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GUNTHER SCHULLER
NEA Jazz Master (2008)

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Schwartz: This is Steve Schwartz from WGBH radio in Boston. We're at the home of Gunther Schuller on Dudley Road in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, to do an oral history for the Smithsonian Oral History Jazz Program, if that's the right title. Close enough? Hello Gunther.

Schuller: Hello. Good to see you.

Schwartz: Thank you for opening your doors to us. We should start at the beginning, or as far back to the beginning as we can go. I'd love to have you talk about your childhood, your growing up in New York, and whatever memories you have – your parents, who they are, who they were – things like that to get us started.

Schuller: I was born in New York. Many people think I was born in Germany, with my German name and I speak fluent German, but I was born in New York City. My parents came over from Germany in 1923. They were not married. They didn't know each other. They just happened to leave more or less the same time, when the inflation in Germany was so crazy that a loaf of bread cost not 40, 400, 4,000, but 4-million marks. That's how disastrous – how destroyed Germany was. So lots of people left, my parents included. What happened – my father auditioned for the New York Philharmonic. He was a violinist, a flutist, and a pianist, but he auditioned on viola, because there was only a viola opening. The conductor at that time was [Josef] Stransky. He started to put out the music

for – viola literature for the audition. My father says, "No, no, I don't need any. Whatever you want to ask me, I'll . . ." He was not a professional viola player. He was a violinist, but he said – 15 minutes later, he had the job. He played all this stuff from memory, some very obscure things from – viola solos in operas and stuff like that.

My mother had come over. She was very artistically gifted. She was well on the way to becoming – who knows? – a painter or designer of some kind. She was about to study with Käthe Kollwitz, who was one of the leading German painters of that era. But instead she left Germany and came here. By the way, she had all of her paintings and drawings in a huge steamer trunk. The ship came to New York, pier 54 or whatever it was, and the net in which the steamer trunk was transferred from the ship to the pier broke, and all of her things fell in the river. We have nothing except one picture over there. It's the only thing that somehow survived.

So she was artistically inclined, and my father was a pretty great musician. The New York Philharmonic at that time did runout concerts to New Haven and Philadelphia. It seems – I wasn't around yet – at one point – this was in Woolsey Hall at Yale University, where they played – my father – he was 23 at the time – during intermission, started to go out in the audience and maybe look for some nice looking lady. He found this woman standing by the wall, very pretty and all that. He went over to her, and then they discovered that she was German. They talked, and then they got together, and that's how I came into being.

Schwartz: I thought only jazz musicians picked up chicks at clubs.

Schuller: No, no. My father was – well, I won't go into all that.

The thing about New York – let me just jump way ahead and just make a cumulative statement – I know I would not be or would be able to become what I eventually became – namely a very multi-faceted musician with my more or less simultaneous seven careers in music – you put them all together – none of that would have happened if I'd been born in – I don't know – Oshkosh, Indiana, or Des Moines, Iowa – nothing against those places – because New York was in the '30s – late '30s and '40s, into the '50s, and even into the early '60s, certainly the greatest cultural artistic center of the world, at that time. That's no longer the case. New York is still an incredible place, a fascinating place, but there's so many things that I was able to feast on, feed on, develop from, grow with, that was really only available to that extent in New York.

Schwartz: How did those things come to you? Did your parents encourage you? Did they guide you? Or did you just realize that, oh my God, I'm in the middle of all of this stuff and started to take advantage of it?

Schuller: My parents did not guide me, except by their example. They were of course also interested, but not to the extent that I have been, in the other arts for example, or in a multiplicity of musical areas. Especially my mother. My mother was not a professional musician. She played the piano as an amateur, very nicely. So no, I'll come to that, because – but I just wanted to say that New York, the New York that I have written about in my autobiography at some length, because nobody now remembers or knows how great that was in all respects, but particularly culturally, artistically – that made me what I am. Of course I participated in that process by, as I say, feasting on all this cultural richness.

Schwartz: I want to ask one question to have you include it into what you are talking about: was music a foregone conclusion in your mind?

Schuller: No.

Schwartz: Or it was just one of the things that was being offered?

Schuller: Here's the irony of the question. It's a good question, and you'll get a strange answer, because one would assume – by the way, my father was a musician, as I mentioned. My grandfather was a musician in Germany. My great-grandfather, and my great-great-grandfather. So my sons are now six generations of musicians. So by all this genetic influence/information that we have, I would have been destined to become a musician, right? It's not that it's guaranteed, but it certainly is a possibly destiny.

Well, no such thing, because when I was 5 1/2 years old, my parents, because I was a somewhat impetuous and slightly undisciplined child, but evidently very talented in some ways – they sent me to Germany to a private school. That school, and the school that I then went to after I came back from Germany – I was there 4 1/2 years – I came back to another great school, namely St. Thomas Church Choir School on 53rd Street and Fifth Avenue, which is, and then was, and still is, the leading English-style choir school, like King's College in Cambridge and so on. So those two schools also made me what I am, because scholastically and in every other way, they were just fantastic schools.

But the irony is that in Germany I showed – at age 5, 6, 7 – I showed no musical talent at all, or no musical interest. It's worse than that. We all – there were 75 boys and girls in this school, right in the center of Germany, near Erfurt, where Bach also worked. It's that whole region where all the Bachs lived and worked – in this incredible castle school located in a castle grounds, with a wall six feet thick around the whole place, within which area was a park, a lake, a woods, eight or nine major buildings including a schloss – a real castle – 18th-century castle – a paradise for a young boy – we all had to play an instrument. That was just part of it. I was given – Hitler had ordained this thing that everybody should learn to play a recorder. So there was this incredible business about the recorder being played by every little kid and amateurs and so on. So I was given a

baritone recorder, because I was rather tall, and that instrument is about this tall. I hate – to this day I really don't like the recorder. It's sort of a wimpy, soulless, expressionless instrument, except when played by the great – what's her name? – Petra, that German recorder player. She's just amazing. There's a few others.

Anyway, I didn't like it at all, and I hated my teacher. He was not a very good teacher. He played the recorder as an amateur, but he didn't really, I think, know what he was doing. We all eventually had to play in a concert – in several public concerts. In the second of these in that particular term, I was put on the program to play a duet for alto recorder and baritone recorder. I play the baritone. Just to show you how untalented I was and how little I would be destined to become a musician, I screwed up totally after about 10, 12 bars of this piece. I broke down. I got completely scared – stage fright – whatever you call it. The piece stopped, and I ran out of the room, full of the entire faculty and these 75 kids. I ran out of the room crying. By the way, the next day, I was stood up in the hallway, the main hallway in the schloss, with a dunce cap on my head. That's a weird punishment. I was in total disgrace.

From that beginning, one would never assume that – and a few other little attempts to make me play the piano with my grandparents, because during summer vacations I went with them, on both sides. My mother came from the Rhineland, and my father came from Saxony, near Leipzig. So I always spent the summer vacations with them. They tried to teach me. I just had no interest and no talent at all.

However, there's another irony in this. Later, when I did become a musician – and that only started to happen when I was 11. It suddenly came to me – when that happened, my parents then told me, "When you were 3 or 4 years old" – or 5, or whatever – "you would sit, for example, in the bathtub and play with your rubber ducks, boats, and things like that, and you could sing the entire *Tannhauser* overture of Wagner with the instrumental sounds of the clarinet as opposed to the trombone and the violins, and you could sing entire Strauss waltzes more or less perfectly. We just couldn't imagine." In those days, by the way, this whole DNA and genetic disposition thing was not known at all. Anyway, that's what I was able to do, and yet in Germany I became a disaster as a musician.

Schwartz: But by 11 years old you . . .

Schuller: Then, what happened, I came back from Germany – by the way, one other thing happened in Germany which today influences and affects my composing and arranging and all of my music making. When we got up in the morning at 7 o'clock, the regimen was this: you had a cold shower. There was no hot water available. Really cold. That surely woke you up pretty quickly. Then you put on some sports clothes and you did 10 minutes of jogging in this woods and park that I described, within the castle. Then we went inside, and we all sang two Bach chorales, every morning. Different – he wrote 400 chorales or something. What I remember about that, or later, sort of, it came back that –

well, first of all, it seems that everybody was able to read the music, me included. No-one taught me to read music. My parents didn't. I wasn't learning music in Germany in that school, except for this instrumental thing. Anyway, we all could read. But what interests me now, in retrospect, not only that I have such a deep inside of me feeling for Bach's voice leading and the ingenuity of his harmonic movements, and further that I was supposed to sing the soprano part, but I was always more interested and went to the alto part. This is of some significance. Of course I didn't know what I was doing. I just did this. This is of some significance, because I am, as a conductor, known – and this is relatively rare amongst conductors – for taking care of the inner voices, whether it's in jazz or classical music. So much of inner voices – also in choruses – are neglected. Most choruses you hear the soprano and sometimes the bass. Forget about the alto and the tenor. These are all lazy, bad habits. To this day I zero in on the lower voices. The top line in any music is by the laws of acoustics the most audible, the most accessible, and you don't have to emphasize that, because by being on the top, it is the thing that you will hear first and most. But everything below takes some additional attention. To this day, both as a composer and as a conductor, I'm very much involved with that, and as a player I was. Playing the french horn, you play usually in the middle range. The whole question of balancing. So this is an obsession of mine, and I'm fascinated that it came from those days in the Bach chorales. That's amazing.

Schwartz: Take us from coming back to Germany. I want to go back to this growing up in New York and having all this – you're in Germany. You've learned to play the recorder. You've learned to sing Bach. Now your back in New York as an 11-, 12-year-old kid.

Schuller: Yeah, 11. By the way, one of the reasons I came back from Germany – I had an accident with my eye. It's a very gruesome thing, where by accident a knife went into my eye. I have had an artificial eye ever since then.

But one more sentence about the school in Germany. Scholastically it was just at such a high level. We had – I had, in second grade, I had French, Latin, geography, and geology. You know what they were doing in American schools? Finger paintings and eating cookies and milk in elementary school.

Schwartz: Are you an only child?

Schuller: No, I have a brother.

Schwartz: You have a brother.

Schuller: A younger brother. He went into the film business. Very musical, too.

I came back from that school. Here's how I became a musician. This is one of the most ridiculous little tales that you'll ever hear. It really is. That first Christmas – the accident happened on Advent Day in 1936. By the way, my mother was 3,000 miles away. My father was playing in the New York Philharmonic, and in those days, there were no planes. You took a ship, and it took seven days to get to Europe. So you can imagine what my parents went through, hearing about this accident. When it happened, there was blood running down my entire body.

So, I come back. I get back around what must have been the 15th of December. Then there's Christmas. This particular Christmas, my parents gave my little brother – I was just 10. No, I was just 11. My birthday is November 22nd. So I was 11, yeah. My brother was 8. They gave him a little toy glockenspiel. This was a toy. This was not an instrument. This was the worst sounding glockenspiel. The bars – there were only 12 notes on it, and the bars were made of tin or something. It just was an awful sounding thing. Of course my brother, 8 years old, he had no musical knowledge or interest whatsoever. But the day after Christmas, he started banging around on this thing. I guess I was listening to him, and I played around with it a little bit. I thought, oh lord, this is ridiculous. But then about two days later – this is the crazy part – I had the ambition, the idea, to write a piece for my brother, including the fact that I knew that he couldn't read music. The idea was that I would write for four instruments: my father, playing the violin; my mother, playing the piano; I was – I had just begun to play the flute. I was playing the flute for about two weeks. I could play a few long notes; and to write a little part for my brother, also. So I wrote this thing. I wrote – as I recall, it was only about 30 bars, and of course it was the most imbecilic, baby – big round notes like this – just the most stupid little thing that ever was created. But by God, we played it at New Year's Eve, the four of us. That was my first composition.

What this means, also, is that I was more interested in composing than I was in playing an instrument. Again, given this strange, non-musical background – most people, by the way, play an instrument first. That's how they get into music. They don't necessarily start by composing. This is rather rare. So that's the beginning, as crude and pitiful as that sounds.

Schwartz: That's your perspective, crude and pitiful, but you're 11 years old, and you're creating a piece of music for four people that had never been created before.

Schuller: That's true enough.

Schwartz: That's the other side.

Schuller: But I mean, given the Mendelssohns and the Mozarts, who wrote remarkable music when they were five years old, or certainly, so many composers, by the time they were 10 or 11, they were doing some serious writing.

Well, let me just say that, boy, did I catch up quickly, starting very late, because my progress was phenomenal, if I may say so myself, and was considered so. Because, by the way, as a player, I also developed remarkably quickly. I then picked up the french horn, and by the time I was 16, I was playing professionally. I'm a high-school dropout. I left high school and started playing with the New York Philharmonic and [Arturo] Toscanini. When I started the horn, I was 14, and by 16 I'm playing with the New York Philharmonic. That's pretty swift.

What happened also at the same time – because this gets me to the St. Thomas Church Choir School – my parents discovered, when I came back from Germany, that I had a beautiful soprano voice, even with a little vibrato, which most young boys singing soprano don't have. It's pretty straight. So they inquired whether I could join this famous St. Thomas Choir School. I took an audition. I was immediately taken. I spent three years there, singing all the great church literature, including all the great oratorios of Bach and of Haydn and Handel, and the hundreds of anthems that make up the whole Episcopal musical literature.

Then I was so gifted at sight reading. I started studying theory with the organist T. Tertius Noble, a very great musician who's now pretty much forgotten – organist, composer, conductor. With all that I began to – he asked me to turn pages for him at his weekly organ recitals during the season. So I turned pages and saw – learned all this great music that he was playing, from Bach to the modern organ composers. I was the one he chose to turn the pages for him. You cannot make any mistakes turning the pages.

All of that cumulatively enriched me and made me move so fast as a studying young musician, teenage musician. So by the time I got out of that school – by the way, I was supposed to go back a fourth year, and right in the summer my voice broke, and I became a baritone overnight. So that was the end of that. I was hoping to go back. Again, scholastically, that school was unbelievable. I read three of Emerson's great essays – on self-reliance, for example. I read those when I was 12 or 13 years old. You can extrapolate from that how else – at what a level this was. That's why I became an inveterate reader of books, really heavy duty, serious stuff.

I developed also rather quickly as a composer, so that by the time I left St. Thomas – by that time I was – what was I? – 14 .

Schwartz: What year is this, approximately?

Schuller: This would be 1940. May of 1940. I had already written a couple of anthems, learning from the different styles that we were singing every Sunday in the services. Doctor Noble at one point said, "Next year, if you keep developing, I'm going to program some of your anthems." I never came, because I never went back.

He was not my composition teacher. He's the only teacher I ever had in the creating of music, but it was limited just to theory and the rules of behavior in tonal music. I learned wonderfully from that.

At the same time, when I was 11 – well, 12 – when I was doing my homework, or on weekends, when I came home – we lived in a dormitory on 55th Street, right near Carnegie Hall, but on weekends we'd come home for one day. All the time that I had access to a radio, even when I was doing my homework later when I went back into high school after my voice broke, I was listening to jazz. I listened also to WQXR, which was the major classical station, and WNYC, but I listened to a lot of jazz. I was immediately drawn to it. In Germany I had heard no jazz at all. We were totally isolated, and anyway, Hitler had forbidden jazz. So there was no access.

Schwartz: Did you know that it was jazz?

Schuller: Yeah. Oh yeah.

Schwartz: Or was it just another music?

Schuller: No, I learned very quickly. I don't know how I learned, but this was this American music.

Schwartz: Who were these musicians you were hearing?

Schuller: I heard everything. WNEW was playing more of the dance bands. Then there were other stations that you heard. Every night, after the news – in those days, there was 15 minutes of news on the four network stations. At 11:15 the bands came on. Every one of them brought bands. By that time, across the country, broadcasting has already begun. So you could hear things that were happening in Los Angeles or in Denver or Kansas City or whatever. I listened voraciously to all of that. Then there were all night programs – late night programs that continued from there, and also from locations in New York. A lot of the Harlem clubs were going, and they were doing that. So it was full of jazz, which, of course, it's practically gone now, certainly in terms of broadcasts.

The epiphany came after I'd already been listening to everything – Benny Goodman, Woody Herman. This is still in the days before bebop and Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker came in. I'm listening to all of this. One night – I'll never forget it – I may have heard Ellington before, either on a recording or live, but that night I heard some music which absolutely blew my mind, the instrumental and colors of the sound. Timbre and color are my main fortes in my composing – one of them – harmony, and timbre and color. I heard some sounds that just amazed me. I knew I had never heard sounds like that in any of the classical music that I was also studying and listening to. I was studying

music from the scores and from recordings. I became a record collector when I was 12 years old, both jazz and classical. I called my father over. I said, "I just heard this most amazing music. By the way, I think I heard two bass clarinets in a piece." That turned out to be wrong. It was just Barney Bigard playing in a very low register and Harry Carney playing bass clarinet. But it sounded like two bass clarinets to me. I said, "The sounds are so amazing, and there's nothing like that in classical music." He had no understanding for jazz. I tried, by the way, later to get him to play jazz on the violin, stylistically, rhythmically. He could not relate to it all, and this was a fantastic musician. But I knew lots of people like that, many of whom came from the old country and didn't grow up on jazz in any way. They just couldn't make the transition. Later, that became much more common, of course.

I said – then about two days later, I said, "You know that music that I heard the other day. I want to tell you something. I think that music is as great in its invention, imagination, creativity, technical perfection, including the performance, as any music in the classical field, i.e., Ellington is as great as Beethoven."

Schwartz: Had you learned by two days later that it was Ellington?

Schuller: No, I heard the announcement on the radio. They always say. It was at the Hurricane Club. In those days, in those 15-minute segments, they always had announcers that announced the pieces. So I knew it was Ellington. As I say, I may have heard him before, but it just didn't hit me like it did that time. I must have heard Basie. Those things all interested me, but not like – this was now a – for me, the fascinating thing was, this was not just improvisation. These were real compositions in a way that otherwise didn't exist. Of course tunes are compositions. But the way Ellington composed – these were like classical music, except in a different style and language, but they were full-fledged through-composed pieces in which people improvised, which is a big, big difference, certainly at that time, because there was hardly anything like that. To the extent there was, I've written about it in my books.

I knew that this had to be part of my life, and an equal part to the classical. So the idea, without having yet coined the term, of Third Stream, the bringing together of classical music and jazz, was born, really, that night. My father – my parents, they were really worried about me. Little Gunther has gone completely – because this is the most heretical thing to say, that Ellington equals Beethoven or vice versa. I said, okay. Ellington's pieces are only three minutes long. And I explained, by the way, why that was, because of attitudes, racial attitudes. Jazz was relegated to the 10-inch disk. Classical music had a 12-inch disk That was four minutes and 20 seconds. So Ellington wrote all of these miniature masterpieces – miniature only in the length and the size. That's the only difference. If you analyzed any Ellington composition from any way that you would analyze a Beethoven symphony or a Wagner opera or Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, namely the melodic invention, the harmonic invention, the structural invention, the form,

the technical perfection and the knowledge of the instruments, and creating imaginatively for the instruments, and, at the same time, writing something that has never been written before, always advancing, moving ahead. In those respects, except for the fact that Ellington's pieces are three minutes and Beethoven's symphonies are sometimes 55 minutes, that's the only difference. In terms of the actual creativity and invention and talent that goes into that, it's exactly equivalent. I stand by that. I've always. And I think I've been proven right by everything that has happened in the recognition of that.

There's still jazz people who don't think so, and there are classical people who think the two musics shouldn't ever get together and that they're just two different worlds, but that segregation has pretty much disappeared, at least to the extent that it existed. It was completely divided worlds.

Schwartz: Gunther, what I wanted to interject is to take a giant leap and leave the chronological stuff that we can go back to and come back to. But earlier you mentioned the seven aspects of your career. On my own, I had written down composer, conductor, broadcaster, writer, educator, arranger. So I'm missing one. But I wanted to go back to . . .

Schuller: There's one of those I didn't even include.

Schwartz: What was that?

Schuller: The third one. What was the third one?

Schwartz: Broadcaster. That's the one I want . . .

Schuller: I did a lot of broadcasting in New York.

Schwartz: That's what I wanted to go back and talk to you about, because you had mentioned hearing this music on the radio, and I know that in the '50s you and Nat Hentoff had co-hosted a program.

Schuller: Yeah, but I also had parallel to that a classical music program, every week for three years.

Schwartz: I'd love to have you talk about that.

Schuller: Can I come to that a little bit later?

Schwartz: Okay.

Schuller: The things that you didn't include – and it's no criticism – is that I became a record producer and a major music publisher of both classical and jazz, which no-one was doing. There was not any publishing company – big company – that was publishing jazz. It was all classical. So I broke that boundary line, and I'm very proud of that. I did both of those for 30 years. So that's the multiplicity of these – because I was doing all these things, certainly since the '60s, simultaneously. On any given day I might do three or four of those careers, which is almost – it's inexplicable to me, how I've done that. I don't know of any – even Lenny Bernstein, he had maybe four. I'm not saying that therefore I'm better or anything like that. It's just, somehow, I'm this freakish guy who can do all these things simultaneously. Not only is there no impediment or problem between going from one to the other instantaneously, but they all fructify each other. They all feed on each other. They all work out together. I didn't say to myself one day, I'm going to have seven multiple careers. No. This all just happened. I think, again, this education and this multiplicity of artistic experiences that I had in New York made that all possible and fired it up.

Schwartz: I've heard that you can get by on two hours sleep. Then you're ready to go again.

Schuller: Four hours. When I was president of New England Conservatory, I really did not sleep most of the time more than four or five hours, because what happened was that everyone predicted, including William Schumann, who had by that time been head of the Juilliard School and was now president of Lincoln Center – he said, "You know, Gunther, if you take this job – and I want you to take it" – He was the one who recommended me – "you'll stop composing. You won't have any time to compose." He knew what he was talking about, because that's what happened to him. I said to myself, brother, that ain't going to happen to me. So I worked all day at the conservatory, from 9 in the morning until usually 7 or 8 at night. Then I went home. Then I composed. That led – by the way, the discovery that I could get along with four hours of sleep, five hours of sleep: this happened to me in my late teen years, because I – one day – I'm kind of a philosophical person. I think about these weird things – one day it occurred – I said to myself, my God, my parents are telling me all the time I have to sleep eight hours and the doctor says I have to sleep eight hours. I said to myself, if I sleep eight hours every day, I'm going to piss away one third of my life. I said, I can't do that. There's so much to do, to learn, to study. I spent thousands of hours in the New York Public Library – thousands of hours, all the time. There was so much to do that I said, I can't afford to sleep eight hours. So – I'm not entirely stupid – I said to myself, if this doesn't work, and if I start to malfunction – I was already playing professionally in the Cincinnati Symphony and New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera and playing with Miles Davis and so on. I said to myself – I said, if this doesn't work, you're going to stop it. Well, it worked, and I'm proof of the fact that for most of my life – just now, lately, at age – in my 80s, I'm beginning to need a little more sleep. I really need it. It isn't that I'm one of those freaks who can get along on 15 minutes sleep, because there are – there's a name for those

people who can do that. But I love to sleep. If I didn't have two alarms, and of course the coffee following that, I would sleep for 14 hour every night.

Anyway, where was we?

Schwartz: Let me just recap. We wanted to get the names of your parents and your brother's.

Schuller: My father's name was Arthur Edward Schuller. My mother's – my mother came from an Alsatian – that is to say, most of the time, Alsace and Lorraine were French. So she came from a French background. Her name was Elsie Bernartz, spelled B-e-r-n-a-r-t-z. That's a German corruption of Bernard, which is a common French name. My brother's name was Edgar – is Edgar. He's still alive. He's retired now. And funny: all of my great – my grandfather and great-grandfather – they always had the word Arthur or Edward in there. They never called themselves Arthur the Second or any of that. But it's very confusing. Somehow they couldn't think of any other names. So, for six generations.

Let's see. I left off with this whole decision to now split my life equally between jazz and classical music. We've talked enough about my classical music. I think maybe in this context we should continue more on the jazz side.

Schwartz: I'd love to do that. I'd love to find out where and when you first heard the music live, and how that affected you, and the relationships that were formed from that.

Schuller: That's a good question, because I knew there were all these clubs in New York, because, as I say, a lot of broadcasts came from there. But I was not allowed to go at age 14 or 15. I was not able to go to any jazz club. My parents just would not tolerate that, especially to go to Harlem. They were fairly prejudicial about that. I wasn't able to go anywhere until I went to Cincinnati at age 17 as principal horn, and then I was on my own. That's by the way – I met Ellington, and we became very close friends.

Schwartz: I was going to say – I heard a story of you meeting Ellington in . . .

Schuller: Yeah. I'll get to that.

