Recollections of Stefan Wolpe by former students and friends

Edited by Austin Clarkson

Claus Adam

I studied with Wolpe for the first time in the summer of '42, and in '43 I came back to New York and was drafted into the Army. I was back in New York within two weeks, because I got into an Air Force show by Moss Hart called *Winged Victory*. I was very lucky, because then I was in New York for six months, and during those six months I studied a great deal with Wolpe. We began right from the very beginning. I said I only knew some harmony and a little counterpoint but had never learned systematically. I asked Stefan to start me off completely from scratch. And he did with basic harmony. I remember very well the relationship of fifths within the basic key. I would also have to do keyboard harmony with him. He would ask me to go from, let's say, D minor to F-sharp major; then he would show me how many extra steps you can take in order to solidify the new key. You can sometimes do it in three steps, and sometimes in forty steps, if you know how, which is what Bruckner and Mahler did over a long period of time. He knew this system very well. Then I said, look, I've never really had thorough counterpoint, so we went through Palestrina counterpoint right from scratch. We used the Jeppesen book.

At a certain point he said, "That's enough of that. If you want to go on and on and on with that and understand it to its fullest, you can become a professor of counterpoint, but let's go on to Bach—to free counterpoint and to linear and harmonic counterpoint." That was a revelation. I remember one session when he looked for a fugue, and said, "Well, that's a very usual kind of fugue, and that's sort of standard, and, ah, here's one. Now that's an exception." And then he would show me why it was an exception, and the ingenious devices of a man like Bach. Stefan was never interested in the ordinary, the obvious, he always was interested in why did the composer turn to that or another idea, and what was the germ, and how did it develop in his mind. He would even project. He'd say, "Well, he could have gone in this direction." He would make some sketches and say, "Now that's another possibility." And this is where he was the greatest teacher, because he opened up your process of thinking how to develop what possibilities you had. That was the great thing.

I went from that step to chromatic harmony, then to whole-tone harmony, and then to completely free harmony. But he always helped to put you in focus. You had to have a certain harmony that would be structural in the piece, not just anything. The piece had to have a shape added to some kind of conviction. Then he also took me for a little while through serial technique. I must say, I turned off on serial technique. It didn't interest me. Atonal was what I was talking about.

Later on he had all these analysis classes, where you take a work of Bartók or a Beethoven sonata and analyze it. It was a revelation that one could see music that way. One could project possibilities from the material. They were really very exciting. I remember later on, when I joined the Juilliard Quartet in '55, I went up to the president of the Juilliard School and asked why a man like Wolpe isn't at a school like Juilliard, because he doesn't just give the ordinary kind of analysis—sixteen bars and eight bars and four bars transition, and this was that key, and this is this key. He wasn't interested in that kind

of analysis. He was interested in what made a piece work, what was the germinal idea and how did it develop. And the president said to me, "I would never have a man like Wolpe teach here, because I once attended a rehearsal in which the ensemble played a couple of wrong notes and he didn't know the difference." That is why he wouldn't have him at the Juilliard School. That was his answer. Other people tried, but it was hopeless.

Then I had to go away for a couple of years. As soon as I was out of the Army, I settled in New York and really went to work with him again for a couple of years and began to write some pieces, not just shorter pieces. The first thing I wrote was a string quartet, and the second piece was a piano sonata. It's being played again this year. I didn't study orchestration with him extensively. I had to orchestrate a number of things with him, but orchestration was not a big problem for me, because I played in an orchestra. I had studied a lot of scores. However, he opened my eyes to certain kinds of sonorities, certain types of doublings, or overlaid sounds I'd never thought of.

I haven't been around a lot of other teachers, so I can't tell, but it's hard for me to imagine any other teacher having the kind of vision, the kind of insight that he had. He almost detected what the composer was trying to do before it was happening, and there was something very special about that.

Born in Indonesia, Claus Adam (1917–1983) moved to New York in 1929, where he later studied cello with Emanuel Feuermann, conducting with Leon Barzin, and eventually composition with Wolpe. In 1948 he formed the New Music Quartet and then joined the Juilliard String Quartet, which he left after twenty years to devote his attention to composition. Adam was also active as a teacher and held positions at the Juilliard School and Mannes College. Interview: AC, New York, 19 November 1980.

Haim Alexander

Every week [was a lesson], and it happened sometimes that I couldn't find him at all, because he just forgot. That was not only with me, that was with everybody. If he was in the middle of a composition, he would not take care. But mostly I got the lesson, and then he sat down, and he scribbled. He gave me a row and said, "Write now a piece for violin and another instrument." And he introduced me to strict twelve-tone writing.

Stefan's music always made a really *immense* impact on me. I mean, you couldn't say, "all right, neutral." What I said to his personality I would say to his music. He was a man you could accept wholeheartedly, or you could reject wholeheartedly. So with me, first of all, I loved him. I liked him very much as a personality. He made an impact on me as a young fellow. I was here alone, I had nobody, and he was like a father to me.

I would say he gave me the beginning of what I could call a bridge to Darmstadt, and Darmstadt was my second shock. But the shock of Wolpe was perhaps not as great as of Darmstadt, because after all, I was in the mean time embedded in this Mediterranean thing. And suddenly I see Stockhausen, and Cage, and Wolpe on the other side again. I feel that I missed a lot of experiences. We were here in *Schlaraffenland* [fool's paradise], and we forgot that music was going on in the world. We did not know what's going on.

On the one hand, it absolutely transformed me in a way. I thought that it must be a man with an absolute genius personality who is able to do such things in such a manner. That he is fearless about what he is doing gave a real impact on me. On the second hand, I was also a little bit influenced by the people around me who where disgusted mostly. And mainly the mediocre musicians, who did not understand. And they laughed silently and said, "What do you think about him?" And I said, "It's a great impact." "Ah, it's rubbish, you throw it away, it's nothing." I would not say that everything which Stefan has done would give tribute to my own thinking, that I would accept it wholeheartedly. But on the whole, I would say that certainly he was such an outstanding personality and composer that the great things he has done were really some things that could not have been done by anybody else. He had his own style. And in his own style he made on me a great

impact. And sometimes I was also against it.

We discussed very often how the music should be taught. And he said, "For my opinion, you shouldn't start with Beethoven or Mozart, you should start with twentieth century. And your students should be aware of what's going on today, not of yesterday. Then, when they want to learn also about the great music of the past, either they should do it on their own, or later on. But it is for my opinion a fault of starting with old music, and then perhaps the danger that they will never get to the twentieth century. They will stick to this, and you cannot develop them." I discussed these things later with many, many great musicians, like Penderecki, and Ligeti, and Berio (he comes quite often here and is quite a good friend). "I would not accept this way of thinking," all these men said. "First of all, let them learn the way of Fux counterpoint, and so on, let them have their way of basic knowledge, and then they may do whatever they think." Wolpe was in that day when I met him exactly the other way around.

Born in Berlin (1915), Haim Alexander studied music there, then immigrated to Jerusalem in 1936. He studied with Irma and Stefan Wolpe and graduated from the Academy of Music in 1945. He later taught composition at the Rubin Academy and improvisation at the Institut Jacques-Dalcroze in Geneva. Interview: AC, Jerusalem, 26 April 1985.

Ronald Anderson

After a recital I got a very, very good review in the *New York Times*. Then I got a call from CBS Television Camera Three. They gave me a program to do anything I wanted. I was so impressed with Wolpe, with his concern, with his music, and just as a human being, that I gave the whole program to him just because of his impact as a composer. We played the *Saxophone Quartet* again, and Bob Miller played *Form*, and then we had an interview conducted by the narrator of the program with Wolpe. And that I believe drew me into his circle inadvertently. I didn't plan it that way.

I'm attracted sometimes to a piece just because it's hard, it's a challenge. As a player I like to conquer a piece. I've done that many times and ended up half the time with a piece that I don't like. Wolpe's music I adore. I like the turn of a phrase. I think I understand it from the heart. I've got a copy of the *Oboe Sonata* right here. It's about fifty pages long. I have taught his *Oboe Sonata* to trumpet students just to play the phrases and get a handle on that kind of music. His music has a gutsy appeal. It's disciplined, highly disciplined, but doesn't lose it's masculinity in the process. It has a sense of beauty, not complexity for the sake of complexity. It has humanity, warmth, occasional ugliness, but that's just as a confluence of some things coming together in a kind of dissonance of a chaotic sort, and rather quickly opening out again. That could be ugliness, or at least a chaoticness for the moment, and then kind of releasing. A gripping kind of feeling. He was a passionate man, mercurial. That's what appeals to me a lot musically. I've played *All Set* of Babbitt—gutsy, great little piece, jazzy, jazz-oriented, as is a lot of Wolpe, of course.

I grew up in Kansas City, Missouri, whence a lot of jazz came and comes—Ellington, Bobby Brookmeyer. I saw the Sauter-Finegan Band back in Missouri. Both Eddie Sauter and Bill Finegan were wonderful. I think both had lessons with Wolpe. And I came to find out that all these wonderful ideas came from one guy, Wolpe. When I came to New York I played a little jazz. I gradually got more and more out of date with it. I'm talking to Gil Evans, to these giants of jazz. "Where did you get your ideas? Where did you get these crazy ideas?" "Wolpe. From a classical composer, Wolpe. Who was kind of a strainer. He would strain your brain. Not change it. You would go to him as a jazz arranger, and you would come back a jazz arranger, but he would strain you, help you change your ideas, not his, yours." And the man could do that in so many different fields—in choral music, piano music, chamber music, and jazz—drew me.

Ronald Anderson (b. 1934) is a member of the Composers Conference, the Group for Contemporary Music, and was principal trumpet with the New York City Ballet for many years. Professor Anderson is on the music faculty of New York University

and taught at SUNY-Purchase, SUNY-Stony Brook, and Columbia University. Interview: AC, New York City, 12 December 1982.

Mordecai Ardon

I came to Berlin from Poland with a few friends and went with my friends to the museum. It was the first time that I had seen a museum. I was born in a very small town, a village. I saw modern paintings for the first time, and I was very enthusiastic and explained to my friends what I am seeing. And suddenly a woman with a black veil was standing and listening. Isn't it the police? And she approached and said, "Who are you? Are you a student?" "Yes, yes, I'm a student." "Are you a student of art?" She gave me her card, *Schlomann, Dahlem, Park Strasse 96*, and said, "Come to me." After about a month I came to Dahlem. It was a very rich district, and I went in, and she came and said, "It's a long time that you let me wait for you. What are you doing?" "I am drawing." "I want to see your drawings." Another day I came with drawings, and Stefan came from the cellar and said, "Schlomann told me about you." To make it short, she wrote a letter to the Bauhaus, I think to Paul Klee, and I became a student of the Bauhaus. It was the beginning of the friendship with Stefan. He was years in the cellar by Schlomann. The cellar became like another home. Schlomann was a wonderful woman. She was interested in homeless people and went in search for such people. We were both her children. She had a son, but we were much closer to her.

Stefan several times came with me to the Bauhaus, because there was a group of Viennese students that were very, very close to him. It was Friedl Dicker, Franz Singer, T ry-Ary-Adler Buschmann. If I am not mistaken he had more than amicable relations with Friedl Dicker. When he was visiting Weimar, he was staying with Friedl. She was a genius, *sans doute*, she was great. So we became three young friends, Stefan, and Friedl, and I. And then Ben Sion, a writer, publisher of Hölderlin. Stefan was very influenced by the poetry of Hölderlin. Stefan wasn't a student, he was like a guest there, he was with us. Because at the Bauhaus they didn't want to be professors, but masters. We were not students, we were *Lehrlinge, Gesellen*. Stefan was one of the most important points in their group.

And he came to the Bauhaus and tried to paint, to make some drawings. I don't remember if they were really good. It was like an amusement. It wasn't really his way of expression. His way of expression was music. He was a musician and tried to make music at the Bauhaus too, especially because Klee was a wonderful violinist and very interested in modern music. But I'm not sure if they came together. We had another connection, it was Johannes Itten. I became a pupil of Itten in 1920. Stefan was very influenced by him, by his way of teaching. He was a genius as a teacher, much more than as a painter. He had not only a philosophical viewpoint, but his viewpoint appealed to us very much, the way he makes something near you. Itten wanted the expression very powerful. I will give you an example. He came one day and said, "We want to draw a tiger, and you will begin it this way. You know what a tiger is, first, you have to growl like a tiger. And then suddenly, he say, "Now!" In a minute we make a tiger. His way was to shock us and to make us to forget all things we have seen, to bring out the fast feelings. And this way was very near to Stefan too. He got that. Itten was for us this magician that makes us free. He frees something in us. All of the other masters, even Klee, and Klee was a good man, was suspicious about Itten's method. For us it was something very wonderful. Stefan attended a few [of Itten's classes], enough to get an idea. Itten was a very strange person. He became Mazdaznan. All of us became Mazdaznan, and vegetarian, Stefan too. Stefan also had discussions with Gertrude Grunow, a psychological teacher. I didn't understand her well. One day she said to me, "Bronstein, come in. I am fearing you have to take care of you. The green color will be very dangerous for you. And the water too."

After a while [in Berlin] Stefan told me, "You know, there is a meeting from the Communist Party." I say, "So that's fine, that's very near me." And he says, "To me too. How fine." And so we became friends from another viewpoint too, not only

from the artistic viewpoint. I entered the Communist Party. I don't know if Stefan did. He was very close, but I'm not sure if he was really a member. I founded a group of designers in Berlin to make the *Das Kapital* of Marx more understandable to the workers, because they cannot understand it. We said we have to be more *engagé*, not to make now paintings. We have to help. Stefan was in this group too. We made films. Stefan was deeply involved with us, not in making the films, but every day he was there. How it is going on, how we are solving this question or another question. We were all of us in the *Kulturfront der Arbeiterpartei*. There were Bert Brecht, Alexander Granach, Eisler, Wangenheim. Granach was close to Stefan, and with Eisler I think there was some relations. But our group of designers were close but a separate group. We made art as a medium to help the workers to be good revolutionaries. Our group in visual art, Stefan in his music came with Wangenheim in the *Mausefalle*. He was in the way of a political musician. I'm not sure if this is great art today, but in this time, for me, for Stefan, for Friedl, for all of us, it was the only way to make something for the revolution and to make something for us. It is the only way then. We have to be modern, and what means modern? Modern means to serve the Communist Party. Our films they were to be sent to Moscow. I showed the film to a great gathering of about 500 or more workers in a school in Neuköln, a part of Berlin. It was two weeks before Hitler came. The films were not sent to Moscow, it was impossible.

His parents were petit-bourgeois. The mother was a very beautiful woman, the father a bit heavy. I don't think that the relations between Stefan and his parents were good. I had a feeling he is strange in his own home. He was much more open by Schlomann. She became more and more like a mother. Stefan wasn't at all Jewish in this time. He had not Jewish feelings. I became interested in the Kabbalah, the *Zohar*, and he asked me for this very small book [German translation of the *Zohar*]. I gave it to him. After a while he gave it back to me without any remarks. I don't think that he really had a Jewish feeling. All of us, I have to say, we wanted to escape the Jewishness. Really to escape. With me it is very strange, because I am from a very Hassidic family. I was in the Yeshiva, but nevertheless, I wanted to escape it. Stefan too, more than I.

In Palestine Stefan was in the way to become a musical leader, because he went in the kibbutzim. The kibbutz was the new human being that was born, and his feeling was, "This is my people." And he became more attached, not to Jewishness, but to the Israeli form of Jewishness, collectively. He thought this is the new Jewishness, this is the new society. This is the Jews, and they are making the new men in the new world.

Stefan was very eccentric, *very*. He was very *stirnig*, emphatic. He wanted all things that he sees, this is right, and what is other he has to make clear that isn't right. He was a special kind of a human being. In his behavior, in his kind of asking questions, of answering. He was very helpful, he had a lot of feelings for people. But he could change between hours. If it was a relation, suddenly tomorrow it can break up. If somebody, something happened, pouf. Philosophy with Stefan is mixed with personal feelings and personal things. But all of us, we loved him. I am not exaggerating, he had a special feeling for me, and I a special feeling for him. We were really like brothers. For years we saw each other sometimes every day. My wife found him a *bisschen zuviel* [a bit much].[When he left Palestine] for us, and for me personally, it was not only a shock, it was a disaster. I didn't become a Zionist, but I became an Israeli. I had the feeling that my friend Stefan is a bit of a traitor that he's going away. Because, where is the new man? He's here, not in Europe.

He was the only friend that I had. He was the only one. You see, the human being is not born alone. There is always a group of human beings who are thrown out. This group are real friends. You have colleagues—friends, but they are not with you together. Stefan was thrown with me together, so he was the only friend. The others, I have a lot of friends, I have admirers, I have people that are with me, but they not thrown with me together. He was from this group. As he was in Israel, something happened to him too. Not in a political way, and not in an artificial morality, not Zionist. It was some-

thing like destiny. He felt that there is something he belongs to. He was a Jew by description, but not a Jew. He became involved, not in Jewishness, but in some primary feelings. He was not brought up as a Jew, but he suddenly had a feeling for these strange roots. He felt that it is something for him too. After the war in '52 or '53 he came back, he was searching for this strange point. This was the purpose of coming back, nothing more. He didn't find it, and went away.

Mordechai Ardon (1896—1992), an Israeli artist of Polish birth, was born Max Bronstein. He studied at the Bauhaus, Weimar, under Klee, Kandinsky, Itten and Lyonel Feininger from 1920 to 1925. In 1926 he studied painting in Munich with Max Doerner. He immigrated to Palestine, where in 1935 he taught at the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem and was its director from 1940 to 1952. Interview: AC, Paris, 27 November 1979.

Menachem Avidom

Michael Tauber the well-known German conductor settled in this country in '33, and then they had just a string corpus of twelve musicians. I wrote the *Polyphonic Suite*, and when I came to Jerusalem for the rehearsal, I met Wolpe. I was maybe the only one who wrote in a style that was absolutely out of bounds here in the country. It was a polyphonic, dodecaphonic and very advanced work. That was at the YMCA, and I remember when Wolpe came over to me. I don't remember if he congratulated me on the work, or if we just spoke about the work. He was an original. He talked very plain and frank words. I don't think that he ever meant to approach somebody with compliments or something like that in order to obtain something for himself. He was not the type. We met before he left, when he asked me to take over his three students [. . .]

I think [his music is] absolutely original. It suits the person I knew (although not so very well, we had just a few meetings). This music is very personal, his own. He did not rely very much on what he studied with Webern or the Viennese School whatsoever, or the German School. He was very apart from Hindemith. That was Jacobi's path, a pupil of Hindemith. His vocal music that he wrote for the kibbutzim I don't think was what he wanted to write, but what he had to write. And that's what reminds me of Eisler and of Kurt Weill a little bit, this sort of socialist [music]. [. . .]

He couldn't see any future for himself here. He was right, because after he left in the early and late 1940s that nationalistic current started. Everybody was trying to build something on his national soil that brought us back to the Mediterranean music. That wouldn't have been a place for him, not at all, because he was like a block. He had his views on music. Were he back today, he would be very successful in this country, because there was a certain tiredness of that national style. We wanted to be more universal, international. So if he was here from the 1960s on, he would have found his place. [. . .] He was much more far-sighted than we were.

Born in Russia (1908), Menachem Avidom studied at the Paris Conservatoire and emigrated to Palestine in 1925. He received numerous awards for his compositions, including the 1961 Israel State Prize for the opera Alexandra ha' Hashmonait. *His professional activities include secretary general of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, chair of the Israel Composers' League, music critic, and, from 1955, director general of the Israeli performing rights society, ACUM. Interview: AC, Tel Aviv, 22 April 1985.*

Milton Babbitt

I wrote the *Second Quartet* in 1953–54 for the New Music Quartet, of which Claus Adam was the cellist. I had to leave for London and never heard the first performance of this piece. When Stefan heard that they were going to play this work, I now recall that he came to rehearsal at Claus's apartment and looked at the score with me, asked some questions, and we had a rather general conversation about the work. Now at that time Claus had given Stefan a copy of my manuscript of the *Quartet*.

The piece of mine that Stefan pressed me most about, and obviously delighted him for rather es-

oteric personal reasons, was one that never made it quite to the top of the charts. It was a piece called *Composition for Tenor and Six Instruments*. He heard a performance which the Group for Contemporary Music did up at McMillin and professed to love it. Now I must confess to you, I think the reason he felt that was because in many ways it was my most difficult piece both to perform and to hear. It was a piece that made many people very angry. It had long, long, long periods of unchanging notes, or very, very slow-changing pitch combinations, which was not like my usual music and which intrigued Stefan. There was another reason, too. It was conducted by Harvey Sollberger, and Harvey and Charles both sort of latched onto that piece. It was then repeated at a large concert at Town Hall, and I remember walking out with Stefan after that, and he expressed this great, great enthusiasm for this piece, which has never been performed since. Now *that* piece we did go over in enormous detail, for two reasons, the first being the tempo organization. It's not the only piece of mine in which I've done this, but it's the most extreme piece. I decided after that piece that I would have to find some sort of way of writing music that was not as difficult. It was just too much. We also had the problem of the tenor. The tenor in that piece used only phonemes, and the phonemes were indeed chosen in order to either contrast or blend with the instruments. Sometimes it worked very well, and sometimes it didn't. Now that's a piece about which I talked a great deal with Stefan. He wanted to know about phonemic structure. Obviously he knew not a great deal about vocal acoustics and vowel acoustics, and many of us were involved in this, not merely for musical purposes, because we were involved in electronics. He did not know about the Haskins Laboratory in New York. I told him about it. He said he would like to visit it, and he had friends who could get him there.

That is the piece with which I can remember the most discussion about the organization—spatial organization, division of the musical space, as well as musical time, and possible analogies between the two. Stefan was one of those who took quite literally—as almost everybody did, including Stravinsky—a statement that Schoenberg never made, but was alleged to have made, about the identification of the horizontal and the vertical. And Schoenberg said he liked that idea, where Stravinsky said he hated the idea. Stefan said he liked it, but he didn't want to use it too literally, and I remember discussing with him the fact that Schoenberg had never talked about that. He said something much vaguer about the unity of musical space, and this had really nothing very much to do with some notion about whatever goes up may go sideways, or something such as that. It was rather that the whole problem of how to make identifications between that which is defined linearly and that which is defined vertically required all kinds of very specific Schoenbergian techniques. We talked about those a little.

Stefan's Darmstadt lecture [1956] is really a public lecture about a lot of composers. The Yale lecture was not like that at all. The Yale lecture was "How I Write Music." Stefan decided that I'm the academic man, so he called me and asked me if I would look at this lecture. Whether, I thought, first of all, it was long enough. And I said, "Don't pack it too full, because no one will understand." And I said to him, "Look, Stefan, don't speak too quickly, and above all, you'll be able to cover much, much less than you think." Well, he showed me this packet of papers, which at that time was handwritten, and it was a mixture of languages. I mean he would put in German words where he didn't know equivalents. All I can tell you is that I probably saw it two or three times. He was very, very anxious about. He had all kinds of trepidations. He knew that Yale was a prestigious institution, and I think he thought this might get him a job. So he worried and worried. All I can tell you is that he never wrote it out completely. Perhaps a week before he was going up to New Haven I saw it. Al Baumann was constantly helping him, so I guess we did this together. We told him to use many musical examples, to illustrate everything, not to just stand there and describe these techniques. The report was that by the time he came to the end of the first hour people were looking around rather anxiously. By the end of the second hour many people had left. It is reported that it went on for over three hours, when they told him he would have to stop. When I asked him a week or

two later how it went, he said he really wasn't satisfied with it, because there were so many things that he had to skip over and skirt through. He said, "You know, people seemed to think that it was too long."

I remember when Claus asked me to come down once to hear Stefan talk about a Bartók string quartet at this new music school somewhere down on Second Avenue around Twelfth. Claus said, "Come on over, Stefan's going to talk about a Bartók quartet," and it was the Fourth. I found it fascinating for a very simple reason. It really came out of a certain kind of tradition of analysis of which none of these kids were aware. It was the tradition of the minor second in the Mozart *G Minor Symphony*. It was motive-hunting, interval-hunting. But all that Stefan was using the Bartók *Fourth Quartet* for was a way of showing how he'd gotten some of his ideas and how he'd extrapolated from them. He would show fragmentary things in the Bartók and then show how this *could* have been developed. It had very little to do with Bartók except as an instigator and as a kind of justifier for the things he was going to talk about.

When Stefan was at a rehearsal, I can tell you with regard to one piece, the piece he wrote for trumpet, saxophone, his jazz piece [*Quartet* for Trumpet, Tenor Saxophone, Percussion, and Piano, 1950]. It was rehearsed at McMillin, and the rehearsal was very interesting. It was probably a dress rehearsal. Stefan was constantly concerned with matters of balance, or being able to hear the relationship between the individual instruments. There was almost no stopping for anything else. Dynamics, a little, but that was dynamics as it contributes to balance. But with that ensemble group the piece did not come off well at all. And I think he was disappointed with the performance. But all that he kept worrying about was the trumpet and the saxophone playing too loudly.

Obviously he was concerned to teach people how music must go to be intelligent, coherent, beautiful, forceful. I forget the adjectives he used to use. These were the necessary and sufficient conditions for making this music, endowing it with those properties. This is obviously when he taught them from the ground up. Stefan was obviously quite different [from Stravinsky and Schoenberg]. He wanted to show people how he wrote music.

Milton Babbitt (b. 1916) studied at New York University where, in 1935 he received his B.A. He studied composition privately with Roger Sessions and subsequently pursued graduate studies at Princeton, where he joined the music faculty in 1938. In 1971 he joined the music faculty at Juilliard and also taught at the Berkshire Music Center. Babbitt was a founding member of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center and in 1986 was named a MacArthur fellow. Interview: AC, New York City, 14 December 1983.

Claude Ballif

I met Wolpe in Darmstadt, where I went from 1956 to 1959. For me Stefan Wolpe was an American, while Varèse ise is French. Wolpe was not at all a German composer, although he had the sense of humor of a Berliner just to have some joy in life. In his music is some humor. What I remember of Wolpe is the man, his music, and his gesture. When he was in Berlin 1956–57, I went to see him every week and showed him my music. He loved to make plays on words, and he called me Pilaf or Piaf. When I visited Wolpe, it was for the whole afternoon or the whole evening. His house was open, there was no limit. For me Wolpe is the world of childhood. He was only truly himself when one saw him alone in his home and he revealed that childlike world. He loved Paul Klee and showed me much about it. For him it was music. About music he spoke always with images, a splendid gift of the image. I never had a technical discussion of his music, but he told me about his system, which I liked very much, and I have examples that he made for me. Not abstract.

Wolpe was wonderful because when he spoke about music he gave the sense, the *essential* analysis. Josef Rufer invited Wolpe into his class at the Berlin Hochschule, and Wolpe began to speak about fish, so Rufer did not invite Wolpe to give an official lecture at the Hochschule. Rufer was very astonished that I visit Wolpe, and I noticed that he sometimes didn't take Wolpe seriously. I think it's wonderful to speak about fish with music, because

for me the most important thing in music is not to have an a, b, and c—a fixed structure, the principal thing is movement. When I think of the man, I have a sense of a sort of *mise-en-scène*. He sits down to explain some things to me, and he suddenly cuts his discussion, is completely lost, gives me some orange and things to eat, and asks Hilda to bring some cakes to Pilaf. The lesson that I have from Wolpe is that we are not in the world, but we try to be in the world. With our little genius temperament we do just what we can.

Wolpe was the first musician I've met who spoke really like an artist about music. We spoke about Bach and the choice of the voice for some subject, the choice of the color of different instruments for saying different things, and to respect the spirit of the instrument. The idea of the subject of a fugue giving the sense of the whole construction, the importance of the choice of the beginning of the piece. Wolpe considered music like a physical thing. He opened my mind about the idea of register. It was really interesting for me, because before Xenakis Wolpe was very concerned with this idea of register and pitch. He explained to me his idea of taking in the middle a pitch, and after, two, four, five [pitches], and so on, like a tree. For me this great sense of register is Wolpe, and I owe him my own path. This is my tribute to Wolpe.

Wolpe said you must read Busoni's book on new music. He was interested in the structure of the piano music of Busoni. He gave me the good poison of the most important things. I was fascinated by the *String Trio* of Schoenberg because for the first time Schoenberg put away the idea of serial construction. We discussed the *Trio* and Wolpe was very interesting about the idea of building the piece around timbre and register. I have a word, scale-harmony, and for each piece we must have a color which is given by the beginning. When you fix the register, you fix also the scale-harmony. Wolpe said, "one should know about all the structures of fantasy and all the fantasies of structure." He is for me the example of freedom of structure and not mathematics, how to bring the human, physical impulse into a real composition, with the brain, with intelligence, and with the ear.

It was really amazing for me when Wolpe said that he was a student of Webern, because his music is completely different. Wolpe said Webern was a very ordinary person, so simple, and never spoke about his music as an example. That was a good lesson. This was completely different from Boulez's idea of Webern. The French people like clear-cut ideas, but you cannot put this music in a little vase. I asked Wolpe what sort of man was Webern. Was he like Boulez, sure of himself, no discussion, mathematical? Wolpe said, on the contrary. He was a marvelous, simple man, not a star. I said to Wolpe, "What is your opinion about the *Second Sonata* of Boulez?" And he said, "Splendid!" He liked the sense of virtuosity of this Sonata.

In Wolpe's *Violin Sonata* what interested me was the freedom of the relation between the violin and the piano, the fresh, open feeling in the treatment, and no pretension to do a classical Beethoven violin and piano. It was the goal of Wolpe to give an impression of improvisation. He was not a specialist of jazz, but he has respect for light music, for music of the people. He liked that, but it was not his goal. He did not give a fixed image of himself, he was mysterious, and sometimes happy to be not celebrated. It was his strength, his force, and I thought for me there is really a great American musician, because he is American now.

Wolpe is completely different from Cage. He doesn't play that amusing, "I give this music, but I can give another." Wolpe needs a deep human feeling and requires the exact expression. We spoke about that with Beethoven, and there is a sense of Beethoven about Wolpe. Wolpe was so deeply wounded by memories of the Nazis that he put it away. He was not a man who cultivated the nostalgia of things. A man is great by the feeling of his insufficiency and by the desire to grow up despite his limitations. He was enthusiastic, excited by his environment and by life. It is a great chance to be able to express ourselves and to write music, and he had that. His music is a quest.

Composer and theorist Claude Ballif (b. Paris, 1924) studied at the Conservatories of Bordeaux, Paris, and Berlin. Since 1971 he has been professor of music analysis at the Paris Conservatoire and

since 1982 associate professor of composition. Interview: AC, Paris, 31 May 1985.

Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg

As I understand it, at some point [Leonard] Bernstein spoke to Wolpe and said that the *Symphony* clearly ought to be done, explained the inherent problem, then asked Wolpe if he would consent to have the *Symphony* re-notated. Now, it should be made very clear that the re-notation was supposed to be simply a facilitation. After all, the score is nothing that the listener directly hears. The score yields parts which stand in front of the orchestra players. It lies in front of the conductor who conducts it. But it is clearly possible to notate a composition in several different ways and still have it come out sounding the same. It was not to be the kind of job that Rimsky-Korsakov did on Musorgsky, straightening out clashing harmonies and things of that kind. As I understand it, and again this all predates my time with Wolpe, Wolpe was intensely suspicious of Bernstein and at first said no, he could not possibly work the piece over. But Bernstein was persistent and asked him, "Suppose we get you a collaborator?" And then Wolpe began to show certain signs of interest—again this is all hearsay from the Bernstein circle. When Bernstein mentioned the idea of a collaborator, Wolpe very cautiously said, "Well, whom do you suggest?" And then Bernstein began to think, and said, "It has to be someone who should know what is conductable, and it should also be somebody who could do the necessary calculations, to do the arithmetic transformations of note values necessary." And no sooner had these two requirements entered his head than he said, "Of course this means that it should be Stefan Mengelberg." Whereupon Wolpe said, "Who is Stefan Mengelberg?" And Bernstein said, "Supposing we send him to you and you can talk things over and see if you might wish to enter on this project." Wolpe said, "Fine." And through the Bernsteinian grapevine I was then told that there was a certain interest in getting this job done and would I be interested in doing it. It thought it was a fascinating idea, but I must report that an awful lot of people with whom I discussed it informally told me that I was completely crazy to consider it. They said, Wolpe will throw inkwells at you, and generally that he would be a terrible man to work with. He has an awful temper, and since you will be viewed as somebody who is basically tampering with or bowdlerizing his work, you will be behind the eight-ball from the beginnings. [. . .]

In those days the Wolpes were still living on 70th Street in a brownstone walkup. I remember going there. There was a long hallway that one walked to get to the Wolpe apartment front door. I remember being on that landing and seeing Wolpe standing there at the door, maybe twenty or thirty feet away, and I, my heart pounding. I didn't really know would I ever get out of there alive. And he was standing in the door as I came towards him, and said, "Here comes my savior." God, I was bowled over. I had expected at best being tolerated. So without another word, he leads me straight from the apartment door to the drafting table on which he worked. And there was the *Symphony* opened to the first page of the first movement. [. . .]

