

Transcription: BV022.29.10

Interview with David Skulski

Audio Recording: 2023_0016_0010_003.mp3

Interviewer: Eric Damer (INTVWR)

Interviewee: David Skulski (DS)

Date of Interview: July 6, 2023

1 INTVWR: Good morning. It is July 6th, 2023. I'm Eric Damer and I'm talking with David
2 Skulski here at the museum. David, good to see you again. You have had a long and remarkable
3 career as a musician, as a music scholar, as a music organizer, as a music educator. And you've
4 been involved in other civic organizations as well. So thank you very much for agreeing to an
5 interview.

6 DS: My pleasure.

7 INTVWR: And your life has touched Burnaby a number of times off and on over the years.

8 DS: Mostly on, I would say.

9 INTVWR: Mostly on, very good, because I know that you've spent some of your teenage years
10 here. You went to Burnaby South High School, you taught at Simon Fraser University, you lived
11 as an adult near Deer Lake, you were part of the attempt to get a symphony orchestra going here
12 in Burnaby, you were in a wonderful band as a youth. So we'll talk about some of those things
13 and fill in all those missing blanks. **00:01:00** So how did you come to Burnaby as a young
14 person?

15 DS: Well, my father, when he was demobilized after the war, was convinced by some of his
16 patients, who, he attended overseas, were from BC, and they convinced him that he should move
17 to the West Coast, when the moment came. And then, which he did, and settled in New
18 Westminster.

19 INTVWR: Okay. So he was a physician?

20 DS: Yes.

21 INTVWR: Yeah. And where was he when he... before he came to the West Coast? That was...

22 DS: In Saskatchewan.

23 INTVWR: Saskatchewan. And you were born in Saskatchewan?

24 DS: I was born in Saskatchewan. But then, after... gee, when... after about 7 years, I would say,
25 7 or 8 years, of practicing in New Westminster, he decided to leave **00:02:00** his office down on
26 Columbia Street and move it into our home...

27 INTVWR: Oh!

28 DS: ...which was uptown, and buy a new residence in Burnaby on Burris Street. So we moved.
29 That's where we moved. I would have been, oh, 11 or 12.

30 INTVWR: Do you have any memories of moving from where you were born ...

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- 31 DS: Oh...
- 32 INTVWR: ... to the West Coast? And did you...
- 33 DS: Sure.
- 34 INTVWR: How did you feel about the big move?
- 35 DS: Well, which one? From Saskatchewan?
- 36 INTVWR: Well. Okay. From Saskatchewan to the West coast.
- 37 DS: Well, that was, you know...
- 38 INTVWR: Exciting?
- 39 DS: I was only 4, so that's... you know, it was just part of what was happening, and I... it
40 wasn't traumatic in any way. And, indeed, it was just a great adventure. The move to Burnaby
41 was not so much of an adventure. That was just interesting, but... equally happy to do it.
- 42 INTVWR: Did you have to leave friends behind in New Westminster?
- 43 DS: No, I continued to **00:03:00** go to school in New Westminster.
- 44 INTVWR: Oh, I see.
- 45 DS: I used to catch the bus. Those days, it was the Pacific Stage Lines...
- 46 INTVWR: Ah!
- 47 DS: ...that went along what was then Grandview Highway, and continued to go to junior high in
48 New Westminster. Vincent Massey.
- 49 INTVWR: Were you interested in music already at that time?
- 50 DS: I was. In fact, it was our... My homeroom teacher was a musician, he's a famous figure in
51 musical circles here.
- 52 INTVWR: Oh?
- 53 DS: Fred Turner. And he extolled the pleasures of being in a band. He was, at that time, the
54 director of the... what was it... the Kiwanis... Boys and Girls New Westminster Band.
55 Something like that. And that I... at that point, I had already been taking piano lessons **00:04:00**
56 since I was 5. So I knew how to read music, and... but I was getting a little bored with the piano

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57 and I was enticed to join the band, and... which is how I came to play the oboe. The story is that,
58 thinking it was my own original idea, and not having been 'seduced' by Fred Turner, I went
59 down to be registered with the band, no idea what instrument I was going to be playing, and sat
60 down to be registered and I was asked, "Well, what grade are you in?" and I was in grade seven,
61 and, "How old are you?". I was... how old was I? [Laughs] 11? No... 10? I don't remember.
62 **00:05:00** I was... because of my birthday being late and having skipped a grade. I was quite a bit
63 ahead of myself. And so, the interviewer or the registrar said, "Oh, a 'smart guy'. We give 'smart
64 guys' oboes," [laughs] ...because the only other person who played the oboe was a guy who was,
65 like... I think he was 30, and considered intellectually superior to most of them. So, he was a
66 'smart guy', and I, apparently, was put into that category. And, 'Ta Da!' I had an oboe thrust into
67 my hands. And... well, I've been playing it ever since.

68 INTVWR: Very good. Your family, were they... you know... did they encourage music?

69 DS: Oh yes, obviously. Because it wasn't my decision to take piano lessons! That was something
70 that was... they said, "Well, you're going to take piano **00:06:00** lessons." "Okay." And indeed, I
71 studied piano with a woman in New Westminster by the name of Priscilla Eastman, who also
72 taught another Burnaby South grad that... a colleague of mine at the time, Ralph Grierson, who
73 later became a pretty prominent jazz pianist.

74 INTVWR: So, just as a little side light, I'm curious... in your family. Did your parents or siblings
75 play music?

76 DS: No. I'm the only musician, almost the only musician in my family. I have a cousin, a first
77 cousin who has a musical career. He, in fact, became the resident musicologist at the
78 Washington, D.C. Holocaust Museum.

79 INTVWR: Oh, interesting. A resident musician.

80 DS: Musicologist.

81 INTVWR: Oh, I see, a musicologist. Now, more generally though, was your family interested
82 **00:07:00** in cultural issues?

83 DS: No more than most middle-class Jewish families.

84 INTVWR: Okay. Did you have Jewish traditions and culture as part of your family growing up?

85 DS: Well, we... well, my grandparents were fairly religious. My grandfather was kind of the
86 unofficial rabbi of North Battleford [laughs] and my grandmother used to teach... coach young
87 boys in their bar mitzvah procedures, but my parents were not that terribly religious.

88 INTVWR: So you... you didn't...

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89 DS: We observed the holidays, you know, that sort of thing, like most.

90 INTVWR: What does it mean to 'observe the holidays'?

91 DS: Well, at Passover, for example, you have a big family gathering. You invite your friends and
92 family, and it's a big deal. **00:08:00** It's a... it's something that's celebrated in the home, so it's
93 not a... it's not like going to midnight mass, you know, it's not a... some people don't even think
94 of it as being religious at all.

95 INTVWR: Did you use Hebrew at all on those occasions?

96 DS: Well the... yeah, the traditional texts are in Hebrew or Aramaic but it's not like anybody's
97 fluent in those, at least... Well, interestingly enough, I was sent to a Hebrew school. I at first was
98 sent into Vancouver to what is now called the Peretz Centre. And it was a Yiddish-based
99 program. But the commute was too much, and I couldn't... my parents weren't happy about that.
100 That was before Highway One, of course. And...

101 INTVWR: Not too **00:09:00** happy just because of the commute?

102 DS: Yeah, it was... I mean, they liked the program but it was just too difficult. And so, they,
103 along with several other Jewish families in New Westminster, convinced the Talmud Torah,
104 which was the more religiously oriented program, with... and Hebrew-focused, to set up a
105 satellite school in New Westminster. And I believe Nili was sent to that, where we went twice a
106 week... at least twice a week, it might even have been three times a week, to learn Hebrew,
107 mainly. And this was held in a building on 6th Street called the... it was the 'Lowndes', 'L-O-W-
108 N-D-E-S', the 'Lowndes School of Commerce'. We had an upstairs room where we... where the
109 classes were conducted. And I did that for 7 years... **00:10:00**

110 INTVWR: And did you...

111 DS: ...and it was a colossal waste of time. [Laughs]

112 INTVWR: Oh, okay. I was going to ask if you enjoyed it at all.

113 DS: Well, it wasn't, you know, it wasn't a poke in the eye with a sharp stick, but it was... it was,
114 just, like I said, a waste of time.

