesting. Toscanini--great conductor, there's no doubt--when he was not well invited Monteux to conduct his NBC Symphony [Orchestra]. So he had the greatest regard for Monteux. You know, I ask people, "Do you know Monteux?" "No." "Do you know Toscanini?" "Oh, yeah."

CLINE: Yeah, right.

MILLS: But I mentioned the story that Toscanini had him-- As a matter of fact, what I recall, I think Monteux was called in several times to resurrect that orchestra, the NBC. Somebody else had done it and wasn't doing a good job-- I mean preparing it originally for Toscanini. I guess that's the story I learned. Mitchell Lurie's book told me that. I mean the one about Monteux. That's where I got that, yes. That reemphasizes that story. So they had the greatest respect for Monteux.

Monteux would build an orchestra. I guess when he went to San Francisco he had to rebuild that orchestra, too. He was there I think seventeen years or whatever. But people speak of him with love, because he had respect for them, and they had respect for him. And he was a great musician, and

it wasn't just because he was nice. He was good.

CLINE: Right. How long was this summer?

MILLS: Well, the summer is about the month of July, I guess. Was it July? No, I guess it was August. He would go-- I guess in July he was in Ravinia and so forth. It was about four to five weeks, whatever August was. Yes, because we had to get back for school in September. But one hour with the man was an eternity and was a lesson that you don't forget, because he spoke the truth. It was like coming from the Bible, you know. I mean, the Lord has said, and what he said we all listened to very, very carefully, lovingly. And he had the experience. He wanted to help people. He didn't need the money. I think the course was a hundred dollars a month, which was like a pittance, and a hundred dollars for the room and board. You know, it wasn't much. But he really wanted to help people. Well, he taught André Previn. Neviner-- What's his name?

CLINE: Neville Marriner?

MILLS: Neville Marriner was one of his students. Yeah, these are the very important ones. Yeah, in fact, I think it is Previn-- What does Previn say in one of his books, how he studied with Monteux. In fact, when I went backstage I mentioned that I was there, too. You know they gave André Previn a lot of problems. They said that he was young and he was just

in Hollywood, and they put him down. I went backstage and said, "You're wonderful to do the popular things with Shelly Manne and jazz and Itzhak Perlman, and then you can do symphonies, and I think that's wonderful," you know. See, people like to put people down, and he's-- Even here I guess they put him down.

CLINE: There were some problems, yeah.

MILLS: Yeah, remember? And I think he's a very great conductor, and there's a lot. And to play the piano, Mozart, and then go to-- With Shelly Manne he played, you know.

CLINE: Right. Oh, yeah.

MILLS: And Shelly Manne was going to do a benefit for us. Did I tell you?

CLINE: Oh, really? He was one of my favorites.

MILLS: Wonderful man. I met him several times. He was one of the contributors to our orchestra, you know. He was one of the donors. We were all ready to do a program. A group of his did something with our-- Then they were going to do a benefit, and for some reason the tickets didn't sell. We had to cancel it. He died two weeks before that. It's interesting. But he was a wonderful person. Did you meet him?

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

MILLS: Wasn't he wonderful?

CLINE: Oh, absolutely.

MILLS: Well, are you a drummer?

CLINE: Yes.

MILLS: Oh, well, then, yeah, that's right. Wasn't he absolutely wonderful the way he played with his fingers.

CLINE: Oh, yeah, yeah. He was one of the greats of all time.

MILLS: One of the greatest, yes. Did you ever meet Louie Bellson?

CLINE: Yes. Yeah, he played with your orchestra.

MILLS: Yeah, I was going to mention that too later, yeah. Well, I love jazz. I respect it. I think they're tremendous. When we used the Louie Bellson Orchestra--most of them were from Doc Severinsen's [*Tonight Show*] band, you know--I had the greatest respect for them. They played very difficult music. We did his *Abijan Suite*, and we did his *Jazz Ballet* that was rewritten for symphony, too. I have the highest praise for them. I was going to try to get Louie back, but he's so busy now. He's still busy.

CLINE: He's still going, yeah.

MILLS: Isn't it wonderful?

CLINE: It's amazing.

So, you had the experience with Monteux, and then you came back to L.A. Is that what happened?

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: And what did you move right into at that point? What was the next--?

MILLS: That's around 1950. Then I guess I went to Lompoc. I was teaching there I guess two years, a year and whatever. And then I started the Lompoc Symphony [Orchestra], just a little group. I believe the cleaner played oboe, and this one did that. The lady--her husband worked for Johns Manville--she played violin. And then the students. We just started a little group. I always wanted to conduct, whatever it was. And you'd have a pianist come in and fill in the parts, you know.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: I think to be flexible is one way of living. Otherwise you exist or you become frustrated.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: Because you can't always have your own way. Well, we see it all the time how music has to be flexible. Well--what's his name?--Igor Stravinsky, the *History of a Soldier* [*L'histoire du soldat*] was written for a handful, because in the war he only had a handful. He didn't write [*The*] *Rite of Spring* [then]. [*Le*] *sacre du printemps* is what Monteux premiered.

CLINE: That's right. He was the premiere conductor, yeah.

MILLS: And he mentioned a little bit about that, yeah. He had to run out of the place.

CLINE: I was going to say, it must have been--

MILLS: That was some experience. And imagine being in his presence. And he also did *Daphnis and Chloë* [by Ravel], the premiere. I mean, being in his presence you just felt history. He knew Brahms as a young person. He played in a quartet, and he said-- He writes in that book, or Mrs. Monteux writes something about he didn't appreciate him. He was too young. He didn't realize the greatness. And it turns out that Brahms was one of Monteux's greatest composers, that he loved him more than just about anyone. So now when I do the Brahms *Tragic Overture* [*Tragische Ouvertüre*, op. 80] the next season I'll feel that.

CLINE: That's right. It comes right through.

MILLS: And I did that at my twenty-fifth anniversary with Louie Bellson at the Music Center [of Los Angeles County]. We did a program called "From Bach to Bellson." [laughs] There was a program using Stokowski's arrangement of the Little Fugue in G Minor and then going on to Bellson. So there's always been a tie-in with these people.

CLINE: So how long were you in Lompoc, then?

MILLS: I guess two years.

CLINE: Then you came back here?

MILLS: I came back to Glendale, an opening there. And as I say, I wanted a steady position because I was married.

Well, I wasn't married then. When I came in '50 I wasn't married. I got married in '57. But I knew that I wanted to get a paycheck that would come in, and then it works on a pension scheme, too. You know, you have to plan. Planning is a very important item.

CLINE: So I think what we'll do is we'll pick up the next interview from when you come back to L.A. and start teaching and continuing your conducting and your studies.

MILLS: So teaching in Glendale and then I started the symphony in '53. Yeah, it was very close. That's right. In '57 I got married. Yeah, that will be perfect.

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JULY 22, 1998

CLINE: I had a few follow-up questions from our last session. I'll run those by you right off the bat here. One thing I wanted to ask you is, we talked about how impressive the experience of seeing Pierre Monteux was when you were thirteen years old. By then you were already starting on the violin, which you continued to play for many years. I wanted to know if you had any really stand-out figures--heroes, if you will--of the violin who inspired you when you were young.

MILLS: Well, of course, this was sort of a golden age, I believe. Jascha Heifetz, who was world famous then. Incidentally, he was born February 2, the same date as my birthday, so that I felt a little bit close to him in at least that respect. And then the great Fritz Kreisler, who was also born on February 2.

CLINE: Really?

MILLS: I believe it was 1875, and Heifetz was supposed to be, I believe, 1901. Both of them on February 2. When you'd go to the concerts and see their birthdate, I already felt a certain closeness to them. But each one of those artists had something to offer that was so unique. That was a time of more calmness in the whole atmosphere. World conditions were bad, but the tempo of the society was slower. I think

we could enjoy more then.

The story goes about Fritz Kreisler-- Part of his career, he would take a train from Chicago to New York, you know, like it was overnight, and he could memorize something on the train--never play it with the violin and play it for the concert the next day or whatever. You know, you can't do that on a jet plane now.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

MILLS: In other words, we had time to really live, I think, at that time. Now things are so pressured and everything is moving so fast. This was sort of, I think, a golden age. I'm happy I was able to hear Heifetz, Kreisler, Joseph Szigeti, Albert Spaulding, the wonderful American violinist. In fact, when I was a student at UCLA, I believe one of those concerts--I think maybe it was Joseph Szigeti--they asked me to turn the pages. You know, you have to have somebody that knows music for a sonata. I believe I did that. So when you get on the stage with these great artists and you're a student, you remember these things quite vitally.

So these are, I think, the main ones of that era.

CLINE: Was there anyone who had on you, as a violinist, the kind of impact that Monteux did on you as an aspiring conductor?

MILLS: Well, as I say, probably all of these--

CLINE: All of them?

MILLS: I would say all of them in their different ways. Kreisler-- I used to play the *Liebesleid*. I was leaning more towards Kreisler than the bravura technique of Heifetz. I mean, if I categorize myself, I'd say I'm in the Fritz Kreisler camp, so to speak, the *Liebesleid* and that--things that were more touching, you know. Not that Heifetz didn't play with beauty. Some people say he played coldly, but I never felt that. I felt that he had such a tremendous concentration that all the warmth was within. He concentrated with such a perfection, but it came out as you can hear the little nuances. Even listening now to the CDs that have been reissued, it's a wealth of tone and intimacy. I don't like to compare them. They were different.

CLINE: Sure. Right.

MILLS: And using the term "great" is-- It doesn't even apply. [laughs] It's a very small term. They were treasures, and thank God for them.

CLINE: Right. Would you say that after you had this experience of seeing Monteux conduct, did you feel that--as much as you loved the violin--there was sort of a competition within you as to which was your calling or your direction, conducting or playing the violin?

MILLS: After I saw him I believe the conductor took the precedence, and it still does, because I don't practice the

violin that much anymore. I use it when I need to and so forth. But definitely conducting always-- It was such a magical thing making a motion with the baton or your hands and evoking a tone from an orchestra--a hundred players or fifty players, whatever--that you couldn't get from the violin. The violin, you know, it's beautiful expression and as close to the human heart and voice as you can get, I believe, but when you get an orchestra you have all of these colors. It's like the whole nature, like you're in a forest, and you've got the green trees and you've got the flowers and the plants. It has everything. I needed that. In fact, when I did the Mendelssohn octet [for strings], I felt it had to be orchestrally transcribed to do it well, but I tried to keep Mendelssohn's-- I don't want to say technique, but-- I didn't want to make it too theatrical, but I wanted to enhance it so that some of the climaxes would be properly displayed, as far as I was concerned. So I made an arrangement for string orchestra, two horns, woodwinds in pairs, and I kept it like chamber music but just a little bit broader frame.

CLINE: Right. Conducting, of course, has associated with it the idea of power a lot, because you have all this sort of responsibility and this power over all these players. We talked last time about the typical temperamental conductor stereotype, the [Arturo] Toscanini type, and I wondered, since

we were also discussing sort of your sensitive nature, your sensitivity to music-- But I would think that that would also translate to other areas of life. Was there anything about the conductor role that appealed to you besides the purely musical part of it? Was there anything about that role, that responsibility, that powerful role that had any appeal to you? Or was it purely musical?

MILLS: I think it was purely musical. I surely didn't do it to get power over a hundred players, because that's not my nature to be-- The old-time conductor was like a dictator.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And I surely don't believe in that, especially now. I mean, when you make music it's of psychological importance that the players want to be with you. It's teamwork. By playing in the orchestra as a young person and seeing what the problems of the player are, I'm on that side, too. And I don't feel that "I'm the conductor and you're the orchestra, just don't bother me. Do as I say." No.

I believe there has to be cooperation, teamwork--if you want to use this word--because through ensemble or togetherness, there is a special inner feeling. If you want to make good music, of course, you pay a professional to play next to your sweet or lovely nonprofessional.

People come back to me. Like David Shostac, he's in

the L.A. [Los Angeles] Chamber [Orchestra]. Now, we have a community orchestra. He plays alongside of nonprofessionals, amateurs. But he does it as a courtesy to me, because he knows what I give. Of course he started at thirteen in our orchestra and he comes back. I'm just, I guess, like a father figure to him. But they see that I give more to the music than just trying to lead them or direct them.

CLINE: Right. I guess there's frequently a lot of ego attached to the idea of being a conductor.

MILLS: Yes. That's true.

CLINE: And I guess I'm curious, because we talked about this incident where Purcell Mayer confided in you about the possibility of teaching, which is what he was doing, because he sensed something about your nature that was perhaps at odds with the competitive, high-pressure world of, at that time, I guess, classical music. I was curious what it was specifically--if you have any idea--that he observed about you that would cause him to approach you to discuss that particular subject.

MILLS: Well, I can just presuppose he must have seen in my nature what was in his nature. We had talked, and of course I had been a teacher, as I mentioned, a private violin teacher. I started, I think, at about thirteen or fourteen [years old], in junior high. So consequently he saw that it was

nothing new for me to teach; I had been teaching. He thought that, well, being a teacher, of course, by getting tenure you have a certain amount of serenity. And of course, by teaching music I'm still in my field.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And I had been teaching, so he just mentioned that as, I would say, as a dear friend observing. I'm happy he did, because I've never regretted that I went into teaching. Eventually, I had five children, and it supported them, and I wasn't concerned by being a freelance musician watching that telephone and wondering if somebody would come in from the Philadelphia Orchestra and take my job.

CLINE: Right, right. Sure.

MILLS: See? Being a freelance musician even today is very precarious. I talk with people. Now, some of them do very well. But if the main contractor of a studio is not there and there's a new one, there can be a whole new regime. You can be just as good as you were, but they bring in their people. It's very political.

CLINE: Yes, definitely.

MILLS: It doesn't make for serenity, which is my nature to want, to compose. And then the idea of having the Brentwood[-Westwood] Symphony [Orchestra] and the teaching, they balanced each other. I didn't give up my so-called good

music or my serious music, my Beethoven symphonies. I would conduct the Beethoven Ninth Symphony [in D Minor, op. 125] on a Sunday, and the next morning I'd be back in school teaching "America, the Beautiful" or "Little Marches" or whatever. But still I would teach them perhaps the hymn of the Ninth Symphony ["Ode to Joy"]. I would make an arrangement, and they were getting the so-called classical music, too.

Of course, my enthusiasm and love for the children and teaching made a success, if I would say so, because I remember going into some schools where they had a very small group and all of a sudden after a year or so had quite large groups. So I love teaching. I enjoyed the route.

And I think that the thing that makes one happy and healthy is not fighting, going upstream. You know, going with the flow. And as a teacher I learned to adjust, because if I had a small group I'd arrange for it. That's how I did all my arranging. And later, by meeting this wonderful Doctor Eugene Zador, he got me in ASCAP [American Society of Conductors, Authors, and Publishers]. Did I mention that before?

CLINE: Yeah. We mentioned it, but we'll get more into it.

MILLS: Yes, okay.

CLINE: Since you had aspirations to conduct, and since that's a pretty rarified sort of role that one can get into or perhaps doesn't get to fulfill, did you have any particular feelings

about where this aspiration, this inspiration, might take you? Did you have a goal in mind?

MILLS: You mean when I first thought of it?

CLINE: Yeah, or at any time along the way up until this point where you decided that teaching was a good direction for you.

MILLS: I see. Well, from thirteen on I wanted to conduct. And to conduct you have to have an orchestra. So that was always, I would say, in my subconscious mind. I believe the subconscious is very powerful and it works for everyone. Therefore, when the right time came I was directed, I would say divinely guided, to that. I met a wonderful gentleman by the name of Robert [E.] Turner at UCLA. Now, this came about so beautifully. He was teaching there. I guess he was, I don't know, associate professor, whatever, and I was a student. I played the violin, and then we did some chamber music. It turned out that he had studied with Fritz Reiner, and he wanted to conduct. I told him I was with Monteux. So we talked it over and said, "Why don't we start an orchestra?" And that's exactly how it started in '53.

CLINE: I see. Okay. I guess what I was curious about is--Because it's such a daunting thing. There are so few, I would imagine, people who want to conduct who get to have those jobs, those really sort of plum positions. And as Monteux said in his letter to you--in fact, I think it was maybe not

attributed solely to him, but he used the line--"Music is really the most expensive of all noises." Were you at any point intimidated by this idea? Or did you just really feel that you were going to conduct and that was it?

MILLS: I think that was it. I just made up my mind to conduct one way or another. Then, of course, as I say, when I met Robert [E.] Turner it just opened up. You know, it was like networking with him. He is such a great musician and a very wonderfully innovative person. So we talked over how we would do it.

CLINE: Did your experience with Monteux help reinforce the feeling within you that it was okay to be not so much the dictator and still be an excellent conductor, since I would imagine that that dictator role did not appear to be to you the role model that you wanted to follow?

MILLS: No, definitely not, because I had been in orchestras, and some of these dictator conductors that-- I've seen them more or less take apart different people, and I didn't think this was the right way to make good music, because it actually destroyed the heart of the music. They would play it if they were professional, but their heart wasn't in it. And if there's any resentment--And of course, in a case of a conductor chewing somebody out and giving them negativity, there's bound to be a little reluctance. I mean, you're playing your job,

but you don't give a hundred percent, these people, I'm sure.

Also, I respected the musician. I felt that they were really playing. The stick I held didn't do anything; it was sort of a guide. But you needed the players, and you need the players. If a conductor doesn't realize that, then there's something wrong. Then he really is all ego. And what I say now is that ego, when it comes in a room, it actually moves the walls. [mutual laughter]

CLINE: Yeah. So I guess you didn't feel any difficulty with the idea of being the more low-key, sensitive person with aspirations to conduct an orchestra. That didn't daunt you in any way.

MILLS: I don't know that I felt that I would be conducting the New York Philharmonic, but I started this orchestra-- It was like a child. You give birth to a child and whatever the child is, that's yours. See, that's the idea of being the founder-conductor. It has that connotation, which even years later and up to this present time, that that is my child.

CLINE: You didn't have ambitions to conduct a big American city orchestra?

MILLS: I guess I didn't or maybe I would have for whatever reason. Whatever reason. I guess I didn't, because otherwise I'd have just-- I wouldn't have gone into teaching, and I'd probably have studied twenty-four hours a day. I never really

had that, shall we say, ambition or desire that much. I felt that the orchestra, I wanted to get it as good as it could be, and I did have wonderful--

I want to definitely mention a Mr. Jack Pepper, who was my contractor. He had been a professional musician. He was a perfectionist, and he got me the finest players. When we played a concert at the Music Center [of Los Angeles County], our twenty-fifth anniversary which we could just say-- Our founding date, 1953, plus twenty-five years was 1978, when we performed in the Music Center. I had about seven or eight members of the L.A. [Los Angeles] Philharmonic [Orchestra] that played, and this is very thrilling.

Of course, when I conducted that [American Symphony Orchestra League music] forum [for conductors and critics]--

CLINE: Right, we're going to talk about that today.

MILLS: --that also was great, of course. No doubt that that's wonderful.

But there was something about starting your own child and seeing what that child could do. Whether that child will become president of the United States or not isn't important. But you wanted to nurture in this case the orchestra and have it do wonderful things.

I've worked with some tremendous soloists--Amparo Iturbi, Gabor Rejto--and these are world-famous people. So in a sense

they've been in our home. I like to consider the Brentwood symphony orchestra as our home. It's our community. That's why different players come back and play with us again, even if they've gone out to different places.

CLINE: Now, related to your experience that led to your sort of life direction decision, you did mention earlier, in the last session, that you did some studio work as a violinist.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: This was around the time--at least the time you mentioned it--when you were playing the Hollywood Bowl Symphony.

MILLS: Yeah, from about '45 to '50, in that time, yes. Didn't I mention that I worked with Aaron Copland on the *Red Pony*?

CLINE: Yes, right, right. So I was going to ask you, what was that like for you? Was there any appeal to that?

MILLS: It was exciting. You had to be on your toes, and of course any kind of recording takes a great discipline. You have to be a good reader. It was interesting and challenging. Yes, I enjoyed that part of it. But there's a lot of pressures. I know my friends that were great successes, later they get out of it because it was too much pressure.

CLINE: Sure.

MILLS: One of my friends, because of all that pressure, he had to have a bypass.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

MILLS: So I don't think it's worth it. I mean, the money is great, but what price do you pay, you know? And I don't think-- Many of those musicians don't really enjoy that music. That's why they come to the community orchestras, and that's why a lot of them want to play solos. I know a lot of these professional musicians, you know. They play in the studio, and they make lovely sums of money, but for their real musical soul they come and play a Beethoven concerto or a Mozart to keep that important part of their musical aliveness ready, you see.

CLINE: Do you think that being a studio musician or even being a musician in a big symphony orchestra can become too much like a job?

MILLS: I think it definitely can. I think that's why a lot of these studio musicians and even the philharmonic players, they usually do chamber music, whether they do it in their home or for the public. Even the L.A. Philharmonic has a chamber music series. Several of my colleagues and friends play in that. That's a more intimate type of playing where they feel that they're like on their own. They don't have to be conducted, and they're keeping their essence alive. I think so.

CLINE: Okay. We left off last time where you had gone to Lompoc [California], and you were teaching there, and you

said that you started an orchestra there made up of whoever would be in it. How did you go about doing that? And who was in it?

MILLS: Well, I was teaching in the schools. It was a school of about a thousand. It's called a union school, I believe, and they used to bus them in to the school. It was one big school in Lompoc at that time, and I was, I guess you could say, Mr. Music, because I had all the music. I was the only one.

The real challenge was that I had choral music and I taught in the classroom. Basically I hadn't developed my piano playing, but when you go into a classroom there's not a piano in each one anyhow. So I decided, why not take the violin? That will give them the pitch, and also it's mobile. So I walked between the desks, and I would play. Then I had my bow, and they'd open their books, and I'd point. We'd do a solfège or some singing, and I'd point with my bow. So the violin was a very helpful tool at that time.

I had an orchestra. I had a band. I would teach a classroom music from kindergarten through sixth grade. So I had a tremendous schedule, and I was-- It gave me a chance to really direct myself and direct the program, which was very enjoyable. I loved it thoroughly, the music. And singing, I had sung, you see, so I was able to sing. We put on some wonderful

programs.

And they were very nice there. They had a very good administration, and I was able to-- They had a good budget. They would give me moneys. I would come to Los Angeles and buy three or four trumpets, three cellos, and other instruments. So that part was extremely good. If I needed things I had them.

CLINE: But you were only there for a couple of years.

MILLS: About a couple of years. Well, my home was here. At the beginning of a career in teaching you can't always get into your home area. But when Glendale opened up, then I came down. I interviewed, and I got the job. And they understood. Maybe I was-- I forget if it was half-- Maybe I had to leave in the middle of the year, whatever it was, but they understood. And actually, when I went up there I took somebody's place. The lady was pregnant, so I think she had the child and she was just about ready to come back to her job.

CLINE: Oh, I see. Okay.

MILLS: So it was mutually beneficial for both of us.

CLINE: You also, at some point during this period of time, continued with your education. I have information here that you attended the Academy of the West and also Mount St. Mary's College. I believe you studied composition in Mount St. Mary's

College. Is that right?

MILLS: Yes. I guess at the very beginning we rehearsed at Uni[versity] High [School]. Then there was an earthquake, and our auditorium was destroyed, I don't know. We eventually got to Paul Revere [Junior High School], where we'd been many years. Also for some reason we couldn't have Paul Revere, and we had a chance to rehearse at Mount St. Mary's College.

There was a Sister Celestine who was head of the music department, and very interested. When we came up there she said we could have the auditorium anytime we wanted for rehearsing or whatever. We gave several concerts there, and I think it was Sister Dolores that played, I guess it was the Grieg [Piano] Concerto [in A Minor]. So we had concerts there in their nice hall.

Then she said, "You know, we could give you a fellowship, scholarship, if you want to work on your master's." And I said, "Well, that's a great idea." She said, "I know you're working, you're teaching in Glendale." So I think it was about '55, yeah, because we started in '53. She said, "You can go to afternoon classes, and you go on Saturday." In other words, it wouldn't take me-- I said, "That would be a great idea." I did that also to get my-- I had a music credential, which was limited, and then in any type of school you have to have a general secondary, which is mandatory.

So I had like five years to get that and work on my master's at the same time, which they did for me.

Sure enough, I wrote a composition called *The Big Mountain*. That represents our life is going up the big mountain to the final peak, and during this life voyage there could be many detours--we're off the track, whatever the reason, we lose our job, we have a divorce, whatever. But to get back on the track is the main idea. So just simply putting it is-- I tried to put in that symphony some of my life before and then perhaps projecting it to a later time, too. And it worked out well. It was interesting, though. I guess I got my master's in 1960. A little bit after that was the Bel-Air fire [November 6, 1961], and that whole school burned down, including my manuscript. But of course, I had the master's. I have the music, too. So it was all right. But it was interesting how that had happened.

CLINE: This actually leads me to a question that I wanted to ask you about, because you mention things of a spiritual nature very often. I wanted to know, did you grow up in any sort of a religious environment?

MILLS: Religious environment. Well, I was born Jewish, and my father-- I never was bar mitzvahed. He died when I was ten. At the end of his life he became a Christian Scientist. So I saw the different changes. And I never knew too much

about Judaism, I must admit. But getting this and later-- I'm glad you brought it up.

I married a lady from Mount St. Mary's. I met somebody there, Marguerite [Patterson]. She was Catholic, and the family was not open to other religions, so I became a Catholic. I had many Catholic friends, and I sort of thought maybe this is what I should do. I didn't get married until I was in my middle thirties. So, I mean, I took things very seriously. I didn't just jump. So consequently I was serious about it, and I would say I was very naive, to the extent that I believed that a Catholic would never get a divorce.

CLINE: Right, right.

MILLS: I mean, I guess I'm a naive person, a trusting person, and I have a lot to learn. Well, I found out ten years later that Catholics get divorces, and it's not easy. But that's another story.

I had four children with Marguerite, and I'm very happy that I have them. The oldest is Steven [Mills], who's a very fine drummer and plays in different groups now.

The second one is Robert [Mills], also known as "Mr. Bob." He's very innovative because he-- In fact, I'm going to give you a tape that he's made. And I'm proud that this is a tape-- This is one of his tapes. Then he's made several documentaries. I've had an orchestra forty-six years, and

I never made a tape. He became Mr. Bob, and he said he was inspired by me to go in and teach, and he does music. He plays all the-- I started him on the clarinet and the violin, and then he went into the other woodwinds. He plays all the different recorders. He's made several documentaries, and he does very well. So he's mainly in music now and he's in--what do you call?-- the Excel business. This is long-distance communications.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And he's happily married now, so that makes it nice.

Then I have a wonderful daughter, Jan [Mills Grigg], who's a registered nurse. She has five children, so I'm a happy grandfather.

As far as religion goes, I'm very open to it, because none of my children have followed their original. Bob and Steven are in [Church of] Religious Science, which I went into later, which helped me a great deal. Religious Science came out of Christian Science. It's more open, and it seems to me a religion that is not prejudiced. So many of the religions I found are prejudiced. If you're not that religion, you're nothing, you know.

CLINE: Yeah, right.

MILLS: This to me is not right. So in Religious Science it embraces from all religions and it takes from all of them.

I think that maybe there's such a thing as reincarnation, and we come back a different-- Maybe that's-- "Vengeance is for the Lord."

CLINE: Yeah, right, right.

MILLS: It could be that. I don't know. I'm getting involved with some real heavy stuff now. I don't know if I want to do all this.

CLINE: That's okay. I just wanted to know about just the background part. You have one other daughter, though, I presume, because you mentioned--

MILLS: Yeah, I had a difficult divorce after ten years. Then I went to Spain. Did I mention I had gone to Spain?