We went to the drafting table, and Wolpe said, "There it is." And I said, "Yes." And then, "What would you do about the first measure." No chit-chat, no small talk, straight from the bell. What would you do? So I told him what I would do about the first measure, and he said, "Go ahead." Which again seemed to me very strange, coming from the man who was going to throw inkwells at me. "And now, what would you do about the second measure?" So I told him what I would do about the second measure, and he said, "Out of the question!" I thought, now we have reached the point of resistance. However, he really objected to that specific solution, and he was not at all adamant or difficult to work with. And before I knew it, we had gone through the first, I would say, fifteen pages of that score and had come to the basic decisions about how to deal with it. So, two or three hours later we arrive at that point. and then I simply could not get myself to say, "Mr. Wolpe, I really came here to tell you that I cannot work with you until the fall." The moment for that would have been shortly after I walked in the door.

So we scheduled appointment after appointment after appointment. No waiting until fall. And in that spring, to the best of my recollection, we had 22 or 23 sessions, each one of several hours, in which we discussed basically the re-notation of the *Symphony*. Bernstein funded this. I was paid $50 a session, and the figure of $650 sticks in my mind. So I think they paid for thirteen sessions, and I threw in the other nine.

Our agreements were memorialized in the form of instructions to a copyist. I did not actually re-bar the *Symphony*. I said to the copyist something such as, "Change this 5/32 bar into a 1/4 bar. Take one 32nd note into the next measure. Change certain accents. Change certain beams. perhaps make a quintuplet out of—." As I recall we wrote all of this on yellow legal-size sheets. The copyist was doing that work while we were still re-barring. It may have gone to the copyist when we were through with a movement. And the copyist then executed these instructions, in part working on the original transparencies, in part, when things got very bad, perhaps cutting out a measure and pasting another strip in, and things of that kind. And that was the spring of 1962.

My own ideas on his notation underwent a very drastic change in the first three or four afternoons that I worked with him. At first, when I saw the score, I thought this is all unnecessarily complex, not in the sense that somebody is simply writing something which is unnecessarily hard to execute, but that somebody's writing something which is more complex than his own creative processes would mandate regardless of execution difficulties. Complication which had no justification in terms of his own hearing of these things. And I could understand that somebody hears things in a very complex way but is oblivious to problems of execution difficulty. I thought it was so to speak somewhat artificially complex. And it became very clear to me within three or four sessions of working with him that this was absolutely not the case. I mean, Wolpe thought in these terms and heard these things this way. I remember once we had an argument about a sustained note, a note which was held through let us say a 7/4 measure, followed by a 5/32 measure, followed by a 9/16, followed by a 2/4 measure with a fermata on the second quarter so there was no pulse. And I simply could not understand why anybody would do that when simple a fermata with the word *lunga* might have done equally as well. And when I asked him, and by the way we very quickly fell into speaking German, "Ja, wer hört drt das denn?" He raised his finger and said, "Das hört Gott." And it was only semi-exaggerated and semi-facetious. What he meant is he heard it, not that he referred to himself as God, but these things were real to him. And consequently one had to be somewhat, I don't want to say deferential, but deferring to these notions of his. I think that kind of realization caused me perhaps to perform surgery which was more minimal than would have been if I had felt that much of this was simply empty artifice.

The same realization came to me when he simply spoke about his music. He had such a metaphorical way, and I'm tempted to say, metaphysical way of speaking about his music. As you probably know, I come out of a rather anti-metaphysical tradition, empiricism, logical positivism. I'm always inherently deeply suspicious of these things, and I wondered whether this was not all rather hyperinflated and empty verbiage. But it is very clear that these were the terms in which he actually thought. There was absolutely nothing phony about him. And while I would still say that this is not really my style, I felt that it had to be respected. There developed between us a very great personal fondness. He would often say, "Wie schön dass ich jemand Stefan nennen kann." [How nice that I can call someone else Stefan.] And then he would always refer to me as Stefan der Zweite [Stefan the Second], as if it were written in Roman numerals, like one emperor following another. And I think he had really very paternal feelings towards me.

The actual new score was probably all finished from the point of view of the copyist by early fall. At that point it was resubmitted to Bernstein, who, and I think this is a direct quote from him, said, it was immensely improved from the point of view of performability, and he decided then to schedule it with the Philharmonic for the '63–'64 season. He scheduled six weeks or so devoted almost princi-

pally to contemporary music. At some point in late '62 or early '63 Bernstein asked me whether now that I probably knew the *Symphony* and its present score more than anyone else, would I want to conduct it. And that of course is an offer which is extremely difficult to refuse. I would say in early 1963 I agreed to conduct those performances [...] Bernstein came over, and we began to have discussions, and at that point the idea was first raised that perhaps we would not try to play the whole *Symphony*. I think it was Bernstein, because I would not have suggested it. Quite apart from the admission of dropping the last movement, there was the question of how to allocate time to the other movements. Bernstein came to me and said, "You know, Wolpe is prepared to let the first movement be played as you have it now. So that you could spend essentially all your time on the second movement." I said, "Well, I'm not prepared to have the first movement played as it is now." Little by little these things were adjusted, and finally the decision was made. We did read through the third movement on the first day. We did it slightly under tempo, which was fiendishly difficult to conduct. All the same, there were some shouts of bravo as we got through. That last movement is a marvelous movement. Stefan used to say that it had to be played like Haydn, sort of joyous, open, bouncy.

Finally the decision was made to go for movements one and two, which of course reduced somewhat rehearsal time pressure. Bernstein's behavior in the whole things was absolutely magnificent, and he was very much maligned afterwards in an article in the *Boston Globe*. He not only began to take direct and immediate personal interest in the whole proceedings, but on Thursday, having had very little rehearsal time now himself, he kept giving me his rehearsal time. In fact, Thursday morning at the dress rehearsal, of which I was to have the first half and he the second, as I was going to leave, he said, "Stick around. I'm going to cut the Beethoven short, and I want you to go through the *Symphony* again at the end of the dress rehearsal. Just play it as if it were the concert." Leonard Bernstein can be as difficult as anybody under the sun, but in that week I really think he rose to very considerable heights.

In those days, he was still, at least on Thursday nights, speaking to the audience about the music. But during the contemporary music cycle he did that all four days, because he thought it was important. The personality of Bernstein served to defuse a certain amount of audience hostility, and his comments could be viewed essentially as a plea to the audience at least to give these pieces a fair hearing. On Wednesday morning he handed me a folder and said, "These are the remarks that I intend to make tomorrow about the Wolpe *Symphony*. I want you to go over them and check them with Wolpe to see if there's anything in these remarks that either you or he would tend to object to, because then I'll make the necessary adjustments." Basically he spoke simply of the difficult birth that the *Symphony* was having from the Rodgers and Hammerstein commission on to the present, and the crisis of the *Symphony* which was not rehearsable and crisis of the parts which were not playable. And then the fact that on Tuesday morning the rehearsals had turned out to be much more difficult. At the rehearsals Wolpe was not an active participant. He told me that he could not be. He said, "Please do not come and ask me about balances and so on. I simply cannot do that." He sat there debilitated by the illness. I did check with him the remarks, and we both agreed that there was nothing reprehensible.

He was one of the most intensely vibrant of human beings, really volcanic in his energy, with those wicked eyebrows always much in action. He was also given to making occasionally wicked remarks. I once asked him in general about how he saw his own music fitting into what you might call the great tradition, by which I mean basically the notions which until very recently have governed our view of art in civilization, which is to say as a way of communication from human being to human being. Essentially the question was, "Do you intend by means of your music to stir the passions of human beings?" He said, "Oh, no, for that I use something quite different." That's an absolute marvelous Wolpeism.

Stefan Bauer-Mengelberg, a mathematician for IBM, also served as assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic (under Bernstein) and music director of the St. Louis Philharmonic. His expertise

in both areas enabled him to devise a musical notation system for computers. President of Mannes College of Music from 1966–69, Bauer-Mengelberg subsequently practiced as a lawyer in New York City and Long Island. He passed away suddenly in 1996. Interview: AC, New York City, 6 December 1984.

Bernard Benoliel

I heard some pieces by Wolpe and thought they were exceptionally interesting. There was a symposium magazine published about who was who in contemporary music in the U.S., and I looked through the biographies. I took one look at Wolpe's and saw he had studied with Busoni, and I thought that's the man for me. So I wrote to him and told him a little about myself and what I wanted to do. I got a letter about six or eight weeks later—he had been away for the summer. It was 1968. He asked me to ring him. When I did, he said, "Come down and say hello." The voice was quite faint.

When I arrived at his flat, he came to the door himself. He was wearing some crumpled, khaki-colored trousers, a shirt of similar color, partially covered by a greyish-brown sweater. By then he was hollow-cheeked, slightly bent in appearance, and looked very fragile. He invited me in, shuffling along unsteadily into his studio room, where we sat down at his piano. I brought him a batch of my early music and a choral work which I had just finished, *Eternity-Junctions, First Sequence*. I was very lucky that in the nearly two years I spent with him he was very *compos mentis* most of the time, and the lively mind, which obviously I didn't know before he had Parkinson's, was always very much in evidence. He just looked and looked at the same passage, back and forth over three pages, the kind of thing he always did at my lessons. Then he said to me, "What do you want here? What do you want to learn? What are you looking for? I think I was a bit downtrodden after being in New York a few years and not doing very much of anything. I thought perhaps I needed more traditional stuff. He said to me, "You're already a very erudite composer. You don't need that. If you want to go back and do that kind of thing on your own later for analysis, that's fine. That's not what you need now." I realized later this was very high praise from him. Then he proposed the question again, "What kind of music do you want to write?" I told him, "Well, frankly, at this point I don't know. That (*Eternity-Junctions*) is the closest I can get to what I would like to do. But I feel it's very limited, and it won't really lead anywhere." He tended to agree with this and said with great sincerity and quiet emotion, "I will tell you what I know. I think you will learn quickly." From then on I had a lesson once a week for about eighteen months, and we became quite friendly. I was very much grafted onto his European circle, now a vanished world. I sometimes saw him socially two or three times a week. I would take him to concerts, sometimes to the hospital, at other times if he was going to see a friend and he needed someone to help him. As we walked, I used to half-sing tunes from the Bruckner and Mahler symphonies. We used them as a kind of rhythmic pulse. He entered into the swing and then he could walk much better.

About Busoni, he said, "I saw Busoni six times for composition lessons over a period of a year and a half." And he added, "I remember every word." That's the quote that sticks in my mind. Another time he mentioned to me how important the aesthetics of composition were to Busoni. One hears Busoni's fingerprints on so many of his pieces from the 1920s and 1930s. What I was getting was a composite of his own thinking and Busoni's, and no doubt other great minds he came into contact with. Any great teacher is like that—which he certainly was. When I attended the 1968 Bennington Composer's Conference, Mario Davidovsky, after hearing my *Variations*, said to me, "Yes, the thing about Wolpe is that he prepares the slate, he gives you what you need, but he leaves your own personality to write on the slate." In other words, another personality could learn from Stefan without sounding like him.

Stefan loved to use vocabulary from other disciplines, the jargon of contemporary painters and imagery borrowed from chemistry. He talked about amalgams, crystallization, and the compound makeup of certain liquids. He was a great one for

using different levels of language within a composition, creating a juxtaposition of complex and simple situations. He said to me, although this is not a quote, if you're going to compose a composition from only one or two viewpoints, the piece is going to suffer terribly from being one-sided. He said, "You have to work against yourself." He meant you just don't do the things that you like, but you must also do things that you don't like to do in order to make a composition richer. That is one of the most important things I learned from him.

I was very pleased that he liked my work as much as he did. He would make criticisms, but he seemed to feel that I knew what I was doing, what I was going for. But sometimes he would say, "Well, you'd better lighten this up a bit." And then we'd have our jokes, because he knew that I was a passionate Brucknerian and loved Pfitzner's *Palestrina*. He would laugh. He also told me no one had mentioned Schmidt and Pfitzner to him since he had left Germany. He liked the Bruckner adagios very much, but not the works as a whole. I don't think he admired Mahler unreservedly either. Mahler stood for something important because he used to say that the opening of the *Seventh Symphony* was a tune that he and his cohorts used to whistle when he was studying in Berlin—a kind of signal.

His comments at lessons were usually very cryptic. I know he was different with different pupils who had different talents and different weaknesses. With me, when not actually teaching his concepts and techniques, he was very monosyllabic. But sometimes: "The rest of it is fine, but in those two bars I think the texture could be a bit more elaborate." Another time he pointed to a passage and said, "I think maybe a little traditional counterpoint here." He didn't like music that was thin in ideas. He was concerned that something was always happening. Did every note have a purpose. Was the organism healthy in the way it was functioning. Once he sat for twenty minutes looking at a phrase from my *Variations*. I remember the spot. He said absolutely nothing. I was waiting for the big pronouncement, but didn't get it. At a later lesson he was worried a little about the lengths of the variations in relationship to each other, and to be careful if I was going to use different lengths I make sure that the pattern added up to something. About a passage in another piece on which I was working he said, "Is this meant to be an organ piece?" I said, "No." "Well, what I think you have done here is written something where the tessituras are being kept too much at the same level." Actually I was thinking about passages you sometimes find in Varèse, Bruckner, and even Schubert. I don't think he liked anything too slow moving or static.

Returning to my first lesson with him, we worked with serial procedures. I showed him several scores I had written much earlier, which I considered to be bad. He said, "Well, yes, they are not good pieces." He realized there had been a lot of development since. He looked over a very early string quartet and said, "You look like you were doing everything you could not to write a serial piece." This was very astute, because it was the literal truth. Regarding serialism he said, "You have to learn it, you have to learn the complexities. Do your row transpositions. I no longer use them, I only work with a group of five or six pitches at a time." He brought out his *Trio* and said with a smile something to the effect that it was one of his most conservative pieces. When he made that kind of statement, it was always ironic and layered with other meanings. Another time he commented, "I'm not against traditional counterpoint," again with more than a touch of irony. About the composing process, "one has to give up certain things," the inference being, if you give up something there's the possibility of something else taking its place. He believed that a composition should be controlled by a protocol, but that too much preplanning could destroy the natural form suggested by the original group of pitches the composer chose to work with.

We were talking about how much great music did this or that composer produce. I said, "For me there's nothing that compares with late Beethoven from Opus 101 onwards." "Yes," he said, "the sonatas and quartets, these pieces are miracles." I think he admired *Tristan* very much. He would always answer a question. I never asked him to expand on his comments. If it was monosyllabic, I knew that is all he wanted to say. In my second or

third lesson he asked me to do an exercise for instrumental ensemble. I chose a double trio, three strings and three winds. He read through it at the piano. At one point he said, "Ah, it's Wagner, but good Wagner—*Siegfried*—very youthful." "What do you think of Wagner," I asked. Once again he expressed his admiration for *Tristan*. He also told me he found some of the harmony of *The Ring* very interesting. We discussed Schoenberg, and I was guarded, and very guarded about Webern. We were working on my *Variations*. Between lessons I decided to add a solo soprano. With a look of surprise he said, "You've turned it into a cantata. Well then, one piece you should look at is the Schoenberg *Serenade*." He wanted me to see the relationship between the vocal parts and the ensemble. He did not suggest going through the score with me. For him it was enough to give me the hint. He asked me what I thought of Webern. I answered, "For me it's just impossible, I just can't relate to his music at all." After that he never mentioned him. He was very sensitive to the likes and dislikes of other people. He had a very subtle mind. He could teach Webern without mentioning him. It was not the Webern aspect of his background that attracted me, yet it was this aspect which probably liberated me most of all, for it was the world of pitch relationships that he taught me more than anything else.

He first discussed pitch relationships in terms of serial procedure. He was a firm believer in keeping certain pitches back, not using the whole series. He also believed in using different transpositions for different types of music and different kinds of musical events—back again to different levels of language. The first thing he asked me to write was a piece for piano on four pitches only. He particularly wanted people to hear what they were actually writing, which is not the simple matter it might seem. In the little piano piece I used octaves towards the end. Looking at them he said, "Don't use octaves, it's false power." So I asked "Well, what about Bartók?" There was a long, long pause. He was obviously very loath to say anything. For once I pressed the point, "Well, do you like any of his pieces? I am particularly fond of the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*." He replied, "That's his best work, that's a good piece." End of subject. A few lessons later, he said, "You are learning very quickly, you are getting to the root of my ideas, but I don't want to overwhelm you either." He was concerned that I had time to assimilate everything. I wrote the first version of my *String Quartet* at the same time as he wrote his long delayed one for the Juilliard Quartet. He told me he was having trouble with the beginning of the second movement. I think he was concerned about setting the right mood. After spending a good deal of time looking over a passage of my quartet, he would often make no comment. I came to understand this meant it was all right, because he was not remotely shy about making a definite criticism. If he came to the conclusion you knew what you were doing and why, he felt there was nothing to say. If he was unsure, he would say, "Well, why have you done that?" Of course, I always knew why, which made him smile. I took his teaching and my music very seriously. He appreciated sincerity and had an attitude of reverence towards high ideals.

About *From Here on Farther* he considered it a kind of scherzo. When we attended the first performance, he smiled and said, "It's just a little piece." I feel it had a special significance for him because his humor crossed over from the ironic to the wistful. Before he began *Form IV* he said, "I want to do a group of piano pieces." After he had finished it he said with a very wide smile, "It's my last Beethoven sonata."

His humor was always in evidence. He loved the Marx Brothers and never tired of Harpo's antics. I think for Stefan there was a touch of Don Quixote in this man, and he identified with him. I used to come for my lessons on Thursdays. One week this was going to be difficult, and I suggested another day. He said, "Oh no, not on . . . that's the day I teach the idiots." There was no malice, just a tacit acceptance expressed with genuine good humor. He wore a similar expression when he mentioned that he lived with his third wife, while his second lived upstairs. The immortal child, naughty and wonder-struck was very strong in him. He was reticent to give opinions about colleagues or their music, but when he was asked at the New York premiere of Stockhausen's *Hymnen* what he thought of it, he said, "I like the

tunes best." After a premiere by one ex-pupil he grinned and whispered, "He sometimes composes my music better than I do." I once mentioned liking Scriabin, he was surprised and said with a twinkle in his eye, "I am a better composer than Scriabin." On another occasion I said that I thought his place in music history was assured. He answered, "What, little Wolpe."

I related to Stefan in three different ways—as a very important composer, a great and revered teacher, and, for too short a time, a personal friend. I admire Stefan's early music more than I love it. When you listen to a piece like the *Oboe Sonata* you can understand why he later developed the way he did. It is the music from the last decade that I like the most. I think it is epoch-making in its own subtle way. Sometimes I find his music a little cool, but I always succumb to the mercurial intelligence and masterly technique. I feel his music will really be understood when his potential audiences can hear almost as fast as his mind moved. What he achieved in his late pieces was to become free of the late romantic sound world with its grandiose gestures without abdicating the traditional techniques on which it was based. He was a great teacher and certainly the perfect teacher for me. Without his ideas, I don't think I would have taken the broad jump I needed to become myself as a composer. He taught me to see so many possibilities, and I know for him that is what it was all about.

Bernard Benoliel (b. 1938) was educated in the United States, won a Bennington Composers Award in 1969 and a Tanglewood Fellowship in 1970. He moved to England the following year, where he divides his time between composing and his position as administrator of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust. Interview: AC, London 11 June 1985, revised for publication, 1998.

Elmer Bernstein

No individual had a more profound impact on my life and music than Stefan Wolpe. As a matter of fact he also had an impact on certain culinary matters. I will never forget going to his apartment for a lesson and watching him put lemon rinds into coffee. Young Americans in those days (early 1940s) knew nothing of such coffee refinements as espresso.

Wolpe pushed very hard to expand one's musical horizons, and as a student you were "liberated" from some academic concepts when you backslid into conventional mediocrity. He would cry out, "What do you want to be—a Leoncavallo?" I must say that as my music was "freed up" my piano compositions became more and more complex, and I would find myself going to lessons when I found it impossible to play what I had written, it being too technically difficult. Not so for Wolpe, who could sight-read almost anything I could write, which was among his many startling talents. I learned a great deal from him about rhythmic intensity and how to achieve it. With all his forward-looking compositional techniques one never lost respect for the past. When I was married in 1942, his wedding gift to me was a bound score of Mahler's *Symphony of a Thousand*.

We spent a summer together at Port Clyde, Maine, during which time, between picnics, he analyzed Bach preludes and fugues and Mozart sonatas. Although it is daunting to see and understand the works of genius, it still illuminated "the way." I remember contentious evenings of modern music when Wolpe would spar with adversaries. I remember one particular evening which got overheated, and Wolpe accused one of his adversaries of having no sense of counterpoint. When the victim remonstrated, analyzing his work to illustrate the counterpoint, Wolpe characterized the counterpoint as "a syphilitic dog swimming in stagnant water." He projected a great vision with overpowering energy and humor.

Actually his tastes in music were especially catholic, and this quality is demonstrated by the great variety of students he taught. Some were in the big band and jazz world, in the film music world, and the concert hall. He was a superb teacher and a great energizer.

Pianist, composer, and conductor Elmer Bernstein (b. 1922) was educated at New York University. Mr. Bernstein is the past president of the Young

Musicians Foundation and currently is president of the Film Music Society, which is devoted to the preservation of film music. He has composed scores for television and documentary shows as well as more than 200 major films. Written communication, Santa Monica, CA, 11 December 1998.

Yohanan Boehm

Before Hitler I was active in so-called "saving the world through Communism." All these Jewish intellectuals were busy at that time thinking that that was the salvation of the world. As a pianist I was active in the agitprop troupe in Breslau. I didn't know Wolpe himself, but I knew all sorts of his songs, which I learned by heart by playing so many times for all different kinds of political assemblies. Then for a year I was playing French horn in the symphony orchestra in Frankfurt with William Steinberg. And when I came here in '36 I was sitting in the hall and playing the piano. I had nothing to do, because the Palestine Conservatoire of Music, which gave me the certificate, was more or less a name. So I was sitting there and playing for myself all these tunes I remembered rather nostalgically. And suddenly the door opened with a big bang, and in comes a wild man. "Who is playing my music? That's my music, that's my music!" I said, "It's me, but I didn't know it's your music." And then of course we became friends, because that was a link.

I studied with him a little bit conducting. He had only a course with Hermann Scherchen, but he had elbow technique. He did really what Scherchen [said] in his *Handbook of Conducting*. Not a normal conductor. Of course, we didn't have an orchestra, we didn't even have a record player, so the whole thing was very theoretical. We did the Haydn *Symphony in C minor*, and in order to give us the musical mind, he used to put in words: "*Wie schön ist, wie schön ist wenn Wolpe dirigiert*." He would have made a good conductor for certain things, because he had a fantastic ear and was very precise. [. . .]

You see, Stefan wasn't bourgeois enough to be administratively acceptable. He couldn't if he wanted to be. He would have blown up the thing within no time. Nobody could really then keep up with his tempo and with this tension he used to work. He was a terribly impractical man, and that's a good thing about it, just for the worker's choir. [. . .] Stefan never tried to be an Israeli at that time because of his political background. His outlook was about twenty years ahead of his time here.

Franz Boensch

I grew up in Vienna and came to Berlin in 1929. I worked with Erwin Piscator. I was reciting at that time, and I said I want to work with Wolpe on music. I had never learned singing, and he said, "You don't know a thing." I first worked with Wolpe as a couple [duo]. There were many couples [like] the famous Eisler-Busch who worked there. At Liebknechthaus we worked in certain meetings. I stood in front, and he stood seven meters behind me. He was so fanatic in music, and he never listened to what I said. He was [snorting]. Sometimes I had to break up and say, "Pass auf [shut up] Stefan, you must a *bit* listen to me too!" He was no accompanist. He even composed everything which was already composed, always changing. We were a funny couple. We did this for about a year from one meeting to another. Once, sometimes twice a week at political meetings. There were speakers at the meetings, I remember Arthur Pieck, Heinz Neumann. I think it was quite a success. Very good reception always. The people were much impressed by his kind of bravura on the piano, because workers had not much connection with this music. They valued that, they saw how he worked. It was a kind of storm of sounds that impressed them. That is their workers' experience. Their experience is hard work, you have to be quick in work, and something come out. And that was always with Wolpe too.

At that time it was still Stalinism. And once I was with him in a train, and he said, "You know, I am writing abstract music and the Party doesn't understand it." It wasn't abstract music, it was quite unusual music, but of course the workers were very interested.

We rehearsed in his studio in Dahlem. This woman had a cellar and in one [room] was a piano. And there we rehearsed. It lasted until we started the *Rote Revue*, and out of the *Rote Revue* followed the *Truppe 1931*. Wolpe wrote the music, about ten pieces, for the *Rote Revue* for choir. We played it on the First of May [1931], then we repeated it. The text was created mainly by [Felix] Gasbarra, the first dramaturge of Piscator, and the producer was the famous regisseur [Leopold] Lindtberg. The choir was [those who became] *Truppe 1931*. And this was very successful, and then somebody said why don't we stay together and get to run a theater. We played for Reinhardt, and Reinhardt is a quite different type of regisseur, and he said, "Ah, that's one of those documentary plays." We thought we may play there, which was quite stupid, because it was absolute opposing. And then we found a theater that Reinhardt recommended, *Kleines Theater Unter den Linden*. Reinhardt started there with the [cabaret] *Schall und Rauch*. The Theater is for 200 people, but not more. And then we started the *Mausefalle*. I didn't have work from the *Red Revue* to the *Mausefalle*, which was more than three-quarters of a year. We had no money, not a mark.

There was a myth going around, organized by us, that for the first time professional actors play *agitprop*, and for the first time a collective of people is writing a play. But not one of us wrote. All the writing was by Wangenheim. But it was just to mobilize people, for at that time *bürgerlich*, also nonproletarian, people never saw *agitprop*. It was a sensation for the people. And there were quite a lot of songs of Wolpe.

We rehearsed nearly three-quarters of a year. The play was always changed, and Wolpe changed too the music. We played it first for the Party, and then we went to the Café König, a big restaurant-café at the corner of Unter den Linden and Friedrichstrasse. And in the cellar we had a very big room. The play was based partly on the Bata Shoe [Company]. And the biggest shoe producer of Germany was Leiser. And we asked people from Leiser, and about 150 people came and we played for them and asked, "What is your opinion?" And they said no and yes, and Wangenheim rewrote the play again. So we had big agreement already with a lot of views. Once the curtain went up and we saw in the first row Krupp and Thyssen, friends of Hitler, who were in Berlin and wanted to see the anti-capitalistic play, how looks revolution. The pay depended on how many people in the evening came to listen.

Wolpe was an extremely nice chap. He looked a bit fragile, a bit thin, but full of energy. I always wondered that in this small, fragile body were such a power. He mixed in [political] discussions, but you had always the feeling that is not his job. He had a definite opinion about the political aim, but everything else went in and out. A good sense of humor, ja, not too much. He had this ability to listen to other people. I think the whole Communists did not listen to other people. Couldn't listen. Rather talk. He gave his whole life to composing. I don't think he was very much in political meetings, but he was connected with people, and we had discussions, we had arguments about the main things. And in a lot of main things he was as stupid as I was, and as others were. We found out much later. But I am still a Communist. He read carefully the paper, we talked about it, but he was no fanatic. He was fanatic in *music*, because he was so intensive. He had a center, and the center was music. I had a center in the Party.

Wolpe and Eisler had to do with each other, because it was the same Party, and sometimes they met, but not much. They had quite a different kind of music. Eisler is a Schoenberg students, but he wrote quite new kind of worker songs, *Kampflieder*. Eisler was in the inner circle of the Party, and whenever some play was performed, he wrote the music. He was much more known, because he was always there. Wolpe was *for* the Party, but not *in* the Party. *In* is being a member. He was very much impressed by Marx. I don't think he read Hegel, and Engels he always cited, talking about the historical parts, the origin of the family.

Franz Boensch (1907–1986), born in Vienna, was an actor and author. For a time he was a member of the agitprop troupe Sturmtrupp Alarm. He was a member of Truppe 1931. He was imprisoned for Communist activities and emigrated to London in 1937. After the war he returned to Vienna. Inter-

view: AC, Vienna, December 30, 1983.

Herbert Brün

Whether you met him in his home, or in a cafe, or talking about music or about food, or about marriage, or about taking another apartment, it was always the same person. You could not find Wolpe not hollering. He was singing consistently with a more or less sophisticated voice. It depended on the content sometimes, but it never depended on the content whether he would sing or not.

The way he composed was quite unique in the following respect. I met in the mean time other composers, among them composers I respect very much, and the difference between all of those and Wolpe that I remember most clearly is the way they spoke about their working. When Wolpe said he worked, it was always in the past. He didn't say, "I'm now going to work," but he reported to you "last night I really worked." The others speak about plans, problems they have, sometimes interestingly, always long and eloquently. Wolpe in this respect was rather strange. He could speak about a subject infinitely long and with great enthusiasm, and when it came to the point that he composed a piece, he was brief—not uncheerful, with a bit of cheer—he just reported, "I worked." And then he turned around and changed the subject. So any kind of witnessship to his particular sequence or priorities while composing a piece is not known to me. I claim it cannot have been known to people at that time. I do not know how he spoke later in New York. Suddenly one day he said, "Here's a piece." And then there was one. Also I found him rarely flaunting pieces, showing them. There *were* some works. Everybody knew about his sensitivity, about him wanting them performed. It was undeniable. But it never came out in *sentences* out of his mouth. It was indirect. "You should get Stefan some performances," and "Who can we interest?" The futility of these attempts was one part, of course, of my history in Israel, in Palestine at that time. For him it was bitter. [. . .]

He analyzed Brahms, he analyzed Beethoven. He defended the Brahms *First Piano Concerto* against all verdicts of all critics of all times. He considered that one of Brahms's great pieces, and that it was slandered and libeled by the connoisseurs and the specialists. But that he did not prove by analysis. The Brahms *Handel Variations*, that was a real assignment he gave. Then he analyzed Schoenberg piano pieces, all of them, Opus 23, every one, depending on the maturity of the student. He made this judgment, and also Irma was then consulted. He preferred to analyze pieces that the people can play. Then if they can't play, he allowed that they couple with somebody who can play. I could play, so I had a nice Wolpe introduction to all the piano music, including the *Suite, opus 25*, and even the piano part to *Pierrot Lunaire*, which he liked very much.

He had a strange way to speak to us. He would not put any one really down. I suspected that he was far more in love with Schoenberg than with Stravinsky, yet he didn't want any one of us to think lowly of Stravinsky, because he admired the skill of this man tremendously and got turned off only when Stravinsky got popular, which happened at that time with the *Petrouchka*. I don't recollect any critical remark; I heard more about Schoenberg from him than about Stravinsky. *L'Histoire du Soldat* was his exception. I think there that he could get a bit warmed up.

He loved pictures, and he and de Kooning were friends, and some others. I mean he had always painters. He talked about Klee, and he made great friends in Palestine with the painters. And he always had paintings hanging all over the place. And one gave him paintings because he knew what he saw, and he knew to say it. So painters were simply eager. And he taught us, too, in his funny way, when he didn't mean to, sort of by delegate, to watch them, and to see them, and to look more carefully. Touch. Touch with the eyes, touch with the ears, touch with the fingers. Everything's touch.

Constructivism was not wanted. So many needs are not satisfied that this was one more. If people don't want what they need, it's very difficult to talk with them. And he, *ja*, it was needed. It's remained needed. Cage also was no competition for them, he was so the other side. Whereas Wolpe still was be-

longing to, he was another composer, right? And Nono and Varèse wse were considered, and Stockhausen and Kagel, and there comes Wolpe. Who needs another competition? There I'm a little malicious, but I'm afraid I'm not off.

I remember certain behaviors of his, and the tone of voice, and saying that definitely make it clear to me that he was also warning us of provincialism. He wanted us to have a view at the small detail in the music which we were to analyze (which he showed us, or which he allowed us to show him) to be so minuscule, so minutely pedantic, in order to not be provincial, since in his view provincialism consisted in categories with a lid on. That when people *knew* everything already, "Oh, well, yes, that's *that*." Now these clichés are still with us today. Nothing has changed. We always live in an environment that, with more or less affection, tries to calm us down. And the ruling word is *down*. Not to calm us *up*, which would be almost an encouragement, but calm us *down*. And that he couldn't stand. Wolpe was probably the first person I met where I learned that the words, "Oh, don't worry," are an insult.

Wolpe was a master of the implosion. What he succeeded in doing is to submerge what is prominent. The surface remains steady, the peaks form underneath. It is a wonderful entailment of rebounding from the highest and lowest toward a dramatic middle. The peaks show their profile out of the middle. So anybody who hears the music linearly, and only this way, gets tired after a while and thinks it's always the same. They hear only an average timbre. The moment you become analytic and think, "What's happening inside?" everything is exploding, you are full of stuff. That's the way it's got to be played, too. You must have no false dramatization of a plot nature. It has to always be played as if it would stop in a second and is only going on because of a hiccup. This is my description of the attitude you have to have when you want to have a piece in the Wolpe way. [. . .]