Schwartz: Okay. All right

Schuller: The way it – I went to – maybe, chronologically, that's next, come to think of it. I became this rather good horn player at age 16, playing first with the New York Philharmonic, and then a lot of orchestras in New York, and always first horn. Then I took some auditions and went to Cincinnati – with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony, and the Cincinnati Symphony. I had – I was accepted for all three

jobs. I chose the Cincinnati position, because it was principal horn. There I had two of the greatest years of my life. I also met my wife there. We were both 17 and then lived together 50 years. Beyond that, on the classical side, Eugene Goossens was the music director. He was one of the really great and now quite forgotten conductors. He was also a very fine composer. I learned so much from him, and he supported me in my composing. My first big public performance, a horn concerto that I wrote, was with Eugene Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony and me playing the solo part. One of his great strengths was that his programming was so rich and broad and informative. He was legendary for his program-making, which is an art in itself.

Schwartz: In terms of choosing the pieces that would be performed.

Schuller: Yeah. I played so many pieces that no-one else did at that time. Years later, I'd be sitting in my kitchen and I'm hearing Dukas's *La Péri,* a ballet, and I say to Margie, "My God, I played that when I was 17 years old," because nobody played it, and it's only got three recordings of it. Obscure, and very familiar – every kind of music.

Then, the whole real discovery of jazz in a more intimate way happened in Cincinnati. It began – with my already big interest in jazz and now being free, I could go out every night if I wanted to. In downtown Cincinnati, right at Fountain Square, there were two nightclubs. One was called The Hanger and the other – oh my God, I've forgotten it for now. They were not big enough for a big band, but one of them could take maybe an octet or ten players. The other one was a smaller stage, and in it played a trio who did the best covering and absolutely most wonderful imitation, I guess I have to say, of the King Cole Trio, which was at its height in 1942, '43. I own every King Cole Trio recording. They were fabulous, and they are now so half-forgotten. Even later, I think Cole's piano playing has really never been fully respected, because it's right at the top, along with everyone else, and completely original.

I must have gone every night, practically, to that club, The Hanger, and listened to them. We became very close friends. That was also my first contact with blacks. It will take too long to talk about the wonderful relationships I developed with the whole black community there. When they also found out how involved and interested I was in jazz, that made a real camaraderie, which was – that may sound like nothing, nowadays, but my God, in 1943, for a white kid to be as much involved in jazz, and given all the segregation and the racial problems, that was, if not unheard of, certainly very unusual. As I say, I will just leave that subject.

Finally, I got to the point where I – they knew I was a good horn player. "Say, why don't you come play with us?" I was rather shy, for a long time, to get up there with these master players. By the way, one of them you probably would know. Wasn't there a . . . ? – yes, Spaulding Givens. Do you know that name?

Schwartz: Yes.

Schuller: Yes. Not too well known, but he was the pianist in their trio for one time, and the bass player was a guy . . .

Schwartz: Did he record with Mingus, I think?

Schuller: I think he did. Yeah. I get vaguer and vaguer in my memory about these things.

Schwartz: I'm pretty sure there was a date.

Schuller: Anyway, Willie Smith was an incredible bass player. He had one of these – like – who was the bass player with Basie? – one of those big fat . . .

Schwartz: Walter Page?

Schuller: Walter Page, yeah – one of those big, round sounds and perfect intonation. So finally I sat in with them. I got up the nerve to do it. I just played – it must have been not so good. I don't know. I can't remember. I was shaking like a leaf. I played a blues, made up a little blues. Then I played *Sophisticated Lady*, of Ellington. I was not happy with myself doing that. I ventured into that one more time, because I felt that I needed to learn to improvise on the horn. Apart from the basic legendary fact that the horn is one of the most difficult instruments to play at all, without cracking and playing bad notes, to then improvise on it, which of course no-one was doing – later, in New York, I, along with Johnny Barrows, Jim Buffington, and of course Julius Watkins, we were sort of the pioneers of playing jazz at all, let alone improvising. So in Cincinnati three years earlier, I realized that – I felt that I didn't have a talent for improvisation, that my real talent was for composing. But I nibbled away at it, and I got to be sort of half-assed good later on.

Then all the other revelations came from – whenever any of the big bands, whether it was Ellington or Basie or Lunceford or – the band from Duke University – Les Brown or Earl Hines or whoever it was, I was there. So that's how I met Ellington.

First I must tell you – which is really, I think, remarkable information – I heard – the Earl Hines band came to Cincinnati only one time during my two years. It was when most of those young Turks, including Dizzy and Bird and Sarah Vaughan, who were all in the band at various times. If you've ever looked at the chronology of that, how many of those people were in the band at the same time, it's very variable, and they all left and went with Dizzy very shortly after that. But I was there. All I remember – and I wrote it in my diary – I wrote, "This night I have heard some modern, more advanced jazz than I've ever heard before except for Ellington," because Ellington was dealing with bitonality and polytonality as early as the early '30s. He was always way in advance harmonically. But with the famous flatted fifth and all the substitute harmonies that came in with bebop,

I was in heaven, because I – and I heard it that night. Only nobody knew who these people were. No-one even – Charlie Parker was in the band for about six weeks, I think it was. They were not names. They became names two years later.

Schwartz: Were they names to you at that time?

Schuller: No.

Schwartz: Or they were just totally unknown to everybody?

Schuller: No. There were these folks up there playing this amazing jazz. I remember talking to Margie, my wife. I said, "My God, I heard the most amazing music. Who are these people?" There were no discographies of any – you couldn't look anything up. And they never came back. But of course retroactively I found out, that was that bunch of people, and I am the only person yet that I've ever met, in all these years, that had that experience and heard – now, there are people who heard that band. I'm not saying there aren't any. But I'm the only one I ever met who did actually hear that band. By the way, that lasted only a little while. Then everybody left. Then Hines created a big band with a big string section, most of which were women, I think. You know that?

Schwartz: No.

Schuller: Yeah. That's how he changed. Anyway, the big thing was Ellington. The first time I went, I stood – I never sat down – I stood in front of the bandstand and just gawked at these great musicians and took in all that music real close. That first night – I stayed there for three hours – that first night, Lawrence Brown, who became my – was already my idol as a trombonist. The horn and the trombone, in the same range and so on – I used to practice a lot of trombone solos on the horn. Lawrence Brown, as it happened, noticed that I just stood there like a statue. He told me later, "I never saw anybody listen so hard to what we were playing." During a break, he sought me out. He came down off the stage, and he approached me. I was too scared, too shy, to talk to any of these people. If it hadn't been for Lawrence Brown, I might never have met any of these people. He came down, and we talked a little bit. He said something like, "Boy, you really like this music. How did you get to like our music? How do you know our music?" I said, "I've been interested in jazz since I was 12 years old. I'm playing first horn in the orchestra here. I love jazz," and so on. He said – I said, "Duke is my absolute idol as a composer and pianist, arranger – all of that." He said, "Would you like to meet him?" I said yeah. So he took me backstage, and that's the first time that I met Ellington. By that time, the intermission was almost over. So we only exchanged a few words. I told him I was – no, Lawrence Brown told him I was first horn in the orchestra. The only thing I remember about the few sentences that we – he says, "I've always loved the french horn."

[The first half hour of tape 2 (disc 2) was lost, for reasons unknown. The recording resumes in the midst of a discussion of John Lewis.]

Schuller: I could tell by the touch that this was not just some jazz player. He was into other worlds of music. When I saw that he had written a piece called Toccata – that's the first time anybody took an Italian form of music with a particular concept to it and used it in a jazz context. So I knew that he was interested in more.

The rest is history. We went together, and he and I created this whole Third Stream thing.

Schwartz: Let's get to that. I want to go back to this Frank Sinatra thing for a minute. I have in my notes, Frank Sinatra backed by Axel Stordahl's orchestra in 1950. Sinatra developed some vocal problems? Can you tell . . . ?

Schuller: Yeah. Where'd you hear that?

Schwartz: You just tell me the story.

Schuller: I may have told it to George. On that particular session – this was at a time when Sinatra – how shall I put this? He had led such an incredibly wild life and had abused himself so much and really not taken care of his voice. I think – wasn't he already doing films by then? He was just beginning. Anyway, his voice was going down the tube, and I began to hear it in some recordings at the time, where the voice got a little bit gravelly and a little grainy and seemed not to have this incredible ease, just floating the notes out, this wonderful line and expression in his singing.

At that date, the arranger had written the piece – I seem to remember it was in F major. So there was a high F, which for a baritone is about the top of the range. Some can go a little higher, G maybe, but generally it stops at F. There was this one high F near the end of the piece. He couldn't get – he cracked it the first time we played it down. We all said, whoo. You can crack a note, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you ruined your voice. It might be just a temporary little thing. It happened. He began to sing the note, but it was always flat. He got so furious with us, as if it were our fault, but also with himself, I know. The guys in the booth were going crazy. "What are we going to do? We have to have this tune."

So they called an intermission. The contractor called an intermission. Inside the booth, Sinatra and whoever was running the session along with Stordahl, said, "We have to transpose this down." Believe it or not, the orchestra transposed more or less at sight – some of the musicians weren't that good at transposition. I, as a french horn player – we deal with transposition all the time. All the french horn music in the nineteenth century is transpositions, F, D-flat, E-flat, D major, A major, everything. So we were used to it. But some of the trombone players had never transposed something at sight. They started

scribbling. The one person who took a little more time was the harpist. I think it was Gloria Agostini. She was a great harpist, very interested in jazz. She had to fix her peddling, because when you go from F to E-flat, there's no way you can sight-read a piece, because the movement of the pedals are just so complicated. You might, where you would have to change three pedals and you've only got two feet, and you're supposed to not use the two feet on one side of the harp anyway. Anyway, she took a little more time, but somehow, within 15 minutes we were ready to go. We recorded. We did two takes, I think, and the second take – it was now one tone down. That was a miracle. That showed you the level, the caliber, of the musicians who were the freelancers – or the studio musicians, as they're called – in New York at that time.

Schwartz: There's one other story that I heard about, of you helping a musician with an embouchure problem, a lip problem.

Schuller: Oh, Miles Davis.

Schwartz: That would be Miles. I wondered if you could tell us. Set that up a little bit.

Schuller: John Lewis was – I had heard the early recordings of Miles. I got to tell you, I was not particularly impressed. Dizzy was, at that time, flawless, no matter what he played, technically, high notes, invention. Miles was still beginning to get there. But one thing I particularly didn't like about his playing at that time, he had a very thin tone, compared to Dizzy's, his ripe, full tone. And not one slur. Jazz trumpet players usually tongue almost all notes, but they occasionally slur. All of his slurs are what we call "dirty." There was a little "kkkkk," a little something. For me, as a classical horn player, that was anathema. On a brass instrument, you don't do that, whether you're playing jazz or anything. I hear too much of that nowadays still.

John was raving about Miles. He's the next Dizzy Gillespie, or he already is. I said, "Gee, John, what I've heard so far, I wasn't really all that – yeah, he's talented, but . . . ." He said, "You haven't heard the latest recording." I forget now what label. That must have been – you might know – '47, '48.

Schwartz: Capitol. The Capitol recordings?

Schuller: No.

Schwartz: Oh, those were the ones you're on.

Schuller: No, it's before that.

Schwartz: Oh, Debut. The Debut records that he made for Mingus.

Schuller: No. This was before that. No, this is about the third recording date that he did, altogether. He said, "You've got to hear this," because John, I think, had played piano on it, or he had already heard it, or whatever. He was right, because that was much, much, much better, including in these technical respects. But still, his tone was not the full blossoming tone that a lot of great trumpet players, like Snooky Young and, my God, I won't try to think of all the names. They had . . .

I got to work with Miles then, in the Birth of the Cool. What happened, Junior Collins, the horn player in one of the dates and – who's the other? Sandy Siegelstein, I think – were not available for the third date that Capitol was going to make. Miles said to John, "What are we going to do?" "We got to get Gunther. He's been dying to play with you. He wants to play with the Claude Thornhill band. He wants to leave the Metropolitan Opera."

Schwartz: This is John Lewis talking to Miles.

Schuller: Yeah, to Miles. So I was hired, and I played. Then, I became one of his favorite horn players, along with Julius Watkins and Willie Ruff. So I ended up – and, at that time, as I heard Miles play dozens of times live, I saw – I heard that he always struggled with high notes. He wanted to be another Dizzy, at least as far as the high range goes. He, really, sometimes could not get above a B-flat concert, or a C at most. He was always struggling, and missing notes, cracking notes up there.

One time, I was very close to him, at Birdland, not doing the Birth of the Cool thing, but some other time. Maybe it was the Royal Roost. I saw that his embouchure was not good for playing high notes. The thing is that if you want to play high notes – if you want to play well, period, in all ranges, you have to have the upper rim of your mouthpiece, whether it's a horn or a trombone or a tuba or a trumpet – you have to have it in this little cup that we have here in the middle of the lip. If you have it in the flesh of the – red flesh of the lip, you can't get any high notes. There's a certain point where you can't maneuver the lip to get the aperture to be the size that will get you – it's very complicated – to get you the high notes.

Miles and I, we were so close. For example, when I was at the Met and we played in Boston for a whole week, in the 15 times that I played here in Boston, one whole week, seven of those times, Miles was also here, playing in one of the many clubs, as you know, that we used to have and don't have any more. I'd go there. He didn't necessarily go to the Met. I'd go. We'd meet, and then we'd hang out all night long. We did all kinds of interesting things. We got so close, he told me about his whole love life with Juliette Greco, and all kinds of intimate things. We were like brothers. The sad story is that later, when he turned into this completely different individual, all of his friends were abandoned, black and white. That's a whole other story.

Anyway, I was that close to him. He had heard from a famous trumpet teacher who was famous in New York for fixing people's embouchures, that I was also famous for doing this at the Manhattan School of Music, where I was teaching horn already, during all those years. So he said, "Listen, Gunther," something like, "Why don't you help me with my – I can't seem to get up there." I said, "I know exactly what it is, Miles." So we got together. He came to my house. I moved his mouthpiece up in here. He played a scale, and he went up to a high D, like that. He smiled. He said, "Wow, that's terrific. What did you do?" I said, "I moved it – you got to have it at least up in here. The question is, now, how high you have it up there." You can have it too high, because then that affects the lower part, where the lower part of the mouthpiece is. He said, "This great."

I said, "Listen, Miles. This is not some kind of real miracle solution. You – if you possibly can, you should play, first of all, a lot of long tones, so your mouthpiece and your lips get used to this new position. Play a lot of long tones, and it also will fatten up your sound a little bit." "Oh, that's great." "But here's the thing. You can't play gigs now, because if you go on a job tomorrow night, you're going to go right back, because you have no choice. That's the only way you know how to play. This thing is not a quick fix. This has to be developed over at least a week or so." Well, he wasn't going to give up a gig.

This thing about me fixing his embouchure and always telling him, you've got to – in order for this to become permanent, you have to not – you have to take a few days off at least. Well, this happened four more times. I fixed his embouchure four more times. It never really got better, except that eventually, having heard me preach what had to be done, he did it by himself. So, everything happened. His lyric style of playing, which first happened in *Three Little Feelings*, that piece that John Lewis wrote for him, and which began to happen even during the Columbia days, *Porgy and Bess* and all of those. It got better, and he developed this wonderful lyric style and became much more easy on the high notes, although he didn't do it as high as Dizzy.

Now, to get back to – this is the preface. I'm longwinded. We were doing the *Porgy and Bess* sessions. The fourth session, he was – those dates were so difficult for us, because Columbia Records – and I don't think it was George Avakian. It was someone above him – had decided that we needed to play in the round in the Columbia Studio at 30th Street. Usually we were sort of in rows or somehow all close to each other. That was a huge studio. It meant that – let's say, the three horns were here. The two saxophones, Danny Bank, and the flute player – I forget his name – they were about 15 feet away. Another – the trombone section, Jimmy Cleveland and Urbie Green and whoever –

Schwartz: Frank Rehak?

Schuller: Rehak. Yeah, Rehak – were facing us, but they were about 20, 30 feet away. The trumpets were behind them. Then there were two other woodwinds over there with

the trombones, but also at some distance. What else is there? The worst of it was that Miles was in a booth, a little booth they had made, up, invisible. There was a window in the booth. I could just see the top of his head. I couldn't even see his trumpet, and I certainly couldn't hear him, because it was baffled so that it wouldn't leak. This was I don't know what kind of stereophonic recording. Jimmy Cobb – or one other player played – he was also behind a barrier, and so was the bass player, the great . . .

Schwartz: Paul Chambers?

Schuller: . . . Paul Chambers. So the rhythm section was totally removed from us.

They said, "Use headphones," but most of us didn't want to play with headphones, and we didn't, because when you have the headphones on, the things that you – you very often can't even hear yourself, depending on how loud you have the other people on the headphones, and what you hear is some kind of weird – it's not mixed or anything. It's just whatever happens to come out there. It's an artificial sound anyway. I personally – I hated it.

It was very difficult for us to stay together in this most complicated, difficult music which Gil [Evans] had written from Gershwin's music. That's why there are so many rhythmic problems in, like, the *Gone, Gone* pieces. We're completely apart. Danny Bank is a half a bar separate from where we are playing. It was torture. We did our best. Nobody – we complained, but nobody up there in the booth cared.

By the way, it wasn't George [Avakian] that did the *Porgy and Bess.* He had done the first one, *Spain.*

Schwartz: Was it Teo – Teo Macero?

Schuller: No, someone else who succeeded George there. Anyway, no-one was interested in listening to our complaints. Just do the best you can.

Schwartz: Do you hear that now if you listen to it? Do you hear all that?

Schuller: Oh God, yes. Oh yeah.

Schwartz: It just sounds so . . .

Schuller: And also, intonation problems. There's some awful intonation in that.

Schwartz: I'll have to listen again. It just sounds so beautiful.

Schuller: Of course it's beautiful. It is so resistant to being destroyed. It's such great music. You can't destroy it no matter how you play it. But I, as a high-level professional musician, that kind of raggedness rhythmically, and intonation problems, is just not acceptable. And still, of course, it survives, because it is that great.

That's just that part of the story. During that fourth date, suddenly, in the middle of a take, Miles runs out of the booth, cursing, "…., …," on and on. He runs over to me, and his lip is bleeding. There's blood running down here. He said, "Gunther, help me." I said, "What do you mean, help? How can I help you? I can't fix your embouchure. You're bleeding." I said, "The only thing I got – I got some Vasoline in my case, and I'll put that on there, and that will probably stop the bleeding, and then you can probably play on it. It might be a little bit slippery, but we'll try." We got some Kleenex and damp – what do you call that, when you stop the bleeding?

Schwartz: Gauze? A gauze pad?

Schuller: Yeah. There's a word for it, a verb for it. Anyway, we could finish the session, but most of what we did then was not up to snuff, which means that, (a) his embouchure was still not of the kind of perfect placement that would enable you to play, in this case particularly in regard to endurance. I didn't realize it, at that time, that Gil Evans – there are 13 movements in that *Porgy and Bess.* I didn't realize, at that time, how strenuous that was for the trumpet. I realized it later, after I transcribed the piece and started performing it. The first two trumpet players I had, could not get through the piece in one sitting. Of course, these record dates were split. There were like every – at least four days apart. So I am a little surprised that, even with this separation – he was not playing it in one fell swoop, but of course we did three or four takes of certain – and some of it is very hard, and he's constantly playing, which it should be. It was written for him. But still, I'm amazed that his lip began to bleed, because that should not have happened.

These other people with whom I've done the piece, as I say, the first two could not get through it. The last three movements, they had to play everything an octave lower. That's how tiring that is. Gil Evans didn't know that, and we didn't know that. Miles didn't know that, because it was separated by these separate dates, during which, if you were tired at the end of a session, you'd have three days to recover.

But he always ran to me wherever he had – it was amazing.

Schwartz: Take us back, if you will: Miles, John Lewis, 1949, Birth of the Cool. Is that the beginning of Third Stream? I always think of – it's got tuba. It's got french horn. Was that germ there? Or am I . . . ?

Schuller: Of course, of course. That was beginning to happen. It's also – right around the same time there are Gerry Mulligan's octets and tentets. There's tuba players coming

along, like Billy Butterfield and Bill Barber, who was the great one. And the softer colors of the horn and french horn were being discovered by almost everybody.

Schwartz: So a lot of people were thinking in these terms also.

Schuller: Yeah, and that's also where strings came in much more. They were a rarity with the big bands, but then it really became – almost every recording, they had to have strings. Charlie Parker with strings, and all of that. This all began to open up very gradually. You can say this is some kind of aspect of the beginnings of Third Stream, to produce in a jazz piece a whole new color spectrum for jazz.

The real reason that happened – apart from what you're saying, the more overt and explicit reason was that the Birth of the Cool octet instrumentation came right out of the Claude Thornhill band, because Bill Barber was the tuba player there. Thornhill had gotten him right after the war, and he got Gil Evans, and he got the two most amazing horn players. Sandy Siegelstein was one of them – amazing, not as improvisers, but the most beautiful tone, a real french horn tone – and whoever. I forget the second player, who was a dear friend of mine. We used to hang out at Carnegie Deli. That's an all night long.

That's where that came from. There's no question about it, because John and Miles were so enamored of the Claude Thornhill orchestra, with this incredible color range, from the brightest to the darkest, and all the emphasis on low instruments – bass clarinet, baritone [saxophone] – and in the Birth of the Cool octet, you have in fact no high instrument. You can't call trumpet exactly a high instrument, like a violin or a flute. The alto saxophone, at that time, the highest note it played was an F natural, which is also – that's an octave and a fourth above middle C. That ain't high.

Schwartz: And Konitz wasn't a stratospheric kind of player.

Schuller: Yeah. Of course, now, baritone players play in the stratospheric range.

You can tell what a struggle it was for Lee Konitz, because in *Moondreams*, Gil had unfortunately written an F#, which was the worst note on the alto saxophones of that time. There is – when this incredible atonal coda comes that Gil wrote, it starts with Lee hung up on a high F#, all alone, with Max Roach just keeping a little time, and then the whole band comes in. This F#, it continues. It is so out of tune, and it's a completely grainy, rough sound. It sounds like a bleeting sheep. So you have – I'm just describing how you don't have any high instruments. Now you have horn, middle range. You have a tuba. You have a baritone. Of course you have a bass. So you have this emphasis on the darker, warmer, low-range colors. That all came from the Claude Thornhill band.

But Claude Thornhill, who, by the way wanted to be – was on the way to becoming a great classical pianist. Played the Greig concerto as a young man, professionally. He turned and went into jazz, but his orchestra was so deeply influenced by classical sounds and classical music in every way – stylistically, harmonically, melodically, instrumentationally – that that was such a breakthrough amongst the big bands, which no-one else until Elliot – the band from Philadelphia, also had two french horns.

Schwartz: Elliot Lawrence?

Schuller: Elliot Lawrence. That's right. Thanks for helping me on that, my badness with names. Anyway, that was a whole – and of course that's why the Claude Thornhill band never became the sort of famous band like Glenn Miller and all the other big bands. But for us, for me, for John and Miles, this was it. This was the most exciting thing.

It's interesting that Miles now, veering away from the Dizzy Gillespie virtuosity and that sort of fast playing, is, unbeknownst to himself practically, influenced by Claude Thornhill and that sound and that extended lyric, ballad kind of playing.

Schwartz: He stopped trying to be Dizzy Gillespie and started to become Miles Davis.

Schuller: Part of that – John and I have to take a little bit [of] credit for completing that turnaround, because in – I would say – when would this have been? When did we record *Three Little Feelings*? Was that '60?

Schwartz: I think it was earlier than that. Maybe the late '50s.

Schuller: Yeah, I think so too. It must have been. Anyway, just before that, let's say a year or so before that, John and I – we were like three brothers, very close. We talked all the time. We argued, we all were friends, and all of that. We kept talking. I, in particular, but John was joining me, saying, don't try to be another Dizzy Gillespie. No-one should be like anybody else except influenced by him. Then become your own voice. "Yeah, but I . . . ." I said, "Since you're interested in these different sounds, you've got to make your sound bigger and warmer and have the ability to not just play all this fast bebop eighth-note stuff, but to play these long lines," which of course in *Porgy and Bess*, that was the killer which created the endurance problem. So we kept after him. I think it is – and *Three Little Feelings*, where John [Lewis] wrote Miles's trumpet part in such a way that he could not play any of that fast, virtuosic stuff. He didn't write it for him. So in that way, Miles – I remember they rehearsed together, John and he, and I with him too. He got closer to that kind of a lyric conception in his sound, in his playing.

Schwartz: I want to go back and talk to you about your broadcasting days, from a personal level, being on radio. Tell us about your experience, what the shows were like, who the audience was, you think, or just . . . .

Schuller: To get into that subject, I began also to write about jazz, eventually in my books, but before that, articles for various magazines – jazz magazines. Also classical, of course. Then, when the *Jazz Review* came in – Martin Williams and I, and Nat Hentoff, we created that magazine. It became, I think, for a while, while it lasted, the leading, most interesting, learned jazz magazine that was around. I began also to do a lot of lecturing about jazz, that is to say, talking or verbalizing and writing about jazz. Nat Hentoff and Martin Williams, who were my closest friends and colleagues in that respect – one of them hooked up with the founder and almost sole financial supporter of WBAI. I don't recall when the founding was. He got to know the fellow. His first name was Louis. I can't remember his last name. We decided to do a parallel to what was happening in the best jazz magazines, in talking about jazz, presenting jazz in a really serious and also somewhat analytical way, not just the storytelling of jazz history, but also about the music and what made it great and important, and who all the great artists were, and so on.