CLINE: Yeah.

MILLS: And then I married Josefa [Primo] in Spain. We were married ten years. And then I had Maria [Mills] with her. So those are my five children. That sort of does it.

CLINE: Well, I think I'm missing one. There's Steven, there's Bob, and the registered nurse--

MILLS: And "Lanie" [Elaine Mills Baydian]. Didn't I mention her? Lanie is also a registered nurse. Now she's married [to Eric Baydian] and has three children, doing very well.

Talking about the religion being free, Jan has married a very wonderful Mormon [William Grigg], and they are doing terrifically well. The Mormons are very family oriented,

which I think is wonderful, so they're very happy. So I've never tried to say "You've got to be this, you've got to be that." Each one has sort of gone their own direction. I think that's wonderful.

CLINE: Okay. So we're actually at the period now where you've returned to Southern California. You're teaching in the Glendale schools. You're teaching music, I presume?

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: Was this a full-time job?

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: And at this time you founded the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra.

MILLS: In 1953.

CLINE: You just started earlier to mention how that actually happened. Can you give us some more detail on sort of the genesis of the orchestra and its early years?

MILLS: Yes. Well, I mentioned that I met Robert Turner at UCLA. I think we did some chamber music together, and he saw I was very serious. I think I might have been in one of his classes. He mentioned that he studied with Fritz Reiner, wanted to do some conducting. I was with Monteux, so we jelled right away. It was a very good friendship, which has lasted to this day. In fact--was it last year?--we honored Robert Turner for his many years of service in the community and

as a co-conductor. He's a wonderful gentleman. When we have contests, "Artists of Tomorrow," he usually has winners, different ones in there. Perhaps you've heard of him, Robert Turner?

CLINE: The name rings a bell.

MILLS: Well, he was many years at UCLA, but he's sort of retired now. So we started grassroots in a little dance studio at Twenty-sixth [Street] and San Vicente [Boulevard]. It was a dance studio that didn't have night classes, and his wife Jane [Turner] had to go out and buy lights so we could have a night rehearsal. We rented chairs from Abbey Rents. We put some articles in the [American Federation of] Musicians [Local 47] *Overture* magazine asking for musicians and in the different newspapers. We started just like that.

I think the first rehearsal had about seventeen players. The Brentwood florist Mischa Yano came out and brought his son Philip Yano--I think I had mentioned that to you--and Philip was to play the flute. He stayed about six months; he was at Uni High, and he got too busy. But Mischa Yano continued the violin. He even took lessons from me privately and stayed there many years until he passed away. That's the idea of a community orchestra, that we want people-- He hadn't played his violin in thirty-five years. He took it out just so he could go with Philip, playing the flute. And

he kept it up.

Howard Engelman, our wonderful president, he's been in the orchestra about forty years playing flute. He's a businessman, has a wonderful family, and he's the one that gives a thousand dollars a year for a scholarship for the "Artists of Tomorrow" contest.

The beginning years-- Well, we had a few concerts at the beginning. They were almost open rehearsals. One incident I might mention, we had a horn player who was going to play a solo. His name was Gale Robinson. He had practiced and practiced and was playing one of the Mozart horn concertos. So we're all ready, and the day of the concert I see somebody coming in with a French horn, but it wasn't Gale. It was his brother Alan [Robinson]. So he said, "I'm going to take Gale's place." Well, I thought, "No rehearsal? He can't do it." I mean, those are the things in the days when you didn't pay people, so I didn't have much to say. But luckily he played all right. But, I mean, those are the experiences that you have to be ready for. You have to have steady nerves, and you have to be at the point where nothing disturbs your peace of mind or you could be shattered on the podium.

At that time also I was in the Pasadena [Civic] Symphony [Orchestra] under Dr. Richard Lert. I played viola. And I met Alice and Eleanor Schoenfeld, who are world famous. They're

USC [University of Southern California] professors. They've been close to me all the time with our music and friendship with our families. In fact, they're the ones who helped me-- Later on, I taught up at Idyllwild [School of Music and the Arts] with Max Crone and at USC. I was there for two years, I guess.

Anyhow, I'm talking about the beginnings of the orchestra. Well, Alice and Eleanor played solos. And in fact, at that time, they didn't even have a car. I think they were both in the Pasadena symphony, and I would come from-- I guess I lived in Hollywood or someplace in the San Fernando Valley, whatever. I would pick them up, take them to the rehearsal. And we had some wonderful concerts. Lert was a very fine conductor. He was married to Vicki Baum, you know, the author who wrote *Grand Hotel*.

CLINE: Oh, really?

MILLS: Yeah. I think she was a harpist, also. Anyhow, it was good training being in his orchestra playing viola. So I kept up my instrument and the conducting. As I say, I would do a Beethoven symphony on Sunday and I'd be back in the classroom on Monday. So people would ask me, "How can you do that? You're with professionals and--" I thought it was a very good balance. You had mentioned the possibility of some of the professionals getting to everything being just a job. See,

I balanced it. We talk about a balanced diet and a balanced life. I was able to do the great Beethoven, the great Brahms, and then the next day I could modify that and give it to the children, see, in an easier form. As Monteux had said, "You have to teach your orchestra." So I was teaching my orchestra, and I was teaching the children to be in an orchestra. So all of the things tied together beautifully.

CLINE: And you were teaching violin privately still?

MILLS: I might have had a few students, yes. I think I always had a few students, people who wanted to study with me, yes.

CLINE: And then at this point, were you rehearsing at the Uni High auditorium? This was before?

MILLS: I think at the very beginning we were. Then quite quickly we went to Paul Revere when it was available. It's always been nice there, and we have a fine music room. There's a man by the name of Stewart Rupp who is the teacher there. I admire him very much. He has a wonderful setup. He now has big orchestras; they bus them in there. We work together each year now, at the end of the school year, and he conducts some of the selections for the people in his orchestra and our orchestra. We combine on the children's concert the day after the "Artists of Tomorrow" in May.

CLINE: During the fifties, now that you are officially conducting this orchestra, this rather noteworthy event took

place. This was the thing that you mentioned a little while ago, this forum for conductors and critics. How did you hear about that? And how did you go about seeking to participate in that event?

MILLS: Well, I believe the Brentwood-Westwood symphony was a member of the American Symphony [Orchestra] League. What is it actually called?

CLINE: I have it here somewhere.

MILLS: I believe that's what it is. We were a member of that as well as the local county groups here. You know, all of the community orchestras belong. And through a bulletin or two, whatever came out-- And then I got the registration form. Of course, being right here was helpful. I didn't have to go very far, down to the Philharmonic [Auditorium].

CLINE: It says here that sixty conductors applied and twenty were chosen. So it sounds like a good thing that you got selected. But just for the record, this is something that took place here in Los Angeles where various conductors from all over came to study under Alfred Wallenstein conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic. I wanted to know, did you know any of the other conductors? Or were they from all sorts of different, varied backgrounds and experiences? Do you remember?

MILLS: I think they were. I don't think I knew any of them,

as I recall. They were from different places, yes. We each had a chance to conduct a movement of a symphony or a concerto or whatever they had selected. I guess they gave us some criticism--you know, a critique. And then, of course, we saw one or two performances of the L.A. Philharmonic. One I know was with Artur Rubinstein. Then we had a chance to all go up to Mrs. Dorothy Buffum Chandler's penthouse. It was a cocktail party for the artists. So it was sort of a gala occasion and very festive and exciting. Then hearing about the other conductors and talking and seeing what they're doing. It was very beneficial. Things like that I think are very good.

CLINE: Now, in these postwar years, this sort of seemed to be promoted as kind of an attempt at making a bigger step forward culturally for the country, and it seemed to be quite a public relations event for the city of Los Angeles. In fact, it said that the Rockefeller Foundation provided I guess the grant funding for this, and it said there were indications of, and I quote, "Readiness for a cultural step forward for America." Was this in fact a time when American symphony orchestras were starting to accelerate in their aspirations to be world-class orchestras and develop in that way?

MILLS: I think that's definitely true. There was a big movement to achieve higher things. Yes, I think so. Of course,

at that time after the war, then we were getting closer to other nations and then having time to think of culture again, knowing how valuable it is, and that that is the essence of keeping the civilization in that proper marching way. All of this elevation of the spiritual and the cultural-- Yes, I think that this was a definite trend at that time.

CLINE: You mentioned that some of the artists that you got to meet up at Mrs. Chandler's, the soloists, actually were Rubinstein, [Gregor] Piatigorsky, Joseph Schuster, David Frisina, Eudice Shapiro, Muriel Kerr, really big names. Do you have any idea how this event came to Los Angeles of all places? Do you have any notion?

MILLS: I don't know about that. I'm sure that Mrs. Chandler had something to do with this event. She was behind the L.A. Philharmonic.

CLINE: Right, right.

MILLS: So I'm sure that when this became available, or up for grabs, so to speak, I'm sure that she must have put in a bid. Of course, the L.A. [*Los Angeles*] *Times* and Mrs. Chandler are very powerful and very knowledgeable. Like she planned our wonderful Music Center. I mean, when she wanted to do something it was done, you know.

CLINE: Oh, yeah, definitely.

MILLS: And of course, it's interesting you mention Eudice

Shapiro. After that time Eudice Shapiro played with our orchestra twice, so we--

CLINE: You made a connection.

MILLS: Some of the benefits came out of that.

CLINE: So you did make some connections through this experience.

MILLS: Yes, there were connections, right.

CLINE: And also this may explain how the L.A. *Times* ran such an amazingly thorough and large coverage of the event. As I recall, there's a photograph of you conducting in one of these articles. Also in the *Christian Science Monitor* there was a report on this. So it appeared to be kind of a big deal.

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CLINE: One of the things that I wanted to ask was if you had any idea how you were selected to be one of the conductors at the forum.

MILLS: I'm really not sure. I think I just turned in my résumé. I was conductor of the Brentwood-Westwood symphony. I studied with Monteux. I really don't know how it was done or by whom.

CLINE: Was this designed as sort of an opportunity for some conductors of lesser experience or perhaps from smaller towns in the U.S. to sort of gain some big-time conducting experience? Do you think that was part of the project?

MILLS: I think that was definitely part of it, yes. And of course, [for] all of us, standing before the L.A. Philharmonic was a very great honor and a great thrill, something that just doesn't happen.

CLINE: And this included observing Wallenstein conducting?

MILLS: Yes. We went to at least one or two concerts that he conducted. I guess, well, with the soloists you mentioned--I know. I guess it was Frisina, the concertmaster, played, and of course Rubinstein and probably some of the others, yes.

CLINE: What was it like observing and working with Wallenstein?

MILLS: He was very methodical, and he seemed to definitely know what he was doing. He was Toscanini's first cellist, so he got first-hand instruction there. But I guess when it comes to the way he would be with an orchestra he was more of the Toscanini than the Monteux.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And that tells the whole thing.

CLINE: Right. That's one of the reasons I was curious.

MILLS: Yeah, he had definitely a different approach. He was an authoritative-type person. Shall we say no back talk, not that the others had back talk. But it wasn't the ensemble feeling. I mean, he was in charge, and that was it. It was like no two ways about it. Not that the other ones aren't, but there's a different way of coming over I think. You can tell somebody you like them, and then after you say it they really wonder if you like them.

CLINE: Right. [mutual laughter] How did that make you feel? Did that affect you?

MILLS: Well, he had a reputation and-- You know, you take people for what they are. You really can't change people.

What I've found in all of my life so far, and I'm finding it out now, is the greater person is one that can adjust to a situation. If you work for a boss that's very stubborn or very difficult, you have to accept it, and bless and forgive

for your own health. But you have to realize nothing lasts forever. Even six hours a day at the job or eight hours, it's over. And I think true health is to be completely present, because there are so many things in life that are disturbing.

The news: you listen to the news, you see it on TV, it's very disturbing. If you let that disturb you to a point beyond a certain point, actually, then you become very inefficient. If you want to help the world or yourself, you can't do it. I think the amount we aggravate ourselves or get irritated or annoyed or angry or more is the amount that we're going to diminish our plus production. Productivity, I guess, is maybe-- I'm getting involved there. But it's as simple as that, I think.

I think the bottom line for me is good health. If you, a person, don't have good health, you can have all the money in the world and all the cars in the world, you can't enjoy them, and you can't really do anything. So to make good music-- And as I said before, each note is like a cell. That has to be healthy, too, the music itself. And then the people playing it have to be healthy. So I think all of that is combined. That's the famous word--

I found this picture--ninety-seven [years old] when it was taken--of my stepfather, Malcolm Heuring. [shows photograph] Look at that posture. And he has no arthritis.

Perfect hands. Do you see that? He was an inspiration. Now, he was a Christian Scientist, and he was smart enough to know that when the Christian Science didn't help him he had to turn to medicine. And he did. Talk about adjusting. You know, you learn from people.

CLINE: That's right.

MILLS: He was a Christian Scientist. He had tuberculosis and he cured himself through Christian Science. Because they took X rays and saw it. But then later he got myasthenia gravis, this terrible disease where he couldn't swallow. And if he didn't take some kind of medication, which luckily they had, he would have died. He was a great inspiration of mine. This was my mother [Lillian Ascher Mills]'s third husband. Now, she was never divorced, which I think is fabulous. My father [Harry Mills] died when I was ten. She was married to Roscoe Evans, her second husband, for thirty-nine years. He lived to ninety-five. Then there was some hiatus between the second marriage and her marriage to Malcolm, whom she knew for about twenty years. He played trumpet in my orchestra. Talk about adjusting.

CLINE: Wow.

MILLS: He was a pretty good trumpet player. He had been in the army. His story could go on for three chapters. He was in the army that chased Pancho Villa to Mexico. And the stories

he told-- He was the inspiration for all this. Now, even, we talk about Malcolm. He played the trumpet until his teeth-- You know, he had trouble with the dentures. He had dentures.

CLINE: Right, that's a problem, yes.

MILLS: So he said, "You know, I'm sitting in the orchestra. I'm playing trumpet, and I look at the violas. That's always intrigued me. I'd like to be a violist." Now, look at the change. He was, I believe, eighty-five, either seventy-nine or eighty-five, an advanced age, and he said, "I'm going to take up the viola." Now, the only connection between the viola and a trumpet is a quarter note's a quarter note. But the clef is different; it's the alto clef. Surely there's no-- It's blowing and bowing. [mutual laughter] There's no connection. What a marvelous-- He took up private lessons with Sven Reher, who used to be in the [Los Angeles] Philharmonic [Orchestra], was my first violist, a great gentleman. Then he studied with me, too. And I would go to the home, my mother's home, and there was Malcolm practicing scales-- C major, D major, E-flat. He was so routine and disciplined from the army. And he played a pretty good viola. He was, of course, wise enough-- In a community orchestra, if you don't know certain things you do it quietly and let the professionals play it. That's what it's all about. But he got enjoyment. And you see him: ninety-seven, posture.

He was six-foot-two, and a real inspiration. So people like that I've always learned from.

CLINE: Yeah, we can all learn from people like that.

MILLS: That is an inspiration.

CLINE: To go back to this conductor's forum, also it said that part of this was an opportunity to go to MGM [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer] studios as guests of Johnny Green to observe the studio orchestras working there. Did you do that?

MILLS: Yes, I believe I did. Yes. I got to know Johnny Green, who later didn't want to be called Johnny Green. When he was in symphonies he wanted to be known as John Green. He did a benefit for us, and in fact, maybe when I went to Spain, he was a guest conductor. I'm not sure. But I got to know him quite well, and he was very nice, a very nice gentleman. Yes. And of course, observing the studio orchestra-- Well, I had played in them, so I knew about them, but it was very inspirational for people coming from Idaho and Utah and wherever to see a motion picture made and the music.

CLINE: It said that David Rose and Miklós Rózsa were actually conducting. Do you remember if you saw either one of those?

MILLS: Later on I worked with Miklós Rózsa. I might have seen him. David Rose, I've done his music. I did *Holiday for Strings*. I didn't know him too well. I got to know Rózsa because the Schoenfelds played some of his music, and we got

to know him.

In fact, interesting story. You mention about Miklós Rózsa. We did one of his compositions--I'm not sure--but we did the premiere in the symphony hall. It was in the movies already, I forget. And of course, movie music, a lot of it is not for symphony. You know, it's background and it's maybe long notes, and the action on the screen, of course, is what's important. So he had made cuts, or he gave me a list, and he said-- It was around January, and it was raining. He lived near the Hollywood Bowl. So he said, "Well, come by. Don't bother to come up the hill; it's sort of dangerous. I'll meet you by the Hollywood Bowl."

So it was interesting. We met probably at seven or eight [o'clock] at night, it was dark, and it was raining. I guess I had a raincoat, maybe an umbrella. He was passing these big scores to me. I was like a spy, you know. I felt people seeing us-- What are we doing at the Hollywood Bowl in January? And he's passing me the music all wrapped up, of course. And I remember he gave me the cuts. There had to be cuts. I remember going through those cuts, maybe staying up half the night to get it ready. I guess they didn't have a librarian to put in the cuts. But I did-- It was interesting working with him.

And Alexander Murray, the violinist, played one of his

concertos, so we got to know him pretty well. And the Schoenfelds knew him very well, and they played several of his compositions, too.

CLINE: You wound up conducting Brahms at this experience.

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: How did you feel about that? Was that okay for you, conducting the selection that they--?

MILLS: Oh, yes. I love Brahms. Yes. I guess it was the First Symphony [in C Minor, op. 68], wasn't it? Yeah, I think so.

CLINE: Do you remember how it was selected? Who got to conduct what?

MILLS: That I don't know either. They just put the selections they were going to have, and they put it down, then they said-- No, I don't know that either. It must have been a committee that looked over your background, I suppose.

CLINE: I see. Did you feel that you learned something from the experience?

MILLS: Oh, yes. Well, of course, such a big orchestra. I'd never conducted an orchestra-- It was about ninety players in it, just-- I guess it's like you're in a yacht that's twenty feet, for the community orchestra, and then you get a yacht that's two hundred feet, you know. The maneuvering is different, and you just have to get used to that, because it takes a

little longer for the sound to travel.

CLINE: Plus the players don't know you at all, or you haven't developed a rapport with them. What was that like?

MILLS: That's true. I might have known some of them, though.

CLINE: But what was it like to get up there in front of that big of an orchestra with all those mostly strange faces and have to make it happen?

MILLS: Well, I guess that's part of my idea that to be in anything you have to know how to adjust. So whether you conduct forty in a community orchestra or a hundred-- The beat had to, I think, be a little larger, although these great orchestras practically play themselves. They know the music, and Brahms wasn't new. It was a real thrill to hear that sound. I mean, when you look out and you have maybe ten or twelve cellos and you have eight basses, I mean, sixteen first violinists-- You know, full sections. The whole stage is covered, and you're up on that big podium. It's a fabulous feeling, and it's something you don't really forget. You feel that you've been swimming in the pool and now you're in the ocean. [laughs]

CLINE: Were you given any sort of feedback on your conducting?

MILLS: I think there must have been something at the time. I don't remember exactly.

CLINE: Was Wallenstein himself giving a critique or anything?

MILLS: He might have gotten together with us. There was

nothing written, I don't believe. It was just maybe-- Just general things, I guess. If it was something written I think I would have kept it, because I kept things. So I think it must have just been verbal. Probably just general things, "Do this or that." After all, they didn't have time to really give a lesson. They had to get many conductors, like four different conductors, doing each movement of the symphony, I guess, and then maybe they did a symphony and a concerto at the session. I'm not sure. But whatever it was, it was a great experience. Like everything in life, it was learning. You learned.

CLINE: You also studied conducting with Richard Lert at the Academy of the West.

MILLS: Yes, I did.

CLINE: This is the person you mentioned that you were playing viola under in the Pasadena symphony. How did that come about?

MILLS: Well, I was in the Pasadena symphony many years, and I found out that Lert was teaching at the Academy of the West. When I found out about it, he said, "Well, I guess you'd write to the managing director and see if you can't get a scholarship." At that time I was teaching summer school in Glendale. I believe it was a two-month session, so the month of July I was teaching, so I just went August. Then I went there and studied. There were great artists-- At the Lobero

Theatre and so forth we played many compositions there.

CLINE: Do you remember about what year that was then?

MILLS: Not positive. It must have been when I was teaching. Maybe '57, '58. I'm really not sure. Maybe earlier.

CLINE: So you were conducting the Brentwood-Westwood symphony, you've had this experience in the conductor's forum, you've studied with Lert. How were you evolving your own style of conducting at this point? How did you feel you were headed in terms of developing your particular approach?

MILLS: Well, I felt that all of this experience had given me a new dimension. I felt more confident, and I was able to try new things, then. I would encourage certain composers. I ran across Radie Britain's name. I don't know if you've heard that name before. She was a very fine composer that lived in the area. I guess she was in our women's guild. You see, the orchestra had like an arm that helped the orchestra, fund-raising. It was called the women's guild. In fact, my mother Lillian was in charge at first, one of the charter members in that. And Radie Britain came, and of course, naturally, being interested in music, I was interested in her. We did some of her works, very wonderful works. And she was in ASCAP.

At that time I was trying to give composers a chance. Then eventually-- I guess I got in ASCAP. Let's see. I think

it was '72 or something, around then. That's about twenty years, isn't it? Over twenty years. But I was always interested in composers and conducting and helping people, too. In fact, later on I did a whole program of ASCAP composers. I used Bob [Robert] Brunner. There's a name that's interesting. He was in the orchestra playing string bass. Bob Brunner. Bob Brunner was fifteen, sixteen, you know, in high school. Very talented, very eager to learn. So then he graduated from high school, and then I didn't hear from him for a while.

One day, later, I turned on the television, and there's Bob Brunner. The Texaco Star Theater had some singers, and it was a commercial. He was in that. Now, that's like another chapter. Then later I took one of my children to a movie, a Walt Disney movie. I forget which one it was. On the big screen, you know. "Music composed and conducted by Robert Brunner." It's the same one. He made, from string bass to composition and singing and everything, a wonderful career. In fact, we did one of his compositions, an all-ASCAP program. So he went ahead.

I think he was seventeen or eighteen years a composer at Disney, made a big success, and he still does big things around now. I haven't kept in touch with him. Well, I guess he's on our advisory board. Wonderful gentleman. And that's another thing: you feel that he started as string bass player

in our orchestra and went ahead.

Another one I want to mention who started as a string bass player, you've heard of Jim [James] Smith?

CLINE: No.

MILLS: Jim Smith is the chair for guitar, classical guitar, at USC. He was a bass player in my orchestra, but I guess he always had a guitar. In fact, a few years ago I had some difficulty with the board--which I don't necessarily want to go into--but he was very helpful. And he played with the orchestra as soloist, a very wonderful person, great player. In fact, he had Andrés Segovia give a master class there a few years ago before his passing.

So all of these people I've seen grow. Like David Shostac started as third flute in the Brentwood Symphony. By the way, for seven years, it was called the Brentwood Symphony. How did it become the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony? A group in Westwood wanted a symphony. They came, and they said, "We'd like you to be the Westwood Symphony." Well, the board went over it and said, "Well, we've got our charter, and we've got nonprofit. Why don't we just call it the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra and take in a larger group?" That's how-- It was the Brentwood Symphony at first, for about seven years. But this is how things have gone.

As I say, Shostac-- By the way David Shostac will play,

in March, the Mozart Concerto No. 2. A wonderful gentleman and a great artist.

CLINE: So to go back to the idea of where you were at with your conducting at this point, you started out with the Monteux model, and you had all these experiences playing under different types of conductors. You had this experience at this conductor's forum with Wallenstein. You studied with Lert at the Academy of the West. How much of a personal philosophy of conducting had you sort of arrived at by this point? Do you have any idea?

MILLS: Well, I think the original Monteux idea of basically being very nice to the musicians, realizing that they have an artistic bent-- And as I say, I read recently where Monteux said something to the idea that the violinists, most of them want to be concert violinists and were unable to. So then handle them with care, too. In other words, they're sort of a special person. And I think his idea is music is important, but before music the person that's going to do the music is important. Go to the creator and what he created and then what the created person is creating now in music. Then that will be better, if you handle that with--I don't want to say kid gloves, but at least with respect. I think that's the important thing I learned from Monteux, respect. He respected the composer and he respected the musician.

CLINE: I was about to say respect. Do you feel that this approach, where that much respect is put at that level of importance, is rare or not in your experience dealing with conductors?

MILLS: It's rare, definitely rare. Definitely rare. Also there are some people I've noticed in orchestras too that played under Monteux, there's a tendency for some to think that that's a weakness. They look at it that way, that this is a weakness. I've had it in other fields, too. People that are nice are weak. And I think that's not correct, because I think to be nice is really a very big strength. To be nice under difficult conditions is a very powerful strength. It's easy to get angry. Look at little children playing with toys how angry they get. It doesn't take a genius to get angry, but it takes a very intelligent, knowledgeable person to respect his body and her body and knowing that getting excited is only going to hurt oneself.

I have the greatest reverence for Monteux having this respect for people. It wasn't weakness by any means in my book; it was a great strength. I read that he was in the war and everything and was in the trenches. So he went through some rough times.

No, still my philosophy is to treat the musician with care and respect. As I say, the baton does nothing. I can

move and move, and if there's no orchestra there there's not a sound. I respect and love the musicians. That's why they come back to me, most of them, you know. They come back and they play because-- They're sure not playing for the salary. The scale is nothing. In fact, some young people now, they say, "What is the scale? You're playing for a trust fund? I won't play." You know, they don't know me, so all right. I mean, they don't even take the job because it doesn't pay enough. That's their privilege, you know.

CLINE: Sure.

MILLS: But I think if it's just for the money then I think the music is diluted. I mean, you have to eat, you have to live, you have to have a home. But the music should be more than a job. You brought up the word job. I think if something is just a job, of course that's boring, and that's even ugly. I have to go to my job every day. I have to go to my career every day. I want to go to my career. It should be the career. And I love to play an instrument. I conduct the "Star Spangled Banner" at the start of each concert. I try to do it as if it's a new piece. I do it with enthusiasm and vigor. I don't do it just to go through the motions. I try to inspire at that moment, to get the audience to live that piece if I do it once or a hundred times. Same thing, we did the school concerts. We played the same thing twice. The second time

I tried to do it better, you know, to inspire myself.

I can't understand anybody being bored. If anybody's bored, I say, "You know the library, go from 'A' and read everything to 'Z,' and then you come back to me and say you're bored." [mutual laughter] There's a lot of stuff out there. We can't learn everything.

CLINE: Undertaking the project of a community orchestra obviously has very specialized sorts of needs for you as a conductor. Can you explain what the special considerations have to be when taking that on as opposed to playing with, say, more experienced musicians?

MILLS: Well, I think the main thing, if you want to be a conductor for a community orchestra, you need patience. You need understanding. You have to conceive and perceive a little bit about the person. Then I think you have to give them the benefit of the doubt. Also I realize one thing: there are limitations. I have a publishing company I call Horizons Unlimited Publishing Company, and I love that term. But I know that when you deal with amateurs, you'll never make a professional out of them.

I know that when I was in Spain and I came back-- Several of the players came to me and they told me they were ready to quit, because some of the conductors I had chosen expected them to play like a professional by going over it and over

it. You see, that doesn't help. If a person doesn't have a capacity, going over it endless times won't help. Now, you have to go over it to get it to their fullest capacity but with encouragement so they enjoy it and not get it so that it's drudgery. Then who wants it? They come out there for fun. They're not paid, the amateurs. So if I can't give them enjoyment and an education in music, then why should they bother?

CLINE: In other words, this does require a special approach.

MILLS: Yes, for sure.