Wolpe spoke with us in German, because most of us were Germans. When he looked at a score, he said, "It's a marvelous idea," or, "You're doing fine." He might say loudly "You're doing fine" as a trumpet, fortissimo. He walked around, and then he picked it up again, picked up the paper and looked at it again, and he said, "Well, what here? Aha, ha, ha!" Then again the next page, "Aha, ha ha! Well? Now look!" And then came the word in some context or another, "*Mittlere Zustand der Extase*," which is, "mean-average state of ecstasy." This was a devastating criticism on his part, and it teaches two things. No matter who you are and what composer you would like to be, with his approval or not with his approval, you cannot serve your goals if you state only them, if you do not *nest* them in something. Now the word 'nest' is mine. I insist on it. I am very proud of that word, and I've used it in some other contexts. His idea was that you have to not only state what you want, but also that to which it is to be the answer. So you have to compose an analogue to a fictitious reality which gives rise to your idea, which has provoked you, and that which has provoked you must also somewhere be stated. You cannot *just* sit there and make your statement with the highest voice and a continuous, allegedly persuasive, but really dictatorial, imposing way. He was opposed to any kind of average, mean-average state, particularly the mean-average state of ecstasy. That was his bogus, he reacted to that violently, and sent people home because he doesn't want to *look* at it any more. It took a while to understand that, as you can imagine. He was never a great pedagogue. That was not the thing. The thing was still a mixture of the old tradition of the master and the political agent. He wanted to do both. On the one hand, he wanted to tell you how to do things, on the other hand, he didn't want to tell you *what to do*. He told you how to do what you want—that was the political side—and the other side was the master side. This all became totally awake suddenly. The relevance to our times is mine of course, since Wolpe is not around, and I don't have the opportunity to discuss it with him.

With Wolpe the situation was this. He understood, and taught, and in some way conveyed (is probably a better word) that dialectics are not only a method of philosophy, and thinking, and logic, and discussion, and argument, but are also a description of dramaturgical behavior. The good drama in the hands of a dramaturge, that is, a person who

knows about sequence, reference, and durations—this is indispensable and has to be regarded as a *sine qua non*, as an indispensable condition to bring forth any thought whatsoever. After that you're free to do your thing. Do your thing so that it show itself in the profile that it deserves.

When I was still of a tender age, he gave me this suspicious look. He taught me how to not believe. I give him the credit for it, because I don't remember anybody else who could have done it. He elicited it from me; so if I want to be the counter-music, I must not believe anything, nor believe *in* anything. So these are the two points I wanted to make: Wolpe's concept of provinciality without using the word, and his concept of mean-average state, particularly that of ecstasy. He understood that every person who wants to break a barrier is an avant-gardist. Even though they don't call themselves that, they're always called so by somebody else. Whoever is an anarchist, or is a revolutionary, or is a rebellious person, or just doesn't want *any* of it any more but *that*—no matter—in order to have the strength to do that in a hostile environment, they'll probably get into the danger of becoming a preaching person. And the sermon also is a mean-average state of ecstasy. Therefore it mirrors itself, even in the best ideas of composers, that in order to get through, they become insistent. Wolpe simply said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but it's a bad composition." [. . .]

I was that year in Darmstadt when Wolpe was there [1956], and I was there again when Cage came the first time [1958]. There is a connection, because again it is the proportion rather than the sequence. It could have happened also the other way round. It was one year Cage and the next year Wolpe, or Wolpe was one year and the next year Cage. In Darmstadt both had an analogous impact, both encouraged looseness. In contra-distinction to the Adorno opponents, who couldn't stand Adorno's language and found everything too stiff and abstract and theoretic, both Cage (inadvertently) and Wolpe (advertently) became constructive looseness. They loosened something. Something became fluid which had been of a viscosity you couldn't move. This viscosity that I'm at the moment denouncing was a part of the students, not of Darmstadt or of Steinecke's direction of Darmstadt. It had happened after two or three years of something. Suddenly these little cliques formed. And as it is in the tradition of the academic world, even when you attack academics and are an academic, you academically attack academia. [. . .]

The first response to Wolpe at Darmstadt was stupendous. *Proportionen* [1960] brought the house down. I claim still to this day that his performance was really what stupefied the people out of their wits. For them it was shameless. He stands there for a moment, and then he starts with a howl! Not "Ladies and Gentlemen," I mean such stuff: "DAS SIND ALSO. . . !" nicht? und "DIE ERSTEN ERLEBNISSE. . . !" [makes a grunt]. Everything. Animal noises. There is not a sentence that rests on its content. The content flowed on the inflection, on the projection to the next high point. Downbeat changes that were unexpected. He is composing, and he has trained it, he has learned it, he has done it. He rehearses. I was so happy. [. . .]

It holds to a large extent for John Cage. John Cage the *performer* is the historical landmark. His contents vary. They may even be absent. They may be present, they may be just hinted at. There may be drugs, or provocations, challenges, anything you want. But he performs everything with such a dedication to the profession of performer that my respect never flags. Even when he got angry in my own house, in my home as a guest, and got angry with me and wanted to leave, he performed *that* so brilliantly that I had to run after him, embrace him, and ask him please to continue his performance inside. Which he of course immediately understood. With Wolpe it never came to such dramatic meetings. Cage for me was a provocation. Wolpe was an invitation.

The effect of Cage was a breaking down of things taken for granted. Wolpe was deep enough that he showed things that were already known but were not taken seriously. Wolpe showed the life-necessity of certain awarenesses that have fallen by the wayside, and he brought them out to the knowledge of the people there. Due to the ideas of Stockhausen, the people were skilled to know about time proportions. They had not learned about intervallic pro-

portions. So Wolpe picked (whether he knew it or not) that concept of proportion, and suddenly made it a life-elixir. It was something on which you can build your existence, whereas before it was just one further parameter. Which is a loosening that really happened, that things that had been for the first time sorted out waited to be integrated again. There Wolpe was an immense help. Cage, not. He came as an advocate: "Forget about all that. We have other things to worry about." So their content was distinct. Whether they have something to do with one another I would like to discuss in another conversation. Cage was imitated immediately, Wolpe not at all. Wolpe was rather quoted extensively. The students said, "Like Wolpe," and "Remember Wolpe," but they didn't do anything about it. If people don't want what they need, it's difficult to talk with them about it. Wolpe was needed. He has remained needed.

Herbert Brün (1918–2000) emigrated from Germany and studied with Wolpe at the Jerusalem Conservatory (1936–38). After a lecture tour of the United States in 1962, he was invited to the University of Illinois in 1963 primarily to do research on the significance of computer systems for composition. He was appointed professor of music. Interview: AC, Urbana, Illinois, 8 November 1984.

John Cage

I may be wrong, because I'm not a good historian, but when I approached the idea of meeting Stefan or becoming aware of him for the first time, it seems to me that it was through David Tudor. And so I think in his generosity of introducing me to the friends he valued the most, he would certainly have brought me to Stefan. And I went several times to 110th Street, out where Stefan had an apartment with Irma Rademacher. And it was always filled with students who were absolutely devoted to him, so that one had the feeling, being there, that one was at the *true* center of New York. And it was almost an *unknown* center of New York. And that was what gave a very special strength to one's feeling about Stefan, that it was in a sense a privilege to be aware of him, since it was like being privy to an important secret.

In each person who was near Stefan, all those students, there was no divided feeling. There was no question of both liking and disliking him. One's feeling was entirely for him, it was unquestioning. And I've always thought that that way of having a friend or a teacher was better than the sometimes popular idea of quarreling with the teacher, or criticizing. Some schools of education think that you shouldn't quarrel with the teacher. I've always thought that you should take everything the teacher says as true. As long as you *believe* in the teacher, you shouldn't question anything he says. That's the way I was with Schoenberg, or Suzuki.

In a strange way he had the same kind of strength that Satie had for the people surrounding him. And you know that marvelous statement of Satie, that it is necessary to be uncompromising right up to the end. And that's typical Stefan. And you had that feeling with [Aaron] Copland or with [Virgil] Thomson, anyone, you wouldn't have lifted an eyebrow if there had been some kind of compromise. It would have seemed perfectly natural even with Stravinsky. But not with Stefan! And that was what was so important.

He must have been a very excellent teacher. And I think I would say that because there was variety and liveliness in the minds of the students. Whereas if you come into contact with the effects of Hindemith's teaching, you see nothing but a mind laid low.

John Cage (1912–1992) was born in Los Angeles. He moved to New York in 1933 to study composition and returned to California a year later to study with Schoenberg at U.C.L.A. At Seattle he met Merce Cunningham, with whom he began a lengthy collaboration as composer and performer for his dance company. He returned to New York in 1942, where he became a central figure in the new music community. Cage became a director of the Stefan Wolpe Society when it was founded in 1981 and generously supported its activities. Interview: AC, Toronto, 26 November 1984.

John Carisi

I had come out of the army and had worked for a couple of bands including Ray McKinley, where I met Eddie Sauter, and that's how I got to Wolpe. I told him that I was scrapin' the bottom of the barrel. I'm stealin' from myself and I keep writing the same things. [Eddie] was funny. He went through a whole string [of teachers]. "I studied with Marion Bauer," and he named all of these big East Coast teachers. I'm not saying that that's who he said, but names like that. "But don't go to any of them. Go see a man by the name of Stefan Wolpe."

[Stefan] was living in 110th Street then, the big huge apartments they used to have. The first thing he wanted to know was what I did. So I showed him some of these scores, and I played some of these things. I remember him saying, "Aha, Prokofiev," which I was unaware of at the time. I said, "Oh, yeah?" His idea, of course, was to kind of place the student's ear development. Figure out where he was ear-wise, what he could tolerate. Was he up to Ravel and Debussy. I guess he hoped you were up to Schoenberg. But if you weren't, he worked from wherever you were and showed you how to go beyond that. He was very concrete, very to the point about how one does things. To him musical devices and means were part of one's arsenal. He said, "I give you these techniques to put in your arsenal, what you can use." And they were very practical, very known procedures. He would like you to find your own application for these things. As a matter of fact, he was very funny about that. If you brought something in and you demonstrated a certain kind of technique, he wouldn't even bother to name it, if you could do it. He'd say, "Oh, you know about this." I'd go, "About what?" He said, "Well, about this procedure here." I'd say, "Well, yeah, I've done that before." Well, O.K., that's it, and we wouldn't even bother with that. He never bothered with anything that you already knew. If you could demonstrate that you knew a certain technique, he went on from there.

And then later on he started the Contemporary Music School, which was on the list, and so I studied some more on the [G.I.] Bill of Rights and took some other things besides. He had great classes in that school, because they were small, and there were mostly professional people that had already good backgrounds, like myself, commercial musicians. No nonsense. I took another class with one of his other students, James Timmens, in ear training, which was invaluable. I also took a marvelous class with Stefan himself in analysis. We analysed Beethoven, Mozart, Bartók scores, whatever was up at the time. He had a marvelous approach. He didn't think that the study of any of the little details was of any importance. I remember one class where somebody was saying, "Well now this first motive Mozart took it and here he turned it upside down." You know, very detailed, four notes at a time kind of thing, where this came from, where that. He finally grew impatient and said, "Does everybody understand this?" And everybody said, more or less, "Yeah, we see that's O.K." He said, "Now what's important is where does he go, and why does he finish this section and initiate this new section?" The idea of trend, that was the point. What makes them change from this thing to this next thing. Especially with somebody like Mozart, almost without error, just about when you were getting tired of the first theme, bam, he was into this next theme. Oh, saved! That course was beautiful for that reason. This was for about a couple of semesters, about a year. At some point or another I think the school got into trouble financially and they couldn't keep going. They had these good people—Ralph Shapey and Jim Timmens—teaching there, Wolpe people who were oriented in this direction. First of all it extended all the possibilities, especially harmonically, which of course if you're an improviser immediately gets into that. You find out all these other notes that you can play besides the ones that you've been playing all along. For a chord that's distributed all over an area he used to call them constellations. Instead of C, G, B, the extensions of that were all available with the extra notes, the D, F, and the A, and so on. Also, and probably more important, that in the process of studying these techniques, which were basically twentieth-century, highly chromaticized if not atonal, you listened to a lot of the best examples of this. You listened to a lot of Berg,

Webern, Schoenberg, Stravinsky. So your ear progressed to a point where, when you took it back to the jazz field, what one hears is already an extension of what you would ordinarily hear if you hadn't heard these things. [. . .]

I think that Stefan picked up a marvelous appreciation for jazz in the listening. There's almost nothing in his music that's like jazz. Let me rephrase that. People talk about jazz as if it's with a capital J. I resent that highly because jazz is just another by-water of music, so in that sense it's related to all other music. If you're a musician the way Stefan was, a musician that knows the difference between Charlie Parker and some lesser player, or Stan Getz—I mean why would he pick Stan Getz, for instance? He knew. He heard. He said, "Wow!" Why? Because on the basis of music alone he recognizes this as superior music. Not because he suddenly understood some kind of art.

I think I took him to see Miles, or I might have even taken him to see Charlie Parker with a rhythm section at the old Royal Roost. It was even before Birdland. I think it was with Charlie Parker, and Curly Russell was playing bass in a typical jazz way with plucking, but not legitimate pizzicato, which is different. We're sitting rather far back, and he's listening, and he hears this bass doing what it's doing, and without paying attention to the head waiter he just ran down right through the crowd, right through the whole bunch of tables, and stood there and watched how Curly Russell did this on the bass. To me this really exemplifies how he was about music, that you study ways and means by observation, by trying to do it, by watching somebody else do it. I'm sure that's how he came to write that [*Saxophone Quartet*]. He heard a piece with a saxophone, in this case a baritone saxophone, and he wasn't happy with just a drum set. He wanted the percussionist to be able to run over and play some notes on the marimba or the xylophone. [. . .]

So here's Stefan, and he's in the middle of this stuff, and he's already made a name with enough of the guys involved in that, starting with Eddie Sauter and Bill Finegan, and Ken Hopkins, who was a commercial writer who was writing for the radio, the Lucky Strike Hit Parade, movies and so on. So he got all of these people. He had access and was influenced, or at least was familiar with, everything that was going on then, which was considerable. I would imagine that he heard [jazz] on records. He didn't go out to that many clubs at all anyway. After a year, or a year-and-a-half, I stopped studying with any regularity. I would go out on the road, and I'd have to break off, and then I'd come back and take a lesson or two. Finally that petered out, but I never stopped being an acquaintance. He became a real family friend.

What his big impact was more than anything, I think, and I'm speaking to start with for myself and for a lot of other people, was that he opened up a tremendous amount of doors as to what one could do. Not like Schillinger. What [Schillinger] did was he made a bunch of successful arrangers that could write quick. He didn't expose anything new. His whole system was based on known music. He analysed Tchaikovsky, let's say, or whoever. As a matter of fact Stefan and I talked about that, and we agreed that that's like learning something in French, then you translate it back into English again, which is ridiculous. If you know how harmony and composition work, you don't need to put it on a graph. [. . .]

Stefan would show you some kind of a tool, a musical tool, and then you would go and use it. He didn't care how you used it just as long as you incorporated it. Sometimes I would have arrangements to write, and I really couldn't sit down and write etudes, so I used to somehow or other figure out a way to use this device or this technique in an arrangement and bring him the score to the arrangement. See, there's another kind of jazz influence that he would not have gotten otherwise, because quite a few of us were jazz arrangers. The way we scored, there were certain things that we did as a matter of course he would never do in legitimate music, in the symphonic thing. The way you group brass, and so on, he would marvel at—and I'm sure he'd never forget it either. He'd look at it and say, "Oh my!" And I'd say, "Oh, we do that all the time." Very off-hand. And he'd say, "Oh yeah? How's it sound?" I'd say, It's nice and rich and full, interlocking chords, or stacked. The trumpets cover

a couple of octaves maybe, with a lot of doubles an octave lower with some other notes. Or maybe spread out a different way, widespread at the bottom and close at the top, which would give a tremendous amount of sonority. This is where he would get into your thing, into my arrangements. He'd say, "How about if you'd change this to this?" And I'd go, "Oh yeah? Let me see what—Yeah, keep that in." Like one of my best pieces. Every time we spoke about it when he was still alive, I used to try and give him credit. I'd say, "That's partly your piece." Because somebody would say, "Well, boy, your student here, he wrote that great piece *Israel*." I'd say, "Well, that's partly Stefan's piece, because he did make some changes." When I write something like this, it was an ongoing thing. This was for Miles. I think originally I wrote a big arrangement of it for Woody Herman's band. And I'm sure that I brought it around to Stefan. If I was working on it, and I was studying with him, which I was at the time, he saw it. He suggested certain changes in it which I would incorporate gladly. Because he always had some ideas that were startlingly beautiful. What I had was pretty nice, but what he did to it, put that in! A new problem arose when I had to arrange the piece for a smaller band, but the Woody Herman band never played them.

John Carisi (1922–1990), trumpeter and composer, arranged for and played in various dance band including Charlie Barnet, Benny Goodman, and Ray McKinley. He also worked in television, most notably on Sid Caesar's Show of Shows *and the Philco Playhouse. His works have been recorded by, among others, Miles Davis, Gerry Mulligan, Gil Evans and Bill Evans. Interview: AC, New York City, 21 October 1984.*

Elliott Carter

His music struck me immediately. Because of my review of the *March and Variations* in *Modern Music* [1940], I came to know him. I never became a sort of disciple. I think that Wolpe was a figure who attracted people who were like disciples, terribly devoted to him, not only as a composer, but as a person. So it was always very hard for him to fit into the modern music scene in New York. Those who gave concerts in some way or other never wanted to play his music. He was a difficult man, trying, and often appeared rather confused and disturbing. This was something that was hard for many people to take. I think it was partly for that reason he had difficulties getting performances.

Over the years Wolpe's music actually changed a good deal. There was the Busoni-esque kind that he did in the earlier days. *The Man from Midian* is that type. Then it gradually developed into something very much more unique than that in the later years. He did all sorts of different things. He even continued to do disparate things simultaneously. The other night we heard *Street Songs* [? *Street Music*] of his that had many very interesting things, in the sense that it was rather uncompromising in the relation of the voice to the instruments. There was no attempt to make the voice shine. It was part of the instruments.

When we were living in Berlin in '64, I was surprised to discover that the *Workers Songbook* that you could buy in East Berlin had songs by Wolpe in it. They're on the whole better than some who were better known.

What makes him seem similar to some Americans is that there was a great element of intensity and vision. Not trying to get everything straight and highly organized and ordered, which is what the disaster was of Hindemith. For when he came here, he was put in the position of having to rationalize his method in order to teach to a certain extent. The same with Schoenberg. They both became rather systematic, partially perhaps to protect themselves from students. Wolpe was an authoritarian in my opinion in a different way than these. His was a kind of emotional authoritarianism rather than an intellectual one. It was characteristic of Frank Lloyd Wright, for instance. Although rather uncharacteristic of Americans, most Americans do like it, they're impressed by it. A rather frightening kind of character too. This was rather characteristic of certain kinds of people who were fanatic Communists. In fact, there was a whole morale that was encouraged by radical people to be that way, to have this com-

plete commitment. It's a lot more interesting than many other kinds of attitudes, but it has its very disturbing side.

Paul Rosenfeld was a good friend of his, and we used to go up to the apartment that Irma still has on 110th Street and hear her play pieces of Wolpe. I remember hearing the *Passacaglia*, and the *Battle Piece*, and various other piano pieces played by her at various evening parties.

I was very fond of Wolpe personally and an admirer of his music, but I was not a close friend in the sense that we saw him more than maybe once or twice every year. We didn't see him all the time, and I don't think I could have stood it if I had, because he would come over to our apartment, and we would play pieces of each other's to each other, and he always said the very oddest things about my music. It disturbed me, and I really didn't like it very well. I didn't take to that, and so I wasn't that friendly. On the other hand, I admired him very much.

His music is terribly uneven, but some of it is remarkable. What it always has is one thing you like to have in music, and that is a kind of personal enthusiasm. It's always very lively, you feel it's always in touch with life. It isn't routine. It's unexpected in many ways. There are all sorts of different kinds of things that he tries to integrate into one thing, which sometimes don't go together so well in one piece, but in others they do. The whole question of the relation of the diatonic to twelve-tone or chromaticism, the combination of those is something he fought with. Sometimes he solved it, and sometimes he didn't, as in the *Symphony*. It seems to me to be extremely odd that a man as experienced as he should have written a piece that is so difficult for the orchestra that it is nearly impossible to get a good performance. It may have been as a result of his contact with musicians in Europe, since he went to Darmstadt in its early days, when composers were writing very advanced and very difficult pieces.

It's extraordinary that he didn't find a publisher, especially by the 1950s, because by then publishers were becoming more open-minded in this country. But I think he really did antagonize people very much in this particular field, as he did in the larger concert world. He wasn't the kind of composer the New York Philharmonic would be likely to play, but then finally Leonard Bernstein did want to play the *Symphony*. Lenny was very progressive, really eager to do new, unusual music, and was impressed by the very character of Wolpe, even though the performance didn't turn out very well.

His impact was more on his own circle of people. They were those who were just turned on by him. It was not a circle related to other circles. There were people connected with modern dance and with the abstract expressionist world. Wolpe was a man that actually attracted many outside of the music profession in the dance field, where there was still an expressionist vision. By the time he came here American musicians had gone through an expressionist phase and left it. They were writing what has come to be called neo-classic music, so Wolpe seemed like a hangover from another time. Composers had moved in a different direction by that time. He was another like Varèse ise in that respect. He was developing along the line that was no longer one that seemed to have any future in America just before the war. And it was only after the war, when a different approach evolved, that Wolpe began to be more widely respected and admired.

I can't say his music has any technical influence on mine in terms of something you can rationally speak about, because I'm not conscious of it. There may be an influence of another kind, and that is the sort of desire for a kind of human expression. An intense expression is something that I think we both shared.

I was invited to teach at the Dartington Hall Summer School in England in 1959. I felt very badly that I was teaching at this school, and he wasn't. He was relatively unknown at the time, and it was important for the students to know this man. I felt he should really be the one to teach these courses and not me. I felt quite badly that he was a sort of neglected figure then at the school. The fact that he came there and was just kept off in a room and didn't do very much seemed to me not right. I made an attempt to try and change that. I did, after all, respect and admire him, and I felt that he was an important composer who should be heard and known. I asked him to teach my class of young English

student composers—feeling really that he at least would give the students one worthwhile class. He started talking about his *Passacaglia*, a piano work built of sections each based on a musical interval—minor second, major second, and so on. At once, sitting at the piano, he was caught up in a meditation on how wonderful these primary materials, intervals, were; playing each over and over again on the piano, singing, roaring, humming them, loudly, softly, quickly, slowly, short and detached or drawn out and expressive. All of us forgot time passing, when the class was to finish. As he led us from the smallest one, a minor second, to the largest, a major seventh—which took all afternoon—music was reborn, new light dawned, we all knew we would never again listen to music as we had. Stefan had made each of us experience very directly the living power of these primary elements. From then on indifference was impossible. Such a lesson most of us never had before or since, I imagine.

Born in New York in 1908, Elliott Carter studied at the Horace Mann School at Harvard and went on to the Ecole Normale de Musique in Paris, where he studied with Nadia Boulanger. He returned to the U.S. and became music director of Ballet Caravan. He held teaching positions at St. John's College and Yale University and has written widely on music. Interview: AC, New York City, 10 December 1982.

Nira Chen

I was about 13 and Wolpe came to Ein Harod to prepare a May Day celebration. The rehearsal was in a stable, on the second floor, in the loft above the horses. He conducted the rehearsal. The people were so excited to hear him. It was very interesting and very good, because everybody wanted to do it in full hearts. He taught the songs and all the kibbutz came to learn the songs. He was a very dynamic person. The First of May was an important holiday then. Not now, but then it was. I don't think he knew Hebrew, but I remember these songs were in Hebrew. They had a ceremony at the quarry and the choir sang the songs.

Nira Chen was born on March 8, 1924 at the Kibbutz Ein Harod. A graduate of the Jerusalem Conservatory in piano and music education, her postgraduate studies were based in composition and orchestration. Among her compositions are songs and music for plays, most of which are written for children. She is a member of the Israeli Composers League. Interview: AC, Kibbutz Ein Harod, Israel, 21 April 1985.

Robert Creeley

Black Mountain was in some ways a confusing time for Stefan. It wasn't that he needed a necessarily particular social back-up or recognition, but he was used to European middle-class manners, far more articulate and providing than those of our fading Black Mountain community in its last months. I remember that he and Hilda lived in the front part of the "Black Dwarf," a substantial, almost chalet-like cottage, and that Tony Landreau (the weaver) and his wife were living in the upstairs part, and the painter Dan Rice was in there too on the other side too. So there would be these intensely drunken parties in Dan's and Tony's part of the building. And Stefan would tell us, "You're killing me with your racket!" Then he would begin to describe to us, as good examples I suppose, the terrific parties he remembered from his time in Switzerland, where everyone had sat in charming wrought iron chairs and were brought appropriate refreshments by very cultured and discreet waiters. He emphasized that this was the proper decor for social interchange—not a brutal, absolutely violent sense of destroying oneself as if that could be pleasure. Even so Stefan was very good-natured toward me personally. He wasn't paternalistic. He took me generously and seriously. And we got on very well. He had a very droll and terrific sense of humor.

Stefan was at the center of the college's activity. Hilda Morley, his wife, had a far more difficult role, because she was not really taken seriously as a poet. She was identified as Stefan's wife just as I've done here. And that may have been all very well, but she was a decisive poet who got

all too little recognition. People, including Hilda, have pointed out (I think reasonably) that Black Mountain—almost in the spirit of the times—was markedly male-oriented, male-determined. And although it had a wide accommodation for diverse behavior, it still thought primary authority, the formal, the decisive authority, came from men.

In the last year or so of the college's existence, Stefan and I were put together in a somewhat desperate enterprise to raise funds for the college. Our company decided that we were to write letters, soliciting monies from anyone we could think of. I had no connections whatsoever and was there primarily to be amanuensis and scribe for Stefan. But Stefan himself had a substantial acquaintance with possible patrons from his past associations in Philadelphia and New York. So Stefan and I were put to work and I was, as said, Stefan's secretary, writing these letters, that is, putting them into appropriate English, really. Because he'd begin, "I bet you got some money lying around you don't know what to do with!" I was charmed. Still I'd say, "I don't think that's really going to get them, Stefan. Got to be a little more circumspect, you know, like, here we are doing this great courageous thin, and we have the interest of Einstein and all these terrific people. Don't you want to pledge your crucial support to our communal interests? etc. etc."

So, anyhow, I was put to composing the letters, and we sent them off. The answers we got were wonderful. For example, we had an answer from Doris Duke saying, in effect, she thought her family had given enough money for higher education in North Carolina and was not about to give any more. Then one of the Guggenheims said she was between inheritances and therefore short of available funds. But our actual progress was one long slow plunge into despair.

Trying to think of who was working with Stefan then, his students, there was Betty Olson, Charles's second wife, who studied piano and composition with him—but primarily performing, not composition, as I now remember. Stefan's students didn't feel socially distant from him, because I remember him as being very much one of their group. The most grotesque instance of Stefan's employment—but we were all "self-employed" insofar as we were the college—was when a local lawyer in Asheville, a black lawyer, wanting to help young persons who were going through a time he also had gone through when young, determined to make a modest scholarship for local black students to permit them to come to Black Mountain. It was one of those terrific instances of very good intentions going very wrong. Two young women from Asheville therefore were driven daily to Black Mountain, and various of the faculty set to and taught them in turn—a little painting—a little potting—and Stefan was teaching them to play the piano, albeit modestly. I mean, the whole enterprise was a wild business. Here are two local black kids at a time when the racism of the place—or in any part of the country—was rampant, being driven to this absolutely "New York" white college, already known as the Communist stronghold of the South, and there being talked to by these people, most of whom they couldn't understand because of their accent. They saw other blacks there, a very pleasant black woman, who was very swinging, bright, solid, from New York—who'd been working in theater there. But Stefan probably gave them the most practical information they got. He taught them so that they could then play a little piano. Ah well!

Stefan was not distant, but he had a droll and objective way of seeing others, so the students *per se* didn't really know what to do with him. Stefan was one of the company without question. Everyone liked him. But I can't recall anyone there, when I was there at least, recognizing quite who Stefan, in an old-fashioned sense, really was. Remember that Stefan comes after the extraordinary impact, or fact, of John Cage, Lou Harrison, *et al*. It wasn't that his music was from another disposition, but it was from another location entirely within that same pattern. The college was used to the curiously dramatic, communal aspects of Cage and his music. And Stefan was not like that. He enjoyed his privacy, had his very clear determinants, was thoughtful of others, but he wasn't hail-fellow-well-met. He was a generous host, but he certainly did not have a need for constant company. He came literally from a very different European world. This one was, af-

ter all, a Deweyistic, grassroots American company. The farm was still active, but even much more than that, it was Olson's sense of the Herodotean—to learn, check out for yourself, the students being on equal footing with the faculty, solving problems together and/or getting it together by the fact of one's own communal agency. The college was also much influenced by Olson's sense of the necessity of living without any buffers or baffles, living directly, learning directly, by fact and activity of the situation itself. Such "Deweyism" was still a very practical advice, and at the college it was joined by the Bauhaus' strong political disposition.

I remember conversations with Stefan in which he said he would love to do some kind of substantial piece for Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. He thought of each of them as being an extraordinary genius of his instrument. I remember years before that, when I was an undergraduate at Harvard, Aaron Copland was living in our entry of Adams House [1951–52]. We would try unobtrusively to corner him as he came or went, and would ask him if he liked Charlie Parker. He'd say, "Oh yes, he's very nice!" I don't know, but I think he knew who we were talking about. He'd say, "Oh, yes, he's very interesting!" We'd be immensely reassured that our hero was somehow known to this eminent old-timer. Perhaps that might be a presumption concerning Stefan's saying he liked Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, that he's being in some way accommodating or simply good-natured. But, in fact, I remember talking to Hilda about the jazz clarinetist Tony Scott, who had studied with Stefan. There's a charming reminiscence by Tony Scott in the book *Bird Lives* where he speaks of taking Stefan out to meet Charlie Parker. It's very brief, but it's so charming—Stefan calls him "Birdie." It's absolutely sweet.

I thought Stefan was fascinated by jazz. Not just as a communal music or a social agency of whatever order, but I think he heard it. Yeah, I would say he did. I don't think he would be simply persuaded by the fact that it could move spontaneously. That was his obvious difference and distance from Cage, that his own music was not significantly involved with a situation of chance, or with variables of that sort. He therefore was much involved with basic sense of the musical organization—with voicing. So he must have been interested by the fact of the instrumentation, that Bird played saxophone, for example. That it was not a common orchestral instrument, its range and sound. It was certainly a significant instrument, but not in the context that Stefan had been working in—and so it attracted him.

Robert Creeley (b. 1926) taught at Black Mountain College from 1954–56 and also edited the Black Mountain Review*, 1954–57, a gathering place for alternative senses of writing at that time. In 1966 he went to the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he still teaches as Samuel Capen Professor of Poetry and the Humanities. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, and most recently was the recipient of the 1999 Bollingen Prize for Poetry. Interview, Andrew Kohn: Buffalo, New York, Nov. 18, 1992*

Fielding Dawson

Wes Huss was the Director of Theatre at school (I see his wife Bea, baby in arms, crossing the field in front of the Lodges), and when he decided to produce Eric Bentley's translation of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, he cast me in the part of Sun, and we had some nasty tangles. But he was persistent, ever see him use his charm? Don't miss it, one of those directors who can act. Cynthia was to play the opposite lead, and be my love (she was anyway, despite the violent affairs she had with Tommy Jackson, Tim, Victor, Dan, and Creeley [before Jorge]). I accepted. Although angry, didn't mind playing the role of a pilot, but I was also to sing several (no less), songs, and I hadn't sung since church, in Kirkwood, Missouri. I was in a lot of plays in high school, but I hadn't sung on stage—*ever*, so being as I was *going to sing*, I would go to Stefan, the resident composer, for lessons, everything being decided for me, I went along. You know, until the curtain went up and I was on stage, and but for the prompter the play would have been the utter disaster I in part wanted it to be, because I *hated* it because it *embarrassed* me. And in the be-

ginning I trudged up to Stefan's house, with a heavy heart and a head full of gloom. Hilda opened the door, cheerful: amused. I went in. She (academic or not, she was young and there wasn't a straight guy at school who didn't miss seeing her go by), turned, gestured to Stefan at the piano, and departed.

Their house had two stories, wood frame with shingles. Nice. Up the road on the side of the mountain.

I crossed the room to him, who rose from his piano (grand), and greeted me. Typical: elusive, head tilted, eyes bright, big grin. Arms out, fingers spread, seeing I was nervous, assumed a look of amusement, and slight reproach. Said I was nervous and I was nervous, said not to worry and I was worried, said he'd help me to learn to sing—we, together. We would do it together. Sit.

I sat.

A small stand on top of which was a large plant, on a large, round copper tray, to my right. In the front room. Good-sized with windows. Sunny. Stefan very happy there.

He had written music for the play. Wes had decided not to use Kurt Weill's.

On a certain day
As was very well known
The poor woman's son
Will gain the golden throne

Stefan at the keys, I, dutiful, beside him. He began to play and sing the above lyrics, and as I could read music (Dan was teaching me trumpet), I read along, hummed a bit. Louder, he said, so I hummed louder, then sang, a little, and he said louder, stronger, so I kinda did that and he got up, reached across in front of me, took the plant off the copper tray and put the tray on top of the piano, put the plant back on the table, sat down and began to play telling me to sing loud, and strong, which I didn't do and he stopped playing, turned, put his hand on my shoulder, and said Fee.