115 INTVWR: That... the family celebrations though, were they fun? Is it... is Passover a fun event?

116 DS: Oh, sure. It was always... always a pleasant occasion. Hanukkah is another one that's well
117 known and... and there's always foods, particular foods that accompany these occasions, so...
118 so, what's not to like?

119 INTVWR: Did you have a particular food that stayed with you, that you really enjoy?

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120 DS: Oh, my mother made what's called a 'mehren kugel'. Which is a carrot... it's not a carrot
121 cake, it's a carrot pudding. The word kugel means 'pudding'. It's a bit misleading because it's not
122 a dessert. It's a vegetable dish. And I found a recipe that pretty much matches what she used to
123 make **00:11:00** and it's one of my favs. I made some... I made one the other day.

124 INTVWR: I'm going to look that up. I've never heard of the...

125 DS: Carrot kugel.

126 INTVWR: Carrot kugel. 'K-U-'

127 DS: 'K-U-G-E-L'

128 INTVWR: ...'G-E-L'.

129 DS: 'G-E-L'.

130 INTVWR: Yeah, I'm going to look that up! Very good.

131 DS: [Laughs]

132 INTVWR: Back to the oboe. I was in school band and no one played an oboe. So, what was a
133 school band like in those days if you had oboes?

134 DS: Well, it wasn't a school band. It was the 'Boys and Girls...

135 INTVWR: Oh, I see.

136 DS: ... Band'. But the... Yeah, generally, there's only one in the band, which is fine, really. In
137 fact it's, you get to be... you know, you get to have your own little domain within the larger
138 ensemble. But it's... Well, band music is not really the ... not the most satisfying milieu for
139 playing **00:12:00** the oboe in, and I quickly migrated to something much more interesting.

140 INTVWR: So you moved. You finished your junior high school in New Westminster and you
141 were moved to Burnaby by that time. And your senior high school...

142 DS: And then I go to senior high school. I enrolled at Burnaby South.

143 INTVWR: Burnaby South. So what was Burnaby South like? This is about 1958?

144 DS: '57.

145 INTVWR: '57. And so what's Burnaby South like in 1957?

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146 DS: It was fine, it was fine. It was a fine... a pretty good school. I quite liked it. And... I still
147 know some people from those days. Well, I mentioned Ralph Grierson. He's not here anymore,
148 but we were... we were friendly in those days. Another successful musician from then was Brian
149 Gibson. Started a... he made **00:13:00** a lot of money writing jingles and had a studio in
150 Vancouver, I think... called 'Mushroom Studios'.

151 INTVWR: Oh, yes.

152 DS: And he now lives in the same complex that... where I do at New Westminster.

153 INTVWR: Oh, interesting. Yeah, 'Mushroom' is a classic.

154 DS: Yeah, well, that was Brian Gibson. And... and I [laughs]... I remember we both competed
155 in the... for the trophy with... at the annual Macmillan Competition for young musicians. And I
156 won, he didn't. [Laughs]

157 INTVWR: Well, it almost sounds like music is a huge part of your life, even as a teenager.

158 DS: Oh, absolutely.

159 INTVWR: You must have done other things at high school, though.

160 DS: Well, I was... I was very interested in math. I remember there was a teacher, one of our
161 teachers, was George Sparling, I think his name was. Sparling or... yes, and he **00:14:00** actually
162 lived in a kind of a duplex, or triplex, or whatever it was in North Battleford. So apparently, he
163 knew my family from those days. And I used to take extracurricular math lessons from him in
164 school. And I thought... For a while, I was even thinking I would... I would go for a career in
165 math, but then ultimately I, obviously, decided otherwise.

166 INTVWR: Any standouts or memories from your high school days that you think, "I remember
167 this person or that person or this event?"

168 DS: Um. To be honest, no. It was... it was pleasant enough, I don't have any bad memories, or...
169 No, there was the odd unpleasant moment, but no. **00:15:00** It was fine.

170 INTVWR: And did Burnaby South at the time have any kind of reputation for being good at
171 stuff, playing? Not so good? Did they have sports teams they were proud of?

172 DS: I really don't know. I was... I remember that there was one teacher who desperately tried to
173 teach me how to throw a football, which I was absolutely... I couldn't have been less interested
174 in learning. And he... [laughs] he was very frustrated [laughs] by my lack of enthusiasm, not to
175 mention ability. So if the school had any sports reputation, it was something that I was
176 completely unaware of.

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177 INTVWR: Did it have any special events like Christmas pageants or any ceremonies?

178 DS: They did a musical, you know, a musical, a little theatrical thing with music. They used to
179 do that, I think, **00:16:00** every year. I remember we used to rehearse and rehearse and rehearse,
180 and the whole day wouldn't have any classes. I would just sit in the little band in front of the
181 stage and I'd play the whole day until my face nearly came off [laughs] but it was probably
182 good... good exercise for playing, but... So... I was good with that.

183 INTVWR: And of course, a lot of people are curious about things like corporal punishment and
184 whether schools were authoritarian...

185 DS: Oh, no.

186 INTVWR: Like the strict teachers...

187 DS: Not in those days. That was... that happened, I remember, in elementary school.

188 INTVWR: Okay.

189 DS: But no. By the time I got to high school that was over.

190 INTVWR: It was over and done with? Yeah. You mentioned earlier too that you think you were
191 maybe one of three Jewish kids in the school.

192 DS: That's right. There were three.

193 INTVWR: Was that an issue at all?

194 DS: It wasn't an issue. It was just the fact it's all. There... I think there were a thousand students
195 **00:17:00** and three of us were Jews.

196 INTVWR: Did do you think anyone else cared about that? Was that...

197 DS: No, no one seemed to care. [Laughs] Least of all us.

198 INTVWR: And when it came to things like Christmas observances or Easter...

199 DS: Well, as far as I remember there, the school didn't conduct any things like that where we
200 would be required to do something that was counter to our traditions. No, it was... I think the
201 school ran pretty much on a secular basis. I remember in New Westminster in junior high, there
202 was a Christmas program where I was conscripted to... I was... I remember thinking, "This is
203 ridiculous." [Laughs] First of all, I actually was selected to 'represent' Israel. I said, "What is...
204 Why is somebody 'representing' Israel in a Christmas pageant? What is the matter with you
205 people?" [Laughs] But that's what it was. But not a burning subject.

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206 INTVWR: Very **00:18:00** good. Now, you said you were involved... at about that time, you got
207 involved in the Civil Defense band.

208 DS: Yeah, it seems to have been a short-lived thing. I found out who was the director and
209 presumably the founder. It was... and I can't remember much about him. I remember the name,
210 and I remember him, vaguely. His name was Harry Kirk.

211 INTVWR: Hm. Okay.

212 DS: And I remember we played... we played once at Oakalla, at the...

213 INTVWR: Oh, well!

214 DS: ... prison. And I believe we played at Simon Fraser. I don't remember, I think it only was
215 around for one season. And I came across a note that they played in Victoria, but I don't think I
216 was... I was in it for that one, probably couldn't go or something. And it was listed as being a
217 'unique group', 'the only Civil Defense band in the country', which I'm... **00:19:00** I'm not
218 surprised at that.

219 INTVWR: I found newspaper clippings reporting on... the Civil Defense band played at the
220 opening... I think it was at the park on Burnaby Mountain.

221 DS: Oh, yes. The Centennial Lodge. Yes.

222 INTVWR: And then they played at this great event, that great event.

223 DS: Yeah...

224 INTVWR: And 'they were wonderful'...

225 DS: Yeah. But how it came to be and where it went, I have no idea. I remember we had fairly
226 nifty uniforms...

227 INTVWR: Oh, really!

228 DS: ...a dark blue with a red stripe on the pants... Well, I thought, well, that's cool. [Laughs]

229 INTVWR: Do you remember your reception at Oakalla? Was that... a standing ovation?

230 DS: No. I remember the conductor thanking everybody for coming which was not that funny.
231 [Laughs]. No, I was, you know...

232 INTVWR: How do people get into the Civil Defense band? This is a community band?

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233 DS: I have no idea. I don't remember how... **00:20:00** Well, playing the oboe was kind of a...
234 you know, there being a shortage of players. It was not surprising that I was invited to do it. But
235 otherwise, I have no idea how it was organized.