CLINE: And actually what you said makes me wonder something. Do you think this would be exceptionally challenging for someone who is accustomed to conducting an orchestra of professionals to come in and conduct an orchestra like this?

MILLS: Very challenging. Like I just mentioned, some of them I had when I was in Spain on sabbatical, they weren't able to do it, because they thought, for whatever reason, that they could make this person play better. But if you have an amateur, and their profession is being a doctor or lawyer or whatever, and they do music as a hobby-- There are different degrees of perfection and quality and whatever. You're never going to get a pure professional that plays like in the philharmonic every day and maybe practices six hours a day. That isn't in the cards.

CLINE: Right. Now, in these earlier years, things are starting to develop now in the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony. How did you go about building the orchestra and building its visibility in the community and getting it closer to where it is now?

MILLS: We've had wonderful publicity all the time. The local papers have been great. Then the *Times* has been fine many times-- We've had people that might have known them. We had James Arkatov, our first cellist. His daughter [Janice Arkatov] worked for the *Times*. When we went in the schools to give concerts she got us a special article that came out. So in most cases the press has been fine to help us. That's been a very good source.

Then I call my colleagues and ask them for players. In fact, I have to do it again now. It's a constant rebuilding. Like the body is building new cells, anything that's living has to be attended to. So if one fails to do it, then it becomes undernourished, and you know it right away. I've been very fortunate. As I say, Jack Pepper was a great contractor. He got me wonderful players, and I've had some since that weren't up to that caliber. So I'm doing it myself now, and I'm trying to handpick people. I call them, I ask them if they can do it.

I've had people like--not to play in the orchestra always

but soloists--Gary Gray. You've heard of him, perhaps. He's first clarinetist with the L.A. [Los Angeles] Chamber [Orchestra]. He's played with my orchestra I guess twice or three times. A wonderful gentleman. A teacher. He's got Grammy awards. He respects me, and I respect him a hundred percent. I would call him for one of his students, perhaps.

I came across this fine gentleman. I have so many things here. Isn't it nice? [laughs] Here we are. David Weiss. I called David, I say-- You know, he's first oboist with the [Los Angeles] Philharmonic, and also virtuoso on the musical saw. He plays the saw. Did you know that?

CLINE: No. [laughs]

MILLS: Yeah. Now, you see, you can admire somebody like that who plays with L.A. Philharmonic. And, you see, if I need an oboe player I call up David. I need a flutist, I call up another David, David Shostac. You know what I mean?

CLINE: Yeah.

MILLS: So I call up--what's the name you mentioned?--Eudice Shapiro. She's still a professor at USC. I call Eudice. She's had some wonderful students play in my "Artists of Tomorrow" contest and win. So we're dear friends. It's always a constant nurturing and calling. I mean, before I go to New York--now we're going to New York for a while--I'll be calling, getting people ready for the next season. For me

that's exciting when I'm contacting people and I find out what they do and they know what I do.

CLINE: How big did the orchestra become and has it stayed?

MILLS: Well, it varies, it varies. I mean, if we do some Mozart we only need maybe forty players, forty-five. We do something bigger, we have as many as seventy. I have a nucleus of about twenty, twenty-five. We hire people. I know I have to hire people to keep up the standard. I mean, the amateurs, the nonprofessionals, can't do it. And it's too much to ask them to do it. When I have a fund-raiser or something, and then also we ask for contributions, I have to give them a product that's worth supporting. I mean, that's my responsibility. I have to keep the quality as high as I can. And most of the time we do. At times we dip a little, but I guess every ocean has a wave up and down.

CLINE: Right. How do you go about finding the amateurs, the nonprofessionals?

MILLS: Well, by calling these teachers, usually by calling. I call up David Weiss for an oboe. String players I call Eudice Shapiro. I call the Schoenfelds. And I get players like that.

CLINE: Do they have to audition?

MILLS: If I give them an audition it's just a-- I would only audition perhaps the professionals. But I don't audition

the amateurs. I make this kind of a policy: play what you can. If you come to rehearsals, it's for your learning and our teaching. If you're not capable of playing a concert, then you don't. So that's what I think a community orchestra's responsibility is, to give people a chance to play. They can't go to the philharmonic. They can't go to other professional orchestras. They wouldn't have them. But we give them a chance to play.

I have a psychiatrist who plays second clarinet very nicely, Dr. [Leonard] Gilman. He does beautiful second. I have a man George Fulton that I hired for first. Second flute, I have an attorney, Erin [L.] Prouty, who was one of the winners of our "Artists of Tomorrow" competition. You smiled. Do you know that name?

CLINE: No, I'm just getting a picture in my mind.

MILLS: Yeah, Erin Prouty. At seventeen she won our contest. Now, twenty years later, she comes back as a married lady and a fine attorney, and she plays. So that's about what we do. And Shostac, of course, when he's available, he'll play first in the orchestra. And of course, he gives a lesson to the other flute players by being there. Engelman's played flute for about forty years. He'll go up to Aspen [Summer Festival] now, and he'll watch the orchestra. David Shostac is sometimes up there. He'll take a private lesson from him.

That's how we keep it going.

CLINE: Right. This is a nonprofit status that you have for the organization?

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: So you have a board of directors?

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: Who makes up the board of directors?

MILLS: We had a reorganization about six years ago. There was a difficulty which I don't even want to go into, but that's where I learned "Bless and forgive, it's good to the heart. Bless and forgive, it's a good way to start." And anyhow, we had to reorganize. And we're still reorganizing. But Engelman is the president. I've got two vice presidents, Fred Cowan and Ken Schoenfeld. They're helpful, and they work. We have a board. You always have to try to get new people to work, because people are moving and so forth. I was just talking to Dr. Gilman. I was saying we used to have a women's guild. He said, "You can't get those things anymore. You know, people are not free." What used to be a time when women stayed home, now they're working. So this is how we have to adjust.

CLINE: How the women's guild started was because women had time to donate to--?

MILLS: They had time. We had a guild. I have a picture of

Malcolm standing here at six-foot-two with about seven ladies--the president, vice president, recording secretary, historian. They were all going to be installed. And they worked. Every summer we had a party in the garden, and they'd make money for the orchestra. Now we have to get out and work hard to do it ourselves. It's a challenge. It's a challenge!

CLINE: So you do fund-raising in order to keep the orchestra going?

MILLS: Right.

CLINE: What form has that taken over the years?

MILLS: We had a quartet play in a doctor's home about a year ago, and they had about sixty people. When the home is donated, the artists donate their services, then we do pretty well. If you have to rent a hall, pay the artist, then it makes it difficult.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: My dear friend Mitchell Lurie-- I think you've heard of him. Four, five years ago, whatever, I had the idea of doing the "Lurie Legend." I said, "Mitchell, would you do the 'Lurie Legend,' tell about yourself?" So he did. It was a benefit, and he did it at the Santa Monica Library with his wife Leona Lurie, a great pianist, playing. He illustrated certain things and played and told about his life. It was

very interesting. He's the one that loaned me the book on Monteux. I've mentioned that, yes. We're dear friends. He was also a judge at the last contest, he and Arnold Belnick and a Dr. [Andrew] Harley from USC. Very fine people.

CLINE: How do you go about setting up all of these administrative bodies to help deal with the practical realities of keeping it going?

MILLS: My wife, Grusha Paterson Mills. She's a very famous dancer, had worked with Martha Graham and Anna Sokolon. So she has experience in that field. Also she's very good at administration. If you notice, she has that poster there, that gypsy poster. She did programs at the [Wilshire] Ebell [Theatre]. She's an author. She's very, very talented. So she works now with me, worked very hard getting things set up and put before the public.

CLINE: What about in the beginning? How did you--?

MILLS: In the very beginning my mother [Lillian Ascher Mills] was very instrumental helping. Let's see, what year was it? 'Fifty-three she was married to Roscoe Evans, my second stepfather, who was very interested in music and so forth. He was like the librarian. And they did the mailing. He had been in the post office. Mailing was very easy then. You just put on a few stamps or bulk mailing, whatever. Now it's very complicated. So that's how that started.

We had a lot of nice people that worked in the homes. There was a Dora Bliss, who gave us her home. She lived about a block away from Marilyn Monroe in Brentwood. We would go there on a Saturday. There would be six or seven men and women gathered around the mailing, and they put the labels on and whatever. Then we'd take it to the post office. That was our once a year thing, plus the flyers, I guess, several times a year also.

CLINE: Do you think there's anything special about the Brentwood and Westwood areas that have helped the orchestra maintain its existence?

MILLS: I think so, a certain helpfulness, yes. It's a good area, there's no doubt about it.

CLINE: Do you think the people here are interested in culture, perhaps, in ways that another community might not be?

MILLS: Well, most of them are. Yes, I think so. Of course, there's some that just support the Philharmonic, and they don't go to community orchestras. We could still have more publicity. It's interesting. Some people don't know that we're in existence yet. So I think it's always a challenge to have better publicity and to have a marketing person or whatever, you know.

CLINE: Also, I think it was around 1960 you started conducting the Los Angeles Doctors Symphony.

MILLS: Oh, yes. I was there for two years. There was a Dr. Samuel Hoffman in my group that gave my name to their board. I was hired for two years. I did nice concerts with them, and I enjoyed the rehearsals. It was interesting. I had my rehearsals-- At the beginning Brentwood was on a Monday night, and the doctors were on Tuesday. I didn't want to have two nights in a row because I was teaching. So I changed Monday to Thursday, so I was Tuesday and Thursday. Brentwood was on Thursday. I was there for two years. The great thing that I did there, I worked with Amparo Iturbi. I think I told you that, didn't I?

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And she had played with the Brentwood orchestra the season before. She played the Beethoven Fourth Piano Concerto [in G, op. 58]. A beautiful, beautiful performance. She was close to her brother, José Iturbi. It was interesting how close they were. Before she decided to do it she went to him. She said, "Mr. Mills, come along. We'll go to Beverly Hills." Well, she was in Beverly Hills, too.

We went to his home on Bedford Drive. He had the flu. It was interesting. He was in bed. We went up to his bedroom. He said, "Don't come too close." So we stood at the door. She said, "José"--probably she called him "Pepe," whatever--and she said, "Mr. Mills wants me to play with the

Doctors Symphony." He had been connected with the Doctors Symphony. So he said, "You play the Grieg Concerto [in A Minor for Piano and Orchestra]." I mean, he told her what to play. So she did. It was a great, great performance. And this was at the-- Before it became the Music Center it was the old Philharmonic [Auditorium]. I think I have a brochure. Did I show you this one?

CLINE: I don't remember seeing one for the Doctors Symphony.

MILLS: Oh, yeah. Let me see where I have it. I have so many things. I'm not sure if it's here. Well, I have it someplace. Maybe it's on this side, I don't know. Yeah, here we are. This is-- [tape recorder off]

CLINE: Okay, you found it.

MILLS: I found the little brochure. It shows the big audience at the L.A. Philharmonic before it was the Music Center. There's Amparo Iturbi, and I'm conducting the Doctors Symphony. Well, it's talking about-- The L.A. [*Los Angeles*] *Examiner* said, "The confidence of Alvin Mills as a conductor was apparent. He kept the situation superbly in hand." Then the other thing about, "The Brahms First Symphony was given a clear and smooth reading by Mr. Mills."

Then I did, I guess, conducting in La Jolla, the La Jolla Symphony. And the *San Diego Tribune* said, "Mills should be commended for his quick rapport with the orchestra." You

mentioned a different orchestra. "He won appreciative applause from the audience throughout the evening." I had a chance-- There was a Peter Nicoloff. Dr. Boris Kremenliev from UCLA introduced the two of us and knew we conducted. He had the La Jolla Symphony, and I had this one. So we had an exchange concert, and I conducted that orchestra.

It was very interesting going there. I went by train. I went to the Union [Station] depot. I had my scores. I could relax and study on the way. They picked me up at the train, took me-- To stay with some townspeople, or whatever, a hotel. And I had a wonderful rehearsal or two with them and then the concert. So you ask about different orchestras. Most of the time--I would say all the time--when you're a guest, you're treated as a guest and you're treated very lovingly.

It was cute. I went down there, and the principal second violinist was a barber. See, it's a community orchestra. He said, "You know, I could help you. I could give you a haircut." I said, "Wonderful." I guess I had long hair, whatever. So I said, "Fine." So he gave me a haircut before the rehearsal. This is how you get to know the people and enjoy the people and work with them.

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CLINE: I wanted to ask you, since you mentioned Amparo Iturbi, what it was like working with her and if you had any dealings with José Iturbi.

MILLS: Yes. Working with her was marvelous. It came about-- One of the members of my orchestra, Mr. Mark Noble, who was assistant concertmaster, a nonprofessional-- In fact, he owned a car wash in Glendale [California]. His daughter Gloria Noble studied with Amparo Iturbi. So after a few months or so Gloria was in a recital. And they asked me, "Would you like to go to see Gloria at Amparo Iturbi's recital?" I said, "I'd love to," of course. That's how I met her.

Then we talked and got to know certain things together. I guess we had common interests, of course, but other things besides music, perhaps. So then eventually she became my soloist who played the famous Beethoven Fourth Piano Concerto [in G, op. 58], a real tremendous composition as you know.

Shortly after that I became the conductor of the [Los Angeles] Doctors Symphony. That's how I mentioned that we saw José Iturbi. She was an elegant lady and so gracious. She had that Spanish-- She was like a Spanish tapestry herself. I mean, it was so beautifully woven, her life. And she would

mention about how she studied scores and her technique. Then the interesting thing is that my oldest son, Steven [Mills], who was about six years old then, she gave him a full scholarship. At that time I thought it was going to be mainly piano lessons, but the strict teaching in Spain is that you learn solfeggio first. She gave him almost a whole year of solfeggio; he hardly touched the piano, which is sure different than this country. But that is the thorough method that the Europeans have that we can learn from. But she was a gracious lady. We did some playing. I played the violin a few times at her home--nothing professionally but just to enjoy it. And then we did this other concert with the Doctors Symphony, which was very thrilling.

CLINE: What about José Iturbi? Did you have any interaction with him?

MILLS: Yes, I did. Yes. I think she passed away in 1969. Prior to that time I had written for a sabbatical leave, and I got a wonderful letter from the *conservatorio* in Madrid [Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid]. It was in Spanish, and I couldn't fathom all the things; I knew a little Spanish. So I took it to her. I said, "Miss Iturbi, will you--?" She said, "Why, this
is--" She had difficulty reading some of it. She said, "I'll call up the consul, Alvaro." So she read it to him, and he

said, "Well, Mr. Mills has a good background, and he's accepted" and so forth, and just do a few things.

So then this consul, he said, "Why doesn't Mr. Mills try for a Del Amo Fellowship?" And that's how that came about. I don't think they had brochures or anything; it was just like word of mouth. And it so happened I got it. I wrote to a Mr. [Eugenio] Cabrero and I was given a fellowship, by knowing the Iturbis.

Before I went to Spain she passed away. I went to the funeral, and I got to know José Iturbi then. He said, "Mr. Mills, my sister liked you very much, and I want to continue the friendship." And I thought, "Well, what a wonderful thing." So I said, "Well, I'm going to Spain now." He said, "Well, let me give you a few letters." He didn't say they would open the door, but they sure did. There were certain people I met, certain critics and musicians.

Then he came later to Spain. He said, "I'll be there, and you come over." I was in Madrid, and he was in Valencia. Well, he played in Madrid too, of course. Later I went to Valencia. And I went to see the festival called the *fallas*, the *fallas*. It's a religious festival there. They have it on Saint Joseph's Day, I believe. And they had-- Oh, there's fireworks, and there are big monumental things. That's the only time they could poke fun at the government. This was

[Francisco] Franco's time, and they could put it in their prose or poetry. That's the only time. If you said it anywhere else, you'd be in jail.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: So anyhow, I got to know him quite well then. He said, "When you come to Valencia I'm going to play some concerts. You'll hear them. Stay at the Hotel Reina." I said, "Fine." So I was there about three or four days, and I saw it. At that time I had met Josefa [Primo], who eventually I married. She was from Valencia, so of course she could speak with him. It was easy. But of course, he spoke perfect English.

It was interesting that after hearing his concerts--One interesting thing was, I went to a concert, and it was a beautiful program. I guess he conducted and played. And a man came backstage with a little recording, and he said, "Oh, Maestro, I recorded it." And Itrubi was petrified and upset. He said, "You're not allowed to record." He said, "You can't do that." This was after the concert. I think it was about eleven o'clock. He said, "You stay here," and he himself erased everything. And it came to a little encore at the end, and he said, "This you can have."

CLINE: Wow.

MILLS: But you see, after all, he was under contract, I guess to RCA [Records]. You couldn't record his concerts.

CLINE: Right. That's right.

MILLS: But it was interesting, that. We waited-- We had to go through the concert again until he erased everything.

But another thing was, when it was time to go back to Madrid, I went to pay the bill, and they said, "No, you're Mr. Iturbi's guest." He didn't even tell me that I was going to be the guest. What a lovely surprise, what a sweetness. That's why he wanted me to stay at the hotel, because he was part owner of the hotel.

CLINE: Oh, I see. Wow.

MILLS: So those are the pleasant surprises you get sometimes.

Also with Iturbi, in Valencia, he ordered *paella*, you know, a famous dish. It was during the time I was there. So he said, "Come meet my manager. He'll bring you here, and then we'll go up the hill." So I took a bus to the manager's home--I forget his name now--and then we took his little Fiat and drove to José's place. We get in José's Rolls Royce. We go up the hill to this famous restaurant where they had just the whole tables reserved for him. I was there with his secretary. I guess Mr. and Mrs. Hazin were there; they owned the main music store that had Steinway pianos and Baldwin [pianos] and everything else. Sure enough, we're up there, and they're catering to José Iturbi. I took movies of it.

So then we're through, we come down the hill, we get

in the Rolls Royce, we go back to his home, and he said, "Now my manager will take you home to your hotel." The manager got in the car. He was tired. I said, "All right, let me off at your place." So then I got another bus, and then I walked the rest of the way. I thought from walking, a bus, a Fiat, and a Rolls Royce and *paella*, this was a day! [mutual laughter] You know, it was really interesting.

But he was very aristocratic, a supreme artist, conducting and playing the piano. And another fascinating thing about it, about him, he played this concert-- He conducted and played, I believe, in Madrid. And it was a late one; I think it was like from eleven [o'clock] to one [o'clock]. You know, an evening concert is at eleven. They have night and evening. So we finished at one o'clock in the morning. He invited us back to his hotel for some cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. He was there and another conductor, Ascencio--whom I've seen on recent television; he's done very well--and myself. So we're having hors d'oeuvres. We stayed there about an hour. Now it's about two o'clock. He said, "Now you're going to have to excuse me. I have to practice." And we looked at each other. He said, "Well, it's true." He said, "I've got a concert in a few days." And he said, "I'm used to practicing late."

Now, this was a Hilton Hotel, and we tried to figure

out how he was going to practice. Well, the piano was dampened so you didn't hear anything. He just wanted the action. But he said, "I learned this continuity and--" What is the word I want? I'm groping for a word. He had such a-- Well, he could play for hours and hours. What's the word I want?

CLINE: Stamina?

MILLS: Stamina. He said, "I played for the silent movies when I was a young boy, thirteen and fourteen, and my father would bring me a lunch." He said, "I couldn't leave, because there was a silent movie going on and on. So I would play with one hand and eat with the other, and I would play for hours." He said, "Now I'm going to rehearse, practice from maybe two to four thirty or five [o'clock]," two to three hours, "to get this new composition that I'm going to do." We just thought it was so wonderful that he did have that kind of stamina and he was so dedicated. I mean, he could have done it without, I'm sure.

CLINE: Since you brought up the Del Amo Fellowship, why don't you explain exactly what it was and what you were doing in Spain on the fellowship.

MILLS: Well, I found out through Miss Iturbi calling the consul. She said, "Get in touch with a Mr. Cabrero"--they gave me the address--"and just say that you're going to Spain, you have a sabbatical leave, and you'll be there a year, the

school year, and so forth." So I wrote, and I got it. They gave me $3,500, and in '68 that was a lot of money.

All I had to do was keep a record of what I did, and then I said that I would give a concert when I came back here dedicated to them. I wrote *The Big Mountain*, I guess-- No, no, I wrote-- It wasn't *The Big Mountain*, it was *Spanish Rhapsody* and another one. I did that as a concert dedicated to Del Amo when I came back. So I was doing research on Spanish folk music.

At that time, the lady I married, Josefa Primo, we worked on two books together, children's folk music. And they came out quite well. We sold a thousand copies. *Canciones Folkloricas Infantiles de España* and the other was *Villancicos: Canciones de Navidad*, which is Spanish Christmas music. So those are very enlightening things, and that was for doing the Del Amo Fellowship.

[Gregorio] Del Amo had come to this country years ago, and he got a Spanish grant for all this land in Signal Hill.

CLINE: Oil money, yeah.

MILLS: So all these moneys that they made, he wanted to reciprocate with Southern California. So Del Amo would have fellowships from Southern California to go to Spain to study. Mainly at that time it was for engineers and medical students, but they gave me one for music, because I knew the Iturbis.

When I got there it was so interesting. I was just there a couple of weeks, and they wrote to me they don't think this is enough. They're going to give me an extra thousand dollars.

CLINE: Wow.

MILLS: So they actually gave me $4,500, and I was getting my sabbatical money from the school, so I was living like a king. At that time you could get a meal for maybe a dollar and a quarter, a full meal. So I lived in a beautiful-- First I lived in a hotel, and it was awful. So then I moved to a-- I don't mean awful. I mean, I couldn't live there all the time, you know, and study and play the piano.

So then I met a young man by the name of Stevens, Henry Stevens. He was a student from Florida. He was going to be a dental student. So we met. Two Americans were touring the town before the school started. Well, his school didn't work out for some reason. He couldn't get in medical school. So I said, "Henry, you don't want to go back. Stay here and study Spanish, and next year you'll get into medical school."

So he took me up on the offer, and we rented a beautiful apartment, three bedrooms. I said, "If your parents come from Florida, they could stay." So instead of going to Salamanca he stayed in Madrid, went to Madrid University [Universidad Autónoma de Madrid]. The apartment was so big, I rented a piano, and I did all my composing there.

It was the greatest year. I didn't have a car; I didn't need one. The buses were terrific, and the metro. Everything was just perfect. I didn't have a phone. I had to go out and phone.

One unforgettable experience, I went out to phone, and in Spain you put the coin in, which is called a *ficha*. It has a little slit, and you put it in. Then you get your party, and when that *ficha*, the time, runs out, it drops and you're cut off. You can't stay overtime or anything. So I figured out, "The next time you'd better put extra ones in that little carton," in the container. But without a phone, without a car, I lived joyously.

CLINE: And you met your second wife.

MILLS: Yes. She was in the same apartment. Oh, yeah. Well, first it was a hotel, and then we moved to this apartment, *coslada veintiuno*. It's been changed to thirteen, *trece*, whatever. But yes, it was interesting. Her mother said she saw the names of some Americans. She said, "Why don't you get in touch with them?" So we met at the mailbox.

Then I found out she liked music. And she knew I was in music, so that was it. She played the guitar very well and sang. She worked for the phone company; she wasn't in music. When I first met her she had her Beethoven Ninth Symphony on, and the record was so warped it was like that. [demonstrates

with a gesture] And she knew every note of it; she had a very good ear. And from that marriage we had a daughter called Maria [Mills], who is now twenty-six [years old]. So that's the story of that.

CLINE: Okay, this is a good time to stop, but before we do, you said that I had to ask you in this session about Julian Brodetsky and--

MILLS: The Brodetsky Ensemble.

CLINE: And Jacob Gimpel.

MILLS: Oh, yes, yes. Okay, Julian Brodetsky had a famous ensemble at about the time [Peter] Meremblum had his orchestra. So it was in the forties, into the war. Yeah, thirties, late thirties. It was an ensemble of strings. He would do chamber music, quartets, multiple players on a part. That's how I got the idea later to do this Mendelssohn octet, because we did it--

We did the Mendelssohn octet [for strings], eight first [violins], eight second, eight violas, eight cellos, and a strong bass. So there were thirty-three players, and we did the Mendelssohn octet. And we did other things. I found that some of the chamber music lent itself very well to a larger group.

It was a big controversy at the time. There was a man in the newspaper, and he says, "How can you do that? How

can you take a quartet and put eight players on it?" So there were two sides. But [Arturo] Toscanini had-- What's his name? Samuel Barber. The famous *Adagio for Strings* is originally a string quartet.

CLINE: That's right.

MILLS: So I think it was Toscanini or somebody who asked him to do it for strings. Toscanini took it on tour, he loved that piece so much. [Pierre] Monteux wouldn't have done it; you know, he stayed close to the composer. But I think when you do something like that, I think it's all right. It's not really distorted. I don't think so. Brodetsky did some marvelous work. He was a perfectionist. There are two players in my orchestra that were there fifty years ago with me, Norman Rosenblatt and her name was Laurette Sarch--now it's Laurette Carlson--and they still play violin in my orchestra. And we were together in the ensemble.

This is the extent and perfection that I learned the discipline from Julian Brodetsky. And he was a strict conductor. He was no Monteux; he was the other one. But you learned this: on Sunday the whole group would meet from ten in the morning to three or four with a little intermission for lunch. Monday he'd take only the first violinists, eight of them, and each one would play every note of the composition. It wasn't like orchestra, where everybody plays and you don't--

This was a real section rehearsal. Everyone had to play every note or you did it again and again. But they were, of course, auditioned. These were good amateurs--I mean, they were nonprofessionals--but they-- Everyone had to play every note.

I played second violin. I was there on I guess a Tuesday. All the second violins were there. We all played, and we shivered in our boots. And Brodetsky's edict was this: He said, "I don't care how tired you

are--" We would rehearse from seven [o'clock] to ten thirty P.M. "I don't care how tired you are. I don't want to see a yawn." So at ten o'clock everybody's hand was over their face and we were yawning. But that was it, that was the training. Second violins were Tuesday. Wednesday was the whole group again. Thursday were the violas, eight of them, rehearsing individually. And Friday all the cellos and the bass. Saturday they'd get all the music. They had this old Xerox, purple machine.

CLINE: Oh, mimeograph.

MILLS: Mimeograph, right, mimeograph. The old purple-- Our parts were purple. Then he would sharpen the pencil. Every stand had a pencil on it. It was perfect organization.

And they played gorgeous music. It was one of the best groups I ever played in. It wasn't considered professional, although I guess we got paid a little bit, whatever. But

I wanted to bring it out, Julian Brodetsky. Then Jacob Gimpel was one of our soloists. He played I think the Brahms Piano Quintet [in F Minor, op. 34] and gorgeous playing. Wonderful playing. You know, he was a very aristocratic gentleman. And his brother was Branislaw Gimpel. He was a violinist, concertmaster of the L.A. [Los Angeles] Philharmonic [Orchestra], also a great violinist. But Jacob Gimpel played several times with Brodetsky.

I also mentioned Alexander Tansman, didn't I?

CLINE: I don't remember that you did.

MILLS: Well, he was at that time a contemporary Polish composer. He did a composition called *Triptyque for Strings*, a wonderful composition for strings.

We did all of these marvelous programs. Every week we had two rehearsals--three rehearsals, actually, the individual and the two together. So that was pure perfection. I wanted to mention that as being-- Nowadays, who would give three days a week to a group?

CLINE: Well, who could afford it, right?

MILLS: Right.

CLINE: Okay, we'll pick up next time with more discussion of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra and move your career closer up to the present day.

MILLS: Okay. Perfect.

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AUGUST 26, 1998

CLINE: We've had a little time apart. You've been to New York to a wonderful wedding, had a wonderful experience, and we're ready to pick up from where we left off last time. How are you this morning?