You must, he said, SING! Whereupon he turned, and as both of his hands hit the keyboard, he began with that sort of yell he had ON A CERTAIN DAY, AS WAS *VERY* WELL KNOOOWWWNNN...

Sat back. Laughing at himself. Looking at me. I nodded. Unh huh yeah right, almost blushing in amusement and fright. He sat forward, fingers struck the keys, I sang pretty loud LOUDER he yelled and began singing again as I sang louder, but still self-conscious and he yelled SING FEE, *SING*! Which I did, a little louder and then some, but still—he stopped. Jumped to his feet. Grabbed the copper tray, and holding with his left hand smacked it with his right BOOOONNNNNNNNNGG shook the whole house including foundations, LIKE THAT! Put the tray on the piano, sat down, glared at me, began to slam out the music. I began to sing. I mean, I sang. STRONGER, he yelled, and stopped singing, but kept playing and I began to yell and I mean I *yelled* that song JA JA he laughed as I cut loose, THAT'S IT!—a force, a call I never knew came out of my throat, I saw his face shine, as he played, and I sang, until the song was over, and we fell silent. He began again and I sang along, loud and strong GOOD GOOD he cheered, and finished he began again and I sang with him, clear through, I loved it, and after I'd finished, Stefan sat back, looked at me, expression warm, tender, triumphant.

"Good! See? What a good voice you have!"

I might have reddened. I'm sure I did, in my pride. But I acknowledged what he had said because it was true, and it was Stefan who had done it.

He (Stefan) played piano each Sunday evening before supper, the one formal activity of the week. We had to dress up. He played waltzes, and couples waltzed. It was funny and marvelous, like him, for he enjoyed it so, but also, right in the middle of a sweeping phrase he'd stop, and leap up in disgust, and turn away, angry. Because as nice as it was, and as much fun, it *was* the old world and the old music. He considered himself an innovator, a modernist, a musical radical, and that waltz stuff was behind him. No amount of pleading with him would get him back to play more. In that sense he was divided, not so much in a deep psychological sense (although that may have been true), but to us, the way we saw him, we identified with him and his vision of himself, and though we were charmed by those waltzes, we agreed with his decision to stop, and turn his back on it. Weren't we? I agree with him today, for those waltzes were the background to World War One. But each Sunday he'd play waltzes,

and leap up disgusted.

He enjoyed his own wit, I liked Stan Kenton's big band, Stefan said "I can't Stanton!" Had a big laugh on that, I did too: he knocked himself out.

The night David Tudor performed the *Battle Piece*, Stefan was ecstatic. In the standing ovation that followed (all concerts were in the dining hall) Stefan rose, and ran along the aisle, crying out, waving his hands, half mad with joy, that it was the greatest performance ever, of that piece. He ran right into the spotlight (on the piano area) where David stood, smiling, seeing Stefan coming toward him, until Stefan embraced him. We cheered, applauding all the more. Needless to say Hilda, too.

He was a private person, so was Hilda. They didn't hang around with us. After supper they went home. Well, who didn't, but there wasn't the camaraderie that we had with some of the faculty, or, which marked Black Mountain, the tensions, with each other, that some of the faculty were drawn into. This has never been written about. But in one sense Stefan was you could say European, and was there to compose, and he did.

Excerpted from The Black Mountain Book *(Wesleyan, N.C.: Weleyan College Press, 34-36). Also includes a written communication, 1999.*

Fielding Dawson (1930–2002) attended Black Mountain College from 1949–53 and went into the United States Army from 1953–55. He is the author of 21 books, including both shortstories and novels. His novel The Black Mountain Book *was published in 1991.*

Morton Feldman

Stefan was never authoritarian in his teaching. When you teach, there are two ways of doing it. There are only two ways to teach. Either you help the student do what they are doing better, or you try to lead them into something else. And what's interesting about the years I was with Stefan is that he didn't employ any one of those approaches. He didn't help me make what I was doing better, and he never led me into something else, which has become a model for my own teaching, that particular *attitude*. It's not like someone once said to me when I once went to Yale to give a lecture, and a friend of mine that picked me up—I ask him what's going on here—he said, "Well, if they're heavy into twelve-tone, we lead them out of it. If they're not involved with twelve-tone, we lead them into it." Which is essentially his teaching philosophy, that particular era at Yale. But with Stefan it was always that confrontation actually with *the piece at hand*. And that's some kind of overriding point of view of what you're going to have a piece. That was a very singular lesson for me, how he focused into the piece at hand, which a lot of teachers don't, you know. They have definite points of view. That became a very important model for me.

I think if there was *one* aspect of my music that seemed to provoke essentially a Socratic dialogue—I would say that even more than me he certainly allows his student for Socratic dialogue, *loved* the conversation, *loved* the questions and the answers, and the questions and the answers, and the questions and trying to find the answers, which is almost like the basis of the antecedent-consequent aspect of his own music [*laughs*]—was the fragmentary element in my music, the fact that it wasn't *organic*, work from seeds, work with that strong variational approach which was part of his generation. I think that was the one thing. He didn't understand why or how my music was so fragmentary, that is, stop-and-go, stop-and-go. That was essentially the whole *core* of both our problem as student and teacher. That was essentially *the basic confrontation*, and never resolved.

He was never hostile when I met John Cage. He was *very, very* open. He was certainly more open, outside of someone like Henry Cowell, who was professionally open, and outside of Virgil Thomson, who was open in relation to his own personal friendship with Cage. I would say that Stefan was *excited*—by excited I mean in a negative sense—taking it all very seriously, and again wanting always to talk about it, while other people felt they had all the answers about what was happening. And I remember it made for some very lively conversations with Cage about a lot of things, because it went beyond just the technical devices used.

This is circa 1951, and it wasn't just a question of Cage, it was just the whole circle now of Cage. And of course, I was his student not too long before. David Tudor became our crown prince, and his terrific involvement with Stefan and Irma, and his great fondness for Cage as a person. So he was very close. The first time I ever saw Cage before actually meeting him was at Cathedral Parkway. Stefan and Irma had these soirees, which was very exciting for me, a young composer across the river. Whoever was in town will come up. Kirchner was in from the West Coast, played two or three of his pieces. I remember Leibowitz was in from Paris with Helen.

I thought he was actually incredible. What can I say? I mean, I'm not trying to eulogize him because he's dead. It's just the energy. And I don't think it was just to me. Just waiting for him to finish up with Ralph [Shapey], or with someone else. The energy that he extended to his teaching was I thought perhaps a little too much in that respect.

I don't know how in the hell he didn't do it [show students his own music], 'cause I think I'm a damned good teacher, and I still have to pick up a piece of mine sometimes and show them an example of something. *Only rarely, only rarely!* I always felt that he was more involved with the formulations of formulas one can discover from insights and just bring it again into the moment of what I just feel that he's involved with, without even discussing it on any classy intellectual level. He was involved with something and talked about something, and what he talked about all the time was shape. That element of shape instilled me, and he'll look at me, you could just see his quizzical look, when I would say that it's essentially what influenced my music. Stefan's big influence. It's a big *influence* when a teacher talks about shape. In so far as that consciousness of just that word could go into any style. I could bring a shape into a simultaneous chord, I could shape a chord, so to speak. I don't have to mean shape in terms of asymmetrical units working with each other on a chain.

Also, being a dialectical materialist, he also liked *opposites*, the world of opposites. In the sense that he brought to me—and I never think of my thinking about that—helped me *tremendously*. But what *I* would consider opposites, you see. [*laughs*] But that's what a teacher does, that's what coaches do. They bring in things which you feel are either used wrongly or misunderstood. But that's what civilization is based on, is it not? My early civilization was based on so many concepts of Stefan's which I took and put [to use]. The consciousness that these *terms existed*. I mean, the young students don't know the various key words, the vocabulary, the baggage you take. They don't know that you have to take a toothbrush, or something like that. Words like 'shape' is a toothbrush, 'opposites' is the underwear. And I grabbed onto those terms, 'cause those are the only terms you know. Those were *real terms*. Other words like continuity doesn't mean anything. Continuity doesn't help you like 'shape.' *Shape* was a very, very important thing. And he would many times play or sing something that he wrote, and he loved the shape. The biggest compliments that I ever got from him for certain pieces, when he got excited about a certain passage, [was] where he felt that the shape was just terrific.

I think that one of the most important pieces that I wrote with Stefan—it's my most Wolpe piece—I wish I had a tape of it, I never had it, *damned successful*! If I ever recorded it, it would be a famous piece. It was called *Journey to the End of the Night*, and it's very Wolpe-ish. That was my last piece with him. I made a collection of Celine [*plays theme on the piano*]. You know my subject matter, "You're going to die soldier boy, you're going to die, so hurry up and die" [*sings the words and the melody*]. *Fabulous* piece, a *tour de force*, *incredible piece*! And then there's a last thing, which is a love song to a prostitute, and there was one passage that he played over and over again, and he kept saying: "Oh, *sehr schön, sehr schön*!" That was coming through, you see. The pieces that I was writing before that were more fragmented than the pieces I was writing after. I came through, and I came through via Wolpe. But I came through actually because the text wrote the piece. But anything I learned from him in terms of what he thought maybe I should have learned came through in that piece. And his teachings made that piece possible. Without the words I never would have gotten into that

world with those *shapes* that he liked so much...

Interview: AC, Buffalo, 13 November 1980.

To have known Stefan Wolpe well would have benefited greatly in equating the music to the man. His vitality alone was exceptional. After 35 years I still feel the sparks of his personal electricity when remembering my first lesson with him. Along with his incredible vitality—it never seemed to subside—was a delicacy of manner which is also very much in his music—those abbreviated benign shapes of his that suddenly appear and leave off with a smile. There is nothing contradictory in all this. Wolpe was the kind of man who used all eighty-eight notes of his personality. He loved what was on the opposite side of the coin. He always talked about opposites, in fact, the Hegelian dialectic of unified opposites was essentially his compositional philosophy throughout his life. Would a composition student guess that an understanding of both Hegel and Karl Marx could result in a very valid compositional concept? Listen carefully to the piano accompaniment of his Palestinian songs for a glimpse of what I mean.

In pre-Hitler Germany Wolpe wrote militant songs for the *real* working class that sang them and loved them. He studied with Webern—he knew the painter Paul Klee—he utilized twelve-tone techniques. Though in disagreement, he was very friendly to John Cage. His intellectual appetite was boundless. When I first went to study with Wolpe soon after finishing high school, I was just another smart kid who thought that writing music was some clever way of pushing notes around. I soon learned differently. The rules of the game were clear enough, but how to jump the hurdles were not. I learned it was a lie, that old dictum, "Rules are made to be broken." They were, in fact, obstacles to be jumped—that our musical history and the realities of note-pushing into shapes and forms was a treacherous steeplechase. You get a clear sense of this in his own music. It never settles, though organically its initial assumptions have nothing to worry about. Logic is more than walking a straight line, especially if there is an obstacle in front of you. Wolpe used these obstacles as part and parcel of his musical language. Though, as I have just remarked, they were referred to as opposites.

I took this overall concept with me into my own music soon after finishing my studies with Wolpe. It was the basis of my graph music. For example: the time is given but not the pitch. Or, the pitch is given and not the rhythm. Or, in earlier notated pieces of mine the appearance of octaves and tonal intervals out of context to the overall harmonic language. I didn't exactly think of this as opposites—but Wolpe taught me to look on the other side of the coin.

Soon after beginning my studies with Wolpe he took a studio on New York's big proletarian promenade—Fourteenth Street on the corner of Sixth Ave. "Street music" he would call what he was writing. He loved it down there—a beautiful balance between those faces out the window and all his artist friends a block or two away. Varèse wse was not too far from his window view. Both these men admired each other—and there are great similarities in both their personalities and music. With both Wolpe and Varèse you feel the idiom can barely contain the granite-like substance of its musical thought.

The *String Quartet* we heard last week and the two *Forms* for piano are of recent years, and the *Hexachord*, *Oboe Sonata*, and the *Palestinian Songs* date the period of his exile from Nazi Germany to Israel and finally settling in New York.

Morton Feldman (1926–1987) studied composition with Wallingford Riegger and Wolpe and greatly admired Varèse. His aesthetic crystallized in the early 1950s through association with abstract expressionist painters and collaboration with David Tudor and John Cage. From 1973 he was professor of composition at SUNY Buffalo. Memoir written at Buffalo, 1983.

Bill Finegan

Eddie Sauter and I were already friends, and he was studying with a composer in New York named Stefan Wolpe. He told me about Wolpe, so I went to see him. I spent a couple of years with him, and that was a great experience. He was unbelievable. I think he was a genius. I don't like to use that term

lightly, but I think Stefan was. His personality! He was such a volatile, fiery, stimulating guy. He would demonstrate things. He would jump up and dance around the room. He'd climb over the sofa and go up the stairs and back. He would give you vivid demonstrations of, he used to call them, strategies more than techniques in writing. Eddie and I talked to other students of his, and they had the same experience with him.

I'd just write free composition. I wouldn't bring in any of the stuff I did for the bands. That's separate. I knew how to do that, so why show it to him. But he opened so many doors. I'm still looking around in some of the areas that he opened up, new concepts of looking at a piece, of how to write pieces. He had the quickest eye in scanning a piece and finding unrelated material. He'd say, "What, what, where does this come from?" And he'd have me. I'd say, "I'm not sure." 'Cause he had that great sense of connection from the germ of a thought, the development of that germ that all the material derived from in the course of at least that movement of the piece. And no left field material, you know.

We'd talk about Prokofiev mostly. He was probably our top favorite. But we also talked about Ravel and Debussy a lot, Bartók, Stravinsky. We had the scores and the records, and we'd listen all the time. Wolpe used to come out to my house in Tenafly for dinner. He loved Prokofiev, and I had some great recording of Horowitz playing the *Seventh Sonata*. I played it for Wolpe, and he was doing backflips he loved it so much. So every time he came out I had to play this Prokofiev sonata for Wolpe. And he'd get really excited, man. He was very demonstrative.

Eddie and I discovered as we went along that we both had all these principles and strategies, to use Wolpe's word, and felt that they were very important. Register contrast, that's why we did it in our band [Sauter-Finegan Orchestra]. Contrast in rhythms, for a period, don't move, just hold still. That's the best contrast to a lot of movement. Wolpe used to talk about composed silence, that some of the most dramatic moments in music is when everything stops, and that *loaded* silence that occurs for a few seconds. You just let it lay there for a minute. *There's* drama, y'know.

Jazz Oral History Project of the Smithsonian Institute, Tapes 3–A, 3–B. Interview: JB, Monroe, Connecticut, 17–18 September, 1992.

For a long time working on composing with Steve and arranging were two separate entities, they didn't join. Then inevitably whatever I did with Steve crept into what I was writing for Sauter-Finegan, or for anybody else. He had a profound effect on anybody who studied with him, and whatever you learned became homogenized into your whole process. His effect certainly was there in the Sauter-Finegan Band. Eddie played some of the early Sauter-Finegan things for Steve, and he liked them very much. I had very long lessons with him—two hours, two-and-a-half hours, ten dollars a lesson.

Controlling the circulation of the twelve pitches is still in effect with me. Steve used to show me, without naming them, the work of his other students. He said this guy will do everything to avoid writing a third. He would then demonstrate a thing for me on the piano. His demonstrations were fantastic. He would improvise a very dissonant passage with no thirds, a minute or so of that, and suddenly hit a third up in the high register. The third was like getting hit on the head by a mallet, it had such a profound impact. He said, "Why not?" He had no dogmas. If you want to write thirds, write them. He kind of laughed at the self-imposed limitations some of the students would lay on themselves.

We used to go to soirees at their apartment. He and I and Eddie would go to contemporary concerts a lot, Stravinsky and Schoenberg and some lesser known contemporary composers. There was a contemporary music society, and they used to have concerts at the New School, and we went to all of those. It was always enjoyable to go with him. You couldn't be around him without learning something. He was amazing. You learned by osmosis from him. Never took him to any jazz events. Didn't talk about jazz too much. When Steve would come out to dinner, I'd drive in and pick him up. There was a period when Ed Sauter had a recurrence of his TB [tuberculosis], and he was in bed at home. So I'd pick up Steve and visit Eddie, and we'd spend the afternoon out there. He was a very generous spirit and gave of himself all the time.

I think he had an effect even on people [in jazz] who didn't study with him. It was almost like an underground at that time the way it spread, a lot of word of mouth. The arrangers would get together and talk all night long about specific things, get at the keyboard, and play things, and discuss them, and a lot of information would pass that way.

Bill Finegan (b. 1917) began his career playing in big bands, and in 1941 was hired by Glenn Miller as a staff arranger. In the late 1940s Finegan became a freelancer and moved to France to study at the Paris Conservatory. He and Eddie Sauter formed the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra to tour and record in the 1950s. Telephone interview: AC, Monroe, Conecticut, 29 January 1998.

Joseph Fiore

It was Christmas Eve, 1953, and we were staying in Minimum House at Black Mountain. We went across the road to where Stefan and Hilda lived. Stefan was ill at the time with his hemorrhoids and he really didn't feel well. It was a beautiful night, cold and sparkling, and the stars were out. I don't remember what we sang, who knows, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," the two of us. Stefan and Hilda came out, and Stefan was very moved and said it was beautiful. They asked us in for tea. It was a high moment.

At some point Stefan decided to have a chorus. There was a very small student population at this time, so we joined. We'd meet in what was called The Round House, which was a small building next to the dining hall. It had a grand piano and some music. Isabel, God bless her, had a thyroid problem and she got very sleepy. But I can see Stefan on his knees before Isabel just trying to get a sound. I mean here is Stefan the composer with this pitiful chorus. Nobody said that he had to do it.

At one point I thought I would like to study composition with Stefan. I wasn't a musical innocent, as I could read music and had some acquaintance with modern music and theory. I had dabbled around with composing a little bit previously. Here was this great composer, and he was perfectly willing to do this. So I wrote a little something and took it to him. And we had this great crazy session. He just took it all apart and then started notating down all these different possibilities, all these crazy graph lines. The whole thing was like a graphic composition. It left me so flabbergasted. It was so involved and intense that I thought, Oh gee, I'll never be able to go on. This was after one or two sessions. It was the involvement, the intensity. I had the feeling that if I was really going to dig into that, I would practically have to drop painting. Of course, Stefan would never have said anything like that, but it's just the way he worked that meant I would have to dig into it that way.

There's something about the way events occur in Stefan's music that seem to come from various places that would somehow relate visually or to painting. It wasn't something from a fixed classical perspective, if you put it in visual terms, that one thing proceeds to the next somehow. But there was always this sense of displacement in space about Stefan's way of working. I remember sometimes paintings of mine that Stefan particularly responded to, certain things may have struck some kind of a chord in his mind about certain convolutions of form, or where things come into the painting. I got some sense sometimes of what he responded to in visual art, in paintings.

He wrote beautiful music for the plays, especially *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and *Peer Gynt*. He was a very respected member of the community; he had really a special niche. I thought of him as dignified, slightly older, firmly established in his own discipline. He was very verbal, but I distinguished him in that sense from some of the more volatile people who were there. He had an inner sense of what he was doing, was dedicated. He had a kind of discipline about his work, which he would do in the morning. Every day he did his composing, but he didn't hold back from other participation. There was an awareness of his work habits, it represented a steadiness there. Stefan's question was always, "How is your work? How is your work?"

Joseph Fiore was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1925. He studied at Black Mountain College from 1946–48 and at the California School of Fine Arts

(now the San Francisco Art Institute) in 1948–49. His work has been exhibited widely; recent group shows include an exhibition at the North Carolina Museum of Art (1998–99). His works are part of the permanent collections at the National Academy of Design and the Whitney Museum of American Art, both in New York City. In 1995, he was elected Full Member of the National Academy of Design, and in 1998 received the Purchase Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Interview: AC, New York City, 21 February 1985.

Edith Gerson-Kiwi

Regarding Wolpe's choral songs, you see, we did not have a model at these early times, at the beginning of the 1930s. If you would take some of our Jewish liturgical music—prayers or hymnodic pieces—it would be very near to this type of music. He was not yet aware that early Jewish hymnody is one of the very earliest sources, and the most precious source. Even if you not a believing Jew, you would never recognize this as Jewish. Or, the other way around, everything would become Jewish. And this Mediterranean music is also not very good. There is no real Israeli music. What we discussed at the time was mostly how to get out of major-minor. He was in the process of becoming a new man, a new composer, and this was the result. It was modal music. He discovered the modal scales. He becomes aware of the cadence. The cadential type is not any more this flashing chords near the end. It is something very deep, and it has to be learned and studied and lived by quite a long time. He had to struggle to get the feel of it.

He started with this new type of hymn, not liturgical hymn, a free hymn. This is all his great donation to the renovation of peasants, intellectual peasants. And there is really no continuation after he left. But I am sure this would have been the right thing, maybe if they recognized the very new form and high measure of adaptation for the intellectual peasants. If they really study this earnestly, they would discover something quite unique, especially meant for the peasants, the kibbutnik. It is at the same time simple, like a chorale by Bach. It is really a Bach chorale transferred to the modern world. It was a means of a highly intellectual composer. They are simple, they have to be, because the kibbutnik are not musicians. But they like to sing it. It is especially done for them.

We have to see him also in the frame of socialism. He was a Communist, but a kind of idealistic Communist. He had very much to work on himself to overstep this, to give the right position in the whole of his compositions. He was a socialist and highly idealistic. You will find it in his work. You must not burn it out. It was *lebendig* living. This is the outcome of his double life, or the intellectual force of the idea. It's impossible not to see, if you see this work. He had always to make a double drive—to go on with his most living ideas and to be the new Wolpe fighting for a new generation of farmers. Would he have thought about writing for farmers, for kibbutznik here? So this is a testimonial of his faith on the one side, and of the new men, newly born here in the country on the other side. And he wanted to give something of himself.

It was high times for discussions of Arabic music. He was interested in the intonation. How could we do this? We had not the means or instruments to produce this. One of my successes was that I went in 1936–7 to the director of the Conservatoire, Emil Hauser, and asked where are our Arab teachers? We are all playing Mozart and Schumann, but we do not know the Arab music, and we are living here. He said, "You are right." I brought him two fantastic gentlemen, great artists, the very best artists of the whole of the region here [one was Ezra Aharon]. Emil Hauser from Budapest succeeded to bring in a special department for Arabic music, and we all took lessons.

Arab rhythm is very different from what we call rhythm in music. For the Arab musician there is a clear distinction between rhythm and melody. Melody can exist without rhythm, a row of tones without any rhythmical connection. You have to take another box where you find some samples, or models of rhythmic deviations. There is a melodic *maqam* and a rhythmic *maqam*. Melodic *maqam* was better known than rhythmical *maqam*. If you

start to perform a classical piece, you have to give the whole state of the melody, all the steps, after you have taken yourself in the melodic model, now you have the rhythmic model. These are called *iqac*. You have to superimpose the rhythmical model on the melodic model. To do this you need ten to fifteen years of exercises.

Wolpe was very sensitive, you did not need to tell him. He felt it [the Arab music] immediately. He was a child of his time. How it got together, he couldn't tell you, but he felt the intensity of the style. They have no polyphony, but instead of polyphony they have the rhythmical *maqam*. He picked out what he needed.

Born in Berlin, musicologist Edith Gerson-Kiwi (1918–1992) studied piano, harpsichord, musicology, and librarianship in Germany, France, and Italy until 1934. In 1935 she immigrated to Palestine to teach music history. She taught at the Music Teachers College, Hebrew University, and Tel-Aviv University, and founded the Museum of Musical Instruments at the Rubin Academy of Music, Jerusalem. Interview: AC, Jerusalem, 25 April 1985.

Alexander Goehr

I met Stefan in Darmstadt in 1956. He picked up with me, or I with him, fairly quickly. The thing I remember him talking about was his return to Europe. He talked about how before the war he shared a flat with Stuckenschmidt, and they were radicals. Now he was very shocked to find that Stuckenschmidt was a well-established critic, extremely conventional and establishmentish. Wolpe went up to him saying, "Come on, what is all this about?" rather aggressively. Wolpe was an outsider.

I think it was my first time in Germany after the war, and my mother thought I should not go. Although I went, I was quite touchy, so I was quite pleased to cotton on to somebody who was equally touchy on the subject, who didn't quite know whether he ought to be there, or not be there. I remember spending a lot of time with him. He had distaste for the new avant-garde as opposed to the old avant-garde. He was equivocal, because on the one hand Darmstadt was wonderful, it was experimental, it was open. And on the other hand, it had no political radicalism or artistic radicalism in the way that he would have known it. It was very didactic and dogmatic in all the ways he disliked most. And so it was all right for children, students like myself to take that sort of attitude, but he was an old student in that sense.

Very often with Stefan you couldn't actually be sure that he was agreeing with you, or not agreeing with you, because there was something equivocal in his manner of speech. I wouldn't have thought that he would have been terribly sympathetic to what I was doing, I think he would have considered me too square. I was very poor, and he tried to give me work. We met then in Paris after Darmstadt, because I was studying there with Messiaen. I was very hard up, and he gave me that blasted *Symphony* of his. He thought I could copy it out. He wasn't very well off, so he really offered me a very small amount of money per page. The manuscript was a frightful mess, because each bar had 5/16 plus 2/8 plus 3/16 in it—big bars. That would have been fine if what the instruments played corresponded with that, but they didn't. I was meant to sort all that out. I spent about a week on perhaps the first four pages and then said Stefan, "Reluctantly, I just can't afford to do it," and gave it back to him. He wasn't very surprised.

He was happy to come up to our flat, and sit and talk and have a smoke. I didn't know what he was talking about a lot of the time, but the thing that was most striking, what I first remembered about him (I don't remember entirely favorably) was his physicality. He was a very physical man, much more than almost any one I had ever met. And the physicality of the man was rather aggressive. So that although I was always very fond of him and always very interested in what he did and what he said, there was a bit of me that was slightly put off by him too. I suppose that I was, or am, I don't know, comparatively inhibited musically. I remember him singing his pieces to me, and that upset me very considerably. First of all, I couldn't concentrate on it, because he made Schwitters-like noises [*imitates with*

guttural sounds]. First I thought it was a joke, because by the time you'd reached page 15, he was going on making this noise for hours. [*laughing*] Neither could one follow or read the score with these noises. Though his vocal imitations were quite expressive, they didn't convey much about the piece. So there was some sense of embarrassment that I felt about him. And yet looking back on it, when I read in your piece that in fact he'd been close to Schwitters, it all fell into place. I was talking to Elliott [Carter] the other day, because he told me you would be coming to talk about him, and I said rather like I'm saying to you now. He thought that Stefan was a lot too near abstract abstractionism for his taste, and that made me think, that I thought he was a bit too near to Schwitters for my taste. He wrote these millions of notes, figures, and things. Perhaps there is an influence. Perhaps he's the only case of anyone serious in the modern music world who actually overlaps with those people. I don't know of any single other composer. But Schwitters was a serious and interesting person and did interesting work. And when I read that in your piece, I immediately began rethinking my impressions of his pieces.

In that direction I want to tell you an anecdote which I've told lots of people. We sat perhaps for four or five hours in a café, which in Paris is common, in London less so. When he came to London, he always phoned up, and I always went to see him or invited him over to eat. He would then go on, telling me what he had been writing and what various people thought about his work. We were sitting in this café in Finchley Road, and we filled a large ashtray full of cigarette ends. I guess I smoked then, and he smoked almost continuously. And we had made a mountain. Finally he said, "Music is like this ashtray. All ashtrays are all different—how the cigarette ends and the ash lies they all don't resemble each other—but on the other hand they're all the same." I thought it was a good image, but it also said something about his attitude towards a lot of music. It was shocking to me in the way that his physicality was shocking to me. Because as a good Schoenbergian, I thought that we use new techniques, they are somehow related to our time, or what we are able to do. But basically what we are trying to do is write like previous composers, individual masterpieces. Maybe we won't succeed, probably not, but ultimately one's trying to write the Brahms *Handel Variations*, although not the Brahms *Handel Variations*, something new. I think Stefan objected to what he would have considered rather a square attitude to music in me, not objected enough not to want to spend time with me, but to oppose that point of view. And I was quite shocked by his version of himself, which was a very modest one.

For a time I worked for the BBC and could occasionally help by putting on things, or telling somebody else to put something on. I think I had a bit of a hand in that Prausnitz performance of the *Symphony*. I don't think I was an active agent, but I did somehow help where I could. I wasn't 100 percent committed to it. I was attracted, and always fascinated and had respect for this figure, but how good those pieces actually were I didn't know.

I went to see him, it was probably the last time I saw him in America. There was this man of such physicality, and he sat in front of me weeping in anger, the tears rolling down his face. He was so angry with his blasted Parkinson's and demonstrating what it did. Those late pieces he wrote with Parkinson's were among the ones that most immediately struck me as the one's that I liked the best. Probably because they stopped having [*makes schwittersounds*] in them. They seemed austere. He couldn't move his hand, he couldn't write the notes any more, and that was why he was weeping, and when I say weeping, he was in tears. We were on our own at that time, and it simply tore my guts. I just couldn't face it.

Alexander Goehr (b. 1932), studied composition with Richard Hall at the Royal Manchester College, founding the Manchester New Music Group. He has been professor of music at the University of Cambrdige since 1975 and a formative influence on many young composers.

Edwin Hymovitz

I was studying at the Settlement Music School, where the fees were a nickel a class. Then in 1941 they went up to a dime. I had had harmony lessons with a guy called Perchik, who warned us about this radical coming in, who was Wolpe. Then I had harmony classes with Stefan. The class was meant to start at nine, but he sometimes arrived at five of ten. He would dictate chords and his command of the material was amazing. I was considered a budding composer and had a class with Stefan. He said you do not need everything in consecutive order, but you could reorganize the elements as in a portrait of Picasso. Others in the class were Jack Maxin and a young black composer, Frank Middleton. Wolpe was very outspoken in praise and in condemning. I mentioned Medtner, and he said, "I knew him in Berlin. He was a schmuck." During one of our classes someone came into the next studio and began playing de Falla, and he went next door and said, "Please, anything else." He loved Scriabin and would assign sonatas as an orchestration project. What struck me about Stefan was the tremendous energy, the great vitality, the love of music and deep involvement. In 1942–43 I graduated to studying piano with Irma. Then I left Irma and went to Joseph Schwarz. At the Settlement Music School in the early 1940s there was a Greek soprano Mathilda Kondax who commissioned Stefan to arrange Greek folk songs for chamber ensemble. They were performed and recorded.

It must have been 1950 when Stefan was teaching at the Contemporary Music School. I wandered in there with a friend, and Stefan was wildly copying out parts for the *Saxophone Quartet*. Anyone who wandered in was impressed into service. Then Jack Maxin wandered in and played the piano.

While I was at New Haven John Strauss arranged this conference of composers from different music schools—Eastman, Columbia, Yale. He asked me who else should we have, and I said why not invite the Contemporary Music School. And sure enough he did. Wolpe gave an afternoon lecture, and I came to hear the end of the lecture. When I arrived in Sprague Hall people were staggering out holding their heads. Stefan was lecturing and was fantastically brilliant. Morty [Feldman], Isaac [Nemiroff], Ralph [Shapey], and a couple of other Wolpe students were on stage as part of a panel fielding questions. They were looking thoroughly disreputable, like the mafia. Morty was very sinister looking at that time. This was the regime of Hindemith, remember. I was supposed to play in the *Seven Pieces for Three Pianos*. I said yes I'll do it, then I gave the part back, and Stefan was very hurt. The pianists were David Tudor and Larry Smith, but I don't remember who the third one was. [*It was Arthur Komar, Ed.*]. The culmination of the week's conference was a lecture by Dmitri Mitropoulos, who came up on Saturday. Wolpe was there, as Mitropoulos was doing a big work of his with the Philharmonic [*The Man From Midian*]. Easley Blackwood came to work with Hindemith. After this conference Easley sat down and wrote a piece *à la* Wolpe. I played the piece the following week for Hindemith's composition class. There ensued a heated discussion that this music was just pretty sounds. Hindemith came and sat in on Wolpe's lecture and stayed for a few minutes and left. Stefan didn't like Hindemith either. Irma said she saw Stefan pointing out every bad note that should have been somewhere else.

I was accompanist for the dancer Merle Marsicano from 1952 to 1962. As a result of my playing with Merle, Morty got to know my music. I was asked to play the multiple piano pieces in a recording of Morty's music for David Oppenheim of Columbia Records [*Morton Feldman, The Early Years*, 1959]. With Russell Sherman and David Tudor I played a very complicated three-piano piece [*Extensions 4*]. Russell Sherman came in and said, "Well, I know my part, so all we need is a conductor." So Morty said, "I'll conduct." After getting through it, he said, "You can get really crazy doing this." So he didn't conduct any more. We recorded it in bits and spliced it together. At that point Morty decided there was no point writing pieces that would fall on their face, so he began writing aleatory pieces.

