

Music at MIT Oral History Project

Dante Anzolini

Interviewed

by

Forrest Larson

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Note on timing notations:

Recording of this interview can be found either as one continuous file or as split up over two audio CDs. Timings are designated in chapter headings in both formats, with the timing on the full file preceding the timing on the CD version.

Contributors

Dante Anzolini was Associate Professor of Music at MIT 1998-2006, and conductor of the MIT Symphony and Chamber Orchestras. Currently, he is Music Director of the Orchestra of the Teatro Argentino Opera Theater, in La Plata, Argentina, and principal guest Conductor of the Linz Theater in Linz, Austria. In April 2008, he conducted the Metropolitan Opera in Philip Glass' opera *Satyagraha*. Along with performing standard symphonic and operatic repertoire, he is an advocate for contemporary music, and has a special interest in the works of Charles Ives.

Forrest Larson, Library Assistant at the Lewis Music Library, has attended training workshops in oral history methodology and practice at Simmons College and by the Society of American Archivists, and is a member of the Oral History Association. He is also an active composer and violist.

Interview conducted by Forrest Larson on November 19, 2007 in the MIT Lewis Music Library. Duration of the audio recording is 1:40:21. Fourth of four interviews. Previous interviews: March 28, 2005; November 2, 2005; and March 21, 2006.

Music at MIT Oral History Project

The Lewis Music Library's *Music at MIT Oral History Project* was established in 1999 to document the history of music at MIT. For over 100 years, music has been a vibrant part of the culture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This history covers a wide variety of genres, including orchestral, chamber, and choral musical groups, as well as jazz, musical theater, popular and world music. Establishment of a formal music program in 1947 met the growing needs for professional leadership in many of the performing groups. Shortly thereafter, an academic course curriculum within the Division of Humanities was created. Over the years, the music faculty and alumni have included many distinguished performers, composers and scholars.

Through in-depth recorded audio interviews with current and retired MIT music faculty, staff, former students, and visiting artists, the Music at MIT Oral History Project is preserving this valuable legacy for the historical record. These individuals provide a wealth of information about MIT. Furthermore, their professional lives and activities are often historically important to the world at large. Audio recordings of all interviews are available in the MIT Lewis Music Library.

1. Charles Ives (00:26—CD1 00:16)

FORREST LARSON: It's my distinct honor and privilege to have Dante Anzolini back for another interview. He's former Associate Professor of Music at MIT. He was the conductor of the MIT Symphony and Chamber Orchestra from September 1998 through spring of 2006. And you are now Music Director of the Teatro Argentino in La Plata, Argentina, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Linz Theater in Linz, Austria. Thank you so much for coming.

DANTE ANZOLINI: Thank you.

FL: In the last interview we had talked about the music of Charles Ives. I had a few more questions, and we could talk all day about it! [laughs]

DA: Yeah. [laughs]

FL: Today Ives is considered by some to represent something essentially American, yet he considered nationalistic music as lacking in depth and substance. His ideal, even when using local folk tunes, was to strive for something he would have thought as universal. Do you want to talk about that? You've come from a culture that's obviously not American, but yet you have a real affinity for his music.

DA: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. As I mentioned, the last interview, I think I got to know his music in my first years of [unclear]. I don't remember whether I was thirteen or fourteen, or something. I told you that I had these couple of books that I was reading, and one of them was the Joseph Machlis, kind of like a long definition on several biographies. And I read about Ives, and I happened to have fantastic teachers, who were very interested in the avant-garde music—I mean, even considering the fact that the guy had written music in 1910 that was so avant-garde that we were already 1970's! But still, there was some data that I got from these people, and I didn't—I wanted to know more about him. And I got the *Concord Sonata* and tried to practice, and I got the *Fourth Symphony*—phenomenal LP—and it opened my brain. I mean, it was such a phenomenal exposure to something that I didn't even know about!

Referring to national music—it sounds funny, because me as a foreigner, in relationship to this culture, when I first heard his music, and I saw that the music was using so many folk elements that came from something completely foreign to me, in a funny way I was comparing some of these procedures—it's a very elliptical thing, you know, or even metaphorical—to what I heard from the use of [Béla] Bartók. And I was relating weirdly the two different currents, without even understanding what was going on, but it was one of the ways of distorting a collage thing. It was one thing, and then to be the application of the *Dances*, in say, *Music for Strings*, *Percussion and Celesta*. It's a completely different path. Ergo, when I learn about his [Editor's note: Ives'] writings, *Essays Before a Sonata*—

FL: Right.

DA: When I saw his ideologic—ideology—when I read and I tried to understand in my young age—I was fourteen or fifteen—what was behind, I did see that there completely no relationship between the nationalistic procedures, and what he was doing. Although for me, many things that I heard from—I mean, heard in his music,

was the ideal Americana that I was so curious to see beyond the black and white TV [laughs], and things that were referring to a culture that I didn't really understand, or didn't really know!

I mean, as much as I love history—and I read a lot—and geography, and it was a funny system in Argentina by which, in the years of high school, we were more—I think—that we were much more informed than today kids here about the geography in this country. It was something funny, being born in some weird place in the world, you always look at the centers as the main, you know, resources of your culture, even though that they didn't have anything to do with anything!

I find myself, I found myself much more knowledgeable about American music, as I was in my first semester at Yale, than many of my American peers! Which is a funny thing. I mean, some people didn't even know, never heard the *Concord Sonata*! I wanted to shoot myself, say, "How come, you're America, you didn't hear this music?" I mean, okay, [Aaron] Copland, yes, fine, yes, many things, yes. But, the so-called experimentalists—no idea! The so-called, you know, this guy that was not known in 1957, I mean, when he got the Pulitzer, and then we are in 1987, '88, and they didn't know! [pause]

And nationalistic—to resume, to give you some idea, you know, referring to your question—even though it might sound funny to you, I always saw the reference. And when he was talking—the reference to a national music, even though he wasn't—of course he wasn't advertising the hymns. But for me as a foreigner, I saw much of the ideal world of chaotic confusion, and at the same time, energy, raw energy, that you can hear in the music, and that you are so bound to. I mean, that phenomenal explosion of energy!

And I always thought of the parallel between that music and the incredible force that this country and this society had when it was creating itself. It was creating its own culture, its own tradition, its own, you know, factories, its own power! And I think it does reflect that, much more than other music that is supposed to be American. But for me, the quintessential America is ingrained in that weird combination of crazy music. If you see the *114 Songs*, and you see this beautiful tonal naiveté, at the same time with the most crazy clusters! And that gives you the whole panorama of what this beautiful chaos. Anyway, I don't know if I—

FL: That's, yeah! So, just to follow up on that, you don't, as a conductor or as a performer, you don't need to know the names of the tunes that he quotes in order to understand the music, right? You don't need to know what the original hymns, the fiddle tunes—?