MILLS: I'm fine. Happy to continue.

CLINE: Okay. We left off last time after talking quite a bit about the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra and its origin and how it manages to function. Also we ended with your trip to Spain on the Del Amo Fellowship and the work that you did there. And I wanted to begin this morning by asking some more questions about the work of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony and some of its special concerts and special guest artists that have worked with the symphony. One thing that you mentioned in the last interview that I wanted to ask you about--we were talking about the support of the community and the different ways that the orchestra has been able to raise funds and continue operating--was that people in the community, they might say, "Well, why go to see a community symphony?" when they can go to see the Los Angeles Philharmonic [Orchestra]. And I guess I wondered if you had an idea about how to answer that question. Why should the local people here, the patrons that you reach out

to, come to support a symphony that's a community symphony when they can go and hear the programs downtown by the L.A. Philharmonic?

MILLS: Well, I guess the way to answer that is we try to offer the finest quality that we can afford. And there are times when my friends have donated their services very generously and have been helpful, and they've supported me financially, too. The trend is always to raise money for serious things, and there are always other things coming up in people's lives and different priorities. I like to think what Napoleon Hill said, "A winner never quits and a quitter never wins." I mean, if you're turned down by one, then you go some other place and think of another idea. It's like the great scientists in history; they didn't get their answer the first time they tried an experiment. And I think symphony orchestras today are undergoing a tremendous change because there are always other things that are vying for people's time. But if we can show the treasures of the past are valuable just like the Rembrandts--we're not going to forget them--and the music of Beethoven and Brahms and all of these great, great treasures of music-- They're still as vital today as they were then, and they're played better and better.

And I think the way we will survive is to adjust. I think if we can't adjust, we won't be able to. It's like

Stravinsky when he wrote *History of a Soldier* [*L'histoire du soldat*]. He wrote for a small combination because that's all he could write for at that time. He didn't write a big thing like *The Rite of Spring* [*Le sacre du printemps*]. So he was able to adjust, and that's why he was able to live so long and produce to the end of his life. I had the privilege of working with him a couple of times when I played in orchestras, and it was very inspiring to see him. I don't know if I mentioned before that one of the bassoon players in the Hollywood Bowl Symphony said, "I've been playing Stravinsky's music for forty years, and he still continues to adjust and change it." And I think that's important, because music, to be alive while the composer's living, he wants to make it even <u>better</u> because you never make anything really perfect. We're all trying for perfection, and we have different ways of getting there at different speeds.

And I think also when we talk about-- It's in the same realm of feeling, self-esteem--I think I mentioned that. We have to give it to ourselves. We live with ourselves twenty-four hours a day. We have to respect this body and mind and soul, which is always here, and we can't really count on other people, because they move away. I had a trombone player who played all last year, and I called him up. He said, "I'm moving." Well, I planned on having him. Now I'll

have to adjust and get another trombone player. But I still have myself to do it and my ideas. And I think we have to be nicer to ourselves. There are times when we say we're doing too much or we're too tired, and we really don't give ourselves the attention and the-- I don't know how to put it exactly. That we don't appreciate ourselves and our bodies enough to take good care of them. Now, working hard is wonderful. It's the worry about working hard that isn't wonderful. Achieving things by working hard is wonderful, but worrying that we have to work so hard, this is bad. And the body should have a vacation every day, even for five minutes, so to speak. And if we take a vacation in our mind and see a beautiful setting, the subconscious doesn't know if we're there or not. Just close your eyes and picture you're at Lake Arrowhead, and it's calm and peaceful, and those beautiful trees that God made are there to make a better life. We don't really appreciate ourselves or our environment. We're striving. It seems like we have a million dollars, but we'd better make two million. We're not satisfied with what we have. What I say, we don't count our blessings enough. We count our complaints, and they will multiply instead of the blessings. I think that's my feeling.

And when it comes to support, as I say, we had a trombone player, and I have to get another one. I had somebody who

supported me, and they moved out of the area Then I had to get somebody else. It's a constant challenge, and that's the great part of it. Look at it as an enjoyable pursuit--the pursuit of happiness through sponsorship. Does that sort of answer the question?

CLINE: Yeah. Well, one of the things I was curious about is, say I live in the area on the Westside here in Los Angeles, and I can go see a concert of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony or I could go see the L.A. Philharmonic or I could go see maybe another orchestra, maybe the L.A. [Los Angeles] Chamber Orchestra or something. Why should I go see the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony? Why should I go to one of their concerts?

MILLS: Well, we try to make interesting programs. Now, this year I'm really ecstatic about the three soloists. I've been connected with them a long time now. The first one is Timothy Landauer. He's principal cellist with the Pacific Symphony [Orchestra] under [Carl] St. Claire--wonderful orchestra, wonderful conductor. And I've been there, I've heard it, and I'm very thrilled with what they do. They have a wonderful hall in Orange County [Orange County Performing Arts Center]. Now, Timothy won our contest--our "Artists [of Tomorrow]" contest--about twenty years ago when he came from Shanghai. He was here a little while studying with Eleanor

Schoenfeld--very important lady in the orchestra's life and in the community and teaches at USC [University of Southern California]. And Timothy, when I asked him if he would be soloist this time, he said he'd be delighted. Now, he's doing me a personal favor. Timothy is of the caliber that when Yo-Yo Ma comes in town and needs a second cello player for his chamber music he calls on Timothy. Now, that shows you the quality of his playing. And of course, when great artists look for another artist, they want somebody that they can work with in a very cooperative manner, and he's the essence of cooperation and good manners. And he's so respectful.

Incidentally, one thing I usually ask the soloist because of time element--they're busy, live far away--is would they send me a tape of their playing so I can hear it. It's like a tailor that would measure the sleeve. Everybody's sleeve length is different. What is allegro to one person is a little different to another. And the style-- So to get a more perfect cohesion when we get together I listen to the tape. So I said, "Timothy, could you send me a tape of your playing at your leisure?" And he said, "Well, I'd be happy to. I recorded this music with the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra four years ago. I have a CD." Now, I mean, my mouth opened up when I heard that. He's played all over the world, and he will come to Brentwood as a courtesy to me, and realizing that the first

orchestra he ever played with was the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony, because he won the contest. Now, that's what you call loyalty and respect and dedication. By the way, he sent me the CD. It is gorgeous. He has on it the Saint-Saëns [Cello] Concerto [No. 1 in A minor] as well as the Dvo_ák [Cello Concerto in B minor, op. 104], and it's just a treasure.

So that is one reason I think people would enjoy coming to our concerts. They're free concerts and free parking, and you don't get that at the Philharmonic.

CLINE: That's for sure. [laughs]

MILLS: And a lot of people say they don't like to go out at night way downtown. You know, older people prefer an afternoon concert which is-- We do it for the families and hopefully the children. This year I want to invite and involve more children one way or another. Other orchestras mentioned it, too. Our outreach program is very good. But we go to the inner city and those schools that are too far away to come out here. I've invited them, but it's a distance.

And then the second soloist, I have John Novacek. Now, he's played all over the world with Leila Josefowicz. She's a great violinist. I heard them at UCLA. They gave their last concert of their tour--I don't know, world-wide tour--and they are a magnificent team. I mean, when they play, of course, not concertos--what's the word I want?--sonatas, I mean, the

piano is equal. He's not just accompanying her. And his sonata playing and all of his playing is just priceless. He has such a sensitivity. She's twenty years old now, and they started when she was eight--he started playing, accompanying her. So after twelve years she's matured into this wonderful young artist. It is magnificent.

And then the last concert is David Shostac, who started in my orchestra when he was thirteen [years old] as third flute. Now he's first flute with the L.A. Chamber, which is an outstanding group. I don't have to tell you. So I'm working with these people who are a treasure.

CLINE: So you have these special programs, and this is what I wanted to talk about, in fact. You've had numerous very impressive soloists come to perform with your orchestra, many of whom, just as you described, were young people who came through the ranks of the orchestra. And to get us to that, I wanted to ask you, you've mentioned numerous times now the "Artists of Tomorrow" program that you have at the orchestra in order to enable this to happen. How did that program start and evolve?

MILLS: Yes. I'm trying to think. The name escapes me for the moment. There was a lady that came to me twenty, twenty-five years ago and said she'd like to present some kind of a concert with the orchestra and have a contest. And that appealed

to me. Beth Jones. There's her name. You know, names sometimes fly away; it was well over twenty years ago. She was part of the Music Teachers Association, the Brentwood-Westside area. And she came to me as one of the chairpeople of one of the committees, and I said, "That's a great idea." So that's how it actually started. Somebody came to me, and I'm always open for new suggestions, and that's how you really grow. I think that's why the orchestra will be forty-six years old--forty-sixth season starting right in October.

CLINE: And can you explain a little bit how the program works? How you find the young players and how the concerts take place? How the music's selected for them to perform?

MILLS: Yes. We send out a brochure, application form, and it's standard repertory, or if there's anything special then we talk it over to see if the music's available. That will go out about in October, and the contest is usually either in January or February. Then we have very wonderful judges like Mitchell Lurie and [Arnold] Belnick, and they will judge the contest. They choose the winners, and then we have, say, from January to May to prepare the program. I usually have a concert in March, so we start rehearsing right after March. And the winners play their selection.

Sometimes-- It was interesting. One year we had-- I

guess in the junior division and senior division they both won, played the same piece. I forget, maybe Saints-Saëns Piano Concerto no. 2 [in G minor]. And of course, that couldn't be on the same program. But luckily the senior winner, whoever won senior, said that they had something else, because they had more experience. So then it worked out. But ordinarily it works out very well. We've done some wonderful things--done the Gershwin [Piano] Concerto in F, we've done all the Beethoven piano concertos, and his violin concerto-- And Prokofiev. Last year we did Prokofiev Violin Concerto no. 2. So we've had a tremendous spread of music.

CLINE: You mentioned David Shostac. Who are some of the artists who are now all grown up and making waves in the classical music field who have been winners of this "Artists of Tomorrow" program?

MILLS: Well, there was-- Daiseilla Kim, a singer, I know had gone ahead after she won, and I know she sang with Zubin Mehta in the L.A. Philharmonic. Some of these people might be in Europe now, and then you don't hear about them. I guess Gerald Robbins was a guest--now he's doing big things as a pianist--but I don't think he'd won the contest. Other ones that won-- Well, of course, Timothy Landauer, who has done all of this. Shostac really wasn't a winner of that. I'll

have to think through. *[There was Cheryl Staples, who is assistant concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and Barry Gold, cellist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.]

CLINE: Sure. But while we're on the subject, then, who are just some of the young players who have come through the orchestra, whether they were winners of that or not?

MILLS: Well, as a matter of fact, my mother [Lillian Ascher Mills] kept wonderful records of every little expense. At one time we were giving gasoline money for people that would come. And Leonard Slatkin, who is now the conductor of the National Symphony [Orchestra]-- And when I went to New York last year and I was the guest of [Glenn] Dicterow, the concertmaster, and my son [Steven Mills] was too, we went backstage and visited with Leonard. Leonard played viola in my orchestra so many

years ago--I don't know when--and he was given five dollars gasoline money to come to the orchestra. So now he's one of the big names. And others that have played--

Well, we've had Werner Klemperer, who's a movie star, and his father, the famous Otto Klemperer, who was the head

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* Mills added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

of this L.A. Philharmonic for many years. Very inspiring man. I used to go to his concerts to hear him. I didn't know him personally. But Werner Klemperer I found out wanted to conduct, so we had him as a guest. As a matter of fact, I just found the program. This was on December 2, 1973. Werner Klemperer, a versatile actor and witty, urbane man and so forth. He was the famous Colonel Klink on *Hogan's Heroes* and did many more things than that, of course. He's usually cast as a heavy, it said, [reading his biography from the concert program] "*Death of a Scoundrel, Istanbul, Five Steps to Danger, Judgment at Nuremberg*--" Well, he was a wonderful person to work with. And he said, "Can I bring somebody?" And he brought-- Her name escapes me now. But she had done *Kiss Me, Kate*, the original Kate. Would you recall that name?

CLINE: No.

MILLS: Anyhow, he was a friend of hers, and she came there and-- Wait a second. Patricia Morrison. Here it is on this program. Mezzo-soprano. Well, we did selections from *Kiss Me, Kate*. She's here. Why isn't her program in here? He did [*Die*] *Meistersinger* [*von Nürnberg* by Wagner]. He wanted to do that. And I guess-- I don't know if he did Unfinished Symphony [Symphony no. 8 in B Minor by Schubert]. But she sang from *The King and I*--she was born in New York--and *Kiss Me, Kate*. That's what she did, Cole Porter. And that was

her big hit on Broadway. I guess she did *King and I* and *The Sound of Music* and all those, too. Patricia Morrison was a very fine-- So she was one of our soloists.

Also, I'm happy to say that I gave Nick Ariondo--

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

MILLS: Did I mention him?

CLINE: The accordionist.

MILLS: Yes, did I mention him before?

CLINE: No, I think only to me off tape.

MILLS: Oh, let me mention him, because I think he's really a genius. And the accordion has been so relegated to a back burner here and sort of downgraded. You'd think they only play it-- You know, the Lawrence Welk-like type of bubble playing. [laughter] But it really can be great with Nick Ariondo. I heard him in a contest, and we gave him a $5,000 prize a few years ago. In fact, two years in a row he won it. He played like-- His transcriptions of a Beethoven sonata, fabulous. He has the greatest feeling for music. And he's accompanied my wife, Grusha [Paterson Mills] when they played at the [Wilshire] Ebell [Theatre], and he's on her CD [*Grusha Sings Russian Gypsy Love Songs*]. I think I showed you that. So I have the greatest respect for him. He's played with the orchestra about two or three times. And Eugene Zador, my mentor, he wrote a concerto for accordion and orchestra

for Anthony Galerini, who was a tremendous accordion player and president of the Accordion Federation of North America. And I met him. He did with me the Zador accordion concerto. Nick did that, and then Nick played his own things, too. Also we did a series of programs honoring Walter Jerman. I don't know if you've heard of this composer, but he worked with this other man, Bronislau Kaper, at MGM [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer]. And "San Francisco," he wrote that. I have the greatest respect for Nick.

CLINE: Some of the other people mentioned here-- At one point I think you mentioned that you had Roy Harris as a guest.

MILLS: Yes. Roy Harris-- I knew him through Dr. John Vincent, who was my professor at UCLA, and I was his concertmaster, and then I got to meet Roy Harris. Roy Harris was our guest conductor-- I forget the year. As a matter of fact, we rented five of his compositions--we had to have that--and for some reason or other he was only able to rehearse two, so we did two. But it was interesting working with him. And also I worked with his wife. Did you know her?

CLINE: Yeah.

MILLS: Johana [Harris]. I was playing in the Janssen Symphony of Los Angeles previous to that time, and she played several concerts with us. And we went through all of the Sibelius symphonies. He was connected with Sibelius, so I had that

experience as a violinist. And we went up to San Francisco, gave concerts under Werner Janssen.

CLINE: And also some of the people mentioned here. Of course, you mentioned Amparo Iturbi the last time we were here.

MILLS: Did I talk about her?

CLINE: Yes, you talked about her. We've talked about Mitchell Lurie. These are some of the other people who performed with the--

MILLS: Did I talk much about Mitchell?

CLINE: I'm not sure if there's anything--

MILLS: Well, I wanted to say that Mitchell Lurie played--Well, I've known him since high school days. I mean, he's also a very great artist, performer, and the most wonderful teacher. People come from all over the world to study with him. He's sort of semi-retired now. Mitchell played the Mozart clarinet concerto with us. I've done that several times, and his performance was so beautiful. It's before I went to Spain, I think, in 1968. And that's remembering thirty years. This is '98. But I remember it like it was yesterday, because the way he approached the music, it was with such a masterful touch. And the tone, the pure tone. His pianissimo was like no other person can do it. And that's, of course, how you judge an artist, the control of their dynamics, because it's just like in speaking. [speaks in monotone]

If we talk always one hard monotone it is awful. [Cline laughs] That's why the great actors and actresses-- You know, "To be or not to be--" I mean, they just say that, and if it's a great actor like Laurence Olivier you'll have to hold onto your seat or you'll jump out of it. [Cline laughs] You know what I mean. The way [Jascha] Heifetz played a run on the violin. And Mitchell Lurie was just charismic. Did I mention the "Lurie Legend"?

CLINE: Yeah, you did mention that. Right.

MILLS: That was very important. Well, I consider him a very dear friend and a tremendous artist.

CLINE: Right. Let's see if there's anyone that we haven't talked about here that--

MILLS: It's good you have that book.

CLINE: Yeah, right. You have Shony Alex Braun listed here.

MILLS: Shony Alex Braun. Yes, a very fine violinist. And as a matter of fact, I ran across one of his programs. He did--in May 18, 1975--Hungarian traditional "Fly My Swallow" arranged by him. And he did "España Cañi." And he did "Serenade Romantíque" and "Romanian Rhapsody." He's a gypsy violinist and composer, well known in the international world among the very few who brought gypsy and continental music to the concert stage. And he really did. One of the things it says, "Shony Alex Braun, recognized as one of the foremost

interpreters of continental and gypsy music in the world." It was in *International Musician*. I just came across that. And I find him very exciting to work with and a fine artist. And by the way, Shony is the violinist on my wife Grusha's CD, *Grusha Sings Russian Gypsy Songs*.

CLINE: And some of the people you've mentioned before, Arnold Belnick and Alice Schoenfeld, Gabor Rejto, and someone you haven't mentioned, who I--

MILLS: Did I mention them?

CLINE: Yes, you have in previous sessions. But you didn't mention-- Jeffrey Solow is listed here as cellist.

MILLS: Yes. Now, he's done some great work, and I've known his mother, Davida Solomon, for many years. In fact, we played in the famous Brodetsky Ensemble. Did I mention a little bit about that?

CLINE: Yeah, that's right.

MILLS: He's done some great work. And I believe he did play with us once. And he has such a tremendous following now. He's world famous.

CLINE: You've also had guests with the orchestra who were, like Werner Klemperer, not known as musicians in the world but more known as celebrities, entertainers, actors. Can you tell us about some of those? You've mentioned Werner Klemperer. What about Phyllis Diller?

MILLS: Working with Phyllis Diller was wonderful. She played the Beethoven Piano Concerto no. 1 [in C, op. 15], and she knew exactly what she could do. She approached it as an artist, leaving being a comedian offstage. I mean, she did some interesting things. Before, as a perfect comedian, she was dusting the piano and taking off long gloves and things like that. But when she sat down and played the piano, then it was very serious. She played the first movement, and it was without the cadenza, and it shortened it, and I think it was what she felt comfortable with. And she did a wonderful performance of it. It would have been nice if we could have taken that on tour. Those are the things. You know, you do it once and then it's over. But of course, they say the memory lingers on. So it does. Working with her was very wonderful. Somebody said she came there and they hardly recognized her. I mean, she came not all in a flamboyant way that she would do a program. She came to work as a hard-working artist. So it was a revelation. I still keep in touch with her because of the "My Prayer," for which I wrote the music.

CLINE: Can you talk about that?

MILLS: Yes. I guess it was one of the personalities-- I forget his name, but at that time I guess it was CBS that went into the homes of the various celebrities. Jerry-- What was his name, this fellow?

CLINE: Oh, he was a reporter, a newsperson? Jerry Dunphy?

MILLS: That's the one. Jerry Dunphy. I recall that he would go in and interview the celebrities in their homes. I don't know what it was called. And this was a program--I think it was about ten thirty at night. I believe I was listening, and maybe I went into the kitchen for a glass of water. All of a sudden I heard some harpsichord playing, which you don't generally hear on channel two. So I came back, and he was interviewing Phyllis Diller. He went through her beautiful home in Brentwood, and "This is the kitchen" and "This is where I wrote a book." And I immediately was captivated by her aura of being serious, because usually you don't see her serious, but she has a very serious and erudite and wonderful way about her. And so I was captivated by that. At the very end of the program she said, "May I read my poem 'My Prayer'?" Well, I was listening. It's a short poem, but it's very poignant, and I thought, "I would like to put that to music"--like later on I put "Color Me Equal." I don't know if I mentioned that or if it comes later. But I wrote to the station, to Jerry Dunphy, and I said, "Phyllis Diller--please forward."

So about four or five weeks later I heard from her. I think it was Ohio--from her. She said, "I'd be happy for you to do that, put it to music." I said, "Can I do that?" And so then finally I got the poem, and I put it to music.

And this I think about '72 or '73. Then, at that time, she was concertizing and playing the piano, and the conductor would have an overture and some music, and then they put "My Prayer"--music by Alvin Mills, lyrics by Phyllis Diller--just before intermission with one of their singers who had to memorize it. Then she would do her part of the program last. We did her program at the Scottish Rite [Auditorium] later on. And this became a very big success. Then I published "My Prayer" through my publishing company, Horizons Unlimited Publishing Company. I guess one has to sometimes do that on his own to get things out there. So my relationship with her has been very, very happy and a healthy one.

And every time I talk with her-- I talked with her just recently about something, and she's doing very well. And my cousin Bud Pulver, from the Illinois area, he heard her in concert at the Drury Theatre and said, "One of your friends mentioned your name on page twenty-five or something of the program." She mentioned that composer Alvin Mills had written music for "My Prayer." I enjoyed working with her.

CLINE: That's great. And another celebrity that you've mentioned worked with the orchestra was Burt Lancaster.

MILLS: Burt Lancaster. This was really quite a thrill. Howard Engelman, our president, was a personal friend of Burt Lancaster. They would play bridge together. They lived in

Brentwood. Very close friends. They both had five children, so they had a lot in common. Howard said, "Why don't we get Burt to do *Peter and the Wolf* [by Prokofiev]?" And there was no reason not to, if he'd do it. And he agreed. He did it as a courtesy to Howard, because we can't pay those salaries. Anyhow, it was arranged in 1961. At that time I was a teacher in Glendale, and I was at the second story of one of the buildings, and I looked out on this typical day in '61, and I saw over the hill there was a fire. Later I found out it was the Bel-Air fire, and Burt Lancaster's home was burnt to the ground. And I just thought, "He has a commitment, but now he's having a real difficult time." He had to live at the Beverly Hills Hotel. I didn't know if he'd go through with it, but he did. A man of word and principle. He was a great person. And working with him was a great thrill, of course. We did *Peter and the Wolf* and the auditorium was just packed. Talk about having an audience. You have somebody like that, you could pack them in. The parents were standing around the hall of Paul Revere Middle School, and, you know, they were standing in the aisles against the wall. And Howard Engelman got up and said, "Would the children"--that were seated--"please come up in the front in the pit." You know, little children, they can sit there. So a lot of them--most of them--did, of course. They filled the pit, and then all the people were

able to sit down. Working with him was just beautiful. And of course, *Peter and the Wolf* is a great composition for children. They loved it. I did it also, interestingly enough, with Richard Hale. Have you heard that name? Actor?

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: He was the first one to do *Peter and the Wolf* with the Boston Symphony [Orchestra] with [Serge] Koussevitsky as conductor. And he worked here. He was an actor, and he became very fond of the Brentwood symphony, and he did several things with us. He did *The Adventures of Henry Bold* by Zador, which has a narrative. And it was wonderful working with him.

Then I did it also with Russ Tamblin. Russ is a fine gentleman who has helped us many times. He did *Tubby the Tuba*.

CLINE: Oh, really? [laughs]

MILLS: Yes. And that was hard to get the music for. I had to check with the Philharmonic to see how they got that. But yes, working with Russ Tamblin, Burt Lancaster, and Richard Hale--wonderful people.

CLINE: Any others that come to mind, celebrities?

MILLS: There was a Thomas Cassidy who was in the KFAC radio station. He did several narrations with us. And he had a wonderful program, *Luncheon at the Music Center*. I was a

guest many times there. It was interesting.

CLINE: Did these concerts with these sort of celebrity-type people, like the Burt Lancaster concert, generate larger crowds generally?

MILLS: It did. It did. Yes. And then, of course, we had to try to keep up the standard and so forth, which was a challenge, too. But I think we have, in most cases. Presenting the young people, composers, I try to help them. I notice here I had a program with-- I think it was Gerald Robbins. He played, and he's a very famous pianist now. You've heard of him.

CLINE: Yeah.

MILLS: He was a guest I think when Peter Nicoloff was the conductor, from the La Jolla Symphony. I've done these exchange concerts, and I enjoy doing those. I did it just this last year with the Los Angeles Doctors Symphony. When I do that I like to conduct my own compositions. I get ASCAP [American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers] credit.

Did I mention Paul [E.] Cummins? He's the headmaster of the-- Well, and now he's the president at the Crossroads School. They're very cooperative, and his wife Mary Ann Cummins, fine piano teacher and professor there and many times she has winners in the young musicians contest. Anyhow, these are people that have been very helpful. Paul has been very supportive. And what I wanted to say is that he enjoyed my

Spanish Rhapsody. It's always nice when somebody of that stature tells you that they like your music, because you never know exactly how it is received. The audiences are different. But just getting that nice response from him was rewarding for me.

And I want to thank him publicly from the top of the roof for all he's done, because we were able to have our contest there each year--"Artists of Tomorrow"--and he'd just give us the facility. We have it for a whole Sunday with security and everything. Well, he does a wonderful job of music, as you know. I mean, the reputation of Crossroads-- And he's very innovative. He's starting new schools all over, and they're patterning after Crossroads, from what I understand. I hope I'm getting it right. Like schools in Korea. He has a model of some type and they're following his model. So, I mean, that shows what we can do in this area. The Los Angeles area is very influential to other parts of the world.

CLINE: You've mentioned this in our first session, I believe, but I wanted to get a little more on it. You mentioned the program you did with Louie Bellson, "From Bach to Bellson." Can you say something about that? Because this featured some of his original music, if I remember correctly.

MILLS: You're absolutely right. It was through Carmen Dragon that I knew him. And Louie Bellson had played with the Glendale

Symphony. We were going to have a twenty-fifth anniversary at the Music Center [of Los Angeles County], and we wanted to have something a little unusual and some real celebrity. I knew that Bellson had played with the Glendale Symphony, so I called up Louie Bellson, and I said, "I'm conductor of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony, and we're having a program at the Music Center. I know you've played for my friend Carmen Dragon, and could we arrange something that would be good for you and me?" That's what it's all about. So he was very, very kind on the phone. He said, "Yes, I'd love to do it." And he said he'd do it without a fee. That was very kind. But he said, "I want to do my compositions." I said, "Fine." I mean, this was an easy commitment. He said, "I did the *Abijan Suite*. My wife, Pearl Bailey, was an ambassador of goodwill and had gone all over the world for the United Nations." And he said, "She went to Africa, to the Ivory Coast in Abijan"--I guess it's a territory there--"and I went along just to be with her." He said he was so fascinated by the rhythms and the playing in Africa, he wrote the *Abijan Suite*. And would we premiere it? I said, "We'd be delighted. It would be an honor."

It was in three movements, "Morning," "Noon," and "Night." All I remember is that it was very difficult. Louie Bellson used members of the Doc Severinsen *Tonight Show* band. Pete

Christlieb played the saxophone, and somebody by the name of Blue-- I mean, he had all these top players. Really great.

CLINE: Was it a trumpet player? Blue Mitchell?

MILLS: That's the one. I mean, he had all the top players. You know the names probably better than I do. They were kind. They would come to rehearsal. They would play the *Tonight Show*-- I think they recorded from five [o'clock] to seven or eight [o'clock], and our rehearsal was a quarter to seven to nine thirty, and they'd come in the middle and sit in. And we worked his music. Also, one other thing he wanted to do was *Jazz Ballet*, which he had premiered in Las Vegas before that as a jazz work, but in the meantime he had worked with composers and he had arranged something for a symphony plus the jazz band. I said, "We'd love to do it." So we did those two things.