Wolpe had a program of his theater music on [radio station] WEVD [17 Jan 1962], including his

songs on Brecht. Natasha Lutov was managing the Kootz Gallery, and Harriet Vicente suggested to Wolpe that Natasha sing them. I then was accompanying Jennie Tourel. Natasha and I got together on the basis of that in November of 1961, and we got married in 1963. We then prepared lovingly some of Wolpe's Palestinian songs. He listened to one or two and didn't want to hear any more. Natasha was very hurt. He was interviewed for the radio by Midi Garth around 1964. Stefan needed to have a radio to listen to it, so he came to our apartment, a fourth-floor walk-up. It seemed odd that he didn't have a radio. He listened to the program and couldn't get down the stairs. I was holding his hand and got him on the handrail, and then it was all right.

Wolpe was a tremendously vital force. I felt he was the end of a long and constantly enriching tradition. A somewhat similar position to Bach, very rich and complex and then taken over by a much simpler style. I felt historically that Wolpe would be vindicated when things would develop yet again and people could handle this music. There was a simplification toward the very end with *Street Music*. He used to think he could write popular songs as he had populist ideas.

Stefan cultivated certain painter friends. If you say "action painting" Stefan certainly wrote "action music" in the sense of having tremendous rhythm, energy, vitality, and very complex structures. But a lot of the complexity of the painters was quite random, while Stefan's music was always calculated and controlled, supercontrolled. That's why Morty gave up writing music of such complexity. It became easier to write aleatoric music or music for tape. Even with such expert performers the piece is about to fall on its face any minute. We always had the idea in our evolutionary thinking that slavery and imperialism would evolve into Communism, and simple Hadyn pigtail music would evolve into Stefan Wolpe, and simple players who do Mozart sonatinas would eventually do Wolpe. It's impossible. Stefan never will be rediscovered by a Mendelssohn in the next century. It will never become currency. Which is a shame because it's problematic. When I play a piece of Wolpe's, I have to give up the greater part of a year to work on it.

Edwin Hymowitz (b. 1931), is a pianist. Interview: AC, New York City, 15 March 1992.

Toshi Ichyanagi

It was the American composer Keith Robinson who introduced me to Stefan Wolpe around 1957. Keith was a student of Wolpe and composed twelve-tone music. Since I was also writing with the twelve-tone method at that time, I became interested in Wolpe's music. As to Japan, Stefan told me the strong impression he had when he met Shoji Hamada, one of the top ceramic artists of Japan who visited New York.

I first met David Tudor at his recital in New York in 1958. David later recommended me to play Stefan's three-piano work *Enactments* with him and Russell Sherman. The concerts took place in New York and Philadelphia in 1959. *Enactments* is similar to Wolpe's later *Symphony*, with complex rhythms and textures, and we struggled to master the piece. In the process of the rehearsals it gave me great pleasure when I began to hear the relation between the other two pianos. After the performance I felt as if I had stepped up to another musical level.

Wolpe was at that time teaching in a college in New York and his life seemed unsatisfactory. He complained that teaching left him very little time for composing. It was my impression that Wolpe had a rather isolated situation on the New York music scene in between the experimental composers like Cage and the academic composers. Nevertheless he was one of the most charming and humane persons I met during my stay in New York, and I was attracted by his personality as well as his music. After seeing some of my compositions he asked me to make a fair copy of his *Symphony* in the summer of 1959. It took me three months to complete the score. The hardest and most time-consuming part was to space correctly his complex rhythmic notation. But I learned a lot from this score-making.

I returned to Japan at the invitation of The Twentieth Century Music Institute for the contemporary music festival held in Osaka in August, 1961. I played the Japanese premiere of Wolpe's *Form* at

this three-day festival. Although I was not taught by Wolpe directly, I was trained and learned very much through the performance and writing out of his music. And more than anything, his severe manner of composing and his artistic attitude influenced my later life as a composer and a musician.

Toshi Ichyanagi (b. 1933), Japanese composer and pianist. Went to New York to study at the Juilliard School. He met John Cage, who influenced his future path as composer and performer. He returned to Japan in 1961. His recent opera has been performed in Japan and Europe.

Irma Jurist Neverov

I met Stefan in '45 or '46. I found him unquestionably the most engaging and penetrating and unusual person I ever encountered up to that time. And well he might have been, because the people I always associated with at that time, who were very famous and very successful, were a bunch of half-assed American intellectuals, and for the most part philosophically involved in their politics and seeing nothing beyond their own noses. Whereas this man already, I could sense, had a world view. Even though I couldn't put it in those words, I could tell at that time that in his art there was a kind of world view, a way of looking at music as an activity of man for some purpose or other. He had consciousness about what he was doing. I was really profoundly stirred by that, and I must say from that time forward we became very intense and understanding friends.

I don't know how he thought I understood him, and I don't quite know how I thought he understood me, but there was a kinship, and he described it as a kinship of the soul. I remember him saying to me one time after I began studying with him, "Ach, Irma, your mind is like the mind of my soul." I don't think I've ever had that kind of kinship with anyone. He was profoundly encouraging. He was profoundly gentle, and non-critical, non-destructive. He was, I must say, a very valued friend. I don't know that any of us ever were able to return to him the abundance of what it is he gave to us. He gave it without measure, and I just feel like a piker when I think of how little I gave him back. He wasn't even looking for adulation. Sometimes one thinks of him as a man who sought worshippers, people who were idolatrous about him. On the outside it would look like that. I think he desperately both needed support from others, needed sort of acquiescence, and at the same time he didn't need it at all. There was within him, as I think back on it, an extreme of sufficiency that nothing could touch. It was intangible. By that I mean that you couldn't touch him. You couldn't harm him. It was inviolable. Even in times of desperation that I have seen him in—for a period I spent a great deal of time in their home, and even when he taught elsewhere in his absolutely ratty, but abundant-with-vitality studio in a cellar of some crummy, Westside tenement, I think it was on 91st Street—I have seen him radiant with purpose. His mind was indefatigably entwined with the conversion of ideas into sounds, which is a really noble path, very noble pursuit. He just imbued everything with glamour, and the tawdriest places—and they were tawdry—intellectually lifted into another realm. He was able to accomplish that. That's a kind of magic, really a transformation.

I know that by his thoughts my thoughts were stimulated, but my thoughts were like fledglings. They were like babies, and he just guided me into various places of flight, and I flew. But where I was flying, or why I was flying, I didn't know. He freed me, in other words. Now, I came across some months ago some manuscripts which I had written, and I looked and said, "Did I write that? I mean, that's beyond my ken." In other words, what he did was loose something within me that was kin to him. I don't think he did that with a great many people. It's like unchaining a spirit of music in us, and I had liberty on manuscript paper to write things of enormous compass which were unplayable. I mean, for me they were unplayable. I could hear them, but not playable. That's what he did. He took me out of the petty and slow and confined places into an enormous realm. I'm not sure I knew what I was writing, I just knew it was grand.

Irma Jurist Neverov (b. 1913, New York City) graduated from the Diller-Quaile School of Music

where she studied classical harmony. A leading improviser in New York theaters, she also wrote works for the Broadway theater, including the original score for Caesar and Cleopatra*. She currently teaches the art of performance to actors at The Neighborhood Playhouse School of Theater. Interview: AC, New York City, 21 October 1984.*

Zvi Kaplan

I was in Berlin, January, 1933, and one evening I bought a ticket and went to *Wer ist der Dümmstmmste?*, the play by the *Truppe 1931*. On this very day the Nazis were all ready. This performance group of about six or seven people on the stage was out in special costumes in the style of modern Russian theater. A somewhat funny man came with a little harmonium, and he sings a song [*sings*]: "Es wird die neue Welt geboren," which is afterwards one of his very famous songs here in Israel. And then is the intermission between the first and the second act, and I'm going out in the foyer, and this funny man comes around with some stenciled music copied through a machine and goes around [*yells*]: "Es wird die neue Welt geboren, für fünf Pfennigs." The new world is born for five pennies. He has a leather bag around his shoulder, as he afterwards appeared here in this country, and I understand in New York he went the same way. So I approached him. He said, "Little man, well, you are going to buy, can you sing music?" I said, "Well, what do you think? Of course I can." "So please, sing me the tenor or something a little, so you will get it for no money." And at this very time [in Israel] the Fire Department sings those hymns.

It was the *Theater Unter den Linden*, a small theater in the east sector of Berlin, and the fire brigade was driving by with loud sirens [to the Reichstag fire]. Nobody knew at this moment what's going to happen, but the policeman at the entrance to the theater said, "*Das haben die Kommunist gemacht*." And you could see in the sky fire going up from the Reichstag. This very night. So this was what the policeman said. Nobody knew what happened, but he said already that this was done by the Communists. It was a funny feeling, but the show went on. There were no stops. I went into the metro and held this music sheet in my hand, standing in the metro. Somebody pushed me on the shoulder—it was the funny man—and said, "Young man, put this paper away! Put it away, it's not good for you!" The new world was just born, and he wanted me not to be involved in some unpleasant things. That was the idea of this man.

I had forgotten I had known about this man. Then I had to leave my school and went to Palestine. I started studying music here in Jerusalem at the Conservatory, and then I met this funny man again. I knew that he was here, and I started to appreciate him. He remembered the fact of the little boy, but not personally. I had even at that time his paper, this printed song in German. Then I was his pupil. He was an excellent friend, and I loved him very much, and regretted very much when he left.

He wanted me to read the Schoenberg *Harmonielehre*, and on the other hand we read quartets, we looked at Bartók scores. That was a very uncommon way of teaching. It was afterwards difficult to get connections with other people, because nobody had such a line of teaching. He was very enthusiastic about, for example, Yemenite music, oriental music from Jews. And he made wonderful choir arrangements of songs, sometimes original, sometimes composed. Very, very beautiful arrangements.

Zvi Kaplan (1916–1993), born in Berlin, immigrated to Palestine in 1935. He taught music in both schools and teachers seminaries. After a two-year position as a music director in a Hebrew school in Detroit (1961–63), Kaplan settled in Jerusalem, where he took an appointment as a music supervisor. Interview: AC, Jerusalem, 12 April 1985.

M. William Karlins

The most important moment was one time in his apartment on West 70th Street. We were discussing counterpoint, and he began to express his thoughts on how he composed it. He became a little frustrated with words. He walked over to a beautiful, large glass tank with several docile colorful fish in

it. Suddenly he tapped his finger against the glass, and the fish streaked in every direction across, up, and down inside the tank. "That," he said, "is how my music works. Notice all the activity in all directions, and yet no fish hit into any other. There are no accidents." That image has stayed with me all of my life, and that moment certainly changed my musical life to this very day.

M. William Karlins (b. 1932, New York City) earned the M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music and the Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. His music is widely performed in the U.S. and abroad and he has been commissioned by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the American Chamber Symphony. He is professor of music at Northwestern University. Written communication, Northbrook, Illinois, 22 December 1997.

Bruria Baufman

I came to Jerusalem in 1934, and I'd heard that there was somebody who was fascinating and had very many students who adored him. I wanted to belong to some musical crowd, and so I went to sign up for lessons with Stefan. I didn't get very much out of the lessons, but I got to know Stefan and the crowd, and Stefan was really wonderful. He was a very warm person, and everybody around him loved him tremendously, adored him. All the young musicians who later on became the important composers of Israel were his students at that time. The house was always full of people all the time trooping in and out. Irma was giving piano lessons in one room, and Stefan was teaching composition in the other room, and there was a lot of activity. I would say that the group of musicians they had was about forty to sixty people in Jerusalem, which is a large number.

Stefan had a very hard time in Palestine. He couldn't make money. Both he and Irma dreamt about America, the big world, where he would become famous and well known. Irma was better known in Palestine than Wolpe was, because she played on the radio, and she also had many students. Wolpe was known only for a few of his songs, nothing else. I don't think his music was played anywhere, it was far too modern at that time. [. . .] Then, in addition to that, there was one other fact—he was a Communist. When he returned from a year's stay in Russia, he said that the only thing wrong with Russia was the fact that they didn't give the artists freedom; he thought the way they acted was very stupid, but everything else was just right. This didn't go down well here in this country, because at that time there were the riots: '36 to '39 was a very bad period. The Communists were helping the Arabs against the Jews, and a person who was a Communist was altogether undesirable. [. . .]

A few years later [in Philadelphia in 1939] I started taking piano lessons with Irma and composing lessons with Stefan just to keep up the relationship. My family there had a large house, and whenever the Wolpes came to Philadelphia, they would stay over. I don't think Stefan stayed for more than a year or two at the Settlement Music School, but Irma stayed on for many years and had excellent students—Jackie Maxin and David Tudor. The Wolpes always stayed in my family's place, so that I saw a great deal of them. I can say something about the composition lessons I took in the Settlement School. Stefan would take all the compositions that we brought in as homework—there were eight people in the class—he would sit down at the broken-down piano, and he played these amateur attempts and made them sound marvelous, like something worthwhile. He really could play the piano beautifully, though he had no pianistic technique.

I got my Ph.D. in mathematics, and that's why he came to me [in the 1950s] to ask me questions about elementary things in mathematics. He wants me to explain why, if he wants to have a bar in which he has five quarters, the first is on the beginning of the bar, the second is after a fifth, the third after two fifths, three fifths, four fifths, and so on. He said, "There must be something wrong, because why is it at the beginning of the bar and not at the end." You see, I can't even re-phrase the question. It bothered him philosophically that he had to state that the quarter began at the beginning of the interval and not in the middle of it. He wanted to know why. This was a kind of question that I couldn't answer, because to me it was too clear. He knew very well

how to fit the five into the seven. He did that instinctively. He didn't have to think about how to do it, but he wanted to understand. Divide the bar into three parts, and you have three intervals in the bar. Why do you make only two lines in the middle? He couldn't understand it.

Mathematician and physicist, Bruria Kaufmann-Harris was born in New York in 1918, earned the M.A. from Hebrew University in 1938 and the Ph.D. from Columbia in 1948. In addition to her career as a teacher, she conducted research at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton, N.J. During the 1940s and 50s she collaborated with both Lars Onsager and Albert Einstein while conducting her own research in the application of Spinor Analysis to physical problems. Interview: AC, Tel Aviv, 14 April 1985.

Basil King

I was in Detroit for four years before I went to Black Mountain at the age of sixteen. I wanted to paint, and high school had no meaning for me. I was at Black Mountain on and off from 1951 until it closed in 1956. It felt very, very comfortable to me. I studied writing with Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, and Bob Creeley and painting with Joe Fiore. He was a very good teacher and his class was important for me. Then Vicente came down for a summer.

I took some theory classes with Stefan too, and Fielding Dawson and I took cornet and trumpet lessons with Wolpe. Wolpe wasn't an odd figure walking down the street as there were a still a number of Europeans. He was Jewish and secular and I loved him for this, as I had been raised by a father who was a socialist and a Zionist and vehement about reform Judaism. Stefan brought another thing to the whole place because he'd been to the Bauhaus, and Berlin, and Israel. He was a true oddity. Because I was one myself, I didn't want to be identified with him. At the same time I really truly liked him. He wrote a lot of music down there at Black Mountain. He wrote music for a production of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, which I was in.

Friday nights were a lot of fun. People got dressed up, put on records, and danced. Stefan would go to the piano all of a sudden and start doing something, sing at the top of voice very enthusiastically something that was on his mind. Stefan depended on Olson a great deal and would demand things that Charles couldn't provide, as Stefan was always worried about money. He would always ask, "Are you working, how is your work," in a way that Americans don't take to. I was reading Spinoza at the time and we'd talk. We both adored Spinoza, the first secular Jew. I think that's one of the most marvelous things that can be said about you. I'm not a religious person, but I'm a spiritual person. I deal with it in my work all the time.

There was that competition between him and Cage. Cage was so much more devious and clever that he sometimes made Stefan look a little foolish. John had that way about him that made Stefan look like someone who wasn't quite sure of what he was saying. It would make Stefan very, very nervous. Stefan would sometimes go away red-in-the-face mad. I found it very awkward. But Black Mountain had a lot of artistic competition going on. David Tudor and M.C. Richards were much more for Cage, and Stefan was isolated.

Stefan had very strong opinions about painting, and he understood abstraction. Creeley, Duncan, and Stefan saw paintings, but Olson's ideas were off-the-wall. Wolpe told me that Klee would throw a lot of stuff out and that he would rummage through those bins and sometimes find things that he thought were terrific and keep them. Stefan told me how his brother and sister and he rebelled against their father, who kicked them out of the house. They were on the street and they put together a little act. Stefan wore pantaloons and they sang and danced for pennies. They lived this way for quite a while. I met his brother once in New York. He'd lost an eye from being beaten by the Nazis. They looked alike, but the brother was much taller. At Black Mountain he was always talking about going back to Germany.

The first time I came up to New York from Black Mountain, he gave me an address at Second Street and Second Ave. When I arrived a fire truck was there and the building had burned down. I phoned

Stefan and he said there's no room to put anybody up at his place. He told me to go to a cafeteria at Sixth Avenue and Eighth Street and wait for a phone call. He phoned and said you can stay at Shapey's for a while. Ralph Shapey and his wife said you can stay for two nights, but that a young French composer is coming over for the first time to America and we need the space for him. Pierre Boulez showed up and I spent a day showing him around New York. We saw each other one time after that. They found me another place to stay in the West Village. In New York, I kind of apprenticed myself out. I stretched canvases for Motherwell and Gottlieb and Newman, and hung out with the abstract expressionists.

I saw Stefan at the Eighth Street Club a number of times. Stefan and de Kooning had a good relationship. I know he did with Franz [Kline]. When I worked for Mark Rothko, he mentioned how much he liked Wolpe. Wolpe seemed very comfortable in their presence. He loved painters. Stefan took me over to meet Varèse. I was in their house two or three times. I think they liked each other. Varèse impressed me. I remember the Varèse piece on Stefan's sixtieth birthday concert. Stefan bought two small paintings from me for $75. I'd go there and he'd give me $20, then $10, and then I'd go with them to dinner, and they'd give me $15 more.

Stefan was manic depressive. There were days when he'd be bouncing down the street, and other days when he looked as though he'd lost everything. He would treat you that way personally. It showed in him all the time. There was a conflict. He told me when he was very sick, you've got to learn to not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. You're a lot better off when you can do that. He was really sick the last time I saw him in 1971. He said, "My head is still working. I can work, but I can't myself physically in tune with my head. The music's there, but I can't get it down. I get so damn, fucking frustrated." And he'd kick things with the slippers that he wore. Then he'd eat some yogurt to cool down.

Basil King (b. 1935) attended Black Mountain College from 1951 and completed his apprenticeship as an abstract expressionist painter in San Francisco and New York. His art reaches through abstraction back to surrealism and forward into a new approach to the figure.

Gottfried Michael Koenig

I was introduced to him by [Heinz-Klaus] Metzger, I suppose, or by [Wolf] Rosenberg or [Herbert] Brün, who knew him from Israel (when it was still Palestine). Metzger and I went to his lecture on *Neue (und nicht ganz so neue) Musik in Amerika*, sat in the front row, very interested in what he would say, and enjoyed his lecture tremendously—and that was why I copied the lecture immediately afterwards. The first impression of his lecture on the audience was that it was very funny, especially because all the other people who spoke at Darmstadt, such as Stockhausen and others, wouldn't have dared to make remarks like Wolpe's. The way he looked and talked and laughed in front of his audience was quite unusual in Darmstadt. Very refreshing; I think he was very much respected for his presentation. That was the first impression. It was, as far as I can remember—this is way back, thirty years or so—just a welcome addition to the information for which one went to Darmstadt. And I suppose this was the best information about American music to be had in Darmstadt. He was not well received by the critics, and he complained about that in a letter to me in which he said, "Ich habe soviel Sinnloses über meinen Vortrag gelesen ("amüsant-witzig," "geistreich-paradox"). Stuckenschmidt verstand kein Wort! O Höllen verkrusteter Sprache, hat man im deutschen Land keinen Sinn für Hintergründe und Beschaffenheit?"[1]

On re-reading his lecture, I realized that it was less about American music than about music. His more general remarks about music were much more interesting than his personal observations about liv-

[1] "I have read so much senseless stuff about my lecture ("amusing-witty," "spirited paradox"). Stuckenschmidt did not understand one word! Oh hell of encrusted language, is there no understanding in Germany for the background and the bases of things?"

ing composers, who were better served by the examples he played. His lecture—funny on the surface, but basically very serious—was more or less about music, how he, Stefan Wolpe, thought about music. And that was what made such an impression on an audience like that, much more impressive than facts and figures—dates, opus number, and things like that. I later read my copy several times, and I was in personal contact with him. We talked about music and corresponded. He said things like "Die Beschränkung auf die kürzeste Weile…" ["concentration in the briefest while"]. This kind of language is very typical of him and very powerful when applied to music, especially when spoken by such a musical person, who was himself a kind of living music. What he says is always a statement about music, even if not about music directly. That impressed the few people who knew what he was taking about. He made that impression on me, and I think also on our friends like Metzger, Rosenberg, and Brün.

The fact is that Wolpe's approach was clearly not by way of the strict serialism that was encouraged at the time. Indeed, he issues a challenge in his lecture when he says that jazz is so important in america. Jazz was of no interest and was not discussed at Darmstadt in those days. There were two factions: on the one hand the composers—one or two of them had played a little jazz, maybe to earn some money, but it was not as important in Europe as in the States. and on the other hand the musicians. I'd say that musicians—pianists for instance—are much more interested in jazz than composers. It's something you play, not compose. I never talked about jazz with my fellow composers. But ask a pianist to play, and he will go to the piano and what will he play? Jazz, baby! Of course that's not completely true, but more likely than not. In darmstadt there was a large group of musicians who would probably have been very interested to hear about American composers whose music they might play one day. For composers it's slightly different, because it's another kind of contact. And i must say that in Darmstadt I had very little contact with musicians. I went to the concerts, I talked to my colleagues, the composers. famous musicians, very good musicians, played in the concerts, but I did not rub shoulders with flutists or pianists, except perhaps with the Kontarsky brothers. I remember Wolpe making a pause in his lecture and then saying, "Und das ist jazz. Vielen von uns liegt er wie ein naturstück in den knochen."[2] At least that's how I remember the moment he started talking about it.

I heard some pieces by Wolpe last year played by Geoffrey Madge, I think. Music that is going to be popular, I mean popular enough to have at least some radius, some reason for being played on a more or less regular basis, has a kind of openness that is accepted and welcomed and recognized by the audience, and I think Wolpe's music is just not open enough, or at least there will have to be a future generation to detect possible openings in his music so as to gain access to it. That's my impression. Of course I am completely able to cope with his music; I like music of this kind. Once a composer has made a name for himself and is played often enough in the right places, it doesn't matter whether you like it or not, whether you understand it or not; it is part of your cultural household. And to bring Wolpe into that household is the task.

Born in Magdeburg (Germany) in 1926, Gottfried Michael Koenig studied music in Braunschweig (1945–46), Detmold (1947–50) and Cologne (1953–54), and computer programming at Bonn University (1963–64). Director of the Institute of Sonology at Utrecht University (Netherlands) from 1964–1986, he has composed instrumental, electronic and computer music and written computer programs for composition. His theoretical writings have been published in 4 volumes (5th appearing shortly) by Pfau-Verlag, Saarbrückencken, Germany. Interview: AC, Utrecht, 29 May 1985.

Peter Jona Korn

I came to Palestine in September of 1936. There were altogether twenty young German-Jewish music students who where given certificates. I was the

[2] "And that is jazz. For many of us jazz is in our bones like a piece of nature."

youngest one. They wanted to start at sixteen, but I was fourteen at the time, and I got one of them. The jury consisted mostly of William Steinberg as the main juror who more or less decided which of the many applying young musicians would be given a certificate to the new Conservatory in Jerusalem. Which was a terribly difficult thing to get, because you couldn't emigrate unless you were in one of the trades needed in kibbutz, or unless you went on a capitalist certificate, which required £1,000, an unheard-of sum, and nobody could afford it. So these student certificates were prized possessions. Herbert Brün was among the first group that went a few weeks before. I was in the second group together with Yohanaan Boehm and Haim Alexander. I was there for five days, long enough to see Stefan and show him what I had composed, which he thought was pretty awful, but he still thought I was very talented, both of which was true. And then a few days later I wanted to visit with relatives in Tel Aviv, drove down with Emil Hauser, and he drove us into a ditch, having been sideswiped by an Arab car. My right arm was smashed. Wolpe went in another car a few weeks later and also was driven into the ditch. And the scar on his nose happened then. When I came back from the hospital from Tel Aviv, it was just about that time Wolpe had the accident. So we probably did not start to work until early in '37. [. . .]

I went through harmony with him quite thoroughly, very unacademically. He went step by step by first doing things quickly. Triads, then seventh chords, then adding diatonic modulation, then adding chromatic modulation. Somewhere in between adding suspensions and so forth. He sort of didn't mix things, and for everything sooner or later I would do a little mini-composition, where I would say use modulation. This included no counterpoint at all, because I said, "Now I want to do counterpoint. How does one do it?" And he said, "Well, I'll show you what counterpoint is like." And then he sat down and played the following, because I will never forget that that was the first example. He said, "Counterpoint is something like this. You have [*plays a line*], now comes the counterpoint [*plays a second line with the first*]. He simply sat down and gave me that specific example. There was really no strict counterpoint, it was really just *zweistimmiger Satz* and *dreistimmiger Satz*, as a result of which I wrote a *Duo for Violin and Cello*, which Parnas and Hofnäckler played on the radio, and on this final concert. [. . .]

He did not say terribly much in the beginning about Schoenberg, because we did not know any Schoenberg. After I studied with Schoenberg, I probably wrote him some letters tearing Schoenberg apart. His admiration for Schoenberg and Webern and other twelve-tone composers was quite obvious, but I don't remember that he said too much about actual works of Schoenberg. He talked very little about twelve-tone technique. Nobody studied twelve-tone technique with him, which of course Schoenberg didn't teach either. Much more Bartók was played. Bartók was a *live* concept to us, of all the modern composers the one we had most actual contact with. Even Hauser and his quartet played the first Bartók, which I found terribly exciting, even though they didn't play it quite for what it was worth. So of contemporary music composers the ones that were most alive in our contact, I would say, were Bartók and Stravinsky. He spoke about Stravinsky and Bartók as if they were close to him personally. He didn't speak that way about Schoenberg, strangely enough. But it may just not have come up that much. One didn't get to hear [the music]. There were no records. At least in the case of Stravinsky and Bartók there were already some records about.

The composer that I feel he spoke most about was Mahler. Once he said that he had gone to bed reading the Seventh of Mahler and was all excited. Mahler we did get a chance to hear. Every year the Philharmonic would play another Mahler symphony. The first one that we got to know was the First under Steinberg. They didn't do the Second for obvious reasons. Then they did either the Third or the Fourth, and I'm not sure who conducted it. Then they played the Fifth under Michael Tauber creditably enough. And of course *Das Lied von der Erde* and the Second Symphony we knew from recordings. They were among the first records to come out. So we had more of a contact with Mahler,

we were very much programmed towards Mahler, he initiated a great curiosity as far as Mahler was concerned. Irma played a lot of Debussy. I had the feeling that Debussy more than Ravel was terribly important to him. My spontaneous reaction is that Debussy is among those he admired particularly. [. . .]

The name Hauer came up once. I said, "*Wer ist Hauer*?" [Who is Hauer?] and he said, "*Hauer ist ein Meister den ich sehr verehre*" [Hauer is a master who I revere very much]. No other composer. He probably explained to me about twelve-tone rows and that Hauer found that at the same time, and this is when the remark came. He did not speak about Webern. I have a feeling that this study with Webern was very casual, maybe one of those things where he met a couple or three times.

Peter Jona Korn (1922–1998), composer and conductor, was born in Berlin and attended the Berlin Hochschule für Musik (1932–33). He studied with Wolpe in Jerusalem and moved to the U.S.A. in 1941. He was active as a teacher in both the US and Germany, and was director of the Munich Hochschule für Musik. Interview: AC, Munich, 7 May 1985.

Leopold Last

We were in the same year at the Gymnasium from 1915 to about 1921. I left school in '21. The school was a *Humanistisches Gymnasium*, roughly a grammar school, in which Latin and Greek were the things that mattered. We would have eight lessons a week in Latin and two in German. It was classical languages that were important. The options were later on. Two subjects were optional, Chemistry and English. It had the reputation of being a very good school scholastically in teaching you an awful lot. We had all the things like Geography, History, Mathematics, and Physics, all the usual subjects. But the emphasis, the subjects which mattered, were the classical languages, and we had to write Ciceronian Latin. It was a very Prussian school, very, very rigid. The behavior expected was rigid, but corporal punishment didn't exist, which in an English school was very common until recently. I was thirteen when I entered, but Stefan must have been there when he was a little boy.

Stefan certainly was anti-authoritarian. He tended to be bullied by the teachers, but not by his classmates, who treated him with complete lack of understanding as a bit funny, but that was that. I don't think Stefan could have been easily bullied by the other boys, and being anti-authoritarian made him quite popular. I was in those days anti-authoritarian. It was one of the things we shared, and I was known in the school as Red Last. I tried to do all sorts of school revolutionary things. Having a debating society was an unheard of thing in a Prussian school. But I don't think Stefan took any part in that sort of thing. I certainly called myself a Communist in those days, but I don't think then Stefan was interested in that. That probably must have come later. We were both much influenced in our thinking by Tolstoy's writings, especially his pacifism. I think there was a *Tolstoi-Bund* [Tolstoy League].

I can't remember him standing up for his own views when he was very young, but later, yes. He became more self-assertive, more sure that he was right and others were wrong. He shared with his brother a little bit of the tendency to do things *pour èpater le bourgeois*. I was never sure when he told me that there was now a composer who would not bother about the details of the notes, but only what mattered was really the crescendo and decrescendo. Whether he really meant that, or whether this was just to tease I never knew.

His problem with authority was with school discipline and dress. It was his lack of interest in most school matters. I'm not sure, but I think he was once kept back in the class, he didn't move up to the next form for six months. This school was the wrong school for him. He had a very difficult life at school. There were no schools in Germany that would have suited. He had the wrong parents, they had no understanding. I think he found it difficult at home that he had no understanding.

We went to concerts together, and he introduced me to modern music. My mother was keen on music and would take me to concerts from an early age.

They stopped at Mahler and Richard Strauss, so I didn't know anything further until Stefan, because I'm not really a musician. [. . .] We certainly sometimes went to some of the artists' dances together. It was roughly then [1920] that he sometimes affected a Viennese accent, which he had no business to have. There were quite a few young people who used to come by our house, and Stefan paid little attention to conventions. Whether he was a guest or not a guest, he would want to have his way. If he wanted to play the piano, he would play the piano whether people would like it or no.

Leopold Last (b. 1902) was a physician in London. Interview: AC, Aston-Abbots, Buckinghamshire, England, 14 December 1979.

Sinai Leichter

I sang tenor in Wolpe's chorus at the Jerusalem Conservatoire; also he taught me solfége. I didn't play an instrument, but I could read music. That was from my childhood in Poland, because my father was a Hazan, and he read music. So I was in the choir, and there was a very happy mood in the choir. This was the cream of Jewish youth, the cream of young musicians, because every one of them played instruments or sang. We still had that cohesion based on music and the sensation of having escaped from Germany. We were very sure of ourselves that this was going to be our country, that we are back home. We were all poor, but very happy with a feeling of still retaining something of our togetherness from Germany and yet being in a free country. We sang Wolpe's songs and Bach. He loved Bach very much, and although his analysis centered mostly on Beethoven, he spoke a lot about Bach. An offshoot of this choir was Dr. Felix Sulman's choir, which kept us together for 40 years. Zvi Kaplan and Heinz Alexander were in that choir.

Wolpe asked me to give him Hebrew lessons, and I would go to his studio. For one winter it was three times a week, very early in the morning. The Hebrew lessons were on two levels, one was instruction of the Hebrew language, and the other level was supplying lyrics and telling him more about the cultural life in Israel, very new, very young, and the tremendous vigor of starting something new. It's the accumulated energy of 2,000 years. This is how we all felt. And that imparted itself even to the so-called non-Zionists. But the spirit was tremendous, and this caught on Wolpe. It was a revelation, and it was an opportunity for him to be innovative, different from his strictly Germanic music of the Weberns and the Schoenbergs.

The impact on Wolpe of living in Jerusalem and in Israel has two meanings. It was the loss of the milieu of a highly musically cultured people in Berlin, where he was before. But this loss was highly compensated by the gain of discovering the Jewish aspect of his life and the culture of which he had hardly any notion at all. As I glanced through these scores [Wolpe's Hebrew art songs and choral settings] I noticed the great Biblical poems which he set to music, the *Lament of David for Jonathan* and the highly ethical pronouncements of Micah. I remember we discussed the ethics of the Fathers, as he had no notion at all of the Biblical sources. Of course, he must have read the Bible in German translation before, and he was only familiar with the major stories of the Bible. But now he was looking out for texts for compositions.