I remember that the first few weeks of our show, which was – Nat came up with the title: "The Scope of Jazz," and boy, did the scope range very widely – the first few weeks, we had to do the show where WBAI was located, namely in the very, very top of . . .

Schwartz: Was it a church?

Schuller: No. That incredibly expensive hotel on Fifth Avenue, right at 60th Street. Not the Netherland Plaza. Right next to it. Oh Lord. 60 stories high. The thing about that building was, it was mostly straight up, but then in the top, it got very narrow. The very, very top floor was this area I would say no bigger than these two rooms. In it was housed the entire radio station. It was divided into three smaller rooms. So we were cramped. And the walls came in, because the building was made that way. The walls came in at a diagonal. You could really get claustrophobic up there. We'd have to go up this long elevator ride, all the way up. That's where the show started. That's where the station was. Thank God it moved to 37th Street and, I think, Madison Avenue, a little bit later.

We did the show. Nat and I were the main creators of the show and the main hosts, but Martin Williams, we worked him a lot. He was still – he was more or less just beginning in his career.

Schwartz: Was this weekly, a weekly show?

Schuller: Yes, every – I think it was every Sunday night.

Schwartz: For how long?

Schuller: Three years. We also got John Hammond in. We had many other guests, including even people like Miles Kruger, who talked about the more commercial part of

jazz and the older history of jazz. He's like a Phil Schaap, walking encyclopedia, all about . . .

We did all this for nothing. There was no pay involved. WBAI could not – they couldn't even afford to buy, half the time, the reels, the tape reels. Nat and I bought tape reels and then – to make matters worse, then they reused them and wiped out our shows, because in those days you could use a tape many times. But I saved about – I have down in my basement, I have probably 60 or 70 of our shows.

Schwartz: I've heard a few that George – your son George – has shared with me.

Schuller: It was very wide ranging. We only rarely did the shows together. Mostly we did them alternatively. I was still playing at the Met. I was busier than a one-armed paper hanger. I couldn't have done all that by myself. Essentially what we did was at a very high critical level: play the music, talk about it beforehand and sometimes afterwards, and present a portrait of a given player or given band, whatever it was, or sometimes a subject, like cool jazz. Martin broadened it very much when he began talking very often not only about Ornette Coleman, who was arriving in New York in 1958 – and that's when we started this program – but also all the way back to ragtime, the prehistory of jazz, things like that, which I at first – Nat wasn't knowledgeable about that at all, and I was just beginning to see that jazz happened because of ragtime, the transition being that all those ragtime musicians, they could all read and write music – the pianists – but the jazz musicians that came in in the teens of the century, they couldn't read or write music. They just had fantastic ears, and they could play and invent. What they did – originally, the repertory, a lot of it was ragtime and the blues – what they did, they simply heard these pieces played and then they would – they wouldn't memorize them exactly as they were played. Scott Joplin's music is supposed to be played like classical music, exactly as it's written. There's no improvisation. There's no deviation, embellishment of any kind. You play what's written. That was the ambition of Scott Joplin. We – black musicians can write music, just like anybody else. But the jazz musicians couldn't read.

Schwartz: Sorry, wait. Was that – that's what it was, to prove that, to show the world that . . .

Schuller: Part of it. I don't think that was the main thing. But I would say that Scott Joplin's writing an opera was precisely that . . .

Schwartz: *Tremonisha.*

Schuller: . . . because the idea that a black musician would write an opera – "How dare they? That's our private territory. Niggers can't write operas." Well, he was out to prove, and he wrote a damn good opera. It's a period piece, but it's marvelous. The classical rags of James Scott and Joseph Lamb, and Scott Joplin of course, and so many others,

they are all in a very strict, you could say classical form, because, first of all, the form of every rag, first of all has four themes – four contrasting themes. Guess where Scott Joplin stole that from? John Philip Sousa's marches. It's exactly the same form. He just put his syncopated melodies and jazz harmonies on top of that march form which John Philip Sousa started to create in the 1870s. That's a fact. There's just no opinion about that. He had studied with a German teacher in his hometown in Arkansas. That teacher had taught him about German opera. He knew about the Magic Flute of Mozart and maybe even [Carl Maria von] Weber's Freischutz and some of the early 19th century operas. So he had always this ambition to do that. Eventually he did, starting in 1907.

All these rags are not only in these very strict 32-bar forms – there are four 32-bar themes with maybe an introduction and then a transition to what we call in a march, the trio, which is usually the third theme. That third theme has to be very sedate and quiet compared to the first two, which are energetic and boisterous. That's written out completely, every note in the piano version. In the instrumentations, which were then later made – the famous *Red Back Book* of rags – that's all done by very talented, extremely imaginative arrangers who went so far as occasionally even adding a counter-melody in a rag that, put in the cello – they used a string quartet in these arrangements, orchestrations, which I later developed with my ragtime ensemble. That cello counter-melody isn't even in Joplin's rag. In other words, they contributed to it creatively and always very intelligently, deftly, and beautifully. All of this was written, with dynamics and everything, and then published. So it was like another classical music, except, it swung, sort of, and it had this new phenomenon in music, syncopated rhythms.

Syncopations had existed even since the 16th century, 15th century. Beethoven probably wrote more syncopated rhythms than any other classical composer.

Schwartz: Can you define syncopation, give me a dictionary?

Schuller: I'll do it two ways. It is where you take – if you have a string of four or six or eight notes. Let's say you move, and it normally should be [Schuller sings an ascending line in a regular rhythm]. You now take that second note and you move it into "the wrong place." You go [Schuller sings a syncopated version]. That's syncopation, when you misplace rhythms that are supposed to be on the beat, and you put them between the beats.

As I say, syncopation was not invented by blacks or by Scott Joplin, because all these – Mozart, Haydn – all these composers – Bach used them. But the syncopation in classical music is so different from what black musicians did, because their syncopation comes from African music, particularly drum ensemble music, from West Africa, and other musics that they have where the whole village sings and they have the call and response style of doing things, all of that which ends up in jazz and in the blues.

The syncopation in classical music, like Beethoven – let's say, in the Leonore Overture, he has this little theme. It goes [Schuller sings the four-note theme]. Someone else, lesser, not so interested in syncopated, would have written [Schuller sings a rhythmically regularized variant]. That sounds very straight and square – not square in a bad way. But Beethoven took that one note and put it early [Schuller sings the theme again]. In 1803 that was shocking. But that still sounds very stiff, in a way, and very rigid, even though it is syncopated.

What ragtime did – and this, as I say, comes from another continent, that influence – and what jazz certainly did: their syncopations do the same shifting of notes, but it's phrased differently. Instead of going [Schuller sings the 4-note syncopated motif again], a jazz musician would take that same thing and go [Schuller sings it with a different pattern of slurring and accentuation]. You see how different that is. That right away swings. That has a bounce to it. This other [Schuller sings the 4-note syncopated motif again], it's almost like military music. That's what ragtime brought in through the black influence and from also minstrel music. A lot of the banjo players in minstrel music were also using African influence from their – you have to call it racial memory, that they brought with them as slaves and eventually developed into a great music.

The jazz musicians – to connect up where I left off on this – they couldn't write or read music. Louis Armstrong eventually had to learn, to play with King Oliver. What they did, they took Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* and with their fantastic ears, they sort of memorized the melody, but they didn't know how to do it exactly as written, and probably they didn't want to. But they also couldn't, except if they really were analytical and studied it. But none of these people ever went to a school in their training in music. They're all self taught and just home-made instruments and all that thing, so that there was no urge or need to imitate that exactly, the classical music, especially in New Orleans, which was such a multi-cultural melting pot, that they just played it the way they felt it. So they would do their syncopations in this looser way than it even is in the ragtime music, which is again so vastly different from the classical. By embellishing those basic melodies of Joplin and others, by embellishing, ornamenting, and fooling around with the rhythms even more, elongating notes, adding little grace notes, adding slides, all these things that they began to do, that was all out of whole cloth. That was just purely improvised with their fantastic imagination and ear, whether it's Freddie Keppard or it's Louis Armstrong or Sidney Bechet or whoever it is.

That was then picked up by mostly white musicians, and then beginning also a few black musicians, who could put this stuff down on paper. That's where eventually by 1922, '23, are Fletcher Henderson, who can write arrangements, put all this stuff down; Don Redman, the most formidable of the early arrangers; and with white bands, Paul Whiteman, Jean Goldkette, and all of those bands. That was all a combination of mostly written out stuff, or memorized. Only very slowly in the late teens, 1917, '18, '19, and

then in the early ’20s, did musicians come along who really could improvise, Bix [Beiderbecke] being one of them, and of course Louis Armstrong being one of them.

But mostly what at first happened – I know this from first-hand, of old-timers that I talked to 40 years ago, who had played in 1908 and 1918. They say, “We hardly knew what we were doing. We were just trying something, and we’d do the best we can. It might have sounded all wrong to everybody else, but that’s how we made the transition from classical training into what later – what became jazz.”

That’s how arrangement and composition finally came into jazz full-fledged. But it was this transition period where the ragtime very grad- – it took about ten years – transformed, metamorphosed itself into jazz, very incrementally, naturally, and just through the particular talents of those particular major musicians who did that. It was nothing that ever happened in an academic arena or was ever taught or thought about or “We got to do this.” There was no such thing. You just did it. You expressed your own personality, your musical personality through that. That’s how you gained a certain amount of maybe even local fame, or national fame eventually, but also a certain freedom. This music was the path to that other world which you weren’t supposed to be able to get into.

All of Scott Joplin’s work is in that direction. He really – and the fact that he wrote an opera which has a theme – which is a totally feminist theme. The heroine of the opera is a woman. And it’s all about education. Educate yourself, and you will be able to go forward. You will be able to integrate into the white establishment. It’s really very prophetic.

Schwartz: Is that what drew you to it, those social messages?

Schuller: That amongst other things drew me to it. But the very fact – I knew about this opera when I was still very young. I just heard about it. Then I read Rudi Blesh’s book about ragtime. I learned a lot in that. I can’t remember when I read that. But then Martin Williams, who was really – he and Guy Waterman were the two great experts on ragtime. I started hearing more and more. Then when I came to the New England Conservatory and had my first chance to do operas, which I did two or three operas every year, right away I wanted to do – by that time I knew about *Tremonisha.* It had been published.

Scott Joplin tried to get his opera performed in the mid-teens – 1915, ’16. The closest he got to it, he approached some manager and opera directors and people like that and presented them his opera. He never got around to making an orchestration. That’s how I ended up making the orchestration 40 years later or whenever. But he had published, at his own expense – even John Stark, his great publisher who published all of his rags – and Joplin became fairly wealthy through the success of ragtime – John Stark refused to publish his opera. He said, “What are you doing writing an opera? It’s such a big thing. It

lasts two and a half hours. I can't deal with that." That sort of thing. So Joplin published it himself out of his own money. He did a lot of the engraving himself, and so on. Eventually every ragtime aficionado says that he killed himself, basically by in his last years devoting all of his time, not sleeping and all that sort of thing, to get his opera published before he would die, because he was very sick.

[recording interrupted]

Was I in the middle of something?

Schwartz: We were talking about Scott Joplin and *Tremonisha* and your arrangement of that. That leads me, if you want, into some of your experience – what I'm really hearing and loving, is how you said that some people concentrate on this thing and then they concentrate on that and then they concentrate on that, but with you, you've amalgamated all of these disciplines into who you are, and one thing just leads to another. We started talking about working in radio and all of a sudden we're off into – it just seems to . . .

Schuller: That led to the books.

Schwartz: It just seems to all flow together.

Schuller: Can you imagine how fascinating my life is? It's unbelievable, how lucky I am.

Schwartz: Yeah. It's truly an astounding life.

Did you conduct the opera when it was first performed?

Schuller: Yeah. Oh sure.

Schwartz: Was that not the first time you conducted an orchestra?

Schuller: Oh no.

Schwartz: You went on to continue to do that through Mingus's *Epitaph.* Can you talk about your conducting experiences?

Schuller: With pleasure. My conducting started when I came back from Cincinnati, back to New York, and I became very active as a composer, meaning that I wrote prodigiously. I'm famous for writing five or six pieces every year, and big pieces, including even operas. I just happen to have – again, I say this in all humility. I don't understand it exactly – I have this amazing fluency that I – the music just rolls out of me. It's like an improvisation, even though I'm a lousy improviser in jazz. I've written – by now I'm up to 195 pieces of all kinds, of chamber music and jazz, in every possible form. This began,

very seriously, already in Cincinnati, where I premiered my own horn concerto, which is a big three-movement work. By the time I had been in New York half a year, I had already written two huge orchestral pieces for big symphony orchestras. Then I also wrote my first jazz piece. It's called *Jumpin' in the Future.* You played it. By the way, that was also a breakthrough piece – I don't know of anything like it at that time – because that was going into atonality, or what I prefer to call "highly chromatic music." Atonality and twelve-tone are those musics that Schoenburg and some other composers created – Stravinsky too.

Atonality had been around, by 1946, for 40 years, but jazz had no connection with that. Ellington finally wrote one piece that I would call atonal. It's partly in F major and partly goes way out of any key. You don't know what key you're in, and full of highly chromatic, big chords. It's called *Clothed Woman.* It's one of his incredible masterpieces. Mostly it's pure solo piano.

Beside atonality, jazz caught up with Debussy's and Ravel's ninth chords, eleventh chords, thirteenth chords, bitonal harmonies – caught up with that only in the bebop period, except for Ellington. Ellington was doing all that. It's not that he studied Debussy and Ravel. He just did it out of his own genius. But no-one was following him. In fact, one could say that Ellington's music was – considering how great he was and how the band traveled all over the country and was heard a lot – it was not really understood or appreciated, except by people like, let's say, Ralph Burns or somebody like that, or some musicians. But generally speaking, it was the more tonal, easy, non-atonal or non-bitonal music that, let's say, Benny Goodman did or Tommy Dorsey's band, although they got a little more sophisticated eventually, too.

I was just yearning for jazz to catch up with these languages which had already existed for 40 years. By the way, when Lennie Tristano came around with his first trios, *I Can't Get Started,* I was in heaven, because here was truly atonal jazz improvisation. Maybe some of it was memorized, worked out, but almost all improvisation is prepared in some way, anyway.

So I started writing this little piece for an instrumentation which wasn't even a standard jazz instrumentation. I didn't – I knew that I could not and would not be asked to write for any famous jazz orchestra, but I had to write jazz. So I did it for whatever combinations. Therefore I didn't bother with a standard big band – a little later I did – but I just wrote – I had a flute. I had an oboe. I had three saxophones. I had two french horns, one trombone – 12 instruments. I did a lot of those pieces. They were already in my atonal – not yet 12-tone. 12-tone is a version of atonality. So that's how I also began to get involved in the creating and pushing the limits of composition in jazz, which again was not appreciated. People thought I was crazy. "Jazz is about improvisation. Never mind this composition stuff. And for God sakes, don't write it in atonality."

Schwartz: Did you have to beat the bushes to find musicians that wanted to play this stuff with you?

Schuller: No, that I didn't, again, because of New York. Already then you could find – I had in those early groups, four or five of the players were my colleagues in the Metropolitan Opera. Then I had guys who were in the jazz field. Joe Wilder. He was a completely classically trained musician. He could play anything. That's why he is on the recording that we made of my totally classical, non-jazz brass symphony, *Symphony for Brass and Percussion.* There's Bernie Glow and Joe Wilder sitting in the trumpet section. I swear to you: there isn't one jazz thing in that whole piece, not even one jazz rhythm, and it's atonal, completely, almost 12-tone.

So I had no trouble. Later on, it went further, in that Ornette Coleman came along, Eric Dolphy, Richard Davis – all these people who could play. Scott LaFaro could play in any language or style harmonically.

Let's see. Where was I with this?

Schwartz: We started with conducting.

Schuller: Oh yeah. So I did all this composing. At first, because the – a lot of people aren't going to like hearing this – the music world in the United States, and certainly in New York, was completely controlled in the mid-1940s into the early 1950s by a style of music we call neo-classic. That was the music basically of Stravinsky and of Aaron Copland. Stravinsky had written the greatest masterpiece of the twentieth century, I believe, which is called the *Sacre du printemps* – The Rite of Spring. He wrote that in 1913. Then came World War I, and he changed style very drastically. He invented this idea of neo-classicism, taking classical music à la Mozart, à la Haydn, à la Pergolesi, à la Bach, and spicing it up with some modern harmonies, but basically the forms – the shapes of the music – and the sound of it, was still rooted in key centers: D major, B-flat major. That's why we call it neo-classic.

Stravinsky started with that in 1915, and it lasted into 1953, when Stravinsky himself became a 12-tone, an atonal, composer. During that long – what is that? 20-year period, from '15 to '53. That's 28 years, isn't it? Do the math.

Schwartz: A little longer than that.

Schuller: '15, '25, '35 – yeah, it's 38 years. The music scene here and in Europe was dominated by this neo-classic, which is wonderful music. There's nothing against it. It just was a regression back to an earlier style. The whole atonality, which Webern, Schoenberg, and Berg had created, was ignored and ostracized. Since I was as a young composer already starting in Cincinnati writing atonal music, I was also ostracized. So

my music that I wrote in 1946, ’47, ’48, had no performance, except I could get – if I wrote a chamber-music piece for four players, I could get three of my friends together and read through it. That’s all I could do. I had no orchestral performances. That whole Copland, neo-classic crowd, they just – it was warfare between the Schoenbergians and the Stravinskians. It was real open warfare. We didn’t talk to each other, talked badly about each other, didn’t want to know about each other’s musics. I, and one or two others – when I came on the scene, I understood that I was supposed to join one of these camps, Stravinsky or Schoenberg. There was no talking relationship, no musical relationship. I said to myself, “Wait a minute. That’s ridiculous. Schoenberg and Stravinsky are both great composers, in fact the two greatest composers of the early twentieth century, and influenced music more than anybody else. So I’m going to learn from both,” and I did learn from both. “I’m not going to participate in this warfare.” But since I had no ways of getting performances, I was subject to the domination of the neo-classic crowd, even though I said to myself, “I’m going to ignore all that business, and I’m going to,” as I say, “learn from both of those great geniuses.”

So I wrote all this music. People – some conductors began to program some of my music eventually. There were some – you might call them sort of renegades, who didn’t belong to the Stravinsky clique and who were interested in doing Schoenberg and who were interested in doing atonal music and more modern music, because all the neo-classic is still really in tonality. As I say, some beautiful music – a lot of beautiful music was written that way.

Anyway, they wanted to explore things. Some of them heard about my music. The next thing I know, Leon Barzan, who was a great conductor of that time, and David Brockman, and – who else? – Dimitri Mitropoulos – he was the one who brought the whole – what’s called the second Viennese school: Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern – he brought that to New York. There was no music of that that was ever played. [Leopold] Stokowski did some in Philadelphia in the ’30s. Just how inimical the situation was is indicated by the fact that Stokowski wanted to premiere Schoenberg’s violin concerto in Philadelphia with the Philadelphia Orchestra. He had two violinists who wanted to play it: Louis Krassner, who ended up here in Boston at the Conservatory – I brought him here – great violinist, who commissioned the Alban Berg violin concerto. But the Schoenberg concerto, he and [Rudolf] Kolisch, wanted to play it. It was scheduled. The board of the Philadelphia Orchestra forbade – prevented Stokowski from performing that piece for four years. That’s censorship. Eventually Stokowski – Louis Krasner came down. He said, “I don’t want any fee” – because the board also didn’t want to pay for this thing – “I don’t want anything.” Stokowski programmed it and defied the board. One week later, he resigned, because he would not take this kind of – he was the most famous conductor in the United States, along with Toscanini.

The other big example of censorship of atonality was when Mayor LaGuardia prevented WNYC from playing Schoenberg’s famous piece, *Pierrot Lunaire*, which is an ensemble

with a voice – instrumental and solo voice. He – for four years, NYC was not allowed to play the recording of that piece.

Schwartz: Because it was . . .

Schuller: Atonal.

Schwartz: . . . atonal.

Schuller: He probably got some irate letters from – it was city station. WNYC was owned by the city. So LaGuardia felt that he had to do something about it. If that had happened with WQXR, who knows what they would have done. They might not have played it, but they wouldn't have been bound to by the fact that their station – their station was a private station. It was not a city station.

I was up against all of that. Finally some conductors came along. Then some others that I don't want to even mention, who ended up doing my music so ineptly, so badly. Sometimes I was playing the horn in my own pieces, they're conducting, and I'm going crazy. I said – I'd never thought about conducting. That was not in my vocabulary for myself, but I began to think, Jesus Christ, I'm not a conductor, but I think I can do it better than these guys. And the musicians around me used to say, "Gunther, why don't you conduct?" They knew I was a good musician. So that's how I began to conduct: my own music, at first, just in self defense, so it would get done better. Then I began to get so successful with that, that I ended up conducting everybody else's modern music. I became the most – to this day, I have conducted more contemptible [laughter] – I mean, contemporary music than even Pierre Boulez or any of those people. I just was the conductor for the modern extreme music, avant garde music that [?] called. That's how I slid into conducting.

Then musicians – I had developed a couple of series in Carnegie Hall which were all devoted to contemporary music. It was called Twentieth Century Innovations, in Carnegie Hall. I did that for five years. Carnegie Hall supported and paid for it. And I did – I don't know how many – I did at least 50 American premieres of European-created pieces. I did the first performance of a hell of a lot of composers, including György Ligeti and [Iannis] Xenakis and all these avant-garde composers.

I went on with that. Then a couple of managers – what do you call them? – managers who manage artists, musicians, soloists – saw my work as a conductor, especially one management called Sheldon Soffer, and they said, you should go into conducting – not just this modern stuff. You should do Beethoven and all those others. I said I'd love to, and they started getting me jobs. Next thing I know, I'm conducting the Chicago Symphony. This was in 1960.

In the meantime, jazz had developed in its expansion and extension of the form which Ellington started with the extended-form pieces like *Reminiscing in Tempo* from 1935. I and others began to write four-movement works with tempo changes and meter changes, which were all things unknown in jazz. There was no 5/4. There was no tempo change. You started off, you go "1, 2," then off you go, and you play the whole piece in one tempo. There are a few exceptions to that, of course, but they're very rare. So suddenly a conductor was needed. That's how I ended up conducting pieces that J. J. [Johnson] wrote for Dizzy Gillespie, because there were 15 tempo changes, and you can't stop and stomp off every time, because they're instantaneous changes. And dynamics were not so much used. The whole range from *ppp* to *pp* to *piano, mezzo-piano, mezzo-forte, forte, fortissimo, fff* – that had to be dealt with. That's where you needed a conductor. So I became the resident conductor in jazz. That's how I ended up conducting Mingus's *Half-Mast Inhibition,* because that piece was so complicated. In it – it's only seven minutes long – I think it has 15 tempo changes, and it goes from *à la breva,* which is time in two, to time in four, and *ritardando*s and *accelerando*s, all this stuff. Dance music doesn't have *accelerando*s, right?

Schwartz: I remember last year at Newport your conducting that, and how incredible the music was, how spellbound the audience was listening to your explanation of the music. Again, it was you as a conductor, as an educator, just everything conglomerated into that perfect moment. The audience was just spellbound listening to you explain this piece and then hearing it.

Schuller: Thank you. One of the things that made that performance – by that time, I'd been performing *Epitaph* for 20 years, I think it is now. We started in 1989, the night of Tiananmen Square massacre. We did it in Lincoln Center. So that long I've been doing that piece and other Mingus pieces. The thing is, that I still have to train jazz musicians to pay attention to all the dynamics – that means the loudness, right?, of the music – relative loudness. In *Epitaph,* which is a 2 1/2 hour work, there must be 8-million dynamic markings. In even some of the most sophisticated jazz charts from the swing era, there might be one dynamic, maybe if in the bridge someone – the orchestration is reduced, and from loud playing it becomes soft, something like that. But that was almost understood that that's the way it's played. But 8-million – I don't think I'm off the mark with this vast work with 31 in[struments]. There's millions of dynamic markings. Jazz musicians will not do those on their own, because in their everyday life, they don't do that. You play a piece, and you play it – if it has dynamics, and you wrote it, then you're going to see to it that it does. But I've heard thousands and thousands of pieces which start loud and end loud. Then I have heard thousands of ballads which are soft – start soft and end soft. That's it. In between dynamics, and in the gradations that I just mentioned – there's eight levels.

Schwartz: So that's your job, to . . .

Schuller: Yeah, that's my job.

Schwartz: . . . to convey that.