DA: In all honest, yeah, I always in my work, in, to, even though I couldn't relate to them as you can relate to them. I mean, I understood some of the hymns when I was playing myself in New Haven in the church—

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: I understood those hymns, then. But before that, fifteen years before, ten years before, I was looking for the names, and it was hard for me. It was hard because—I don't know if you don't need them. I mean, I would say, I mean I always look, I

search, for that information, even though I might not understand. The truth is, you know, as I said, you get—for instance, you get the name of one hymn, that it was in the second movement of the fourth, okay? And then you go and you look for your stuff, and then you found, you found, you know this hymn, and then you play it. But it doesn't have the same resonance in your brain or your heart until you get to the New England church, and then you have to play that, in New Haven!

FL: Yeah!

DA: And then you see the connotations of the words, the connotations of the tradition, the way people react to that, and then you, maybe you are—when you have that experience, you feel much richer, and able to conduct the piece. Yes, you might be right, you don't need it. But I don't know, I'm not sure. I—

FL: I didn't think you needed to know that. He hoped that it was universal.

DA: Mm-hm. Yes, I appreciate that. I don't know. I have this mentality of trying to look over all the sources, all the possible sources to feed myself. It's such a different world! Anyway, yeah, you were going to say?

FL: One last question about Ives. It's hard to limit the questions. There's a quote of Ives. He says, "Unity is too generally conceived of, or too easily accepted as analogous to form, and as analogous to custom, and custom to habit." [Editor's note: from *Essays Before a Sonata*.]

DA: [laughs] That's great.

FL: And lots of scholars have been misled by some of his quotes like that, thinking that he had no concept of form.

DA: No

FL: As a conductor who really spends time really getting to the bottom of a piece and understanding its form, how does Ives's unorthodox form—what kind of challenges does that present to you? Is it something different?

DA: Yeah, yeah.

FL: Yeah.

DA: I mean, it presents the simple—simple! [laughs]—enormous challenge that you can, many times, you won't be able to identify this content into some kind of like funny little scheme. That will not—you will not be able, many times, to identify the development of whatever, you know, in the German tradition, what is supposed to be the main, the main street for making music. Which is kind of funny—so limiting! Many times with Ives you will have to create, yourself, a scheme for you to put the music through your veins and through your brain! Which is an enormous amount of energy and work, because again, when you go to some other musics, you can even look to the transpiring, you know, way to put this theme, this out of the confrontation there—

But with Ives, it's never so easy. And I think that is one of the many ways to show that, his incredible richness! I do not at all—I don't even [unclear] one percent of what critics might have said about the lack of form or not. I mean, the fact that

someone is creating himself new envelopes for his own music is not a negative thing at all! It's just the contrary: it's someone who is going out of the norm, and so much you do we—how much do we know about the biggest genius in history, say, Bach, or Beethoven? Where they, I mean, at the moment when we see some phenomenal piece that stayed there in the repertoire for centuries, how much our usual schools, conservatory, culture—how much do they teach us about the phenomenal amount of contradictions between those phenomenal works of art? And they're supposed to be clear scheme, supposed to be form.

Many times that we hear those genial works of art, they are based on exceptions to the rule, not to the rule! And one should recognize that in Ives, in many—in so many phenomenal aspects of the—it really poses an enormous difficulty, you trying to conceivably make sense of—supposed to be this part, elements—chaotic contradictions, difficulty relating, you know, themes that are supposed to go together with different tempi, you know, and things that you are supposed to see how this extreme of the score is one thing, and this other is a different one—to what extent you can do this schizophrenic exercise of having everything there and being able to help people playing them! It's hard. It's incredibly hard!

But again, it opened my ears to such an extent that it will never be enough for me to say thank you. It will be something that you can repeat until you die, every minute, but it will never be enough: how much the guy did for our culture, how much you receive from this incredible universe of things, this chaos. They imply the organization of something new. Yes, it's hard. Believe me, it is hard. It's really hard, but I cannot wait to do it again! I mean, the *Fourth [Symphony]*, for instance. You know?

FL: Yeah.

DA: I cannot wait to do some—to have the opportunity that someone gives me the possibility of choosing, you know, that repertoire, and that I'm able to do it with the orchestra. You know, that's a hard one. But anyway, yeah.

2. Post-romantic and modernist music (15:43—CD1 15:33)

FL: Wow. So moving on, you are somewhat unusual as an orchestral conductor in that you have a deep affinity for post-romantic and in modernist music, and not just eighteenth or nineteenth century.

DA: Mm-hm.

FL: Can you talk about having this kind of orientation in today's world of orchestral music, as a conductor?

DA: Oh yeah. I mean, I can answer that, you know, I can speak hours about that!

FL: I know you could!

DA: I mean, you see, we talked about it. For years, when I was working here, what—it gets to a point that I don't understand it anymore, because you can emphasize forever

and ever and ever the big works of art of the past, and yes, we do have this obligation to present it. Obligation—I mean, the moral obligation of presenting it. But at the same time, what I'm thinking is: I don't understand any of my colleagues who do not understand the simplest truth—it's probably the first time in history, the last many years, I mean fifty, sixty, seventy years, in which the tendency—you go to a concert, I mean, as [Pierre] Boulez put it, I mean, you go to a museum—I don't get it.

First of all, the only way to really help the music, as any art, to be alive, is to talk to the real composers that compose today, and to help them getting their pieces performed. And this is an ideological thing, that it doesn't really equate to whatever you feel it should be, or shouldn't be, your taste or not. I mean, I essentially, sometimes I may conduct pieces that I'm not really convinced about. But it's not my function to be convinced! My function is to be a bridge so the public will decide. Deciding about anything in terms of choosing, well, I tend to go to, first of all, pieces that impress me, in the twentieth century, impressed me as a young composer, when I was a young composer.

I have some empathy to the things that went outside the norm. I did play one million, as a pianist, pieces by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven. I played almost all the symph—all the sonatas, sorry, of Beethoven, I played the two books of Bach [*The Well-Tempered Clavier*], I mean, the *Goldberg Variations*, all the *English Suites*. You know, I love Bach; the older I get, the more I love Bach! I played many violin sonatas from, I mean, Mozart, you know. Chamber music with the viola, with the violin, with the piano, with the whatever. Yes, yes, I do acknowledge that, and it's in my veins. I learned that tradition.

But as I said, we, besides my particular tastes and things that impressed me when I was adolescent, I always thought, since I decided to be a conductor, being that bridge implies helping people to get their music known, helping those pieces to be known, and helping music as an art, you know, to be renewed—not believing that the only function is to go to the museum and see the same painting by Goya. Of course, yes, lovely, it's fantastic. There's so many people doing it, why should I do it myself? I mean, they will hear one million Beethovens. They most probably won't hear a single Ives, you know?

