

Now I understand,

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Robert F. Schmidt

A 100 year old man's memories of life, his lifelong quest for proof of Deity's Existence and the implications of Infinity. His discovery of the Hand of God in his everyday life and the gratitude he feels for his life's undeserved goodness.

NOW I UNDERSTAND: An Autobiography

By Robert F. Schmidt

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Chapter V

My Musical Life

My earliest musical memories are of a mahogany cabinet Victrola spring driven record player with a crank handle with music and record storage space in the lower portion of the cabinet. It stood in a corner of the dining room. I vaguely remember playing big heavy records of *Il Trovatore*, Caruso singing and some Wagner. I remember my mother singing to herself while she worked in the kitchen or cleaning in a lovely clear voice: “I Love You Truly” and her favorite hymns.

She was the one, middle class family, very talented, the third of five children, insecure, longing for a better life, without a college education as was common at the time who was determined that her children would have a musical education which would open the door to popularity for them and be a sign of a higher class background. However, in that pre-electronic, age when families provided their own entertainment or listened to the radio, usually all together; spontaneously being asked to play for a group never happened. Rather, music was for family entertainment. Music as a source of popularity for her children never occurred.

As is often the case, good intentions lead to unexpected results. In my case, music served, along with reading, as a place of escape from the verbal abuse, the ridicule and sarcasm used as teaching tools or punishment by my father, who loved me dearly, I know, but suffered from his own unwarranted feelings of inferiority. An added burden for me at such a young age was the incessant, cruel teasing by my younger brother which further intensified my insecurities and shyness. (I was the oldest child and the first to attempt anything new. Woe, if there should ever be any failure.) And my mother was unable to intervene. Music was my salvation. And later, reading.

Mother started us on piano lessons when I was 6 years old. We had a baby grand player piano which played music from perforated paper rolls. It was a very poor instrument. But Dad could load a roll into it and the keys would go up and down and produce music and that fascinated me.

Our first teacher was Miss Naomi Gratz. I have no idea where or how Mother found her. Possibly through a church connection. But she was satisfactory for beginners and she drove to our home on Parkwood Road in Lakewood. She only charged \$1 total for 30-minute lessons for both me and my brother. I can still remember the first instruction book. Just big whole notes on the staff. No black notes. Miss Gratz had scheduled a recital for her students which I feared and which I avoided by breaking my left wrist on the first day of our family vacation at Devil's Lake, Michigan.

Dad was furious because it happened while I was being disobedient, trying to mount a pony too soon after lunch prior to a family horseback ride. I never got to see my mother and father try to ride

a horse! A sight I always regretted because I am sure neither had ever been on a horse before. I learned to dislike milk that afternoon after being given some fresh from the cow's udder with the foam still on it - to settle my stomach, after what I have always thought must have been a local veterinarian mis-set my wrist. To compound my Dad's rage at losing his whole week's deposit of \$50, he had to witness me having my wrist re-broken in a doctor's office and reset later that summer. Ether was used as an anesthetic in those days (1927) and I had a dream I have never forgotten of digging gold coins from the sand at Edgewater Beach in Cleveland near Grandma Gaede's house, or the scent of ether, either. At any rate I avoided the recital and never had to prepare for another. Possibly as a result, I have never learned how to memorize a piece of music. I am unable to sit down and play without a sheet of music before me.

At a certain point, probably when I was in the 7th or 8th grade, Miss Gratz retired (she got married?) and my mother located another teacher, Jay Bevington, older, very fine player in spite of his stubby fingers. He was very gentle and lived in the Hilliard/Madison area with his two daughters, and so was able to take the streetcar down Madison Avenue. to our home. So, we continued to receive our lessons at home. By this time the player piano was long gone, replaced with a Chickering baby grand, a fine piano, still located at the front window of the living room where, with great longing, we could watch our playmates having fun playing all sorts of games in the street and their front yards. We hated to practice, and Mother had to threaten punishment to force us to practice. I will always bless her for having the tenacity to not allow us to quit and for her faith in the power of music for good that kept her from letting us quit. It would have been so much easier for her and made us so much happier - at the time; also have cost so much less money at a time when it was scarce. (I don't know how much Mr. Bevington charged). But her persistence resulted in a positive force in my life for the rest of my life and I bless her for it

Mr. Bevington had us do the standard exercises (Hanon, Clementi, etc., and he brought old (very old) issues of a monthly musical magazine, *The Etude*, for which he charged 25 cents, which had instructional articles by prominent teachers on technique, which I don't remember ever reading and by well-known artists with their personal instructions on how they played one of the pieces featured that month. Each month the pieces were by various composers and usually included one or more of the great composers. The pieces were graded 1-6 in difficulty. I remember one I particularly liked (it fit my big hands) "Melodie" by Rachmaninoff. I played it to audition for my organ lessons at Yale.

The Etude usually included a duet, and soon my brother and I were playing duets: Russ always played the flashier Primo and I the lower, more inconspicuous Secondo, in keeping with my inferiority complex. I did control the pedals, however. I think our favorite was an arrangement of the *Fifth Symphony* by Beethoven! We also liked *Invitation to the Dance* and *Scheherazade*. One interesting insight our mother had was that she insisted that other than the duets, we would never learn or play the same piece, thus avoiding any friction or sibling competition. This might never have resulted in any case since Russ loved loud, showy things and I loved the slow, sad, lugubrious pieces. I often wonder what our mother thought as she listened to me practicing the slow, sad things; if she had any idea of how unhappy I was. It was so hard for me to have a family I loved -

there now were two more younger brothers- but feel freakish because of my height and my religion. And the feeling that I could never do anything right, or be told that I had done something right and pleased my parents.

I clearly remember Mother showing off her “prodigy” sons' skills by the nod towards the piano when guests arrived, invited or drop-ins, which was common in those days. Before they could be seated at the other end of the living room, we would be hammering away at Beethoven’s Fifth, and after about 2 minutes of music, their conversation would start and we might as well have been playing in an empty room. We never had a request for an encore, either! It could be that we weren't quite as good as Mother thought we were!

My brother and I used all sorts of strategies to avoid the hated daily practice and it was a small triumph when we succeeded, but this ended for me, when in the 11th grade, Mr. Bevington gave me the Mozart *Fantasia* to learn and suddenly by reading the notes I knew absolutely what was in Mozart's mind, what he wanted to say and how to say it. I spent hours on the first two pages trying to achieve his intent and fell in love with the piece. I couldn't stay away from the piano. It wasn't “practice” anymore but being able to produce real music. Now my mother had another reason for scolding: neglect of my chores! I consider this my awakening to the world of music and I note that as with learning a foreign language, it took five years to get to the starting line where true appreciation and comfort begin.

While my mother's dream of the piano as a pathway to popularity never occurred, I did end up playing as a public service where piano music was needed on a public occasion. This started with my playing the hymns and the before, and after music for Sunday School. I have always suspected that, at that age, the necessity of learning three or four new short pieces every week suitable for playing in a church contributed to my skill in sight reading and explained my inability to memorize. There was never enough time to spend on any one piece of music to memorize it.

I find it interesting that I do not recall any undue nervousness or fear when I sat down at the piano to play before an audience at this age, when I was almost paralyzed with doubt and fear in so many other areas of my life. Music was my key to overcoming fear: not pep talks or religious belief.

Later, after my army service, I played for church services at Sixth Church, Christian Science, in their temporary location in the auditorium of a junior high school on Lorain Street at Kamm's Corners for which I was paid \$30 per month. This was a significant amount for newlyweds living on \$50 per week. It was difficult to get there having no car and required three transfers on the streetcar. Unfortunately, after two years, I was fired by a classic letter “knowing that I would find greater opportunities elsewhere.” I have saved the letter somewhere in my archives. The problem was with the First Reader who was obsessed with being on time, and two weeks in a row my prelude music did not end precisely at 11:00 a.m.

I also recall playing for a Christian Science lecture during this period in a school auditorium filled to capacity, this by someone who could not face playing with other students in a piano

recital. I think I played the Mozart mentioned above, and shudder today at my chutzpah to play Mozart in public. The end result of my mother's dream was not popularity, but service.

Another fond memory of my high school days was playing duets after school at his house with a classmate, John Wyman, who played oboe in the high school band and orchestra. He studied at the Cleveland Institute of Music and was a better player than I was. But we had fun and played duets. I have a vivid memory of working on Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.

Another high school memory, even more vivid, is of being asked to play a solo on the stage in front of 1,200 students at the induction into the Honor Society ceremony in my senior year. I was terrified. But at least I did not have to memorize and could use the sheet music. I have large hands and could easily stretch my fingers to play 10ths, two keys more than the usual octave (8 keys.) I had always been fascinated by music written for the left hand alone and I had learned an arrangement by Ralph Kirkpatrick, the harpsichordist, of "Song to the Evening Star" from the opera *Tannhauser* by Wagner. I found it in one of the old *Etude* magazines.) It was not a show-type of piece: no flashy runs or arpeggios, no bombast, but rather quiet and relying on the lovely melody. I felt playing with the left hand alone would provide just enough interest and showmanship, or so I suppose my thinking went. It was only one page long and lasted probably 3-5 minutes, or so, and so I didn't have to worry about turning pages, even though I would have had my right hand available.

It all went well until, for some reason my mind wandered, and I lost my place on the page. I froze, broke into a cold sweat, and just sat there, frantically trying to find my lost place. When I did, after a long, pause, I finally finished and tottered off stage.

Later that day I ran into one of my old English teachers at my junior high, now teaching at the high school, Miss Edna Kleinmeyer, tall, erect, stately, very prim, eye glasses and hair done in a bun, who rushed up to me and said, "Oh, Robert, I loved your playing and especially that pregnant pause in the middle of the piece. It was so dramatic, so effective." Just goes to show: " you can fool some of the people some of the time."

Also, during this time frame, bearing in mind the paucity of entertainment available compared to our electronic age today, we had to provide our own entertainment, and music was one form. We used to see our cousins, the Geigers, who also lived in Lakewood nearby, frequently and many times the occasions would be Sunday suppers. Often, after finishing supper, Uncle Charley would get out his fiddle and scrape away, leading the family "orchestra": me on clarinet; brother Russ on saxophone; and our cousins, the twins, Don and Doug, on trumpet with older brother, Charles, on Sousaphone. I can't imagine where the sheet music for such a disparate group of instruments came from and shudder to think what it must have sounded like to our poor captive audience, the two mothers.