Schuller: The reason that that Newport concert was so good, in one respect, is that I finally got all of them in those few pieces – which I only had two rehearsals with them – to play all of those dynamics, which are by Mingus. They're not by me. I'm just the conduit. I'm the transmitter. That's so important. When that music is played just in one dynamic level, it's downright boring. It ruins the music, because dynamics give the expression, the particular expression to the music. Dynamics – the range of dynamics allows different colors. At the low ranges of dynamics, in *piano* and *mezzo-piano*, you can get different timbres, different colors, from dark to bright. You lose all that if you just play one dynamic and you play loud. That just destroys the expressive essence of the music.

So that's been my job as a conductor in classical music and in jazz. As I say, it finally reached the point where I started conducting Chicago Symphony, and I started conducting all the pieces that were recorded in the whole Third Stream movement, with Atlantic Records particularly, and in jazz. The next thing I know, I'm conducting hundreds of orchestras all over the world and doing jazz concerts with some of the orchestras in Germany, in Switzerland, and in France. Again, these worlds are always colliding or amalgamating, all the time.

I never had a conducting lesson. As I say, I never thought about conducting. The reason I became, I think, a quite good conductor, if not a very good one, is that I played with every great conductor of that whole era, particularly when I was playing at the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic. That goes from the most legendary conductor, Toscanini, all the way down to the worst conductors, whose names I don't even want to mention. They were so abysmal that we had to save their asses, because they misconducted – wrong tempos, wrong dynamics, couldn't make tempo transitions. We did it by ourselves, because we loved the music and wanted to protect the music. So, all the way from the worst to the best – great conductors like Fritz Reiner, Dimitri Mitropoulos. Reiner was one of the most impeccable technicians. I saw the best, and I saw the worst. Guess what? I decided not to do the worst. I took the best that I could glean from these great masters of the art of conducting, which is manual and gestural, and in the end has to be pictorial. It has to paint a picture of the music, so that if a music is gentle and soft and lyrical and linear, I will conduct it like this, flowing motions, making little waves. But if it's very energetic and rhythmic, then I'll conduct like this. So you have a million different gestures that you can use to pictorialize the music that's written – according to what's written. You don't make this up. If Beethoven writes *pianissimo,* you conduct a *pianissimo,* and you conduct a *pianissimo* like this. If you conduct a *pianissimo* like this, which is what these horrible conductors did, ain't nobody going to play *pianissimo,* because just as a kinetic reaction to what you see in front of you, you're

going to play louder. You go [Schuller makes a spitting sound]. I just learned it working with these great and bad conductors. I am known all over the world as one of the most meticulous score-respecting conductors, whether it's jazz or classical. I don't care what it is. Or whether it's ragtime or a Strauss waltz.

Schwartz: Do you have a feeling that you're being able to pass this on to other people who want to conduct?

Schuller: Sure. I not only pass it on. I've written a 900-page book about the art of conducting.

Schwartz: You wrote some of it in the library at WGBH.

Schuller: Most of it, listening to all the recordings. Yeah.

Schwartz: I used to go there at two in the morning and find you with a pile of LPs.

Schuller: I'm about to start again. I just talked to Alice about doing some work there.

I did it that way, although that book has been totally ignored to death by the conducting establishment.

Schwartz: Why is that, do you think?

Schuller: I'll answer it in a second. The other way that I've done it – you asked the question about how can I pass this on – I've been teaching conducting for 40 years now. I started – actually, I never thought I would teach conducting. I'm very modest about my accomplishments. I don't think I need to be a teacher. But what happened – at Tanglewood, when I became artistic director there, I was first of all in charge of all the contemporary music, and then branched out again into the standard repertory, classical music. We always had a conducting program, which Aaron Copland started. Leonard Bernstein was the first student at Tanglewood, in 1940. He was a conducting student. So I took that program over. There I've now had thousands of students – not only there, but in my own festival in Sand Point, Idaho, and at the New England Conservatory. So by various ways I hope to pass this on. And I do. I have some wonderfully talented conducting students.

But this kind of meticulous paying attention to the score and not fooling around with it and not elaborating on it and not screwing around with it – that is not what most conductors do. Therefore, I am considered a kind of *persona non grata.* Those young conductors – I know this from experience – when they vie for a job and they do my kind of sensitive, respectful conducting and not showing off, exhibitionistic and jumping all

over and conducting through their legs and whatever, they don't get the job, because audiences want to see somebody.

Schwartz: Show biz.

Schuller: If the conductor wiggles their behind, that's a great thing. The hell with the music. If the music is all wrong – by the way, it's note perfect. Every orchestra plays every piece note perfect. No recording has a wrong note in it. But it's the interpretation of how all those notes are played that is seriously deficient. People – audiences, and a lot of critics, unfortunately, go by what they see. There have been some incredibly photogenic conductors, like – Seiji Ozawa is one of the most magnificent conducting machines. Every gesture is just perfect. But his knowledge is not up to that same level. So a conductor can even look very good. Or Leonard Bernstein, who was a calisthenist – did calisthenics on the podium – once – a couple of times – jumped off the podium. There were other extreme conductors. This new guy, this guy from Venezuela, this [Gustavo] Dudamel – he's just insane with his movements. It excites the public. They want to see something. We live in a visual world. Television has turned us into a completely visual world. It's not an aural world. No-one gives a damn about listening to anything. So – I shouldn't say nobody – so these people who follow my and Reiner's, Toscanini – Toscanini was a marvelous conductor, very efficient, very expressive. Reiner's great saying was, "The art of conducting consists of getting the maximum of expression with a minimum of gestures, a minimum of effort."

So I don't think I'm going to leave much of a legacy, and to answer your other question – why is my book ignored? – because the conducting – all the major conductors, they hate my book, because – I don't know whether you know what I actually do in the book. The reason I listened to 430 recordings at the GBH library over a period of 2 1/2 years – I listened to only eight pieces, which I made the subject of that book. They were the Beethoven Fifth Symphony – famous – the Beethoven Seventh Symphony, Brahms's First Symphony, Brahms's Fourth Symphony, Ravel's Daphnis and Chloé, Schumann's Second Symphony – Robert Schumann – Strauss's Till Eulenspiegel, and one other. Only eight pieces, and that book is already 900 pages. If I had taken – I wanted to do two Dvorak symphonies – the book would be 1,500 pages.

I listened to, in each case, multiple, multiple recordings of those eight pieces. Like, of the Beethoven Fifth, I think I ended up listening to 86 recordings of that piece. That piece lasts an hour. So that means at a full listening, just even one listening, that's 86 hours right there. I had to make notes while I was listening: every good thing and every bad thing that some conductor and orchestra did. I still have those notes. I've got a closet full of all those notes. So I would say that each symphony – and these were all big pieces – took me three hours to deal with and then write about it. What I did there – as I say, I pointed out what was in discrepancy with what the composer wrote, whether its tempo is wrong, dynamics wrong, balance is wrong, feeling wrong, coloring wrong. If something

is a dark music and it's played with a very bright, penetrating sound, that's wrong. You're doing damage to the music. What I did was to show the score by Beethoven or Strauss, and here it shows what in those six measures the man wrote. It's very explicit. There's no equivocation. It has the dynamics. It has the phrasings, the slurrings. It has the instrumentation, of course, and it has the tempo marking. So that's it.

That's on the left side. The right side page, I list and sometimes wrote out in musical examples, what a certain conductor did instead. The beauty of this system is that it – the score is fixed. It doesn't lie. It's like that painting. The record doesn't lie either. It is fixed. So here are two things that clash completely, or a little bit, whatever, in various gradations. That makes it impossible – most of my students and people who've read my book say that this is the reason you have gotten no reaction. You have not been attacked by one conductor who would say, Schuller, on page 283 you say this about Beethoven there. You're full of crap. I'm waiting 12 years for somebody to come, because I have them hands down, because as I was saying, these two things don't lie.

Schwartz: It's June 4th, 2008. My name is Steve Schwartz from WGBH radio in Boston. We're at 167 Dudley Road in Newton Centre, the home of Gunther Schuller. This is the second day of our oral history project with Gunther. Thank you for having us back.

Schuller: My pleasure.

Schwartz: Gunther, yesterday we talked – you talked quite a bit about your experience with Duke Ellington, meeting Duke Ellington, and getting to know the musicians and how he worked. I think maybe there's more in there that you wanted to tell us. So . . .

Schuller: Yeah. I had so many times that I met with Ellington or was with him in one way or another, listening to his concerts – all over the world, by the way. We met in Chile – Santiago – when I happened to be there and he was also there. We met in Frankfurt, Germany, when we were both there doing different things. So it goes on and on.

One of the most interesting experiences I had with Ellington occurred in that period when I was in Cincinnati. I had already written a lot of these symphonic arrangements for the pops concerts of the symphony. They, as I mentioned, were picked up – the news about these arrangements, which were still very unusual at that time – I'm talking about 1943 – for a symphony orchestra to play jazz pieces was a whole new pioneer kind of thing. As I mentioned the Associated Press and the United Press, they both got wind of my doing this and made press releases, as you might say. So suddenly my name was in all the newspapers, because everything that those two agencies did was automatically put into a newspaper.

My most successful arrangement was of Ellington's *Mood Indigo,* or it was thought to be. I think they were all equally quite good. Anyway, word got around. So other orchestras began to play these arrangements of mine. On one occasion I got wind of the fact that Paul White – who was the second in command at the Eastman School of Music. He was the assistant to Howard Hansen, who was the founder and director of the school – Paul White was doing the pops concerts in Rochester, New York. He had programmed *Mood Indigo.* I happened to have a few free days from the Cincinnati Symphony work. So I went to Rochester. I knew Paul already as a friend. So I went to the concert. It was a wonderful success. While I was there, I found out that Duke Ellington was in Cleveland, just a short train ride away. I said, "Oh, my God." He was going to be there at the Lowe State Theater, it's called, on Euclid Avenue? I think that's the main street.

I went there overnight. Around noon, when I figured Ellington would start with his shows – in those days, in the movie theaters, the jazz orchestras played five shows, four or five shows. Between their playing, the films were shown, the movies were shown. So it was music, jazz, movie, music, movie, back and forth. They usually started around noon. I went to the stage door. I imagined that I wouldn't be able to just walk in. But thank God, one of my by-then already good friends, Junior Raglin, who was a wonderful bass player, very underrated nowadays. He followed Jimmy Blanton. He succeeded Jimmy Blanton, and maybe his lack of recognition has something to do with that. He followed one of the greatest bass players. Anyway, he saw me. He said, "Gunther, what are you doing here?" I said, "I've come to hear you guys." "Come on in." I saw Duke. I saw Rex Stewart. I saw Harry Carney and all these people, who were just warming up. I listened to two of their performances. Then Duke said to me, "How long are you going to stay?" I said, "I've got a few more days." "Where are you staying?" "I haven't got a hotel," because I hadn't really planned on all this. He said, "Why don't you stay with us?"

In those days, these theaters, they were huge buildings, like eight stories high. There were – because they were theaters, they had both offices in them, but they also had, for the musicians, places where they could stay and sleep, and even cook their meals with their little Bunsen Burners and so on, because in those days, the black orchestras – the black musicians could not stay in a downtown white hotel. No way. There were hotels in the black section of Cleveland, and they could have gone, but that was like a 45-minute ride in a streetcar or whatever, a bus or something. So the entire band, except for Ray Nance – he had some friends out in the other section – they stayed in this – in the theater. These were small rooms with a bed and a table. You could actually live there for a few days. So Duke said, "Stay in one of these rooms. In fact there's a room free right next to mine." Oh my God. So I stayed there.

The last show that first day ended at one o'clock. Ellington came upstairs. This was on the fourth floor somewhere. I saw what he did. This is what he did every night when he was in that kind of a situation. He took off his fantastic tuxedo – he had this incredible wardrobe – and he put on a marvelous maroon bathrobe. It was all silk. He put on this

stocking cap to keep his hair in place. Then Tom Whaley – who was his copyist, who wrote out all the parts, but he was also kind of his valet – he brought in some food for him. He sat down at the piano and just began playing, just sort of – I call it ruminating at the piano. I was in my – I went into my room. I figured he'd go to sleep fairly soon, and I would too. Well, no way. It turns out that he – like he did – I found out from the guys in the band that he did this all the time. The man never slept. The reason he had the rings under the rings under the rings of his eyes, because he never slept. Why didn't he sleep? Because he was always composing at night. I am witness to this. So I'm in the room next door, and I hear him improvising. It's all beautiful stuff. But every once in a while it would stop, and I could hear through the door the scratching of a pencil. There would be this [Schuller imitates the sound of pencil on paper.] He was writing down something that he had just played, that absolutely he thought was special enough to do.

Schwartz: He found something that he wanted to write.

Schuller: This went on until 4:30 in the morning. I did not sleep. I listened to him do this kind of composing.

Then it turned out that he had actually – then he went to bed, and he slept about three or four hours. Maybe a few more. How that happened that night – and again, the guys confirmed, this happened all the time while they were on the road. Ellington's band was on the road for 50 years. He would compose in bathrooms. He would compose in trains. Later he composed in airplanes. He composed in hotel lobbies. He composed in restaurants, whatever. A voracious appetite for creating. So he had actually written about 20 or 30 bars of a new piece. I used to remember what the piece eventually became, but I can't remember it right now.

What happened, and as I say, this is what happened all – not every day, but very frequently – Ellington would leave whatever he had composed and actually written down – by the way, he had the most beautiful, exquisite hand, writing music. It is so beautifully legible, unlike Beethoven's music. If you can read Beethoven's manuscript, you're some kind of weird genius. Anyway, he had written it down. Tom Whaley would pick this up. Ellington always put in little suggestions for the instrumentation, who would play what. Naturally. We all do that in our little short scores. He would leave that for Tom Whaley. By the time Ellington got up at the mandatory little warmup rehearsal at 11 o'clock, before the first show at 12, they would play what he had written at night. There is no composer in the whole history of the world that could instantaneously hear what he had just written a few hours earlier. There's no such thing. Even Haydn, who was the famous composer at the Esterhazy estate in Austria, who wrote all his music for that Prince Esterhazy, he had to wait at least for the sun to rise or for the orchestra to get together.

Schwartz: That also speaks very highly of the musicians in his band, who were able to look at this piece of music that they never saw before.

Schuller: Of course I was at that little rehearsal. There was some back and forth, like Johnny Hodges, say, "Hey, Duke, let me do a little embellishment here." Or he wouldn't even say anything, because he was very taciturn, and he never smiled, as we know, but a genius player. He would just play something, adding some idea to the one that Ellington had written. We all know – and I saw this in process – we all know that, yes, Ellington is the great composer who wrote all this – composed all this remarkable music, but the way it was finally played and recorded had so much to do with what the players in the group contributed to it.

I heard him only – the next day, there was the same kind of phenomenon, this rehearsing and playing what had just been written – I heard him reject only one thing that somebody had – I forget now who it was. He said, "No, no. Leave it simpler." Something like that. I don't know whether I'm the only person who ever witnessed this. There's no way I can know. But, boy, I have certainly never met any, especially a white kid with a black orchestra. So that's again a sign of how close I was to that whole scene. I'm so proud of that and consider myself so fortunate to have seen that. It's just like that thing of hearing the Earl Hines band when Charlie Parker was in it. How did I have the fortune to have these incredible experiences?

Schwartz: Don't ask.

Schuller: I don't deserve them.

Schwartz: Gunther, yesterday we mentioned a few times, through our interview, the term "Third Stream music." I'd like to try to have you tell us how that term came up. I know you were giving a lecture somewhere, and that term came up. Then if you could connect that Third Stream music with the Orchestra USA, with the Modern Jazz Society, the people that you were involved in, and how that kind of grew from that one phrase, Third Stream music. Connect those few things and of course your involvement in it.

Schuller: I am known for having coined this term, Third Stream. I had thought of it for some time. I think this was in 1947. I finally used it in a public lecture at Brandeis University, where I was asked to talk about – I don't know – jazz, or the history of jazz, or something. I can't remember the complete topic. The reason I came up with this term was primarily that I was aware – I was very – as I have already mentioned – I was very interested in bringing these two segregated worlds of music together. I've done that all my life. I'm a person who wants people to get together, ideas to get together, learn from each other, cross fertilize, and so on. That was my mission, as it were.

I knew that the first instance of a rapprochement between jazz and classical music had occurred and lasted for about ten years in the 1920s. What happened, both – mostly French – European composers – mostly European, particularly French composers, and

some in England, when jazz started being played by traveling orchestras from America, or, in Berlin and in Paris and in other big cities, local jazz orchestras began to be formed and played in the clubs there, particularly in Berlin. In the 1920s Berlin was one of the – after the inflation and all of that settled, it became one of the great cultural avant-garde centers of the world. So everybody was starting to hear jazz. The jazz that the Berlin and Paris orchestras played wasn't really very hot jazz. It was sort of polite dance music. But it was some kind of jazz.

Schwartz: There was a precedent for these musics.

Schuller: These were all classical musicians. No-one had been trained in jazz before 1921, let's say. These were all classical musicians who played – maybe in the cafes they played popular classical music, Sarasate violin pieces and all that sort of – Fritz Kreisler pieces. They were very good musicians, but you couldn't certainly call them jazz musicians, and they certainly couldn't improvise. They were – the early jazz musicians thought they weren't very good. They were just a pale version of what real jazz was. But anyway, it was a kind of coming to be fascinated by this music that came from America. In Paris, when I speak of that, that was the days of Josephine Baker, when she danced virtually nude and became this world sensation at age 19.

Schwartz: We wanted to bring this to the present.

Schuller: All this was coming together in some way. Anyway, the big breakthrough thing was, one of the greatest French composers of that time, Darius Milhaud, with whom Dave Brubeck studied out in California, later, he was invited to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra by Leopold Stokowski, who was the conductor of that. So he came to America in 1922. He did his conducting there, one week in Philadelphia. But when he arrived, having heard about jazz from Ernest Ansermet, who was the guy who heard Sidney Bechet play in France in 1919, right after World War I – he began to hear all about this jazz, and he said to everybody, "I'm here to conduct this orchestra, but I've got to go to Harlem. You've got to take me to Harlem. I've got to hear this music." He said, "Beside that, I also want to go to one of those churches in Atlanta where they do this weird singing and everything in the services and the congregations." That all happened. As a result of his actually hearing – he's the only European composer and the only American composer – because there were American composers at that time also getting interested in jazz, including Aaron Copland, but none of them ever went to Harlem. He heard the authentic jazz. What was one of the great bands there? Charlie Johnson? Wasn't that an orchestra in Harlem? Charlie something. Fantastic orchestra. Anyway, Harlem was crazy with jazz. So he heard the authentic improvised spontaneous creation of jazz in its homeland, home place. Then he went back to France and he wrote the one great, you could say, Third Stream masterpiece, of that time. It's the *Creation du monde.* It's the Creation of the World, which is a ballet for a ballet company in Paris. It is the most remarkable transcription of what he heard as improvised music, but writing it out, writing

it down, what he thought he had heard, so that if you didn't know this was all composed by him, you might think, wow, that sounds like they're improvising. But of course the musicians, who then played that piece in Paris, were all classical studio musicians. They couldn't improvise.

Schwartz: Can we see if we can bring this to you?

Schuller: I will. I will. But this is important, because the reason I got into that – because this whole movement of identifying with jazz, both by American composers like Louis Gruenberg and of course [George] Gershwin to some extent, too, and the European composers in Poland, in Germany, in Italy, everywhere, got fascinated with jazz. That lasted for a whole decade. Suddenly – and Ravel wrote two piano concertos which are deeply influenced by jazz. So this wasn't just some little incidental thing. It lasted for ten years. And I was of course conducting, studying, performing that music. So this was – I knew there already had been this coming together, but it was aborted. It stopped in 1930, absolutely stopped dead. And it of course never included improvisation, because all of that music was played, not by jazz musicians – they couldn't have read it. It was – even if they had wanted to play it. But it was played by classical musicians.

I admired that whole development, and I admired that Aaron Copland, who was the first American composer to get with that idea – that was an important development in music and in American music. So now I start talking about this music, and I had to talk about it with always the three sub-clauses to the sentences, how to explain what I'm talking about. Finally it dawned on me, why don't I call it "Third Stream"? That meant this was the marriage of the two main streams of music, classical music and jazz. As it says in the Bible, they begat a child, and that child is the Third Stream, out of the two. A very simple idea.

I used it a fair amount in talks and lectures. It became a buzz word, a household word, when John Wilson, the very great jazz critic of the *New York Times*, he used it in a headline for one of our concerts, one of our classical – Modern Jazz Society that John Lewis and I formed.

Then Third Stream became famous and controversial, because half the world was still totally divided. The jazz musicians – a lot of jazz musicians resented the idea of coming together with classical music. They thought it would stultify, contaminate jazz in a bad way by its stiffness, its rigidity. A lot of this was exaggerated and prejudicial feelings. It wasn't really real. On the classical side, oh my God. These people who thought that jazz was a degenerate, awful music. There were articles in earlier times that if you listen – parents told their children, if you listen to jazz, you're going to get pimples in your face, and you're going to get syphilis and gonorrhea and all this. It was horrendous prejudice on both sides. They were worried about what would happen to their classical, sacred

music of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and so on. For ten years I was attacked on both sides for this idea, even the nerve of the idea to bring jazz and classical music together.

But John Lewis and I – all of these young musicians like J. J. Johnson, Dizzy Gillespie, many of the saxophone players – they were all themselves beginning to listen to classical music. They were going to Carnegie Hall to listen to the symphony orchestra. So I could use them and write for them music that was beginning to straddle this fence between classical and jazz. That's what John Lewis and I did with everything that we did. And thank God, Atlantic Records was wonderful. Nesuhi Ertugen picked up on this and started – not just – started to record what we were doing.

One of the first concerts that we did of this modern classical and jazz society was a concert which in fact consisted of both musics. This was totally unheard of, radical. That had not even happened in Europe or anywhere in the 1920s. Namely, we played a piece by John Lewis. We played a piece by J. J. Johnson. We played a Mozart Serenade. These are these multi-movement entertainment pieces that Mozart wrote for dinner parties. And I did on that first concert the first American performance – this was in 1956 or '57 – the first American performance of one of the great Italian modern avant-garde composers named Luigi Nono. So this was a concert of jazz, improvised. We did a piece by Jim Hall at one of these concerts. He had just graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and had studied with a classical music teacher. We did that. We did avant-garde contemporary European music. So, the whole range of available music at that time. This was an incredible breakthrough. That then developed for the next 10, 15 years, with everybody getting on the bandwagon of this Third Stream idea.

Schwartz: How did – when you say everybody, are you talking about the critics, because I was going to ask, how did the critics respond?

Schuller: As I say, it was incredibly controversial. There were critics on our side. John Wilson wrote beautifully about not only this, but also the idea of this. Then, a little bit later, Martin Williams and Nat Hentoff did. This was a very important and wonderful new development, because the language of the music, the style of the music, changed and developed by this introduction of Third Stream, because the modern music of Europe and America, classical music at that time, was in this either highly chromatic or atonal language. So where jazz was still basically stuck in the language of the late 19th century, tonal music, we were introducing jazz now which was in this more modern language, which of course offended a lot of jazz people. They said, "What are you doing with this modern stuff? Jazz is the music of New Orleans."

Schwartz: It's a fugue.

Schuller: Yeah, exactly. John – oh, John got so lambasted for writing all these fugues, because he was . . .

Schwartz: *Little David.*

Schuller: . . . yeah, *Little David's Fugue* – he was studying all this music at the Manhattan School of Music. It went on and on. I was crucified right and left, and John Lewis was. "What are you guys doing? You're screwing up everything." Eventually it settled down. Then for 30, 40 years, the term went completely out of discussion. Only lately, in the last 10 years, has it been revived. In the meantime, Third Stream has taken over the world. I postulated in my talking about Third Stream, this isn't going to just be a rapprochement between jazz and classical music. This is going to involve any or all of the ethnic musics of the world. There are about 300,000 folk vernacular ethnic musics on the face of this globe. That is exactly what happened. You now have music, let's say, that combines classical ideas, trends, style; jazz; and, let's say – I'll pick anything – Turkish music – Turkish national folk music or popular music. Or it could be, as happened so much, Indian music. So this Third Stream idea, which originally was limited to, in my first conception of it, just jazz and classical, began to expand like the Mississippi River. It came to encompass everything. The record companies eventually caught on to this. Now you have this thing called "world music." That's Third Stream, but it isn't just two little streams. It's everything. The record companies, who of course have to label everything, they also call it either crossover or fusion, often giving it really the wrong name or a name that's not particularly appropriate. But that is was happened, so that my little puny idea of bringing jazz together with classical music, and bringing improvisation into the combining of the musics – that has spread all over the world.

Schwartz: There's a recording out now by a group called Third World Love. The title of the band is like, why did they call it that?, but it's Avishai Cohen, the trumpet player, and he's the brother of Anat Cohen, who's a saxophone player. I don't know if you know of her work.

Schuller: No.