Wolpe was one of those who really proved my concept that you had to approach the German Jews intellectually by explaining the structure of the grammar and the beauty of that structure rather than teaching them the individual words and mimicking sentences. I think it was Wolpe who said, "You know, this structure is almost like the chord in music." Hebrew grammar has a structure based on the concept of the roots which have three letters. And on the basis of a very few rules and a creative, imaginative approach, you can build your own words, your own sentences, your own terms. There are seven building [blocks] of Hebrew grammar—three are active verbs, three passive verbs, and one reflexive. The most difficult one is the causative form, called a *Hif'il* structure. Once Wolpe grasped this, he was enamored with it, and he started creating his own Hebrew language, new words. And then the joke went around—look how Wolpe all of a sudden became so interested in Hebrew. He's one of the few

Yekkes who can speak *Hif'il*. There is an old saying in English that you can only speak in the passive. He had a wonderful sense of humor and tried to make Hebrew jokes. He was very creative in making up his own words once he learned the rules.

His understanding of the structure of the language was a new departure for his understanding and love of the Bible. It was around the same year as Martin Buber came to Jerusalem. [Buber's] approach to understanding the Bible was also based on this deep understanding of the structure of Hebrew language with its three-letter roots. Wolpe was interested in Buber, although Buber was not a leftist socialist, but a great intellectual with a profound understanding of Judaism. The word for "sacrifice," coming from Greek or Latin to English, usually means sacrificing an animal to a god or to an idol. I remember I discussed this with Wolpe following a lecture on the radio by Buber. Buber said that sacrifice in Hebrew has nothing to do with appeasing a god, or praying for rain. In Hebrew the word is *Korban*, derived from the root *Karev*, which means "near." It was an act of bringing the human spirit nearer to godliness, an act of nearness. Buber translated it in German not as *Opfer*, for sacrifice, but as *Darnüng*, bringing something near, from the word *nahe*, "near." He meant to imply nearness between men and God. I can recall how Wolpe was fascinated, hypnotized by it. This kind of approach and understanding of the Bible gave him the intellectual urge and motive to study Hebrew.

He was very much in love with the poems that I revealed to him by a woman poet whose name was Rachel. Her full name was Rachel Blustein. She was a young woman from Russia, and she had been assimilated. She never knew any Hebrew before she came. She was fascinated by the idea of the kibbutz and was a member of the first kibbutz of the Degania, near Tiberias. Rachel became the poet of the first settlers and the first concept of kibbutz. Her poems are extremely beautiful. I got a book of Rachel and read and translated some into German. Wolpe was highly enamored of the poetry of Rachel. He insisted on having very literal translations.

He had leanings to extreme socialism, but he was not considered Communist, neither did he consider himself Communist. I would define his communism as Biblical fervor for social justice. He burnt up for that. He was a great admirer of kibbutzim, that was the implementation of socialism not on the scale of a government or a state. It was a small, nuclear, very genuine, idealistic socialism, and people really gave up any claim or intention for making private money and goods, and worked all for the good of community and for culture and science. The main reasons of the kibbutz was to have peasants living a kind of cultured life like the great German intellectuals. Back to the land with a high cultural, idealistic, and moral life. Now where in the world do you have that? That was most appealing to Wolpe. He adored kibbutz life. I think he would have lived on a kibbutz were it not for Irma, because on weekends he would run away to his kibbutz. There were weekends where Friday night meetings for musical analysis were canceled. Many of the students of the Conservatoire joined him in kibbutzim, and they are still to this day. [. . .]

He was greatly in love with one very primitive little Yemenite song, "Ali b'eir" by Sara Levi[-Tanai]. She was a Yemenite girl who couldn't write music. Somebody wrote it out for her, and Wolpe arranged it for piano. It was a simple Yemenite traditional tune from the desert of Yemen, but he loved it so much. I remember how when he put it into four parts we sang it in the choir. [. . .] When I brought him the text "Tsedaktem Habonim" [by Saul Tchernichovsky] the content was fantastic and the rhythm of the words was great. He wanted to know the accents, and I said it is read: "Tsedakt'm Ham Habon'm Hatseir'm." And the music was born in his mind the very moment that we read the Hebrew words together. When I said the words, he sang them back exactly with the rhythm of the Hebrew text. It was his capacity to absorb deeply the meaning and the rhythm and the flavor of his new culture and turn it into music.

Born in 1915 in Kielce, Poland, Sinai Leichter moved to Jerusalem in 1935 to attend Hebrew University and the Palestine Conservatory of Music. In the late 1960s he moved to the United States to pursue graduate studies and later returned to Israel where he was appointed Assistant Profes-

sor of Jewish History at the American College of Jerusalem. He has served as co-ordinator for the editorial board of Encyclopedia Judaica*. Interview: AC, Jerusalem, 19 April 1985.*

Edward Levy

All of the people there [at the Contemporary Music School] were just marvelous. I remember one time going to Cherney Berg for counterpoint lessons. I was giving him three dollars. I was making 25 dollars a week at some job, and Cherney said to me, "If you have a date on Saturday night and you need the money to go out, forget about paying for the lesson." And that was the attitude that all of them had. Ralph Shapey would say, "If you can't pay, don't think that you have to stay away from a lesson. Come for a lesson anyway even if you can't pay." The generosity of spirit was incredible. After studying with Ralph Shapey for about two years, he said, "I think you're ready now for the master." He then said very magnanimously, "I don't think I can teach you anything now. You should go to Stefan." And I began to study with Stefan. Stefan I paid, but I think I paid him five dollars a lesson. It was usually an hour and maybe a little bit more than that. When I studied with Ralph, the lessons were so exhausting and so challenging, so attacking, such an assault, that I always had to take a day off. I would go to the movies that evening to kind of relax, and I would take a day off before I could get back to work. When I started to take lessons with Stefan, I couldn't wait to get back to work. That evening I would run to the piano to start work all over again. I never took a day off. He was the most inspiring person. I don't think that I can remember specifics, because again it would be detail. I would bring in something, he would hear it inside, the way I heard it. He would hear what I was trying to do, and then he would write out another solution of it, invented right at the time. I would look at that solution, and then I would look at what I did, and I would not take his solution. I would work out something else of my own, but along the lines he indicated. And we would proceed like that. So that he went over every note I wrote. He heard it in his head. He played it through occasionally. He was meticulous in terms of every single note being in the right place—rhythm, dynamics, phrasing, everything. And if something was wrong, he would create an alternate version. He would never fix mine. He would never say, "Here, you don't need a B." He would create an alternate version in order to give me a sense of comparison. On the basis of the comparison with the alternate version I would then be able to create another alternate, which was different from mine, but at the same time not his. That was mine, but better than my original. So he always led you to the next stage.

When he went to Black Mountain it coincided with the time that I went to City College. He would come back to New York in the summer, so it was only during the summer that I continued to compose. When I composed in the summer, I went for lessons with Stefan, and they were sometimes two to three hours long. At the same time I could only afford five dollars. Occasionally he would say that's not enough, but there was nothing I could do, and he never refused me lessons just because I couldn't pay more. That generosity was always there. [. . .]

They moved the Contemporary Music School one more time to Eighth Street and Fifth Avenue. There the analysis class got larger. The notable addition was Claus Adam. Every single week would start the same way. Stefan would come and say, "Who has something to say?" Since I had initiated the conversation the previous week, I wanted to be quiet. No one else volunteered. He would finally look at me and say, "Levy, you have something." And I did. I would say one or two sentences about whatever piece we were looking at. He would then take whatever insight I had and for the next two hours improvise a lecture. I am almost sure that he did not come prepared. I can't swear to it, but the way in which he needed something to kick off from indicates to me that you had to give him a starting point. Once I gave him (it was always me) a starting insight, then he would simply develop that idea, which he could do with brilliance. The other people, I felt, except obviously for Claus, were there only to bask in the sunshine of his charisma. The first time I heard the word "charisma" was when Hilda used it to describe

Stefan, and that's exactly right. He inspired people who were around him. What they got from him, I can't say, because my feeling is they got nothing. The difference was when Claus was there. He being a superb musician and an old student of Stefan's, they would then have discussions on a much, much higher level than any other of the students could come close to. So he would ask Claus a question, and Claus would respond, and that got to be a really interesting discussion. It's impossible for me to remember what it was that they discussed. But I can give you the list of pieces that we looked at. The Beethoven *Pathétiqutique Sonata*, the first movement, the *Second Quartet* of Bartók, the first movement certainly, the *Fifth Quartet* of Bartók, I believe all of the movements. And we were supposed to look at the Schoenberg *Fourth Quartet*, but we never got to it, as I remember. This is all over a two-year period I was in that class, '49–'51.

Mostly what he concentrated on was bar to bar continuities, that is, the building up of momentum and then the sudden turn away from that momentum, what represented a balance. There's one spot in one of the Bartók quartets where a short but significant event balances a long development. So it isn't a question of length, it is the question of length plus the strength of the position that represented a balance. The reason I remember it is that I made the comment and he turned to me and said, "You will be a good teacher some day." And then he went off from that. But that was the kind of thing he led us to discover, the question of continuity and balance, and how long an idea could be developed before changing. To get the motivic development as fully used as possible and then to balance it out with an asymmetrical event. Intervallic relationships were the constant concern.

Edward Levy (1930–2002) began music studies in 1943, and his first influences were Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespire, and Lennie Tristano. He studided composition with Ralph Shapey from 1948–50 and with Wolpe from 1949–51. After a B.A. at City College of New York, he received the M.F.A. from Princeton University (1960), where he worked with Sessions, Kim, and Babbitt. he taught at C.W. Post College until 1967, when he joined the faculty of Yeshiva College. Interview: AC, New York City, 19 October 1984.

Ursula Mamlok

I came to the Mannes College from Ecuador in 1941, because we couldn't come straight here from Berlin. There was a quota system. I got a scholarship, and I came by myself as a teenager. George Szell was stranded here also. I studied only "model" composing " *à la* Brahms and as far as, maybe, Strauss and early Stravinsky. If I had brought in anything that was of an experimental nature, Szell would just sort of almost throw me out, because he couldn't relate to the sounds of my attempts. The name Schoenberg was never mentioned, so I didn't know that such a composer existed. This was now the beginning of the war, when nobody was really studying composition, especially at Mannes, where we had two students, George Rochberg and myself, and later, Martin Boykan.

I went one summer to a music institute at Black Mountain College, and there assembled all the European refugees. A big festival of Schoenberg's 75th birthday was celebrated, 1944, and they played all Schoenberg's early music. I still didn't get familiar with what was going on in the first half of the century that I lived in. I was very isolated from that. I noticed after going to Black Mountain College that the kind of music I was writing was not getting me anywhere. It was sort of *à la* Prokofiev and Hindemith, while I was searching for other ways to compose. Roger Sessions was at Black Mountain, and I went to him, but he left pretty soon to go to California to teach, and so I was for many years without a teacher.

I had no degree, so I couldn't teach. I went to the Manhattan School, but unfortunately the opposite happened from what I wanted to happen. Giannini was a very conservative composer. With Sessions I had already gotten another language of composing for myself. With Giannini I had to compose tonal music that was somehow related to what he could understand. And while I got my degree, I still felt I wasn't ready. I remember Giannini making fun of

me and saying, "With whom are you going to study next?"

Well, I knew already it would be Wolpe, because I had heard a great deal about Wolpe being such an influential composer. I met Netty Simons at some occasion, and she said she had studied with Wolpe. I called a friend at the time by the name of Beatrice Witkin, and I told her that I'm going to go to study with Wolpe, and she said, "Oh, I'll go with you. We'll try to both study with Wolpe and share a lesson." We both had no money. This I should never have done, because our personalities were very different. So these lessons we took together didn't work out for me. I called Wolpe one day and said that I have to stop these lessons. He would not hear of it and said, "You come to me, there will be no charge for it. Come twice a week. No student has ever left me."

I composed with Wolpe a piece which is now my most recorded and most played piece, *Variations for Solo Flute*. I wanted to learn twelve-tone composing. Wolpe actually is not a twelve-tone composer. He did talk about it, but in a very allusive kind of way. I somehow needed something to hold on to to get a new language, and I didn't know quite what to do with Wolpe's teaching. I did write pieces at the time which I didn't understand myself, which I thought somebody else had written. Wolpe liked what I did, but I couldn't believe it, because I felt anybody can do this, I'm faking, I'm not doing something that is true to me. But I fought on. Later I said I would like to have him give analysis classes, because I felt he had so much to offer that should be shared. I told him there are other students like me from the Manhattan School who are really held back in their development. They know nothing about Schoenberg and Webern and about their important influences on other composers. Wolpe needed the money badly, and I said: "I'm going to bring you people in need of your knowledge." There was Bill Karlins and Howard Rovics, and some other students, and we all sat around in the evening and had very interesting times hearing Wolpe discuss the Webern *Piano Variations*.

Wolpe's teaching at that time was too allusive for me. It wasn't technical enough. He talked very poetically. Today, I could take this, and I use his approach in my own teaching. He would say, "Well, imagine three objects. They could be placed this way, and they could be placed that way." He spoke about the cars in the street. "You watch the traffic, and you get inspired, you compose." Now that at the time meant nothing to me. I wanted to know something about the pitches. Today, thinking about his ideas, they seem very appropriate, and can be very helpful, but not having the technique and having been based in a sort of extended tonal technique, I couldn't do anything with this valuable information. I saw in the lessons that we took together the students composed his music. Of course with many teachers you come up with a language of the teacher. This is a natural thing. At the time, I found this disturbing. All of a sudden I didn't hear myself any more. I couldn't identify with his very original music. But, on the other hand, what else could he have taught if I wanted to learn from him. [. . .]

But I learned from Wolpe and still maintained how he would free me from writing in narrow ranges and limit myself to symmetrical phrases. Those are very important technical points which I learned through his music. Actually I still have sketches where he would say, "well, this should be this way." And today I can't fathom not accepting his suggestions. It has become a natural language for me to write long arches melodically, and that is something that he showed. He wrote something down, he sometimes also would write down some numbers, he would write down some words—very much like you would teach a child—a sentence where the words could be rotated and there would still be a meaning. There would be permutations of a sentence. I think that's a valid way of teaching music, especially to a beginner.

Born in Berlin (1928) Ursula Mamlok immigrated to the United States in 1941. She studied at the Mannes College and also took private instruction from Wolpe, Sessions, Steuermann, and Shapey. Her work has been recognized by the Fromm, Koussevitzky, and Guggenheim Foundations, and her music has been performed by the Jubal Trio, Parnassus, the Group for Contemporary Music, Speculum Musicae. Her work has been commissioned and

performed by the San Francisco Symphony and is published by C.F. Peters. Interview: AC, New York City, 16 February 1985.

Josef Marx

When Wolpe met me [Jerusalem, 1935], he said, get your oboe and come over. So I did, and I played for him, and I played everything that he had so tediously learned in school can't be done. He would ask, can you do this, can you do that, and I did it. I had a fingering chart for quarter-tone scales and all kinds of stuff, which I subsequently I threw away. All what's now called multiphonics, those noises that we worked so hard to get rid of, are now the discovery of Dr. Rozzi. I knew all those and did all those. At that time I composed a tonal cadenza in double stops on the oboe, which I wish I had written down, because it was very impressive. I have no idea how I did it. And out of that then grew the *Suite* that Wolpe wrote. Twentieth-century changes in oboe technique and therefore in oboe literature began with the pieces that Wolpe wrote for me. The first is the *Suite im Hexachord* for oboe and clarinet, which he began composing shortly after we met in Jerusalem in 1935. It was finished in early 1936. [. . .] The second piece was the *Oboe Sonata*, which was begun in 1937 and finished in 1941. When I got it in 1939 it was three movements, and the last movement was yet to come. Wolpe very frequently stopped composing before the last movement and then had great difficulty finishing the work. I spoke with him about it, and he said that in the course of working on a piece he advances so much with the material that by the time he gets to the last movement he doesn't have the technique yet to compose the ideas he has generated. Then there is a time lag of several years. The time lag in the case of the *Oboe Sonata* brings about a great discrepancy in style between the first two movements and the last movement. The last movement is the most remarkable movement in the piece. The last movement of the *Suite* does not exist except in name and becomes the first movement of the *Oboe Sonata*. When he planned the *Duo*, he wanted to end on a Danza, and there is no such dance. That dance is the opening of the first movement of the *Oboe Sonata*. In between the *Duo* and the *Oboe Sonata* is another *Oboe Sonata* of which I have a pencil manuscript, which includes the greater part of a first movement, and then it breaks off. It gets so complicated and so embroiled in trickiness that he couldn't go on and started all over again. [. . .]

The third piece is the *Quartet for Oboe, Cello, Percussion, and Piano*, composed in the middle 1950s. Wolpe had come back from Black Mountain College, and I think it was the night that he came back, or in those very first days, that I played a performance of the Mozart *Oboe Quartet* [K.370] in Carnegie Recital Hall, a performance that I had very carefully prepared from the photograph of the manuscript in the Paris Conservatory Library and the first edition in the Library of Congress. I had made an edition based on these two sources and rehearsed for about six weeks very carefully. It was a very exciting performance, except for what the *New York Times* thought. Wolpe then wrote his *Oboe Quartet* in reaction to it, which *Quartet* is to my mind the most beautiful piece for oboe that exists, and also the most difficult. I don't know any other piece that is that fiendishly difficult.

Born in Berlin in 1913, Josef Marx moved with his family to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1927. He later studied comparative literature at the University of Cincinnati, oboe at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and composition with Wolpe from 1935–41. He held teaching appointments at the Jerusalem Conservatoire, the New York College of Music and at the C.W. Post. He performed internationally with organizations including the Tel Aviv Symphony Orchestra, the Palestine Orchestra, and the Metropolitan Opera Company. In 1946, he founded the publishing house of McGinnis and Marx. He died in 1978. Interview: HR, New York City, 1973.

Jacob Maxin

I lived with Irma and Stefan many years. One of the extraordinary things was breakfast time. They must have been both morning persons. The talk around

the breakfast table would not be small talk whatsoever, not the weather, but on the highest aesthetics of his creative ideas and his composition, or the late Beethoven quartets. I remember a lot of analytical talk about music in general and about the classics. He was at the highest peak of inspiration when he was talking about this, and so was she just listening to him. Then she would say, "Aha! then this means so and so!" And then he would go on for another ten or fifteen minutes. I remember an atmosphere of such inspiration at the wealth of his ideas, his talking, and her listening with the greatest understanding, and responding to him in a way that he could go on and on. And this was breakfast. [. . .]

The difference of Stefan's music, the color of it, the vitality, the blazing non-legatos and staccatos, the excitement of it, that was what struck me the most in my youngest years. Not the harmonies, because my ears immediately responded to modern harmonies the minute I heard contemporary music. It didn't make one iota less my love and completely being encapsulated by Beethoven and Schubert. One of the things that Irma was constantly saying was that through contemporary music one understood the classics. It's very true, and I teach that to my students. [. . .]

I played the *Chaconne* of Stefan, *Complaint*, a little piece called *Con Fuoco*, and the *Pastorale*, which he dedicated to me. Those were the pieces I played when I was about twelve. I had a natural facility, so I just learned them. I played them for Stefan, but I guess I worked on them mainly with Irma. I don't remember instructions, and I don't remember any differences of their opinions. It's a pity that I played so many of his things in first performances and cannot remember his comments in our rehearsals. I cannot remember, because it seemed always to me that he didn't say very much. He listened very carefully. He must have known every single thing we were doing, which might not have conformed to his imagination, but he didn't tell us that it didn't. It was as if he accepted what every person did (I'm talking of the chamber works, of course). What one got from him was the spirit of a piece, and the enthusiasm, the *élan* of his music. And that was conveyed just by his personality and his being next to us at the rehearsals. Because he sang along, and of course he indicated tempi, which is the most important thing. So we were not wrong in tempos, or, if we were, that would be corrected, but not very strictly. I remember in the *Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano* he thought we took the second movement too slow. But we said we liked it better that way. I don't remember if he shrugged his shoulders or made a remark, but we continued to play it slower than he had wanted, because we felt that that was better. There was otherwise not enough of a contrast between the first movement and the second.

The one thing I remember Stefan saying over all the years was the one word "More! more!" And that word will be forever burned into my memory, because that was the word he used almost exclusively. It sounds sort of idiotic, but he was always asking for more expression and more deep intensity into what I now understand as the vitality of his music. If you weren't awake to that, it wasn't the music. And I think that tempo and that "more!" were the basic two things that he did, plus the all-important spirit of the piece. I'm talking about the *Saxophone Quartet*, mainly. I don't know if I even looked at the metronome. I was just with him all the time, so I knew the tempi that he felt. I suppose, if I was wrong, he corrected me. Technically I could do it, and we had very fine players. [. . .]

He talked to his adult pupils on a one-to-one, very equal basis. He never was "the professor." His students were always close friends, or they became equals at least in his social attitude, so could say whatever they wanted, and they did. You don't find that with other teachers of composition. I studied later with Roger Sessions, and if I said what I felt like, it was couched in very civilized terms. Stefan was a very accepting person. I don't know how critical he was. He loved people so much for their individuality and those things they had that others didn't have. He surrounded himself with very extraordinary people and loved them for their qualities. If you were his friend, you were wholeheartedly his friend, and he gave heart and soul to you. I didn't even realize until after his death what a warm person, or hot person he was in friendship. It was just

complete acceptance and all-embracing. Maybe I was an exceptional case without realizing it, but that was my position with him.

Interview: AC, Boston, 10 November 1983.

Leonard B. Meyer

I was a fiddle player, and I started to compose just out of hearing. I'd never had a lesson in harmony and didn't know beans about harmony. I started to study with Karl Weigl, and he gave me counterpoint lessons till they came out of my ears. It wasn't what I needed. My brother had studied with a pianist named Henriette Michelson, and she said, "Why don't you study with Stefan Wolpe?" It was one of those odd things, because I'm sure that, while she appreciated Wolpe's personality, I can't believe that she appreciated his music. But I went to see Wolpe, it must have been in about 1939, and I started to study with him. We got along well. I was very young and very naive. I had been at Bard College and had taken harmony and counterpoint there. I started working with Stefan when I transferred to Columbia [College]. At Columbia I had shown some of the quasi-romantic stuff I had written to Seth Bingham, who I guess was in charge then, and he said piano music should be percussive, and I said under my breath, [expletive] and decided that was not for me. I majored in philosophy at Columbia sort of by default. I studied with Stefan during the last two years at Columbia and after that.

What one learned with Stefan is hard for me to say after all these years. One learned to find out what the implications of one's own gestures were. You would go to him with what you had written and he would say, "Well, this is *quatsch*." That was a favorite word of his. Then he would say you could do this, or you could do that, and then he would send you home. But he was always encouraging. Basically, I was not exactly the most talented composer who ever lived. But I feel I learned a hell of a lot about music and how it worked from Stefan. I still teach my students things I learned from him. He used to talk about what he called dead intervals and the notion of making them live again. A dead interval being, as I remember and as I use it now (I may have sort of changed that), where you didn't hear the interval actively. To take an example of a dead interval from the literature, at the beginning of the *Opus 130* [Beethoven, *String Quartet*], you don't hear the interval between the end of the first phrase and the beginning of the second as an active relationship. He had a theory that if you had such an interval that was not active, that you didn't really hear as a seventh, for example, that you would later make it into an active interval. Another concept which I think I got from him, also from gestalt psychology, was the notion of gap-fill, that if you made a skip, you then filled in what you had skipped over. There were all kinds of things like that where there were sort of informal concepts which were really aspects of technique, of seeing what the possibilities of your tunes were, or your melodies, or harmonies. There was the business of the linearization of harmony and the harmonization of linear structures. I don't think I ever wrote a twelve-tone piece with Stefan. He didn't explicitly teach twelve-tone music. I was in my radical phase. I wrote a worker's march, and he was very good at that, since he'd written some himself. He was both enthusiastic and helpful. [. . .]

I feel deeply indebted to Stefan, but I couldn't put my finger on it, except that he taught me a lot about what made music work. He was always concerned with really important issues about motivic structure. He would talk less about harmony and somewhat about form, but more in a synthetic, dialectic sense, the relationship of things to one another. He was not at all doctrinaire in his teaching of composition. He knew what was going on in twelve-tone music, but we never talked about that really. He talked about Busoni a lot, much more than anyone else. He felt that Busoni somehow was the beginning of an alternative way of making music. Some of the neoclassical aspects of Busoni meant something to Stefan in terms of the structuring of music. I know that he spoke very fondly about Busoni.

Born in 1918, musicologist Leonard B. Meyer is a graduate of Columbia University and the University of Chicago. In 1946 he joined the department of music at the University of Chicago and in 1975 was appointed professor of music and the humanities at

the University of Pennsylvania. His publications include Emotion and Meaning in Music*, (1956),* Music, the Arts, and Ideas *(1967),* Explaining Music *(1973),* Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology *(1989). Interview: AC, New York City, 12 December 1982.*

Hilda Morley Wolpe

We met at the end of 1948 because he was looking for a translator for *Songs from the Hebrew*, which he had written in Palestine. He came to see me. I was on the telephone, and he resented this very much that I didn't immediately drop the telephone. I just sort of waved at him and asked him to sit down, and he felt this was very rude, he said later. But he began to look round the walls of my sitting-room, and I had reproductions of most of the great modern painters—Miró, Picasso, Braques, Klee, Mondrian, and so on. And this interested him. He said, "You're interested in modern painting?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I knew Klee." I nearly fainted, and he seemed extraordinary to me from the very beginning. His directness, kind of a fiery light in his eyes. It wasn't just fire, but light also, a kind of penetrating look that he would give you. And the way he always talked about essentials, no little things, nothing trivial.

His connection with Klee struck me as something so rare and marvelous that set him apart already. We went out to have dinner, and he seemed to me then immensely tall. I know that he was not really very tall, but he seemed to me bigger than ordinary people. Actually in size larger, as if he had come from some other race or some other planet almost. One of the ways he tells me that evening was when I actually mentioned the word "God." He said, "Do you believe in God?" angrily. I said, "Sometimes." He said, "How is that possible?" angrily. "No intelligent person can believe in God. Do you really?" He looked at me so challengingly that I wasn't sure that I did, and I felt very hesitant. I had had one experience where it seemed to me that something like God did exist.

At this period [1920s] he went through several stages. One was that he believed in the total anonymity of the artist, and that one should not credit oneself with what one does. For example, he signed himself "X" in many cases on modern music concerts. At another point he had a kind of Tao or Zen idea, he followed Tao a good bit at one point. Lao Tse influenced him a lot, the hidden great man, the concealed one, which to a certain extent he remained to the end of his life. He felt that a piece of music performs its function when it's performed *once* and need not be preserved after that. It's flowered and had its one blooming, and after that he would destroy his work, if it had one performance, after the premiere. He did that, I think, for about a year or so, and signed himself "X." Then he went through a period, I think he said for a whole year, when he composed only in his head, didn't write anything down, because what he felt was most important was the spiritual state you arrived at through the process of composition. It doesn't help other people directly. It can help them indirectly insofar as you have become transformed and improved. So a lot of that early music has been destroyed one way or another.

He went through a phase of almost being a Catholic. I think it was [Jacques] Maritain who came around to Berlin and tried to proselytize a lot of the young artists there. And Stefan was influenced by that. Anyway he became interested in Gregorian chant, and he went to a small town in France called Poligny, where they had a school for Gregorian chant, and he studied it. There's some extraordinary letters from there, mostly about the French landscape, which he loved very much.

When I first met him I was amazed, because no one I knew had ever done this. When he wanted a few moments of peace and contemplation, he would walk into churches (which were usually empty) and think, and just gain those moments of stillness that he needed to get in the midst of the day. Another thing that was surprising about him, but delightful, was his love of Christmas. He adored Christmas in a purely childish way. It had nothing to do with Christ, but he loved the Christmas tree and the ball. He always had several sprigs of evergreen and loved the idea of buying gifts and the festivity connected

with it, giving something to one's friends. And every year when he was well he used to write and decorate his own cards with green and red ink in very beautiful designs and scribbles, and kind of abstract inscriptions for all his friends. He worked over that for days.

In Palestine he fell in love with the Hebrew language in terms of musical expression, and expression as such. And not only the Hebrew language, but even the Arabic seemed close to him and to his sense of sound. He would sometimes imitate the chants of the Copts. He used to go to a Coptic Church in Jerusalem and hear these fantastic sounds in their chanting. Stefan knew a certain amount of Hebrew and understood a good deal, particularly of the poetic aspects of Hebrew, I mean the Bible, and he picked up phrases, but he didn't use it himself in ordinary conversation much. He had a marvelous sense of the sound of it, and the meaning of the sound, that meaning that was related to the sound. And he loved to imitate typical Hebrew sounds as the Orientals used them. He had probably studied a certain amount, but he never really got into it very much as a language. But instinctively he knew how to handle it. Just the way he could never read a whole novel through. I don't think he had the patience for fiction because used to say, "That's too anecdotal." He liked to hear stories, particularly if they were funny. He claims to have read *The Brothers Karamazov* when he was young. That's the only one I could swear to.

He was brought up ostensibly as a believing Jew by his father. He was bar mitzvahed, and he used to go to the temple once a year with his father on high holy days. But he very soon broke away from that and the idea of all orthodox religions. There was a growing rebellion against all of the beliefs of the generation just before him, which reached its height just before the end of World War I, when youth simply became totally disillusioned with the leadership of the country, with all the mores that they'd been brought up to respect. And Stefan was one of those who led a students' rebellion at school, and a students' strike, and chalked up slogans on blackboards. He'd also become a member of what was called a *Tolstoi-Bund* when he was about sixteen, a pacifist organization based on the teachings of Tolstoy.

The first experience he had that he told me about of his musical needs came when he was in his early teens, before he had a theory teacher, when his father gave him a toy railway set for his birthday. He was about thirteen, I guess. And Stefan became fascinated with the varying speeds that he could use to make the trains run round the track in relation to each other, with some slower, some faster, speeding them up and diminishing the speed. And this became for him later a kind of analogy for what he wanted to do with musical rhythms and with the pace of musical movement as a whole. I also remember the way he described his going up to this very conventional theory teacher. He used to go up to the door, and before he'd knock or ring the bell, he used to say to himself, "Now Stefan, remember, everything he's going to tell you is nonsense, is not true, but you have to learn it." And of course at that time he knew nothing of the Schoenbergian school, it hadn't reached Berlin yet, at least not at his age level. But he tried to construct a kind of modern music for himself, he said, by turning Beethoven upside down and trying to look at it that way. Or speeding things up on the early gramophones that they had, speeding things up and slowing them down, or playing them backwards.

He broke completely with the traditions of his own family and his own past, and he had practically no teachers to help him, although Busoni was a great influence on him. Busoni was an avant gardist in his thinking about music in certain ways, in certain ways no. Also his sense of form. Perhaps most of all in his warmth and tenderness and affection for the young Stefan. When he was seventeen or eighteen and had run away from home, he was practically starving to death, worked as a porter in the railway station to earn his living and was dressed in hand-me-downs of soldiers' uniforms and old military boots that were too big for him. When Busoni saw him in that way, he was horrified. One of the first stories was that when Busoni met him, after he'd shown him some scores of his, Busoni said, "My God, look at the way you're dressed! You can't go on like that! You don't look as if you've eaten

anything, come to my house." And he did the next day, and Busoni found him a suit of clothes and fed him. And then when there was the premiere of *Doktor Faustus* or *Arlecchino* Busoni insisted on taking him into the private box in which he sat. And he remembers Busoni saying with a kind of naive delight (because there was a blue light on the stage), "Oh, that's the mystic blue light!"

He was never an aesthete. On the contrary, that's what differentiates him from a great many modern composers. He always had the feeling that art should be at the service of the people, not in the sense of the Soviet idea (as it's understood now) in a hide-bound way, but that art exists to help people. His idea of art was a very humanistic one. The way I'm putting it sounds rather naive, but it was not. It was deeply true, and it was through art that he learned what was essential in life. One of the pieces he wrote toward the end of World War II is called *Battle Piece*, one of a group of pieces called *Encouragements*. He really thought of art as being a form of encouragement for the people, a way of helping them. He used to say that the trouble with our society is that everyone's left alone, nobody's helped. He was an idealist really, though he was fascinated with scientific expositions of reality.

I think he basically remained a Marxist in broad, general terms. I don't know whether he read much of Marx in the original. He probably read a few of the significant chapters in *Das Kapital*. But his way of thinking was certainly that of dialectics. I wouldn't say he was a dialectical materialist, because he was a highly spiritual person and his sense of the values of life were spiritual. But he knew that the basic needs of human beings are material, and that first those have to be satisfied before you have anything else. But he didn't ever think of that as adequate. He was spiritual in a Renaissance humanist way. He thought of man as at least the center of our attention, even if he's not the center of the universe as a whole. He had a general feeling for the suffering of human beings. One of his piano pieces is called "There's too much suffering in the world." That was how he felt.

His music sprang out of basic inner impulses, like the way he breathed almost, or the way he talked. They were part of his inner rhythms. But he did think of his music as helping people either to transcend their suffering or in some way to place it in a perspective that would help them. As a kind of a gift of energy. The essential energy of life is in that music. It's like part of the essential electricity of life that's in his music, like a cell electricity, a cell that's vibrant and pulsing with some form of life. His temperament basically tended to express itself in terms we could call radiant or joyous ones. Not only that, but there was so much of that in his temperament that his music couldn't be all anguished. He had a lot of sentiment about love. He was very romantic about love, and he would say things that were almost embarrassing, that he really believed in. He believed in the kind of magical power of love, that love can really conquer everything.