Grandpa Gaede was a Mason and on one or two occasions arranged for Russ and me to be the program after their meetings at their Lodge on Franklin Boulevard in what, is now known as Ohio City. I don't remember too much about this, but think Russ and I played the piano, both solo and

duets. I can't remember whether the Geigers were included in the programs. I have to assume we performed acceptably but doubt if the other Masons were as pleased as Grandpa Gaede presumably was.

To conclude the keyboard section of my musical life, in my senior year of high school, my mother arranged for me to take organ lessons, no doubt hoping that someday I would be the organist at Fifth Church, Christian Science, where we attended and I had played piano for the Sunday School.

I remember taking the lessons on the organ at the Methodist Church at Summit & Detroit Streets in Lakewood, within walking distance of our home on Parkwood. But I do not remember either the organ or the name of my lady teacher. I do remember wearing heavy crew socks instead of shoes, which is not a very good way to play the pedal keyboard. I was able to practice on the Wurlitzer theatrical organ, which had many unusual stops, at the Hilliard Square Movie Theater at Hilliard and Madison Avenues, also within walking distance of our home on Parkwood Road. I was able to do this through the good graces of the manager of the theater, a business friend of my father.

The culmination of my musical training and, indeed, of my understanding of pure music, such as it is, came the following year as a freshman at Yale, where I auditioned and was accepted to take organ lessons. I had followed a Lakewood High School tradition of winning one of the many Ivy League scholarships each year. In keeping with my determination to gain an "education in the humanities," as the oldest of four brothers and the first in the family to be able to attend college, I took a heavy five course load of subjects, none of which turned out to be easy for me based on my performance in high school, even English, French and Chemistry, to an extent that I was in danger of losing my scholarship by Thanksgiving because of my poor grades. High school was no prep school for me.

In addition to the heavy course load I had to work three hours per day, required for scholarship students and chose to work as a waiter in Freshman Commons, where the Freshman class ate all their meals,. I worked as a waiter seven days a week, 3 hours (2 meals) a day, went out for the freshman swimming team and joined the marching band, which meant riding in an Army truck to the Bowl every Friday night to practice the formations for the game the next day. And I took an organ lesson every week which meant practicing an hour a day and there were not that many hours in a day. Those were interesting times.

My organ teacher was Frank Bozyan, one of the top two or three organists in the U.S. in his day. I took my lessons on the big organ in Battell Chapel which was a thrill. Practicing was done a hour a day on a small reed organ in the basement of Sprague Hall where the School of Music was located; and where I also went for my Music Composition class, which was deadly because it was at 1 p.m. right after lunch. The instructor droned and it was very hard to stay awake.

I don't remember much detail of my lessons but do know I learned more real music from Professor Bozyan than from any other music teacher I ever had. He spent a lot of time working

with me on Bach's *St. Anne's Prelude & Fugue* which I finally mastered to some extent. At least I was able to play the Prelude at St. Matthews Episcopal Church, where both Fran and her mother worshipped, for the Sunday service the week after my dear mother-in-law's burial 25 years later.

As an aside, I have always remembered fondly being invited to dinner with Professor Bozyan at the home of Eugene O'Neill, son of the great playwright and a Classics professor at Yale. I had him for a one semester class in Roman government, which was extremely boring. He did have an amazing bass speaking voice and sang in the Battell Chapel choir on Sundays. (I never attended or heard him sing). This must have been in my sophomore year after I was no longer taking lessons from Professor Bozyan and spoke to him after one of his free afternoon concert series in Dwight Chapel, where he performed the entire organ works of J.S. Bach every year. I believe their friendship must have developed because of Professor Bozyan's playing for the Sunday services at Battell Chapel.

Along with all of this keyboard training and my growing love of classical piano music, my mother thought it might be a good idea if my brother and I learned to play an instrument. It's interesting that our three male cousins who also lived in Lakewood never had any keyboard lessons but did learn to play brass: tuba for the oldest and trumpet for the younger twins.

We went the other direction: reeds. Our mother's younger brother, Uncle Elmer, had an old metal clarinet which Mother "persuaded" him to give to me in about the 6th grade. I started taking group lessons from Harry Parks, a retired symphony clarinetist, in the Chamber of Commerce Building at the south-east corner of St Charles and Detroit Avenues, where we learned how to fasten the reed to the mouthpiece and proceed to make terrible noises, all six or eight of us together, and how to cover the keyholes with our fingertips to be able to play scales.

After a year of this, I started taking private lessons from Mr. Parks in his living room on Lakeland Avenue between Clifton and Detroit once a week on my way home from school. At Mr. Parka's suggestion, we threw away Uncle Elmer's terrible instrument and replaced it with a new, metal Silver King clarinet manufactured here in Cleveland - a huge improvement.

By the 8th grade, I was 6' 4" tall and playing in the Lakewood High School marching band for the football games, which was under the direction of Arthur Jewel. He was about 5' 4" tall,. He directed both band and orchestra for the entire Lakewood School System. I was issued a uniform and the trousers which had a stripe down the out seam had to be special ordered because of my height, which was the reason for Mr. Jewel's recruiting me at that age. I remember my measurements: 34" inseam, 45" out seam. The trousers were new, had never been worn by anyone else, and were very nice, I thought.

I remember our first band uniforms at Emerson Junior High School which consisted of our own white "duck" pants and white shirts plus a school cape we wore at concerts. The only concert I remember is when we walked (marched?) the three or four blocks west on Clifton Boulevard to Taft Elementary school and played a "concert" for the younger students. I have no idea of how

long we played, or what the songs were - or how they sounded but my imagination makes me wince.

However, I do remember that at this time I was introduced to popular dance music by playing in Mr. Herman Gannet's (he was the Metal Shop teacher!) Dance Band at Emerson Junior High, which played once a month for the Friday afternoon teacher chaperoned dances for the older students. I recall that we practiced regularly, all 8 or 10 of us, in the metal shop, and it was fun, a bit of an ego trip, but only realized much later that while my peers were learning valuable social skills and how to dance, I wasn't, which certainly was no help for my inferiority complex and shyness, and was a handicap the rest of my life.

I seemed unable to make my body move to the "beat" I felt, which was frequently missing in the ordinary dance bands we heard locally, and this became a *bête noire* for me all my life. Later, after marriage, swallowing my pride and taking dancing lessons more than once, once as late as our living in Florida when I signed us up to take "cha-cha" lessons for a new dance craze) I never overcame my lack of confidence or added to my skill. I loved it but couldn't perform. (Fred Astaire was my hero.) It was humiliating and a source of embarrassment.

I remember one occasion when we were part of a group of people we didn't know well and went to a dance held at the American Legion hall on Brookpark Road in Brookpark, Ohio. The women were terribly excited because there was a live band, the big attraction. I think there were 6 or 8 couples. The band was terrible, and I was not a good sport. I remember actually developing a headache, rare for me, and never set foot on the dance floor. It must have been very rude because I never asked any of the other wives to dance and didn't even dance with Fran. It was a long evening, and a long ride home. I don't recall facing that extreme a situation ever again.

Fran loved to dance and was very good. I always felt it would have added to her pleasure if I could only let my body relax and go with the beat, if there was one. It was especially hard for me, who considered himself to be a musician.

After my discharge from the army and return to Cleveland we started our real-life marriage, after our two month "honeymoon" in the frozen North. We were fortunate to have a father who owned a 24-suite apartment building at the end of the Madison Avenue streetcar line in Lakewood, Ohio, at a time of extreme housing shortage. We were able to rent an apartment in his building on the 4th floor. The rent was \$50 per month. And we were very grateful to have a place of our own to live.

When the opportunity came to play the piano for the Sixth Church, Christian Science, services after the birth of our first child, Nancy, I needed a piano on which to practice and found a big, old, ugly upright piano which was in good tune and had a good sound. I don't remember how I found it, but vaguely remember paying \$50 for it. I don't think I was there when it was delivered but would not have liked to have been one of the men who had to struggle with that monster, lifting it all the way to the fourth floor. It sat against the outside wall in the dining room.

A very fond memory is of Nancy who was just old enough to stand, standing in her crib/bed next to the piano, holding on to the edge of the crib and swaying to my playing with her eyes wide. It provided a very warm feeling to have such an appreciative audience.

It had to be at this time that I discovered that the Cleveland Public Library, where I spent many a lunch hour researching the architectural magazines in the reading room, that I discovered that the Library had an extensive collection of all kinds of music, including classical piano sheet music which could be taken out for a 30 day period. This solved my problem of finding a source of material for playing for the church services and at no cost. I also became aware of many composers I had never heard of before and started my explorations with Albéniz, working my way through the alphabet. Two of my favorite discoveries were Gabriel Fauré and the Russian composer, Scriabin. Fauré's barcarolles and nocturnes and Scriabin's preludes seemed particularly suitable to me and were very musical. My theory in selecting what to play was always that I would rather play something of high quality and interest poorly than something easy and meaningless perfectly, like Ethelbert Nevin pieces.

After I retired from playing the organ for St. Matthews, I called the Library to see if they would be interested in the collection of organ music I had accumulated. Amongst this miscellany were things I had found in music shops in Paris and Venice on two of our European vacation trips. The music was from unfamiliar publishers and composers, inexpensive and both suitable and within my skill level.

In due course I delivered the music to the library and received a nice letter of thanks which pointed out that 85% of the items donated were new to their collection. Sadly, in 1996 when I wished to donate most of my piano music, some of it from the 1890s from Grandmother Thompson, they no longer accepted donations. I do not know if one can borrow music from the library any longer.

I think we moved the old upright piano when we left the apartment in the fifth year of our marriage to our first home on Ridgewood Drive in Parma Heights, Ohio. It had a radiant heating system created by hot water being pumped through copper piping embedded in the concrete floors, including some in the attached garage floor so it was possible to put the piano in the garage and it would not lose its tune. I could practice in reasonable comfort in cold weather. I don't remember its ultimate disposal.

Three years after moving to Brecksville, when we were settled in, I was anxious to have another piano, not only for myself, but also for our three daughters so they could also have piano lessons, as I did. I started my search and ended up at the Mattlin-Hyde Piano Studio at Lee & Mayfield Roads in Cleveland Heights; I probably noticed the store on one of my appraisal trips to the Eastside where I appraised many homes.