Okay, you go to the store, get your CD, get your Beethoven, or get a conductor you know. If I had one million concerts, I—many times I would like to play many pieces by Beethoven. But given that I, you know, have a limited amount, like everyone has a limited amount of possibilities, I tend to choose one new piece every concert, if I can place it—new piece, completely new, you know? One not really known piece from the repertoire, if—seldom played, you know? Yes, one piece that is known, and people will instantly like, because it has been a favorite for centuries. Yes, if I can do it, I will do it. But those are not my priorities. My priorities are, you know, to be a bridge.

FL: The dissonant sonorities of non-tonal music seems very compelling to you. We've had lots of conversations about that. Music that lacks a sense of tonality—does it pose special problems in preparing a piece? Can you talk a little bit about that?

DA: Oh, yeah, yeah. The lack of tonal—a tonal center, the lack of hierarchies—look, essentially many times I'm going from the simplest thing to the most complex one. Essentially, I got to understand that—I never thought it would be the case when I started conducting, but I met so many people that do my profession, and they don't have perfect pitch. That for me always was an impossibility. I mean, I would never even—I wouldn't even dream of becoming a conductor without that thing. I mean, essentially sometimes I think that people, when they open a score, they cannot listen to that, and that's impossible!

You have to be able to listen! Otherwise, how can you—anyway, I mean, it's a long conversation, going towards the skills that you have to have as a conductor. I think that one of the first reasons why people don't do that is that they cannot hear it. And the fact that they cannot hear this is just a complete negation of the possibility of being a conductor, period! For me, it's [unclear]. You know, it's like that, sorry, I won't discuss it. And it's a little bit of historic idea about conducting, but I won't change now; I'm too old.

The difficulty—the simplest way to define, you know, the lack of that repertoire, is that there are some other things that one should consider. And as I mentioned to you, my ambivalence about some of the musics that we are considering, say, [Arnold] Schoenberg, say, [Anton] Webern. I'm not touching the Ives' things, because Ives poses other types of questions, and other difficulties, and other ways of seeing music. For instance, for many years I had my doubts about how to approach a Schoenberg piece, because I never really agreed—never really agreed with the fact that all lines are equal and all the sounds are equal. I know the hierarchies are destroyed, because in my way, the biggest—in my feelings, the biggest contradiction to such a statement is that to what extent we human beings, in this culture, we hear the bass the same as the melody, the same as the inner voices.

One of the questions is: how do you approach a music where the dissonance is the rule? How do you feel about the dissonance in the bass line, the dissonance in the top melody, the dissonance in all the inner voices, the core dissonance, the succession of dissonances? How does your brain or your heart make an order? I'm using order because I'm too used to speaking of the German *ordnung*. Not an order, but a hierarchy. Or maybe priorities, or maybe, you know, what is the goal of this phrase, if the phrase is completely dissonant and there's no tonal scheme or model that can imply the arrival to the tonic, or to whatever, you know.

Or even in the post-romantic period, in which, you know, as you see and you analyze a symphonic poem by [Richard] Strauss. And even though you see that it goes back and forth, back and forth, here you see the goal, somehow determined by how many of the exceptions to the rule the deceptive cadences go to what place and how. Fine! You make—you can make sense of that. How do you make sense of melodies or structures in which you don't see any kind of—you don't see any kind of triad? You don't see the thirds, so how do you make sense of that?

And then, the difficulty in that is, in my—I'm always asking myself questions about, for instance, the shadows of the bass lines. If the bass lines I am studying and I am conducting are completely dissonant, do they imply in me some certain kind of

ghost of the past, of the tonal past? Am I understanding that as completely independent music from the past? Am I feeling—what should I transmit? Am I feeling that this line, related to the melody, has any kind of dependency? Am I thinking that the combinations of dissonant melodies, or voices, when I hear—they're supposed to be clusters, or not? Or they might be completely “abnormal”, of course, in the context of triads. Do they mimic the triads? No, maybe not.

Am I mimicking a normal development of a tonal melody or tonal structure by acknowledging these big arcs, and arriving to certain places in which I hear that there is some sense of arrival? Is a sense of arrival to those atonal, dissonant structures exist? If that exists, how do I make sense of that, in the traditional way, if I need to be traditional? How do I make sense of the arrivals, if they are not implied by cadences that are known in the system? How come that I feel that, and how can I express that feeling to a student?

Or to a professional musician, because many times, they play—I mean, I was conducting a [György] Ligeti concerto, the *Piano Concerto*, some—a month ago or something, with the Bruckner Orchestra. [Editor's note: full title is the Bruckner Orchestra Linz.] It's the Bruckner Orchestra! It's an orchestra with a phenomenal tradition—great players! I can swear to God, I can tell you, and it's not detrimental to their abilities: no one had a clue! A musical clue! They studied the notes; they practiced them, and it a funny situation in which, you know, in the most atonal, complete chaotic thing, you know, people were asking me why I was conducting in six if the implications were four. And I said, “Well, if you look at the score you will see that this is going to better for you proper technique of playing.” I mean, just talking about simple gesture thing, every time that I was conducting.

I remember the moment in which it was kind of like a transcription of a crazy, free jazz go, let's go to hell together, and let's enjoy it. And it was fun! It was great, but the chordal structure, when you understood that, had implications of lines that people did not get! And many times you had to underline those things that are your—not only your theories, when you study note by note, you will see that, how the guy implied with his crescendos the point of arrival. And people don't see it because they cannot even, they cannot hear the other voices. They would go crazy!

At a certain point he writes for the—in special positions for the horn, so he says in the score, “This sound is going to be too high. It's going to be sharp. Let it go, play it, and don't worry.” So there it could—entire line of the horn, in the third movement, in which you see a succession of not only dissonances, but things that you're perfect, which you will hear that they are either sharp or too low! And then you have to let it happen, and relate—relate that melody, because it's supposed to be the *halb stimme*, the main, in that particular area, no? The main melody. But how can you relate that to all the dissonant chords that go back and forth? [laughs]

Again, I feel this attachment. I feel attached to the idea of exploring in that direction, maybe because I studied as a composer. Maybe because the music touches me; maybe because, I don't know, those exceptions make that little salt of beautiful thing that you have to go after. Maybe because it's not explained, fully explained, what's going on with the organization of those sounds. Maybe because we don't

grasp it, and I will—I can tell you about the famous pendulum I mentioned to you. Why do we go this way and then this way?

You know, why do we think that everything has to be dissonant, or everything has to be consonant? I mean, it might not be! I mean, Ives is a biggest example of that. It might not be necessarily one or the other [pause] direction! It might be all of them! All of them! All directions! But it certainly—I don't know where we started from! [laughs] We started, I mean, yes, I feel this attachment to exploring new things, and if they are not, they don't follow the norm, well, better, no?

FL: Just briefly, and this touches back to what we were talking about a little earlier, you found tonal tendencies in Schoenberg's twelve-tone music, such as the *Variations for Orchestra, Op. 31*, which you had arranged for solo piano, and was recently published. Anything you want to mention more about that particular piece? I know there's a lot to talk about.