And like you say, it was from Bach to Bellson. I did a Bach Prelude and Fugue in G minor, and then Bellson. Working with his group and him was terrific. I've always enjoyed doing new things, and I'm not opposed to so-called jazz or anything. I think it's wonderful that they all worked together. It was really fascinating. And the thing that thrilled me--besides the rehearsals and that--his comment after, he said, "Someday, Alvin, I hope I can do your music as well as you did mine." I thought that was the paramount compliment

from him. And we've kept in touch a little bit. I've tried to get him again, but he's a very busy man, and perhaps someday we'll have him again.

CLINE: Yeah. And since you mentioned Carmen Dragon, perhaps you can say something about your association with the Dragons.

MILLS: The Dragons. [laughs] Yeah, that's right. Carmen Dragon-- I was a teacher for over thirty years in Glendale--I think I mentioned that--an instrumental teacher. And one year, from the honors orchestra, they asked me to be the main conductor from the school system, and I was. And they came from all over. It was all over the state. It was a state orchestra. They were auditioned, and we had about a hundred musicians. Now, they wanted a celebrity who was well known, so they got Carmen Dragon. Well, he was conductor of the Glendale Symphony for many years, and we got to be friends right away. Working with him was tremendous. In fact, I did his *March of Destiny* when I was conductor of the Idyllwild Symphony just after that. I guess it was '67, '68. And he conducted beautifully. He had such a tremendous way of conducting, and personality. Just working with him was great.

I was going through a difficult situation at the time, and Carmen hired me to play a concert, which I did at Lake Arrowhead. I played in the Glendale Symphony. We did a concert for the Fourth of July. We were on a barge, and the people

sat on the sand at the water's edge, and they had a picnic lunch or whatever, and we had a nice pops concert. He was noted for his wonderful pops music and arrangements. He has a tremendous library even yet. And his daughter Carmen Dragon mentioned that to me. He has a daughter Carmen Dragon who is a fine harpist and who has done wonderful things in CDs herself. She sometimes plays in my orchestra, and I help her a little bit with conducting. So I feel I'm keeping in touch with Carmen Dragon.

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CLINE: We were discussing Carmen Dragon--two Carmen Dragons. You said that the daughter Carmen Dragon sometimes performs with your orchestra.

MILLS: As a matter of fact, the father Carmen Dragon at that time said, "You know, Alvin, I have a daughter that plays harp, and if you need a harpist with the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony--" I said, "We'd be delighted." So there were times when we used her as a harpist twenty, twenty-five years ago. As a matter of fact, we had a rehearsal last night with the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony, and she came out and played the piano, learning the technique from [Pierre] Monteux: when you don't have all the instruments, the pianist can do it. So she filled in certain parts, which was wonderful. Then I let her conduct the first movement of the Unfinished Symphony of Schubert. She did that. Well, I want to encourage young people to conduct and give them a chance, because they don't always have an orchestra at their disposal.

CLINE: Now, when you get ready to do a program like this, since you're now-- You just came from rehearsal. You're now preparing for a concert in October. What is the process that you go through to select the material to put the program together? How do you envision a program when you embark on this?

MILLS: Well, when I ask a soloist--and I have something in mind and they do it--that sort of gives me an idea of the timing. Now we're doing the Dvo_ák Cello Concerto with Timothy Landauer. That's a work over forty minutes, so that's the second half. And it's not only a concerto. I think of it as a symphony, because the orchestral parts, the tuttis, are magnificent. They're challenging, they're exciting, and they give the audience a chance to hear the orchestra as a soloist, because it's very important. Then, of course, the support of the soloist and the way it's written. This is a great concerto. In fact, I believe it was Brahms, after he heard this concerto, he never wrote a concerto for cello himself. The great Brahms wrote the Double Concerto [in A minor] for Violin and Cello [op. 102] but never a cello concerto. He was so taken with this.

That's another thing. It's nice to know how people in the past helped, just like Zador helped me. Brahms helped Dvo_ák. He got him SIMROC, the publisher in Germany. And he helped him. The way I remember it too is that Dvo_ák was a teacher, and he had to work very hard to make a living as a teacher. Brahms knew that and would get him different fellowships and scholarships and awards because of his wonderful talent.

That's something else we learn on the route of learning

the music is to know what the composer did and wished. And he said, "I don't want one note of my music changed." Because a cellist wanted to change it at the first performance and other things. But he changed it later, the ending, he mentioned. It's interesting. But I think it's a marvelous piece. And I had the privilege of doing it with [Gregor] Piatigorsky when I played in the Kansas City Philharmonic many years ago. Piatigorsky was a soloist. And then I conducted it already twice with Gabor Rejto.

You talked about Rejto. He was a great cellist. One little incident about Rejto-- I don't think I mentioned that when I was at the Academy of the West as a student in Santa Barbara, Rejto, and, I think it was, [William] Primrose and Piatigorsky and, I think it was, Louis Kaufman, the violinist-- There was a quintet. I forget who the other violinist was. They played a work for two cellos. Piatigorsky, of course, played first cello. Six-foot-six [inches tall], and the cello looked like a viola when he carried it on stage. And Gabor Rejto was about five-foot-five. He played a cello. But I remember Gabor Rejto's approach. I forget the work now, but he was playing pizzicato, and he played those pizzicato notes--there were five or six--like they were the only notes ever written. He approached them with such dedication and such respect, and it was like a prayer the way he played them.

I always remember how a great artist approaches things, I mean, because they have respect.

Like Brahms had respect for the talent of Dvo_ák. And Brahms surely had respect for the talent of Beethoven, because he never wrote a symphony until he was in his forties because he said, "How do you walk on the sacred ground of the Ninth Symphony? That's sacred ground." So respect is an important thing which we don't have in this world today, and I think we have to give it by continuing good music and inspiring the young people to get it back, because it's the only thing that might save civilization. Because if it all tears apart-- That's what I believe. That's a deeper, longer issue.

CLINE: Yes. We will probably talk more about that at the end of our interview process.

MILLS: Right, right.

CLINE: So you begin putting a program together based on the soloist's selection of a piece that they're going to perform?

MILLS: And then I want to balance it later with time. Now, Brahms's overture-- He only wrote two overtures, but the *Tragic* [*Overture*, op. 81] is so powerful. At "Bach to Bellson" I did the Brahms, twenty, twenty-six years ago. I obviously opened with that. So I opened with that, and then I wanted a short symphony, so the Unfinished Symphony by Schubert. I think it's a nice balance.

CLINE: And do you have to very clearly keep in mind the limitations of the nonprofessional musicians that you're working with when you do this?

MILLS: I have to think of that to some extent, and then I have to think about the fact that I might only have one professional rehearsal. I think I mentioned before that I wanted for years to do *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Themes by Weber* by Hindemith, based on Weber. That's such a magnificent work, but I couldn't do it with less than maybe four rehearsals. So I just wouldn't try to just scramble through it. I just have to not do it.

CLINE: Is that ever frustrating for you to not do--?

MILLS: Yes, it is. It is. And someday I hope to have a budget, and maybe I can do that. Yes. I try to be optimistic, because I am an optimist.

CLINE: Yeah. You also did some pops concerts out at the Veterans Administration, as I recall. This was the "Concerts on the Green"?

MILLS: Yes.

CLINE: What can you tell us about that? How did that come about? This was in the late eighties, actually.

MILLS: Yeah, about '89. Right. Well, there's a very fine gentleman that I did "Color Me Equal" with--he wrote the poem--Stan Lefcourt. He's the poet laureate and a very dear

friend of mine. He knew about us, and it took him two years. Talk about really working on something. He had it almost one year, and then one of the sponsorships didn't materialize, so we had it the next year. We had two very fine sponsors: Jon Douglas [Company], and at that time there was a magazine, *Music of the West*, I believe--it's not in existence now--and they got together the proper moneys. They were going to have four concerts, and then they decided that there were so many expenses like insurance, security, so it became three.

I enjoyed those thoroughly. We did motion picture music. We did, of course, the famous [John Philip] Sousa march "Stars and Stripes Forever." And then I did *Outdoor Overture* of [Aaron] Copland. One year we were very brave and we did *Rhapsody in Blue* [by Gershwin] with Michael Bays, who was a personality on television.

I might mention that he's a pupil of Bruce Sutherland. I don't know if I mentioned him, but he's been a great help. And he was a dear friend of José Iturbi, so I've known him since the Iturbi days. Bruce Sutherland was in charge of the "Artists of Tomorrow." You see how everything ties in. In "Artists of Tomorrow," he made it so secure from a financial standpoint that when he was no longer doing it, we had a rough time.

But getting back to the "Concerts on the Green," we had

Michael Bays play *Rhapsody in Blue*. Interestingly enough, when they brought the piano for that, to put a piano on a little platform on the grass-- A piano is heavy, and when they put the piano in before the rehearsal, the platform began to sink, and I was wondering if we would be right underground. But luckily we weren't. And he did a magnificent performance of that. But then I learned that playing outdoors, unless you have a tremendous sound system, the music evaporates.

We had three concerts the one year. We had about five hundred in the audience, then about close to a thousand, then about twelve, fifteen hundred. Everybody came. Free concert. They brought their lunch; they picnicked right there. And the thing that was wonderful is the children could come up right by the platform and conduct right behind me, which was wonderful. And people were so nice. They saw me rehearsing, and they said, "I bet you won't have lunch. We'll bring you lunch." So they brought me lunch afterwards. That was a wonderful, happy feeling. I'd like to have that again, and there's talk about having it reinstituted--is that the word? We'd like to have that one more time. I enjoyed the pops music very much.

CLINE: And that went for a couple of years?

MILLS: Yes. The second year was quite curtailed, because that was the time of the real estate problem, you know, when

real estate faltered, so we had no backing.

CLINE: And this sort of relates, then, to the concerts you do with some of these celebrities. This is something that really is geared toward the public. What are the considerations for putting a pops program together as opposed to your regular concerts that you do with the symphony?

MILLS: Well, there's nothing really opposed. They sort of complement each other. It's just like the Hollywood Bowl. They have Tuesdays and Thursday serious, and then the weekends they have the pops. It's the same thing. I mean, it's sort of a balanced diet, and doing the pops music, I've always enjoyed it.

And talking about lighter music, I worked-- Did I mention Vernon Duke?

CLINE: No.

MILLS: Vernon Duke I met through Frederick Marvin, a concert pianist. And Vernon Duke-- His other name is Vladimir Dukelsky. I recently heard Skitch Henderson talking about that. You've heard of Henderson.

CLINE: Yeah.

MILLS: And I met Vernon Duke through Frederick Marvin, and I did his *Washerwoman's Ballet*. I did that before I went to Spain in, I think it was, '68. He's the one that wrote "April in Paris." He wrote "Autumn in New York." He was a

dear friend of Gershwin, and Gershwin said, "Vladimir Dukelsky? This won't go on Broadway." So he kept his initials. Vernon Duke. And he invented that name. So I knew him. But he kept both places. When he wrote serious symphonies he was Vladimir Dukelsky. He was a white Russian that had escaped Russia and came here. Tremendous man. I knew him just a short time, but I came to respect him as being very innovative. He was going to get music from all over the world for my orchestra--you know, unknown things--but unfortunately when I was in Spain he passed away. But we worked with him a little bit, and he gave me his book--*Passport to Paris* I think it was called. Very educated man. I did his ballet and got a chance to know him a little bit. But his "April in Paris" is a wonderful piece, and "Autumn in New York." And then he did symphonies and other things. So that was another personality I worked with.

CLINE: And related to this also-- We were talking about the potential frustrations of not being able to play more difficult music sometimes, or maybe not being able to hear the pieces that you're familiar with played at the level that you'd probably imagine having them played at sometimes. But this would probably make it more difficult for you to play more modern music, I would imagine.

MILLS: Yes. Certain composers come to me, and even Zador

said, "I know with your limited rehearsal and so forth we wouldn't attempt this list." There are some things, right. Of course, I can do things at rehearsal on a limited basis so that we can sort of learn it together, the orchestra and myself. There are some limitations, of course, because budget is a definite factor.

CLINE: Do you personally enjoy more modern compositions? Or is this an area where it's just as well that you don't have to invest--?

MILLS: I can do it or not. It isn't that frustrating. And I think my philosophy is that one has to adjust, because situations don't adjust to us. We have to adjust to it. So to be happy and healthy-- I mean, then I'll listen to the [Los Angeles] Philharmonic do it. And I'll listen to college orchestras that have unlimited resources and they don't have to worry about union [American Federation of Musicians] players, and they can work for three months on a piece. So everybody has to know their place in this situation.

CLINE: But do you personally enjoy more modern music?

MILLS: I've enjoyed some modern music, yes. I don't hold anything against it. Some of the public does, and I think they should have a chance. I think the composers should have a chance to be heard, and that's why I'm glad that the different orchestras in the colleges and universities, where they have

unlimited time, no restriction with union players, they can do it, and I think that's the place to do it. And the Philharmonic or big orchestras, of course.

CLINE: Now, with all these different community orchestras and things-- You've mentioned, for example, La Jolla, Glendale-- I mean, there are various other ones around here. I don't know if it's still around, but there was a Palisades Symphony. Do you have communication with these people? Do you share information? Or do you network in any way?

MILLS: Definitely. When the L.A. [Central] Library had a fire a few years ago, do you recall that? And that's the source of most of our music. All the conductors that I know got together-- The one in Downey [Thomas Osborne], he and I exchanged music from our own personal libraries. And Joel Lish, I got music from him that I use for the children's concert. No, we try to help each other. We had to help each other when it was a crisis and we couldn't get any music. So now that the library is open again, we get music there. I think we try to help each other.

CLINE: So you know most of these conductors pretty--?

MILLS: I know most of them, and I respect them, and I know they're doing good things. Dov Scharf has an orchestra I think in Orange County, and he's loaned me music. And Tom Osborne of the Downey Symphony, and Leon Guide, who has the

La Mirada Symphony Orchestra, we've shared music together, yes. Yes, definitely.

CLINE: There are a lot of community orchestras out there.

MILLS: There are many, many, yes. And they're all doing what they have to, and I salute them all. I mean, instead of thinking they're competition, I think they're cooperating in keeping the main source of music alive that I believe in, and it's a treasure. So we have to take good care of that treasure, because it's delicate. It's a delicate treasure, music, and we know how valuable it is as a source of inspiration, spiritual fulfillment, enlightenment, and putting us to a much higher level. So I think for our own health we have to think of cooperation more than competition, because competition, it doesn't do anything for you.

You have contests. It's like I had dinner with somebody recently, a young winner, and I said as a teacher and as a parent we have to tell our sons and daughters that are going into competition, "Go in for the experience." If there are two hundred people in the competition and only three prizes, we have to be realistic and not quit if we don't win. But go in for the experience that you're going to learn and see what the others do and learn from them. We don't have all the talent. We don't have everything ourselves. And if we do, then something's wrong with us if we think so, because

it's crooked. We look at something crooked and we get a crooked result. It isn't pure. We have a certain talent we got from God, and we should share that talent and realize other people have talent too and not be jealous. The awful things that you hear in the past, the jealousies between composers and how they did things and-- This is a waste of time, and it surely didn't do their health any good to try to hurt a person or take away their thing.

Like six years ago somebody tried to take my orchestra--which I'm going to touch on just lightly--but it didn't work. And then I realized who my friends are. Henri Temianka came to my rescue, and my wife, and my son [Robert Mills]. And then you realize when seventy people write letters in your support you must have done something good for the community, and that gives you a feeling that you can't buy. That is a very secure feeling. And then that gives you confidence to help other people maybe in similar situations.

I think I mentioned before, I would like to heal. I like to think of myself as a healer. And some people just put their hands on people and they actually heal them. We see in the world today neighbors aren't necessarily neighborly. And this is a sad thing that the world doesn't learn, because all the effort we put into wars and destruction, we could wipe out probably all the diseases and all the bad things

and there would be enough for everybody and more.

My way of thinking at this time is to help as many people as we can. And it does come back. And then the satisfaction that you really helped somebody--not necessarily for five dollars or fifty dollars or fifteen hundred--but you really helped somebody-- "I really helped this person. They were in a difficult situation, and through my few words or my music or my working--"

Somebody said last night my patience is almost saintly. Well, perhaps when you work with amateurs it has to be. You see, I don't expect what they can't do, and that puts me in a good place. I know when I had my orchestra and I was on sabbatical and I had some conductors that came in--I won't mention names, and I don't know if I mentioned before--they tried to work so much to make these nonprofessionals professional, and it was frustrating for them, and the people were ready to quit. [laughs] So I try to realize what they can do, and I inspire them to do a little more, but I know they'll never play like a professional. That's why I hire professionals to come in and give us a good sound that the audience will respect and have a good response to. I think that's my duty to both the nonprofessional and the audience.
CLINE: There are a couple of orchestras here in the area who work exclusively with younger musicians. One is the

American Youth Symphony with Mehli Mehta, and there's the YMF [Young Musicians Foundation] Debut Orchestra. Do you have any interaction with either of those orchestras or their--?

MILLS: I had some interaction with Mehli Mehta. In fact, with the Doctors Symphony-- They are one of our sponsors, the Doctors Symphony Society. And there's a wonderful lady, Sylvia Margolis, who's in charge of that, whom I knew years ago when I was their conductor in the sixties. She's in charge of that now. They gave a tribute to Mehli Mehta, who had been thirty years with the American Youth Symphony, just last summer, and they asked me if I would come and have musicians play. I was delighted to do it. And we brought, I don't know, maybe twelve or fifteen musicians. We played outdoors. The people donated their services. David Shostac played, who had never been with him, but of course they respected each other. And then Rob Frear, the trumpet player, who plays in the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and played under Zubin Mehta in the Israel [Philharmonic], he was trained by Mehli and was happy to play a solo for him. And James Arkatov, who is a dear friend of Mehli's, and he played a cello solo. So we had three solos as a tribute to Mehli Mehta. So that sort of answers-- There is a relationship.

I don't know the Debut Orchestra. I respect them. But they change conductors all the time. And of course, I've

known--not intimately-- Sylvia Kunin has been the head one of the Debut, I believe, and I've talked with her and so forth, but we've never done anything. And I think they do wonderful work. I applaud them highly. I don't feel competition. I feel that if we can put in the atmosphere a certain amount of harmony and good music, and they do the same thing, I think this structure of harmony in the air and just going through-- You know what I mean? One of my sayings now is "May harmony and good health be your constant companions," and I think that's what I feel for the world. Because they will feel better if there's harmony in their heart and soul, and if they have good health they will make better decisions. I think we'll have more peace with this kind of a-- When people are happy and healthy they're not looking for trouble, you know?

CLINE: Right. And when we were talking about these community symphonies and things, one that hasn't come up yet that I know you were involved in was the Inglewood Symphony Orchestra.

MILLS: Yes. I was assistant conductor there for several years under Ernst Gebert, and I enjoyed working there. I never conducted a concert, just mainly rehearsals. He was quite a bit in Europe, so I would prepare the orchestra, and I worked there. Alexander Murray was my dear friend; he was concertmaster. So I worked with them a few years.

It was interesting, though. For some reason, whatever it was, I was one year told not to come back. So I didn't. And it was interesting. The loyalty of my friend Alex Murray-- He said, "Why, Alvin Mills had done so much. There was really no reason to fire him," I guess, or "not hire him again," whatever. I never really found out why I was, in fact, but it could have been a certain jealousy. But the philosophy of "bless and forgive" comes in very handy. And Alex Murray just quit, too. He said, "If you do such a thing--" And there was no reason, you know, because I had done so much there.

CLINE: When was this?

MILLS: I think it was 1955. It goes way back. I just ran across something on that. But, whatever. I mean, things do happen. It's interesting. When one door closes at least another one opens, and that really is true. When a chapter's over it really is over. Have we talked about the "past is history"? Did I mention that?

CLINE: I don't think so.

MILLS: "The past is history, the future is a mystery, and this moment is a gift, and that's why it's called the present." [Cline laughs] Isn't that interesting? And actually [strikes table], see how quick the time is over? For our own health I think we have to be very present. And "Bless and forgive, it's good for your heart. Bless and forgive,

it's a good way to start." I think for health that is imperative. Now, if you want to be angry all the time, it's a big club out there--you can join it. [mutual laughter] But I don't think that does much for your health, and it maybe keeps your Bufferin bill up.

CLINE: Yeah. [laughs] Well, while we're on the subject--I know you didn't want to go into it in depth; you said you wanted to touch on it lightly. There was this incident that you've mentioned a couple of times where someone tried to take the orchestra away from you. Is there anything that you want to say about that for the record that you're comfortable with?

MILLS: Well, I think the main thing is that I had people like Henri Temianka, my son Bob Mills, Grusha Paterson--who wasn't my wife then-- They really came to my rescue, knew it was the wrong thing. The newspaper articles came out and said it was the wrong thing. The community was against it. And why did they do it? It just happened by one individual that wanted the orchestra. And it was very well thought out, his plan, that different members of the board that could have been, shall we say, sympathetic to me were eventually eliminated. It was a well-planned and timed thing. And I'm very trusting and naive, and I didn't think anything like that would happen, but it did.

But I'm grateful that I was able to adjust. I was grateful that I had all of these people help me, and then I knew who were my friends. As I say, I bless and forgive them. I think if we say, "I hope that they're happy, they're healthy, and wealthy," then the case is closed, then it puts me in a proper position. And I mention no names, no names, because I think that's wiser. I think so. And I really do hope they're happy, healthy, and wealthy, because those words are in my being, and if I say anything negative, that isn't my being, and that will happen to me.

See, people don't realize-- I meet so many intelligent people, so many rich people, so many-- They don't know how the subconscious works, and they seem to be against themselves. They say, "Why did I do this and that? I wasn't smart doing that." I don't think we can afford to say anything negative. Now, it doesn't mean when we make a mistake we don't say it, but we don't emphasize it. We don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Everybody I've known has made mistakes.

I hired somebody to play, years ago, English horn, the *New World* Symphony [Symphony in E Minor, op. 95, *From the New World*, by Dvo_ák]. [sings English horn melody] Very simple tune. He made a mistake at the concert. I'm conducting, and I couldn't believe it. But he didn't do it on purpose. He made a mistake because he is a human being, and human beings

make mistakes. Now, they might try to cover it up, but the mistake is there. It is. Pierre Monteux told me, he said, "If you make a mistake, you tell your orchestra, 'For my sake, let's do it again.' You don't cover it up. You tell them. You're honest." And I think that's perfect. I say that many times. I say, "For my sake let's try letter A again, letter B, and number three," whatever, and we do it again. And I'm very sympathetic to everybody, because I know they make mistakes, and if you keep-- It's just like a sore. If you keep rubbing it you really get a sore, but if you let nature heal it it goes away. Nature heals. You get a scratch on your hand and coagulation is there as your constant companion. [Cline laughs] And you don't have to say, "Come on, would you coagulate for me, please?" You know what I mean? And I think that's the same thing. Don't trouble trouble, and don't make such mountains out of little things.

Now, things have to be corrected. If you make a mistake, you make a correction, but that's it. Don't dwell on it. People have a tendency to dwell on the bad and make it worse and reinforce it so it stays. Now, if something bad happens you address the situation, you take care of it, and it's over. And I'm talking from the real standpoint of good health, because I think you work better with good health than if you're not healthy. I mean, that's my real philosophy now.

CLINE: How many years now has it been since this attempted takeover?

MILLS: It's six years. It was 1992. So this is '98. About six years. About this time it was over. But as I say, it was a series of events that, when you look back, you say, "Why did that happen?" It was interesting.

The thing that was a little sad-- There was one of my fraternity brothers that was in on it, and that makes it sad when you sort of-- You think you trust people like that. A music fraternity, but as I say--

CLINE: Does it have a name, the fraternity?

MILLS: Phi Mu Alpha, you know, the music fraternity. You've heard of that.

CLINE: It's sort of not my world.

MILLS: Yeah. But as I say, those are some of the things that you didn't expect. But you learn. But I bless my wife, my son, the late Henri Temianka, who wrote such a beautiful letter that was just-- I have it as a treasure. And that was a model for other people that saw it. You've heard of him, of course. I mean, he's a very important man.

And it's interesting. When you do something nice it comes back. When I did the concert with Louie Bellson, I had his student Nina Bodnar Horton play *Zigeunerweisen*. She was the soloist. And he came to the rehearsal. She was about

nineteen, and it was very wonderful. At the rehearsal, sometimes you forget to look at the time, and I went overtime. I gave her so much time that I didn't realize, and I went over. Seven minutes overtime cost me $300, and $300 is a lot of money, you know, for an hour. But he remembered the nice things I had done over the years, Henri.

In fact, did I mention Henri was in a recording session I did years ago? I think I mentioned that. And he said after that twenty-one hours he said, "I don't want to do that anymore."

Well, we had been friends for all those years, and when this happened and I showed him-- He had the flu. He said, "Come in my room, though, and I'll--" He wrote a letter, and he had his secretary type a letter. I'll show it to you someday off the record. But those are the things that give you a lot of courage when you find you have friends like that. People, when they shared music and that, that was nice. We got together and realized we had a crisis and we wanted to help each other.

Well, I'm willing to help anybody that needs help, whether it's a young person or somebody not so young. As I was saying, people that are so intelligent and they don't know their subconscious, that it's very delicate, and you really can't afford to say things that are negative. Did I give you the example with Wiley Post?

CLINE: It doesn't ring a bell.

MILLS: Well, this is what I read. Wiley Post was connected with Will Rogers, and the last flight they took together, they crashed in Alaska. The story goes about Wiley Post-- He had one eye. He had a patch over the eye. And the story goes like this: He had said when he was a young man, "I'll do anything to get an airplane. I'll give up an eye." And within two or three weeks, if I remember the story right, he lost an eye. He got a lot of money, and I guess he got his plane, but that's the wrong way to do it. [Cline laughs]

You see, the subconscious doesn't take a joke. And it's there twenty-four hours a day. It has nothing to do with your color or your religion or your age. You can be one year or a hundred and one, the subconscious is working. That heart is beating, digestion takes place, all the time. So it's a very important factor.

And what I tell the young people: "Learn about the subconscious. You know how to play the piano very well. I don't have to teach you. Your teacher has done that. But what you don't know is probably about the subconscious being your friend. If you let it be your friend--

I believe in the subconscious. And it's what you honestly believe in your heart that you get. The people that get a lot of bad luck are thinking bad luck, so to speak, if luck

is a part of it. And people are so-called born with a golden spoon in their mouth because they think positively. I really think that's so important. Would you sort of agree on that?

CLINE: Oh, yeah.

MILLS: And don't you meet people that are really very intelligent and so forth, and they don't know a thing about their subconscious mind? They say things that are so negative that I cringe. And I can't tell them all the time, because I would maybe be considered rude, or it's inappropriate.

CLINE: Yeah. They're not ready to hear it, probably.

MILLS: No, that's true, as if they're not ready.

CLINE: You mentioned when this challenge was taking place that one of your allies was the woman who is now your present wife.

MILLS: That's true.

CLINE: How did you meet?

MILLS: Oh, well, we met before that, and we had been friends. We had met because she was part of our guild. We had a women's guild of about maybe fifty or sixty members that was the right arm of the orchestra, and they would put on fund-raisers. They would put on programs, and I would talk with them about the program. So we got to be friends, and little by little it just came about. But they didn't know we were friends, and they sort of took her into confidence, and they--

Unfortunately for them and very fortunately for me.

CLINE: [Cline laughs] Yeah. And then you were married after that?