236 INTVWR: So was it just young people, though? It can't be...

237 DS: No, not at all.

238 INTVWR: So it was adults and...

239 DS: Mixed. Yeah.

240 INTVWR: So you're playing with the adult musicians in town.

241 DS: Mhm.

242 INTVWR: And then... for people who don't know, why... what does the Civil Defense part of it
243 mean?

244 DS: I have no idea.

245 INTVWR: Oh.

246 DS: I mean, I don't know that there was a Civil Defense organization beyond the band [laughs]
247 either here or anywhere else, so it's a total mystery. And I was unable to find any more...
248 anything more about it. You'll probably do better at that.

249 INTVWR: So, more generally, though, the notion of Civil Defense, that's kind of a 1950s / early
250 60s concern.

251 DS: Yeah.

252 INTVWR: A Cold War concern.

253 DS: Yeah, I.... No, I suppose - well, **00:21:00** over... functions now are conducted by fire and
254 rescue, and, you know, ambulance services, and things like that, so I'm not quite sure what it was
255 that they were supposed to do. I mean, I knew what the band did but what 'Civil Defense' meant
256 otherwise, I... [laughs] it's a... [laughs] I don't know.

257 INTVWR: So it's... you were filled up with stories of possible nuclear attacks and trying to hide
258 under your desks? Really?

259 DS: Who knows?

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- 260 INTVWR: Oh, really? Oh.
- 261 DS: There must be... there must be somebody around who remembers.
- 262 INTVWR: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, that's generally how I understand Civil Defense. It's in case the
263 Cold War went really bad, really fast, what can you do? But that just...
- 264 DS: No.
- 265 INTVWR: ...it wasn't the topic in school?
- 266 DS: No.
- 267 INTVWR: Really? Interesting!
- 268 DS: So Harry Kirk was around in some... in another band or a group, I suppose, and I must have
269 met him and he drafted me, but I don't remember. So it was not a... other **00:22:00** than the
270 uniform, it didn't make much of an impression on me. [Laughs]
- 271 INTVWR: But you enjoyed playing in the band?
- 272 DS: Well, I don't remember it one way or the other. I guess it could have... it must have been
273 okay.
- 274 INTVWR: So... you're nearing the end of high school, you're... your music is a big part of your
275 life already by then, and so what was the next step, then?
- 276 DS: Well, the next step was to make a career decision, and I, well, decided to go to, well...
277 decided to go to university and study music there, and I had go out of town to do it. And my
278 parents wanted me to get out of a relationship that I had... that I had been in. So they thought the
279 best way to deal with that would be to put me into exile. So, I **00:23:00** have an uncle in Los
280 Angeles, and so I went there. And I started out at... with the 'Los Angeles...', some Los Angeles
281 music school of some description. I remember it was near the Hollywood Bowl. I mean, that we
282 could actually see it, I think, from the building where it was in. Anyway, it turned out to be
283 something of a disaster. It was just a very strange program and I don't think it was properly
284 accredited. I don't know who did the research on that, but it was just, "No". They had the main
285 program, I recall, was something in 'Eurhythmics', like, "What?" [Laughs] So I quickly got out
286 of that and registered with the University of California in Northridge, which is where my uncle
287 lived. And I studied there for a year and that was a very... that was a good experience because
288 there **00:24:00** were some very good people there.
- 289 INTVWR: And it... was it focused on musical performance, or also lots of theory...?
- 290 DS: Theory, history, performance, the whole... the whole bag.

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291 INTVWR: And that lasted one year?

292 DS: Mhm.

293 INTVWR: And then you came back.

294 DS: And then I came back.

295 INTVWR: Back to?

296 DS: To Vancouver.

297 INTVWR: Vancouver. And you studied at UBC?

298 DS: And went to UBC.

299 INTVWR: And their music program was half decent?

300 DS: Oh, excellent. Yeah. No, it was very good. They had imported a... some American professor

301 to run the program, and I don't know why they felt the need to do that, but they did. And he was

302 okay. He organized a good program. And I remember it started in, it was in the old forestry...

303 forestry products lab...

304 INTVWR: Oh! [Laughs]

305 DS: ... which was in an older building on UBC. And it was... [laughs] it was pretty strange. But

306 then, while I was there, they built what is now the music building. And I was one of the... I was

307 in the class... the first class to **00:25:00** take courses in the...

308 INTVWR: Okay. The one in the new building...

309 DS ...just before that... the good part of the [trek] **[inaudible]**.

310 INTVWR: Ah. Yes, yes.

311 DS: And so, yeah. So, UBC was it. And I...

312 INTVWR: And you were living closer to UBC at the time? Or went back to Burnaby?

313 DS: No. No, no, I was commuting from New Westminster.

314 INTVWR: Okay. So you didn't... you weren't back at the old homestead on Burris Street?

315 DS: Wait a minute. No, no, it was Burris Street. I was commuting from Burnaby. Yeah.

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- 316 INTVWR: And how does one commute from Burnaby to Point Grey?
- 317 DS: Well, Brian Gibson, who was living in New Westminster, he... we... I used to carpool with
318 him.
- 319 INTVWR: Okay, that helped a lot. So before we carry on, it just occurred to me, too. What was
320 your Burris Street neighborhood like?
- 321 DS: Oh, it was fine. It was... it's the Shaughnessy of Burnaby.
- 322 INTVWR: Oh!
- 323 DS: At least, that was the reputation it had. I remember there... when there was a senator who
324 lived up the street. What was the name, Ed Lawson, Senator **00:26:00** Lawson lived on Burris
325 Street. So it was, you know, pretty toney. [Laughs]
- 326 INTVWR: And so, lots of green space between homes?
- 327 DS: Oh, yeah. The house next door was another doctor, and there was a... he had a huge lot, and
328 one part of it was fenced off and he had horses. He had two horses on a field between his house
329 and our house. And in fact, the house that we... that my father bought was one entire acre. There
330 was the house and then there was this huge expanse of lawn.
- 331 INTVWR: Wow, it's almost like a small estate.
- 332 DS: Yeah. Yeah. Now, there are three houses on it, I think. But when he bought it, it was this one
333 house in a big expanse of property.
- 334 INTVWR: Did you make use of exploring the wilds?
- 335 DS: Well, I didn't. It was grass, and my parents hired a gardener to mow the grass **00:27:00** and
336 look after... look after stuff. But I didn't... I didn't have any use for it.
- 337 INTVWR: But you're fairly close to Deer Lake though, are you not?
- 338 DS: Well, it's around... well you know where Burris Street is, so it's walking distance. But not...
- 339 INTVWR: Where the [inaudible]
- 340 DS: [inaudible] ... by the [--]. That came later, the house where we were.
- 341 INTVWR: Mhm, mhm. So it wasn't that, you know, in the summer all the kids in the
342 neighborhood were down at Deer Lake then?

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343 DS: No. I had another high school buddy who lived on the avenue, what is the name of the street
344 that's on the south side of the lake? There's a bunch of fancy homes. Because I think that's part
345 of Deer Lake [--].

346 INTVWR: Could be.

347 DS: Yeah. You go past the lake and then they cruise around to the west.

348 INTVWR: The Eagles residence?

349 DS: Yes, exactly. I remember the... my mother used to be involved with the... while she was the
350 secretary for **00:28:00** Hadassah, which is the Jewish women's organization. And they used to
351 have an annual event on the Eagles property. And I would get roped into helping set that up and
352 so on. But I had a friend who lived over there, a wealthy family, his name was Jensen. What was
353 his first name? I use to... he used to... [laughs] he used to drive a Cadillac to Burnaby South...

354 INTVWR: Well!

355 DS: ...from Deer Lake. And he... of course, he went right by my house so I used to catch a ride
356 with him to school. In the Cadillac. [Laughs]

357 INTVWR: Wow. Now, I also came across a newspaper clipping. Again, somewhere I think,
358 early 1960s, that said that it was a review of some sort of a play, and you played... you had the
359 part of a rabbi.

360 DS: Oh, yes. Typecast, of course. Well that was with the... again, that goes back to the Peretz
361 Centre, which was then the Peretz 'shul', and they **00:29:00** had a little theater group. They had
362 been doing that for a number of years and I got drafted into that and I thought, "Well, why not?"
363 It was fun. I got... I got good reviews! [Laughs]

364 INTVWR: The review I read was quite good.

365 DS: And... yeah. But that was my brief career in theater.

366 INTVWR: Very good. Okay, so back on track now. After your UBC music studies. What
367 happened next?

368 DS: Well, the woman that I had been in a relationship with, that had prompted my trip to
369 California, became my wife...