I remember vacillating between two spinet style models of Steinway and Baldwin, the two most highly regarded brands at the time. Then the salesman took me to the other side of the room and had me play a few chords on a piano I had never heard of before, a Haddorf, a very handsome

spinet. I liked the sound much better than either the Steinway or the Baldwin. The salesman said the secret was the Haddorf was built with a bridge similar to the bridge connecting the back and front panels of a violin, between the main sounding board at the rear of the instrument to the “skirt” on the front below the keyboard. This increased the total square feet of resonating surface to that of a baby grand piano. It was remarkable. Later they were forced to discontinue selling Haddorf or lose all the Steinway and Baldwin products. So, I bought the Haddorf, but don't remember the price, probably \$1,200-\$1,500. When I got home and told Fran, she was dubious. Her comment, “I hope you know what you're doing!”

Later that summer we were invited to our next-door neighbors, Sid and Vera Stadig, for a cookout. We were good friends, but on this occasion may have been invited to gain access to my jazz collection. I remember taking a big box of records suitable for dancing over to their house and helping Sid move their TV/record player downstairs to their rec room where there would be dancing later. He was an engineer at one of the TV stations, and the guests were mainly studio people.

Among them was a wife who was one of the most highly esteemed piano instructors in Shaker Heights. During the course of conversation, the subject of our new piano came up and she remarked, “Oh! That's a wonderful instrument; it's the one preferred by piano teachers who live in small apartments and have space limitations.” Fran overheard this comment and was reassured. She looked at me and said, “You lucked out this time!” And I did luck out. That piano was a constant source of pleasure for many years.

We also had very nice time dancing to my music. One of the women asked me where this kind of music came from and I told her it was easily available, but she would never hear it played on her husband's station.

While living in Brecksville and after playing the organ for Fran's church for 3-4 years, I got tired of having to go out after dinner to practice at the church three or four nights a week: to open up the church, turn on the power and lights, climb up to the choir loft where the organ was situated, practice for two or three hours and then reverse the process, turn off the lights, lock up and drive home, even although it was only a short distance. We decided we had room in the lowest level recreation room where the Haddorf sat and we ended up buying a basic, full pedal keyboard Allen Organ. Now I didn't have to leave the comfort of my home to do my practicing. The Allen wasn't very exciting after playing the larger organ at church; just as practicing on the simple reed organ in college was after taking my lessons on the huge organ in Battell Chapel. Fortunately, my dissatisfaction did not last too long because about a year later, I resigned my position at St. Matthews - actually the week before Nancy's wedding in that church, when the organist was my Baldwin Wallace College instructor, Warren Berryman. The organ never sounded that way when I played it. I still don't know how he did it.

The Allen sat, basically unused, for several years until we downsized and sold the house, a very hard thing for us to do. We had a lot of trouble trying to dispose of the organ. There was no market,

either institutional, or private, for selling it and we couldn't even find anyone to take it as a gift. Finally, a small storefront Black church on the near east side of Cleveland accepted it. I don't remember how we were led to them.

They came on a Saturday morning, a small crew and somehow or another, moved it out of the basement, around the bends in the stairs and out the front door onto a trailer. I found an old piece of carpet for them to use to protect the finish. The Pastor said his wife who had been playing the piano for their services would now become their organist (at which my eyebrows raised slightly). They were all extremely nice and the Pastor remarked what a wonderful spot this would be for church retreats, (at which my eyebrows twitched again, slightly). They were extremely grateful. A few weeks later the Pastor stopped on the way to drop off his daughter at Kent State U. to return the rug and was again effusive in his thanks.

Our Allen Organ story ended in 1996, and the reason for including this story is the great contrast to a recent funeral I attended at a (white) community church in a shopping center where there was no organ at all, just an electronic keyboard on a stand and a drum set on the stage. Of course a church organ is far more expensive today than it was 30-40 years ago, but I find it difficult to compare the quality of service music for worship in my day to what is current in the more popular community churches today. At my age today, I could never attend a church service where the music was not provided by an organ with all its grandeur and inspiration.

In 1996, at age 75, the Haddorf ended up in the laundry (music!) room at the Bob Schmitt condo we bought on Cedarbranch in North Ridgeville. I still admired the sound it produced and enjoyed playing it occasionally. One of the few sad memories I have is playing for my brother Russ after a strenuous Sunday afternoon while he was resting across the hall. He had not heard me play as an adult and had never heard me play the organ at St. Matthews, being occupied Sunday mornings playing the organ for his own church. We had had a good visit and conversation, warm and conciliatory, while waiting for our wives who were inspecting a model home in the Bob Schmitt subdivision where our daughter, Barb, now lived. It was a great shock the next morning to learn he had been rushed to Lakewood Hospital and died there that same day. There was great sadness but also some good memories for me.

One other piano oriented memory took place at our Florida condo in Vizcaya of Bradenton. There was an active Social Committee, headed at the time, by Joan Schneurke, a very persuasive German immigrant. The committee arranged to buy a Technics digital piano which was placed in the great room in the clubhouse where it could be played by any of the residents, including me. This was my first experience with this type of piano. It was spinet style and thus did not take up much space and only needed an electric outlet for its power. I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the sound and believe it was achieved by blending digitally the sound of a Steinway and Baldwin concert grand piano. There were many other sounds available, also, including organ. But the only one I ever used was the concert grand piano. I used to take my music with me and go early to the afternoon bridge game and practice.

After the 1st year the Social Committee decided to have an evening musicale piano concert where any resident who wished could perform. I was asked to play but refused, pleading that I had not played in such a long time and needed much more practice to regain even some of my skill. But I promised that I would be a part of the program the next year if they had a second concert. This promise was an incentive and I practiced much more regularly and was well prepared when they did stage a second concert, well attended by probably 75-100 people, including Fran and our daughter, Nancy and her husband, who had their own condo nearby in Vizcaya. I ended up being the last performer. The others on the program usually played a single piece, and for the most part it was just short of embarrassing. I played three or four short pieces by Fauré, Scriabin and Rachmaninoff and got through them in pretty good shape; received many compliments afterwards with the coffee and cookies. But I do not recall any special comments from the family and have no idea what the other listeners really thought of the kind of music I chose to play which was so different from the previous players' choices. It was the last time I ever performed in front of an audience and I think of it as my Swan Song.

While in high school, I acquired a used E flat alto saxophone which was somewhat similar in technique to the clarinet, and although I never had any lessons, could play it well enough to become a double threat in the two or three extracurricular dance bands I was invited to join. This was not a money-making proposition, because other than the school sponsored after school “tea” dances, I don't ever recall playing for hire (or free) at a local dance. I did meet some very nice boys who became friends, Bob Radefeld and Herb Seitman, and it was fun to get together to “rehearse” after school at the leader's home and make music. I remember one of the better groups being organized by “Skeets” Whittaker who lived on St. Charles Ave. between Franklin Blvd. and Madison Avenue, who played the drums, and in later life became a professional music educator.

During this period, having progressed in my ability on the clarinet, my parents somehow or another found the money to buy me a wooden Selmer clarinet, I remember it cost \$150, manufactured in France, which was supposed to be the instrument of choice among symphony clarinetists. It had a superior tone and I loved to practice in our tiled bathroom which was a great enhancer of the sound. I wished I could produce that tone out in the real world.

In high school, I played the clarinet in the marching band for the football games from the 8th grade on, basically because of my height, of which Mr. Jewel was well aware. I also played in the concert band and orchestra. Both groups had outstanding players in all the first chairs.

The band, both concert and marching, competed in mid-western competitions, once in Cleveland, where the marching competition was held in the Cleveland Stadium and the concert competition at Severance Hall, home of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. I don't remember what composition we played but do have a vivid memory of sitting in the left balcony while the Joliet, Illinois, band (competition we feared) played. They were unusual in that the band was all male except for one girl, elected from the student body who simply sat on the stage on the right in front of the band, not in a uniform, but a pretty dress, acting as sort of a mascot, I suppose. She was striking and beautiful and we spent all our time ogling and never heard what was being played.

Another small band came from Mason City, Iowa, the home of Meredith Wilson, the composer of *The Music Man*. Their marching style was very high stepping with very sharp breaks just popping into their formations. These two bands are the only thing I remember of the entire competition.

We also competed in 1939, I think, at Elkhart, Indiana, where we stayed overnight in the homes of private residents which was very hospitable. With the number of bands competing, it must have enlisted most of the households in the small city and required a tremendous amount of organization. We marched well and played well. We felt should have come in first place which would have meant another medal to wear on our uniforms. We waited and waited for our name to be called, and when it was, the final name called, we were disqualified because a couple of our wilder male members of the band were caught drinking hard liquor, transported in their suitcases, in their host family's home. Unbelievable. After the close of the judging, I remember walking the city streets for what seemed like hours with Barbara Peebles, our second chair oboist, a very pretty girl with a great figure, who cried and cried in her disappointment, using my handkerchief to dry her tears. She lived on Clifton Boulevard and I remember clearly walking her home one afternoon after our return in shame and her returning my laundered and pressed hanky, which she must have kept in one of her dresser drawers where it picked up a delicious feminine scent. I kept that hanky under my pillow the whole summer!

I never entered any of the contests for individuals, but my brother Russ, who also had a Selmer saxophone, did, and made amazing progress while I was away at college my Freshman year.

The closest I came was to compete in a clarinet trio, where all three of us had Selmers, which we felt produced a superior sound mix which we hoped would give us an edge in the competition. I remember painstakingly transcribing the three parts of the piece we played onto lined musical paper so we each had our own separate part for practicing at home. Of course, I cannot remember either the name of the composer of the piece or its name - or whether we won.

The other members of the trio were Fred Bowditch and Ken Kettering, both members of the Band and in the class behind me. Fred went on to become an executive in GM's engineering department, and Ken, who was the nephew of the famous Kettering of GM, committed suicide while a freshman at Baldwin Wallace College in Berea, a terrible shock and very sad. This was my first experience of a suicide and very hard to accept.

Playing an instrument probably was one of the plus factors in my receiving the Yale scholarship. I played in the marching band for three years. The band was small, about sixty men, and I didn't think compared with my high school band. I became first chair clarinetist within weeks, which should give you some idea. Freshman year I went with the Band by train from New Haven to Ann Arbor where we played on a very uncomfortable, cold day for the last football game ever played between Michigan and Yale. We played Cole Porter arrangements of the Michigan songs and were a big hit. Of course, I don't know what kind of an impression sixty men without even helmets for their uniforms could have made as opposed to a 180-man organization the University of Michigan put on the field. The whole experience was a big thrill for me, of course.