Schwartz: They're fusing Israeli eastern music with Latin music, with straight-ahead jazz. So what you're saying has come to fruition.

Schuller: There are now thousands of examples of this, bringing different musics together. The idea is not only a great musical idea, but it is a very deep and profound, important, philosophical concept, because with all the strife that we have in the world, always wars, always people fighting with each other, religions fighting with each other, all these terrible things that go on – this would not – my Third Stream idea, once it really takes over and all the peoples in their history and in their musical and artistic interests, if they all got together and learned from each other and worked together, you wouldn't have all this strife. It really is a profound philosophical, aesthetic idea, not just a good musical idea.

Schwartz: Let's keep Third Stream in our conversation, keep our conversation alive. Talk to me a bit about how you came to the New England Conservatory, again given that you've got all these hats you wear, and you haven't talked about this administrative, educational, whatever you want to call that. You also, when you got to the conservatory – I don't know how long it took you – developed a Third Stream department there with people like Ran Blake, and George Russell was involved. So if you could paint that picture of how that came about.

Schuller: As a matter of fact, the first thing I did, my absolute first act as president of the New England Conservatory, was that I created the jazz department. At that time there were no bona fide jazz departments in any school in the United States. The most . . .

Schwartz: Did they have an idea that you would do that? Were they . . .

Schuller: No.

Schwartz: Did they ask you?

Schuller: No, no. I think – no, even someone like William Schumann, who was one of the ones who recommended me for the job at the Conservatory, he was kind of hip to what I was talking about in my lectures about jazz, but I don't think even he would have guessed that my first act – I was on the job one week, and I ordained – I had the power to do – I was the president. I was not answerable to anybody.

Schwartz: Can you put this in a time frame? When did you . . .?

Schuller: Yeah. This was in 1967.

Schwartz: You started in 1967.

Schuller: Yeah, and I just said, this is what we're going to do. It took me about a year to actually create the department, because I had to hire jazz players who were going to be on the faculty. I had to get students and all of that. But that's the first thing that I did, because I said to myself, here is 1967. Jazz has been around since – in some form or another since, let's say, 1900 or 1910, whatever date you want to give the beginnings of it. Here we are. This is one of the great and oldest conservatories in the United States, and there's no jazz. In fact, when I say there's no jazz, it was so bad that the saxophone was not allowed as a major, even classical saxophone, because the saxophone was that terrible instrument. You know. That's how deep the prejudices in the classical conservatories, in music schools, including universities, music schools, of which there were hundreds and hundreds – how deep that was. I said, this is so bad, so wrong. The music that was created on our soil – it's the only original music that America has produced. Everything

else is imported from Europe, even the popular musics of the 19th century, the Irish jigs and all the dance music. That all came from Scotland and Ireland and so on. So here's jazz, created by black people, and it is the music that is completely ignored in the educational system.

There were – a university in Texas and Indiana University had a – they – I shouldn't say they had. There was a jazz orchestra there. By the way, that was created by David Baker, who was a student at Indiana University. But Dean Bain, the head of the school, did not want that in the curriculum. So David Baker had to do his rehearsing in the sub-basement of the building. It was not allowed upstairs. That's how deep these antagonisms towards jazz were, or to put it more benignly, the idea, we don't need jazz in our – we've got this wonderful, great music.

There were other instances of people talking about jazz, ad hoc. The first lecture on jazz, by the way, by a non- – well, by anybody on jazz, happened in Frankfurt, Germany, where a Hungarian composer was on the faculty of the university there. He gave – in 1931 he gave a lecture about jazz. That was the first one ever to put that in an educational framework.

So I did that. Then later – it took me quite a while. I wanted to do Third Stream right away, but I just couldn't get it all together, and Ran Blake was so little known at that – when I first came to – I brought him to Boston, and eventually I was able to create that. That was about four or five years after I had been at the Conservatory. I was there ten years. I completely revolutionized the place and the curriculum. The thing about the jazz department, and the Third Stream department, later, is that it was the first full-fledged, six year undergraduate/graduate program, with degrees. We all know there was already Berklee at that time, in Boston, when I got there. That was a very good school, but mostly oriented – half of it, to real jazz, and the other was more commercial music or film music or television. They still do a lot of that, and very well. But they had never had the idea of getting a degree for all of this, and they didn't have it as an undergraduate/graduate process. So I did this with one wave of the hand, and I brought in all these – my first big teacher and head of the department was Jaki Byard, who was a multi-performer, played five different instruments brilliantly. I brought in all my – I brought in Dizzy. I brought of course John Lewis. I brought J. J. Johnson. All these people in, sometimes as guest teachers for a week. They were all still working on the road. So I couldn't always have them in a permanent position. But Jaki Byard was able to do that. That is again, in a way, a Third Stream idea, to have right in the midst of a famous and old conservatory, the coming together, in the school, of jazz and classical music. It could not be avoided.

Schwartz: Was it had to get students? Was it had to get faculty?

Schuller: Not at all, because I had – I didn't have any money, by the way. I have to interpolate here, that when I was hired, the Conservatory, which had been the best and

most famous and biggest conservatory in the United States during the time of World War I, let's say, the teens of the century. Juilliard had not yet been created. Eastman School had not been created. New England Conservatory and Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio were the two major schools. By the way, they both accepted black students. They're the only ones. In fact, we know that Johnny Hodges and Harry Carney did somehow have some training at the New England Conservatory when they were very young. Anyway, these two great conservatories – for the first 30 years of that century, the twentieth century, the Conservatory was regarded as the major school. Then Juilliard and Eastman began to be serious competitors with that, and Curtis School, which was founded in the 1920s in Philadelphia. But the Conservatory had fallen on very hard times starting in the '50s. By the time I got there, the Conservatory was financially bankrupt and educationally bankrupt, because that school, to this day, in its building near Symphony Hall, can only take on 700 – something like 715 students.

Schwartz: Limited by the physical . . .

Schuller: Yeah. That's right. It was down to 215. People had – people were not coming to the Conservatory. Couldn't get any students. It's reputation was just about finished. Financially – I found out later that there were only something like $200,000 left in the till, or some terrible small amount. You couldn't run a conservatory for more than three weeks that way. I was so innocent. I'm a high-school dropout. First of all, I didn't even know the difference between a graduate degree and undergraduate degree. These were just all remote terms to me. I didn't know anything. I had no education. I have no diplomas. I have no degrees. I have no certificates. I have nothing from any school that I went to. So here I am suddenly the president of this major school. Then I found out they got no money. The school is totally finished. The sheriff is about to put the padlock on the door. I said, oh my Lord, what have I gotten into? No-one, the chairmen of the board, or Erich Leinsdorf, who recommended me for the Conservatory and William Schumann and a whole bunch of other people, say, "Gunther, yeah. He'll take care of this school" – they didn't tell me anything, said, "Look, Gunther, this school is virtually bankrupt. You've got a hell of a job before you." No-one said anything. I was so naive. So what I did, in answer to your question about how I got faculty – not only that, but classical faculty. There was a lot of dead wood on the faculty when I got there. People just had hung on. By the way, everyone was woefully underpaid. The standard salary at the Conservatory when I got there – of course, this is now 40 years ago – was $4,000, when it should have been at least $12,000, or something like that.

So I come in there. I have no money in the Conservatory, and I have no experience in dealing with money, raising money, and stuff like that. I never thought about money.

Schwartz: You thought about starting a jazz department.

Schuller: Yeah, and doing other great things in classical music and so on, which I did later, creating the ragtime phenomenon, revival. Anyway, what I did, I just traded in on my reputation, because by that time I was so famous and so successful, and I had so much admiration from a wide range of music, including jazz musicians, of course, that I could bring people to the Conservatory, even though I couldn't really give them the money they deserved. People who left other – for example, the great pianist Russell Sherman. He was teaching at a college in California. He didn't like that place. He came, even though I could offer him hardly anything that he deserved. He was already one of the major great classical pianists. I brought all these people, and they just came because they felt – I was told this many, many times – because they felt that, boy, working with Gunther. This will be very exciting and wonderful, and musically at a very high level. By that time I was well established as a conductor, as a conductor, and all. So within the next two or three, four years, with a lot of – with work from two wonderful persons on the board, David Scudder and Jim – how can I forget his name? – we saved the Conservatory. It was about finished.

How we saved the Conservatory: within two years – we applied to the Ford Foundation for help – within two years, they inspected us from stem to stern to see whether we were savable, viable, and they gave us a two-and-a-half million dollar grant, which we had to match. That saved the school. The reason they did that, because out of respect for me, that they knew what I was going to do, or was in the process of doing, but they also saw right away that I took that curriculum and just turned it totally upside down and opened it wide open into all kinds of things. By the time, let's say, my being there three years, I had created a Duke Ellington orchestra, a Paul Whiteman orchestra. I had created just a regular big band – jazz band that played all the big-band music. I created the Ragtime Ensemble. I had created a country fiddle band that played nothing but what used to be called hillbilly music. I did all – and I brought in – my whole philosophy about this was – and I have no idea how I came on this – but I was so – the one thing I hadn't done was work in education. I had done everything else in music. That's all those seven careers that I'm – the center of my philosophy of education was that the creation of music had to be the centerpiece of the whole educational plan, because – a very simplistic idea – if you don't write music and create music, musicians ain't got nothing to play. So it had to be the creative thing, not the performance. Performance is terribly important and wonderful, but there were too many schools in the United States, particularly Juilliard and Curtis, where all the emphasis was on performing and producing virtuoso performers, rather than working on composition. So I brought in – within those first three or four years, I had a faculty of 17 composers, including George Russell, a major composer in jazz. That put the creation of music absolutely into the center of the whole working of the Conservatory. Everybody was affected by that. Performers who probably otherwise would have just learned their ten famous violin concertos and go out in the world and play on the classical music circuit the same ten old pieces for 50 years, they became aware of modern music and the whole range of music, and I had in the school all these

remarkable composers, who were creating this stuff. That was a revolutionary idea. No school had such a big composition faculty.

So, all of that, the Ford Foundation said, wow, this is terrific. What happened, just anecdotally – I like to mention this – the board was totally ineffective when I got there. They obviously were, because they had let the school practically die. The function of a board – it has two basic functions in the American concept of a board, whether it's of a symphony orchestra or a corporation or whatever it is. Its main function is to see to the financial health and well being of the organization. The other thing is that they have the right – the privilege – to fire and hire the top people, the presidents or whatever their names are. Then those people do the rest of the hiring of the faculty and so on. But this board had become completely ineffective. A lot on the board thought it was sinful to give money, to actually give money to the Conservatory, this sort of Puritan ethic that all kinds of things are forbidden, and we take the money with us up to where we're going in Heaven. It was ridiculous. It sounds pathetic, as I said this, but this was true. People at board meetings got up, "I will not – I can't give any money. This is my money." Well, then, get off the board. There were no Jews and no blacks on the board. I took care of that rather quickly. The Jewish community in Boston, boy, did they resent the Conservatory, because they had been ignored by the Conservatory for at least 20 years. Very deep, anti-Semitic prejudices. Anyway – Jim Terry is the lawyer on the board. He and David Scudder. They helped me with this. Anyway, we get this grant. McLowery – Neil McLowery, who was in charge of this at the Ford Foundation, he said, "Come down to New York. I want to have lunch with you. I want to talk with you, now that you know we're going to help you with this grant." So I went down there. We had a wonderful lunch. He had been an English teacher. He was in charge of all the cultural work of the Ford Foundation. He saved the American Ballet Company. He helped symphony orchestras. He helped museums. The Ford Foundation did immense amounts – millions and millions of dollars, when they were a very successful automobile company. Not any more.

He says to me, "Listen, Gunther." He says, "I want you to know this. We wouldn't have done any of this if it wasn't for you. We had already seen what you had done in your life up to now, and now the first two years, what you have done there is just remarkable and revolutionary. It's so exciting and great, and everybody's beginning to talk about the New England Conservatory again. So we have this faith in you." He leaned towards me, and he looked at me. He says, "Now listen. What are you going to do with that dead-ass board of yours?" Boy, did I know what he meant. That was the basic problem that had led the school almost to die.

Schwartz: Did it surprise you to think that they knew who you were, they were monitoring you, they knew your history?

Schuller: Oh yeah. I just said before – I don't want to say it, because it sounds arrogant. I was so famous and I was so successful in so many areas of music that I was one of the most famous and most performed composers, and I was a major conductor, conducting hundreds of orchestras all over the world. I'm now a little bit forgotten, to some extent, because the young people come up, very talented people, and they take the place of the elder citizens. I say sort of forgotten. I'm not saying – but no, in those days – but someone's reputation can be very deceptive. Just because you're famous doesn't mean necessarily that you're doing all the best things or that you have the ability to, for example, save a conservatory. How they chose me, given the fact that I'm a high-school dropout and knew nothing about education except what I was doing at the Manhattan School of Music. I was teaching when I lived in New York. I taught at that school for 20 years. I taught composition, chamber music, and horn.

Then, later, just to give you another inkling of how famous I was and how interesting I was considered to be, Yale University hired me. Here again, I shouldn't have been able to teach at Yale University. They don't have someone who's never finished his education. There I taught for three years. I succeeded Paul Hindemith, who was one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century, as a teacher there. Then I left Yale University to take the job at the New England Conservatory. So yeah, they had – like I say, they not only knew about me or looked me over very carefully, but, as I say, they investigated the Conservatory, its status and where it was and all of its problems, because they don't give away money to something that – what do you call it? – a sinking hole or something. So yeah, they did an incredibly thorough job. They came up there during those first two years before they give the grant. They interviewed everybody, me included, and the board. They came and analyzed our curriculum, and all this sort thing, like I say, from stem to stern. They weren't going to give any money to anything that might still fail.

One time I gave a concert at the Conservatory. I invited Josiah Lilly, who was the head of the Lilly Pharmaceutical Company and Foundation. At the end of the concert he embraced me. He said, "Gunther, tomorrow you're going to get a $500,000 donation." That's the power of music, and the power of ragtime music, the happiest music ever written.

[recording interrupted]

Schuller: Where were we before we broke?

Schwartz: We did – I had asked to talk about getting to the Conservatory, forming the jazz department and the Third Stream department. So I think we've . . .

Schuller: Yeah, I think we've pretty much covered that.

Schwartz: I want to take a left turn. We've talked about all of the hats that you've worn throughout your life. I want to talk about the hat that you wear as a family man, as a husband, and as a father, because you have two sons who have followed in your footsteps, and I know your relationship with your wife was a longstanding one. If you want to get a little personal, but certainly how George and Ed have been carrying on, and your feelings about them.

Schuller: As for my wife, we met in Cincinnati when I was in the orchestra and therefore teaching at the conservatory there. I taught horn. She was – we were both 17. She was a student and a double major, piano and voice. I was on the faculty. We got together, and we were together 50 years. We first lived in New York, until I came to the Conservatory. I always said to Margie, if we ever leave New York, there's only two places we can possible go. One is Boston, because of its cultural life and its history, and as an academic center of the world, and/or San Francisco. It ended up the call came to go to Boston.

My two kids, Edwin, who's a very great jazz bass player and composer, and George, who's a drummer – we often conjectured, Margie and I, about, are they going to become musicians?, because, as I mentioned before, prior – my father and grandfather and all the people before were all musicians. So I thought, probably they'll become musicians.

In the case of Edwin, no interest at all. When he was growing up, this was the beginnings of space travel, Sputnik, and John Kennedy saying – declaring the exploration of the cosmos area theory. He began to draw the most incredibly detailed spaceship, practically every screw or whatever they use to hold pieces – every detail was there. I was amazed at what he knew. Of course this was the time of *Star Wars* on television. All of this was going on. He wasn't at all interested in music. However, when he was four years old – I always remember that, and therefore I was a little surprised that he wasn't going to go into music – when he was four years old, I heard him once sing – he was playing with one of his toys – he sang a whole tone scale. The whole tone scale is a very unusual scale. It's not the usual tonal, diatonic scale [Schuller sings a major scale]. The whole tone scale goes in whole tones [Schuller sings a whole tone scale]. Debussy used it a lot. It's sort of an exotic scale. I know that Edwin had not heard a lot of whole tone scales. Yes, okay, the radio is always on. I've always got music on – GBH, particularly. But whole tone scales are relatively rare, and there's no culture – no musical culture around the world – that deals only in whole tone scales. It's really a strange little phenomenon, and here he's singing this perfectly in tune whole tone scale. I said, what the heck is that with him?

It didn't seem to lead to anything. Finally – as I mentioned to you, I started music very late. I was 11. That's very late to get into music seriously. With Edwin, it was even later. He was 14 before he became interested in music. That happened right down here – down there is Newton South School, a famous school. Edwin went there. He just went out the back of my house, went down the hill, went through the fence, and went to school there.

He was, as I say, not involved with music. He didn't like school, and he cut a lot of classes. I didn't know that. I just found out later. I was very upset.

One day, he was – there was a music class led by a cellist here in Boston, a teacher who taught almost all the subjects and had a little orchestra also. All those schools in those days had orchestras. Most of them have disappeared nowadays. Edwin was standing out in the corridor, listening to the music in the room. As I say, he didn't know anything about music. He'd heard a lot of music in my house. He couldn't have escaped it. The class ended, and this teacher comes out and sees him standing there. He says, "Hi there. What are you doing?" "I'm just listening to the music." They got in a conversation. The teacher said, "Do you like music?" "I don't know. I don't think so." He was listening – by the way, he was listening to rock music a lot, but not jazz, not on his own.

The teacher saw him again the next day, and he said, "Do you want to play some instrument?" "That would be kind of fun." He said, "I need a bass. We don't have a very good bass. We have only one bass, and he's not very good." This teacher was cello. Actually became – the cello and bass are very close – so he became his teacher. I have to tell this quickly, because it happened so quickly. Edwin became a very good bass player in about half a year. Similarly, by two years – he started at age 14. By 16 he was a full professional. It's like a return of what happened to me, because I also developed that fast. How this all happened, it's all kind of mysterious.

He immediately went away from all of the classical music and started to play jazz. I remember, up on the fourth floor, which is where he lived, and we were down here – I heard him practicing while we were having dinner. I said, "Margie, this guy is an amazing talent. God, how did all that happen, and so quickly?" He started working with all kinds of musicians here: Dave Stewart. I can't remember all of them. The next thing we know, he's got this full-fledged career. He's starting to travel and play.

Sort of the same thing happened, except a little more slowly. George wanted to play a woodwind instrument eventually. He studied with Bill Z[?], who was one of the great players in the [Boston] Pops Orchestra for years and years with Arthur Fiedler, and who played jazz and classical music, by the way. He [George] wanted – he played the clarinet, and he got pretty good at it, but some – at one point he discovered the drums, and that took care of that. He studied with Frank Epstein, classical drumming, and then worked on his own to become a jazz player.

I think what happened – it's sort of the same thing as in my life, that even though I wasn't consciously, actively interested in music, or thinking about becoming a musician, I had absorbed all that music in my father's – parents' home, both jazz and classical. Same thing with my kids. They could not escape music. Music goes on here all the time. Also there was a lot of live music here. I had rehearsals here. I had musicians come here and coach them. All kinds of stuff going on. So it just is the same thing, that somehow they

absorbed all this, and at some point it just came out almost full-fledged and not in any sort of stumbling, groping way, or "I hate to practice" or all that stuff, which almost always happens. These people – I didn't have to tell them to practice. They – Edwin practiced 7, 8, 9 hours every day.

Schwartz: If you had told him to practice, he probably wouldn't have done it.

Schuller: Yeah, sure. And they started composing, because they went to the piano and they started writing music. Inexplicable in a way, except – it just happened.

Schwartz: Where are we? We want to – I need you to tell me about the School of Jazz in Lenox, how that came about, how you got out to a hundred-and-some-odd miles away from here, and what led to . . .

Schuller: Tanglewood. There was both Tanglewood and Lenox.

Schwartz: That was one of – that was a short period of time. That was the late '50s into . . .

Schuller: The actual Lenox School of Jazz lasted only 3 years. It just was too far ahead of its time.

Schwartz: Tell me how that started.

Schuller: When I came to Boston, I not only came to the New England Conservatory, but Eric Leinsdorf, who became the conductor of the Boston Symphony, and who admired my work and recorded one of my most famous pieces with the Boston Symphony – he – when Aaron Copland retired from Tanglewood after 25 years of being there – he and Erich Leinsdorf talked about who would be his successor. They both thought I should be. So Erich Leinsdorf, who was the music director and the boss of the Boston Symphony and of course of Tanglewood – by that time, the most famous music festival in the world, practically, except Salzburg, maybe – he hired me to become, in effect, the artistic director of the school of Tanglewood. That's in Lenox, Massachusetts. There are the classical symphony concerts there, and then there was the school that Aaron Copland and Serge Koussevitzky created. It's the most famous summer school – music school – entirely classical.

I went there. So I'm now every summer out in Tanglewood. I began to hear about things that were going on at Music Inn, which was owned by the Barbers – not Bill Barber. Stephanie Barber was his wife. She was a singer. She sang cabaret songs and popular songs, not professionally so much. They loved music, and they started to bring in musicians to play – this was as early as, let's say, the early '50s. Wait a minute. Am I

wrong about this? Let me think a minute. Yeah, early ’50s. Dave Brubeck came, the Modern Jazz quartet came, just for a single concert.

Schwartz: Then the Music Inn was not connected to Tanglewood. It was just . . .

Schuller: No, totally separate. It was only two miles away, but it was down at the bottom of the hill.

Then they got more ambitious. They started to have – create symposiums and evenings of discussion about folk music. They brought the great folk music specialist, Willis James, from the college down at Atlanta. They brought him up to talk about folk music. They brought in other people to talk about jazz and talk about other American musics, like country music and things like that. This just grew incrementally over the years. It grew bigger and bigger. Marshall Stearns, who had written the first really remarkable history of jazz – became a very successful book – he was a teacher, I think at NYU in New York, an English teacher, and he was the head of this whole development of this bringing together major musicians and academicians from all over to talk about all these great American musics. Jazz became very much the center, because Marshall Stearns had the greatest collection of jazz records at that time, most of which is now at Rutgers University.

They became especially enamoured of John Lewis, who was a kind of intellectual and who could really talk about music, and he was very wide-ranging in his musical interests. And the Modern Jazz Quartet of course too, who were – by 1955 they were at the height of their fame, and continued for another 30 years. John, who had always wanted to continue the educational process that he had experienced at Manhattan School of Music – he wanted now to do something himself about that and to create a school at – the Barbers and John Lewis – and John pulled me into this. I helped him with founding of that school, because he knew that I was already very experienced in all these arenas and that I could – and we were so close, anyway.

By 1958 we created the Lenox School of Jazz. Through John’s connections, mostly, immediately the faculty was formed. It was of course the members of the Modern Jazz Quartet. It was Dave Brubeck. It was Dizzy Gillespie. And then some of the younger ones. It was Jimmy Giuffre. It was Lee Konitz. You name it. We had access to – some of them could stay for the whole three weeks. Some of them could only come for a concert and stay for a few talks or classes in the next day. It was just – the best of the jazz world became the faculty.

I was hired to do the history courses and composition and arranging, as was George Russell, also, arranging. Who else? We had quite a few. Jim Hall was quite a composer as well as a great guitarist. And Martin Williams. Martin Williams became a very important part of it, because he was also so wide-ranging in all of his knowledge of jazz and the

history of jazz. He was not like some people who knew the history, but they weren't interested in the future of jazz or in what was happening in modern jazz. Martin Williams was one of the first to talk and write about how great Ornette Coleman was, to discover Ornette Coleman, which a lot of people – even some very fine great jazz musicians of that period – they couldn't stand what Ornette Coleman was doing. They didn't understand. They thought he was a fake. "He plays out of tune. He doesn't know what he's doing. It's just nonsense and noise."

The Lenox School of Jazz in fact brought Ornette Coleman from the West Coast, where he was working, practically starving, because no-one out there understood what he was doing. He told me, part of his job in playing at some hole-in-the-wall club, a filthy place in Los Angeles – part of his – at the end of the day he had to clean out the latrine. That was part of his job.

Percy Heath heard about Ornette Coleman in California on one of his gigs. He started talking about this. So John Lewis and Nesi Ertegun brought him. The first thing we did, we put him in as a student. He was a student. That's the only way we could manage this financially, of his coming and staying on the East Coast.

This incredible faculty, dealing with the whole history of jazz and all the way into the future of jazz. I remember Ornette sitting in the history class. I'm playing some Jelly Roll piece like – Jelly Roll Morton piece like *Grandpa's Spells* or something. He had never heard that. He had played blues in Texas, where he came from. So he was very involved with the early music of jazz, which you can still hear in a lot of his playing. But he didn't know a lot of the big band or more formal jazz music, non-improvised and arranged. Jelly Roll Morton was one of the great composers and arrangers of the '20s. I'm playing this piece. His eyes got this big. He got all excited hearing this music. It was great to have someone like that, of his genius and talent, into this modern world, suddenly coming in contact with music of the past and immediately understanding and embracing how great it was. That was very exciting.