DA: It's a—I will try to resume in a few words, because there is so much to—look, I see, when I did this study, in which I, you know, studied every single note of the piece, and tried to put it in some way that you can play almost, you know, ninety percent of the notes in your, with your two hands. And it was an enormous work. I saw so many contradictions between the confessed, or supposed to be, independence of the voices, or the lack of hierarchies, and those who referred to the ghosts that I explained to you once.

When you see that at a very fast tempo, that there are little pieces, little circles of tonal implications, or tonal voicings—I mean, parallel sixths and thirds, that isolate it—will give you an idea of a D major in the middle of this “long” measure, (long, quotation marks). This measure is going to go by in, I don't know, three seconds. In less than one second you hear this ghost, that if you have perfect pitch, is simple and easy to identify. But the weird combination of those ghosts, as a result of the whole, you know, the whole listening experience to the whole piece, makes you think that there is a real independence between the voices, and real independence of anything that is hierarchical.

I mean, it's—things of this, kind of like, the tone to arrive, “supposed to be,” I see those contradictions all over the place in that music. I, myself—let me put it this way: without any arrogance, I'm not able to listen in a slow piece, where the twelve-tone series determine a bass. My tendency is to listen distinctively to that, the low part of the row, and see all the implications in the vertical consequences of the combination of the sounds, to the extent that I elaborate in my brain some sort of meaning of the chord—I'm, every time that I confront this music, or for the case, any dissonant music, I look for some sort of sense of what—even if the sense is not explained to me by the composer or anything, it has to make sense to my ear, somehow.

I don't how to explain it, but it's more or less to create a new system out of this new world. What I see and hear in Schoenberg is way too many contradictions to his creed of creating a new world of music based on the independence of the dissonance.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: I see Brahms, Strauss, so much, all the time—and I’m not saying only in the rhythm. I’m saying in the real harmonies that you—that apparently are so diss[onant]—I mean, I don’t see that anymore! I see the transition *Gurre-Lieder*, *Verklärte Nacht*, going to the extreme, and as a logical transition towards this and this and that. But look, I see all those ghosts, all the time. I hear them. And I can with it—I mean, I was offered to give a conference on the transcription next month. And I can go to different places and play for you, you know, the implications of some of those little motifs, or you know, relationships that you see, basically, are tonic/dominant, tonic/dominant, tonic/domi—you know, all the time! All the time! But at such a fast speed, and in such a combination of sounds, that unless you have perfect pitch, it’s very difficult to hear.

3. Philip Glass (37:22—CD1 37:12)

FL: You’ve worked a fair amount with the composer Philip Glass. You’ve conducted works such as the *Symphony no. 5*, and next spring you’ve been engaged as the music director for a production of the opera *Satyagraha* with the Metropolitan Opera, in April, 2008.

DA: Mm-hm.

FL: You’ve shared with me, over the years, some of your thoughts about Philip Glass’s music and minimalism. Do you want to talk about some of that?

DA: For the record, it’s a very interesting thing. I mean, whoever hears these parts of the conversation in the future will also probably be able to understand how conflicting sometimes the ideas about art, or you know, I mean, as human beings also, about us being a human being, close, for instance to Philip, nowadays I know him very well, and I have some empathy, very interesting empathy as a person.

When I first heard his music I was probably fifteen or fourteen. My instant reaction was, “I can’t understand that.” My instant reaction was, as I was studying the music of Ives, the music of Schoenberg, the music of Webern, I said, “What is this?” Boulez. [pause] I took it so hard; I took it so, “Fraulein, I will kill you,” or something like that! [laughs] What is that? I mean, I was—how can I express it in English? I was furious. [pause] To the extent that I couldn’t understand the inner logic of the thing. And I was as if, I will never! I mean, what is this? I had such a stark reaction against the music, the philosophy, the implications, the—.

As much as then, you know, some twenty-five, thirty years later, I’m thinking to what extent the creation of a twelve-tone system, the implications of the manifestos, the propaganda that the Second Viennese School organized, to what extent my beliefs on the future of music as exposed in this book that I read like crazy when I was fourteen, Antoine Golea. It’s a French historian that was basically, and Juan Carlos Paz, which is also a composer and a historian who wrote the transition will be the music of our times, and all these people that were kind of like, you know, the Darmstadt, the Darmstadt implication of what the future of music was.

How much of my strong reaction against Philip's music was based on my beliefs, and my beliefs, how much of those beliefs were based on what I was feeling about what music was supposed to be? How much of that implied the negative feelings I had about composing, and that actually quit when I was twenty-one? Myself being in kind of like a dead-end activity, that I didn't even know how to support—myself going crazy, and my fear of going real—I'm mean crazy, real! I mean, to go to the mad house! [pause] How much of—and then relating to, nowadays I'm going to do my debut in the Met with this music! How difficult for me is to explain the enormous ambivalence of the pendulum going back and forth, and now my coming to terms to—I was studying two days ago. I was studying the music, his music. I was studying the opera. I say, "How the hell I can make sense of these repetitions?" I mean, in terms of, I have to meet him tomorrow!

And, and, we went to this—this is my idea. This is simply my interpretation. I'm composing myself, after twenty years, I'm coming back, and I'm allowed to send this to the Library of Congress, my *Little Preludes*, that are kind of like—in a funny way, they use my relationship with Bach, and in a funny way to Ives, in a funny way to Bartok, in a funny way to [Gustav] Mahler, and in a funny way to Philip, because I'm using sometimes some sophisticated ways of repeating things.

Not to the extent that I repeat, you know, the same chord for five minutes. I don't do that! But I mentioned to you in a conversation: there must be something behind, and I don't know what it is. I wish I did. I don't know! I don't know. If our culture went from the total destruction of the tonal sense, the tonal hierarchy, to years, in with America exposing the sixties and the seventies, they got repetition. Go, Philip Glass, go Reich, Steve Reich. Go there and listen to that. I mean, if we go from this extreme of the pendulum to that one, my question is simply, or, no question. I'm affirming tha—saying that as a statement. And I'm not even sure what I'm saying! [laughs]

I'm just saying it in the most sincere way. Why don't we learn from the dissonance? Why don't we try to have a grasp of what Schoenberg, Boulez, Webern, Darmstadt, Lige[ti]—I mean, what do they, how do they help us in getting elements that some center is a goal they didn't, I mean, no one had, as composers, as performers? We saw a new world. We—and no one ever thought of, you know, the famous simple "transposition of two bands" clashing in the, you know, some meters from you as an observer, and listener. And then, Ives did it. Okay, let's put that, let's use those elements, and let's try to understand why we arrive to that.