The band also traveled to Cambridge, Massachusetts that year for the final game of the season against traditional rival, Harvard. I arranged to meet Doug Fentom, son of my favorite Sunday school teacher and winner of the M.I.T. scholarship that year, for dinner and an evening at his fraternity house afterwards. After only two months at Yale, I will never forget how shocked I was that there were girls allowed on the upper floors of Doug's fraternity. I don't remember who won the game but remember going out on the field after the game and playing "Bright College Years," Yale's college anthem, on the field after the game for all the loyal Yalies who waved their hankies back and forth in unison in time with the music. It was a pretty emotional event for a lowly, mid-western freshman. I don't remember who won! I do remember the score of the Michigan-Yale game: 39-6.

Both my high school and college football teams were consistently second rate and there was little to cheer about, especially when getting soaked in the perennial rainstorm at the Brown University game. Finally, in my senior year I retired from the marching band and watched my first games with my roommate as an ordinary civilian, sitting in end zone seats in the Yale Bowl.

While at Yale, I also played in a small pep band at basketball games. (Never an away trip). I was invited to play in a small, three or four player, peasant, costumed group in a play staged by the Yale Drama School. I have no recollection of what the name of the play was, but it was an interesting experience. I do not remember the rehearsals, or how many performances there were.

I think it was in my senior year when I became aware of a U.S. Government program, the C.Y.S., College Youth Symphony (?). One could audition and if accepted become a full-fledged member of a professional symphony orchestra, under the baton of an European conductor, who was the best conductor I ever worked under and whose name I have been trying to remember for years.

I know of no connection of the government program with Yale. I must have seen a notice on a billboard which aroused my interest and caused me to apply. At the concert we prepared for, I do remember that the major piece was the *Second Symphony* by Cesar Franck. This I remember well because in the slow movement there is an exposed clarinet solo, not difficult to play, but in 3/2 time and I have always had problems with 3/2 or 5/4 time and I was terrified I would fluff it. I don't remember where the concert took place - off campus I am sure - or what the other pieces we played were. But I do remember how relieved I was when it was all over, and I had successfully gotten through that brief passage satisfactorily. An added benefit was that the U.S. Government paid us \$30 per month, a significant amount for a scholarship boy on a very limited budget. It meant that much less I had to ask my parents for, and indirectly that much more available to my brothers in the future.

Reading this thus far, you may be aware that all the emphasis up to this point has been devoted to classical music. However, in my junior year in college I was exposed to what became a near obsession for me: Jazz. Obviously, I had some exposure to non-classical music since I had played in some dance bands. Also while buying sheet music, I bought some books of piano jazz arrangements by some of the great players of the 30s & 40s: Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, Mary Lou

Williams, Billy Kyle, Count Basie and Duke Ellington; none of whom I had ever heard on the radio, let alone live in a theater or at a dance. There were only a few of the songs in their piano albums which were easy enough for me to play but I kept trying. I didn't realize at the time how lucky I was to be alive during the Golden Age of the American Song Book and the birth of Jazz, to awaken at the peak of the age. However, because of my family's religious background where drinking was forbidden and night clubs were where this music was performed; plus my ignorant prejudice that "black" players were undisciplined and immoral, I would surely have been classified as very "square." As an example of my ignorance and flawed judgment, I looked down on Benny Goodman, who happened to be white, because his "tone" wasn't what a clarinet should sound like. In my youthful wisdom I knew what that should be. What opportunities I missed before my awakening.

In my junior year (1941), the Yale band accompanied the football team on its biennial visit to Princeton. We went by train a day early to give a concert at the Yale Club in Manhattan and stayed overnight at the Commodore Hotel, where I was one of the lucky ones who was assigned a single room. After the concert, a small group of band members talked me into going with them to the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem to hear the Erskine Hawkins Band play. It took quite a bit of persuasion to get me to go: What would I tell my mother? Go to a black dance hall in Harlem? Where a white college boy had been stabbed a week earlier; and to listen to "uncivilized", "black" music? But I did go. It was a revelation: all well-dressed young black couples; no liquor sold, only set-ups - you had to BYOB; some mixed couples; all very respectable. And the music. I had never heard anything like it before. I stood up near the bandstand, transfixed, and just absorbed it. This was not frenetic, undisciplined noise but highly organized arrangements of popular songs for dancing, beautifully performed by The Hawkins Band and the house band, The Savoy Sultans. There were no breaks, one band sliding into the other's seats at break time so the music was continuous. They finally closed up shop at 3:30 a.m. and we got back to the Commodore about 4:00 AM, There was no way I could fall asleep; I simply lay on the bed with the music still going on in my head, never closing my eyes, reliving the experience until it was time to report to the lobby for the rest of the trip to Princeton. I have always regretted that there was not enough time to explore the campus, and, also note that we played Cole Porter arrangements of the Princeton fight songs. Wish I had been smart enough to keep those arrangements. They would be interesting to see today. The Savoy Ballroom experience changed my life. It opened up a whole new realm of music for me: Swing, Big Bands, and Small Combos. Even an occasional Country Western. My musical world had suddenly widened enormously.

After marrying Fran and settling in Cleveland after World War II, which did not do much for my newfound desire to hear live jazz in addition to attending the Thursday night performances of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, which we eventually shared with my brother, Wes, each choosing the programs he preferred and then tossing a coin to decide the remainder, we also attended concerts featuring choruses (I have always been partial to vocal music), glee clubs, opera and light operas.

I never was very enthusiastic about grand opera, probably because of my first exposure. This took place when a very nice high school friend, Emma Able, who lived only one street away from us, invited me to go with her and her parents to hear a matinee performance by the Metropolitan Opera Company, on one of their annual “opera weeks” at the Public Auditorium. They performed in the large end of the auditorium which (I believe) seated approximately 8,000 people; and with their six or seven evening and one or two matinee performances, appeared before more people in Cleveland than in their entire season at Carnegie Hall in New York. The “Met’s” appearance was a big event in Cleveland’s cultural life, and also a highlight annually in the higher social circles.

Unfortunately, the opera I heard was “*Louise*” by a second-tier French composer, Charpentier, and it was long and boring and had not even one memorable aria. The afternoon was a blur and I hope my boredom was not too obvious to my hosts. I now wonder if my interest in opera would have been greater if that first exposure had been to have heard *Aida*, or *Porgy and Bess*, or *La Bohème*.

There were two or three later experiences when I was older and more appreciative. One was hearing Beverly Sills sing “*Thaïs*” by Massenet the year before her retirement. She no longer had the figure to play a slender young girl, but listening to her beautiful, soprano voice made it easy to overlook.

I did get to see *Porgy and Bess* with the original cast while a junior in college and went into detail about that occasion in my chapter on my college years. That was the time when Tinker had announced a test on the day I was to meet my senior high school date at Grand Centra, and Tinker had a hard and fast rule that he would not permit make up tests for those who missed the regular exam. I had an idea and went to see him in the Rare Book Room and asked if I couldn’t take a make-up test, would he consider letting me take the test in advance. I think this was something new for him, and he looked at me and said: “Schmidt, you are the crafty one!” and allowed me to do just that. However, I will say that was a memorable experience in and of itself, and many of the scenes are still sharp and etched in my memory. So many singable, beautiful songs.

I also have a vivid memory of a Met performance of Alban Berg's *Lulu*. It was done live on TV and I really didn't want to waste my time on 12-tone music, which I thought, with my traditional background, was very “far out” (too hard to understand). I knew I wouldn't like it but thought I should give it a chance. If it was as bad as I thought it would be, I could always change stations and switch to one of the sitcoms. I was amazed at what I heard and after five minutes was totally engaged; I listened to the very end and couldn't get over the power of the work and how the music captured and expressed the deepest emotions. This is one opera I would like to hear in live performance.

Another opera I found I really enjoyed was Puccini's “*Madame Butterfly*”, which had additional poignancy for me because of my study of the Japanese language in the Army.

The final operatic experience which comes to mind started out with a French “noir” movie I happened to see, “*Diva*”. This concerned a very reclusive opera singer in Paris, a beautiful black

girl, played by Herminia Fernandez, who refused to be recorded, but sings one aria to herself repeatedly and in recitals. It says something to me that after seeing the movie 35 years ago, I remembered the name of the movie and was able to find it on Google and Wikipedia. I know at the time that I thought the melody of the aria was haunting.

Many years later while wintering in Florida, the Sarasota Opera Company, on a sunny Saturday afternoon, gave a performance of “*Le Wally*” by Catalanti, a very obscure composer, which contained the aria from the movie, *Diva*: “Ebben? Ne andro lontana,” and it can be heard on YouTube. Naturally, I couldn't miss the opportunity to hear it in a live performance. This turned out to be as big a disappointment as my first opera, *Louise*. It was long, dull and very boring; well performed and done very professionally, but overall a second-rate piece of music, and easy to see why not performed regularly. The only worthwhile thing in the whole long afternoon was the aria!

To complete my operatic history, on our first trip to Vienna with the University of Michigan travel group, we took a side trip to Salzburg through the beautiful lake country. There, one evening, we heard Mozart's *Magic Flute*. I know I was supposed to like anything by Mozart but am somewhat ashamed to confess I did not like it. And on one of our last trips to Europe, on a University of Michigan tour, we visited Vienna again and went one evening to the famous Opera House and heard an opera by Richard Strauss, probably *Electra*, and once again, in spite of the beautiful surroundings and the very polished performance, my only recollection is that I didn't like it, and would certainly never try to see it again.

One other comment I would like to make before concluding this chapter is how grateful I am to my wife, as a youngster a would-be ballerina, for introducing me to the Ballet. When I was twelve or fourteen, I went with my brother and the gang of guys to the Hilliard Square Theater for the Saturday afternoon double feature. Once or twice between the movies, the management allowed a local dance studio to stage a recital. The sight of those young girls in their tutus trying to be graceful was too much for us. We made such a disturbance that I think we were ejected at least once, and missed the second feature, undoubtedly a cowboy movie. Maybe, Hopalong Cassidy.