As I said before, it seems that the cost of the school – which the Barbers themselves, and Nesuhi, and from grants from Atlantic Records – they paid for the cost of this school. Well, it just got too much for the Barbers eventually. They couldn't keep it going. Again, I think in a way it was ahead of its time, because the school lasted from 1958 into 1961. This is, as I say, when there were no schools of jazz in the United States, because I created the first one later, in 1967, you see. It was, I guess – who knows? – it just – it couldn't last, and so it just became of history. Now, thank God, there's been this wonderful film that my son George was involved with in creating, and it is a history of the Lenox School of Jazz and its prehistory, with all these talks and symposiums and discussions about American music.

Schwartz: Do you think there's a legacy alive around the school?

Schuller: Not particularly.

Schwartz: It just was what it was then.

Schuller: I won't say it was totally ignored, but it was pretty much ignored, even in its own time. There was no support coming from anyone, or there was no excitement, "Oh finally, we got a jazz school." As I keep saying, jazz wasn't – there was an occasional lecture about jazz somewhere, but there was no real institution of education in jazz. Only years later the IAJE [International Association of Jazz Educators] came along. Then – now you have jazz in every school, even every high school, maybe. But this was all just – jazz was not to be educated. You weren't supposed to learn it in a school. There was a tremendous feeling on the part of many very great people and great musicians that jazz would be – somehow become an academic music. It would become stultified and stiff. It would be ruined if it ever got into education and was being taught formally in schools. This was not true, but this was the prejudice against that.

So here's a school of jazz in 1958. What the heck is that doing? We're not supposed to do that. But, as I say, by my introducing a jazz department at the Conservatory ten years later, then somehow everybody woke up and said, this is what we – now we have 8-million stage bands. That's what they're called. Every university, every college, every school. Wynton Marsalis has these incredible things that go on at Lincoln Center every year, having competitions of all these orchestras, the high school orchestras that play Ellington's music.

Schwartz: Is this a good thing? Do you think this . . . ?

Schuller: Yeah. When it's done well, it's a good thing. It's also often done badly. There are sometimes – look, when the education of jazz in the schools finally started, the biggest problem was to find teachers, because even the greatest players were not necessarily ones who could teach it, or the people in the universities felt that they wouldn't be able to teach it, or thought that – they were worried that they wouldn't be able to teach it. What they didn't realize is that sometimes the teaching could consist entirely of somebody just playing, showing what they were doing, and maybe talking about it even in a sort of simplistic way, but what they were doing – just by the example of what – they were learning from that. Then it came to be that somebody like, let's say, Benny Golson, who's a most articulate, intelligent, and brilliant person, with fantastic language abilities and all of this – he could articulate in intellectual and technical terms all about teaching jazz.

That finally – we discovered them. As I say, I brought people that I knew who could do this. But at first there was a shortage of teachers. Then some people were hired who, it turned out, were not very good, because they didn't even understand what jazz was. They

liked it, they had a little record collection, and they listened to Benny Goodman, maybe, or something, but suddenly they were trying to teach a year's course on jazz, the development of jazz, or what is jazz?

The best of all the early teachers was David Baker at IU [Indiana University]. That was one of the first schools that finally developed a full curriculum. By the way, against – as I mentioned before – Dean Bain wouldn't let him be a part of the school. He just had this band, and it played in some of the clubs in Bloomington. But I persuaded Dean Bain finally – it took me about six years – that he must allow jazz into his major school. It's one of the biggest music schools in the United States. He must let it in as a full-fledged part of the education. That finally happened, and David Baker became the head of that. The Lenox School was just a little too early for all this.

Schwartz: Jackie McLean once told me a funny story. When he was asked to go to the Hartt School of Music in Connecticut, and he had never taught before, he was talking to his friends. He said, "What do I do? What do I say?" They said, "Jackie, just go. You've been on the scene for years. You know more than these kids." So he said, "All right. I'll do it." He went to Hartford. and he started teaching. One day . . .

Schuller: The Hartt School.

Schwartz: The Hartt School of Music, in Hartford. He said a kid got up one day and said, "Mr. McLean, can you tell me about Jelly Roll Morton?" Jackie didn't know anything. He said, "We'll cover that tomorrow." Jackie went home and read everything he could find and came back the next day, like he was the expert – a learning process.

Schuller: The early – the first four or five years of all this education of jazz in the schools was pretty precarious. Even to this day, I know there are some of these – in some of the schools, there are teachers who are not doing this really well. They treat jazz merely as a kind of commercial vehicle to make some money, because the more simplistic, the more commercial or obvious your jazz playing is, the more successful it will be. Anything that really explorative or innovative somehow is never going to be as successful. So it turns a little bit towards that side of becoming something with which you can become financially successful, rather than the creation of an art.

Schwartz: I wanted to go back on a couple things. I've heard great stories about Ornette at Lenox, playing every saxophonist's style on his horn.

Schuller: I was witness to one of those. Of course I have to say that 95% of the students at the Conservatory thought that Ornette was a disaster. He was crazy. You don't – that's not jazz. So he was pretty isolated. He's such a philosophical person, he's such a deep, intelligent man, that he paid no attention to this. He also was sneered at because he couldn't read. He still really can't read music, but he has such incredible ears. He picks

up things. Twice later, three times later, he's got it memorized, and he can play. So that's why we could put him into a bigger band, where there was a chart to be read. He was just amazing, how quickly he learned, even though he could not read. All these other musicians were quick readers. They go, "This guy, he can't even read music." So he was very isolated.

On the afternoon, when there were no classes, we had jam sessions. They went on from 1 o'clock until 6 o'clock, until dinnertime. Different groups came up. One time – I just happened to be there – Ornette Coleman was sitting in the audience part, listening. I know that he felt, "These guys are never going to invite me to jam with them, and I don't even know that I want to." But he sat there for about two or three hours. Then suddenly he got up, he grabbed his horn, and he went up on stage. Immediately, the then-present rhythm section left. But then some other ones – he said, "Hey, come on. Let's play." Eventually he got a rhythm section that came up. It took about 10, 15 minutes. That became one of the most amazing things I ever heard. He started playing. I like to say – and I don't know that this is accurate – that he played something like 99 choruses of the blues. It went on for – it was a sort of medium tempo – it went on and on and on. He, in that process, just that one piece, he wore out three rhythm sections. The minute one of them – the bass player would leave. Somebody else would come up. Of course they were struggling to keep up with him. But, as you already just mentioned, in that process, having sat in the history classes and what he knew from his own experience as a young player in the whole Texas blues style, he reproduced the whole history of the saxophone. He knew his Coleman Hawkins. He knew his Lester Young. He could produce those different sounds and of course the right kind of more tonal playing than his kind of atonal playing. It was just the most amazing history lesson. Again, I am witness – Martin Williams – sat there with our mouths open. We couldn't believe what we were hearing. We didn't know that that much was already in him. Of course, he was then the talk of the place at dinner for the next week. Everyone talked about Ornette Coleman. "God, he's some kind of weird genius. I don't get his music, but boy." It went on from there. That's true. I'm glad you reminded me of that.

Schwartz: There's another not-so-famous alto player named Buster Smith, who influenced Charlie Parker back in the early days and had fallen into obscurity. You were involved in rediscovering him or finding him again?

Schuller: I will do that. I'm glad you mentioned that, because that's one of the least known things and that I'm very proud of that I did. But I just wanted to say, because there was another amazing moment at Lenox School sometime after this event. Maybe it was even the next year or something. No, it was – because Jimmy Giuffre, who was on the faculty and who had by that time created what was called cool jazz and his pianoless trio and this kind of folksy jazz music that he was doing – he also was totally baffled by Ornette Coleman. But he was intelligent enough to not just condemn it. He said, "I just don't understand it. Do you get this music, Gunther?" He just kept listening.

One day there was another one of these little improvised sessions in what is called the potting shed, a very small area where they raised plants, the Barbers. There was Ornette, with a bass and drums, playing and rehearsing something. Who was the trumpet player?

Schwartz: Don Cherry?

Schuller: Don Cherry was with him too. Jimmy Giuffre walked by this place. I didn't see that, but I was told that this is what happened. I heard about it. I immediately ran over there, and I heard what happened. He walked by there. He was going to go on back to his dormitory. He went part of the way. He came back. He said he listened for a while. Then, what happened, he was just overtaken by this impulse, namely, I've got to get in on this. He went in that little place, and he started playing with them, with Ornette. What happened, he went absolutely crazy. He played the most cacophonic, crazy music, because he really didn't understand what Ornette was doing. It was this insane screaming and ridiculous – totally non-tonal, atonal music. Eventually he ended up on the floor – it was like he was possessed – with his legs up in the air and his saxophone like this. He'd be playing [Schuller shouts], playing all this crazy music. He did this for about 10, 15 minutes, and suddenly he just sort of collapsed and staggered away. It was his conversion, which then became real. He never did play that much like Ornette. Why should he? But he certainly was converted to – that this was something of the future or of the present that he should not misunderstand and should not condemn. It was just an amazing experience. Again, all of us – by the time he was playing there, half the school was there, watching this thing. I remember Ornette wanted to pick him up off the floor. "Leave me alone."

Schwartz: Whenever I'm talking with people on the subject of – Miles Davis might come up, and people will say how connected he was to so many different eras of the music. I always remind them of Jimmy Giuffre, who started with the big bands, who invented West Coast, who got into the avant garde through Ornette, and who's this . . .

Schuller: And also, as you know, he wrote a bunch of Third Stream pieces, many of which I recorded. Through the good services of Columbia Records those things got played.

Schwartz: Is that *Pharoah*?

Schuller: Yeah. *Pharoah* was the first piece, all just for brass instruments, an amazing piece.

So now, to come back . . .

Schwartz: We want to go back to Buster, and tell me how . . .

Schuller: I had heard, through my programs of "The Scope of Jazz," on WBAI . . .

Schwartz: Will you set this up?

Schuller: That's what I'm doing.

Schwartz: I'm sorry.

Schuller: I think it was Martin Williams or Nat Hentoff who told me about Buster Smith, and he said, "You should listen to *Cherry Red*." There's about four recordings which Buster Smith made in Kansas City back around 19- – whenever it was. '38, '40, something like that. He said, "You'll hear that he was the major influence in terms of the tone and the style and some of the more adventurous intervallically, harmonically improvising that he was doing. You'll hear the influence on Charlie Parker." This was then later historically documented, that in fact Charlie Parker hung out with him, and that Buster Smith was the only one in Kansas City who didn't think that Charlie Parker was crazy. Because the thing that I just described about Ornette Coleman being completely rejected, misunderstood, happened in Kansas City. They would never let him into their jam sessions. So Buster Smith was his only friend.

I knew about this. When I heard the recordings – I immediately got them, and then I played them on the show and began to talk a lot about the greatness of Buster Smith in my talks, lecture, teaching, and so on. I just fell in love with this man's playing, because it is one of the most beautiful saxophone sounds, and it is almost as beautiful as Charlie Parker's sound. To me – sound, the sound of the playing, the beauty of the sound, and the originality of the sound, is a very important part for me of how important or great a musician is, because it is one of the many tools that we have in creating music, and that is the concept of the sound. Every one of those great saxophone players of the '30s, although they all were influenced by Coleman Hawkins, they all developed their own sound. That's such a great idea, and that that could be done with the same instrument, but with somebody's ears hearing – Lester Young is so different from Coleman Hawkins.

I admired this. I knew that Buster Smith was living in Dallas, but he was completely forgotten. I found out that he actually had some gigs at some of the hotels, including white hotels, in Dallas, downtown Dallas, and that in one of these – it was the – I can't think of the name. The biggest hotel in Dallas, where I stayed often. One time, during my stay in Dallas with the Metropolitan Opera, by God, Buster Smith was playing in the ballroom for dancing in the evening. I heard about it, and I went down there. I heard some wonderful music. It was a nine-piece band, ten-piece, not the real big band. They're all black musicians. I heard such beautiful playing. I was transfixed. I just stood there, like I had stood with the Ellington orchestra, and listened.

I introduced myself to him that night and then didn't see him again, but came back. Every time I came back to Dallas, I looked for him. Most of those times he was not playing, or he was about to play in some god-forsaken place on the outskirts of Dallas or in the black section of Dallas.

I finally said, I've got to do something about preserving, or bringing this man back, because by that time, there had been a lot of revival of earlier jazz. The whole jazz revival movement in the 1940s. Constantly older musicians were – from the territory bands out in the West – were being rediscovered and recorded. Things like that were happening. This is, by then, during the LP era, when there were so many reissue programs.

I went to Nesuhi Ertegun. I knew he loved the older jazz as well as the more modern things. I knew he would be very sympathetic to an idea of recording Buster Smith and his orchestra for Atlantic Records.

It took me two years to organize this. It took me almost two months for two things to happen: for me to find Buster Smith – I think this was in 1959 or '58 – and then, once I found him, for Buster Smith to round up and find the musicians with whom we were going to make this recording – all blues, by the way, because – you'll never guess why – because no black jazz musician except Buster had a telephone. They couldn't afford a telephone. They were dirt poor and never had – rarely had any jobs or playing. They were just forgotten. They worked in many other ways, just to stay alive.

What Buster had to do, by this time, when I asked him to get his band together, he had to literally drive around – the whole metropolitan Dallas is a huge area. It's almost as big as Los Angeles. The poor guy had to drive in his broken-down car to all these – where he thought these people lived. Some of them had moved. He couldn't just call them up on the phone. "Hey, I got a gig for you." He spent over a month. He called me once. He said, "Gunther, I can't find my favorite baritone player. I can't do this without him." Poor guy went through all . . .

Thank God, eventually we got something together. By this time I wasn't in Dallas any more. I was in Los Angeles. The Metropolitan Opera had gone on. We had hoped to record while I was in Dallas for the four days, I think, we were always there. So I flew back. I got myself two days off from the Met, the opera. I had my colleague fill in for me. I went. We quickly arranged, and we found a wonderful studio out in the outskirts of – pretty modern, good equipment, good engineers. We recorded that day.

Unfortunately, what happened, just to make things even more difficult, only – of the – I think it was ten players – of the ten players, only two were there when we were to start the session. I forget when we had scheduled. Whatever time it was, only two were there, and one was Buster. I knew what was going to happen. These guys were going to be

terribly late. The time would pass, and who knows? We'll never be able to get the whole band together. That's exactly what happened. Finally – they all had reasons. Their car broke down. They had a flat tire. They had to go to some other errand. They had to do something with their wife. All these excuses. The last one finally arrived about 45 minutes before the session was supposed to end. So we recorded all this stuff in 45 minutes, bang, bang, bang, just single takes. It turned out, therefore, not to be as good as it – I couldn't do any re-takes. I even went into overtime, but I didn't want to do too much of that. So it's not as good as I hoped it would be or as I had heard when I heard him that first time in the hotel.

Also – he told me later – "Some of these guys I haven't worked with for three or four years. I couldn't get the ones I actually wanted." So it was a little bit of a flawed experiment. But I'm still glad that it happened, and at least you could hear, even then, the beauty of his tone and the beautiful playing, the improvisation. But it was pretty rough. I was – some of these players were really not very good. The rhythm section – the drummer was very uninteresting. I had hoped to find somebody – he'd get somebody. I don't remember the details, who were the few guys that he really wanted to have and who were the other five or six that he had to deal with. Anyway, I gave it a good shot.

Schwartz: I'll have to pull that LP out. I have it. I have it on my shelf.

Charlie Parker. Did you ever have any personal dealings with him?

Schuller: Like I said much earlier, I got to know almost instantaneously every great jazz musician and of course Charlie Parker, always through John Lewis. They were very close. Many times, of course, Charlie Parker wasn't around, or he was in a hospital in California. He had a terrible drug problem. But I did get to meet him many times. The last time was – and of course I went to hear him many times, and all of that, when he played at Birdland and so on. But the last time I saw him was at a big party that the – here I go with names again. The woman who supported him. The countess.

Schwartz: The baroness.

Schuller: Baroness, yeah. What was her name? Rosencrantz or something?

Schwartz: Baroness Panonica de Konigswater.

Schuller: Anyway, she gave this – that's right, you've got it – she gave this big party. I don't know what the occasion was. I remember – there were 50 musicians, all kinds of people, music lovers – I remember that all – she had a huge place, and all the rooms were dark. There were some little lights on, but it was mainly a darkness. There were pillows, big voluptuous pillows and mattresses all over the floor, because there weren't chairs for all these people. Suddenly I found myself lying on the floor. Charlie Parker comes over.

This place next to me was free, and he lay down with me. We started talking. He started telling me about how he started – when he came to New York, how he started going to the New York Philharmonic, and he listened to classical music, and how much he loved, particularly, Bartok's music, and Stravinsky. He says, "I've even heard some of this – I don't understand it – Schoenberg music." He said, "Gunther, I'd love to study with you. I'd love to take . . ." – he did this with Hal Overton. He did it with Stephan Volpe. He did it with everybody, because by this time – this was only maybe a half a year before his death – he knew – he said to me that night, "I've played the blues every which way they can be played, upside down, backwards, inverted, slow, fast, loud. I've done everything, and all those great tunes. But I know there's this marvelous world out there, all this great music that's been created over many centuries, and I have to get involved with this." It's sort of what John Lewis felt, but had done it just simply by going to the Manhattan School of Music and studying there. Parker could never do that with all of his traveling and all of his other problems. Anyway, he said – pleading, he said, "Please, teach me."

He knew that I was very popular amongst jazz musicians. I was teaching a lot of jazz musicians. They would come to my house. Who was Dave Brubeck's bass player?

Schwartz: Eugene Wright.

Schuller: Yeah, Eugene Wright. He came to my house for regular lessons once a week. Bill Evans came over for a lot of things. I'll have to tell about that a little bit. All kinds of people, because they trusted me that, since I was so involved with jazz myself, I wouldn't be teaching them nonsense or trying to get them away from jazz or something like that. They needed help in reading, in writing. Many of them wanted to compose, and they just didn't know how to do it. They didn't know any theory, either.

Bird knew about this, and so he turned to me, because some of the other people – he had never been able to get together with Hal Overton, who, by the way, Mingus worked with him a great deal in many ways, Mingus being one of the great composers, the greatest in jazz. So Bird – I said sure. I knew, with his erratic, crazy life that he led, that he probably would never show up. In fact, we never could get together. I remember getting hold of him once. I said, "You said a few months ago you wanted to come study with me, but you haven't been able to get together." "Yeah, I'm sorry, but I will." Then a few months later he died.

Schwartz: In her apartment.

Schuller: In her apartment. That's right. That place – I never smoked anything. I once – a couple of guys in the Met got me trying marijuana. I took three or four puffs of this. They told me, oh boy, you're going to see the most amazing colors, and your imagination's going to go wild. Nothing happened at all. I think I'm truly unaddictable in anything. I really am not. I don't think I can become an alcoholic or anything like that. In any case, I

tried it for a few days. We were traveling on trains in the Met, and we could do these kinds of things in our little roomettes. In that room at that time, that last evening with Charlie Parker, I almost got a contact high, because it was just smoke-filled, and it smelled very sweet. I don't like the smell of it. Anyway, that's just another footnote.

[recording interrupted]

Schwartz: Where were we? We talked about Bird.

Schuller: Let me just insert this little story. One of the more interesting and, for me, incredibly exciting things that I got involved with was to – I was asked to make a recording of popular songs – Broadway show tunes, the jazz repertory – by Risë Stevens, who was the mezzo-soprano superstar singer at the Metropolitan Opera. Her husband was involved in the music business as a manager, as an entrepreneur, and quite well to do. He decided, in the days – this was in the early '60s – in the days when a lot of the classical singers, particularly altos and sopranos, wanted to do this crossover thing into jazz. Eileen Farrell, the great singer, had done it. By the way, she's the only one who ever did it successfully. She could really sing jazz – not improvise it, not like Ella Fitzgerald or Sarah Vaughan, but it at least had some authenticity. All the others, I wouldn't give you a nickel for them.

Anyway, her husband hired me to write arrangements of, let's say, 12 of these great songs. He said, "You pick the songs for Risë to sing." I was so thrilled, but I was worried at the same time that – I had a hunch that she wouldn't be able to sing like a jazz singer. But they thought so. She thought that she was going to be another Eileen Farrell. This was all in 1963, during my summer at Tanglewood, my very first summer. I was busy taking over from Aaron Copland, learning the ropes of the place, and trying to – very, very busy. But in betwixt and between all of that stuff, I wrote these 12 arrangements. It was quite ambitious. Her husband didn't tell me, keep the cost down or don't make too big an orchestra. None of that. He said, "You go ahead and do it." So I made arrangements for three different types of orchestras: sometimes just a big band, the usual big band, a 16-piece big band; sometimes with strings; or sometimes strings primarily, but with, let's say, two french horns and one saxophone. So it's three different basic instrumentations.

Through all of my connections, I put together one of the greatest jazz orchestras that ever was. George and I are trying to reconstruct who all was in that band. Benny Golson was. Joe Newman was. Clark Terry was. Ben Webster played. I had written two things for him to play. Richard Davis played. I had classical players. I had Harvey Phillips playing tuba. I had my two best jazz horn colleagues, Jimmy Buffington and John Barrows, play horn whenever I used horns. I had Charlie Rousseau, who was a great clarinet player who is not as well known as Eddie Daniels, for example, for playing both classical and jazz, but he did that all his life. He played in the big bands in the 1940s, but then he became one of

the biggest freelance clarinetists in New York in classical music as well. So I had him. It's just an amazing orchestra. I think Barry Galbraith. Was he still alive then? Or maybe it was Jim Hall. I could pick the best.

We started recording. In the meantime, Risë came up to Tanglewood a couple of times, because I knew I had to coach her in this, and of course I had to give her the materials. This was all written out by me, because I knew I couldn't trust her to just improvise this, even though she might sort of know the songs. Of course, her singing had to fit in with my arrangement, when to sing, what to sing, how loud to sing, how soft to sing, and all that. I was coaching her. My heart began to sink, because I could see she could not get rid of that horrible vibrato that she had. Most jazz singers don't sing with a vibrato, or they sing only with what we call a terminal vibrato. They sing a note straight, and at the end they vibrate. They got that from Louis Armstrong. He started that.

Sarah Vaughan was a master at using no vibrato to the most extreme vibrato and everything in between, and every color of the rainbow in her singing. I once wrote an article – it's published in a book, and I stand by it – that she was the greatest singer ever in the history of the world, because she was – yes, including every great classical – Caruso – I don't care who you name – because, besides being an incredible voice – she sang baritone. She could sing alto. She could sing soprano. She could sing all kinds of falsettos. She could do anything with her voice in any respect. One can say that about some other very great singers, many of which I worked with at the Metropolitan Opera. But then finally, the ultimate difference is, that she was a creative composer, because she improvised everything. She never did any song the same way, and you never knew what she was going to do. I accompanied her a couple of times with a symphony orchestra at Wolftrap, where we were both hired. Man, it was scary for me, with a whole symphony orchestra sitting there, and she's doing every song differently than we had rehearsed it. She was the great[est] – I say that, because she was also the greatest composer of all the singers. Enrico Caruso did not compose, period. He just sang what Verdi wrote.

To get back to this, I just got very, very afraid that this was going to be a disaster. I kept working on her, and she sort of improved. I had her listen to Judy Garland, some of the songs that Judy Garland had done. She was a fabulous singer. She's not known necessarily as a great jazz singer, but she was one of the greatest singers, along with Frank Sinatra and people like that. Anyway, I began to have her listen to some of my favorite – Fran Warren with Claude Thornhill, Francis Wayne with Woody Herman, and of course Bessie Smith, things like that, not that we were doing ancient blues like that. It was very slow going.

All right. We start the sessions. This is now November 1963. We did three sessions. The musicians, when we started and they heard her singing, they began to roll their eyes. "Oh, my God. What are we . . . ?" Here I had this greatest of all jazz orchestras that maybe has ever been put together, and this woman is just making nonsense of this stuff. I'm so

proud – I have to say this with whatever modesty I can muster – the players in that band were so excited about what I had written. A lot of it was challenging. A lot of it went out a little bit. But I couldn't go out too far, because of Risë. I wasn't intending to do Ornette Coleman or something like that. But they were so admiring of what I had done, and I felt so great.

Then came a certain day. We had a recording session which started at 10 o'clock. It was the biggest orchestra of all those different instrumentations that I had put together, with the strings and jazz players and woodwind players – everything. We started recording. Suddenly, like you just said about – who was it who was waving his hand that Clifford Brown had died? – someone came into the studio. "Listen folks. John Kennedy was just assassinated in Dallas." That was November 22nd. That happens to be my birthday. Harvey Phillips, my great friend and great jazz tuba player – he and his wife had baked a huge birthday cake, because I had 30, 40 players there. They made this immense cake, and it was sitting there on a table. Of course we were all going to devour this cake, once we got through.