MILLS: Yeah, about five or six months later, something like that. That was '92, also. It was December. As I said, it was about a three-year plan. As you look back you can say, "Why did--?" And you read the board notes, and you can sort of get inklings. You know, hindsight is a very wonderful way of winning a game when you've almost lost it. [laughs] Or lost it.

CLINE: But things are on track now--

MILLS: They're on track, and I learned a lot, and like the phoenix out of the ashes I've-- Rebirth, reconstructed, and I'm stronger. I learned a lot. The inner me is stronger, and I realize that I live with myself twenty-four hours a day, and I have to be good to myself, and I have to teach myself.

I think I mentioned a little bit about being divinely guided, being divinely protected, I believe, and being divinely healed and divinely supplied. Now, if you have those four legs, you can write a good scenario on that. Because peace of mind-- Everybody wants it. You go to church, you go to temple, you want peace of mind. "My God, help me." But you don't have to beg. Your God is with you twenty-four hours

a day, and just your blood is your God and your thinking. And you know, people say, "Aren't computers wonderful?" The brain is the greatest computer ever. We say, "Isn't that a wonderful camera?" Well, our eyes are photographing all the time. "Isn't this a wonderful sound system?" We've got ears. "Isn't this beautiful, the rose?" We smell and we taste. I mean, we have so much. We don't count our blessings enough. That's why the psalm says "count your blessings" over here, over there, and everywhere. That's what it said.

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SEPTEMBER 2, 1998

CLINE: We talked last time a lot about the "Artists of Tomorrow" contest and some of the young players who come through the [Brentwood-Westwood Symphony] Orchestra. And I'd asked you about some of the names of some of these artists who had come through the orchestra, whether through the "Artists of Tomorrow" contest or not, and you said you'd remembered a couple more names of people who'd come through the orchestra that you wanted to talk about. So maybe you could mention a couple of these musicians who had come through the orchestra.

MILLS: Yes. The three that come to me now-- And I mentioned a letter that just came yesterday. Of course there's David Shostac, who's the first flutist with the L.A. [Los Angeles] Chamber [Orchestra], a dear friend, and he's going to be soloist this year in our March concert. With him it's been a great friendship. He's almost like a son. When he was thirteen [years old], he started as third flute, playing in the orchestra, sitting right next to Howard Engelman, who has been our president for many years, over forty. In fact, when Engelman goes to Aspen in the summer, David Shostac is usually on the faculty, and he takes lessons from him. So it's an interesting connection over all these years, how the president admires this wonderful player. And every time David comes in the orchestra the flute

section gets a lesson. So he's one of the wonderful successes that I'm happy about and that we've kept in contact with all these years, and he's been soloist with my orchestra many years.

Then another one, as I mentioned I think, is Richard Lesser. Now, he is first clarinetist with the Israel Philharmonic over twenty-five years, maybe close to thirty now. And he also started when he was a teenager. He played clarinet. I forget with whom he's studied. But he's gone ahead and done some wonderful things, obviously, to play in this great orchestra and on all the recordings they've made. I haven't kept in contact with him, although I would like to write to him and see if we can make a connection again. I'm very proud of what he's done. They started as basically very modest people, as I remember them, and they had, of course, this great God-given talent that comes forth and comes to the top.

And the third one, the one that I just showed you the letter a few minutes ago-- I believe in the subconscious, and this was a demonstration. We talked last week, and sometimes when you think of over forty-six years, a few little facts and figures and people's names disappear easily. But there's a new doctor, Leslie Eber, who's a cardiologist and teacher and professor at UCLA, and he played as a nonprofessional

in our orchestra just this last year. And he's always trying to help us get new people. He has a boat in the marina [Marina del Rey], and next to him is a Mr. Kaufman, who also has a boat. And they were discussing whatever--he didn't specifically say--but obviously he must have said, "I play cello and I love the cello, and I bought a new cello, and I play in the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony." And Mr. Kaufman said, "Well, so did my son many years ago, Richard Kaufman." And then I think his brother did, too. So he said, "Well, what is Richard's phone number? I'd like Alvin to get in touch with him and see what could happen now." So I called Richard, and after the famous machines talking to each other a few times we finally got together--human voices--and it was the most delightful and enlightening and what is called a perk, I guess. You know, in a community symphony the budget is not the greatest, and my salary's not the greatest, but what happens when you get a treasure type of experience that I had talking with him, that sort of makes up for everything and inspires you to go ahead for another forty-six years. And I'm on my way.

I'll just read a little bit of the letter. It was so wonderful. He writes to Maestro Alvin Mills in Santa Monica and so forth. He said [reads],

> It was wonderful speaking to you last night. I've thought often of the invaluable training I received as a young violinist in the Brentwood symphony. I was in junior

> high school and was already thinking about music as a career. In the Brentwood Symphony I found musical challenges and inspiration that would contribute greatly to my desire to be a professional musician when I grew up.

And I think that is something that you can inspire people--Obviously it's the music, but the way we presented it. And the experience of a young person is extremely vital, because I remember in my junior high school days when I played in the orchestra and my teacher said, "Why don't you become a teacher?" And I remember that like it happened yesterday. And of course, I did become a teacher. So there's inspiration in those very vital times of our lives, in junior high, especially.

[reads]

> I have so many memories of playing in the Brentwood Symphony. Three come quickly to mind. The performance of *Spellbound* was my introduction to electronic music, as it were. Dr. Sam [Samuel] Hoffman played the theremin, and this incredible sound combined with the music of [Miklós] Rózsa gave me one of my first opportunities to play film music along with observing this strange and haunting instrument.

And I recall Dr. Sam Hoffman with great respect and admiration. Later he was one that helped me get to be conductor of the [Los Angeles] Doctors Symphony. He was a chiropodist. He is not living now, but memories of Dr. Hoffman are very vivid, and they make me feel very warm and loving to this gentleman and what he did. And now I can see him playing the theremin, which was a very beautiful thing. And of course, the way you play it, you hold your hands along the side and the different

sounds come out. That alone was very unusual. I mean, it's different from the violin or blowing a trumpet. So I can see how it made an impression on a junior high school boy, Richard Kaufman.

Then he goes on to say, [reads]

> *Peter and the Wolf* [by Prokofiev] was another memorable experience. Of course, everyone loves that piece. But it was narrated by Burt Lancaster, one of the great actors of Hollywood. Not only was he a fine actor, but he was also my little league baseball coach. His son Billy and I were on the same team. So there I was with my violin and Mr. Lancaster on the podium in front of the orchestra and the audience loving every moment of it. And I loved every moment of it, too. Working with Burt Lancaster was a very thrilling thing, who we got through Mr. Howard Engelman, our president, who was a very close friend of his.

And this was the time of the Bel-Air fire--I don't know if I mentioned it before--

CLINE: Yeah, you told the story.

MILLS: Yes, so I won't go back over that. But the fact that his home burned to the ground and he still went through with the commitment was something very wonderful. So that was a beautiful experience both for Richard and myself.

And then he says [reads],

> Lastly, playing in the orchestra gave me a rather unique experience. It was the first time I saw a woman smoke a cigar.

I didn't even realize that, but it must have been these very thin cigarillos, like a cigarette. But unfortunately the smoking was a bad thing for her. Anyhow, she smoked.

Amparo Iturbi was to play a Beethoven concerto. I forget which one.

Well, it was the number four in G major [op. 58], and that, of course, starts with the piano. It's very impressive and a very great composition, and she did it so wonderfully well.

He said [reads],
And she strode into the rehearsal, sat down at the piano, and proceeded to light up a cigar.

Richard is talking now, and I'm quoting him.
I almost fell off my chair. What was the world coming to? Then she played, and what an extraordinary experience listening to her.

Well, she was one of the great pianists, and that was José Iturbi's sister. They did many joint concerts that they played together, and of course he conducted for her and so forth. And I mentioned my Spanish experience. So I got a chance to know them very well and I loved being with them and learning from them. [reads]
Needless to say, musicians gain so much of their experience in the first years of playing. Those rehearsals and performances at Paul Revere Junior High School were an important part of my musical education,

Richard says,

and there is no doubt in my mind that you provided me and other young musicians with an invaluable gift: the opportunity to sit among professionals and prepare for the future playing major repertoire in an orchestra of great quality and musical integrity.

CLINE: Wow. A real testimonial.

MILLS: I think that's beautiful, and it makes me feel very

good! [continues reading]

> As I have pursued my career playing violin in the studios and conducting symphony orchestras throughout the world, I look back and am so very thankful that you were there, so generously giving me and others your time, your experience, and your inspiration. It is this kind of giving that keeps music alive in our world and is a tangible legacy which will continue to brighten the lives of all who love music. Looking forward to speaking to you again.

Signed, Richard Kaufman.

Well, I think we were looking for ideas about what's going to happen with the future of music. All the conductors--I give them all credit--as they continue to play this music, continue the outreach program, I think the future will be very good, and I think it is very important for us to do that. We feel empowered. Well, the music is such a great inspiration for me personally. Every time I think of a certain composition I have conducted I am definitely in a different world, so to speak. I mean, I'm with Beethoven. I'm with Brahms, I'm with Mendelssohn. They had a great gift directly from God, as far as I can see it, and I'm honored to be able to recreate the sounds. And now with this letter I see that I have been doing things. I imagine there are other people that I've touched over forty-six years that probably would say something like that, and they might be on the other side of the world helping people now. I just don't recall who they are, but I hope they are doing-- I know they are. [holds up letter] This is the proof.

Richard conducts now the Pacific Symphony [Orchestra] pops series, he does about ten concerts there. And he told me he did one year in Dallas as the pops conductor, and he was such a success--he very modestly mentions--that they hired him now for three years, a new contract, and that is something of importance and speaks very well of him. Then he sent me this CD, *Wuthering Heights: A Tribute to Alfred Newman*, and he's with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. "Richard Kaufman, conductor." And I think this is a great tribute to him.

And then of course, the late Alfred Newman-- It's interesting. When I went to Spain almost thirty years ago, I got in touch with Alfred Newman to be one of my guest conductors. I don't know if I mentioned that.

CLINE: No, you didn't mention that.

MILLS: Yes. He was very busy with the studio, and he wasn't too well at that time, and he gave me the name of John Green--Johnny Green--who did accept. He was at MGM [Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer] also. So I did meet Alfred Newman. And through Peter Meremblum years before-- When Meremblum played in the studios at Twentieth Century-Fox [Film Corporation], they did *The Song of Bernadette*, for which Alfred Newman had written the music and conducted. He took some of the orchestra to watch the recording session. That was very thrilling, watching Newman work with this wonderful studio

orchestra which Meremblum was a part of. He played in the first violin section. So it's interesting how all these things tie in one way or another.

Incidentally, he always wanted to be called John Green when playing symphony music. Well, he wrote quite a few things, of course, for the movies, but he was in charge of MGM for many years. He did a benefit for us in Beverly Hills. He was very, very kind, very nice. He was a member of ASCAP [American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers]. He would always be at the meetings. It was a joy having him as one of my guest conductors when I was in Spain. I had James Swift, who's a conductor in town. I had two others. I can't think of what their names are right offhand. But you want to put the orchestra in good hands when you're away, and they all did very nicely.

Ernest Gold, did I mention him? The one who composed *Exodus*, Ernest Gold. He was also a conductor. And at that time he had Louise Ditullio play, I believe, a flute concerto and a piccolo concerto. I ran across one of the brochures or something. So that brings back nice memories. And once in a while I talk with Louise Ditullio. She and her sister [Virginia Royer] did a wonderful benefit for the orchestra some years ago. And

her father was a great cellist--he was in the [Los Angeles]

Philharmonic [Orchestra]--Joseph Ditullio. So connecting with all these people has always been very, very nice.

CLINE: Can you remember any of the other young players? Or do any more come to mind after Richard Kaufman?

MILLS: Well, I think I mentioned Daiseilla Kim, who went ahead with the Philharmonic.

Well, there's one important one that I ran across. My mother, Lillian [Ascher Mills] Heuring, she kept tremendous records. I guess people born in January are very efficient, and I looked over some of them-- You know, we have expenses, and many, many years ago Leonard Slatkin was a violist in our orchestra--at least for several concerts--and we gave him a gasoline allowance of five dollars. So that could tell you how far ago that was, because five dollars doesn't get you very far nowadays, and they wouldn't have come out for that. Anyhow, my son Steven [Mills] and I went back to New York last year. He had won some prize, and I was his guest. We were guests of the New York Philharmonic. It was Glenn Dicterow, the concertmaster, who gave us the tickets. We were his guests. We went backstage afterwards and saw him. And then I saw it was Leonard Slatkin who was guest conductor, and now he's in the National Symphony [Orchestra] conducting. I asked the attendant, "Will you call up and see if he's still there?" And when he heard I was here from California,

we went up and had a nice informal visit with him. So he has done great things. I just heard on the radio he has a CD with the St. Louis Symphony, and he has many CDs. So I would say his being in the orchestra was an inspiration, hopefully for him. I don't know how much he got from us, but he was in the orchestra as a violist. And of course, his famous father, Felix Slatkin, had done many things with the Hollywood Bowl Symphony and the Hollywood String Quartet.

And another great violinist that comes to my mind as having played with the orchestra but not coming through the orchestra is Paul Shure and Bonnie Douglas, his wife. They played the Henk Badings Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra a number of years ago. He's one of the great violinists around, and I'd known him for many years, too. Sort of in the class with Mitchell Lurie.

CLINE: Just because I knew him in high school, I just have to ask this: Did David Howard ever play with the orchestra?

MILLS: Yes. Did you know David Howard?

CLINE: Yeah. I went to high school with him. And of course, he's in the L.A. Philharmonic.

MILLS: That's exactly right. David Howard-- Yes. He played the Eugene Zador-- I think it was a concertino. We got a wonderful write-up from the late-- Well, not the late, but he's not with the [*Los Angeles*] *Times* anymore--Martin Bernheimer

came out, and usually they don't come to the community concerts. We don't charge, but as a courtesy to Zador and a courtesy to David Howard's father, Orin [Howard], who was in the Philharmonic and wrote the program notes, I believe, he came out and wrote a very nice article. And David Howard played--I think he was only sixteen then. And then later he played--Was it the Mozart [Clarinet Concerto]? I guess maybe it was the Mozart. He played with our orchestra. You know, he was already a member of the L.A. Philharmonic then. Yes. Wonderful gentleman, great player, and I was very honored to have him back. So he didn't really start in my orchestra, although he played at an early age before he was in the Philharmonic.

It was interesting. Let me give this little incident. You know, clarinet players, by blowing, there's a certain amount of moisture that gets in the instrument, and between movements sometimes they have to get the moisture out. So we had done the first movement of the Zador piece, and I'm ready to conduct, but I looked over, luckily, and there he was putting this large material through the clarinet. It looked like a parachute. He was cleaning it out. And so my hand came down; I didn't conduct until he was through. But those are the experiences you have on the podium that are not in the score, and they happen.

CLINE: Well, you always say you have to be able to adjust, right?

MILLS: Oh, "adjust" is the main word. Alvin "Adjusting" Mills they call me. [Cline laughs]

CLINE: While we were talking about the orchestra, I know that the orchestra engages in a number of social activities as part of its existence. What are some of those activities? And then how do they help the orchestra in its musical pursuits and its morale, perhaps?

MILLS: I think that's beautiful--"pursuits and morale." I love your way of putting things, and I'm learning a lot. [Cline laughs] Almost from the beginning, we had a group that met in homes. There was a Mark Noble--I don't know if I mentioned his name--years ago, and he was assistant concertmaster. He was a nonprofessional. He was a very successful businessman, lived in Brentwood, loved the orchestra. And we would have section rehearsals in his home--maybe the first violins or the second or the violas and cellos, whatever--and that became like a social thing. When you have a small group, there's always refreshments, and he would invite--he had a beautiful home in Brentwood on north Barrington [Avenue]--people on a Sunday, and they would come and swim in his pool. So that was part of it. Then every year we would have an anniversary party at the Brentwood Youth House

on Bundy [Drive]. And at that time I did a lot of playing myself, so there was the late Russell Reiner and a few other people, and we had a string quartet. So I'd play, and then they'd have dance music. There would be tremendous refreshments and social time. We did that for many years.

And there was the late Mischa Yano, who was the Brentwood florist. In the summer he said, "Well, why don't we have a social, and I'll buy the steaks, and we'll go to the Barrington playground?" where, incidentally, we did play a program there to inaugurate the park many years ago. So we've been an integral part of the community. We'd go there, and that's the time when steaks were in, before cholesterol, so everybody enjoyed that. And we would have it once every summer. So we'd have the anniversary party probably in January and the summer event. So there was a great deal of socializing, and that's probably what kept the orchestra really as a friendship organization.

And I want to mention three of our presidents. Harris Elvebak, who now is up north, and I keep in touch with him. He still contributes to the orchestra and is interested in it. He was principal second violinist. I think he was maybe our first president. He was there a number of years, and then he moved up north. I think he owned a music store someplace in Northern California. We keep in touch, and he still contributes to our orchestra.

And then there's John Lamb, a very dear man. He played flute but never in the orchestra. He was my CPA [certified public accountant] for many years, and he's sort of retired now. He has been an inspiration and a very big help. And I pay tribute to him all the time. He still comes to the concerts, he and his wife Jan [Lamb].

And then Howard Engelman, the third president--not necessarily in that order. When I had some difficulty with the board I asked him to come back as president, and he did--he was very kind--and he's there now. And the thing that he does to perpetuate the orchestra-- He has a $1,000 award, the Howard Engelman Music Scholarship, every year, which is a beautiful incentive for people to join in the contests. He has played the flute in the orchestra all these years. He had a little difficulty with his hand, some problem, and now the flute is a type of therapy. I notice he's using his hand very well. He had some kind of operation in here [indicates area on hand], and then for some time he was not able to use the right hand as well as he does now. I notice now he plays-- And one thing I want to say about Engelman-- He has the most beautiful tone, and if he'd wanted to be a professional musician-- I've always said, "You could be first," but he didn't want the stress and the strain of playing first. So when David Shostac came in, he learned from him, and he was

happy to play second.

So those three presidents--Harris Elvebak, John Lamb, and Howard Engelman--have been stalwarts. They've been helpful personally to me. When I've had personal difficulties they've come to my rescue, and I appreciate that, and I want the world to know that, too.

CLINE: And you mentioned some social activities that are going on right now.

MILLS: Yes. Yes, that's true. We have a very fine flutist--that's another one that I would say is a success--Erin Prouty. That's her maiden name. She's an attorney, a very successful attorney now, and she, I believe when she was about sixteen, won the "Artists of Tomorrow" contest. I knew that she would do things, and she went ahead with her flute. But then she went to law school, got her degree, but keeps up her flute, and plays again in our orchestra. And we talked about having some social events so the orchestra could be closer, so last Sunday-- What date would that be?

CLINE: Sunday was the thirtieth of August.

MILLS: Thirtieth of August. Engelman very delightfully and kindly said we could use his home. So we had Erin and Howard, flute. We had Dr. Len Gilman. He's a psychiatrist. He plays clarinet beautifully. He played. We had Dr. Leslie Eber play the cello. I played viola and conducted--sort of double duty.

And then we had two violinists, Francis Gaskins, and George Beck is also a very wonderful gentleman--has been our treasurer for over twenty years. So George does it as a hobby, too. They played the Bach double [Concerto for Two Violins in D minor]. Then Carmen Dragon--we talked about Carmen Dragon--Carmen Dragon's daughter Carmen Dragon played the harp. And she brought some interesting music for trios. It's like the melody for all treble, and then like a counter melody, and keyboard, and she played the harp. It was so beautiful in his home. It is a gorgeous home. And the sound-- Everybody enjoyed it. We stayed from two thirty until almost six [o'clock], with just a little intermission for some fine refreshments. But that was part of it. And we want to do that again.

Did I mention Joseph Keel, the soloist? Last May we had a contest, and Joseph Keel was a co-winner of the Engelman $1,000 music scholarship. I want to do things for him in the future, so we met with the father to discuss this. In the meantime he won a contest to play with the L.A. Philharmonic after he played with the Brentwood symphony. And this is the famous-- Well, Bronislau Kaper was at MGM as a conductor-composer. That's his name. But he has left a legacy and money for the Bronislau Kaper competition once a year. And Joseph Keel and his sister Esther [Keel]--she's about twelve and he's about sixteen now--they're going to play with

the L.A. Philharmonic sometime in October. It's some kind of a festival, and I'll be going there. Joseph played very beautifully the Rachmaninoff [Piano Concerto] Number Two [in C minor].

He has a very wonderful way of preparing that's almost like a little prayer before he plays. And I think this is a very important item, because then you get into the spiritual quality in the music. You're in the music and the music is in you, and that combination is a winning combination. As I've mentioned before, I try to tell the young people, "learn about the subconscious," and then also I mention in passing to them-- I don't want to be just a professor standing up on the podium looking down, but letting him know, I said, "Joseph"--and I meant for the sister, too--"every day you should play something for fun." In other words--I didn't use the word condition--so you condition it to be second nature. If you're always practicing for a contest or always for a concert, that is pressure built in, to some extent. So if you play for fun--and I mean to do it nicely; I'm not saying you do it well--you do it as an enjoyment second nature. So as we breathe we don't have to say, "Body, breathe in, breathe out. Heart, beat and don't beat." You know what I mean? That is second nature. We do that automatically.

And the greater the player-- I remember Nathan Milstein.

I mentioned how he sat and played the *Surprise Symphony* [by Haydn]. He wants to play all the time. It's second nature. He loves it so. It's not a chore. It's not a difficulty. It's not a challenge. It's a love. It has to be done. And I think when you program it in your subconscious that you love music and music loves you, so-called nervousness isn't existing. So-called extra stress isn't existing. There's some stress, of course--I mean, you have to be ready--but it's the right amount. It's balanced.

We talk about a balanced life, a balanced diet. Well, I think our mental and emotional life should be balanced too. I think that's why we have so many difficulties today, because there's no balance. People are always in a hurry, people are always rushing, and those are negative things, because they make the body work twice as hard. Then if somebody gets in your way, that's an irritation. And all these irritations only hurt the person that is irritable himself or herself. We have to give up some of this rushing, because we don't really enjoy the route. And I'm trying to teach myself too when I say it, to do one thing at a time, to enjoy what you're doing, and then let yourself know that it's done and it's done properly. And go to the next thing, and don't have worry, doubt, and fear, the three things that really wreck the world. That's my soapbox place.

CLINE: And you haven't said much about your weekly evening classes, your Tuesday evening classes. What can you tell us about how they started and where they take place and how they're going?

MILLS: I think that's wonderful you bring it up. Years ago I mentioned I taught in Lompoc [California]. And I met a Mr. Maurice McKenna at that time, and then he became Dr. McKenna. When I came to Los Angeles some years later--that must have been 1950; from '53, of course, then I had been conductor of the Brentwood-Westwood-- Dr. McKenna--he became a doctor, and he was from UCLA, I believe--was the principal of the night school at Uni[versity High School]. He heard about me and knew me from Lompoc years before. And he came to me, and he said, "I know you're a teacher, and I have another group"--I think another group he had in another place. "Have you thought about becoming a night school teacher? You have a credential, so that's there." And I said, "Well, fine. How do we do it?" So I applied. That must have been at least since 1970, I guess, maybe before. And of course, we had been rehearsing at Paul Revere [Junior High School]. At that time we had to get a permit, you know--outside people coming in--but now the facility is available for us because we are part of the school. So I'm very happy and grateful to be there, and I want to publicly thank Pat [Patricia] Colby,

who's the principal at the present time, who's very supportive, and she does a wonderful job with the whole night school class, the structure of the whole thing.

So we meet every Tuesday from about six thirty to nine thirty, and it's open to all people. I don't give a difficult audition; I don't want to scare people away. I feel that if they want to participate and at least play the rehearsal, I think as a community service an orchestra should do that. Now, we're not all professional. But when we have a concert, I bring in the very best professionals so that I can feel we have the integrity that Richard talked about. We have a very high caliber of playing so the people want to come back again for the next performance. So I'm really riding two horses, wearing two hats, I guess: the teacher helping people and even if they don't play too well encouraging them--And maybe they'll just play a few notes.

Sometimes I encourage people--Like there's a professional that comes in, Julie [Metz]. She comes in. She's a fine violinist, but she wanted to learn viola. She said, "May I come and play viola?" You know, she wants to learn. I said "Fine." So she comes and plays viola. I think that's one of the things we're responsible for, and to help people and to inspire them to do all kinds of things. So we have some amateurs, nonprofessionals. We have some that are quite good,

that wanted to be a violinist or something, but obviously financial reasons sometimes gear us into another profession.

I had to go in really for teaching. I was professional, but I felt it was better to teach. And with Pierre Monteux saying, "You teach your orchestra," I have that always in mind. And I always come back to Pierre Monteux, because he's one of my idols, of course.

CLINE: When did you actually retire from teaching in the Glendale public schools?

MILLS: About fourteen years ago, give or take. I retired early, and they have a three-year program where you can do part-time work and receive some type of salary. You could be like-- I don't know, whatever there was. But I enjoyed my teaching very much. I don't teach privately now because of the time, but I feel that by going every Tuesday I'm teaching these people.

Like when Dr. Eber comes-- In fact, it was interesting. I brought the viola. He didn't know I played. He said, "Oh, you play quite well." I said, "Well, I used to make a living at it." And he said, "Why don't you bring it more often?" I probably will, to play, you know. That's my instrument, the violin and viola. I have the viola that my late stepfather used. I mentioned Malcolm Huering. I was thinking of selling it, but when I played last Sunday and I enjoyed the playing

I said, "No, I'm going to keep it another thirty years at least." [laughter]

CLINE: Great. Also, the things that you wanted to make sure I brought up today, I want to get to those. You wanted to say more about Arnold Belnick.

MILLS: Yes. Arnold Belnick played the Beethoven Violin Concerto [in D, op. 61] with us several years ago. And it was through Jack Pepper, this wonderful violinist contractor that I had. He brought me some tremendous players. Belnick also recently gave a benefit for us with three other great players: Marilyn Baker on viola and [Johana Kevci] and then we had an Israeli cellist, David Shamban, who's very good, who stepped in at the last minute. And we played at Dr. Eber's home. We played a wonderful benefit. When Jascha Heifetz had an octet and he had [Gregor] Piatigorsky and [William] Primrose and a few other important people, he had Arnold Belnick play with that group. So Arnold Belnick is really a treasure and a tradition, and he carries on that, and I was very honored that he played the benefit for me. And I consider him a dear friend. And also at the last contest of the young artists, Arnold Belnick and Mitchell Lurie, my dear friends, were there also as judges. So Belnick, I wanted people to know the wonderful things he's done. And he still makes CDs and he's very active. Wonderful, wonderful violinist.

CLINE: And you wanted to talk about a story that involves Mitchell Lurie and Monteux at Ravinia.

MILLS: Oh, yes. Mitchell recently gave me a book that Mrs. [Doris] Monteux wrote, and I got some wonderful ideas out of his life. Mitchell had played in the Chicago Symphony [Orchestra]--I guess it was under [Fritz] Reiner--and they have the summer series, the Ravinia concerts. And I had thought it was a rehearsal, but Mitchell Lurie said later, "At a concert in the summer--" And it's very hot in Chicago. They're playing a concert with Artur Rubinstein as piano soloist. And clarinet players have a B-flat and an A clarinet. They have a little stand right by their music stand. Evidently Mitchell in one of his selections, he went down to change clarinets. Monteux thought he had fainted. And Monteux was coming off the podium to go to help him. At a concert! I have the greatest respect for Monteux, the way he treated people.

And I mentioned that he said, "Treat the violinists very nicely, because they all wanted to be concert violinists and they all can't, and they're here with you. Treat them nicely." And what I mentioned about the horn player. "Watch him." He was always so kind, and he realized people have feelings. You see, a lot of people don't realize people have feelings.