Contrast this with a young married man 30 years later being “persuaded” by his wife to take her to see Moira Shearer dance in Tchaikovsky's “*Swan Lake*” at the Public Auditorium. Even though I was familiar with his music and loved it, nothing prepared me for the experience of seeing and hearing a third dimension added to the language that is music; to see a series of stylized, disciplined body movements used to convey and add to the message contained in the music was a revelation to me. The performance was by the Sadler Wells Company with their own orchestra. From our seats in the front row of the balcony at the end of the horseshoe we were as far as possible from the stage but with an undisturbed sightline to the stage. I think the distance added to the magic. I later saw Margot Fonteyn do *Swan Lake*, which was her most famous role, but I preferred Moira Shearer's interpretation.

This was my first exposure as an adult to a wonderful art form and we saw as many more ballets as we could over the years. Nothing ever surpassed that first experience

This led to a great love of the Tango. We saw several of the professional Argentinian groups perform, and also bought movie DVDs centered on the tango. If there is such a thing as reincarnation, I would like to reappear as a professional Tango Grand Master!

Once again, and finally, one of the things we found to do in our summers in Ohio, in addition to visits to Blossom Music Center for special events that interested us, was to travel down to Wooster, Ohio, about 30 miles south to listen to performances of the Ohio Light Opera Company.

This started out as a 10-week season of all Gilbert and Sullivan, produced by James Stuart of Kent State University. Originally, they put on their productions at the Porthouse Theatre on Steele Corners Road off S.R. 8 on the way to the main entrance to Blossom Music Center, summer home of the Cleveland Symphony. As their popularity grew, they moved their productions to the Freedlander Theater on the campus of The College of Wooster. This was a much more desirable location: seating for 300 people, larger stage, better acoustics, movable pit (the orchestra - no longer simply a piano - rose from patron seating level to stage level to lead the singing of "God Save the Queen" when the play was to be Gilbert and Sullivan; always a big hit with the audience, putting them in the mood for what was about to come, and a good sized lobby where the cast could mingle with the audience after the final curtain came down. The performers were all professionals. James Stuart was not just the producer and manager of the operation, but loved to perform in the comic, pompous roles which he did very well, especially the brilliant patter songs.

As time passed the range of operettas expanded into more than just Gilbert and Sullivan. The Company branched out into other classic operettas by the likes of Strauss, Lehar, Kalman, Romberg, Victor Herbert, et al. In the 2017 season they even did "*The Music Man*" by *Meredith Wilson* and "*Anything Goes*" by Cole Porter. These were all done up to Broadway standards in every respect in a little college town between Cleveland and Columbus, a real opportunity for mid-westerners.

We used to try to sample things we thought we would like, pick the dates out of the Repertory calendar and make the long trek to Wooster in time for lunch at the Wooster Inn nearby, where the food and service were very good, and then go over to the Freedlander for the performance. We spent many a happy summer afternoon that way. I note that after James Stuart's death, the summer program has expanded into the Broadway productions of the 30s, including musicals by George Gershwin, Cole Porter and Irving Berlin, which are hard to find done professionally elsewhere. How I wish I had been able to attend in recent years.

The next step in my development after the Savoy Ballroom experience occurred at a very fine record shop on campus, David Dean Smith, where I went to buy a popular new record by Skinnay Ennis and his Band, with him singing in his unique, breathy voice "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire." As I was paying for it (\$0.35?) I noticed on the counter a small display of very expensive 12" Bluenote label records (\$1.50) and took two of them into the demo booth, which all record stores had in those days, and was stunned by what I heard. This was the first small jazz combo I had ever heard. The artists were people I had never heard of before: The Edmond Hall Jazz Quartet

consisting of Edmond Hall, a New Orleans clarinet player; Meade Lux Lewis, a widely known boogie-woogie pianist, playing the celeste on these records; Charley Christian, the 23-year-old guitarist, who played with Benny Goodman and originated playing melody on the guitar rather than simply strumming rhythm chords; and Israel Crosby, the bass player from the Cab Calloway Band. I believe the two records were produced in 1937, which makes them 80+ years old today and I believe they are as fresh and interesting as they were when they first appeared on the market. I wore out two or three sets until they were finally released on vinyl and believe they can now be found on YouTube. They were the first true jazz records I ever bought and led to a collection of about 1,300 records collected over a period of 50 years. Along with these, another collection of classical records accumulated totaling about 800. These were acquired one by one and were far from comprehensive regarding any one category. I only bought according to my own taste and preferences and frequently learned of new things from reading the reviews of Whitney Balliot of the *New Yorker*, a fine critic, and from reading *Stereo Review*, and other catalogs from record companies. For instance, many would think my “neglect” of the brass players shameful, but I preferred reeds and piano - Frank Sinatra was in a category all his own - but with a background of playing reeds which helped me appreciate those skills, it's not hard to see why.

My main interests from the beginning were the small groups rather than the big bands, some of which created small groups from their own personnel, i.e., Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey and Duke Ellington, for example. I felt then (and still do, to some extent) that there was more clarity and creativity and precision in the small groups, to say nothing of originality and improvisation. No chance of “faking” it in a small group. Exceptions were found in the big bands who could afford superior arrangers, who provided original ideas to popular songs which appeared almost weekly, some not very good, and leaders who did not tolerate sloppy playing: Goodman, Shaw, the Dorsey brothers, Basie and, of course, Ellington come to mind. There were many other big bands who crisscrossed the country playing in theaters, amusement parks with dance floors, night clubs, anywhere a dollar could be made. Alas, after the war and a disastrous strike of the musicians' union which stopped the recording industry cold, the changing times after World War II virtually destroyed the big band business. This, plus the power of the promotion, prepared the way for the rock-n-roll era, and the following generations were basically deprived of the experience I had with jazz, a genuine form of art originated in the U.S.

Thus, my horizons widened, both classical and jazz during the years of our marriage. Fran was already well-steeped in her appreciation of classical music - and Tommy Dorsey - but widened her taste to include my kind of jazz after our first date, which was a first time experience for her when we danced in her sorority parlor to my small group jazz. However I would love to know her true, initial reaction to the first present I ever gave her upon my return to Ann Arbor for her Senior Prom, after my visit with Sidney Mishcon in New York, when I proudly presented her with a 12” Signature label record of the Coleman Hawkins Quartet, playing “The Man I Love.” She really wanted and was expecting perfume! But that record ended up being worthy of inclusion in the Smithsonian Jazz collection, and her tastes developed and improved over the years. I always wondered what the Brecksville duplicate bridge group thought when they played at our house

because I seized the opportunity and had my jazz records playing in the background. They couldn't hear that kind of music anywhere else.

In addition to small combo jazz, I became enthralled with the wonderful piano players of that time beginning with Art Tatum, the blind pianist from Toledo, Ohio. I knew the name because I had bought a book of his arrangements while still in high school. They were far beyond my ability except for one song: "Don't Blame Me." When I got into record buying, I soon discovered him and bought as many of his things as I could afford. Constant source of amazement. Dazzling technique with a fabulous left hand, and the ability to make anything he played his own. If I had to pick only one of his records as my favorite, I would probably choose his Art Tatum-Ben Webster Quartet on the Verve label. Pure pleasure, and such easy listening. Two older gentlemen ruminating on life.

The other pianists I admire and never tire of listening to would include, in no particular order: Dick Hyman, Teddy Wilson, Count Basie, Dick Wellstood, Ralph Sutton, Oscar Peterson, Johnny Guamieri, Paul Smith, Marian McPartland, Sir Charles Thompson, Eddie Higgins, Mary Lou Williams, Fats Waller, Dave McKenna, John Bunch, Mark Shane, and my most recent obsession, Stephanie Trick, a 28 year old stride pianist from St. Louis whose pure joy shows on her face while playing and the way she keeps time with her feet. She recently married a fine Italian pianist, Paolo Alderighi and they have a remarkable 2 piano version of "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise," accessible on YouTube. Anyone who has ever taken a piano lesson has to be impressed with the technique displayed by these people and impressed with their improvisational skills. And be a just a little bit envious.

Since that was my case and having played piano (No solos!) in a Nisei dance band in Minneapolis in the army at USO dances - my pay was \$3 per gig which was a significant amount when we were first married and I was earning \$65 per month before deductions. I was frustrated and felt there had to be some system that I could learn which would free me from the notes on a sheet of music and enable me to improvise. It was much too late to develop the skills of the above list, and I was hampered by a very limited amount of talent, but to be able to play even one piece in an original interpretation, all my own, was a deeply held dream. Therefore, somehow or another I found a teacher in the E. 105th St. and Euclid Avenue area, who had a studio on the second floor. Every Tuesday night I would stay late after work and drive out there, parking somewhere a block to the south near Carnegie Avenue and, I shudder to think of it today, walk to my lesson. I am ashamed that I can't remember the teacher's name but I think he was fairly competent and I was beginning to get the hang of it when it all came to a halt when St. Matthews, Fran's, church needed a substitute organist. She asked me if I could try to step in. I pointed out that it had been 20 years since I had touched an organ; and I didn't know the order of service. And I didn't want to embarrass her.

I agreed to try and sometime later became the permanent organist. I ended up taking my final music lesson, an organ lesson, as a tired businessman from Warren Berryman, member of the faculty at Baldwin Wallace College. He was a fine player and instructor, and very patient with me. Thinking of the comparative satisfaction derived from becoming a church organist as opposed to a

competent jazz pianist playing in some smoky bar, I believe I made, I know I made the right choice. Serving a congregation for five years as I did was probably the most satisfying thing I ever did in my whole life, far more satisfying than the selfish thrill of being able to sit down without music and improvise on a standard ballad or swing tune would have been. I think of it occasionally but without any regrets whatsoever.

I also felt and hoped my playing for her church was a form of redemption in Fran's eyes for my earlier shameful outburst when the church was being formed. And I can still listen and marvel at the wonderful jazz geniuses of my day whose work is readily available on YouTube on my computer; I feel truly sorry for others, young and old, who are unable to experience for whatever reason what I do while listening to my Golden Age music.

I think I was very fortunate to grow up in a period of time when technology was making the Golden Age from the 1920s to the 1950s more accessible and affordable. The music could be heard live on the radio, then TV, and on the constantly improving sound systems following the transition from shellac to vinyl, long playing records which allowed the performer to escape from the 3 minute 78 RPM limitations, and to have more time to explore their musical ideas. The final improvement was the advent of the compact disc, CD, where the time limit expanded far beyond that of the LPs.