370 INTVWR: Oh, very good!

371 DS: ...for the next 27 years. And I... I dropped out.

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372 INTVWR: Why?

373 DS: I did not complete my degree. And for a number of reasons, actually, not merely **00:30:00**
374 because I needed to make a living. But also because I came to the conclusion that getting...
375 having a 'BMus' after my name, was go... that, that plus \$5, would get me a coffee. It just
376 seemed to be... although I learned a lot and I was grateful for the resource of learning how to use
377 the library properly, and do research, and so on. I valued the education, but the degree was
378 pointless.

379 INTVWR: But put in perspective at that time, were serious musicians generally, did they get a
380 degree or was that not really important at that time?

381 DS: It was becoming more important. But nowadays, if you... I think if you apply and play in a
382 professional orchestra, they expect to see some letters after your name, but that wasn't so much
383 in those days. I mean, after all, I got into the Vancouver Symphony before I **00:31:00** had any of
384 those things. So...

385 INTVWR: I think my sense is that at that time, certain professional degrees or professional roles
386 really didn't use the university to get into those roles.

387 DS: Well, I can't really speak to that. I can only speak for my own experience... it was... that
388 was how it looked to me at the time. And that's the decision that I made. And I must say, I don't
389 particularly regret it. I have on occasion thought, "Hmm, you know, if I had a PhD or whatever
390 I'd probably be able to do this or that." But at the end of the day, "Probably not."

391 INTVWR: And you got a job with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

392 DS: I'm sorry?

393 INTVWR: You found employment with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

394 DS: I... as you know from my biographical material that's on the web, I was the youngest person
395 ever to be contracted to the VSO.

396 INTVWR: How **00:32:00** old were you?

397 DS: Seventeen.

398 INTVWR: Seventeen. Oh my goodness. That was very young.

399 DS: Well, again, that plus 5 bucks gets me a coffee.

400 INTVWR: [Laughs] And this is oboe?

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401 DS: Mhm.

402 INTVWR: And were there other oboists along with you?

403 DS: Well, in a standard configuration of symphony orchestra, there, triple wins. So you have a
404 principal oboe, second oboe, and, third, an English horn. I was the English horn player.

405 INTVWR: That's right. And so, exactly what is an English horn?

406 DS: It's a big oboe.

407 INTVWR: A big oboe. And how long were you with the VSO?

408 DS: Two years.

409 INTVWR: Two years? Between... In general though, you've started your career as a musician.
410 And did you stay in the Vancouver area...

411 DS: Oh, yeah.

412 INTVWR: ... to do that two years of the VSO?

413 DS: And then I was... played with the CBC orchestra and I actually toured with the CBC
414 orchestra. I was **00:33:00** thinking actually, recently, about the late, recently late, George
415 Zukerman, who was one of the most prestigious musicians in this country. I toured with him. I
416 remember I toured with him in a... it was just a... it was a quartet. It was myself, a clarinet
417 player from the VSO, and George, and a pianist. So...

418 INTVWR: And how did you...

419 DS: ...that was pretty cool.

420 INTVWR: Yeah. You enjoyed touring with such a good quartet.

421 DS: Well, flattered to have been asked.

422 INTVWR: Mhm, well that's very good. And home base at the time is Vancouver?

423 DS: I... I drove a taxi for three years...

424 INTVWR: Oh, why?

425 DS: ...in Vancouver. So got to know every **00:34:00** street and... and it was a great job for a
426 musician because you could get away from it any time. If you got a gig, you were available. You

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427 just booked off your... your driving schedule and they could... could always get somebody, but
428 then there was a job waiting for you when you came back. I remember there was a trumpet
429 player who also drove for the company, he used to keep his trumpet in the car with him and,
430 [laughs] you know, practice when he wasn't busy. And there... in those days, the cabs had radio
431 communication, so the dispatcher would say, "Car number 4- -you'll go to the ---", [imitates
432 inaudible example of a dispatch]. Tell you the address you had to go to. And then you would
433 answer, "47, Roger." So when they would call him, and the other cars, you could hear the
434 communication or at least half of it. So you'd hear the dispatcher calling him and then you'd hear
435 in return, instead of somebody saying, **00:35:00** "Yes, got that, Roger." You'd hear, "beep beep,
436 beep boop boop" on the trumpet. [Laughs] He's a funny guy. Anyways, I... that kept food on the
437 table for those years.

438 INTVWR: Now somewhere along the line, you start developing an interest in early music. Is that
439 about late 60s, early 70s?

440 DS: Well, actually, that was fairly early on that I became interested because, and here's the way
441 my thought process worked: I had taken... I had been studying with the then principal oboist of
442 the VSO, who was a wonderful musician, a great oboist... third generation oboist himself. And
443 his son, one of his sons, is now like the fourth generation playing in [Scotland]. Well, that's
444 another story. Anyway, part of the repertoire that one learns as a student is quite a bit of baroque
445 music, 18th-century music. The oboe was a very important **00:36:00** instrument in the 18th
446 century. So I'm studying the sonatas by Handel and I'm thinking, "Well, I know that the oboe in
447 Handel's time was a very different kind of instrument, it, you know, had... only had one key. So
448 how did they do that?" I was very... I was mystified, curious about how that could happen. And
449 then I didn't take long to find out that, number one, you don't need keys [laughs]. That doesn't...
450 that's not what makes an instrument superior.

451 INTVWR: Holes, though?

452 DS: Yeah, like a recorder.

453 INTVWR: Yeah. But not keys.

454 DS: And the... and at that time, there were... Well, the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis had been
455 started in the 30s, so there was already in Europe, a fairly mature tradition of people studying
456 historical instruments. In fact, it goes back to the early part of the **00:37:00** century in England
457 with Carl-- not Carl, Arnold Dolmetsch. Anyway, I mean, I did a whole lecture on some the
458 history of the revival of old music. In any case, I got caught up in it. I thought, "Wow, this is just
459 wonderfully interesting." And that's how I got into it, curiosity.

460 INTVWR: So by 'early music', renaissance and medieval?

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461 DS: Well... well, it's not so much a particular time period as it is a philosophy of performance.
462 It's the idea of performing music in the way that the composer intended. And that applies to...
463 you could even apply it to Stravinsky. No it's not a... it's a philosophy, not a time period.

464 INTVWR: Interesting. Out of that, you joined SFU **00:38:00** as a musician in residence?

465 DS: Well, no. No, that didn't happen 'til later. The... I started in... Well, the first thing that
466 happened in early music, well first of all, I went to Mexico.

467 INTVWR: Oh, okay.

468 DS: And I worked there for, was it, one year? Only one year? Yes, I think it was only one year,
469 which was... That's one thing I regret, I should have stayed longer, [laughs] but I decided that it
470 was... my interest in the historical music had only grown and I wasn't getting anywhere as a
471 player. I thought if I played Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony one more time, I'm gonna... you
472 know. [Laughs] So I just felt I had to come back and throw myself into the field of historical
473 music. **00:39:00** And so I did. Came back to UBC, and when I... and where I met other people
474 that were... had similar interests and we formed an ensemble. And we had quite a success. We
475 did a number of tours and a lot of public programming. And out of that, came the... what we
476 called, it was called, the 'Vancouver Society for Early Music.' I was the founding president and
477 executive director. And then, after five or six years, I had a falling out with the board, I had to...
478 I felt that there was an ethical problem, and I didn't agree with what was going on. And I said,
479 "Well, that's it." **00:40:00** I... and they didn't agree with me, I lost the vote, and so I was out.
480 Which I... and I then immediately turned around and set up shop across the street [laughs] and
481 started another ensemble called 'The Town Waits', and... which also had a... which then went on
482 to considerable success with touring, and public concerts, and concert series, and even made a
483 recording which stands unique in the annals of recorded music, [laughs] I'm proud to say. But
484 the... and it was out of that that I received the invitation from Simon Fraser to be appointed
485 'Musician in Residence'. I was not on the faculty. I did get to do some teaching and mainly
486 **00:41:00** assisted with other... other courses. I remember Lee Palmer, my neighbor here on Deer
487 Lake Drive, I gave some lectures for his physics class on instruments, and acoustics of musical
488 instruments from the physics point of view and other things like that. So I was kind of like a
489 resource person. I used to introduce the noontime music programs that they had in the theatre.
490 And yeah, so... that was... that was Simon Fraser.