CLINE: That's for sure. [laughs]

MILLS: Then they do and say things that are unkind, to put it mildly. But Monteux had such a sensitivity for other people that he treasured that sometimes more than the music, because he was willing to get off the podium at a concert and see what happened to his clarinetist. So I had to bring that out as being a very important item. That's why I love Monteux. [laughter] One of the thousand reasons, by the way.

CLINE: Yeah. When you were talking about one of your associates, you mentioned ASCAP. You haven't talked specifically about how you got involved with ASCAP and what your involvement is, and I wanted to get that in here for the record.

MILLS: Yes. I'm extremely honored to be in ASCAP. ASCAP speaks for itself. I mean, you have Aaron Copland, all the great composers. I know even a few years ago André Previn was given an award for his composition by ASCAP when he was conductor of the L.A. Philharmonic. Of course, Irving Berlin-- I mean, these are treasured names. Edward MacDowell-- It goes back to the beginning and so forth. So I'm honored to be there.

I have only one person to thank: Dr. Eugene Zador. He came to my orchestra and said, "Would you play my music?" And of course, I was delighted. We went over the different things that we could do that were proper for a community orchestra,

and for several years I worked with him. Then he found out that I was doing some composing, and he said, "I want to get you into ASCAP. I know you have children, and this is a way of supplementing your income." He was just like a father to me. He told me certain personal things, and of course, when a person tells me something it's a treasure, and I never reveal, you know. But I mean, certain things, confidences. I was just honored to be in that capacity in relationship with him. Anyhow, he got me in ASCAP.

And I was thrilled to take him to the meetings. At one time ASCAP had two meetings a year at the Hilton [Hotel], and they would always honor people, like I mentioned they honored Previn, and others. And Sammy Fain. Did I mention I worked with Sammy Fain?

CLINE: No.

MILLS: Oh, my. Let me come back to this later. Let me get Sammy Fain involved. Sammy Fain was a dear friend of Dr. Samuel Hoffman, whom we mentioned on the theremin. Way back when he said, "Why don't we have Sammy Fain?" Well, he wrote "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing" and received many awards. I mean, he was really famous. And I got to meet him, and he came and did an afternoon of music with our orchestra. It was interesting. It was about October. It was right at the time of the World Series, and the [Los Angeles] Dodgers

were playing on a Sunday. So Sammy comes on to play his number. He said, "And by the way everybody, the Dodgers are ahead four to three" or something like that. [laughter] The audience was in an uproar. He said, "Now from the sublime to the ridiculous." Anyhow, he played with our orchestra. All of his compositions-- He said, "Alvin, go to the studio and I'll have the music for you." I went to his studio--I guess Paramount [Pictures] or whatever--and got all the music, and we played his music. It was wonderful. Then later Samuel Hoffman passed away, and then I called him again, and he did another program with the orchestra.

People like that in ASCAP it's always thrilling to meet on a very intimate basis, because we had dinner together and we talked over the program. And these people are so genuine. Well, with Monteux, too. I could feel comfortable. I wasn't intimidated by them. A real important person with a great God-given talent will not intimidate a person who they know innately maybe isn't their equal, at least by the standards of the world. But Monteux treated everybody equal. That's the thing. I think the great person knows that even if you don't have that talent, so what? You're an individual that needs respect.

Now, if this world would have more respect now we wouldn't have these headlines of neighbors not being neighborly. I

mean, when will the world ever learn? Some music came out about the flowers, you know, and the-- What is that song? You knew that one, didn't you? A popular song about the graveyards of the world and everything, the flowers ["Where Have All the Flowers Gone?"]. And it's the same. "When will they ever learn?" I ask the same question. Because all the time and effort we put into the negativities--the negative things like wars and so forth-- We could eliminate all of these bad diseases and put time into helping each other. And, I don't know, I guess I'm very idealistic, but I'm hoping for a day like that sometime.

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CLINE: We were talking about things that could make the world a better place, and this involved ASCAP, of all things.

MILLS: Yes. I think it does. I think the fact that ASCAP is world renowned and has different affiliates, different places, a reciprocal type of thing where the music of one nation comes back to here and so forth-- They recognize the composers. I think that's very important. As I mentioned, Sammy Fain was a real inspiration and a wonderful person. I enjoyed both of our concerts together. Other ones with ASCAP-- Of course, Dr. Zador. And I met Giedra Gudauskas, who is a very fine composer from Lithuania, and I-- I guess there were two compositions that I orchestrated for her. And she's being given an award-- What is today? Is today Wednesday? I wonder if today is the day she's given an award from Lithuania by the president there as a special composer. She's done CDs, and they've done her music at UCLA. So she's another one.

And Radie Britain. I think I mentioned her.

CLINE: Yeah. That's right.

MILLS: Yes, Radie Britain. We did some of her works. And she dedicated some music to the orchestra.

So ASCAP has been a wonderful thing for me. And I have

a publishing company which I call Horizons Unlimited Publishing Company. It's an ASCAP licensed publisher, and I publish my music, and I publish some other people's music through it. And I encourage them to get in ASCAP, and I'm very willing to publish their music so they can. So that's an ongoing thing.

CLINE: I know that ASCAP has also helped you with regard to your access to music to use in your concerts. Isn't that right?

MILLS: Yes. Yes. They have a wonderful service. And we might mention that the new president, Marilyn Bergman, has done so much to advance it. Of course, we've had Morton Gould as one of our presidents. He's gone now. When I was eighteen I played the violin in the movies--you know, a sideline--and Morton Gould was conducting. And a few years back I went back and talked with him. I said, "You remember this picture?" He was real cute. He said, "Yes, I made that picture, and they never called me back." [laughs] But I mean, he was a great composer, well known. We use his "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." But "The American Salute" is very, very popular and I use that at pops concerts and so on. Anyhow, Marilyn Bergman has done a great deal for ASCAP, and I wanted to mention her name now as being very helpful to all of ASCAP.

CLINE: Another thing that I wanted to make sure to bring

up today was your work more recently bringing music into the public schools. So once again, it seems that you are still teaching. You have had some experience very recently where you've been able to do this, and I wanted you to explain how this came to be and what exactly you've been doing.

MILLS: Well, about 1994, I got a call from a lady, a Mrs. [Diana] Cooper. And she said that her son, I guess two sons, were attending Carlthorp School--that's a private school in Brentwood--and she wanted to know how the orchestra could come to them or they can go to us. We finally figured a way with budget and personnel that we would take a group there. It was very successful. So we played for about two hundred children, about a hundred in each assembly. We had two assemblies, like from 9 [o'clock] to 9:45, a little intermission, and then, say, 10:15 to 11 [o'clock]. And I took a group of musicians in. I think they were woodwinds at the time. And it was very successful. I talked a little, and each one would demonstrate their instrument. The clarinet would take off the mouthpiece and show it was a single reed. The oboe would show us a double reed. It was a teaching experience. We demonstrated that if they played the clarinet without a mouthpiece no sound would come out; it takes the vibration of the reed. So it was teaching and learning and then demonstrating just what we did.

So then after that I got a very substantial grant from the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. And the stipulation was that we go to inner city schools where children had no music, where they're deprived, and it would be an enriching experience for them. And it was for us, too. We went to inner city-- Someplace. We had to park on the school grounds for safety reasons. Every school that we attended, the children's conduct--the way those teachers brought them in class by class was superb. The listening--as a teacher I would give them an A. Talk about grading. I took in pieces like *Peter and the Wolf*. We didn't play the whole thing; I just gave a sypnosis of it because in forty-five minutes I can't do the whole thing because I want to do other things. So we had the flute play the bird and the oboe play the duck and things of that nature, just excerpts. And then I'd give a capsule view of the whole story. Then the orchestra would continue other compositions.

One year I took in two young violinists, students of Robert Lipsett. And I must say that he's a wonderful teacher, and there are other great ones I could mention. I could go on for two weeks with wonderful teachers that have been kind to me and helpful to the orchestra and the community. Robert Lipsett had two young people--I guess they were ten and eleven at the time--Rachel Kim and Emily Gaines. She was from Texas,

the young girl. Ten and eleven, and they played the Bach double, Concerto for Two Violins [in D Minor], the first movement, memorized.

And this brings up the letters that came to me, because after the program I would say, "Would the teachers please have the children write a letter, and if they only know Spanish write it in Spanish, or other languages." Later on we went to a school and they spoke no English, and I got letters in Korean, Chinese, Russian. My wife Grusha [Paterson Mills] knows Russian, and she translated. And then they drew pictures on the back. That was so wonderful to receive those letters. And of course I've had them interpreted by Chinese people and so forth to find out what they said.

But the one thing that we played, the Bach double, I would introduce the artist or the composition--there was no printed program--and I mentioned, "We're going to have two young artists, ten and eleven, playing for you now, all from memory, a piece by Bach, a composer of many years ago--" I wasn't trying to be too erudite for elementary students. I didn't want to bore them with "Bach was born here and he lived there and he played--" That isn't what the idea is. It's to have them love music and sound and see these young artists who are their age! And I got a letter: "Dear Mr. Mills, I thought you were lying." [Cline laughs] And I didn't

want to read on, but I've realized that in sixth grade they tell you what they think. There's no diplomacy, there's no tact. "But Mr. Mills, you weren't lying. These young people did play. They were our age, and it was beautiful." And it goes on to say this. In all my years, this is poignant. Words to this effect-- Now, since I've moved I've lost it, but I make copies, because I send it out. "Mr. Mills, you brought us an orchestra, and that gave us an example that maybe we don't have to be in a gang." Now, if I saved one person, if this thing happened to help one person that doesn't go in a gang and do wrong things, then I felt we've accomplished something. Just one person that realizes-- They don't realize there are other things, other groups but gangs. They only know gangs. Now, if you show them there are orchestras, I hope that they learn there's sports and there's other things, but they can see the people relating and playing an instrument. That will stimulate them and show them that they don't have to be in a gang. And you see the devastation we have now with gangs and gang mentality, and the violence, which is awful.

I read someplace where Paul [E.] Cummins mentions how important music is to show them-- About the same thing I'm saying. He wrote a book [*For Mortal Stakes: Solutions for Schools and Society*] with his daughter [Anna K. Cummins],

and I have to get it. The idea that we have to show them there are other things. There are choices. And we know that many will make a better choice to get out of the gang, and they'll see that, "Well, look at those people, they're enjoying it." I see from New York groups that could be in the ghetto and doing wrong things--instead they're singing all over the world. They're singing on television.

And I think this is the thing, that it behooves us to help young people and show that music and this getting together is so important. You don't need a big group; you can do it with a piano and one violin and two people singing and playing the recorder and the flutophone. I mean, it doesn't really take much. Or [claps hands]. Snapping fingers [snaps fingers]. That's what I do in my "Color Me Equal." Did I mention "Color Me Equal"?

CLINE: Yeah. That's coming up. I've got it on my list.

MILLS: Oh, I see. I got so many things to say, and I can't say them all at one time.

CLINE: Yeah, right. It seems that the orchestra itself, or any musical ensemble, is an excellent sort of microcosm of cooperation, in a sense having to subdue the ego to work for a common goal.

MILLS: That is so beautifully put, because ego is really number-one trouble with the world. Because, I think I mentioned

before, if somebody with a big ego comes in, I always check my walls to see if they're crooked. Because people's egos really get in the way. They're so important, but we're not so important. We are important and we're not important. This balance is the important thing of getting along, and this is what the world doesn't know--a lot of it.

CLINE: Yeah. Are you planning to do any more of these school performances?

MILLS: Yes, as we get a grant for it. The first time I got five figures. The next time I only got four figures. So I had to adjust. But I figured I went into five schools, and we were elated. I got what I call the gang letter I told you about, and other letters. Later on I got a letter. The girl said, "Your music was so beautiful I thought I was in heaven." Now, from a twelve-year-old girl to elicit that kind of response, heaven is the ultimate, and having heaven on earth is maybe what we're striving for too to an extent, and we can make it heaven or anything else we want. We can choose to live peacefully or not peacefully. But, oh yes, I'm planning to do it. And when I have a smaller budget I try to go to the same number of schools but cut down on the people I bring in. Instead of twenty-two I'll bring in nine or ten. And then I adjust. I'm able to adjust.

And this is all public domain music. We did a Haydn

concerto for violin, and the young lady, Janet Choi, played the first movement for the first assembly and the second and third movement for the next. So she got mileage on it. Then we did "Mexican Hat Dance," and I'd bring up somebody from the audience to conduct. It's only in one-- [sings first melody of "Mexican Hat Dance" then claps hands twice] Clap twice, you see? The audience participates. And there are times when I've walked in the audience and chosen somebody to conduct, and then I have the whole audience conduct. What's this fellow's name? Bobby Ferrin?

CLINE: Bobby McFerrin, yes.

MILLS: Bobby McFerrin. I saw him on television, and I got a beautiful idea. He had his whole group participating, and he was walking around the orchestra. And he does some very serious conducting now, I see, very good. And he's extremely popular. So he's working with the young people too. I saw him walking around, and I got an idea from him: more participation, so the audience feels you are part of them and they are part of you and not you're standing up way up there and you can't be reached. You're something so important-- That isn't the idea. You want to have them feel, "I had an experience where I was part of it. I enjoyed it. I am it, and it is for me to enjoy more."

Somebody else wrote a letter: "I didn't know about

classical music. Now I'm going to start listening to classical music." I sometimes don't call it classical; maybe I'll call it serious. I'll say "music that maybe you haven't heard before. Give it a chance." And when they see them playing the Bach double concerto [sings part of melody to Bach double concerto], I mean, that's emotion. And look at that great composer that's still alive today as music, Bach. Just think about that vitality. And it does touch young people today in the inner city schools.

Then we do something like the *Toy Symphony* [by Haydn], and I have my percussion play the cuckoo, which is a fun thing to hear, and then he does the nightingale, and then with wood-- Different percussion things. We play movements of that. That's very successful. Then they join the conducting, and then we end with George M. Cohan. What is that about, the flag?

CLINE: "It's a Grand Old Flag?"

MILLS: "[It's a] Grand Old Flag" and the other one, "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Then I sing along where it is-- You know, the words he uses, he interprets the-- What is it? [sings beginning of melody to "Auld Lang Syne"] "Should old acquaintance be forgot," how he brings that in, I sing along with that and show them. And they're ready to clap and march.

Oh, one very interesting thing that happened with the

school concerts. May I mention this?

CLINE: Yeah.

MILLS: This was at Eagle Rock Magnet School. This wasn't a deprived school. I want to mention a very important man, Mr. Don Dustin, who's in charge of music in the L.A. schools, and he was so helpful in getting us started to go into the schools. I can only say he's a great person, and I love working with him. He suggested for some reason this would be a good school. It wasn't a deprived school, but it was good. So we went to Eagle Rock school some morning and Erin Prouty--I mentioned her, that she was an attorney now-- Well, being an attorney, she was able to get there, and she played the flute. And I had different ones-- Then she played the piccolo. She played the "Flight of the Bumble Bee." And it was cute. She got from her little son the little things like that that were lit with batteries, so the little lights-- What do you call these little--? Like antenna, you know, like a bee would have. And as she's playing "Flight of the Bumble Bee" [sings part of the melody to "Flight of the Bumble Bee"], all of a sudden the lights go out. And I thought a very ingenious teacher went in the back of the room and turned off the lights because she had her antennae on, and she wasn't reading music. But the lights went out not because of that; it was an outage. But it went out just when the person with the light was up

there. We weren't reading music. And then what do you do? Talk about adjusting. We thought we'd have no lights for the rest of the program when we have to read music. So they opened the doors to get sunlight, but then within about four or five minutes the lights came on. But people wrote and said, "Did you plan it that way?"--with the lights. And then they drew pictures, and they showed the flutist playing with the little yellow lights. So that actually happened.

CLINE: That's great. So you're looking forward to doing more of this, then.

MILLS: Absolutely, yes.

CLINE: And since we're on the subject, what are your feelings about young people today and their exposure or lack thereof to the kind of music that you love and what their prospects are at this point?

MILLS: Well, I think there are wonderful groups around, like the Young Musicians Foundation that does a great deal. The Philharmonic's going in outreach programs, other ones are--So I think we're on the rise. I think all of the people in charge of these organizations are aware that things are in a challenging pattern now, and we have to meet the challenge by addressing the problem, so to speak. And I think we're doing it. When I get a letter from Richard like this, and we keep going and others are going, I think we should just

always encourage people, and there should be always a cooperation and not a competition. I think that's the thing that will eliminate some of the negativity. Because when you're competing

and, you know, "I'd better go there first" and everything-- This, in my feeling, adds to a certain-- Not a wellness. It adds to a certain tension which is pure sickness, you know what I mean? If you're always under pressure-- We need a certain amount of stress, yes, but when we overstress--

And even now you see people driving a car and telephoning. I mean, enjoy the driving or enjoy the telephoning, but what happens if you're driving with one hand, which they already see is difficult, right? And I'm bringing this out because it's happening right now in my world, in your world. It's not, "By the way, will it happen?" It's happening. And what if they get terrible news, that they forget they're driving and collapse, almost--mentally, physically, or emotionally? I mean, you know what I'm saying. I think it's the Auto Club says, "If you're going to drive and you have to call, pull off the highway and call for a minute."

We try to do too much, and we make the stress ourselves. We're to blame. And worrying always about making so much money and being the first one and-- Enjoy being the second one sometimes. Enjoy being the third one. Enjoy not winning

at all and say, "I gave it my best shot, but those four people, maybe they deserve to be first and second and third and fourth." I mean, accepting the truth is a very-- I'm an optimist, but the truth is the truth, and you can't get away from it. And gravity is still gravity. And the body needs a certain amount of rest every night--four to six hours or eight hours, whatever, but it needs it. Nature will let you know if you don't do the proper thing in anything.

No, I think we're on a good road now. I hear my colleagues are having outreach programs too, and I'm willing to help them and myself and anybody to perpetuate our good music, because it is a treasure. As I say, when they played the Bach double--and this was written by Bach two hundred years ago--and they appreciate it, and they saw the value, the vitality-- And of course, the young people that played it learned it, put hours into memorizing and rehearsing together. What a tribute to those young people.

So I want to go in the schools more, I want to use young people. And I want to get more participation and-- Like they send me letters that I want, and those are testimonials. And that perpetuates the music and also our spirit. It's a beautiful inspiration, I think.

CLINE: You mentioned "Color Me Equal," and it has come up before. This is a composition of yours?

MILLS: I don't know why I don't have the poem, at least to read part of it, and my memory for something-- I just want to give the greatest tribute to Stan Lefcourt. He has been an inspiration, and also he is a person of action. I mentioned "Concerts on the Green," and he was instrumental in starting it. He talked about it with me, and one year we tried, and we came within an inch of it. It didn't work because of sponsorship. But he is also a winner, he's not a quitter, and we went back next year and got it. What happened was, of course, I told you, the real estate market dropped and we lost. But we're going to do it again. This is just a hiatus, and we'll grow and do it better. Stan Lefcourt-- He won a $10,000 prize as the poet laureate for this poem, and he's so modest he donated all of that to charity. I mean, he's a wonderful person. I love him very much. He's a community leader. And we're working together on projects. I'm happy to say I got him into ASCAP because he wrote the lyrics for that and he just recently got in ASCAP, so it's my delight. And we're going to try to publish his poems. He's written some wonderful poems. He has a great sense of humor, which-- His happy laughter keeps the good health.

CLINE: And what can you say about the piece "Color Me Equal"?

MILLS: Well, when I got the poem I couldn't stop until I wrote something, and I wrote it for orchestra and chorus with

a baritone solo. I've sent it different places. I want to get my friend Bob Bruce--I don't know if I mentioned him--to make an organ reduction so it could be done in the churches, in the synagogues, or wherever. It's always ongoing things. But this is very much a part of my thinking in these times right now. I could just say for the record I'm grateful to have known all these wonderful people that have inspired me and helped me. So it's my--what shall I say?--duty and responsibility to carry on this helping hand in the same way.

CLINE: So with all this, we were talking about reaching children with serious music, and you feel the prospects are good. In a time when that type of music is struggling to reach not just a wider audience, but the same size audience that it once did-- A lot of the older generation is not in attendance at a lot of these concerts as much as they were for whatever reasons--mortality or health or any of a number of reasons. Younger people aren't in such great numbers coming to take their places in the seats in places like the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

MILLS: You notice it there, eh?

CLINE: Oh, sure, yeah.

MILLS: That's a good point.

CLINE: What do you think the future holds for the kind of music that you love? Do you have any feelings about that?

MILLS: Well, I think-- I receive things in the mail. There's a group that has like a film they show, pictures, above the symphony, and you have to have a very good facility to do it. I see where the Long Beach Symphony did it, and they brought in thousands, and it was very successful. I think so-called serious music or classical music is looking for new ways, and I think they're finding them. I think they'll always have to look for new ways. I mean, there was a time when we used the old record, and then it became long playing, and then it became a tape and CD and digital. So there are changes and we have to adjust to those changes.

Like I say, if I can't take in such a large group to the young people, I'll take in a smaller group. I mentioned before that that's what Igor Stravinsky did when he wrote the *History of a Soldier* [*L'histoire du soldat*]. I mean, he had written *The Rite of Spring* [*Le sacre du printemps*] for orchestra, immense, and then he wrote for--what?--seven, eight people? He adjusted. I think the people that are going to be successful are the ones able to adjust, and I think a lot of the leadership realize that now.

At the Hollywood Bowl they have a jazz night and they have things like that. And I had something called "From Bach to Bellson." I would love to do something like that again. I'm not opposed to popular music or film music. And Richard

Kaufman. He did the movie music, but he also does some symphony music. He said he has to go into more detail with that, so we're in good hands as long as we have a Richard Kaufman around and the other ones, Shostac and those people. They're doing things. And David Howard, I'm sure. Anyhow, so these people are still helping us.

CLINE: I mean, you're saying basically that by mixing it up and having a little bit more for the audience and then maybe a little bit more for the aficionado, having a kind of balance keeps things moving? You feel that's healthy?

MILLS: I think that's healthy, yes. A balanced diet. Well, there should be so-called pure symphony, yes. There should be that, but they have it at the Bowl, I guess Tuesday and Thursday, symphony, and then Friday, Saturday, and Sunday they have the lighter music. But we're shown the way from the past.

George Gershwin is a perfect example. He wanted to be serious, so he wrote *Rhapsody in Blue*, he wrote Concerto in F, but still he wrote "Embraceable You" and movie music. He was very versatile.

Years ago I played-- Did I mention the [Julian] Brodetsky Ensemble?

CLINE: Yes.

MILLS: The Brodetsky Ensemble. He was a pure classical

musician, but he was playing in the studios. And who is that clarinet player? Not Benny Goodman, but the other one.

CLINE: Artie Shaw?

MILLS: Artie Shaw. Now, he played in movies with him, and Brodetsky was very impressed with him. And of course, Benny Goodman is a perfect example. His grand niece played and won the contest this last year.

CLINE: Oh, really? Oh, I didn't know that.

MILLS: Yeah. Elyse Goodman. I said, "Are there any musicians in your family?" She said, "Oh, yeah, Benny Goodman was my uncle." [mutual laughter] "By the way." Well, he's a perfect example. He studied with Reginald Kell, I believe, and he would play the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with the London Symphony [Orchestra], and the next day he's playing in New York with his jazz group. I think that's wonderful. I think that's great.

I mentioned Vernon Duke. He wrote "April in Paris," and he wrote five or six symphonies and whatever. I think that's terrific. And also I went backstage with André Previn when he was here, and I said, "I admire you that you could play jazz with [Itzhak] Perlman and Shelly Manne, and then the next day you play Rachmaninoff or you conduct. I admire you for that. There are some people here that look down on you because you did Hollywood music. I think that's ridiculous.

Whatever you do properly and good, that's good."

Look at Aaron Copland. He wrote for the movies, and he wrote this wonderful score, *The Red Pony*. I mentioned I played that, didn't I?

CLINE: That's right.

MILLS: Yeah. That was marvelous music. And that's very inspirational to me. When he shows the foal, all of a sudden, surprise. And he wrote these beautiful chords. It was outstanding. [sings excerpt] I hear that music still, and I did it many years ago. Thinking of him. And he does *Appalachian* [*Spring*]. He does symphonies, and he did a symphony when I was in New York. I think it was Symphony No. 3 that was on the program. Slatkin conducted it. But this is the idea of being flexible. I mean, you look outside when you see these storms. The tree that can bend and sway with the wind lives, and the one that's stiff and rigid will be broken. And that's the same thing with character and adjusting to situations. The weather's not going to adjust to us, and if we don't like it we can lump it. [mutual laughter] The weather is pretty hot. So you act cool, you think cool, and you don't worry and get upset about it, which is worse.

It's the worry about a thing. The work isn't anything; it's the worry that "I have a lot of work to do" that crushes you down. "I have a lot of work." Look at my tables.

[indicates tables covered with papers] Look at this. But I'm happy. I'm rich with work. And I look at it-- Isn't it wonderful that I have a lot of things to do instead of saying, "Do I have to do all of that again?" And by saying "I'm happy to do it, I'm rich with work to do," I feel better than saying "Do I have to do all of that stuff again?" That drags you down.

See, I choose to more or less live peacefully. I try to practice what I preach, and someday after this is written, I hope to get that "big seven" philosophy down in that CD I told you about. Well, you'll keep in touch.

CLINE: Right.

MILLS: And I'd like to see more of your music. I encourage you.

CLINE: Okay.

MILLS: You might even write something for the symphony.

CLINE: I would like to do something like that.

MILLS: Why don't you do that? And I'll do the premiere.

CLINE: [laughs] Okay. There you go.

MILLS: And we'll get BMI [Broadcast Music Incorporated] credit. It's a good organization, too.

CLINE: So you're into having these boundaries be flexible, but would you consider yourself a purist when it comes to music?

MILLS: I don't know what that word means exactly.

CLINE: Are you somebody who feels that what we call the classical--the so-called classical--tradition needs to be upheld in its purest and most traditional form?

MILLS: I would think so, yes. I would think so. There are times when-- I don't know how you look at it. Maybe some of the classical pieces-- Well, they've taken Rachmaninoff and made it into popular music. But of course, when they do something like that, and if it brings people closer to Rachmaninoff and they want to look him up, I think that's very good. I think that's very good to do that.

Well, I'm using [sings opening melody to Beethoven Symphony No. 5 [in C minor], op. 67. The inspiration of Beethoven is telling me, [singing same melody] "For piece of mind, for piece of mind--" I mean, the words seem to come out at me, and my whole being says, "What did he mean, now?" I am not there to ask him what he meant, but if I can use this theme to project my philosophy and my psychology--which I think is good, and I have a great deal of faith in it, and it has been demonstrated to me that it's worked-- And I've shown people, and I've talked to people. I was in New York someplace, and I did this little bit: [singing same Beethoven melody] "It's time to tell, I did it very well." The young man said, "I relate to that. I can use that." Anything that will help

people--

I talk about the healing. If I can touch people I guess through my music, through my words, through my philosophy, then I'm very happy. And I think that I'm successful in a different vein than just pure conducting and pure violin playing or just pure viola playing. I think life is bigger than that, and the world problems are bigger than that. But that's a part of it, and for me it's a very important part.

CLINE: When we were first meeting and you were allowing me to riffle through all your clippings and scrapbooks and things, you said something that I wanted you to perhaps now elucidate, if you can. You said, "Music is like acupuncture." Can you expand on that a bit?