Now, what I'm saying about Philip's music: as much as my reaction was very hard, and very aggressive when I was fifteen, I played with him after, I think, before I turned forty, the first time. And I said, "Am I going to go play with, what?" And all these years I have been working with him, I have these phenomenal conversations in the, you know, in a bar, in the World's Exposition, the World—in 1998. We were together, and some people would come to him and say, "Thanks for your music," and people that didn't even speak English, and tried to be—and I'm, he's telling me this story of his beginnings as a composer, and the difficulties, you know, the fact that he respected so much Nadia Boulanger, and all the phenomenal amount of fugues that he

had to do, and the phenomenal amount of twelve-tone pieces that he did compose!
Philip!

FL: Wow! [laughs]

DA: He said that to me! An implications of the non-tonal, the implications and the difficulties that he found as a person, to relate to that music. He said, “Why am I following that system?” Now, difficult for me to explain how to make sense of the constant repetition. Yes, it’s difficult for me to make sense of some of his music, and the big lines. But what I’m thinking now is that blast of sound that is constantly tonal—how can I interpret that, in this given five minutes of time in which, how can I shape that? If there is any shape implied in the repetitions, and if there is any shape implied in the line going somewhere, why does the line or the repetition cause some kind of pleasure in the listener?

I mean, I’m thinking, this is a string. This is the other string of the pendulum. How can I use all the elements together? How can I appreciate the constant repetition of consonance, the constant repetition of dissonance? How can I relate to the two worlds? What are—what is behind? Why—rock music is so important nowadays? Why did I—does this happen? I went to play with Philip and Dennis six hands concert, and they clapped like crazy for minutes, and they maybe they felt like rock stars. It doesn’t make my ego bigger. I mean, I don’t care about applause, to tell you the truth.

My question is: what am I causing to them? Causing as, you know when I’m doing this, one million repetitions, what does, what little part in your heart I’m touching? What is behind? And it’s a question that, in the process of elaborating, you know, of creating that inner logic, I’m trying to come to terms to the fact that I’m doing this music, and magically, Philip, and the public’s—I mean, Philip’s told me that whenever I’m conducting I do something new in his music, that is a different thing that to what Dennis does.

FL: And that’s Dennis Russell Davies?

DA: Dennis Russell Davies, yeah. And Dennis has been his champion forever! Yes, I have one million contradictions, in conducting this music, in going to see Schoenberg and conducting Schoenberg, and seeing all the tonal implications, and not getting, and acknowledging that this guy, and the propaganda, the manifestos, killed my life as a composer. And Evan Ziporyn told me many things about his own feelings, and the guys my age who went through that Darmstadt, [Karlheinz] Stockhausen, seventies, eighties. But he, luckily, he’s American, like you. And you guys had another, you know, another wave that protected you from the implications of [coughs] the mathematical system of going, and that was approved by the schools and universities. Go and do the math, and you had a piece!

I didn’t have any protection, and that killed many composers! I mean, literally! And you had Ives! We didn’t had Ives. No, but there were some force in the other extreme of the pendulum, you know? So I am acknowledging that side of the pendulum, you know, Reich and Philip, as a necessary balance to see how do I compose my own music which is really my first interest now. And how I do understand those extremes, and everything that is in the middle. How do I make

sense of Philip's music? How do I make sense of Schoenberg's? And you know, Boulez, Stockhausen? How do I make sense? [John] Cage—how do I make sense of Cage? Through the lights of the prism, you know, through the prism of Philip? How do I make sense of Philip through the prism of Cage?

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: How can I understand all the realities? How can I put them together? If I can! But yes, going back, in all sincerity of the interview, hey, that was my first feeling, when I heard the music. And tomorrow I'm meeting with him, and I'm working on this piece! [laughs] And I can—it would take me hours and hours to go on and on, you know, going further in the implication of the second, the third act of, the end of *Satyagraha*. How can I make sense of that?

I mean, I can exp—I was thinking of: mi, fa, sol, la, si, do, re, mi: E, F, G, A, B, C, D, E. [sings] La da da da di da—I'm singing in the wrong key, but [sings] di da da da di da da da. And played with an A minor—A minor—A minor constant harmony. Nothing! And this is the last ten minutes of the piece. [sings] Di da da da di da da da—in three. After that thing, you go to a four-four that you conduct in two for the implications of the: [sings] bi bah bah bah bah bah bah, the eighth notes. [sings] Di ga da ga da ga; di da da da da da da da da da da, bah bah bah bah bah bah. Then four and four.

I was thinking, to give some variety, then he constructs a cadence with three chords going to A minor, after that three-four feeling: [sings] di da da da di da da da, two times. [sings and beats time] di da da da di da da da. And then after that he does a kind of postlude of that phrase, formations of four-four, where the instruments, where the woodwinds go the simplest, I think that six, seven, first. I mean, F major, G major, A minor cadence. F, G, A, *basta!*

So, how do I make sense? I was thinking of some weird things. For instance, the woodwinds play structures of chords, for instance, I can give you an example. An arpeggio that you can think of, four plus—four eighths plus four eighths, or three plus three plus two, because of the arpeggio construction. Three eighth notes as an arpeggio, three eighth notes as an arpeggio, and two eighth notes as a finish of the structure. Then I was thinking I can do variations of the phrasing, so every time I count the same thing, people can see the same line through a different person.

But it's, as you see, it's a difficult operation for me, because to what extent that I asking, when I look at myself in the mirror, "To what extent do you believe in the repetition?" And when I look at [unclear], I say, "Well, I don't completely." Am I only a fiction, heart, you know, felt. The thing is, Jesus, the other pendulum threw me to hell. So then there must be something behind this side of the pendulum could help me, maybe. This is a very egoistic statement. Maybe, maybe not. Maybe it's my way to expose, in an interview, what I see of the two extremes, and the incredible amount of new music that you see, and you hear, and you try to conduct!

If I had my hands, I mean, if I had the power, I would conduct every single week different, four different new pieces. If I had the power. So you see, all—I was talking to John Harbison two weeks ago, and he says, "you know, I was on the jury of the composers for Tanglewood. I mean, nowadays, from Europe, you can see

everything! Not only in America—you can see in Europe, too—everything! Some years ago it was only Darmstadt, and forget it! You were from Vienna? There was nothing—nothing beyond Darmstadt. Nothing!”

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: They would despise Reich. They would think that, you know. But nowadays, you see all the spectrum. Forrest, you see everything! Then that moves me more and more to try to understand the swings of the pendulum. More and more, because I will confront myself with everything! Anyway, sorry. I went on.

FL: No, that’s—that’s just great.

4. Arrival at MIT (56:02—CD1 00:00)

FL: When you came to MIT in September, 1998, what were your main goals as Professor of Music, and as conductor of the MIT Symphony Orchestra? How did you see that when you came?

DA: You mean, as a work, or as a person? As a professor? I mean, they gave me the job.

FL: Right. You were Professor of Music, and you were conductor of the orchestra.

DA: Mm-hm, well. Two or three things. I came through an international search, which they said to me, well, they chose the best conductor, the very best conductor, is what they said. You know, I think all of them, all of my ex-colleagues. “We want you to conduct the orchestra.” They said to me that class work was secondary, for whatever reason.