491 INTVWR: And any sense of why Simon Fraser was doing that?

492 DS: Well, they had this... they'd established this seat for music, a musician in residence, and
493 they had to get somebody [laughs] and I don't know whose idea it was, but I got picked. So. And
494 they had a quartet. The Purcell Quartet was the ensemble in residence, and I worked with them a
495 little bit. I **00:42:00** and...yeah, I... well, I don't really know what... how it all came to be in
496 existence, and I was the last one, so it ceased to exist after me.

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497 INTVWR: So I'm curious to know about the... sort of the context of Burnaby at that time, the
498 other ensembles you were involved with, and that you knew about are mainly Vancouver-based,
499 are they?

500 DS: Yeah. Well, Vancouver Society for Early Music, Town Waits. We... yeah, we are... I was
501 living in Vancouver in Kitsilano, and these... all these other activities were essentially in
502 Vancouver.

503 INTVWR: Do you think Burnaby could have sustained that sort of activity? Was it a community
504 that had room for that?

505 DS: Well, I'm trying to think. Did we ever perform in Burnaby? Well, we certainly played at
506 Simon Fraser, but... well, otherwise, as I think you know, even to this day, there's a... there's a
507 dearth of venues that are suitable. You've 00:43:00 got the Michael Fox Theatre, which is not
508 bad.

509 INTVWR: That's very recent.

510 DS: Yeah. And you have a few churches, which are okay. But, you know, in terms of public
511 access, you can have a nice acoustic in the church, but if you have nowhere for people to park,
512 it's awkward and, you know, location is important. So I think the development of these kinds of
513 activities, you know, particularly musical, has been problematic for... for Burnaby. And I came
514 across – you know, which leads me to the Burnaby Symphony –

515 INTVWR: Mhm.

516 DS: -- and I came across... I have a copy of a letter from the city council in which they declined
517 a grant to the Burnaby Symphony.

518 INTVWR: Now, this is moving ahead quite a bit. This is 2000 and...?

519 DS: That 00:44:00 was... that came in 2001.

520 INTVWR: 2001.

521 DS: So not that much further ahead. And the... and the reasons given for the decline... for the
522 rejection of the application for a grant, was essentially to say that, "Well, we don't have... you
523 know there's no evidence that there's a viable environment." And, people... "If people want to
524 hear a symphony orchestra, they can go to Vancouver." And they do. So... the Burnaby
525 Symphony lasted, well, five, six years, and then it [inaudible].

526 INTVWR: Whose idea was it to try to get this Burnaby Symphony out?

527 DS: Leonard Camplin.

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528 INTVWR: Sorry? Leonard --

529 DS: Leonard Camplin. He was a British band leader, a band conductor, a military band
530 conductor who immigrated to Canada. And I 00:45:00 must... I give him credit for being fairly
531 entrepreneurial and having a lot of initiative. He started the... he started the Burnaby Symphony.
532 He also started the Okanagan Symphony. Yeah, very energetic guy. And I think that he lives in
533 Chilliwack, and I think he started a Chilliwack orchestra, the Fraser Valley Orchestra. So, he's
534 good at that, but he's mainly good at self-promotion. [Laughs] He's... I'm sorry to... I don't
535 mean to speak negatively about anybody, but he wasn't a good conductor or programmer,
536 and...and I think that's actually the main reason for the demise of the Burnaby Symphony. It just
537 wasn't...

538 INTVWR: And your role, though, you were called in to be one of the musicians?

539 DS: I'm just a... you know... I was principal oboe.

540 INTVWR: Ah. So, the lack of facilities, there wasn't a particularly 00:46:00 strong support by
541 the municipal government or the city government.

542 DS: Virtually... virtually none.

543 INTVWR: Do you think that there were people in Burnaby who were excited, enthused about it?

544 DS: Well, there was something of a following, it wasn't a total... You know, we didn't play in a
545 vacuum. I remember, though, writing to the board of directors. I warned them, I said, "If they...
546 if they don't get another conductor, there... in... it's... it's over." And I just... I called it exactly.
547 And that's what happened with the Okanagan Symphony. The difference is... there... is, that
548 there was a much stronger community support. The public... because there was a vacuum, there
549 was no orchestra in the area. So the public really... really appreciated what was going on but the
550 musicians were not happy. And they... after five years, 00:47:00 no, they... because they...
551 they... after five years, they fired him and they got another conductor and they're still going.

552 INTVWR: So... so how did you feel about the demise of the symphony? Were you
553 disappointed?

554 DS: Well...

555 INTVWR: That was kind of inevitable.

556 DS: Yeah. I mean, I called it. I said, "This is not going to... not going to continue." And indeed,
557 it didn't. But... I mean, it's regrettable, but...

558 INTVWR: How about today? Do you think a symphony with the right people would work out in
559 Burnaby?

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560 DS: No. No, I think the situation remains essentially the same. There's not a demonstrated need
561 because we have the New Westminster Symphony, and you've got the Richmond Orchestra,
562 the... another orchestra that I'm actually playing in at the moment, in North Vancouver, which is
563 not hard to get to, you know, it's ten... ten, maybe fifteen minutes over the Second Narrows
564 Bridge and, boom, you're there, for the Ambleside Orchestra. So... so, no, **00:48:00** I don't think
565 that... No, I think there is room for smaller kinds of events. Chamber music, and you have the
566 Clef Society, I think they're still going.

567 INTVWR: The Lyric Opera group.

568 DS: Yeah, yeah, so, you know that... that's... I think that's probably sufficient.

569 INTVWR: And then, the infrastructure for that sort of thing, like the Shadbolt Centre. That, and
570 you mentioned the Michael J. Fox Theatre. And...

571 DS: Yeah, the Cowan... the Cowan Hall is a bit of a... a... [laughs]

572 INTVWR: It seems like a nice little theater.

573 DS: Yeah, it's... it's... it's an old facility that could... could really use a major renovation in the
574 form of 'tear it down and build something decent'...

575 INTVWR: Okay.

576 DS: [Laughs] But, you know, it... it serves the purpose. You know, we... now, where did... I
577 played a musical with the light opera. Was it in Shadbolt?

578 INTVWR: I've **00:49:00** seen a few at the Cowan Theatre.

579 DS: I guess that's where it was. Yeah.

580 INTVWR: Although often, the musical accompaniment is very light.

581 DS: Well, yeah, it was... it was a small group. Yeah. It was like a quintet, I think, with piano, but
582 that's all you need to do. You know, Gilbert and Sullivan, and that sort of thing. But, yeah,
583 that's... that kind of the thing is... I think... [--] satisfies the demand that seems to exist.

584 INTVWR: Mhm. And we get the Symphony in the Park once or twice a year, and, you know,
585 and there's festivals, and....

586 DS: There you go.

587 INTVWR: ... things like that. Is playing in that sort of amphitheater above Deer Lake, is that...

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588 DS: Well, I've never done that, but it seems... looks to me to be fine, yeah.

589 INTVWR: Sort of almost across the lake from where you used to live.

590 DS: Yeah. Well, no. It's not even across the lake. It's right next door.

591 INTVWR: Oh, okay.

592 DS: Um. The...

593 INTVWR: So... so that's where you lived as an adult. So why don't we look at **00:50:00** your
594 Deer Lake home —

595 DS: [Laughs]

596 INTVWR: --you're at briefly in the 1980s, since that's come up?

597 DS: Yeah, well... that...

598 INTVWR: How did you come to live...[inaudible]

599 DS: Well, I was... I had been... I got involved, which is putting it lightly, in a business that my
600 wife started. My... and it went... It was very interesting. We ran for a number of years and were
601 amazingly successful. I mean, we didn't make a fortune, but ... but we did quite well. We were
602 selling... we had... At its peak, we had twenty-seven employees, [laughs] which is like... it's
603 staggering now that I think of it. And we were selling on three continents...