We all fell apart. We started crying, including Risë. We just couldn't continue. So the session was aborted, and we all went home. Nobody ate any cake. We just couldn't. Harvey and I and his wife Carol, we schlepped that cake back to their house, and Harvey and I and Carol devoured that cake in various visits during the next two weeks. It took us two weeks to eat that cake. Anyway, we all know what a horror – it's the one day that all of us remember and never forget. That's what happened.

Then, in the next week – I forget what her husband's name was. Vincent, maybe? – they listened to some of the takes. The minute we finished a session, they went home and listened to it, to find out whether they liked it and approved it. The orchestra was playing fantastically, but they, after that day – and I don't know whether the death of Kennedy and the horror of all of that also influenced it – but within about a week they called me and said, "Tell the truth." Risë said, "I think I'm really not doing very well, and you've written such marvelous arrangements. I just can't do it." So it was finished. We made no more recordings. I have the tapes of this here in this house. What the orchestra is playing is incredible, but it is ruined by the voice, which of course is louder than the orchestra. That's the way one records these things. It's just ruined by her. It was not – 24 tracks hadn't yet been invented. So it was just plain stereo. It was perfectly balanced, but I can't get rid of her voice, because otherwise I would use those. I would – what do you call it? – overdub somebody else, another singer or some instrumentalist or something on top of the existing tapes.

The other thing that I've been wanting to do all my life, ever since then, is to record those things with somebody – with Joe Lovano, with Wynton Marsalis. I don't know. Whatever. Or a singer. I don't know that I can find singers nowadays. They're very few left who can sing in the swing/jazz style. This is, after all, over 40 years ago, and I wasn't

writing – I was writing harmonically modern, but not in what you would even call a bebop style. It was basically a sort of advanced swing jazz style. I don't know whether I could find any singers now who could do that. But I hope before I die I can get somebody – I can't finance this myself. It just costs – I don't know – $30-, $40,000 to put that together again. I'm trying to get Joe Lovano and Blue Note to maybe somehow take it over. But all the record companies are in trouble as far as jazz goes.

Anyway, that was both a great adventure, as long as it lasted, but also this terrible memory of that fateful day. I don't know whether Risë is still alive and if she'll ever hear this, but I have to say it. She knew it. She knew it. She later – when she became head of the Mannes School, she invited me to be on her board. So we've stayed friends and so on.

Schwartz: Your son George sent me an e-mail about some stuff. He also mentioned another ill-fated record date that I guess never really happened. That was with *The Sting.* You were asked to . . .

Schuller: Oh yes. Oh my God.

Schwartz: That led to this whole ragtime thing. I wonder if you could expound on that?

Schuller: Well, it's the other way around. *The Sting* came out of my revival of ragtime.

Schwartz: You tell the story.

Schuller: As I said before, I became very passionate about this great past music of American history, ragtime, which preceded jazz and then went into complete oblivion. Once jazz came in, ragtime died. I revived it at the New England Conservatory, by, as I mentioned already, putting ragtime right into the middle of a classical concert. I did four Joplin rags, including *Maple Leaf Rag,* which was the first big hit in ragtime music, in 1899. It was famous. It was the first big sheet-music seller in the history of music, and so on.

People at the conservatory – the students, the faculty – went wild. "My God, who's this guy Scott Joplin? We never heard of him. How'd you find this great music?" They also said, it isn't just wonderful music, but it's such happy music, such positive music, and indeed it is. There's not a sad – well, some of Scott Joplin's rags are a little bit melancholy at times, but nothing depressing, like I find a lot of contemporary music today to be.

With that, I said to myself, I've got to do something about this ragtime. It cannot remain to be just a totally forgotten music. By that time, only two things happened that contributed to the revival of ragtime, of which I consider myself one of the three parts of this revival. Namely, Joshua Rifkin had made a recording for Nonesuch of Scott Joplin

rags. That was the first time anybody had recorded any ragtime. He did it, and he, in my opinion, although it's very beautiful, he turned it too much into a really classical music. He did it all at very slow tempos, and he made it sound like Chopin or Liszt, and it certainly didn't swing. His idea was to treat it as a very serious classical of, let's say, the mid-nineteenth century. But it was beautifully played and beautifully recorded, and it became a big hit. Suddenly, people began to talk about Scott Joplin and this music. Ragtime, after all, was a dance music. The cakewalk and – what was the other? – some other dance. Those were the two dances for which ragtime was created. It wasn't just a concert music. It was dance music in the clubs and cabarets and so on. He took the dance feeling out of it quite completely.

The other one was Vera Lawrence, who is a great musicologist of American – the history of American music, not just the creative part of it, but performance history, all the history of New York and opera, bringing opera to America, and Boston, and all of the cultural musical history. She had published all the works of Scott Joplin except four pieces for which she couldn't get the permission to publish. Most of the works of Joplin, the copyright had run out with John Stark, and so she was free to publish these. She went to 17 publishers. All of them rejected the idea of publishing this music. What she did, she took the sheet music – the original sheet music, reproduced it, and published it in that way, with these beautiful covers that all the ragtime music had. She was rejected by 17 publishers, all the biggest publishers. She thought this could be a terrific hit and success in American publishing. Finally she got someone to do it, and that was the New York Public Library. So she published this thick volume of these beautiful rags, almost 60 rags of Scott Joplin. I bought that immediately.

Then I began to hear about the *Red Back Book* of rags, from her. She said, "These rags" – they're all piano. Ragtime was piano music, basically, but somewhere in the early – first decade of the twentieth century, in New York, they started to make instrumental arrangements of the rags. It was all done by very clever arrangers working in the Brill Building for the – this is called Tin Pan Alley. That whole building was nothing but publishing companies. They did all the popular music: [Leo] Feist and all the names of these Tin Pan Alley publishers.

She said to me, "As far as we all know" – Rudy Blesh had already said that all in his book – "the *Red Back Book* and all of those publications – there are none left on the face of this earth." There were probably only a hundred or two hundred copies published in 1905 or '07, whenever it was, but they're all gone, and when I asked about wanting to play this music from those *Red Back* publications, she said, you can't. They don't exist. I said, then I'll arrange from the book that she had published. I already had some sheet music of rags. I'll just arrange them.

Suddenly, she called me back, because when I was talking about doing *Tremonisha* at the New England Conservatory, she had told me, as I mentioned before, that you can't do

this piece, because it is under copyright protection and it is not allowed to be performed in the one orchestration that has been done, by T. J. Anderson, a black composer who teaches here at Tufts University. There had been a performance of his arrangement of *Tremonisha* in Atlanta, and it was considered a complete failure. The Scott Joplin Trust, of which Vera Lawrence was a member, and family members were of the Trust, and some lawyers – they got an injunction from a court that this version of *Tremonisha* should never be played. So she said, "Right now, you can't do anything about – because there can't be any performance of *Tremonisha* in an instrumentation." That later was lifted, and I was then asked to make the orchestration of *Tremonisha*, which I then performed and premiered at the Houston Opera House, and then on Broadway, and the whole history of my doing *Tremonisha.*

In the meantime, on one of these days when we were talking about how sad it is that I can't do *Tremonisha,* she said, "Gunther, I've got something for you." I was in my president's office in the New England Conservatory. She was in New York. She said, "You know what? I've found one copy of the *Red Back Book,* and guess who had it?" She used the word son-of-a-bitch – had it all this time, and he didn't let on that he had what may be the one remaining copy, and that was William Russell, the great ragtime performer. He had a ragtime group down there, and he performed these rags, but nobody knew about it. He had a copy of the *Red Back Book.* She had visited him, and finally, even though he refused over and over again, she got him to photostat or xerox the whole *Red Back Book* parts. There were no scores. Never had been made. She brought them with her to New York, and she said, "I'm going to make you a copy." That's how I started my idea of forming a ragtime ensemble at the New England Conservatory with students.

I did that. In 1972 we gave our first concert, and I performed these rags. I edited them, because it turned out these arrangements, while they were very clever in many, many ways, and very beautiful, they didn't have much dynamic variation. They were made – in the early days, they were played in vaudeville. These instrumentated rags were played mostly in vaudeville houses. Because in those vaudeville houses you might have only three players, or you might have 12 players, and you would never know whether you had a melody – you would have to have a melody instrument and a rhythm instrument and a bass instrument, but the pits in these theaters were all such varied sizes that you never knew what kind of a group you could have to play the rags. This is all before jazz. Therefore these instrumentations were made what I call failsafe. No matter who showed up, if you had a piano and a drums and a violin – which it often was, because vaudeville always had violin players and the burlesque houses always had violin players – then you could play the rag. But if you had a bigger pit and you could put together a big orchestra of 12 players, well, then you could do that. The standard instrumentation was a string quartet, a flute, a clarinet – flute and piccolo – a clarinet, a cornet, a trombone and sometimes a tuba or a bass, and a piano and drums. That gets up to 11 or 12 players.

I, as I say, began to perform this thing, and I started the Ragtime Ensemble. That concert that I've been talking about, Martin Williams, my great friend and ragtime expert, aficionado – I sent him the tape of that concert. He was so thrilled by the performance of these rags. He said, "Gunther, you've done something amazing. I am quite sure that's the way ragtime was played and has to be played," because I spoke earlier about the syncopation, how classical syncopation is. I knew somehow, because of the influence of ragtime onto jazz, in terms of swing and rhythmic feeling, that the syncopations would have to be played "da-da d'da-dat-dah," not "ta-tah ta-tah," and that therefore I had to change the bowings of the string instruments, because syncopations in classical music are played up-down, "dat, da-dah." If you do that, you'll never get "da-dat." So I knew – I knew about string playing and bowing from my father and all that – I knew that if you reversed that bowing, you went long on the string, we call it – down – and then you went up and lifted the bow, you would get "da-dat." That's the secret of ragtime and jazz syncopation. When you use strings, that's what you have to do.

I did all that. Martin Williams went crazy, and he talked about it. Finally he sent it to Angel Records. He said, "You guys – you've got to record this." The next thing I know, I get a call at the conservatory, inviting me and the whole ragtime group for Angel Records and record. That was the first Ragtime Ensemble music. It became a huge hit. It became the biggest hit in Angel Records, which was a subsidiary of Capitol, I think. Anyway, it was a big company all by itself, but it was owned by an even bigger record company. I can't remember now.

This became a humongous hit. We got a Grammy right away with that recording, just students, New England Conservatory, and I became even more famous, because this became now the rage of the whole country, the rediscovery of ragtime. I started being – we started to be asked to tour. We toured. We then toured all over the world: Russia, Japan, the United States, all over, for the next 25 years with my Ragtime Ensemble. They were all the students who, once they graduated, I retained them in the group. They all are still people who are still working as freelancers here in New York and in Boston. So we were able to continue, with some replacements, of course, eventually, when somebody couldn't do it any more.

The next thing that happened – about two years I get a call – by this time, as I mentioned to you, I had raised $500,000 one time, with one ragtime concert, from Josiah Lilly. It became so widespread. I was invited to Wolftrap and other major music festivals to play ragtime concerts. Suddenly I get a call. There's the voice – it's something like this: "Are you this guy Schuller?" He said, "Are you dis" – d-i-s – "dis guy Schuller?" I sort of stammered. I said yeah. He had one of those gruff, deep voices. He said, "Are you de guy who wrote that ragtime music?" I said, "Wait a minute. I didn't write it. Yeah." "Okay. Whether you wrote it or not, we want you to do da music for a new film" – "do da music." I now began to envision this guy, this big fat guy with his legs up on the desk, with a big fat cigar, the moguls in Hollywood. He said, "There's this film. Robert

Redford and Newman are the stars in it. It's finished, and we need some music for it," and said, "The director" – which turned out to be George Roy Hill – "he want me to call you to do da music." This was – oh, I wasn't at the Conservatory. I was in Tanglewood, in my office in Tanglewood. I was in the middle of the season. I had an eight-week job there, eight-week contract. I said – when I explained to him that I had arranged the music, I said, yeah, I'd love to do this. I hadn't done much work in Hollywood. I said, "When do you want to do this?" "Right away. You've got to come out here. You got to do the music." I said, "Wait a minute. I'm under contract here. I'm in the middle of my contemporary music festival. I'm doing a thousand things here. I just can't leave." I was in the midst of rehearsals for the – we had a one-week festival of only contemporary music, a festival within the festival, Tanglewood. "I can't leave." "You got to come out here." "I just can't. I can do this in September and October, or even in late August." He said, "Well . . ." and he hung up.

The next thing, I get a call from Lalo Schiffrin, who had written a lot of great film music, of course the *Mission Impossible* theme and so on, and he had played piano with Dizzy. Lalo and I were very, very good friends and all that. He was a huge success out in Hollywood. He called me, and he said, "Gunther, I hear that you can't come out and help us with the music." I said, "I talked to this crazy guy. He could hardly speak English. Besides, he said I have to come right away." He says, "Unfortunately, the film is in the can. It's ready to be produced. The only thing we don't have is the music. We've been sitting around, George Roy Hill, Elmer Bernstein, me," and who else did he mention? – advisories to George Roy Hill about the music. "We suddenly discovered" – this was when the ragtime record that I made was this humongous hit. He told me, "Here's what happened." He said, "George Roy Hill one day was driving home from the studio. He turned on the radio, and he heard your record. George Roy Hill told me," Lalo said, "'I nearly jumped through the ceiling of the car, because I said, my God, this is the music'." When he told Lalo – I think Pete Rugalo was also in on this. They said, "Oh yeah. That's terrific music. But you know, George, it doesn't fit into that time period of the film. Ragtime happened 15, 20, 30 years before the film *The Sting*, which occurs in the 1920s, the late 1920s." But eventually they all said, the hell with it. So, all right, it isn't absolutely that period, but this is great music. Then, Lalo called me back. He said, "There's all kinds of reasons why we have to get this film out immediately, or at least get it ready for our release date." So it turned out they gave the assignment to Marvin Hamlisch. Thereby hangs a tale.

He – because I had copyrighted my editions – I don't call them arrangements. I didn't arrange, rearrange the rags. They were too perfect. But I edited them. So there was a new copyright on these versions. Therefore Marvin Hamlisch, in order to use the music in the film, had to use my editions. All that he could do – he could slightly rearrange them, change the instrumentation a little bit. He could also do what he mostly did – he slowed up the music. He took the dance out of it. But the *Maple Leaf Rag* played slow is still a remarkable piece of music. He did a really remarkable job of fitting that music to the

story. That became – as you almost said or implied, *Sting* became the biggest hit of that decade of any film. It just became – and therefore ragtime music, which was the only music in the film, became a world-wide phenomenon. The next thing is, I'm getting calls from Poland and Russia to come over and do ragtime music there, because they knew that I had been doing this. Sometimes they called Marvin Hamlisch, but he didn't have a ragtime ensemble. He didn't do it. He went on to do Broadway things, as we know.

The end of this story is, Marvin Hamlisch is, I think – has an enormous ego. He's very arrogant and very self-serving. He's a talented guy. By the way, he was chosen because he was the rehearsal pianist during the making of the film for some of the musical or maybe dance numbers that are in the film. So they just picked him. Then he used my editions, my arrangements, but he – he began to be praised. My name was never mentioned in connection with the film. In fact it is not mentioned in the credits. Nobody knew that I was really the inspiration for this whole thing. All the credit went to Marvin Hamlisch. So, amongst many other things, he is now on the Johnny Carson Show. He's there because of the success of the music of *The Sting.* Marvin Hamlisch continually says, or implies, or somehow lets it be known, that this is music that he created, and in fact the *Maple Leaf Rag* of Scott Joplin came to called *The Sting,* by Marvin Hamlisch. He's preening himself on the Johnny Carson Show. Johnny, who didn't know about any of this, he goes along with him. This guy is bragging about this great music that he created. I'm – we listened to the Johnny Carson Show in those days – Margie and I are pretty – we were laughing or we were mad as hell.

Finally, my very great friend – I haven't talked about him at all – Doc Severinson. He knew what had happened. We were very close friends. He knew about what I had done about ragtime. Also, we have a lot of mutual friends. Snooky Young was in his band for years in the show, and Harvey Phillips and Doc Severinson – I, by the way, played the first record date, jazz record date, that Doc Severinson did in New York, after he had come off the Charlie Barnet band. I should just mention, there was this new guy in the band. None of us knew him. He was sitting there in the trumpet section. The arranger had given him a solo, a 16-bar solo. I can only describe it this way: he started playing the first take. To the extent that we could turn our heads, about 15 heads went that way. Wow. Who is this guy? Because he played the most amazing solo. So I've known Doc that long. He finally played Milton Babbitt's *All Set,* which is this incredibly difficult atonal jazz piece that Milton wrote. He played the trumpet part on there better than anybody. It's almost unplayable. He played it.

Anyway, Doc Severinson knew what had happened. Lalo Schiffrin had talked to him about it. So the fifth time that Marvin Hamlisch was on the Carson show, Doc Severinson had called John before. He said, "Listen, John. I can't stand it any more. This guy Marvin Hamlisch comes in there, and he's talking about how he created that music. You don't – I don't know why you should know this, but he had really almost nothing to do with that. This was all created by Gunther Schuller." "Who's that?" John didn't know. He said,

"Let me tell you the real story," which he did now, this whole recounting of what had actually happened. This next time, John Carson – he was such a genius and so clever – he started off, "By the way" – I'm paraphrasing – he said, "We've talked about this music, *The Sting.* Tell me a little bit more. How did that get . . ." – he did it purposefully, sort of stumbling, almost hesitating, because he didn't want to come right out and say, "Hey, did you write the music? Because I understand you didn't." He wouldn't do that. Little by little – he said, "How did this music come to be?" Marvin Hamlisch, I could see it. He was nonplussed. He said, "I produced that music in the film." "I know you were on it, and you had the musicians play that music, but who wrote it?" He elongated this. It took about three minutes. Little by little, he wheedled this out of Marvin Hamlisch. Finally Marvin had to say, "Actually, the music is by Scott Joplin." He didn't mention my name at all. Johnny Carson did not go so far as to say, "I've got to tell the audience that the arrangements were first played by Gunther Schuller. You probably never heard of him." He never went that far. But he did finally get it straight out of Marvin Hamlisch that Scott Joplin had written the music. The part of this that I forgot to mention so far – with this kind of stealing the music and slightly rearranging it, he had gotten an Oscar. By rights, I should have gotten the Oscar. They called it – they have an Oscar for adaptation. I think they invented it that year.

So that's one of my – oh, about two years later I was staying at the great Savoy Hotel in London – the hotel founded by the Gilbert and Sullivan brothers, composers of operettas – fantastic hotel, one of the greatest hotels in the world. In that hotel they have one part of the building where you never have to go out of the room, because you have complete food and valet service by one person who is in charge of those eight rooms on that floor. I had stayed there many times. The guy who was always on that floor became almost my friend, welcomed me back every time and took care of me.

One day he came – "By the way, there's a very famous guest here. He's right across the hallway from your room. Would you like to meet him?" I said, "Who is it?" "It's Marvin Hamlisch." I said, "For God's sake, no. He's the last person I want to see," and I spent the whole rest of the week avoiding him, making sure that he wasn't in the elevator or in the hallway, because I just couldn't face him.

Schwartz: There's a thousand things, but one thing that we haven't really touched on, one of your hats, one of your ongoing, multiple, is the writing that you've done, particularly – well, we did mention *The Complete Conductor* but there's *The Swing Era.* There's *Early Jazz.* I understand there's a memoir in the works. So if you could tell us a little bit about some of that.

Schuller: I started – Martin Williams and Nat Hentoff started right away, after I started writing for the *Jazz Review* and other articles and was hired right and left to write about jazz – said, "You've got to write some books about jazz." There was a great editor at Oxford University Press, Steven Meyer – I mean, not Steven. Oh God [Sheldon Meyer].

Anyway, he's responsible – you must know this – for about 30 of the greatest books on jazz being published by Oxford University Press. He was a very knowledgeable – he loved jazz – very knowledgeable in jazz. He had – the editors at many of these publishers are given three major areas in which they specialize. They publish the books in that area. One of his was jazz. Another was naval history. I think the other was film, art film, great film, history of film. He produced all these books. He and the English head of Oxford – Oxford is basically a company headquartered in Cambridge – they came over and they hired me to write my first book for Oxford. That was on horn playing, horn technique. That was in 1962. So I wrote this little book. It still is considered one of the basic books about – anybody who wants to learn to play the horn.

Then a few years later the request came to write a history of jazz, to start. I said, "All right. This is a long history. This is a vast undertaking. It's going to take at least three books, because I knew that it would be each one – dealing first with the, let's say, first 20 years of jazz, then the next 20 and so on – these would be huge 800-, 700-page books, to do it the way I wanted to do it, which was, essentially, not to tell the story of jazz and the anecdotal history of jazz, who played where, who was a major alcoholic, and who slept with whom, and all this history of the nightclubs in which jazz grew up. We know that all the clubs in early jazz were all owned by gangsters. If it hadn't been for the gangsters in America, there might never have been the flourishing of jazz. This is a truth, an awful truth.

Anyway, I knew I wanted to write only about the music. That had never been done. The only book that had appeared by that time, just around the same time I was asked, was André Hodeir's first book on jazz. It was an analytical book about – analyzing the pieces, what was great about them, how they were great, and why. This is what I then did in my first book, *Early Jazz.* It's full of transcriptions – notations of the jazz, of what was played on the recordings, all from recordings – to show, not only in words, but actually in musical examples, the things that I was excited about and what were the great contributions. In that volume I dealt with Louis Armstrong and early Ellington. I only got up to 1932. I began with the prehistory of jazz as it came from Africa. I even created some music examples as to how dixieland jazz – as it's now called, or, let's say, New Orleans jazz – came to be, because it's really a development directly out of certain musical traditions from West Africa, both vocal traditions and instrumental traditions, and all of the ways syncopation was used, and even to some extent the instrumentation of what became a jazz orchestra. Saxophones, trumpets, and trombones – all of that has its prehistory in Africa. So I created some musical examples of how the very first, primitive attempts to play something like a collective, improvised jazz, might have looked like.

So it's the whole history up to 1932. In that, I said, we're going to do at least one more, possibly two more volumes. In the meantime, I was the busiest musician in New York – in America – with these seven careers. So it took quite a while for me to get around to the second volume. *Early Jazz* is only 300 pages, I think, but *Swing Era* became, I don't

know, 800, 900 pages. There I undertook the entire swing era and almost covered everything, again in an exhaustive, detailed way, in a musicological, musical analytical way, explaining and describing the greatness of this music, and purely music. I very rarely got into the personal history of these people. I always had to introduce them a little bit, and things like birthdays of Ellington and all that sort of thing. But basically, it was just about the music, because I felt that all the books that I had by that time on the history of jazz – "history" – were more about the personalities. They were also very limited in their understanding of the vastness of the whole jazz development, because what most of these books did – and they were very fine books up to a certain point – their writers took their three favorite pieces by Bob Crosby or by Louis Armstrong, wrote about those, and neglected everything else, sometimes very important or great other pieces that they never mentioned.

What I decided to do, being this sort of perfectionist – if there's such a word, inclusivist – who has to deal with every detail – I decided to listen to – anybody I was going to talk about, any band or any player – soloist – anybody I was going to write about, I was going to listen to every damn recording they did, from the earliest to whatever the most recent was. I did that. I did all of that – most of it – at GBH. My son George helped me to gather, to amplify my own record collection. I already had thousands of jazz records, but of course there were a lot of things I didn't have. I stole. I borrowed. I taped. I spent a lot of time at GBH, using that great jazz collection. Therefore I was able to listen to every Benny Goodman record that he ever made. He made thousands. I listened to every God-damn Thomas Dorsey band record. The first four years of Thomas Dorsey band record, there's not much to listen to, until Sy Oliver came in and completely changed the band from a polite dance band, which didn't even have a baritone saxophone, into this incredible jazz orchestra. I listened to everything of everybody. In that process I discovered pieces that no-one had ever written about. There's a fantastic piece by the Basie band, called *Volcano.* It is the only piece that Basie actually wrote, or wrote most of it. No-one knows it. You've probably never heard of it, except you might have read about it in my book. I was floored when I heard that piece. It is so different from anything else that you hear in the whole, long, Basie history. It's an incredible piece.

Same thing. I discovered the first quasi-atonal piece in jazz history. There are two of them. One was written by Red Norvo, a little chamber group with Benny Goodman playing bass clarinet, Red Norvo playing marimba, a bass player – I forget now. Maybe Walter Page or somebody like that? – and a guitar. It's just four instruments. It goes into atonality, which, again, is – my interest was always in the advancement of the harmonic language of jazz. The other incredible piece that I discovered that no-one had ever written about – I forget the name of it now, but it was by Jimmie Lunceford. That's the only piece that Jimmie Lunceford ever wrote. He was the leader of the band. He had a whole parcel of great arrangers. But he wrote this one piece. He was basically a woodwind player. He played about six different saxophones and flute and clarinet. He wrote this one

piece. There are absolutely non-tonal, inventive things that are not just crazy sounding. They are wonderful.