MILLS: Well, my dear wife Grusha, of course, is a great expert in the wellness field, and I've learned since I'm married to her now and know her, acupuncture being a very important item-- It goes to the meridians of the body. And I mean, this is definite; this is not black magic or hocus pocus or whatever. It's recognized. And of course, it comes from China, that had this tremendous civilization before we did. This country is barely two hundred years old or more, you know, and this goes back thousands of years. So the meridians in the body, the connections, and how they put a pin in a certain place and it affects everything and then it connects. I think

music is the same thing. It's a body, and connecting one measure to the next, one note to the next, one phrase to the next, and how it relates to each other-- One case in point is the Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto [in D Minor], which I did with John Novacek. I don't know. Did I mention his name?

CLINE: Yes.

MILLS: Wonderful young man. I don't know of any other composition that brings the first theme back three times. There's always a recapitulation. But he'd bring [sings a portion of theme to Rachmaninoff Third Piano Concerto]-- It's so simple and beautiful that it puts a hand on your heart, and it holds you in reverence and wonderment. So why does he use that three times? He could have done something different or made a variation, but he wanted as part of the body of the music that it all circulates and comes back. I mean, doesn't the blood come back to our heart? It goes away one way and comes back another. But it's the same blood. It's the same. And how the body rejuvenates itself.

Nature is so perfect. You know, we look at the computer and we're amazed, but before the computer was the human brain, which is here and is better than the computer. It makes as many mistakes as a computer, because what you put in the computer you could make a mistake, you know. But we're all amazed

by these wonderful things. Television, we're amazed, but it came out of the human brain. We're amazed that we go to the moon, but where did it come from? The thought, the thinking process, from a divine source. So this is the marvel of it all.

I think the great composers, when they were inspired to write music, got a definite-- Beethoven went to nature, by the brook and that, but what was the brook? The brook is God-made. It wasn't made by General Motors or someone. You know, all these companies, they claim so much, but look out at these flowers and bushes. I went out before you came, and I looked at all the leaves, and I thought if you look at this leaf and it's a thousand units of healing, and the next one is two thousand, what a good feeling that is, that it's right there. It doesn't cost anything to look at the bushes and the leaves and to count our blessings.

We should count our blessings and not our complaints, because what you think about you magnify. Now, we all have problems, but as soon as we get away from "Why did it happen and how did it happen?" instead of, "I know I can make it better," I know the next minute is a healing. I scratched my hand, but God's coagulation is already working without my saying, "Please heal it." It already does it. That force, if we recognize it and put our egos where they belong and

not try to always be first to the extent that you do wrong things, this is what -- The world would be in a terrific, peaceful state, I believe, a better one. That's my thinking.

So I'm going to keep in touch with you, and when I get my CD ready I'll let you know. And it will be my first CD and probably your fifth one by then. [mutual laughter]

CLINE: So when you're conducting or composing, do you sort of feel like the sonic acupuncturist stimulating those meridians?

MILLS: I hadn't thought of it, but perhaps so. Perhaps so. Well, I've taken acupuncture, and it does work, and it is helpful, and all the parts of the body seem to harmonize. See, harmony. I like to think now, "May harmony and good health be your constant companion." I like to think of that as being an important item that I greet people with and say goodbye.

CLINE: And as a composer do you keep up with current phases and trends in composition, be it in the so-called serious music field or others?

MILLS: I try to as much as I can, although I don't feel comfortable in the so-called avant-garde, doing all of those things. I don't feel that I'm a Schoenberg that would start a new twelve-tone system. But I respect him, because he always taught his students the so-called conventional way first,

and then out of that, when they were ready, then they could go to a so-called advanced technique. Of course, my feeling is that he had gone as far as he could with conventional music and he had to try a new route. And he inspired others.

CLINE: Right. Do you have any feelings about where serious composed music is headed right now?

MILLS: I think it will adjust to what is needed. I think it will. And I think composers-- There will always be some that will stay traditional--you know, so-called classical or romantic, post-romantic--and this is fine. I think it will probably be needed, because some of the-- Well, the music that the people like has a story. Country, you know, they have a story, and people can relate to that little story, and the music is easy to grasp. I think there will always be something there. The so-called folk music, there will always be that. And people always will hum [hums]. You know, the humming is-- The original instrument is right there.

Did I mention Gabor Rejto, mentioning that when we were doing Dvo_ák's Cello Concerto [in B Minor, op. 104]--as a matter of fact, which we're going to do with Timothy Landauer--he was saying-- There was a certain phrase that came out. He said, "Well, let's sing it. Let's sing it." And that's really the way to do it. I mentioned about Europeans--the Spanish and the French too--using solfeggio. They sing everything.

And they learn [sings], "do re mi fa so la ti do." They learn that before they learn to play the violin, the flute, or the piccolo so they know music, and then, then they're ready for an instrument. What we do here is give you the instrument and you learn to read notes and everything. Suzuki's a very good method because it doesn't push too much on you. You see, it's sort of doing it by rote, and that's why a lot of them do very well.

CLINE: Since you've integrated your influences from your experiences in Spain, and of course you talked a little bit about the Russian gypsy musical background and dance background of your present wife--

MILLS: Did I mention that she has this wonderful CD [*Grusha Sings Russian Gypsy Love Songs*]?

CLINE: Yes.

MILLS: And I'm very proud of that. Did I mention that when we were in New York that I met this conductor [Gary de Sesa]?

CLINE: Right. That was the last time--

MILLS: Oh, we talked about that.

CLINE: We just talked about that.

MILLS: That was a very beautiful experience.

CLINE: I wanted to ask if you see influencing current composed music the musics and cultures of different parts of the world as part of where it may be headed right now. Do you see more

of that going on?

MILLS: Now, how do you mean that exactly?

CLINE: Well, for example, there are a lot of current trends in music that are integrating music from the East--say gamelan music from Indonesia--or music from the Latin American countries, or folk musics of different European countries certainly have inspired many of the famous composers of Europe for a long time.

MILLS: Absolutely, yes.

CLINE: Do you see that as being something that's--? Maybe you see more of that going on in serious composition?

MILLS: I think that's always a very important item. We're doing the Dvo_ák, and I'm reading about him and how his use of American music--you know, when he did the *New World* Symphony [in E Minor, op. 95, *From the New World*], and then of course in the cello concerto--he's thinking back, he's reminiscing about his being lonely for his homeland. And I think the composer will always go back to the source and use a folk song. Copland did it: "Amazing Grace." I mean, you have examples all over. Beethoven did it, and they all did it. I think the composer will always go to his roots. "What did mother sing to me? What did I hear when I was a child? What did they sing in school?" They sang folk songs and whatever and the current songs. I think that will always be a part.

That's a part of our mores and physical being and everything else.

CLINE: Do you think that there is a distinctly American music?

MILLS: Well, I think distinctly American is jazz, for sure. It influenced people like [Darius] Milhaud in the twenties and so forth, in the thirties, yes. Oh, that's our music. "Basin Street Blues." The blues, of course, came from this country. Oh, yeah. And it's definitely affected the world. There's jazz all over. And it's wonderful to see like the late Shelly Manne, who was able to do that in his own style and then do other things too, play in the studios and so forth.

I think "horizons unlimited" explains it all: unlimited and unrestricted. Yes. Use anything that will help the world to be a better place, that will help the composer, and not be prejudiced. "Because it's not classical it isn't good." There was a time when the classical people would look down on the jazz or other non-classical music. Now that doesn't exist.

I mentioned Brodetsky appreciating-- What's his name again? The clarinetist?

CLINE: Artie Shaw.

MILLS: Artie Shaw. A very great player. And then Benny Goodman. So I think that that barrier's broken now. And when you play in the studio, those men are great players and they

have to read everything. The more you can get from other places, that's good. That's really good. And that shows that the world is one and there's one heartbeat. [taps chest to indicate heartbeat] The whole world has a heart. It's just a matter of learning to use it. But we have a heart that-- That's our rhythm all the time. And you hear people all the time humming or singing.

Years ago, when I studied, I guess at UCLA, it was education courses. They say all over the world, [sings nursery rhyme melody, "A Tisket, A Tasket"]. The falling minor third. All over the world, they do something like that, children. Just from God they do that, I guess, eh? [Cline laughs] You know? I mean, it's part of the-- All over the world.

So music is universal language, and that brings people together. Think about bringing an orchestra where they can't even speak the same language and just put them all together and they can play Beethoven. Whether it's in Tokyo or Beijing or in Paris or in London, Italy, anyplace, they're playing Beethoven. They're reading. A quarter note's a quarter note. And they're playing-- They're making harmonious sounds together.

That's the wonderful thing when you see-- In my orchestra I have maybe a sixteen-year-old high school student, and then of course my stepfather [Malcolm Huering] was ninety-seven.

That's a great thrill.

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CLINE: I wanted to ask you when you were talking just now about various musical and philosophical issues, and you were talking about American music, and basically you were continuing your idea of sort of the breakdown of a lot of the attitudes and the borders that have separated a lot of musical genres and musical attitudes. One of the things that I wanted to ask you about also is, what do you see, in the broadest sense, as it applies to you personally and to the world at large, the role of the arts in life today as we near the millennium?

MILLS: Well, I think besides being a treasure and an inspiration, it's something that we're going to have to hold onto very tight, because we see what happens in the financial world: one day the market's up, one day it's down. There's so many things you cannot count on. That's why the spiritual aspect of music is there for you twenty-four hours a day. There was a song called-- Well, "when skies are cloudy and gray, they're only gray for a day." I think if skies are cloudy and gray and they're gray for many days, have your music. My music has saved me from difficult situations or brought me back from brinks. And I think I mentioned the *Symphonic Metamorphosis* [*on Themes by Weber*] by Hindemith as being one. I think other people have that too, where a song or a selection

or a symphony will relate-- They'll relate to it, and it will be a certain thing that will be a psychological handle and a philosophical uplift in a world that's very tragic at times, very tragic, and very dismal. Now, the music will get you out of that. It's more than a therapy. It is a therapy, but it takes you to a spiritual place above the mundane difficulties of everyday life. When you read the newspapers, the headlines, what a waste of time what people are doing, and then of course the terrible violence now. So when we have music that will really lift ourselves spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and then that is physical. Then you're healthy.

I think the bottom line is to be healthy so we can work efficiently. As I said before, it's not the work, it's the worry that we have to work. It's not the task, it's the worry about the task. It's not the weather, it's the worry about the weather. If we consider that nothing lasts forever, it will be over, so just hang in there. I mean, just using everyday sayings, not to be so erudite that people don't understand it. One and one is still two, and you can't change that. And sometimes, people try to make one and one six million, and that's where the difficulty comes in. They makes things so complicated. The body is simple. You just feed it properly, give it the proper rest, it'll do its thing. You don't have to say, "Would you beat today, my heart? Would my eyes look

and see?" I mean, it's all there. The nature is easy, and we make it hard by worrying, doubting, fearing over--you know, the over-eating and the over-worry. These are the things that make for trouble and problems in all fields, not just music.

I've read some places to simplify is so important. And I think we should do one thing at a time. When we eat, we should eat. We shouldn't be standing and running. You know, we eat on the run, we're eating in our car, and we don't give the body a chance to enjoy the food and to take the nourishment. I think all of those things are important. And I try to practice what I preach, too. If I'm doing too much I say "stop."

My one thing that helps me--I don't know if I said it before--I try never to make a decision at night. I don't know if I mentioned that before.

CLINE: Oh, no.

MILLS: At night, a person is tired. It's dark physically. So I try not to make a decision until the next day, because even with a little rest, I feel more rested, and if there's an inkling of daybreak, psychologically it looks better.

CLINE: You've slept on it.

MILLS: That's right. I think when they say, "Sleep on it," that's a very important item. I think the great scientists do that; they put it in their subconscious. They've got problem

number one, two, and three they have to solve. And they don't stay up all night. They stop, and they'll think about it, and they'll put it in their subconscious, and they'll rest, even a twenty minute rest, and they'll probably get the answer. I've read where great scientists have done that.

And also they made a survey of champions--I don't know if I mentioned this--champions of industry, athletics, musicians, and they find that the real champions are more calm and peaceful when they're off the center stage. They're more relaxed. People that interviewed them-- They weren't trying to be in the spotlight all the time and all the time performing, because they really burn themselves out. And I think that's a beautiful idea that I've gotten. When you're on the platform, when you're up there, you're really a hundred percent, you're two hundred percent, you're three hundred percent. But when you're off, let somebody else have the spotlight and let your body regenerate. And of course, I find by listening I learn, not by talking. That's part of my philosophy. And that's what I tell the children: if you want to learn, learn to listen.

CLINE: You mentioned the Hindemith *Symphonic Metamorphosis* last time in terms of it being a piece that you someday wanted to conduct, but you didn't actually tell the story of how this piece affected you personally. Do you want to talk about

that?

MILLS: Yes. When I played in the Kansas [City] Philharmonic under Efrem Kurtz many years ago, we played that piece, *Symphonic Metamorphosis,* and it made such an impression on me, especially the last movement, the march. And I liken it to life, parts of it. There's one passage about a quarter through, it just descends [sings fragment of melody], and that to me-- My interpretation of it--it's surely not Hindemith's, because I don't think he wrote many notes on it--but it's like the lowest point you can get psychologically, and it's like almost giving up, not giving up, but almost. And then after that there's a blaze. It's on fire. [sings fragment of melody] In other words, everything's going to be fine. You are wonderful. It's just like from a very high source breathing into you that, and it does it for me. I've gone through some difficult times, and that music always works. And if I don't have the actual recording or the CD I think about it. That helps. One of my daughters, Elaine [Mills Baydian], knew I liked that music and bought me a CD of the San Francisco [Symphony] Orchestra performing it. Very beautiful.

CLINE: That's great. Speaking of your family-- We talked about them before, and of course your present wife [Grusha Paterson Mills]. Do you want to, for the record, update everyone on how they're doing now?

MILLS: Yes. Well, my wife, of course, has the latest CD [*Grusha Sings Russian Gypsy Love Songs*] out, which I'm very proud of. And when we were in New York--I guess I didn't mention it--to a wedding just last month, August, went to her stepgrandson [Todd Baker]'s wedding. It was marvelous. And you know, I talked to somebody this morning. They said it's not serendipity, it's divine guidance, and I think that's what it is. We were at the wedding, and my wife's daughter Judy [Baker] mentioned that, "Mother, maybe you want to go to the beauty parlor and have your hair touched up"--you know, we came from California--and she said, "Fine." I think the wedding was on a Saturday. The wedding was seven or eight [o'clock] or whatever, and they made the appointment for my wife to a beauty parlor at three [o'clock]. So she goes down. And I'm-- We were wearing tuxedos, so I'm putting the studs in and the cufflinks, you know. It takes a while when you don't do it every day. So I'm working on that at the hotel room. At four o'clock I get a call, an urgent call. "Alvin, come down immediately and meet a conductor." Now, in a flash, I thought, "My wife's in a beauty parlor. Where do you meet a conductor?" Well, it so happened it's for men and women. You know, there are barbers. Sure enough, she has such-- [to his wife] I'm telling the wonderful story about you in New York. [to Cline] She's very perceptive. And she looked

at his hands--you know, he was having a haircut, and you have a sheet--and his hands were like this [poses his hands] and she said it looked like a musician's, artist's, hands, like my hands at rest. And she just asked him, "Are you a musician?" He said, "How did you know?" It turned out he was a conductor. He conducts several orchestras and a chorus, Gary de Sesa. And it was so interesting.

So I went down and met him. And of course, we didn't have much time. We talked. He's a graduate of Juilliard [School]. His wife [Masha de Sesa] is a singer from Juilliard. So we didn't have much time. I said, "Well, Monday we're leaving. Why don't you have breakfast with me. It would be a delight." You know, this is a current story so it's very fresh in my memory. I said, "Have breakfast, and we'll talk about music." And he said he has a tape he'd like me to hear. He's a composer.

So we had the wedding and everything, and it was fine, and the next day we had another little brunch. And Monday, he comes by at eight thirty. We go to the little restaurant, and he and I are together, we're talking. I had Grusha's CD, and it says "Grusha sings Russian Gypsy music." And he looks at it, he says, "My wife is Russian." Now, here's a conductor, and he has a Russian wife, and he meets me under these circumstances. So I said, "Well, here's the CD for

you to take." So he took it home. Let's see, we ate from eight thirty to nine thirty, quarter to ten. We were leaving about one [o'clock]. He takes it home. His wife plays the CD and loved it and called up Grusha, and they talked for about ten minutes in Russian. I mean, what a coincidence that just happened.

And I feel very wonderfully close to him in such a short time, this man. Tremendous background. He had written some religious music, some Jewish music, and he went to Russia and gave twelve performances in ten days in different synagogues there. So it was very interesting. So I have his name now. We'll get together and talk. Isn't that interesting?

CLINE: Yeah. And you mentioned your son, I think--

MILLS: Steven [Mills].

CLINE: Steven. Is he the one who accompanied you to New York?

MILLS: Yes. He won a prize, and we went--I went as his guest--last year. And we stayed I think at the Hilton [Hotel]. And before I left--

CLINE: What was the prize?

MILLS: Well, he had heard a radio program and gave an answer or something.

CLINE: Oh, that kind of a prize.

MILLS: Yeah, that kind of a prize.

CLINE: Oh, wow. Okay.

MILLS: Just a real serendipity too, when you listen at eight o'clock in the morning or ten and [claps hands]-- And by the way, it was true. So he had a chance to go to New York.

Now, did I mention that Harold Dicterow had played in my orchestra?

CLINE: You didn't mention that he played in your orchestra. You mentioned that you just saw him in New York.

MILLS: No, no. That's his son. Harold Dicterow played fifty years as principal second violinist in the L.A. [Los Angeles] Philharmonic, and now when he has time he plays principal in my orchestra, principal second.

So Harold knew I was going to New York, and he said, "Well, call up Glenn [Dicterow]"--Glenn is the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic--"and see him." And of course, I called him, and we were his guests. Tremendous concert. This is where [Leonard] Slatkin was the conductor. And then we had a chance to meet, take some pictures with Glenn, and then we took some later with Leonard Slatkin, too. But this was a marvelous concert. And talk about [Aaron] Copland, they played his Third Symphony. And he's the one that had played the lighter music, you know, and the movie music and then symphonies.

CLINE: Right. And then your son Robert [Mills]?

MILLS: Robert was married last December. Very happy. He's

married to a lovely lady [Kumari Sommers Mills]. And Robert does a lot with-- He's got several cassettes out. I think I gave you one.

CLINE: That's right.

MILLS: And he's got CDs out: *Cloud Drifting* and *Totally Awesome* and so forth. He's done tremendous in that field, but now he's also doing communications with Excel, so he's working as one of their representatives. So he's doing nicely with that. And then-- Let's see. Those are the two sons.

Steven does quite a bit of work in playing with popular groups. He plays sometimes with my symphony. He can play the popular or the jazz or the symphony. He's very versatile.

And then the daughters, did I mention? I think I mentioned Jan [Mills Grigg], who's up in Clovis [California]. She has five children, and her husband is Bill [William Grigg]. And did I mention the children? I think I did mention them. The grandchildren? Well, the oldest one is Jenny [Grigg], at least fourteen [years old] now, and she's going to junior high and plays the piano and organ. Billy [Grigg] plays the piano, and I think he's twelve [years old] now. They both do wonderful things in swimming. They're good for sports, you know. Then they have Allison [Grigg], who's about six [years old] now and I guess in first or second grade. Then they have Robin [Grigg], she's the one that flies. [laughs]

And she's about four [years old], four now or five. And then they have the other one. No, no, I guess she's five, and then they have one, I guess, three [years old]. The baby is Katie [Grigg]. So that keeps my daughter very busy with school and preschool and everything.

Then there's Elaine Susan Baydian, who's married to Eric [Baydian]. Both of them, these young ladies, are registered nurses, so they've got very practical experience. I have three grandchildren: George [Baydian], the baby, about one and a half [years old] now. And then they have Heather Lee [Baydian], about four [years old]. And then the other one I guess is five [years old], and that's Rachel [Baydian]. These families are just wonderful. When I think of something very nice, I think of them. We talked about substituting good thoughts.

And then Maria [Mills] is my baby who's working and going to school at [California State University] Northridge, so she's in the process of getting ready for something. She wants to do interpreting, court interpreter, translator. So she's very good in Spanish. She has a tremendous-- Well, she knows both languages well, and she knows both the character of the American and the Spaniard.

CLINE: Right. Well, her mother [Josefa Primo] is Spanish.

MILLS: Yes. Her mother was born in Valencia, very fine--

Well, she's a musician, too. Her mother plays guitar and sings very well.

Basically, that's the family.

CLINE: Yeah. So you have kind of a multicultural family at this point.

MILLS: It is, for sure.

CLINE: So as we're getting toward the conclusion here, I wanted to ask you how you see the future of the Brentwood-Westwood Symphony Orchestra at this point.

MILLS: Well, that's a challenge. I'll have to think of my successor one day. I'd like to think that I'll conduct until I'm ninety-five [years old] or so, which is a few years up, but I have to be realistic. I would love it to go on, but it will be up to me and the board [of directors] to do it. I have certain plans. They're not formulated yet, so I can't really say I'm going to do one, two, three, but I will one, two, three, and if necessary, four, five, six. All of life is a planning, and you focus on a goal. I know that one of the goals now, of course, is to still go in the schools, still have classical, serious music important, but a way of perpetuating the orchestra will be a real challenge. I'm thinking of ways of doing it, and I know that with divine guidance that will be there. If I practice the four legs of what I call a table--I think I told you--divine guidance,

divine protection, divine healing, and divine supply-- Now, if you have all of that, that just about covers everything, I believe. It covers most of it. The old saying "It covers the waterfront," so-- [mutual laughter]

Anyhow, I try to be practical. I'm basically an optimist, and I like to see the best. I see the glass as half full, and it has the opportunity of filling up more. That's the postlude on that. They never say that. Most of the time they think it's going to evaporate. [laughs]

CLINE: You're right. Someone's going to drink it.

MILLS: Right.

CLINE: When you were preparing to start the orchestra, you had someone who was a detractor, someone who tried to tell you that it wouldn't go. Who was that person? And what would you say to that person now?

MILLS: Well, I believe it was one of my junior high school teachers. I believe it was. We'll make him anonymous now. I don't know if he's even around. Well, I don't think I'd tell him anything. You hear of vengeance and revenge. Vengeance is for the Lord, by the way, and vengeance-- I think if you want people to know that they were wrong, just by doing it, that's enough. You don't have to go around and put it right in their lap, so to speak. I mean, we have to realize that most of the world is negative, it really is. But as

I mentioned before, even a simple little battery is smart enough to know that it needs a plus and a minus to at least balance itself. I mean, there's a battery without a brain, but it's doing pretty well.

I think we have to know how to balance our lives with the minus. There's so much minus. There's so much negativity. Read the papers. Where do you find "The Brentwood orchestra played a nice concert and gave people a chance?" "The L.A. [Los Angeles] Chamber-- "Well, the Chamber Orchestra gets a nice write-up, but "This community orchestra played a nice concert and helped people," where do you see that? You don't see that. Where do you see that--? Once in a while in the back pages it's somebody did something correctly, but in the front pages it's all the difficult problems. They multiply it, make it more, so they can sell papers. And what happens on television? They say something like, "Oh, in a few minutes we'll come back and tell you." You know, they keep you dangling as if it's going to be very important. Everything is sort of a hype, a wrong hype. That's why it's nice to hear sometimes the British. They just say, "The news is brought to you by John Jones." He reads it and goodbye, you know?

CLINE: [laughs] That's right.

MILLS: But we say, "Oh, did you hear about--? Did you know about that?" Oh, it's so awful. And then they try to get

an Academy Award, each one. You know, they have anchors, and anchors have anchors. I mean, it's-- You know what I'm saying. It's so commercial.

CLINE: Yeah, it's entertainment.

MILLS: That's right. It's got to be entertainment, everything.

CLINE: Do you remember what the person said to you when--?

MILLS: Oh, yes, something like, "They've tried an orchestra in that area and it didn't work." In other words, "I want to save you the time and effort and all the difficulties that you'd have to go through." But I'm glad I didn't listen. There's a time when you listen and a time when you just don't. You omit things. There's a time when of course you'll tell your child, "Do not touch that stove, it's hot." "Do not"--there's a time. But instead of saying, "Do not walk on the grass," better to say, "Walk on the sidewalk. Walk on the sidewalk." That means you're not to walk on the grass. But most times you say, "Don't do that, don't do this." And all of those don'ts are depressing, and they suppress the real thing.

CLINE: They also make people want to do it, don't they? [laughs]

MILLS: How true that is. Yes, that's right. The rebellion,

which is in the growing-up person, that's for sure. "Don't do this," and they'll do it. That's true, yes.

CLINE: So I'm pretty much out of questions at this point, but is there anything in closing that you would like to say?

MILLS: Yes. I want to thank you personally for being so helpful, erudite, and I learned a lot from you. And then I want to thank UCLA, and--the gentleman's name is--?

CLINE: Dale Treleven.

MILLS: Dale Treleven. I want to thank him and the people that were making this. I feel very honored that I was selected to do this. And of course, UCLA is my alma mater, so I feel I've sort of come home. I've always been, shall we say, loyal to the colors, and I wish them well. I know their music department is doing beautifully. I'm very happy to hear that. I've been to some of their concerts; they're really magnificent. So the school's in good hands. And of course, besides music there are other departments. UCLA has a wonderful reputation all over the world, so I'm very happy to be part of this history at that wonderful institution and then know that it's got such a wonderful reputation, and longevity is there. And it will be a great tradition into the millennium.

CLINE: Right. Well, thank you very much for doing this interview on behalf of the Oral History Program and everyone at UCLA. Thanks a lot for taking the time to talk to us.

MILLS: It's my honor and pleasure, yes. Thank you.

APPENDIX

I began my musical study on flute in April of my fourth grade year in 1961, having lost my dad only three months previously. Mr. Alvin Mills was the instrumental teacher at Glen Oaks Elementary School in Glendale, California, when I started in his program in fifth grade. In everyone's life, certain people or events change their course of existence. Alvin Mills was one of these people. I remember Mr. Mills not being bound by the rules I see today. He immediately moved me into orchestra from beginning winds. He continually encouraged all his students to achieve beyond our school orchestra class. We played solos on all of his concerts, which made us study our instruments even further. Mr. Mills was terrific in mixing humor with the seriousness of classical music. This made our classes "fun" so we wanted to participate in music.

When I graduated from elementary school, Mr. Mills immediately began to send me elementary age flute students. I began teaching, I believe, at 50 cents for a half-hour lesson. I will never know if this came about because he knew of my financial need or because he saw my talent. This was truly my way to help my family, by beginning to earn an income at a young age. He created the inception of my career, for I have continued to teach the rest of my life, making music my career. I taught throughout high school, then at the Eastman

School of Music I taught Saturdays for the Rochester City Schools inner city music program. When I came to USC for my master's, I began teaching the younger students for Louis DiTullio. Now I have a studio of thirty-five students weekly. My students have gone on to study at Curtis, Peabody, Eastman, Paris Conservatory, as well as many other prestigious universities. Some of my younger students have been chosen for the Disney Orchestra and others for the Young Musicians Foundation, State Music Teachers conventions, National Flute Association conventions, and local youth orchestras. I am highly regarded by my colleagues and asked to evaluate, adjudicate, and give master classes all over Southern California on a regular basis. Performance-wise, I have played locally in the Santa Barbara Symphony, Long Beach Symphony, Beverly Hills Symphony, Westside Symphony, San Fernando Valley Symphony, and the San Gabriel Valley Symphony, as well as the Five Winds Quintet and Foothill Artists Trio.

For all that I have accomplished, at the beginning there was Mr. Alvin Mills to plant the seeds for my career. Many thanks, Mr. Mills!

--Francine Ross Pancost

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