604 INTVWR: Well!

605 DS: So it was quite an amazing run. But ultimately, it went down, badly. **00:51:00** And we had
606 to... we had to sell our home. It was... and that's because I had no background in business. I had
607 no business doing it, to be perfectly frank. And I don't... I don't... I'm not going to blame
608 myself for the... for mismanagement. But if I had... if I had a different background, if I had
609 known more, I probably... it probably wouldn't have happened that way. But it did. And so we
610 had to... we had to find... we had to rent a home and we... we lived in a place off Commercial
611 Drive for a while. And then the owner of that... I think he sold it, so, willy-nilly, we had to move
612 away from there and we... we landed at the... what is now the 'Burnaby Arts Council Building',
613 the home, here in Deer Lake Avenue. And the... it was a... previously **00:52:00** owned by
614 firemen, the Burnaby Firemen. So I was the, we were the first renters after the city had acquired
615 the property. And... and it was the... it was the last place that my... my wife worked in. She
616 passed away in that house.

617 INTVWR: Oh, really? I'm sorry.

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- 618 DS: No, that was... somewhat... quite a long time ago.
- 619 INTVWR: Yeah, but it probably clouds your entire memories of that time living there.
- 620 DS: No. No. Well, I mean that's... I feel sad about it, but the... no I don't know that it clouds it.
- 621 I mean, I still have a great attachment to Burnaby.
- 622 INTVWR: On the other hand, it's a nice location. Did you [inaudible] the lake?
- 623 DS: Oh, it was just wonderful living here. We had two Newfies [laughs] who every once
- 624 **00:53:00** in a while would manage to escape because of the lake. As soon... as soon as they see
- 625 the water, [makes splash noise] they're in. So, [laughs] if the... and the... you know, the garbage
- 626 would be picked up in the back, so sometimes the... the gate would open and [makes splash
- 627 noise] they'd be in the water. And people would report that they'd seen a... seen a bear...
- 628 INTVWR: Oh, really?
- 629 DS: [Laughs]... in the... wandering around the neighborhood, because Newfies are big. So
- 630 that... that was fun.
- 631 INTVWR: And then I imagine it's not quite as busy, if this is the mid-1980s...?
- 632 DS: Yeah.
- 633 INTVWR: And so it's not... not as many people, walking around the lake continuously.
- 634 DS: It didn't seem... it didn't seem big. There weren't big crowds. No. Well, no, actually, there
- 635 was one... there was one thing I do remember, though, about Burnaby from much, much, much
- 636 earlier, even from when I was still in New Westminster. When I was a little boy in New
- 637 Westminster, I had a pet **00:54:00** budgie, as many do. And that budgie came from an aviary that
- 638 was run by a woman who lived on Deer Lake, on... on Sperling, right next to the lake. And I've
- 639 always wondered, "Who was that?" She was... it was the last house on Sperling on the... on the
- 640 west side, just before the lake. And I always... I never could remember her name, but she had
- 641 a... the whole structure with budgies. And then I think the house next to that, just north of that,
- 642 was... there was a home much, much, much later, decades later, of Ernst Schillinger, who was a
- 643 Jewish emigre from Austria. And he married my late wife's best friend. So they lived... they
- 644 lived in **00:55:00** that house. So he was a Jewish resident of Burnaby for a time until his demise.
- 645 I think they were here when... yeah... He and his brother owned a sawmill. That was their
- 646 business.
- 647 INTVWR: When you say you're the last people to rent in that house, the first and the last, what
- 648 became of the property, then, after? You were there for about three years, I think you said?
- 649 DS: Yes.

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650 INTVWR: And so what became of the property following your rental?

651 DS: Burnaby Arts Council moved in.

652 INTVWR: Is... is it owned? Did the municipality buy that property?

653 DS: Yeah, they bought it from the fire... the fire guy.

654 INTVWR: Okay, so it's now municipal property. You mentioned, again, your Jewish neighbor.
655 Part of your interest in early music, does that extend to Jewish musical traditions, as well? Is that
656 an interest? **00:56:00**

657 DS: Not significantly. There were... well, I had some friends play at my... When I remarried, I
658 had some friends play some music by Salamone Rossi, who was a Jewish composer in Mantova
659 in the early 17th century, so... [Laughs] It's... there are some interesting sort of sidelights in
660 terms of historical music where Jewish musicians are involved, but it's very much a peripheral
661 story. However, I've always enjoyed Klezmer. And... and just coincidentally, I'm also currently
662 playing with an ensemble that I've had a lot of experience with that goes **00:57:00** back to the
663 '60s, called the Vancouver Folk Orchestra, which is a Ukrainian orchestra. And the... and I
664 conducted it for a number of years... see... is it here? And... and the... and just recently, the
665 conductor who is this... the middle... the middle guy in this photo...

666 INTVWR: Oh, yes.

667 DS: The three of us were going to play tomorrow evening at the... at the Polish Hall, where –
668 and I say we were 'going to' -- because it just got cancelled...

669 INTVWR: Oh, no.

670 DS: ... and we were going to be playing a programme of some Polish pieces, and some
671 Ukrainian pieces, and some klezmer. And I always had **00:58:00** felt kle -- oboe, klezmer, no,
672 no, it doesn't make sense. And then I... a friend that I re-met a few... a couple of years ago who
673 plays accordion, and... and in fact, she knows Pavel, they played together in the 'squeezebox
674 circle'...

675 INTVWR: Right?

676 DS: ... and... and I said... she said, "Why don't we play some klezmer?" And I said, "What?"...
677 I said, "I play the oboe. It doesn't... doesn't mix." And she said, "No, no, not at all." And I... so I
678 looked it up and sure enough, there are guys playing the oboe flute in klezmer. And I thought,
679 "Hm, okay...", but I've never done it, so I'm a little bit of a... a fish out of water. But we've had
680 some rehearsals, and I... I was starting to get it. So... but unfortunately, my... my debut as a
681 klezmer musician, they got cancelled. So... [Laughs]

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682 INTVWR: Oh no. [inaudible] and in the picture you showed me, that's you on oboe, there's a
683 fellow on accordion, **00:59:00** and the third person is...

684 DS: His name is Leonard Choukroun and he's an Algerian.

685 INTVWR: Oh.

686 DS: He's an Algerian Jew.

687 INTVWR: And... and the music? The instrument is?

688 DS: Violin.

689 INTVWR: Violin.

690 DS: Yeah. [Laughs]

691 INTVWR: Klezmer usually, though, has...

692 DS: Clarinet.

693 INTVWR: ...clarinet.

694 DS: Yeah.

695 INTVWR: And... and oboe's very...

696 DS: Just... just a little weird. Well, I mean... but...

697 INTVWR: But, "Why not?"

698 DS: Okay, "Why not?" [Laughs]

699 INTVWR: What... what is the klezmer tradition anyway? Is it... does it have sort of... some sort
700 of meaning to it?

701 DS: Well, it's associated most often with weddings, but they play it at other... it... it's a... you
702 know, a Jewish folk... kind of folk music. Originally, mostly violin. And... the violin with the...
703 with the bass and... and a... a bayan, which is a... a Russian accordion, a button accordion, sort
704 of... but, you know, it's an accordion, sounds like **01:00:00** an accordion - and then occasional
705 other instruments, trumpet, trombone, guitar, mandolin. You know, everybody joined, and
706 then... and then clarinet... clarinets got involved and became a mainstay. So your typical
707 klezmer ensemble will be violin, bass, clarinet, keyboard, or a bayan. And that's... you know,
708 that's enough. You know... and then some of them are bigger bands with a whole brass section,

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709 and so on, so... so yeah... and it's very popular. In fact, the... at this point, I'm thinking most of
710 the klezmer bands around aren't Jewish. [Laughs] I said, "What?" But that's the way it is.

711 INTVWR: What is the appeal? Why... why do you have a... [inaudible]

712 DS: Well, it's wonderful music. I mean, you just have to listen to it. You can't sit still. It's great
713 stuff.

714 INTVWR: Fun? And uplifting?

715 DS: Yeah.

716 INTVWR: And fun to play? Now that you're [inaudible] it?

717 DS: Yeah. Absolutely.

718 INTVWR: Very good. Yeah, I'll have to listen to it a bit more. I have heard some klezmer in the
719 background, but I'll have to listen to it a **01:01:00** bit more. Now, you mentioned a little, a few
720 minutes ago, about having an ongoing fondness for Burnaby. And I'm curious about the
721 generation [inaudible].