I thought that was my obligation, to use the class work to open people’s ears, if possible, to confront their own beliefs of, you know, we do our studies here in technology and science, and this is for fun. And you know, they have to understand ,there is a lot of science in music! [laughs] And a lot of discipline that they had to learn. My colleagues told me that people needed, in the classroom, a lot of exposure to musics that they otherwise don’t hear. I trusted them, and I tried to do it.

What could I do with the orchestra? When I came here to do the audition, I thought that the orchestra that they had was a crazy disaster. I didn’t understand why. I didn’t even try to explain it. I just saw what I saw, I conducted what I conducted, and I honestly never thought they would choose me. I didn’t know there was such a big difference between my level and whoever. It was a funny situation, when I saw my predecessor. And he was there, and he explained to me that he wasn’t a part of the jury because he wasn’t supposed to be. And the first thing he said, you know, he came running to me after I conducted my audition—

FL: This is David Epstein?

DA: David Epstein. And he said to me, “Why are you here?” And I was surprised. Like, he wanted to be friendly, and he was very friendly to me. He said, “I’m sorry, you don’t have to tell me. I mean, I’m just surprised.” “Why are you surprised?” “Well, what are you doing here?” I said to him, “I have a son.” [pause] In a very egoistic

way, I looked for a security that I didn't have. In a very egoistic way, I thought they had a nice city there, I always told them. I mean, I was in Boston, I had been in Boston for a couple of things, but I never got—and MIT meant to me—a great guy that I had met many years ago, John Harbison, implied to me MIT as a big institution, I mean, known in the world, and confronted with people, my former colleagues were telling me that the students were fantastic!

Well, my goals. I saw that, I heard that when I was conducting. I got the position. I came here and I tried to do the very best orchestra you can create, anywhere, and I didn't care about, you know, the big disasters I heard when I went to the first rehearsal! [laughs] I didn't care. I mean, I saw two or three interesting things: that the IQ of my students was really high, and it was a pleasure to go to rehearsal—I never received a stupid question! [laughs] And I said that to them so many times! It is the truth!

I saw limitations of technique and they, of course, due to the fact that they were doing something else. I was really thankful to all of them that they came to the rehearsal because they chose to be there, and even though half asleep, dead, they would come. And they would do their best! So, I thought, "I will give them as much possible exposure to music that is seldom played in the ac—university level," because people don't dare to do it, because people think that the instant, you know, you had mediocre players, then you, you know—and they were not mediocre! They didn't have enough time to practice, but as soon as you [snaps fingers] talk to them, and you hear some of the things that they did, they were very, extremely capable, and people that deserve a lot of respect for their brains, and for their force. And people that were selected all over the country and all over the world to be—you know, usually you have a lot of concertmasters of many orchestras in many high school orchestras! They were the best! You had all these selections.

So, okay, I can do—I can do many pieces that they wouldn't even dream of doing! So that was my goal. I had to give opportunities to new composers. Yeah, there's a composition class here, so I have to play their music. The system of concerto competition was already in place. I had, you know, I had opportunities to give guys the opportunity to play with us, from the school.

And finishing the answer to your question, I tried consciously to ask my former colleagues to be put in places as a teacher where my skills as a teacher were easily revealed, the things that were very important to me, like twentieth century music. Things that I could do easily, because—I mean, just looking for the best situation. Yes, go ahead.

FL: No, I'm just checking the meters on the [digital tape recorder]—

DA: Uh huh. Yeah, yeah.

FL: Yeah.

DA: So those were my goals. I did know that the requirement was to do fine class work, and also as a contradictory statement for what they decided not to put my case forward, I received very high and honorable reviews of my work, at least the people from my colleagues who went to see my classes. Whether they were lying or not, I

don't know! [laughs] But it's what they told me! Anyway, and as what I accomplished with the orchestra, well, you know, the documents are there. I won't talk about it! Go ahead.

5. Work at and departure from MIT (1:03:50—CD1 07:50)

FL: So, what should be the goal of the MIT Music Program, the most students are not music majors and do not plan to go on to professional careers? Did that present special kind of challenges?

DA: No. For me, it gives you a little bit of freedom. I remember this, and I really—I really, it's not my idea, but I really sympathize with the idea. John Harbison said to me that the fact that we don't have to deal with the enormous responsibility of teaching them to proceed in a musical career, excuse me, gives us nice freedom to do many things to expose them to musics.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And not the difficulties of explaining to a student that there are one million students there who would like to do the same profession! And there's so limited amount of jobs that they might have, as musicians! That's—that makes your life easier as an MIT professor, because you do feel the moral obligation to do the best that you can for your students, but you don't have the huge weight on your shoulders to nurture them to—so they will keep working in a profession that you know that it would be difficult for them.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: In that regard, what—my idea was always to give them the exposure to musics that they will love, and also required from them the highest possible result, as performers, and go beyond any kind of “okay, they're not musicians. I mean...” mentality. Any kind of “okay, you know, they do math, so you know, if they play okay, I will go with,” kind of that—no, no.

My way of interpreting what one should do for MIT students is to be able to adapt to the fact that you have in front of you probably a good, world-class team of phenomenal IQ's, and over-achievers. And, your moral function is to give them the highest possible product, as your studies, and your passion about music, and deepness in analysis—and give them all of that, because they do have the brain cells to receive it! [laughs] And very often, more muscle skills than many conservatory students! [laughs]

As a result, many concerts were attended, and they couldn't believe the skill of—but they had—I mean, it wasn't me! It was them! It wasn't me! I just was sympathetic to their mentality, their IQ's, and you know, I liked it! I liked it a lot! I felt a great relationship, and I never thought of them as second or third class musicians that happened to be there. Because while they do some fun thing, yes, they did choose to be in the orchestra. But yes, I had this group of incredibly talented

people, so let's make music, and first, write music, the very first—the very best you can do. No less! And I'm sorry—I won't go down! That's the very best! *Basta!*

FL: So at MIT, there was a real emphasis on musical performance, as opposed to musicology, theory, and all that. You know, there's the orchestra, the wind ensemble, two choral groups, and a well-organized chamber music program, among others. Yet, most of the faculty are musicologists, theorists, and composers. There's very few faculty members who are active performers. There are a number of adjunct instructors, but they're not, you know, on the faculty. How do you try to make sense of the music faculty as such, because there's an emphasis on performance? Is there kind of a contradiction between the two? Or, how do you make sense of it? Because it's—?

DA: It's—[pause] there is a real intention, at least in this particular moment of history, at MIT, for the eight years that I happened to have a job, there's a real clear intention of the so-called historians of musicologies to conceivably have the power upon many decisions, and all the implications of that decision that is not outspoken, but exists there, gives a kind of like ideological direction to what the faculty does at MIT.