He had a block about mathematics, because he had a teacher in his *Gymnasium* years that would frighten him very much with regard to mathematics. It was some Prussian-type teacher who bullied him, and so he just blanked out and didn't develop any mathematical [skill]. He was fascinated by modern physics and by the world view that we get from it. In fact, in talking of music-making with his students he would often use terms that sounded as though he was very knowledgeable in physics. Of course he used them as analogies rather than as precise scientific terms, but then artists do that. And when he looked at some of the photographs in *Scientific American*, say, of the constellations, or of black holes and the milky way, or of the opposite kind of photographs of minute living matter under microscopes, he always felt that there was something of the image of his own music in these images, that is, that the essential cell of life is what he started from, and it was really the same everywhere. His sense of time relates to his sense for modern physics and this global-spherical sense of life that he had, that is, of organic life, and of the need to get rid of the purely linear, horizontal nature of music, and to experience things vertically as well. Sometimes I think some of this was derived from what he learned at the Bauhaus, where he took courses under Paul Klee, who also writes about different levels of visual experience, all of them organic, but

to be apprehended simultaneously by the artist. So that Stefan also thought in terms of various forms of life going at the same time at different levels. And that's why you get that sense of clots. In the music sometimes you move from one level to another, and sometimes you could call them levels of language, and sometimes levels of organic modes, depending which way he was thinking at the time.

It wasn't something that he talked about, but it was a total fascination with nature. He could get impatient with cities and would feel they were too purposeful, there's always some direction, you always have to run after something. The beauty of nature is that it seems so purposeless, as far as man is concerned. You just look, and you become part of it. It was a kind of Goethean attitude in many ways, the multiplicity of forms in nature that were all related. For example, the forms of a leaf, which is never exactly the same leaf, but which is always recognizable as "leaf." That sort of thing fascinated him. He didn't have the romantic, pastoral sense of nature, it was more intense than that. For example, in the *Duo for Oboe and Clarinet* [*Suite im Hexachord*], there's a movement called Pastorale, which is completely un-pastoral in the usual sentimental sense. It's a very fierce, intense kind of vision of (as I understood it after Stefan talked to me about it) of small darting insects dashing at each other and biting pieces out of each others' wings and tails, and lashing tails in fury at each other. A kind of furious intensity of the movement of nature, which you sometimes see in fishes in a stream.

He adored Beethoven. Beethoven was his god, identified with him very much. The heroic nature of Beethoven's music was very close to him. Beethoven's basic response to life and the world was very close to Stefan's. When I went to buy some records for him once, I asked him what did he want, and he said, "All of Beethoven's symphonies." I said, "What performance?" He said, "Well, if possible Kleiber or Mengelberg, but anybody." The things that he listened to continuously was Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, the last few months of his life. He seemed to identify with it. The tears welled up in his eyes. They didn't fall when he was listening to it, and I knew he felt his own death approaching. Which I didn't realize so much at the time, but only later. He was very close to Mahler anyway. He didn't ask for that much Mahler, he asked for *Das Lied von der Erde*.

He adored Schubert. He especially adored Chopin. I think Chopin was some kind of a personal, profound love of his. He was absolutely mad about Chopin. So much so that he believed in that myth that so many musicians have inherited concerning the diabolic or destructive nature of George Sands' influence on him. He kept on asking me, "Was she really anybody? Was she really of any value?" Because he really couldn't believe that there could be two people of value and the other one could be Chopin. He recognized Wagner's genius. One of the last things in the last few years of his life that he said was that he'd like to hear *The Ring*. He told me that *Tristan* was extraordinary.

He adored Scriabin, and Scriabin's one of the greatest influences on his youthful development. Alban Berg meant perhaps less to him, because he felt him to be more derivative, but Scriabin was a great discovery for him as a young man. Because Stefan knew as an almost normal part of his human experience, the experience of ecstasy, of extreme bliss, of an ecstatic kind of delirium, and that was what Scriabin expresses, of course.

He didn't know Schoenberg well personally, but he attended his classes in musical analysis in Berlin. He admired him tremendously and respected him. He did feel, though, that the content of Schoenberg's music was not the content of the music that he wanted to write, because it represented a different kind of psychological, emotional trend, for the most part. Except, say, certain things in *Moses und Aron*, of course, and the *Trio*. What he felt to be Schoenberg's greatest works were really closed to him. In general the music of a hyper-sensitive sensibility which seems to find no way out of its sensibility was something that he was not going to express in his music, and this is what he felt to be true of some of Schoenberg's music, even the most exquisite and marvelous, which he enjoyed despite the fact that it wasn't close to his nature. He thought *Erwartung* was marvelous, but he wouldn't want to write music that expressed that kind of experience.

He loved Webern. He thought of Webern as a rather saintly man, very spiritual person, very warm, very simple, very direct. Webern warned him against staying in Vienna too long, because he thought the Fascists were taking over there soon, too. He used to imitate Webern's Viennese accent very well, too. If Stefan learned anything about concentration, of course, he learned it from Webern. He did towards the end, this way of working with small units may have had something to do with Webern.

He was very friendly with Copland in the first years. They were great friends, and Copland continued to be among his major supporters to the very end. Though he didn't hear very much of his music, he had absolute faith in Stefan. He had a kind of brotherly relation with Varèse, an older brother whom he loved, esteemed, and admired. He had something of the same temperament, and something of the same position in the American musical world, a position which was outside the establishment for a long, long time. They shared a European background, so that their way of relating to aesthetic experiences was somewhat different from that of an American composer. They had kind of short-hand conversations, where the one person understands what the other means without having to say very much. Very brief comments on what they had heard and what was happening in contemporary music and with contemporary composers. For a while Varèse was more acrid, extremely witty and funny about composers that he thought were very mediocre. Varèse was the only composer we could rely on to respond immediately to a premiere of Stefan's. And he did this with absolute directness and spontaneity. He would come to every first performance of Stefan's. The next morning Stefan would usually be sleeping later than usual, and so I would answer the phone. I'd hear a voice say "Eelda," and I'd say, "Varèse." And he'd say, "Varèse, how are you?" "I'm fine." "Is the Herr Geheimrat there? Can I speak to him?" [. . .]

Occasionally he would go to hear a great performer. He adored Horowitz, and would go to hear him if he could get tickets. Or Glenn Gould. He was delighted to go to a Glenn Gould performance of Schoenberg and Beethoven. He knew about Charlie Parker and was impressed by him. Charlie Parker wanted to study with him towards the end of his life. He loved Duke Ellington and Armstrong. He gave a course in jazz at Post College, so he studied up on its historical development. Whenever a student told him that there was some new thing happening downtown in some jazz nightclub or hangout he would go to hear it. We used to go to those places, the Half-Note and the Five-Spot. He just wanted to get an idea of it. What he loved was their virtuosity, their freedom, and the fact that the ordinary orchestral musician isn't capable of it. Sometimes he wrote for that kind of virtuosity and couldn't find someone to play it. We heard Charlie Mingus. Tony Scott was a student of his, a very devoted student, who used to sometimes tell him where to go. He loved some of Tony's playing. He knew Jimmy Giuffre. He was very glad that Jimmy Giuffre came to a performance of one of his pieces, I think it was *Piece for Two Instrumental Units*. He was very pleased that he liked it very much. He must have met him once or twice, not very often. He loved blues, and he improvised blues himself. He loved Gershwin, for example. I mean, that's not exactly blues.

He admired Prokofiev to some extent. He admired the early Shostakovich, and then he didn't like the late works, which seemed to him an aesthetic sell-out. He was a friend of Hanns Eisler, and liked some of the music. He admired Stockhausen very much, particularly as a younger composer. He thought he was a real genius. *Momente* is the work by Stockhausen that he particularly liked. He was very disappointed in his recent work, the one called *Hymnen*, which he didn't like. [. . .]

In Cage he objected to the use of chance music in that he felt that it was an abnegation of something that was a deeply human necessity or function, the function of choice and decision. He deliberately molded his life, shaped himself, I would say. He tried to influence his students in that respect. He used to say to me, "One must give oneself orders, one must give oneself commands."

He had a tremendous power of mimicry. He could improvise almost any style, from early vaudeville, which he loved to act out, or the straw hat, soft-shoe routine he used to go through. Or dance to

typical ballet music. Or he could improvise Bach, or Mozart, or Beethoven, Debussy, and Ravel. And he could also improvise in the style of Parisian café singers, café chantants. It was marvelous. It was part of his nature to be a theatrical person. He was in certain respects a ham in the best sense. He was playing a blues, what the Black Mountain kids used to call a Bauhaus blues. And everybody applauded him before dinner once, and he stood up very straight and said, "I'm *not* an entertainer!" But that in itself was part of the act.

Something that he loved to keep on his piano as a kind of spur to his creativity was a photograph of the *Victory of Samothrace*. That meant a lot to him. I would say Picasso was his favorite painter, because his temperament was close to him. He loved some of Miró, and he loved Matisse, and Mondrian meant a tremendous lot to him, though at first glance their temperaments were poles apart. He felt the compressed intensity of those Mondrian paintings, and he used to keep a print by his beside for many years. Cézanne was his greatest hero. It's through him that I learned to know Cézanne.

When I first met Stefan I felt that, like many Europeans, he was more fascinated by America than I was myself, because I was American. There were many things he liked about America—the directness and the apparent openness of things, and the accessibility of people in many ways. Also, like a number of Europeans, he saw in America the contours of a society that would ultimately take over the rest of the world in terms of modern industrialism, that is, a society in which mass culture had been pushed to an extreme. It was a mass society which one didn't yet have in Europe to that extent. He felt that that made art all the more necessary, that the dangers of a mass society were such that art became more essential rather than less so. And therefore he felt whatever he could do in this country in terms of his art was more important, more significant perhaps.

I often used to talk about possibly settling in Europe and that it would be better for him. And he thought about it once or twice when we were in Germany on a Fulbright. He was first at first very reluctant to return to Germany at all, and then finally decided he would, because modern music was at that point being supported so much by the Germans. In many ways he felt happy in Europe, but he had his doubts about Germany, because he felt that many of the elements that had made for fascism before were still alive. However, had he been offered an ideal position for himself there, he might possibly have taken it. I don't know.

We came to Black Mountain College at the time that Charles Olson was rector, so the main emphasis was on poetry of the Olson type. In many ways—materially and physically—Black Mountain was falling apart. It was in a very decrepit state, and there were very few students coming there. Those who were coming either had no money at all, or were on work scholarships of one kind of another. It stood for everything that was considered non-conformist in America, and there were all kinds of rumors about that it was a hotbed of Communism, which it was definitely not. But Stefan loved it there, because it reminded him of certain things about the Bauhaus in the early days, when the Bauhaus was very poor, and young people came from all over Germany just to look for something new, new values, and new ways of living. There were very few music students, which was in the end Stefan's main reason for looking for another job, because he felt he didn't have enough scope there. But in other ways he loved it, and he always said until he died that if it were revived, he'd go back any time. [. . .]

He considered that he composed slowly in that his preparations for composing a piece were rather involved. The musical thinking that went into and the musical notes that he took were rather involved. But when he was commissioned, he actually composed rather quickly and liked to do that. This was true of the *Form* piece. The *Saxophone Quartet* was composed in a few weeks. The *Violin Sonata* was composed in less than two months that were not completely devoted to composing. Once he got it down on paper, he did not revise very much except sometimes endings bothered him, and they would take rather long. But he sifted so much in his mind while he was composing. His capacity for choosing was so impressive and had been honed to such an indubitable kind of point that it wasn't necessary. It

was because he said that there was such a need, and if you lived with him you saw that he was filled with music from morning to night, and was just pulsing with it, humming it, conducting it, singing it to himself, making sounds of various kinds with his vocal chords, making extraordinary sounds fiddling with the piano. If you were talking to him, sometimes he would go on with this and not hear what you were saying. And when you were walking down the street with him, or anywhere, standing in a store waiting in line, this would happen. But he didn't write everything down. He had this torrent of music pouring out of him, and he could have written twenty symphonies if he had written it all down. But his sense of discrimination was very developed, and he wanted to put down only what was essential to his musical thought. He used to say he'd let it run, like you'd let the water in a tap run, until he came to something really essential. And that's why he didn't revise his pieces, because there was no waste matter in his writing, and it was very economical.

I don't think he thought exactly in terms of beginnings, middles, and ends. He would start with what he called a constellation of sounds—pitches, rather. One of his students said to me once that he talked about these pitches as if they were living entities. The beginning of a piece would be like the map of a country that was going to be explored more fully, or in a variety of ways, later.

He would say there is no inspiration unless one has the most intense concentration, unless one lives in terms of the most continuing and deepest concentration. Concentration was for him the source of all one's creative ideas. He used to say to me sometimes, "Mine yourself, dig farther, dig deeper. Get as far as you can into the well." Depth was a very concrete concept for him. "Opening one's pores" was an expression that he used, too. Not so much for the immediate act of writing, but for kind of refreshment in between, that is, going to look at some painting to open your pores, or a certain kind of landscape that was very meaningful to him.

Hilda Morley Wolpe (1919–1998) was born in New York (née Aue Auerbach) and educated there and in Palestine, London, and at Wellesley College. She taught at Queens College, New York University, Rutgers University, and Black Mountain College. She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1983–84 and the Capricorn Prize for To Hold in My Hand: Selected Poems. *Her fifth collection of poems,* The Turning *(Moyer Bell) was published in 1998. She died in London and is buried beside Stefan Wolpe in Spring Cemetery, Long Island. Interview: Matthew Paris, New York City, November 1978.*

Thomas Nee

My wife Mary and I arrived at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1953. We had both decided that Stefan Wolpe the composer and Merce Cunningham the dancer were people to study with. I had been interested in Black Mountain since the 40s: emigrés Jas Jalowetz and Lowinsky were known to me, we had met William Levi, a former faculty member of Black Mountain, in Vienna when we were on a fulbright in 1951–52. We knew of the drama critic Eric Bentley, who had been at BMC and was now at Minnesota, and most importantly my teacher Ernst Krenek had taught summers at BMC in the 40s. We had discussed BMC with him, and he admired Wolpe.

We drrove from St. Paul to BMC and arrived in the middle of the afternoon on a Sunday. Although we had corresponded with Charles Olson, the poet and head, we soon discovered that we seem not to have been expected and that Sundays were a day when everyone fended for themselves. We found a bedroom and discovered the college kitchen and made ourselves some sort of meal. During this time it was mentioned that Wolpe and David Tudor were coming for a Wolpe talk that evening.

This was an experience like no other, since my past teacher Krenek was a totally different kind of speaker *about* music. Krenek had been rather cool, lucid, and in a way more matter of fact. In contrast Wolpe's talk was extremely poetic with a murkiness that somewhat disturbed me. David Tudor played examples that were composed by Wolpe for the occasion and were dramatic examples of Wolpe's style.

Krenek and Wolpe were opposites in personality

and musical style. Krenek was highly intellectual, gifted in languages, a fine pianist who was an exceptional score reader and had a strong interest in medieval music. Personally he was very kind and generous, but a somewhat objective and understated personality. On the other hand Wolpe was a hot and excitable person. Both gave students free rein to be themselves in musical style and did not try to create students in their image.

After that first day's introduction to the seeming semi-anarchistic Black Mountain style, Mary and I had a discussion whether to leave early the next day. Luckily we decided to stay. At our first breakfast with all of the musicians, dancers, artists, and writers, we heard this sudden dramatic howl of a theme or gesture, somewhat like I had heard David Tudor play the previous evening. It was Stefan. He had an idea and let us hear it, and then went back to eating his breakfast. This happened at many meals, and I got so I would look forward to his whoops.

Wolpe as a teacher was a joy and we seemed to hit it off immediately. We met perhaps three times a week whether or not I had made much progress on whatever I was writing. He had me keep a music notebook in which he would quickly write possible solutions to problems I might have. (I have kept the notebook as a sample of unpublished Wolpe.) What he stressed, as all know by now, was using the complete musical space available; throw caution to the winds. He had a great ear plus a vibrant singing voice, and his exuberant style was of immense inspiration. We also discussed Webern, and I recall we spent several sessions on the Webern *Variations for Orchestra*.

The College had a small cottage devoted to music and had the name on the door of the American music education Thomas Whitney Surette. As I recall there was a fair amount of music, perhaps left there by Surette after teaching at BMC during the 30s and later. The cottage was a mess and evidently hadn't been cleaned in months or longer. Another student and I clearned the place and found things like dead mice and remnants of a cheese sandwich under the piano lid. Among the various music were choral scores for the Bach cantata *God's Time is Best*. One evening I directed some of the College in a community sight-reading session of this cantata and Stefan came and added his vigorous bass to the chorus.

Because we had a car (I think a 1947 Ford), Wolpe thought he and his wife Hilda should learn to drive. I thought I would be a fairly adept teacher, but permitting Stefan to take the wheel could be traumatic. We drove on fairly safe country roads, but when another car approached, Stefan would let out some screams, release the wheel and put both hands to his head. After this happened a few times, we decided that Hilda be the student. I have sometimes thought that my most meaningful contribution to contemporary music was to convince Stefan not to drive an automobile.

Other events that summer were a series of talks by Hans Rademacher on new ideas in mathematics, piano recitals by Irma Wolpe Rademacher and by David Tudor (I particularly remember the *Battle Piece* of Wolpe), Charles Olson reading his new *Maximus* poems, dance by the nascent Merce Cunningham Dance group, and a series of talks by the oboist, publisher, and sometime anthropologist Josef Marx, many talks with Earle Brown, and an extraordinary, inkless, embossed program by M.C. Richards for Cunningham.

Stefan and I kept writing to each other till near his death. He remained a man of courage in the face of a devastating disease and zest and generosity almost without equal. And a composer with the same qualities.

Thomas Nee was a student of Ernst Krenek, Stefan Wolpe, and Hermann Scherchen. He is now retired after teaching and conducting at the University of California, San Diego from 1967–91.

Joy Tudor Nemiroff

The Contemporary Music School began in the fall of '48. Isaac [Nemiroff] wrote the charter and submitted it to Stefan, and Stefan said it was wonderful. We had a school, all the teachers, all the pupils, and all we needed was to get a building. The first one was on Second Avenue near Fourth Street. None of the rooms were finished, and the amount of money allowed to us was just enough to keep going. Stefan

was the musical director, but the actual financial affairs of running the school fell on Isaac. It began in September '48 and continued until June '52. I was the only one who got a salary [as secretary]. It's what we [Isaac and Joy] survived on. It was quite low, fifty dollars a week.

It was Stefan's idea of a school where all of the teachers were focused upon teaching musical creativity directly, not indirectly through exercises, which was the basic theme of the old scheme of teaching. This new theme of teaching was so driving an idealism that it somehow held the school together. The end of World War II was not the end of war. The intense effort needed to move creativity against this situation of unrest required some very forceful dynamics. Why Stefan was such an effective teacher was the students were looking for ways to break patterns that were holding creativity in stasis. That was the dynamic of the Contemporary Music School—determination to challenge forcefully all of the barriers and most established rules of classical music for a positive reason.

Stefan's innovative way of teaching allowed these students who had only heard jazz to move into expressing themselves in a complex language without having to learn traditional, classical stuff, which their ears were closed to. In all of the students who came around and who had anything to do with composition studies, this is what they talked about. The difference between concert music and jazz performance, the difference between having to learn to read music from music script and playing spontaneously from sound, which was the jazz way, you just pick it up. They became interested in writing it down, in learning to read music. Many of them had been antagonistic to that concept—"It gets in the way of my playing." He was always pushing them to try the untryable, to reach for sounds. He was working in space of sounds, very high sounds, and then in a crashing way throwing them to the bottom of the piano.

[Stefan] had no practical ability whatever, though music appointments he remembered. I felt Stefan as a person who lived music so totally that it was like a different species of being. And there he and David [Tudor] met all right, because they were both music beings. And the personal life somehow or other struggled to keep up.

David's connection to Irma [Wolpe] was of a more metaphysical sort than with Stefan. It was the metaphysical level that drew David to John Cage. David was the only one who could really develop a performance of a piece with understanding of what the composer was hearing and the working-out of the *Battle Piece* was exactly that. David was essential to that piece. David would laugh about a particular passage that Stefan had composed because it was impossible. David would work it out and work it out until he found either that it truly was impossible and had to be changed, or that he could find a way of doing it. That went on for the whole working-out of that piece. If David had not been there, the piece would have been later and very different.

[The premiere of *Battle Piece*, Feb 1950]. I was standing out in the hallway waiting for David. I head the audience clapping for Jack [Maxin]'s performance a nice long time. Really with my heart in my throat I was watching that door. David came in. He had a coat on. He heard the clapping, it was just ending, and there was a quiet. He walked right to the door, taking his coat off as he walked, dropping whatever he had in his hand. He walked right out on stage and sat down at the piano and started to play. He played a very short passage and stopped. He said afterwards his mind went blank, he could not remember. He pulled himself together and started again from the beginning and played the piece. I found the performance so wonderful, absolutely wonderful! There was a burst of applause, and then because some were also intensely antagonistic, the applause stopped for a minute. Then it came back in a wave.

It's true he [Stefan] had a spiritual concept. Even though we saw how formidable the opposition could be, what he [Wolpe] would do was to challenge the opposition, always. He would never not do that. It was the onlyway he *would* react. Still we (I, David, John [Cage]) understood this was a spiritual recognition in Stefan that tyranny must be opposed. Cage had a different way. It was the difference between a karate expert and a *t'ai chi* master. Cage was like

a wizard. He knew how to work into the enemy stronghold and sit there quietly until he was noticed. I see him as even after he was noticed sitting there quietly, and then making a little movement and getting up. That being a statement in spiritual terms that there is another way to look at this. [Stefan had to do it] with sound and fury. I felt for a while that there was a triangle with David in between: David being one corner of the triangle, Stefan another, and John another. David balanced the two. He was the triangulation between the two opposites, and as three they brought this creative idea into the world of music at that time, which was their purpose. Music was his [David's] purpose totally. This concept of sound was Cage. What I saw in those years was that for Cage music was not so much sound—physical sound, space, the hearing of spatial tonality and resonances—his actual music was very dry. But it was a concept of opening the ears to hear the different qualities that each sound has.

At the earlier time [David] was insisting he was not a composer. Stefan was undoubtedly pressuring him into being a composer. He was not only not ready to do that, he was intent on being a performer at that time. Yet the very way he went about it was with such a complete comprehension of composing that it couldn't help but become what David's work became. So when he finally did do something that he acknowledged as composing, for me it was just, "Uh-huh, now you know." I think it must have been in writing out those graphic pieces that he accepted the realization in his own mind that he was going to be a composer, that he was composiing. Until then, it was still, "Well, I'm not doing this, I'm doing the other."

Joy Tudor Nemiroff (b. 1923), sister of David Tudor, studied painting. She married Wolpe's student Isaac Nemiroff in 1947. From 1948–52 she was secretary of the Contemporary Music School. She is a long-time student of metaphysics and a practicing astrologer. She currently lives in North Carolina. Telephone interview: AC, Burnsville, North Carolina, 14 April 1999.

Yoko Ono

I met Stefan Wolpe in the late 50s, when he lived in his upper West side apartment with Hilda, his beautiful partner. Stefan and Hilda often invited me to their home for tea. (I was invited for dinners too, but there, I must say, Hilda was not a very professional cook!) I loved the intellectual, warm, and definitely European atmosphere the two of them had created. Stefan immediately showed me his musical scores. I was surprised how complex, precise, yet emotional his works were. I don't know of any other composer of the time who represented atonal music so brilliantly.

It was a time of the great shift in the music world. On one hand "modern" composers such as Stravinsky, Copland, and Bartók were hailed and played over and over again till they came out of your ears. On the other hand, composers such as Edgard Varèse, se, Stockhausen, and Maurice Kagel were receiving for being the forerunners of electronic music. Henry Cowell, John Cage, and Morton Feldman were applauded for their avant-garde pioneer efforts. Stefan's work fell in between those two contemporary schools, as he still used the musical vocabulary which was considered less fashionable at the time. He himself was very aware of this situation. He complained how the composers were no more dealing with music, but noise. Where is the human spirit? Where is the soul? I loved him for his belief in his work… and for not joining the crowd.

In those days it was even difficult to have your scores printed, if you were writing music using traditional notation of Western classical music. You had to first pay an expensive copyist who copied your score by hand on a special chemically treated paper and then have it printed. It took ages to copy scores as complicated as Stefan's, and most copyists, who were usually unknown composers themselves, bowed out of such a complex job, or rushed and made mistakes. Stefan was very patient with them, but copying each of his scores was always going at a snail's pace, so to speak. I thought it was interesting to speak about this, since I presume for contemporary composers this is probably like talking about the time we all traveled in carriages! You

will also have an inkling of Stefan's daily frustrations even on the level of having his scores copied because of their complexity.

I remember one concert in Carnegie Recital Hall in which Stefan's *Enactments for Three Pianos* was performed together with pieces by Varèse and Cage, three composers representing contemporary music. After the concert Stefan introduced me to Cage at the old Russian Tea Room, frequented by New York composers and musicians in those days. It wasn't as though I asked for it. But later Stefan made quite a thing about having introduced me to the "noise player." "I introduced you to Cage," Stefan would say in his heavy European voice. Oh well, you have, Stefan.

It's nice to know that Stefan will get his music played by the musicians of this generation ... though I'm sure I would have heard some complaints from Stefan regarding the performances, if he was around. As a human being he was a romantic, but as an Artist, he was the epitome of a perfectionist. And Hilda, where are you?

©*Yoko Ono 2002.*

Raoul Pleskow

Musically I found things that Wolpe played for me and showed me quite remarkable. Strangely enough I was on the same wave-length with him. What was that wave-length? At that time it was important to get away from linear writing. The idea of writing music that is no longer lines is something that I felt and therefore was very close to Wolpe's feeling it. All of the contemporary music that I heard was lines, all lines, counterpoint. Counterpoint, when it is total, and you have lines going on and they spell "mother," and they're pretty, it makes sense. When it's dissonant counterpoint, and you have two lines going on, and they sound like hell (you expect two lines going on to sound like hell), so what's the point of it? This idea of counterpoint stopped, and that I think was an important thing. Wolpe saw that I was leaning towards it, and that was exactly what he was involved with at the moment. The idea was space, where you break through four lines, three lines, melody and accompaniment, and so forth, at least in any consistent way. The return to that is another matter, but it is a return like a portrait painter comes back, let us say, after ten years of doing abstract expressionism. When he comes back then, that portrait will not be the same portrait as if he spent the same ten years doing nothing but college professors, old ladies, and gurgling children. In other words, the absence and the involvement with something else brings it back. I think that whatever linear writing I now do, the linear writing that one finds in the simple Wolpe pieces at the end of his career, like the *Solo Trumpet* piece, that's a linear writing that has passed certain dangers and has freed itself from it. It's never the same. That I think was the most important obvious musical impulse that I gained. [...]

Another piece that both I and Wuorinen absolutely fell in love with was the *Sextet* [*In Two Parts for Six Players*, 1962]. I went through the whole process of being at the inception of that piece, all his thought. His original thought was to add electronic sounds to it à la Varèse, and he imitated sounds that go [*makes guttural vocal sounds*], things like that, which he did so well. And then of course he discarded that. And he would play me the slow movement, but I really got nothing out of his playing from it. But when I looked upon it, it was marvelous. And of course the fast movement, those scales, that business became enormously important to me. It's the idea of writing within the belly-button of a piece, writing in three, four, five notes turning around. The thing that made this piece so remarkable was that it had this dualistic idea of being both a single voice piece—in other words, that in essence you could follow a melody, if you wish, if you allow a melody to be all of those little things. As well there was a kind of polyphony, and that polyphony existed not of several lines working together, but one line in many lines. It is really expressionism in painting when you see a figure that consists, like a Kokoschka painting, of many lines but it just makes up a face. Or those many lines sometimes make up *a* line. Essentially it's a piece that can be followed that way through. There's also the idea of having next to one another simple things, el-

egant things, and complex things, meaning, that the music that was written at the time consisted either of a very elegant—if you wish, academic—non-phrased, non-periodicized, pitch-oriented, complex music. Or it consisted of music that was considered old hat, classically-influenced, romantically-influenced, with phrases, and tonality, and so on. Wolpe managed at those times to put together things that were at opposite ends, for example, the running figure with which the piece starts, this little thing. It was a cheap thing, but it was a marvelously cheap thing, and exciting for its cheapness, in that one is allowed to write such cheap things. Next to it again were quite elegant things. There were things that were phrased and periodicized. There were things that were just left as pitch involvements. Also, the way that the instruments overlapped in this complex space was new and wonderful. And then there was just a kind of muscular energy to the piece that is so much of Wolpe, that comes about through rhythm, dynamics, really through a kind of phrase. It is all a kind of melody, a melody in a non-lyrical sense, but a melody of attacks, decays, tones, runs, chords, silences, and quips. *This* involvement was what was new and what was attractive to the young composers at the time. I remember only relatively recently speaking with Charles Wuorinen. We both fell upon this piece as a thing we remembered. Again, you know, when one speaks of performances, the performances were miserable. Shapey was conducting. He had to stop three times. It just fell apart. But in spite of this it was a successful performance and a successful piece.

The reprises in the *Sextet* and the *Trio* [*Trio in Two Parts for Flute, Cello, and Piano*, 1964] were done with great reluctance, where his musicality overcame his stance. In other words, the repeat for the *Trio*, I remember very well, was done about a week before the performance. They put in the double line and hesitated to the very end whether it should be done or not. I also remember certain sections in several pieces where he really would ask me, "Is not this too *albern*, meaning, too everyday, too banal, and so forth. So it was always a struggle. Reprise came from a sense of form, a classical sense of form that was innate. He wanted to have reprise, and he wanted to find a new-fangled, modern-sounding term to accept it. What he means by [reprise as] the zero-situation, philosophically speaking, is that one aspect of variation is non-variation! He said that consciously, for the sake of modernity. Yes, his *Formgefühl* [form-sense], his musical *Formgefühl* was a very strong, natural one. The fact that he never even looked at his earlier stuff [in the piece]! The only reason I can say is that when he wrote his *String Quartet* [1969], he gave me pages to thicken, to darken (because he had his Parkinson trouble). And I said, "Well, don't you need those pages to write the next step?" "No, no, no, no!" And he didn't. I kept them for a whole week going over them thicker.

And of course, it's not only a question of stance, it is a question that the more thematic, concrete shapes exist, the more these shapes allow themselves to be repeated and demand to be repeated. The more Webernesque shapes are, (let's put it that way, a-thematic, and so on) the less their repetition makes any sense, because then their repetition is not something aha, but something that you've run out of steam. But when Wolpe was aware of the sharpness, of the sculpturedness of these themes that he actually wrote, then he felt the need to go back to them. The other aspect is this, that since he used the row partially, he set up a kind of tonality, so that the opening five, six notes with which he often worked for a long time, in fact give you a tonality. And if you want to *have* a tonality, the idea of a reprise becomes very important. Then, of course, was the question of trying to justify this in philosophic terms. I think that in musical terms it is justified by the fact that, if you set up a pitch situation that becomes a memorable pitch situation, there's a sense to go back to that memorable pitch situation. When you set up a shape that is supposed to be a memorable shape, then it makes sense to come back to it. And sometimes these small changes were done for the sake of being virtually afraid to really go back one hundred per cent in the end. It was something that he had to overcome in the *Trio*. And also in the *Sextet* there was very much of a reprise.

There's also a morality about music that I learned from Wolpe, a morality about life. One very im-

portant lesson was that every performance was important. In other words, even if it was done in some small little place with five people there, one makes just as much of a fuss as one does if it's in Carnegie Hall, because, as Wolpe said, "*Gott hört*. God hears." It is important because one should not be so career-conscious that one worries about the critics. One should do it for the art itself. It's a very important lesson. Also important for performers that every performance is important and must be considered, because it's the *art* that is being performed, not the people that are being impressed. That was important.

And another instance having absolutely nothing to do with music. Wolpe did not live in the cleanest place in the world. One day I went to Wolpe, and I saw him on the floor scrubbing the floor. I said, "Why is this?" "Marx is coming over for a visit." I said, "Well, Marx will understand." I found it strange that somebody should clean up the floor for a good friend. I expected him to have a conductor or some important person coming over. No, he did it for a friend. I thought *that* was extraordinarily moral of him. If the poor person is important, then the gesture is important. I think, finally, that most important for the artist is a sense of priorities. When those go out the window, the art goes out the window. But Wolpe kept his priorities. There was never a sell-out, and there was never a loss of innocence. The innocence was always there. He regained his virginity in each piece. One thing I wanted to say about the morality, too, was that he did not lie about what he thought was good, what he thought was bad. He did tell people. He felt it a moral obligation to say to someone, "You played badly," when he did. When he felt the piece was bad, he did not lie about that for political reasons. That's a sense of morality. Also that he had a sense for pushing music that he thought was good, and for not pushing music that wasn't. And when he had a big fight with Shapey, and he liked a piece of Shapey's, he said, "I hate to say it, but it's a good piece." So it was that he divorced that from politics. Although, of course, he did have an absolute what I would say bias towards the new. He always wanted the new. And that was a *Lebensobligation*, a *Funkenleben*, a spark of life always to go on and not to move back. So, again, that cannot be put down as a compromise, but an obligation to a greater truth perhaps than the actual piece that he admired for being modern (although he didn't really like what came out).