One of the ways musicians put food on their tables was to be hired to play at private parties. Probably the precursor of the jazz party/festivals we enjoyed so much later on. My room while in college was located right off fraternity row and I remember well a party one of the fraternities gave where the band they hired was the Count Basie Orchestra. I didn't get much studying done that night! Many years later, while living in Brecksville, we hired Chuck Braman, the son of my best friend, a genius percussionist and his small combo to play for us and a small group of friends on a Sunday afternoon. He set up in the dining room and we all sat up in the living room looking down on the performers. I wonder what our guests thought of the music they heard.

Early in the era Tin Pan Alley flourished and many young aspiring musicians made a living playing the latest songs in music stores to promote the sale of sheet music: George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Fats Waller among them. They went on to write some of the great, timeless songs and to create musicals for Broadway. Movie theatres hired dance bands to play for a week as an added attraction to entice more people to see the movies they were showing; recording studios were busy churning out various versions of the new songs by the big bands; Hollywood jumped on the "bandwagon" and produced both original and their own version of Broadway hits. I remember going down to the Palace Theater on Euclid Avenue which had a live performance of some sort every week, which competed in a way with the movie being shown, to see Ted Lewis and his band do his famous "Me and My Shadow" routine.

Also, I remember going out to the Euclid Beach Park, which was purported to have the best dance floor in the State of Ohio as well as the fastest roller coaster, to hear big bands several times. I remember going way down to Chippewa Lake, about 30-40 miles southwest of Cleveland, a

vacation cottage community with an amusement park and a dance floor to hear the Will Bradley Band who were famous for their drummer, Ray McKinley's version of "Down the Road Apiece," a piece I loved to listen to while studying in my room in college.

I should point out that classical music flourished on records with their longer playing time and the scope of the music available increased many fold; many lesser known composers and artists became known to the record buying public. I took advantage of all this to the extent I could, both jazz and classical. Others were far more deeply involved. While my collection of records and CDs grew to total 2,300 over a period of 50 years, this was modest compared to many who had collections of 8-10,000, or more.

Those living in the New York area, or the west coast, had far more access to live performance, especially New York. There were limits imposed on me by money and family responsibilities. But I feel fortunate to have enjoyed the opportunities that presented themselves and that I was able to take advantage of.

After all this background, now is the time to recall some of the experiences that made a lasting impression on me beginning with my high school and college days. I recall two shattering musical experiences in high school. The first occurred when we were allowed to leave school early one day to go to Severance Hall to hear an afternoon rehearsal of the Cleveland Symphony conducted by Artur Rodzinski. They played *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* by Stravinsky. I now realize that although I had played in my high school orchestra, this was the first time I had ever experienced the power of the sound produced by a professional symphony orchestra. I had never heard anything like it before, the gorgeous sound. I remember standing up on the streetcar all the way home at rush hour and feeling sicker and sicker and when I got home, going to bed for a couple of days. I don't think I even came downstairs for meals. Maybe it was the effect of the music. But it could have been the intestinal flu.

The other high school experience, probably my senior year, was when my parents allowed me to go alone to downtown Cleveland at night to the small concert hall at the Cleveland Public Auditorium to hear a piano recital given by Sergei Rachmaninoff, one of my favorite composers. I was overwhelmed by his technique and his austere presence seated at the piano. One of the pieces he played was an impromptu by Schubert which I had been working on and his playing was magical. The result of this experience was that I didn't touch our piano for about two weeks. What was the point? There was no way I could ever approach such perfection.

Also, thanks to my high school principal, Mr. Mitchell, I was able to hear the Yale Glee Club, and the Whiffenpoofs live. I had never heard anything like that before, either. Later, in my Freshman year at Yale, we would open our windows on the fourth floor in Durfee Hall and listen to the Whiffenpoofs singing on their way home after practicing (at Mory's?) in the soft, spring air and it is simply unforgettable. How fortunate!

While at Yale, I went to an organ concert given by Marcel Dupré, one of the great living French organists. He improvised a symphony based on five original themes provided by School of

Music students, which was impressive. But the most memorable thing was shaking hands with him at the reception afterwards and being amazed at how cold and flabby his hand was.

I also went to a recital by Artur Rubenstein at Woolsey Hall and didn't like his playing, or the liberties he took with the music he played, copies of which I had brought with me. I thought he was demeaning the largely student audience. It bothered me that he didn't play the notes the way the composer wrote them. He was physically flamboyant, emphasizing himself and not the music. Absolutely no comparison to the Rachmaninoff performance I had heard earlier.

I played hooky one afternoon and went to hear the Jimmy Lunceford Dance Band, very popular at that time, playing a weeklong engagement at one of the two movie theaters in downtown New Haven, the Roger Sherman. I think I sat in the last row of the balcony and my ears still hurt from the volume of sound they produced. Strange memory.

During the war years while at the University of Michigan, four of my friends formed a jazz quartet, the Sunnysiders, and became very popular. There was no specific leader, but they were all from the U. of Michigan ASTP program. They were Dick Thomas, piano; Ray Kiser, guitar; Bud Klauser, drums; and Ken Pierson, trumpet. It was Pierson who set up my blind date with Fran. Occasionally another U. of M. ASTP-er, Bill Corkery, a fine Irish tenor, would sing vocals with them. When we finally got to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, they played for USO dances. They were quite a contrast to the high school or retiree-old men bands, uniformly weak playing, and not very good. It was war time and all the regular young men players were in uniform. When the Sunnysiders were on the bandstand, everyone in the room was on his feet dancing.

The outstanding member was Dick Thomas, who played the piano and became a very good friend. He was a Princeton graduate who majored in Arabic and was one of the outstanding Japanese language scholars in our group. While at Princeton, he used to go up to Manhattan on weekends and play as an amateur intermission pianist at one of the 52nd Street night clubs.

He had an amazing experience one night when he was playing. Maxine Sullivan, a famous girl singer, known for her recordings of "Loch Lomond" and "Comin' Through the Rye", came up to him and asked if he would like to accompany her in some Gershwin. He said he almost fainted, but did play and was complimented, and loved it.

Many years later Maxine Sullivan, who was one of my favorite singers, and the reason we went to our first jazz party at Conneaut Lake, said, when I spoke to her, that she remembered him. Could that be true? After 15 or 20 years?

The men in the company used to ask Dick to play for us after dinner at Tyler House, East Quad where we lived. He usually agreed to play and then would play his own improvised versions of the popular songs of the day for 30-40 minutes, holding us all spellbound. What a wonderful experience and memory. He was very modest, and gentle. He was also very popular at least one of the sorority houses. I went with him once, not Fran's house unfortunately, or I might not be telling this story, and he played for the girls who were enthralled. I think it may have been the Chi

Omegas and have often wondered if any of those who heard him realized how rare it was to hear such talent and did those evenings become part of their treasured memories.

Many years later while he was living in Washington, D.C., and working at the VA, he played regularly for a wonderful, relatively unknown girl singer, Joyce Carr, who had a lovely, clear soprano voice and superb diction. He gave me a record she had produced privately where she was backed by the Bob Vigoda Trio (Bob was the nephew of Abe Vigoda of the famed *Barney Miller* TV series). Dick sat in and played for two of the songs. The one I like best is “You Don't Know What Love Is,” a haunting ballad. I was instrumental in interesting the Heritage Jazz Society to publish the album and put it in their catalog and distribute it (a small claim to fame!) It was quite successful for an unknown singer, I was told. Dick was very grateful to have Joyce's name more widely known. I would have loved to hear her sing live.

At the end of our stay at Fort Snelling, before scattering after our discharge from the Army, the Sunnysiders had two 12” LPs recorded by the Rudolph Schmitt Company of Minneapolis, a recording studio. I paid \$5 each (a fortune in those days), for both and eventually had them reproduced as CDs, and gave copies to each of the members of the group. I was told that after hearing the recordings, a nightclub in Chicago offered the group \$300 per week to play there. If true, this was a huge amount for men who were paid \$65 per month by the Army at that time. But they all had other plans - two of them were already married, the others had careers to begin. It never happened.

Two other musical memories of the time spent in Minneapolis/St. Paul were the occasion, I have no recollection of the details, how or why it happened, but I was one of a committee to meet and deliver Vaughn Monroe, a very well-known singer/band leader and escort him by cab to a concert he was giving. Tantalizing not to remember more details, since he was very well known for his nasal baritone voice.

Fran and I went to a concert given by Art Tatum, the incredible pianist, the only time I ever heard him live. I don't remember a thing of what I am sure at the time I thought was unforgettable; he played or how. But I do remember (I always remember the important stuff) him arriving at the concert hall the same time we did, and it was cold and rainy, and I held the door open for him to enter. Ahead of us, of course.

During our married years, we would occasionally go downtown for dinner at the Theatrical Grill, a popular bar/restaurant on “short” Vincent Street, which stretches only from E. 9th Street and E. 6th Street. The owner, “Mushy” Wexler, who was an important member of the “mob” was a lover of jazz and regularly brought in important performers, usually for one-week engagements. It was wonderful to be able to hear Teddy Wilson playing the piano live, and not to have to go all the way to New York to hear him. But it always annoyed me that so many people talked through the performances and didn't have the intelligence or courtesy to listen. The bar was very long, a

horseshoe shaped oval with a raised stage in the middle the players had to climb up to play. The continual noisy chatter should have been distracting. Apparently, they were used to it.

One night, Maxine Sullivan was the featured singer with the Buck Clayton Combo on his first trip on the road after recovering from cancer of the lip. She was dressed in a simple tunic dress and just stood there and sang. She was wonderful. It was a terrific contrast to the girl singer in the house band who was dressed in a pink cocktail dress that looked sprayed on - and she never stopped wiggling while she tried to sell whatever she was singing. I hoped she had her ears open that week when Maxine sang. It would have been like a master lesson at a music school.

Two other things I remember about those days at the Theatrical. I don't remember and can't imagine how it happened, but I stayed downtown after work to have dinner with "Peanuts" Hucko, perhaps to be joined by Fran coming down later. He was one of the great clarinet players who later was frequently a guest on the Lawrence Welk show. He liked to play golf and always had his clubs with him when he was on the road - also his clarinet. I can't remember any of the conversation; but I suppose we talked about music and golf. YouTube has a great live performance of him playing at a concert in Tokyo where he plays "Memories of You" which Fran and I always felt was "our" song.