I discovered about 30 or 40 pieces in this systematic listening of everything, that I had never heard, never read about, didn't know existed, and was able to write about them. So that was the inclusiveness with which I did this. It drove me halfway crazy. It took me years to write that book, because I listened to 30,000 recordings in the process of doing this systematic work on it. I felt I had no choice but to do that, because with my – if I may say so – vast knowledge of all kinds of musics, including jazz, I felt that I had to do this, because, in a way, I am – I have been, up until now – I think maybe the only person who could do this from a musicological, analytical point of view, to really describe and explain how great this music is and why it is great.

In the process, by the way, I finally ended up – I was the first person to create some absolute definitions of swing, because, as you know, swing has always been considered this thing that nobody knows how to explain. It just is. What was it Louis Armstrong always said: if you have to ask what it is, you'll never know, or you don't know what it is. Everybody avoided it. So I feel very proud about that book.

Now – I promised in the second volume that I would very soon start the third volume. Well, that has – I delayed that. I regret that, to some extent, but because I realized, having had this incredible, wonderful, privileged life in music in so many areas, that I really had now, before I pass away, to write my autobiography, my memoir. In that, of course, there are huge amounts about jazz. A lot of things that I've talked about here are in that memoir, which is in the process of being published. Well, not quite, but it will soon be actually published. It won't be published by Oxford University, which published all of my seven books, because Oxford finally rejected the book, even though I had a hard and fast contract on it, because they said, "The book is too big. We cannot sell it." This has to do with the great problems in the publishing industry, because the illiteracy, the reading illiteracy of the American population is just enormous. No-one reads any more, and the publishers are all struggling. The only books they can sell to a publisher are summer reading books and tell-all books. You know what most of those are about. Big books like this are just – they say, "We can't do it, because nobody's going to – it's going to cost us $85 to publish a 900-page book. No-one can afford it. No-one will want to read it. Attention spans aren't long enough for people to read big books." So they rejected it. Now I'm dealing with a number of other university presses at the moment, including Harvard University Press, to publish the book. I've got a lot of people helping me with this, because this has got to come out. It's only the first volume of my life. The second volume is in the making. So that's why I've delayed.

I tell you. I can go to outer Mongolia or, I don't know, some place at the end of South America, and someone will come up to me, "Say, when are you going to write that third volume of jazz?" I say, "I'm going to do it, just" – my standard answer is, wish me very

good health, so that I live at least another 10, 15 years, and I will do the third volume, once I finish the second volume of my memoirs. I have to do this. Everybody sort of understands. I say, also, if the second volume, *Swing Era,* went from 1932 to, let's say, about 1955, '60, somewhere in there – yeah, into the early '60s. Now we are 50 years later, practically. I told you that I listened to 30,000 recordings in the making of *The Swing Era.* Guess what I'd have to listen to now, if I wanted to be that comprehensive and inclusive, which I am determined to be, but I can't do it, because I would have to listen to 8-million recordings, something like. I don't know what the number is. I'm just guessing. Am I right? Something like that? What has been done since 1960.

Schwartz: There's a lot of music out there

Schuller: Unbelievable. So I cannot do that.

[recording interrupted]

Schwartz: Your third edition.

Schuller: As I say, 30,000. Now it would be 8-million. So the only way that I feel that I can still do something of some value is to, first of all, be much more selective. I cannot discuss everybody. I discussed every damn and mostly neglected jazz orchestra in the swing era. I talked about Bob Chester. I talked about Alvino Rey. They all had great bands at various times, and then they didn't succeed and they went commercial again. I wrote almost about every – and every territory band that almost no-one ever wrote about. So it was really inclusive. I just cannot do that, and I will be selective, therefore. In a special way, I think I will concentrate mostly – because I still want to be exhaustive with anyone that I do talk about – that I will pick only those who have, to one extent or another, or greatly, or totally [been] ignored in the recent history of jazz, have not been written about. Even that I'm sure will be a 700-page book. That's what I hope to do. That will reduce it to listening to only 30,000 recordings. There's so much. Because in *The Swing Era,* I didn't just write about the big bands. I wrote about all the trios, the King Cole Trio, the Rex Stewart quartets, all of these other things, the small groups. I talked about the soloists as great individual soloists, those who never really led a band, like Coleman Hawkins never was a bandleader like Ellington or Basie. I covered everybody. But I just won't be able to do that, much as I would love to. I'm not going to live that much longer.

Schwartz: You've given us a lot as it stands right now.

Schuller: By the way, on the memoir: a lot of it is chronological, but I also do – I have some things called premonitions, and then I have some things called reminiscences. So I go back and forth in time, but basically it's chronological, up to a point, because the last 3 or 4, 5 years of that book of my life, which ends around 1960, I decided – because by that

time I had become fully established as one of the major classical composer in the country. I had become fully established as a conductor. I had become fully established as a major figure in the whole jazz development. So I decided to divide the last three chapters into three separate areas. One – and it's, I know, 300 or 400 pages long – is about jazz, all of – a lot of things we've talked about, all of those developments. The next one is about my performing as a horn player and my playing in orchestras, the Metropolitan Opera, New York, and freelancing and all of that – in New York. The third one is about my work as a classical composer, because by the time I reached 1960, I was being performed in my new music by all the orchestras all over the world. By that time, I had already written 50 compositions. So each chapter has its own little musical area: performing, jazz, and classical music. Those tell all kinds of things which I – no-one knows about. You're going to read some amazing things. Maybe if we still have time, a few of them we might still touch on, because these are things that happened in my life with, in the case of jazz musicians, that are very interesting and very important, not just little funny anecdotes, but things that happened and that I was able to have a very serious influence on some of those musicians. That I finally tell in the memoir, which I hope it will be published, at least by next year.

Schwartz: Can you give us one of those?

Schuller: Okay. I thought you'd never ask.

I should tell you about two. One of them, I was able to have no influence, but the other one – I don't make any big claims about this, that I caused them to be the great musicians they are. No, no, nothing. They were great musicians and phenomenal players whom I admired and adored and considered great geniuses in what they already did.

The one interesting case: this was Bill Evans. As soon as Bill Evans came to New York – I can't keep it all straight any more. It's too far back, and my memory is really getting cloudy about this. But I found myself working in groups or bands where Bill Evans was now the pianist. I remember particularly one festival, the Randall's Island festival, where Dizzy – I think that year was '57 – where Dizzy had a big band and he had four french horns. I was the lead french horn in that band. We did two concerts there during that weekend festival. That's where I first heard Bill Evans, because he was playing in some trio in another concert. I remember it was in a tent, instead of a real hall, because it was such a small group. I heard immediately that Bill was this – again, harmonically, stylistically – very advanced player, both in his lyric playing and in his rhythmic playing, and the way he articulated notes, and so on. I thought he was one of the most original pianists that had come along.

We got to know each other. Many ways that we had contacts. I worked with him. I hired him for all the recordings that I did with Atlantic Records, because he could improvise atonally in pieces – when I did the Thelonious Monk pieces, and with Ornette Coleman

and Eric Dolphy, all of that was in the direction of atonality. John Lewis could not improvise atonally. He stayed in – beautifully – in tonal music. So Bill became one of my major resources, along with Richard Davis and people like that, and Scott LaFaro, who were into the more modern directions.

I knew, and we all knew, that Bill was very heavily on drugs. Two things happened. We became such close friends that – these are two little separate stories – that he started to come to my house about three times a week. I would give him money to buy his drugs. I did that either out of stupidity, because it was not the best thing or the right thing to do, or I did it out of such pity or concern, that I somehow dimly – I knew nothing about drugs, but I just knew that you got hooked and you couldn't get out, except by some extreme measure. I just felt – since he was able to work so amazingly well, even though he was on drugs – that I had to help him. I don't know how he picked on me, but maybe he felt that I had a soft touch and that I was generous and that probably I had made enough money to do something. So for two years, I kept him going. He – as I say, he appeared every – three times a week, always in the afternoon, around 4 o'clock.

That's one thing. The end of that whole story – it's just amazing how Bill Evans finally reduced his consumption of drugs, and, on the other hand, to the extent that he was still on it, it never interfered. He somehow licked that problem which Bird half the time could not lick. Bird was an incoherent player many times. It was just terrible. Sound was terrible. His notes were terrible, wrong. Bill Evans conquered that. Most jazz musicians finally figured out how to do that. He certainly did. There was that period.

At another time, before this, he came to my house once every week, almost regularly. Occasionally he was traveling and touring, so he wouldn't be there, but it was quite regular. What it was, was that, in a conversation once at the Carnegie Tavern – where, as I mentioned before, we hung out a lot, all of us musicians – we got to talking – I don't know how it started – about Wagner's operas. They are arguably – certainly amongst – Wagner was arguably – certainly one of the five greatest opera composers. He not only wrote great operas, but he revolutionized the language of music by inventing what we call chromaticism. He took the music of Beethoven and his predecessors, and he chromaticized it, which eventually led to atonality. This is all a logical development. There's nothing peculiar or weird or avoidable in the development of atonality. It just all happened gradually over the years, and Wagner was the one who moved – in his operas like *Tristan* and *Parsifal* and *The Ring* – moved music forward at least half a century.

Bill was beginning to hear – had recordings or heard recordings or something. He found out that I was a great Wagner lover and that I had played all the Wagner operas at the Metropolitan Opera hundreds of times. I knew these operas – well, I knew them already as a kid, because my father was a great Wagner lover and had played opera in his young years in Germany. He could sit down on the piano and play a half hour of *Siegfried*, one of *The Ring* operas, just from memory.

What he said – again, I don't know who said it to whom, but we ended up playing through opera, the piano scores, reduced from the orchestration, piano scores, which is what singers use to learn the music, is the piano reduction of – and it contains pretty much everything you have to hear. Some things are missing in a piano reduction, particularly in some of the big orchestra things that Wagner wrote. What happened: over a period of a year and a half, he came to my house quite regularly, as I mentioned, and we played through all of Wagner's late operas, which – almost all of them – which included the entire *Ring*. That's four huge operas, the shortest of which is four hours long, and the longest of which is five-and-a-half hours long, *Götterdämmerung.* Then we started on *Parsifal*, which was his last opera and the most advanced. *Parsifal* and *Tristan* actually go into atonal. There's three or four measures where there is no key center discernible. We just – we loved what we were doing. I can't describe to you how excited he was to play this music, which he only faintly or partially knew. Now we were feeling the vibrations of this music in our bodies, playing it at the piano. I was excited, because I had never done anything like – I had played through these things, but by myself. There are – sometimes we resorted to – there were four-hand arrangements for one piano but for two pianists with four hands. In those you could play more than you could play with just the two-hand arrangement of the operas. I had some of those. This was this incredible immersion in Wagner's music, which is a narcotic music. It's addictable. It is so sensual and it is so sometimes even downright erotic in its sensuality and in its richness and in its warmth. So it's almost, as I say, like a narcotic. We just sat there in this dream world many times, playing this music.

All I can say is, as I say, he already was very advanced stylistically, but it confirmed this experience and codified for him the whole development of the kind of things that he was already beginning to play, how that all had happened and that it basically had happened through Wagner, whose advanced chromaticism was then taken up by Debussy and Ravel and other early modern twentieth-century composers. This was a marvelous – no jazz musician's ever studied the history of classical music. John Lewis finally did, but that was exceptional. So this was an incredible experience for him. I know it affected his playing, also – not necessarily in the direction of more advanced harmonizations, although there's a lot of that at times – but also in the way he formed his music. A lot of his late recordings are perfect in form and structure and the way things happen in the pieces, the way the music is developed, because Wagner was an incredible developer of themes through something called a leitmotiv, which is – motiv is a thematic idea, and leit meant, in German, to develop this motivic material and use it in tremendous amounts of variational ways, varying it all the time, never having it come back the same way. Bill certainly – because if you play Wagner and you don't learn that, you ain't learned nothing, because that's the essence of Wagner's – the way that he constructed his music.

Bill, in all of his last 10, 12 recordings, there is this element of a conciseness and a perfection of form, and of course including his improvisations. One of the greatest,

maybe the greatest improvisation – it's hard to say something is the greatest – is the solo that he played in *All About Rosie* of George Russell, because that is so perfect and great a solo that I really can't think of anything that was so spontaneously created. There's Art Tatum and there's Oscar Peterson and all of those great – but this occupies a special place. One other reason I say that is because we were rehearsing *All About Rosie* for the recording date. It was a pretty advanced piece, quite different from anything most of us had ever played or heard. Bill was playing a lot of his beautiful chordal things, amplifying George Russell's harmonic language, which comes out of this theory of this – what does he call it? He wrote three editions of his book on this theory.

Schwartz: The Lydian chromatic concept.

Schuller: Right. Bill was into that. This piece required that we all should – whether it was Art Farmer, whoever – we should try to deal with Russell's concept, this theoretical concept. So he's playing mostly chordal things. Then at the actual recording date, which was two days after the last rehearsal, we started playing that. When his solo came, he burst into this single-note – almost no left hand. Occasionally a chord there – this rattling, driving, energetic, incredibly articulated, fast eighth-note. It veered off and down. The shapes were all over the place, these gestures. I remember I looked at George Russell, and we all – I was conducting – we just looked at each other in amazement. Then it went on for about – what is it? It's almost two minutes long, that solo. It was so wild that, I remember, George and I, we were worried – about every two or three choruses, we had to put in a chord, like the beginning of a new chorus – I remember a couple of times I got lost. I didn't know where he had gone harmonically. It was based on a chord progression which George had written, but it was quite wide-ranging harmonically and that sort of thing. So I got lost at one point. Thank God, George was there. He gave it, because everybody was looking at us. "Where the hell are we?" That is one of the great moments in my life with jazz, that moment. Bill Evans. There you go. A lot of wonderful things.

The other thing – do I have time? –

Schwartz: Yes.

Schuller: – is about Ornette Coleman, because, as I mentioned, so many people wanted to study with me. In particular, Ornette and I, we were so close. I bemoaned the fact that he could not read music. He'd gotten a little better. Especially with his good memory. He can pick up on things. But he certainly cannot write his music. I think it's not known, still, and it is sometimes denied, I think even by him, that he can't write his own music.

When he says, "Oh yes, I write my music," he writes his music on the saxophone. He plays it, or he hears it, and then he writes it down, but I know from an immense amount of evidence that what he writes down is not what he just played. We all know that the reason – as I found out in what I'm going to tell you about – the reason for Ornette not

being able to read or write correctly, is (a) that he is dyslexic. Dyslexia is when you can't tell from upright to down, or sequence of things. You get mixed up. My – Edwin had dyslexia very seriously, but he was cured by it. It can be cured. But Ornette of course didn't know that he had dyslexia, and even if he'd known it, I don't know that he would have known to do anything about it or what to do about it. I only found out later.

The other thing that we do know about him, because he – someone discovered – that the only saxophone study book that he used as a young player was one which was full of exercise studies. The alto saxophone is a transposing instrument. The notes are written a major sixth higher than the actual sound. All the saxophones are transposing instruments. They're in the key of E-flat or B-flat. Trumpets are transposing instruments. Violins are not. There's actual pitch. Trombones are not. So what seems – I wasn't there. This was out in Texas, when Ornette was very young – he got this book. Someone told him he should get this book and study and learn from it. Because of his dyslexia, he had the transposition completely upside down. So the note that he played was a sixth higher than what he wrote. So it was totally upside down. I often – I found out – when we talked about specific notes – when we were working together, I'd say, "By the way, that F# that I wrote in that place. You got to play that a little bit louder." He said – he would say something like, "What note do you mean?," because the F# that I had written for him was a D# in his part. I was talking what we call concert pitch, right?, which is the way the note sounds. Now the alto saxophone part is written a sixth higher. I told him, that F#. So he was looking for F#, and of course I didn't at that moment maybe remember to tell him, it's your written D#. But even that, it wouldn't have meant very much with him, because I found out that he had these weird ideas. Speaking of F#s, he always told me, "F# is always an upbeat note." What? F# can be anything. It can be a downbeat, an upbeat. Can be a passing note. He had all these things where certain notes had only one specific function. I puzzled at this. Somehow Ornette finally said to me, "Listen, Gunther. Teach me how to read music and write music." He said something like, "I'm a little frustrated that I seem to not be able to do it."

By the way, the reason that I know that a lot of his music, when it was finally correctly performed, according to what he had actually heard – or sometimes maybe he never had gotten around to that – was that I know some of the people who wrote the music out for him, who took his – what he wrote. Those people would then have him play what he had written. Then they would correct the notation of it. One of the reasons I know this really well, because one of my secretaries for ten years was a composer and a musician. She worked up on the fourth floor there for ten years with me. She became good friends with Ornette Coleman, and she wrote out, in correct notation, five or six of his big pieces, including the big symphony orchestra piece that he wrote for the Philadelphia Orchestra. This is fact. It's denied. People can do with that what they want, but I'm telling you.

Now he comes to me and again, it is amazing – by this time Ornette had priced himself out of the business. He was demanding such humongous salaries that he essentially was

out of work for a long time. He might get one gig, because he asked – when other people – a big band was getting $8,000, he'd ask for $15,000 for his quartet or trio. So he was essentially out of work. So he was – actually by that accident of fate, he was able to come to my house once a week. He came always on Wednesdays, at something around like 3 o'clock. I, who am a very good teacher, very persuasive, and of course very analytical. I really can explain and articulate everything that we do as musicians, whether it's how we play a brass instrument, as I told you about embouchures, and all of the technical aspects that go into playing, or whether it is about composing or arranging or about instruments, or whatever it is, I'm – again, I say this in all modesty – I just happen to have these gifts. So I thought I would surely be able to get him around. Well, it turned out that he didn't really comprehend everything in those first three or four times. I thought it would all be over by six weeks or something like that. He didn't know what the heck I was talking about, and he could not – it isn't that he – he's not stupid. He's brilliant. That is an incredible mind, intellectually, but there's wires crossed in there. He could not comprehend. I'm not saying he was stupid. He could not comprehend the concept of what I was trying to explain. I dealt with this business of transposition, and he could not get through – it was like his brain was full of fog about understanding – seeing that. I worked on it. I approached it from many different ways, from going to the piano and playing, or showing him about transposition, because, as I told you before, horns – horn parts, not anymore, but basically always transposing instruments. I showed him the difference, the note that I played – and he heard what it was – and what was actually written. I tried every way to get him to understand that his transposing on the saxophone, the way he had learned it, is just upside down. I got nowhere.

But he kept coming back, which is amazing, because most people, they'd say, "Oh shit. I give up. I'm not getting anywhere." And he was paying me, even though I said, "Look, Ornette, I don't want any money from you. I'm doing this out of friendship for you." But he insisted on paying me. Finally, what happened one day, about half way through the lesson – I don't – unfortunately, I don't remember what it is that I said, but I said something, and Ornette – if a black person can turn white, he turned white. The blood went out of his face. He got up. "Where's the bathroom? Where's the bathroom?" He ran. The bathroom, thank God, was only a little bit down a hallway. He vomited. He threw up for about ten minutes. I've never heard such painful and loud throwing up. It went on and on and on. I thought he was going to – I don't know – have a heart attack or die. I rushed in there, but I didn't stay there. I called Margie. I said, "My God, something's happening with Ornette." She came. We didn't know what to do.

Finally it all ended. I think I said something like, "Jesus, Ornette, what happened?" He said, "I don't know." Something like – he said, "You said something, and I don't know what it was, but I couldn't take it." This is when he ran off into the bathroom. To this day I don't know what it is. We have a few times – we don't talk about it much, but a few times we tried to figure out what it may have been that I said. In any case, whatever it was, it was something that his mind – his body – could not accept. This is pretty

traumatic. This is very extreme. I don't know whether in the annals of medicine and health, whether anything like that has ever happened, where someone was told something verbally that caused them to go into a paroxysm of – I thought he was going to – because he was vomiting so much that he didn't get a chance almost to breathe. To this day, I don't know. We'll never know, and it will remain a mystery. It's almost unbelievable, what I'm telling you, but I don't make these things up. This is not a lie or an anecdote. It is what happened. Therefore, I also know, to this day he's not really learned how to do that.

Of course he doesn't have to read. He doesn't play anything that's written any more. He just plays. I heard him at the Newport Jazz Festival two years ago. It was – his playing was amazing. I wasn't quite so enthralled about what his son and the two bass players were doing, but I guess they were doing what they thought they should do. I don't know. It was interesting. At that particular concert, he played almost no fast music. He's famous for these roulades, these incredible rushes of sounds all across the saxophone's range, with microtones in it and quarter tones and all that, and weird intonation. In that concert he played a kind of wailing – you might call it a kind of blues music, mostly very melancholy, long notes and long lines. They would just sit there on a note and then dip down a little bit. In the meantime, Denardo [Coleman] was going wild with his drums. He was almost like the soloist in the group. And one of the bass players was playing only arco [bowed], which you couldn't hear most of it, but I could tell what he was playing. It was all this fragmented, atonal stuff. Then the other one was the jazz, slightly walking, but also not very common or orthodox walking. So I felt there was a disconnect between what he was doing, in this elongated, lyric, and rather tragic-sounding, painful music, and these busy guys, doing all this weird, almost unintelligible – I don't know.

Anyway, that's just one occasion. I hear from people that he's sometimes just amazing, good old Ornette Coleman. The greatest – all those early recordings that we know are marvelous. Also the recordings he made with all the Moroccan musicians. I forget when that was. In the '70s or something – '80s. Also, *Free Jazz*, that octet which he got together with Eric Dolphy. They formed two quartets. That's one of the most amazing things that ever happened in jazz, and that happened in 1960. Did you ever play it, *Free Jazz*?

Schwartz: I played some of it on the air.

Schuller: I mean that particular piece.

Schwartz: Yeah. Maybe not the whole thing.

Schuller: There's no theme given. Somebody just started in each group, and then they went from there. That was unheard of in those days.

Schwartz: The Jackson Pollack routine.

Schuller: Right.

Schwartz: I have to go. I just want to ask if there's any one thing that we haven't talked about, or any thought, or any advice?

Schuller: I doubt it, Steve, because also, my memory's not so good.

Schwartz: We'll wait for the memoir.

Schuller: We certainly covered a lot of ground. I've never had this long an interview, even close to it . . .

Schwartz: It's been an honor. I feel like I'm in a master classroom.

Schuller: . . . So I'm very pleased. I'm glad we could do it this long. It's very time consuming, of course. I could be doing other things, but, no, it's great, because I've had this incredible life. I keep saying it. I'm so fortunate, and it's so incredible and vast that at some point you have to talk about it and document it. Because I don't know of anyone that has had this kind of a life in music. If somebody can point to someone, I'd be happy to hear it. I don't make any great claims about this. As I keep saying, this is an accident, my life, that this could all happen. Where I started eight hours ago, I have to attribute almost all of this to New York City and the two schools that I went to, because the ultimate thing in any person's life, whatever discipline or activity they're in, is curiosity. I don't mean being curious and funny. I mean curiosity is what generates imagination, intelligence, the wanting of knowledge, the accumulation of knowledge. If you're – and so many people are nowadays – totally uncurious. They're not interested in anything, in any expansion of their intelligence or their knowledge or their emotions, their feelings. I've just been blessed with this insatiable curiosity. I wish I could become a total expert not just in music, but in zoology, in anthropology. Every subject in the world is what I would, if I could live 120 years, explore. That's what has made me this crazy, freakish guy.

Schwartz: Can you just converse a little bit about the NEA Jazz Master award that you were a recipient of.

Schuller: Yeah, sure. The first I have to say about getting a Jazz Master award: I was totally stunned to be told that I was going to get this award, and by the way, just incidentally, that there was a nice little financial award included in that. But for me, with all that I've said about my involvement in jazz, I consider my role to have finally only a peripheral role and a very minor role, although in some ways, important or influential. I'm not Charlie Parker. I'm no Dizzy Gillespie. I'm no Duke Ellington or anything like

that. I'm just someone who helped in a certain way. So for me to get the Jazz Master award, particularly when it has gone almost entirely – and should go – to performers or players and composers, if there are composers. There aren't that many composers. Most jazz players are improvisers, which is a form of composing, of course. But it isn't composing like Ellington did. Now they have this new category, Jazz Masters, and the attached word is advocates, and I certainly have been that. So I'm very proud to have received that, and especially on the same group at that year was Joe Wilder, my dear friend whom I hired dozens of times to play in my classical and jazz groups. He got it, the award, and Morgenstern – Dan did, and the great Hollywood film composer, Quincy Jones. Quincy Jones got it. So I'm in very honored company. It turned out that our group created the number of Jazz Master awards given at that point, got it up to 100. So I'm obviously in very distinguished company, because everybody's in there of greatness and worth and contribution to this great music. So I'm deeply honored, and it still sort of won't quite go into my brain, that I have this award. But I do have it. It's wonderful.

Schwartz: Congratulations. It's been an honor and a privilege.

Schuller: You probably heard a few things that you didn't . . .

Schwartz: Thank you for the opportunity.

Schuller: Thank you. It's great.

(transcribed and edited by Barry Kernfeld)