722 DS: Well, I can't be specific about it. First of all, this place, the... the 'BVM', is just a... a
723 treasure. And... it's just the... the neighborhoods are nice, and the one that I grew up in is a very
724 pleasant neighborhood. The... it's a... it's a great community.

725 INTVWR: And you've lived also in New Westminster and Vancouver... you see Burnaby as
726 being a little different from those [inaudible]?

727 DS: Well, it's... it's... it's a kind of a little slower pace. New Westminster used to be even
728 slower, but New Westminster has become much more sophisticated, and... I'm thinking, for
729 example, now, for example, down in Columbia Street, there's a wonderful market, a deli called
730 **01:02:00** the 'Gastronomia Italia' who carry the... wonderful things. When I was growing up in
731 New Westminster, the... the highlight of going out to eat was to go to the White Spot. I mean,
732 it's like, "What?" [Laughs] It's... things have come a long way and Burnaby has come a long
733 way too, in this regard. So... so you have everything that you could wish for in the way of
734 amenities, I think. And at the same time, very... very pleasant neighborhoods with lots of
735 greenery, lots of gardens, parks, and trees. So, what's not to like?

736 INTVWR: Mhm. Mhm. Are you... you must have seen some changes over the years as well. So,
737 on the one hand you said [inaudible]...

738 DS: Well, you know, like, Metrotown is like, "Oh, my God. What is that?" [Laughs] And I... I
739 avoid by Metrotown as much as I can, the... the... it's like the... [laughs] even **01:03:00** the
740 parking is like a... is a maze.

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741 INTVWR: Right. Right. And you've been to the Brentwood area lately?

742 DS: Been by it. That's... yeah... the towers are amazing. I haven't actually inserted myself into
743 shopping around there, but hopefully it's a little less oppressive than Metrotown.

744 INTVWR: And how do you respond to the sort of, the... the 'new and improved' town centres,
745 densification, or development?

746 DS: Oh, I don't have a problem with it. The... I mean, we need people and people need a place to
747 live. You know, it's...

748 INTVWR: Are there... are there some favorite spots you have in Burnaby, that maybe...
749 [inaudible]

750 DS: Oh yeah, there's the... there's the miniature railway up on the north.

751 INTVWR: Oh, yeah!

752 DS: That's another...

753 INTVWR: It used to be here.

754 DS: Oh, that's great. Yeah, that's a great little attraction.

755 INTVWR: Do you still ride the miniature railway?

756 DS: I... [Laughs] I haven't been on it for a few years, but I'd like to take... **01:04:00** take, you
757 know, my grandchildren, or... Well, my grandchildren are adults, so, [laughs] not anymore, but,
758 you know, there's things like that.

759 INTVWR: Are there some parks that you visit?

760 DS: Mm. Not recently, but certainly with... I used to be with a walking group and we often came
761 to the... the... some of the Burnaby parks to do our little tours and that was... that was always...
762 they were always good. That was always nice. Around Deer Lake, or around up by the old... that
763 was slated for demolition... the Brown swimming pool?

764 INTVWR: Oh, yes.

765 DS: And there's a walk around through there that's... that they used to do. So, yeah, it's... that's
766 what you need. [Inaudible]

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767 INTVWR: Do you have any memories of Deer Lake or Burnaby Lake from... from your youth?
768 And... that kind of compare and contrast **01:05:00** to your memories, or to what you know of the
769 areas now?

770 DS: I remember canoeing on the lake, once. Just once. I'm not much of an outdoorsman, to be
771 honest. [Laughs] So... so, no, I don't really have a... strong memories or... or connections to
772 that... that aspect of life. I'm... I'm an... I'm an urbanite and an indoor person. Well, as a
773 musician, I mean, outdoor music... Well, I've done outdoor music. Wind instruments, after all,
774 do... do well, and do better outdoors, but...

775 INTVWR: Well, culturally then, how have you seen Burnaby change over the years?

776 DS: Well, not having lived here for so long, I can't really say. I don't... I'm not aware of... of
777 a... significant events that... that **01:06:00** I ought to be, you know, that I can say, "Oh. Well,
778 that's ... that's interesting." And, "No, that's different from back in the day." I can't... you know,
779 I can't dredge up that kind of impression. I'm assuming that things have, you know...
780 progressed. [Laughs]

781 INTVWR: You... you said, though, that there are some... some venues in town which, do sort of
782 fill the gaps for cultural activities that were here earlier. You know that we now have, you know,
783 the Michael J. Fox Theatre, the McCallum Theatre, and there are places for little ensembles to
784 perform, that sort of thing... Which weren't there earlier, in terms of other urban amenities, you
785 know, restaurants, or art installations, or galleries?

786 DS: We now have the Burnaby Art Gallery, which I think is probably up to snuff. There's
787 certainly no shortage of decent **01:07:00** eateries. And they're all over the place, you know,
788 Metrotown, and on East Hastings, and... some wonderful places, so, no. It's like I said,
789 Burnaby's got everything. [Laughs]

790 INTVWR: Now, do you think... again, tying back to your earlier experience, did you think that
791 the... the Jewish population of Burnaby has changed much over the years?

792 DS: Well, I... I don't know. You know as many people as I do. [Laughs] You know there are...
793 there are certainly a number of... of faculty people at Simon Fraser, sure. Mordechai Greenberg,
794 Sheila Delaney, Ted Cohen -- the late Ted Cohen, and I'm sure I've... there's a number that I
795 don't know. I know, formerly, Murray Schafer. Oh, yeah, I'm **01:08:00** sure there's at least a
796 dozen that I don't know. And I'm assuming that most of them live in... in Burnaby. And... Oh,
797 Peggy Meyer, that's another one. She lives in New Westminster, though, but she was on a... she
798 was a professor at SFU. And so... But in terms of their Jewish affiliations, I think most of them
799 are either, if they... if they practice at all, they are going to Burquest, or to whatever, in
800 Vancouver. [Inaudible] about two of the people I mentioned, Sheila Delaney and Peggy Meyer,
801 both were coming to the Peretz Centre, for example.

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- 802 INTVWR: I was going to ask about Burquest. Is it...
- 803 DS: I don't really know much about them. I was never involved.
- 804 INTVWR: Okay, and... but you were involved with the Peretz Centre in Vancouver?
- 805 DS: For many years.
- 806 INTVWR: And... and what is the Peretz Centre? **01:09:00**
- 807 DS: Well, it's the... it's, well, number one, it's the home of people who... for people whose
808 affiliation is, shall we say, linguistic. It's where Yiddish... it's the only place where you can learn
809 Yiddish as opposed... as opposed to Hebrew. And... and that continues to this day. I... I was, for
810 five years... well, I was, for two years, I was the president. And for five years, recently, I was
811 a... I was staff. I was general manager. And... and this is more significant, while, in that... in
812 that role, I was also the producer of a highly successful **01:10:00** event called the 'Festival Judio',
813 which was a celebration of Latin-American-Jewish culture, and the... the... the most successful
814 event the... at the Peretz Centre in the last fifty years, I'm proud to say. And it... and we did it a
815 number of times. So... so, yeah, I am... I am happy to have that on my... on my résumé.
- 816 INTVWR: Mhm. Mhm. So... so your Jewish heritage must mean quite a bit to you as well.
- 817 DS: Well, it's certainly a core identity.
- 818 INTVWR: Are you able to find, anywhere in town, your favorite carrot pudding? Or is that
819 something [inaudible]?
- 820 DS: Oh, I make it myself.
- 821 INTVWR: Make it yourself.
- 822 DS: Yeah, yeah, which I've done... I did recently. [Laughs]
- 823 INTVWR: Someone told me that there's a cafe up at Metrotown which serves sort of a... a
824 version of a challah bread.
- 825 DS: Oh, you can buy challah anywhere. **01:11:00**
- 826 INTVWR: Oh, okay.
- 827 DS: 'COBS' has challah.
- 828 INTVWR: Okay.

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829 DS: Not that difficult. The... maybe, if you're really fussy about it, the 'Garden City Bakery' in
830 Richmond - it's a...

831 INTVWR: Oh!

832 DS: ... kosher bakery...

833 INTVWR: Okay.

834 DS: ... so you get really good challah there if you want to get the more authentic stuff. Not that
835 there's anything wrong with COBS, by the way.