And in spite of the fact that there are big groups of students who choose performing, as opposed to two or three students' classes in many subjects, I felt—and it will be, and it's already documented, that [pause] people that nowadays have the power, and this particular faculty, see their function as the most prevalent, the most important musical activity that the students are supposed to receive. For instance, 101. For instance, courses where MIT students get to know repertory music as listeners, and they are taught how to skillfully analyze, recognize, understand, those musics. They're supposed to be classical music, in the classical tradition!

And this kind of instruction is acknowledged by most of tenured faculty as the primary function of their work, although it contradicts a couple of very important ideas—or a couple of important facts! It contradicts facts. As I said, one is the amount of people that take a performance as the way to relate with music, and there are many in the chamber music program, in all the groups. That's if—it contradicts that.

And secondly, the implications of being in the system at the highest level of hierarchy in this institution, a system that prizes your supposed to be work outside the institute, gives you a very limited time to devote yourself to your students. The over-population of instructors, who depend on those historians' and musicologists' decisions, to give the primary instruction to the students—the over-population is due to the fact that someone in the highest level is supposed to do a lot of work outside of the institute, because the institute will claim their fame, and use it as a nice and welcomed propaganda for what do we have as an institution? But it blatantly contradicts your moral function as a professor!

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: This, having exposed in some, and implied in some conversation with my colleagues, also determined my exclusion [laughs] from the group! Which is fine, I mean, at this point. But as—I hope it answers, in part, your question.

FL: Mm-hm. Not just at MIT, but other research institutions, there are questions of how to apply academic standards and values to faculty who are not scholars, but are performers. And some institutions actually don't give faculty status to performance instructors. And, so the question is—well, there's lots of questions implied with that, but specifically, how can success be measured for performance faculty against traditional benchmarks, when some of those benchmarks don't easily address—?

DA: Equate to?

FL: Yeah.

DA: Yeah, or address, yeah. It's a complicated one. MIT has the experience of having now three tenured professors who are performers in some ways. Obviously Marcus [Thompson], as a viola player, but also John Harbison is a conductor, or player, and Evan Ziporyn, not only being a composer, you know, like John, but also as a player. It was explained to me that equation is, you know, publishing in the academia world, equation, you know, to performances in important places. Or just occupy a resonance, or form a chain of important events as a performer, to be comparable to people that do research in some other areas of knowledge.

It is easier to understand, at least to my, for my skills, that a composer, as a creator of works, can use the creation of those works of art, or the implications of being a creator, as a possible comparable product to guys who write interesting theories about physics. I mean, just to put it in the most simple way. For a performer, it would be hard to equate those, because mainly the performance is a one-time event, and then, you know, to what extent you can qualify for a very important event, or a very mediocre event, or a very minimal event?

One of the reasons that was exposed to me in the twenty minutes conversation I had, three—I mean, two of my colleagues explained to me that I wouldn't put forward my case as a tenured professor was that I didn't have enough performances in Europe, or in important places, or something.

Obviously, I mean, all this time went by, and I'm so much putting my energy in working in things that are my new projects. I can simply smile at the fact that it would be interesting, and probably fair, to invent a system by which there is accountability on statements, on such statements. I mean, that someone can openly say the reasons why such-and-such performance cannot equate to such-and-such written theory in physics. I do understand the difficulty. I do see the implications of how can a group, a small group—and really not the big, top importance at MIT, being MIT what it is—introduce such a thing to the big council of MIT.

I do see the difficulty, but what that difficulty clashes with the simple fact that you, as a performer, acted in places, and countries, which are not comparable to the performances that your own colleagues, already tenured, did. The simple contradiction of the statement is to what extent those performers can judge me? I'm not sure, at this point of—I'm not sure, because it was everything but evident, as I mentioned to you, that I pass you, and I can say also in this interview, some documents of my communications to the biggest hierarchies in the institute. And there are things that I don't really—I've heard, they told me, I mean, that many people as themselves, "How come the decision was made?"

And the very, the saddest truth is that—and I'm using the question, your question, for explaining the statements that were said to me—if the same reasons as a performer, myself, reasons that my two former colleagues gave me, for not putting forward with the case, the tenure case—if the same reasons that they in private gave me were, even today, put in a public information for people who do not even know why, I wasn't given that privilege. I highly doubt that there will be less than seventy or eighty percent of the readers of those statements who at least wouldn't laugh. Because it's such a stretch of the imagination! [laughs] That I was, that the reasons I was given were even logic.

Anyway, but going back, it's difficult to equate, but I do understand. The point is if you, as a performer, did things, performed in very important, considered, supposed to be important institutions in the world, the only difficulty I see is that maybe your colleagues wouldn't do it [laughs]—they didn't do it! Then, how could you compare it to them? Or something. I mean, it's kind of like a funny labyrinth for me, at this point, when I think about the reasons I was given. And I do acknowledge, first of all, the difficulty in comparing the two different worlds, you know, theory and—I do acknowledge that.

And I do acknowledge a second thing that is very important: any group of people doing any kind of activity, like my former colleagues—they do have the right to choose who will enter in the group. To some extent, it's their right, because you have to work with them. If many people hated me, I shouldn't be in that group! [laughs] I mean, it's as simple as that! When I see it played against my own interests, I don't care! They have the right. They had the right—they will have the right.

Contradiction to that statement is: if it's possible to demonstrate that the acceptance of a given person will be only determined by taste, of saying, "I like it or I don't like him," and that's detrimental to the function of that person as a Teacher—and I'm using teacher with capital letters—as your function, as a moral function, you, as a teacher of youth. You as a teach—I mean, you as a real guide to your students. And the decision made by this group, which has all the right to say no to you or yes to you—but that's a big contradiction in terms with your function and results, then it's not as simple as just saying, "You don't like me; you don't take me." Then it's not—then it's already funny. Then it's already a little bit spurious. Then it's a little bit mafioso.

FL: Mm-hm.

DA: And then, when you learn that in the big council, the same actors that told you something, said something different, and your own former colleagues in other areas tell you that the reason, the reasons given were completely opposite than the ones they gave you in a small, little room, and the accountability does not exist, then for the future, if someone is listening to this interview, for the future it will be important to do a nice review on how people are accepted as tenured professors or not. It will be important to discuss it. I'm not saying, by any means, that I deserved it, and I do deserve it now, and I will deserve it. I'm not saying that. That's, for me, it's history. I'm very happy that I'm doing very well.

But for the future generations, for the people that care about the moral function of you as a professor, as a teacher, the moral implications of you being a guide of young people, it should be important to revise it, and to see if that's right or wrong. That it goes beyond, I mean, this nice little boy's club, and "We like you," or, "We don't like you." And then you go, you leave, or you stay with us, because we are nice, and we play soccer together. That's very tribal. Obviously, I do acknowledge again, there is a group. If they don't like you, ciao! Then, you know, I'm giving you the other side of the story, because maybe the problem is if we don't like you, and you are such-and-such-and-such, maybe the problem is not you; the problem is them!
[laughs]

But you know! I mean, history, as much—and this is an important element, and it is very nice that you are doing it—history will judge. In my particular case, I'm happy, because it already did! I think that only for the last year, I already did. It's 2007; my contract expired one and a half years ago. History will say.