The other occasion was similar: Vic Dickenson, one of the great trombone players, was in town at the Theatrical and I don't know how it could have happened, but I took him to dinner.

The only memory I have of the conversation was that he complained bitterly that he was getting old and couldn't play standing, typical in a Dixieland band, for any length of time but had to play sitting down, which was some sort of blot on his character in his mind. He was still a great musician. I played one of his LPs, the Vic Dickenson Septet doing "I Cover the Waterfront" for the electrician, who was a jazz harmonica player, when he came to our house in Parma Heights to study the plans for the proposed house to be built in Brecksville. He was sitting cross legged on the floor, swaying back and forth, in time with the music. Fran had serious doubts as to his sanity - and ability. He did do the work, far more than the plans called for and no question as to his ability.

I must say the food was excellent at the Theatrical, both lunch and dinner, especially the rolls. One final Theatrical memory is the time Fran's brother, Mark, 11 years her senior, was visiting us and more for me than for him (he was very difficult to entertain) we took him for dinner at the Theatrical. The band that week was Turk Murphy, a very good west coast Dixieland band, and they were in full voice as we entered. The blast of sound was tremendous, and I think Mark who was very "square" must have been overwhelmed. But he was a good sport and probably wondered about the guy his sister had married. I don't think it affected his appetite.

Another activity that we enjoyed later in our marriage was attending jazz festivals. It started when we got a flyer in the mail from the Allegheny Jazz Club of Meadville, Pennsylvania. It was interesting but I didn't recognize many of the players and it was too expensive. The next year the announcement came and this year one of the artists was Maxine Sullivan. We decided we couldn't miss the opportunity to hear her over a three-day span of time, and maybe even get to talk to her. It

was held at the Conneaut Lake Park in Pennsylvania, an old, small, amusement park with a midway, rides, and one small roller coaster, I believe. There was a small firetrap hotel on the grounds where we stayed, with a small separate building with a dance floor where the performances took place. Conneaut Lake is not a very large lake and was only about a two to three-hour drive from Cleveland.

It was a revelation: the ten or twelve performers were from the east and west coasts, many of whom had never played together before. All were first rate musicians, but because of the genre, not that well known. The sponsor, Joe Boughton, founder of the Allegheny Jazz Society, ran a tight ship, varying the mixes of the talent, and the music was nearly continuous with no intermissions and no wasted time talking. They played 45 minute-sets from 7:30 p.m. until midnight, which is a lot of high-powered music. This went on Friday and Saturday nights with additional music Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning during the farewell breakfast and it all came to an end at noon. Boughton had only one rule: No blues, which he felt could be self-indulgent and go on forever. Attendance was limited to 100-150 listeners in cabaret style seating at tables, and both the people and the performers who were approachable were so friendly, sharing their common love of the music, which made it all the more enjoyable. Not being seated in theater style added to the intimacy. Best of all was being able to actually talk to the performers when they were not on stage between sets. It was a wonderful experience. The music was so stimulating it was hard to get to sleep when we finally got to bed.

It was also fun to watch the college age servers standing at the bar between orders swaying and toe tapping to a kind of music they had never heard before, certainly not on their local radio stations.

Fran and I spent most of one Saturday afternoon sitting on the lawn in front of the hotel on the shore of the lake listening to two of the older, very well-known players, Bucky Pizzarelli, guitar, and Bud Freeman, tenor sax, reminiscing about their past. It was fascinating to be a part of that living history. Another time we wandered around the midway after lunch with Bob Haggart, the great bass player, who wrote "Big Noise from Winnetka" and "What's New." He lived in Sarasota where many other jazz greats did; and we met him several times at other festivals.

Fran was particularly fond of the trumpet playing of Ed Polcer, as was I. He was a Princeton grad and a half-owner of the Eddy Condon nightclub in Manhattan. We heard and met him for the first time at Conneaut Lake and then at almost all of the later jazz party/festivals we attended. He was very, very good; had a great flowing style that never quit. Another great discovery was Marty Grosz who played the acoustic guitar, and was related to the German cartoonist, Georg Grosz, who had work hung at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He played fine rhythm and sang funny songs and told humorous stories. I liked his rendition of "The Chambermaid's Love Song."

I was also impressed at one of the parties by Johnny Mintz who used to play clarinet in the big bands and had to be 75 years old when we heard him. I marveled at his energy. It was hard to get him off the bandstand. He just wanted to keep playing.

I think the first time I ever heard Dick Hyman live was at Conneaut Lake, where he did a solo of “Caravan,” which was remarkable. These people’s recordings were virtually inaccessible then in the ordinary record shops, many recording on obscure labels privately produced, with no corporate promotion. One of the side benefits at the jazz parties was that there was always a table in the lobby displaying many of the performers' CDs and it was easy, and the only way to get their CDs. It's much different now when they almost all can be sampled on YouTube.

All in all, we probably attended ten to twelve of these festival jazz parties, many while spending our winters in Florida, notably one held every year at Easter time in Atlanta.

This was a very well-run affair, heavily attended, and attracted very high-quality performers, Bob Wilber, the soprano sax player, among them; we had dinner with him several times and got to know him. He may have been the greatest living reed player in the world at that time. He lived in Scottsdale, Arizona, in the winter and spent his summers in the Cotswolds, in England. He made an arrangement of a piece of classical piano music by Frederick Delius which I gave him; had it recorded on a CD with him leading the Toulouse Jazz Band of Toulouse, France, for whom he acted as arranger and leader sometimes. He called “my” piece “Savoy Stomp.” I have the CD (it can also be found on YouTube) and get quite a thrill knowing I was responsible indirectly for one of the pieces. In the liner notes Wilber referred to me as one of his “fans” who inspired the song he wrote which is the first track on the CD.

One year, on Super Bowl weekend, we went to a jazz party in Pensacola, at the westerly end of the Florida Panhandle, stopping on the way at Tallahassee, the capital of Florida to explore it. The party was held in the old railroad station which had been converted into a Hilton Hotel. It was the first time we heard Eddy Higgins, the piano player, who knew one of my golfing friends at El Conquistador, who was a teacher and the baseball coach at Phillips Exeter Academy. He taught and coached President George H. W. Bush, “the finest young man he ever met,” he said. I really enjoyed Higgins's style and talking with him; having a mutual friend made it easier.

We never went to the closest festival, which was held in Clearwater Beach, while we lived in Florida, It was sponsored by the Arbors Record Company, who have a large catalog specializing in classical jazz music. It was more expensive for the whole program and just a little too far to attend a single session, in spite of the temptation to go to hear some specific performer.

I suspect we missed some great occasions when Dick Hyman, the great “Stride” pianist (he’s much more than a pianist limited to one style. He can be checked out on YouTube) was featured on the piano. He must have loved playing there because of the proximity: he lives in Venice, only two or three-hour drive south of Clearwater.

Many of the same great players appeared at all of these festivals all over the country, so we looked forward to seeing the same people but were never disappointed because of the freshness of their ideas and playing. Seeing many of the same attendees and performers, we looked forward to seeing old acquaintances again which added to our pleasure. It was like going home to visit family. As I recall the cost was in the range of \$ 150-\$200 per person, all-inclusive except for travel &

lodging expense. It was a great way to enjoy a short weekend get-away. These festivals originated from a private party in Denver, in the home of a wealthy individual, by invitation only, and have grown to spread all over the country, where any lover of the traditional, classic jazz may attend. It helps to get on a mailing list to know where and what to choose from.

There are even jazz festival cruises now, one as far away as Scandinavia. We took one to the eastern Caribbean featuring all Dixieland bands. It visited several islands we had not seen before and we met a Yale classmate from Connecticut who lived in the same college I did, but whom I met for the first time. It was a whole week of great music and I was mesmerized by the dancing style of one of the couples, what I dubbed the "One Step." They had been married by the ship's captain just before we left port.

They had a unique style, moving rapidly around the dance floor, emphasizing every beat. I could not take my eyes off them and wished I had that skill. They obviously were having a great time. We particularly enjoyed listening to Bob Schultz, the leader of the San Francisco Jazz Band, whom we had met at an earlier festival. His was one of the five bands, and I thought the best. Even though the music lasted for seven days, not the three-day weekend we were accustomed to, it never bored us, at least me, and we looked forward to every performance.

As always there was the opportunity to mingle with the performers which always made it special. I am very happy that in this terrible musical era of Rock 'n Roll there, are still a few oldsters and young people as well as young performers, who are striving to keep traditional jazz, which has real musical value, alive considering what it has meant to me over these past 70+ years.

During our 30 years of spending our winters in Florida, we became aware of the Sarasota Jazz Club which had about 1,500 members and claimed to be the largest such club in the world. They had a public school-educational agenda, as well as sponsoring individual performances and an annual jazz party extending over four days and held in the Van Wezel auditorium on the shores of Sarasota Bay. Many of the people we had come to know previously appeared, but the performances were on a theater stage, and the seating was in typical rows of theater seats and thus there was no chance to mingle with the performers, or to get up and wander around to relieve the tension aroused by the music, let alone dance.

It was surprising to me how many of the jazz greats lived in or retired to the Sarasota area. Perhaps it was for the same reasons we chose the area to spend our winters away from frozen Lake Erie: the amenities of a great climate, superior cultural opportunities, easy land and air transportation, and excellent medical facilities. And some pretty good restaurants.

We attended several of the individual performances when the performers were people we especially liked.

Probably the only sad occasion in all our jazz evenings was the memorial concert for Bob Haggart when most of the living jazz greats gathered together in his honor and put on a wonderful concert at the Van Wezel auditorium. Admission was free but one had to stand in line to get a

ticket the day before which I gladly did. It was a wonderful tribute to a fine gentleman and a great talent.

One or two of my other jazz related memories: I was elected to man our office one New Year's Day afternoon when we closed early, and the phone rang. It was my good friend, Jack Wyse, publisher of the trade magazine, *Properties*, asking me to hold and then he put me on the line with Duke Ellington who was in town with his band to play for a private party. I couldn't believe I was actually talking with him, told him of my collection of his records, of my lifetime love of his music, said, "Happy New Year!" and begged him to "Stay well, that we needed his music." I couldn't believe it.