836 INTVWR: Right. I think I'll look up your carrot pudding.

837 DS: [Laughs]

838 INTVWR: Well, David, so we've been talking here quite some time...

839 DS: Yeah.

840 INTVWR: Probably enough. I'm wondering if you have any other thoughts of... you know, your
841 time spent in Burnaby, or your observations in Burnaby you might like to pass along?

842 DS: Yeah. That's a good question, and... gee, do I? [Laughs]

843 INTVWR: Where would you like to see Burnaby go in the future? What would be good for
844 Burnaby that maybe we're lacking?

845 DS: Oh gosh, I don't know. I think... I think Burnaby **01:12:00** is in a... is in a pretty good state,
846 the... the Metrotown notwithstanding. [Laughs] I'm a little puzzled about the riverfront property,
847 you know, that... that land down there. That seems to me, there's a lot of potential down there,
848 both... for both housing and... and you know, everything. And it's currently, "But, what?"

849 INTVWR: Along the Fraser?

850 DS: Yeah, along the river. You've got the 'River District' happening in Vancouver, but Burnaby?
851 I'm sure a lot of people are thinking about it.

852 INTVWR: It's mostly park, I think, right from Boundary Road over to New Westminster. It's
853 very [inaudible]

854 DS: Yeah. Well, there's some industrial stuff, you know, on... what's the street? North Fraser
855 Way? That's mostly industrial on the north side of it, which is like, "Ah, it's too bad." [Laughs]
856 Yeah, I think there's tremendous potential down there for... and I... and I was **01:13:00** very

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857 disappointed when... when as the River District was... was being developed, I went, in fact, I
858 even went to the... the guy who was in charge, and expressed my... my deep disappointment and
859 dismay that, here they're building virtually a city within a city... because eventually, there's going
860 to be, like, thirty thousand people down there...

861 INTVWR: Whoa. That's crazy.

862 DS: And I said, "Where is the theatre? Where is... where is... where is the concert hall?" You
863 know, you've got the... they've looked after the salmon streams...

864 INTVWR: Mhm. Mhm.

865 DS: You know, they've got... they've figured out everything in terms of the engineering, and the
866 environment, and yada, yada, yada. Where are the cultural amenities? It's deeply disappointing.

867 INTVWR: It goes back to your observation that without that infrastructure, there's nowhere for
868 people to present their arts and culture.

869 DS: Yeah, you know... so I would say in future development for the... the area that I'm talking
870 **01:14:00** about, by the river, you know... think about some cultural entities, 'build it and they
871 will come', as they say.

872 INTVWR: Mhm. Yeah. Yeah. Sounds like good advice for the future of Burnaby.

873 DS: Well...

874 INTVWR: Well David, maybe we should wrap up, then.

875 DS: Oh, by the way...

876 INTVWR: Yes.

877 DS: I wanted to mention one other thing. Since we're... I'm in the autobiographical mode here
878 and you've poked me with regard to my Jewish identity, and I... so I did do one thing. It's not a
879 Burnaby-related thing, but I did... and I shouldn't, you know, I... I came from Saskatchewan as
880 a child, but at that... at that point I didn't speak English. I didn't start learning English until I
881 moved... until we moved to New Westminster.

882 INTVWR: Oh.

883 DS: Yiddish is my first language.

884 INTVWR: Oh, is it? Is it really? Yeah.

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885 DS: However, you... you don't use it, it **01:15:00** fades. So it... but... in... in 19... in 2001,
886 that's already more than... more than 20 years ago, I decided, "You know, I've got to reclaim it."
887 So I... off I trundle to a program which... which... many were popping up all over the place, but
888 the one... this was the one that stood out. I went to Vilnius in Lithuania, which is historically
889 very important in terms of Jewish history. It was known as the... the 'Jerusalem of Lithuania'.

890 INTVWR: Oh!

891 DS: First of all, the population, the pre-war population of Vilnius was, I think, fifty percent
892 Jewish. And the institutions that were there, the academies, and so on, were like... absolutely
893 **01:16:00** central to Jewish culture for the whole world. And they had started... they had started a
894 few years before, a program, a summer program of Yiddish classes. I thought, "All right, I'm in."
895 And I went and I studied Yiddish there. And, again, now it's twenty years later and I've let it
896 slide, but I... I can still understand it, and... and then, read it, and so on, so... so that's... that's
897 something that I've got... [inaudible]

898 INTVWR: Can you give us a little example of Yiddish right now?

899 DS: [Laughs]

900 INTVWR: A little bit?

901 DS: [still laughing] Um...

902 INTVWR: Like, "Good morning."

903 DS: [**speaks in Yiddish**] Hm.

904 INTVWR: "Good morning, and have a wonderful day"?

905 DS: Mm. [**speaks in Yiddish**] ...and what?... [Laughs] What was I going to say? Say
906 something. [Laughs] When **01:17:00** some... somebody says that to you, it's like, you freeze.

907 INTVWR: "I... I... I enjoy visiting Burnaby Village Museum".

908 DS: [Laughs] Yeah, how do you say that? Well, [**speaks in Yiddish**] You never know, I think I
909 may have screwed that up [inaudible].

910 INTVWR: Now... now... now... Yiddish, is... it's... what is Yiddish exactly? It's Germanic...
911 it's... [inaudible]

912 DS: It's based on old High German from the 10th century.

913 INTVWR: Oh, okay. **01:18:00**

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914 DS: So it's... Now it isn't just old High German, but it's based on that. And... but, syntactically,
915 it's... have a lot of other influences. There's a lot of Slavic influence. And of course, there's about
916 twenty percent vocabulary that comes from Hebrew. So... so, for example, in... in Israel you
917 would say "Shalom.", but in Yiddish you say "Sholom". So it's the same word, spelled the same
918 way, in Hebrew letters, it uses the Hebrew alphabet, but the pronunciation is... is different.

919 INTVWR: And... and we use Yiddish terms all the time, don't we? Like, "Don't be a
920 'schlemiel'", or...

921 DS: [Laughs]

922 INTVWR: ... "Have a little 'nosh'".

923 DS: There's quite a few words that have found their way into English, yes.

924 INTVWR: And they're very onomatopoeic. They... they sort of sound like what you mean.

925 DS: [Laughs] Well, I don't know about that.

926 INTVWR: Like, "we just 'schlepped' the log..."

927 DS: [Laughs]

928 INTVWR: ... "and then we 'schlepped' ourselves **01:19:00** over somewhere else." And they
929 kinda sound like what they mean.

930 DS: Okay. [Laughs]

931 INTVWR: Any other favorite Yiddish words you have?

932 DS: No, I don't have any special expressions that I... I cling to. I enjoy the songs, of course,
933 and... but mostly, I'm reading things in translation. As you know, I... I've done a number of
934 audio books, including...

935 INTVWR: Right, right.

936 DS: ... including a number of Jewish stories in translation. And there's a wonderful novel by
937 Moyshe Kulbak called 'Zelmenyaners'. Highly recommended. It's a great novel and there's a
938 translation that we've done, I don't know... not that long ago, which I have recorded.

939 INTVWR: I'm glad you mentioned the audiobooks. Some of them also have a very strong
940 environmental theme to them.

941 DS: And... and other kinds of social issues, yeah.

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- 942 INTVWR: Yeah. So that's also an **01:20:00** area of concern for you.
- 943 DS: Well, yeah. I'm a lifelong Marxist. There, I've said it.
- 944 INTVWR: Oh, there we go. [inaudible] It's out!
- 945 DS: [Laughs] Uh oh. No.
- 946 INTVWR: Yeah. Well, you know, I've had a... found a list of them on, I think, Amazon.
947 Thought that was... and their very...
- 948 DS: Oh, not [inaudible]
- 949 INTVWR: ... [inaudible] page, important topics to discuss these days, I think. I'm glad
950 someone's doing it.
- 951 DS: Well, I try.
- 952 INTVWR: Very good.
- 953 DS: All right.
- 954 INTVWR: So... so, thank you very much, David. I will wrap this up. Thank you, once again.
955 And I... I hope to see you at the museum in the future just visiting it for fun.
- 956 DS: Oh, absolutely. **01:20:38**
- 957 [inaudible]