FL: Yeah. Getting back to your work with the MIT Symphony Orchestra, when you came, you—there was a big emphasis on post-romantic repertoire, which was a real change for the orchestra. How was this initially accepted by the musicians and your faculty colleagues?

DA: No, the students were, the ones that were in the ensemble before I came, for them, it was somewhat a shock, for some of them, but not many. For most of them, I do remember very vividly, it was a nice, fresh air of, "Oh, so we can play that?" Kind of like, "Oh, we never thought we would play it," for the students. For my former colleagues, I don't know anymore. After my experience of being here for many years, I—in all honesty, I'm not sure if they lied to me, or they were happy, sincerely happy.

I remember some really nice reactions to my ideas, and really kind of like, "Oh man, you are too daring!" Or, reactions like, "Are you going to be able to do it?" And the implications of, you know "Ha ha! What? Are you thinking of doing that?" Then magically, they went to the concert, and they went off all happy, but extremely, I mean, to the extent that every single time that we have, you know, a faculty meeting, they were doing all these big statements of how beautiful and how fantastic that I came here, and whatever. At this point, I don't know.

I mean, answering the question, yes, they were very happy. But then I cannot equate that to the 2006 decision. No one can get it—I mean, I don't know! They were raving about, you know, the piece that you, that we both love, I remember, you know, Charles Ives' *Fourth [Symphony]*. It was—God, when I think about it, that this orchestra was able to play it, and we played it well! We played it well! My colleagues wouldn't believe it! I mean, they were so in the stars, they were like raving about the performance, the concert, the ideology, the dah dah dah dah. But then, Forrest, I mean, if you ask me about—yes, they were happy. But then I think, how can you? How can you explain, then? Anyway.

FL: Can you talk a little bit about the challenges of building and developing the orchestra to where you took it? That's a huge subject, right?

DA: No, no, no, no, no! I like the question, but it will take me, you know, hours and hours. Let me put it in few words as much as I possibly can. Staying almost every night of the week until ten, eleven, eleven-thirty, almost sleeping here, receiving, in spite—I mean, please, this is well-intended, although kind of funny in my culture, my former colleagues telling me that I have to be careful about receiving girls in the evenings, because of—leave the door open, or something! And my only interest [laughs] was to receive people, and just being able to help, because they saw that I was being impossibly challenging for them.

And at the same time, this is a work, is a work, is a simple work, because they are over-achievers anyway! They would do their best anyway, and you will—if you push them to the extreme, they will. And they did! At least with me, they did keep the push back. I would be sometimes sending emails about the harmonic structure of the piece until four in the morning, and I enjoyed it. I would give them, you know, enormous, papers like that, and they understand, so they can read about whatever, you know. I was interested in them understanding. I would explain many times things that they usually don't explain to MIT students, implications of phrasing, implications of harmony. I would—we did such an amount of sectionals.

But mainly, the point is, not only their artistic or musical work, is that they had to have the feeling and conviction that you would be always there for them. And I was, to the extent that my friends, Claudia, my wife, always said that I devoted so much, so much time of the week, of the month, of the year, to them, that it was really hard to understand. How did I care with that amount of time and energy for a college orchestra? The truth. What can you say?

FL: Do you need to go?

DA: Yeah, I mean, in some minutes. But we can—

6. Current work (1:34:40—CD1 38:38)

FL: Okay. Well, there's obviously lots of things to talk about. Why don't you briefly talk about your current work? You're director of the Teatro Argentino in La Plata, in Argentina, and your work at the Linz Theater in Linz, Austria.

DA: In Teatro Argentino, I'm equivalent to the KMD, [unclear] Musik Direktor, in a German city. I'm the chief conductor of the orchestra, but also I have many decisions, I have to make many decisions about the general program of the theater this concert season, in which I conduct some five or six concerts per year. Whereas the concert is like ten, ten or eleven concerts, as a series.

FL: These are symphonic concerts, as opposed to—and then there's opera as well?

DA: Symphonic concerts. I do conduct one or two operas per year. I do conduct one ballet per year, among all things. And I do work on the personnel and things, competitions, auditions, inviting people to conduct, inviting people to play. In the Stadt Theater in Linz, I'm the Principal Guest, so usually that implies, they offer me usually one of the biggest productions a year. I mean, they just offered me for next

year *Un Ballo in Maschera* [by Giuseppe Verdi]. Or I do a ballet, like now I am doing *Coppelia* [by Léo Delibes]. And there's a very close relationship with the personnel of the orchestra. This place has a history of tours, and concerts that we did in many places, and it also implies a certain particular say in some of the artistic decisions that are taken in the theater as such. It also implies that I, you know, conduct sometimes the concerts, or tours, with them.

FL: What's your relationship with the theater with the Bruckner Orchestra? Are they kind of related ensembles?

DA: Mm-hm. The orchestra is independent, to some extent, but it's also paid by the city to do performances in the theater. So each one, I mean, the salaries are divided into slots, percentages, that belong to the theater, where the theater pays to the performers, for the performances, which are five to six a week. A lot. And also they do a season of concerts.

FL: Mm-hm. I noticed that you, I guess it was earlier this fall, the Ars Electronic[a]? [Editor's note: Ars Electronica is a music festival in Linz, Austria.]

DA: Mm.

FL: And you did some Frank Zappa, *The Perfect Stranger*.

DA: *The Perfect Stranger*, yeah.

FL: What did you think of that piece?

DA: Well, it is interesting. I didn't know his music, so I really studied his music before, I mean some months before, I conducted the piece. There's a very interesting radar that he had. You see some of the implications of how to put together rock—I mean, what I remember of his rock and roll—and this fantastic world of dissonances, in an organized way for the orchestra.

My difficulties with the piece were essentially ensemble-wise balance, and the balance due to the fact that the pieces were originally composed for Ensemble Intercontemporain, conducted by Boulez. And the diff—I mean, it was hard for me to create a good balance. When you have sometimes two different groups with an axis in the middle, like, departing from your podium, the orchestra divided in two big groups, each one of which had, for instance, three cellos, three violas, two violins in this left side of your podium, playing with three trumpets, two horns, two flutes, two oboes, bassoons. So the number relationship was kind of funny. The number, the strings as opposed to the winds.

So, that's what I saw, that it surely worked much better in a recording session. In the real live performance, it poses real problems of balance, real problems of how to complement these two worlds, and then a huge section of percussion, of course. But it was interesting.

FL: Okay, so I want to thank you very, very much for this. It's just so tremendous to have you back. Thank you again.

DA: No, thank you, thank you, thanks a lot.

[End of Interview]