Some years later we went to a fund raiser for the Gilmour Academy which was held in a small shopping center in Beachwood at Cedar and Richmond Roads. The whole center was closed after 7 p.m. to accommodate the several bands and performers who did their thing without stopping which allowed attendees to rove from one location to another to sample their favorites and the others. I can't imagine how they ever assembled so much talent to appear on the same date.

The big attraction for me was the appearance of Duke Ellington and his band. We were able to wander from one performing location to the other, and we were the first ones at the Ellington site and sat on the floor in the first row right in front of the band. It was pretty cramped, and uncomfortable and we missed some other great music. We had never been to a party where you could sample various performers and wander from one to the other while eating free hamburgers. It was an interesting format and I never heard of it being used anywhere else.

One of the artists was the girl singer, Carmen McRae who was backed by the pianist, Tommy Franklin of Detroit. I liked his playing, but had never cared for her voice, and hearing her live did not change my mind.

But the big deal of the whole evening was the chance to hear the Ellington band up close. It would be closer and more intimate than Fran's Senior Prom, the week when we first met, and the Ellington Band played for the prom. Most of the couples there didn't dance much - just stood as close as they could get and listened. We were going to be even closer and with only 50 or 60 people in the room! At first it was disappointing because the Duke was not there. The band always traveled by bus, the Duke by car with Harry Carney, the baritone sax player, as his driver; they got lost and were late in arriving. When they did finally arrive, dressed for travel in clothes that looked as though they slept in them, the Duke apologized to the audience and promised to play some extra music.

A short time later he appeared, immaculately dressed for the audience and Carney took up his place with his huge baritone sax. The band was transformed and played brilliantly. Up until the Duke's arrival the band sounded like a second-rate organization. The minute the Duke appeared it all changed; and they were their old crisp, rhythmic, rich sound. The contrast was amazing. The one thing I remember was when they were doing encores; I was sitting on the floor in the front row, I asked the Duke if they could play "The Gal from Joe's," one of my favorites, featuring

Johnny Hodges, the alto sax player. I had a record of it and had loved it since my college days, playing it over and over while I was studying. He said they couldn't do it, that it was no longer on their play list. A disappointing end to a great evening.

Another of my vivid memories is the concert at Blossom Music Center one balmy, summer evening when we went to hear the New Orleans Preservation Hall Jazz Band which was very famous for playing the old genuine Dixieland jazz. They were the first half of the program. The second half was to be The World's Greatest Jazz Band, a group I had never heard play before, but which had some fine personnel.

I felt rather sorry for them having to follow the Preservation Hall group who put on a great performance. It seemed as though this second group should have appeared first to act as a warm-up act. However, as soon as the World's Greatest Jazz Band started playing, I knew that we were going to hear something remarkable. They simply blew the Preservation Hall band off the stage. I couldn't believe how good they were. Later I bought everything of theirs I could get my hands on.

The most interesting thing was that this was basically a Dixieland band which played far more than the old standby Dixie favorites. The make-up of the band was unusual in that there were single players in the rhythm section, but two players in each of the other sections. This meant that when they played a ballad or other popular song there was double the opportunity to show off the talents of the players and it made the whole experience that much richer. I still remember leaving early in the last piece to avoid the traffic jam in the parking lot, climbing up the hill listening to Billy Butterfield, trumpet, playing "What's New," the great song with great lyrics that was written by Bob Haggart, who was there playing his own creation. It was warm and uplifting and beautiful.

My listening to music still continues to be an exploration, trying to expose myself to new composers and performers who, perhaps, are not considered top tier, or well promoted, but are otherwise interesting to me - worthy of repeated listening. It's not just nostalgia for the long-gone days of the 30s and 40s. Having access to YouTube on my computer has made this search easier and more satisfying; in some cases, a source of amazement as to how I could not have known of some of the performers I stumbled on.

Of course, not having to buy a record or CD and then being disappointed, using YouTube, which is free, makes the constant search much more appealing to me.

As examples, some of the new things which I have discovered and listened to over and over, both "old friends" and people new to me are: Dick Hyman (old) and Stephanie Trick (new) doing both solo and two pianos. I never used to like the 2-piano format. It has now become one of my favorites after listening to Hyman & Trick. I listen to them doing "I'll See You in My Dreams" again and again. Incidentally, Hyman was 88 years old and Trick was 28 years old when this recording was made. It's on YouTube and it's fascinating to witness Trick's excitement and enthusiasm to have the privilege of playing with the acknowledged master of the genre. The way she keeps time with her feet is really amazing.

She also plays the greatest arrangement of “The World is Waiting for the Sunrise” I have ever heard, with her new husband, Italian pianist, Paolo Alderighi. The photography is exceptional, and the joy on her face while playing is almost palpable.

As I have grown older, I am finding that knowing the words to these songs adds something to my enjoyment. Not only do they complement the melodies, but they seem to round out the musical experience. I have actually memorized the words to two or three of the songs I like the best. I especially like Diane Keaton singing “Seems Like Old Times” from the Woody Allen movie *Annie Hall*, available on YouTube. It's as though they were written to sing to Fran and that brings a feeling of closeness.

Other recent discoveries include: Bob Wilber playing “Si Tu Vois Ma Mère” (1983); Joe Brown at the George Harrison Memorial Concert in the Royal Albert Hall in London, playing and singing the closing number “I'll See You in My Dreams.” How I would have loved to have been there; something my daughter, Barb, called to my attention: Judy Collins, playing piano and singing in concert a song she wrote: “My Father Always Promised Us”; Blossom Dearie (knew the name from ads in the New Yorker but never heard her and when I did, what a revelation that was, singing solo, Duke Ellington's “Sophisticated Lady,” a great introduction to her many great songs; new discovery, Paul Smith, playing in his studio for his family on his 91st birthday; Dick Hyman and Dick Wellstood, two pianos, playing “Thou Swell”; Jimmy Giuffre, reed player, with a trio, playing “The Train and the Bridge”; all the Benny Goodman small groups; all the Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson things available; and, then, not to be forgotten, Frank Sinatra singing “Goodbye.” Only one word describes his performance: heartbreaking.

There is so much richness which I am afraid I will not have time to explore. Not everything on YouTube is great. One has to be selective, and one doesn't have to like something because of its category but, if my enthusiasm has not turned you off, dear reader, a little exploration could lead to many hours of pleasure and excitement.

I want to bring this long account of a life saturated with music to a close by relating two of the most shattering musical experiences in all my 96 years. The first occasion was the night, cold and rainy and we shouldn't have gone because I was coming down with a cold, when we went in to the Parma High School on Pleasant Valley Road to hear a concert given by Virgil Fox, a widely known virtuoso organist, who was also a showman. He came on stage wearing tails with a satin cape lined in red and wore patent leather pumps with red heels, enhanced with rhinestones! This proved not to be a distraction while he was playing. His playing was flawless, especially the moving *Passacaglia and Fugue* by J.S. Bach. The crowning glory of the evening for me was his encore. He played a pedal solo with incredible rapidity and accuracy. It ended with a descending passage of chords in 3rds and 4ths, which requires arching the foot to be able to strike both notes of the interval simultaneously. Open mouthed, I thought you can't physically do that. It's impossible. And at that speed. I, who had struggled with Bach's pedal solo prelude, couldn't believe it. I still don't know how he did it.

The second experience was a Thursday night concert at Severance Hall (I think it was 1968 when I would have been 47 years old) to hear István Kertész, guest conductor, lead the orchestra and chorus in a performance of Gustave Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* ("Resurrection"). I was familiar with both Mahler's and Bruckner's names because classmates across the hall at Yale who were wealthy and had a collection of every symphony recorded, played symphonic music incessantly, at high volume on their Capehart record player. The sound was fine, but it was just background noise and I never was able to distinguish one piece from another or where one began and ended. It would be stretching things to say that I was acquainted with the works of Mahler.

So, many years later, this concert was the first time I would be listening to something, knowing it had been written by Mahler. The Second Symphony calls for an enlarged orchestra and a full chorus plus a contralto and soprano soloist and has five movements. It is so long that it makes up the whole program for the evening. I recall that the first 3 movements seemed fairly conventional with some very lovely melodies.

After the intermission the 4th & 5th movements began with the entry of the chorus and the two soloists singing. The words are in German and I was reading them and the translation in the program notes and was transfixed when the stunning, exalted finale came. My cheeks were wet with tears and I was literally speechless. The audience was silent and motionless for a minute or so and then jumped to their feet and erupted into cheers and applause. In the car on the way home, I finally regained part of the use of my voice. I know that Fran enjoyed the music but was more concerned by my reaction and tried to comfort me. All I can say is that no other piece of music I have ever heard in my long life has had such a profound impact on me.

I went out the next day and bought a recording of the symphony, there are many available, but it was at least a year before I could bring myself to listen to it because I feared a repeat of the emotional impact. The first time I did listen to it, it did have the same effect. It is an amazing piece of inspiration and the 5th movement is a wonderful expression of affirmation, or faith.

Finally, some ruminations on what music is and why it is so important. Because of my foregoing experiences, I bought a Great Courses class on "Music and the Brain" which I have promised myself I will listen to someday. I speculate that the professor is making a case that a special area in the brain is wired for music, that it controls and governs the perception of music; enables us, all of us, to appreciate some form of music; and that in some way is connected and influences other areas of the brain; that in the case of some highly endowed individuals enables or compels them to express themselves by becoming virtuoso performers, or composers. It is said that music is a form of language or an unseen form of communication, and I believe this to be true. I think everyone responds to music in varying degrees and in one form or another to some sort of music. And I think music can be arousing, or inspiring, or comforting. In my case, with my middling, limited talent, never of professional caliber, I am grateful for music's presence in my life. It is something for which I thank my mother every time I think of her. What would my life have been without it?

Both playing and listening, it has been a reliever of stress and a source of happiness, my escape to a more perfect realm.

I frequently wonder, granted the importance of other personal habits, if the presence of music in one's life is not a contributor to longevity. The examples of Leopold Stokowski, Paul Smith and Dick Hyman come to mind and I am sure there are many others, both classical and pop, who are out there. I consider myself a living example.

And I close with a quotation of the German philosopher, Artur Schopenhauer, which I noticed in Frank Sinatra's biography by James Kaplan, with which I totally agree.

“MUSIC IS THE ONE FORM OF ART WHICH TOUCHES THE ABSOLUTE.”

Now I understand,

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY



Robert F. Schmidt

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