One more incident that was memorable, because it was the last time that I saw him. It was the death of Stefan. He called me up and said, "I can't write any more, show me some freshly made music." I was writing the songs for tenor and instruments and brought the first of the three songs to him. He looked at them and he said, "The text, you wrote it?" Actually, I've always put down anonymous or something, but I did write it, and he was the only one who ever got that. Anyway, he liked the piece very much. And then he said, "It's like freshly made bread. It's good to see." Then he kissed me, and then he said, "Ah, I have enough—*jetzt hab' ich genug*." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he says, "Ahhh," and he made a gesture with his hands saying that it's over. And of course I said all the usual things, you know. You can't determine that, and you're just in a bad mood, and all that. He said, "I can't write any more. I see these hallucinations." We talk about that. And then when I left, I said, "I'll see you." There was a concert coming up. "I'll see you at the concert. I'll pick you up." He then made a gesture with his hands, "Ahhh—maybe not," and several hours later he was dead. It was the day of his death. In other words, he choked on something that was, I believe … Hilda then was in her room, and then he was discovered. But other than Hilda, I think I was probably the last person to see him. That I still remember exactly. His calling me up, because he usually called me up in order to *do* something, not just to show him music. So that was strange.

I'm totally a person without premonitions about anything, but shortly before that I had a dream, and I remember in the dream something that he once said. And he just said, "Wir arme Juden, uns bleibt nichts erspart." And he actually said that: "We poor Jews, nothing is spared us." He said it much earlier, when he first got Parkinson's. Strangely, I dreamed of him saying that a couple of days before, and then I got the phone call from him to come over and show him music. It almost seems like he knew, or willed, or

something. And it had to do with this feeling that he couldn't compose.

Raoul Pleskow was born in Vienna (1932) and educated in New York, where he studied with Karol Rathaus, Otto Luening, and Stefan Wolpe. His works have been performed by the Cleveland Philharmonic and the Tanglewood Festival Orchestra. He was professor of music at C.W. Post College, Long Island University. Interview: AC, Douglas, New York, 17 February 1985.

Trude Rittman

At the Scherchen Conducting Course in Bruxelles I coached Stefan conducting a Bach Suite. He conducted silently, and I watched him with the score. He was already then a remarkable pianist of his own stuff. He was so musical, the music dripped out of his fingers. He had always a magnetic quality in anything he did, whether he talked or played, such intensity and drama. He looked pretty much as he looked later on, already the little bald spot. He changed very little throughout his life. He looked older when he was young, and younger when he was older.

He was exclusive. I don't think he suffered small talk. He like talented and intelligent people around him, especially when people admired him. About six weeks after I arrived I was engaged by Lincoln Kirstein for the Ballet. I started first as a pianist going on concert tours with him, replacing Elliott Carter. Elliott wanted to compose and turned it over to me, and I became their musical director for four years. First year I did it all by myself, the second I engaged another pianist, and Stefan was commissioned to write a ballet. I have a very vague memory that something was commissioned, and he got stuck, or they didn't like his style. I converted the entire repertoire for two pianos in 1939. Got myself a very good pianist, Pablo Michel. Virgil Thomson wrote *Filling Station*, Copland, *Billy the Kid*, Carter, *Pocahontas*. I remember Stefan playing me parts of *The Man From Midian*, and explaining how it should go choreographically. Gene Loring was dancing with Ballet Caravan. I remember how he played it for me and visualized what was going on.

His politics smoothed out later. I knew that he wrote *Arbeitermusik* for the *Massen*. He would sit down and play them at the drop of a hat. He did play a lot and played excellently with enormous verve. There was an ease to his playing, as you can see by his piano writing, which is difficult for a normal bent of mind, it goes all over the keyboard. [. . .]

Adorno had a program on WNYC, and he had Steuermann playing something, and some songs, maybe Schoenberg [recte, Mahler]. I was supposed to play the Berg *Sonata*, Op. 1, and then to end the program Joe Marx and I played Stefan's *Oboe Sonata*. Then a terrible thing happened. I played the Berg *Sonata*, and nobody knew that I would repeat the exposition part, which I did. And so when Joe and I started the *Oboe Sonata* and played and played and played, we were not done when the time was finished. So part of it was hacked off, and poor Stefan had a fit. We played to the end, but didn't know they had turned off. Adorno was called out while we were playing, and returned looking very pale and disturbed, and afterwards he told us Mayor LaGuardia had called to say he didn't want any more of that music on his station. He was very outspoken about it. I still feel very guilty for having done that to poor Stefan. I made that repeat, which nobody had foreseen. It's such a short piece, that if I repeat the exposition it will make it a bit longer.

Adorno and Stefan were good friends. I knew Adorno from Frankfurt. I had already written my lyrical songs and went over to Frankfurt. How Adorno knew about me, I cannot tell you. We were flirting somewhat wildly. I went over, and Adorno said, "Watch out for that eight-bar period, that always spells tonality." He was very atonal-oriented.

All the American composers I knew were interested in Stefan and saw him as a very gifted man. Virgil Thomson was very much in favor of Stefan. But as to making a success, for a person like Lenny Bernstein, with whom I was very friendly, [he was] too *outré*. He had a certain haughtiness about him, he was rather opinionated, easily given to judgment. He looked down on other composers, and that was very much resented. People appreciated his worth, but there were little jealousies. And then his role

as a socialist spokesman also shocked some people, certainly not Blitzstein, but others. He didn't have the gift of making himself popular. He came across as a specialist. He shocked many people through his honesty, and his knowledge, and his opinions, especially here in America, where there is an inferiority built in. At the time there were only the refugees, and everyone fought for survival.

Born in 1908 in Mannheim, Germany, Trude Rittmann studied composition and piano at the Staate Hochschule für Musik in Cologne, Germany; she graduated in 1932 with an artist's and teacher's diploma in both fields. In 1938 she was appointed musical director for the American Ballet Caravan*, which included both composing and arranging for the company. She arranged Rodgers and Hammerstein's music of* Carousel *for Agnes de Mille's choreography; other productions with which she was involved included* South Pacific*,* The King and I*, and* The Sound of Music*. Interview: AC, Waltham, Massachusetts, 9 November 1983.*

Zvi Rosen

I was born in Russia in 1916 and came to Palestine in 1927. I then left to study music in France with Ivan Galamian and Georges Enesco. I returned to Palestine in 1933 and began to work at the Habimah as a violinist. I continued to be concert master of the theater orchestra and later composed for the theater. Between 1965 and 1970 I wrote music for ten to fifteen plays. I worked for Vordhaus ben Zissy for 20 to 25 years. Vordhaus was Russian and had studied with [William] Steinberg. He wrote and directed the music for the Habimah productions and did about 100 plays. He composed most of the incidental music both before and after 1934. The Habimah was dominated by Russians. When they spoke Hebrew, it sounded like Russian. Their musical tastes were very conservative. They liked the Romantics—Tchaikovsky, Rimsky, Smetana. Dvorak was as far as they went. I performed the *Glazounov Concerto*, and even that was too modern. I had to write out the equivalents of the double sharps and double flats for the pianist.

And suddenly comes Stefan Wolpe, a German composer from another culture. When Vordhaus met Wolpe, he asked him to write incidental music for Moliére's *La malade imaginaire*. The music was very difficult for the band, but Vordhaus really liked it and fought for every measure. The musicians were not very good and were used to Russian conservative music. Vordhaus wanted me, but I wasn't yet a member of the union, so Vordhaus threatened to resign if I didn't play. I was the violinist of the theater band, and for me this music was an adventure. Wolpe asked for a trombone, but there was no trombone in the theater orchestra. A trombonist was found, and he came and looked at the music and said, "That's not music, it's farting" (in Yiddish). He then played the cello theme from *Swan Lake* to show what real music is like and left. They looked for another trombone and found a young fellow who had played in an orchestra in Poland. Since there is no trombone in the score, Wolpe must have substituted the contrabass. The clarinetist was a man of about sixty from Warsaw, where he played in vaudeville. He was not a bad musician. The flutist was terrible, and Wolpe told him to stop spitting into his flute and play. I don't remember who played double bass.

When the actors heard the music, it was another problem. They said it was too noisy and not beautiful. The main actor, Tzemerinsky, disapproved: "The music is crazy, I can't hear myself." He said, "It's not an opera." So Wolpe shortened the overture, but he was very upset. He didn't like the musicians. After a few rehearsals it went much better. In the end the music served the play wonderfully. It was the only really modern aspect of the production. The staging and set were very conventional, but the music stood up. It was the first time the music was so strong in the theater. Wolpe's music made a very great impression.

I remember both the characters Vordhaus and Wolpe because they were both a bit crazy, *meschugge*. It was an interesting episode in the Habimah Theater. The Habimah was run as a collective by three men chosen each year. Wolpe was not asked again to write because the actors had a lot to say about it.

Interview: AC, Tel Aviv, 16 April 1985.

Howard Rovics

I joined an analysis group of six to eight people during '60–61. Wolpe had us get the Webern *Piano Variations* and he began talking about them. They were a springboard for him to unfold his philosophy of composition, so where ordinarily you might analyze that piece in three or four sessions, after about six or eight sessions he had barely gotten through the first page. It wasn't so much an analysis of the work as a way to focus his thoughts. The sessions were two hours, and it was not uncommon for them to run three hours when he got going. He was not preoccupied with numbers at the beginning. He talked about shapes, mirrors, trying to imagine time flowing forward and back, challenging us to imagine something other than time flowing only in one direction. He drew our attention to proportions, balance, and symmetry, the imaginary flow of time, and what he loved to call the thirdless unit, the hallmark sound of the 20th century. Maybe a month or so into contemplating the piece he started to lay in the row and did the row analysis. Here's the row and watch what happens. I always use the *Variations* in my own teaching. [. . .]

Wolpe impressed me with the idea that style is not a single entity, that creating a piece of music consists of making many, many hundreds, thousands of decisions. Style is the result of a decision-making process. He said, "Don't worry about style." I learned that. Trust in your own unique decision-making process, create your decision-making process. His emphasis is on not letting the conventions of notation confine you. Teach yourself the difference between music and notation. The notation is not the music. The music is these sounds and gestures, shapes, events, all these things that are going on. What you need to do is learn to perceive your own thinking and be detailed enough about your perception, capturing the dynamic, the articulation, the rhythmic nuance.

Very early on he taught me to be specific about whatever it is. If I said "soft" on a piece of music, he would pull out the dictionary and start delving into the synonyms of "soft" until we got a long list. He fought with notation. He was absolutely cruel in the way he would twist and bend notation. He wouldn't hesitate to give you a 1/32nd extra in the notation for a nuance of time, which is absolutely terrifying for conductors to have to deal with. There's a big change over the years. Being a performer I really evaluated a lot as to how radical I wanted to be with notation. I have moved more toward convention. I can satisfy myself as a composer with a more conventional approach to notation than Wolpe. It was wonderful to have had the challenge of what he did with notation. If he had been a performer or conductor, he might have moderated his notation a bit. But since he wasn't a performer, he left the challenge up to them. It was good that we had to wrestle with that.

What he encouraged was to capture your ideas with spontaneity but then to be able to justify them. Always analysis after the fact of the music. It was a very delicate game that you played between analysis and composing. Not analysis to inhibit, but analysis to unleash. Spontaneity might come first, but then the analysis and the consistency had to be there. He'd talk about the need for a pretty high degree of control, but not total control. There's a big difference between Babbitt and Wolpe. Wolpe would allow for and be open to the unexpected. I came to think of that in composing terms. For myself I want to have 80–85% control, but I love the 15% of the unexpected.

I dedicated my piano work *Events* (1971) to Stefan Wolpe. Anne Chamberlain premiered it at Tully Hall and Wolpe heard the performance. Afterwards, grinning joyously, he said to me, "Howard, you are radicalizing your musical language." I thank him for giving me a musical language to radicalize.

Howard Rovics (b. 1936) earned the M.M. degree at the Manhattan School of Music and did further studies at New York University's film school, the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, and with Stefan Wolpe. He was awarded a National Endowment bicentennial grant, commissions from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Bruce Museum of Greenwich Connecticut and the

Trustees Award from Long Island University. The Connecticut Music Teachers Association voted him Distinguished Composer of the Year in 1996. A CD, Retrospective*, representing thirty years of his composing was released in 1998 on the North/South Recordings label. He is currently Professor of Music in the School of the Arts at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University. Telephone interview: AC, Danbury, Connecticut, 9 January 1998.*

George Russell

When I was released from the hospital, I was actually on New York City welfare. They had a very enlightened program then of getting patients who had been incapacitated (it was tuberculosis that had involved itself with me). You could study what you wanted to for six months. This paid for lessons with Wolpe. I saw him once a week for six months. I heard his music when he played it for me and went to concerts where his music was played. All of us did.

I conducted *Cubano Be/Cubano Bop* in 1947. I wrote *Bird in Igor's Yard* in 1948, but it wasn't recorded until 1949. When I auditioned for Wolpe, he heard the recording of *Bird in Igor's Yard* and was impressed. He said, "You have possibilities, you have talent, of course I'd be interested." He called me George. He knew I was a kid who didn't know much about anything and didn't know a lot about life. My interest was in talking to him chiefly about life, but I wanted to know his principal concepts of music. The two things that impressed me, that caused me to think in a new way, were his theory of the rate of chromatic circulation as a means of destroying any tonical integrity and the principle of the thirdless sound. I thought that was incredible. [. . .] The rate of chromatic circulation and the thirdless sound were big ideas. The works that would show that are on an RCA Victor album, *The Jazz Workshop, George Russell* (1956). Other works are *Lydian M-1* and *All About Rosie*, written for small chamber orchestra. [. . .]

Gil Evans didn't study with Wolpe in the way that students did who would like to write like Wolpe or write in the style of Wolpe. But I have a feeling that other people like myself just wanted to absorb as much not only of the music but of the man. Gil was one of those, and Wolpe loved him, I'm sure. If any one would influence Wolpe it would be Gil. I do remember Wolpe being at one of the initial concerts of that Gerry Mulligan-led group that's been given the credit for founding the whole cool movement in jazz. Some of Wolpe's influence is in there. Monk would have been open to Wolpe's ideas and Charlie Parker. Towards the end of his life he [Parker] was desperate to find new ways to expand his own music. Remember the story of how he approached Varèse. He asked Varèse if he could be his butler and study with him. Gil might have mentioned Wolpe to Lester Young because he [Young] and Gil were very good friends.

Wolpe's overall effect on me was immensely positive. I felt a living, breathing force in this man that was extremely life-positive. You couldn't be around him without that force entering you. To that extent Wolpe and the two principles that stuck with me and his forceful being are part of *me* now, and they always have been, and always will be. He's alive in those of us that he touched.

George Russell was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1923. He began his career as a drummer, but in the 1940s began to write arrangements and compositions for big bands and small ensembles. Author of The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization *(1953; 1999), Russell has been elected a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, a MacArthur Foundation Fellow, A National Endowment for the Arts American Jazz Master, and a Guggenheim Fellow. Telephone interview: AC, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, 6 December 1997.*

Ruth Samsonov Cooper

There was no order to life with the Wolpes. Day and night were undifferentiated. Things were done when they had to be done. I came to them on Friday for my lesson and stayed overnight in their house. I would return early Sunday and go to work Sunday morning. I had little money. When I left money for

my lessons on the Wolpes' piano, I would get a letter in the mail with the money returned. I was lucky to get a half-hour alone with him. It was always a group lesson. On Friday evenings all their students would gather at the Wolpes' place and there would be much music and discussion. I studied piano with Irma and harmony with Stefan. They would call each other in to comment on something here, something there: "Liebchen, komm schon!" But I heard from Josef Marx that there was difficulty in their marriage, an affair of some kind. He must have been a difficult man to live with.

Josef Marx took me to Emil Hauser of the Conservatory. He listened to me play the *Italian Concerto* of Bach and was very interested in a mistake I made. Not a bad mistake, but a mistake of reading that betrayed my upbringing in Palestine. He was very interested in this and talked about it for some little while. [. . .]

Wolpe was full of protests against the injustices of capitalism against the workers and wrote songs with texts that expressed his Communist sympathies. He wrote beautiful Hebrew songs for the alto Anna Hirsch. Stefan had a studio not far from their apartment, where he would go to work. He would shut himself up there until his composing was done. Stefan went to great trouble to help Hindemith when he came through Palestine as a refugee, getting clothing and shelter and money for him. He worshipped Hindemith. The Wolpes made a one-hour detour to say good-bye to me on their way to the airport in 1938, when they left. We cried when we parted.

Ruth Samsonov Cooper (1918–1992) was born in Israel, where she studied piano. Her teachers included Stefan Wolpe. She subsequently studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and obtained the LRAM in 1944 with specialties in piano, voice, and conducting. Among her teachers were Harold Craxton and Sir Henry Wood. Following the war years, she returned to Israel and pursued an active performing and teaching career. In 1954 she moved to Toronto, where she continued to teach piano and became a highly regarded Jewish music educator. Interview: AC, Toronto, 14 October 1980.

Eddie Sauter

I had begun studying with Stefan Wolpe about that same time, late '45, and that opened up a whole world to me. But before that there was always a curiosity of how does this work. What Bartók and Stravinsky were doing in those days was not [what] I might have been used to hearing. How that fit into the total thing fascinated me, and I did want to learn about it. I wanted to learn about Schoenberg. I never got quite to Schoenberg, it never turned me on the way the others did. It still doesn't. Wolpe was a twelve-tone writer, but what a good teacher, what an inspirational human being he was.

After studying at the Juilliard School Eddie Sauter (1914–1981) played trumpet in Red Norvo's band from 1936 and soon became the arranger. From 1939 he worked freelance, writing for Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman. He began studies with Wolpe in 1945 and implemented many of the ideas he learned from his teacher in orchestrations for Ray McKinley, the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra (1952-57), and others. Interview: Kirchner, Nyack, New York, 1980. Jazz Oral History Project of the Smithsonian Institute*, 187–8.*

Tony Scott

I graduated in 1942—clarinet, piano, composition, and had a schooling in classical and modern music until Stravinsky. I saw Mitropoulos conduct *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg in 1942 at Carnegie Hall, the first time it was performed in the U.S.A. Very impressive. I was in the U.S. military from 1942 to 1945 and played in a military band. I was in the black world of jazz in New York City from 1942. Jam sessions in Harlem, Greenwich Village, 52nd Street, making friends with the black musicians famous and not, old and new. I then studied in 1950 with Stefan Wolpe until 1954 at the Contemporary School of Music. Tuition was paid by the U.S. Government. He taught me the music of Johann S. Bach with all its rules and at the same time atonal music, twelve tone music, with all its rules. After I studied with Stefan I started to understand what atonal mu-

sic was like, and I was the first jazzman to record atonal music on my recording for RCA Victor with my septet in the album *Scott's Fling* (January 7–12, 1955): *Abstraction No. 1* and *Three Short Dances for Clarinet*. I've used Bach style in jazz, for example, on RCA Victor *Lullaby of Birdland*, or *Monica's Smile*, recorded 1981 with the Zurich Radio Orchestra and with a string orchestra. In 1949 I experimented with playing free atonal jazz with pianist Dick Hyman, but we both had no experience in atonal music. One time in my house I decided to play my clarinet and baritone with Stefan at the piano. We improvised together, and I taped it. Improvising was a big part of my life as a jazz musician, and I was very surprised and thrilled that Stefan was one of those great classical composers like Bach and Beethoven who could improvise in their style of written music. Stefan improvised like his music was written. I improvised in a jazz style using elements that I had heard all my life in jazz. I played clarinet and baritone sax. We just played with no tonality or sequence of chords or rhythms, we just played "free." I learned from Stefan it could be done and that is how I make my space music, my requiem music, calm or ferocious. I play free with no labels, improvising since I was 12 years old. I am now 78 years old. Sixty-six years of using techniques, sounds, and rhythms to represent whatever emotions I feel and try to pass this on to the listeners. I'm still looking for the tape. I'm sure I have it somewhere. I traveled playing in all the world and was without a fixed home from 1960 to 1970. I left trunks everywhere. I jammed one time with Stefan and we did not use any systems. About jazz musicians who played "free jazz" in the 1960s such as Charlie Mingus, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Pharoh Saunders, John Coltrane. I never discussed with any of them what influences they had. I think I was the only jazz man who had knowledge of Stefan Wolpe. His name was never mentioned in jazz books as an influence in jazz or among the black jazz players.

Stefan was my teacher and dear friend. His close friend was Josef Marx, oboist and publisher of Stefan's music. They were from the old world of European composers and musicians. Stefan became a dear friend, and we had some wonderful times together. I lived at 81 Fourth Avenue in a loft 100 feet long and 30 feet wide. I was a disciple of Charlie Parker and his music called bebop. For me it is the last main influence on black jazz. Stefan was at my house when Charlie Parker came on one of his many visits to me. When I introduced them, they both were thrilled. Stefan exuberantly shouted, "Bird, I love your music!" And Bird went into his three-plumed hat routine and in his best Shakespearean voice said, "Maestro, I would be honored if you would write something for me and a 75-piece orchestra. Mr. Norman Granz will pay you for it." It was a beautiful idea but was never realized. At another meeting Bird and Stefan went with me to see a movie about flamenco dance with famous dancers Antonio e Rosaria. Stefan shouted OLE!!! a few times. Bird was sitting behind me and went to sleep. I turned around after a half hour and Bird was gone. Bird came and left when he felt like it. When Stefan composed his *Saxophone Quartet*, he asked me to get Bird to play the part on tenor sax. I did not know if Bird could play Stefan's music and if he would show up at the recording session. So I got Al Cohn, famous jazz tenor saxist, to play the part. I was able to school Stefan in black music with discs of Mahalia Jackson, famous and fabulous black spiritual singer. Stefan also loved Mahalia Jackson, and when I played her records for him at my house, he shouted, "Why can't they sing my songs like this!" He loved the freedom and the feeling that was in the Afro-American music called jazz and also spiritual music. In late 1950 I remember also the Carnegie Hall concert where the music of Stefan, Cage, and others was played. David Tudor played piano.

Once I met Stefan on West 48th Street on a cold day. He was going to collect a money prize from Yale and he had no coat. I gave him my cashmere coat given to me by a rich booking agent with the MCA agency. I met Stefan again in Berlin in 1957, and as we walked down the street juke boxes were blaring the *Banana Boat Song* sung by Harry Belafonte with Tony Scott Orchestra and Chorus. I told Stefan that I arranged that song, and he said: "I heard this song everywhere, you must be rich!" I told him I did not copyright the song as I was not

interested in being known as a calypso song writer. I told him that being number one clarinetist in the world was my goal, and I had become that from 1955 to 1960. I have with me two big tapes of Stefan and Hilda and me and my first wife talking at my house at 71st Street in New York City, September 30, 1959.

I believe that all art and music is blocked by the professionists who know too much about technique and too little about emotion. I think it has to do with their scholarly, "ivory tower" existence. Stefan Wolpe lived in the harsh world and the reality of a hated Jew in Nazi Germany of the 1920s. He was anti-old style German music and with others like him wanted to take all art forward and away from militarist Germany, which had started World War I in 1914 and was defeated in 1918, leaving a crushed people who hated everybody and everything that was not part of German traditional music, art, and literature. Stefan was able to escape from this bitter existence to America before the doors were closed dooming millions of people to die. The avant-garde artists got the message from the Nazis and left Germany in the early 1930s as they could not function. No work, no money, no future. Get out or be suppressed as an artist and a human being. So Stefan got out. I never talked to him about his life in Germany or America.

Ralph Shapey

I met Stefan in 1939, shortly after he came to America, at the Queen Street Settlement School in Philadelphia. I was about sixteen-and-a-half and was studying violin with Emanuel Zetlin. Well, the first meeting with Stefan was a harmony, theory class, and he gave us some kind of an examination, an ear training test. I had already had harmony, theory, counterpoint, and things of that sort, and I guess, as I tell my students, the young have a right to be arrogant. At one point I said, "Why don't you tune that piano, it's out of tune." He turns and says "Ach, ach, write, write, come write!" And he laughed and hovered over my shoulder. After the examination he asked me to stay after class, and he asked if I knew what it was all about. I had brought along a piece that I had already written, as I was already composing on my own. He looked over it, looked at it, and said, "Oh, this is very interesting. All right you want to study composition? I accept you as a composition student." So we arranged the first lesson. In the course of the lesson, I remember, he did not speak English very well. He had a dictionary with him, and he constantly interrupted to ask if he is using a word correctly, or the pronunciation. Perhaps the key to our relationship was grounded in that first lesson. At about halfway through he asked me to get him a glass of water. "Ach, slave, get me a glass of water." I got up, went to the door, stopped, turned around and said "Mr. Wolpe, I will be glad to get you a glass of water, but I am not your nor anyone's slave." He bent over backwards making apologies. When I was in Israel a few summers ago they asked me "What did you really learn from Wolpe?" and I said, "I don't know, I haven't the slightest idea. I can't say what I really learned from him, because I was very sure of what I wanted to do." Well, there were these studies, and then I wrote a piece called *A Dream Within a Dream*. That, combined with the fact that I became the assistant conductor of the National Youth Symphony Orchestra, got me thrown out of the Settlement School.

I went into the army when I was twenty-one then I came back in 1945, went to New York and contacted Stefan. Even in the army I had done some work, tried to write some things. I showed it to him and he said, "Ach, yes, yes, I remember, talent, yes of course I take you as a student." I remember he made an arrangement, because I had no money. I paid seven dollars a week for my room at West 122nd Street, right across the street from Juilliard, and a dollar a day for food. "So," he says, "Okay, we make an arrangement, you pay so much per week." I said, "So what does that mean?" "Well, what it means is that I give you a lesson and you pay for that lesson, and then if I want to see you two days later or three days later, two or three times during the week, no charge. That's my business." However, after a week or so, he demanded that I pay him for the extra lessons. I reminded him of his agreement, which he denied. I then borrowed money from a

friend to pay him. It was a very distasteful moment between us. It was before we were able to get with him under a G.I. Bill in an accredited school of some sort. After I had written my *Second String Quartet*, which was finished in either '48 or '49, it was right around that period, I would say that from that point on I was not formally studying with him any longer. Even though I didn't study with him, I wrote the *Quartet* as a so-called friend and colleague. There were no longer formal week-by-week studies. He would call me, "Ach, come over, I just finished this work. I want you to see it." Or I would call him up and say, "Ah, I just finished this work. I want you to see it."

It's like his marriage. He and Irma probably loved each other very much, but they couldn't live together. It was the same thing between he and I. I was the only one who in all those years did any of his music, but the next day after a concert in which I had standing ovations and bravos, or maybe that same night, he called everybody and said that I killed his music. At a certain point our relationship was broken completely. There was no longer friendship of any kind, not real friendship. I continued that relationship on the basis of mutual need. My need was to establish what I can do, and this was the route to do it, because I was the only one that could do certain things. That's what Wolpe was to me, his music was a challenge. Despite everything, I was his real friend. He didn't believe me or trust me. I did not give him *adoration*. I gave him something else, I gave him honesty and truth, while everyone else gave him adoration, which he needed and demanded.

Some of our big fights occurred over notation, lining up and things. There was one rehearsal I remember that I took the score and threw it on the floor. I said, "If you ever hand me a score like that again, I'll never conduct it." When he wrote the *[Violin] Sonata* for [Frances] Magnes he borrowed a violin some place and got a sound that makes scratching in the throat, and said, "Ach, that's marvelous, I'm gonna use it." I said, "Stefan, what are you talking about? The violinist spends a lifetime to learn how to draw a beautiful tone and you're going to want them to break the violin? What's the matter with you?"

Cage he liked actually. I don't know if he liked him or because Cage gave him a certain adoration, or exactly what it was. There was also in his later works certain Cageian influences there's no question about that. He was very much in his last years with the Cage gang because he wanted to be *avant garde*. He couldn't stand not to be part of whatever is going on. He always had to incorporate that far-out type stuff because he couldn't stand it that they were doing something that he wasn't doing. Instead of being what he was really in his early days, like the *Passacaglia* for piano, which is a damn good piece of music, he always had to get involved in all kinds of shit, like with the *Oboe Quartet*, in which there were nails in glass jars, the percussionist rattled nails. They laughed their heads off and said, "What kind of shit is this?" And as the conductor I constantly had to battle the musicians. I had to say to the percussionist, "Okay, I'll agree with you it's silly, but once upon a time a composer demanded an anvil. Today you have a little steel bar which is the percussion instrument called the anvil. Isn't that so." This is how I got them past their own hatred against Wolpe in many of the things which he constantly demanded, which were ridiculous.

The first movement, "Early Morning Music," has a blank measure at the beginning and a blank measure at the end. I said, "But Stefan, I mean, exactly what do you want?" He said, "Well, it's like a parenthesis." "Okay, what do you mean by 'parenthesis'? The piece starts on the second measure." "No, the piece starts on the first measure. You have to conduct the first measure as if people were playing. Measure for nothing." "Well, all right and what about the end?" "Oh, you have to conduct that last measure as though people were playing but a silence." "Okay, if that's what you want, that's what you're going to get." From my knowledge of conducting, it should not have been done the way he wanted it. My argument here is not that he wanted this pause of silence as a kind of active pause. My contention is his demand, which made no sense. And he refused to let me do it the way it should be done. I think in this case the gesture meant the moment of pregnant silence, and then it starts, and

then it ended on the pregnant silence. It makes no sense to me for the simple reason that any good conductor makes a pregnant silence before he starts the piece anyhow. To me it really had no special meaning. In the last movement the conductor suddenly had to go like that [hits foot on floor], a dance gig. I'll do anything that the composer wants, if I believe that it's really valid. So we had a big argument about it. Joe [Marx] was dead set against it because there was an oboe in it. Stefan wanted a kind of a dance-like impetus to suddenly start it off after a pause. So all right I'll give it to him. Well, they insisted that he had to take it out. I said, "I'll do it, I don't give a shit." They said, "No, that's ridiculous and it's stupid. Out with it. We won't play unless you take it out." They insisted. Leonard Bernstein was at the concert and we talked about it because he thought it was ridiculous. I showed him the score and explained it at the reception and at the gallery and said to talk to Wolpe, not to me. He is the composer and we had a big fight about it and he refused to listen and insisted that it be done that way. As a composer myself, despite knowing it was stupid, I did it because the composer felt it was important to him and the piece. We both shrugged our shoulders and laughed.

He was personality-wise filled with life, there's no question of that. One of the important things was he had a gesture, and he was interested in composing this gesture. There's that kind of virility in the music, there's no question of that. He knew what he was doing. He was not a good musician, though, is where the failure comes in. He gives me this score which you can't read and is all lined up incorrectly, everything is absolute chaos. How can I take this here and make sense out it? There were many fights about that, because I would do it a certain way, and then Wolpe, of course, instead of backing me up would back the musicians. The fact that they were wrong had nothing to do with it. He always backed them up. But I was the one who had to bring it to life. His music was a challenge.

I think the first and foremost thing that a composer or any artist has to do is to make an immediate impact. If there is complete understanding, then there's nothing else in there. You hear it a second and a third time and you're bored to tears because there's nothing else in there. But the fact is it should be complicated or abstruse enough so that upon repeated hearings you hear more and get more out of the work. A Beethoven work or a Brahms work, as an example, hits you with an immediacy. There's an immediate reaction, and I'm not talking about like or dislike now, I'm just talking about getting an emotional reaction immediately. Then based on your like or dislike, you might say, I want to hear it again and again, or I don't want to hear it again and again. But the so-called, pardon the expression, "modern" composers, with their big magazines, articles, and lectures in which they have to convince the audience ahead of time, or after the playing of a work, how great the work is, is nonsense, because the music has to speak for itself. It has to have an immediacy. Varèse had that, there's no question. I think on a certain level Wolpe had a certain immediacy of that generation. Actually even Sessions has somewhat that kind of immediacy.

I've always said Wolpe is my father in music, and Schoenberg is my grandfather. I say Schoenberg is my grandfather because many times I will use a row, but not in a pedantic way, I refuse to be pedantic about it. And that's true of Wolpe. It's a free kind of twelve-tone music, for me, and I think for Wolpe too. Of that I'm not completely sure because he did make graphs at times, and he did try to have all these intellectual things going on. He used to keep a notebook, and he would write all kinds of things in it, random thoughts. He would write them all down in these books as they occurred while he was working. He never let me look at it.

When I met Scherchen in Europe, his only question about Stefan Wolpe was: "How is he making out politically?" You know he was a communist, although I must admit we never got into any political discussions that I can recall. I had some of Wolpe's scores and tapes, but Scherchen didn't want to hear it, he didn't want to know his music. In London I had to twist arms desperately to get people to hear anything of his music. They weren't the least bit interested.

Ralph Shapey (1921–2002), studied violin with Emanuel Zetlin ad composition with Stefan Wolpe.

He conducted the premieres of many Wolpe pieces. In 1954 he founded the Contemporary Chamber Players of the University of Chicago. From 1965 to 1985 he was professor of composition at that University, after which he joined the faculty of Queens College, New York. Interview: CB, New York City, July 1975.

Fred Sherry

It was always the quality of the music to be incredibly energetic, almost nervous at times. I wouldn't say that Wolpe was a nervous guy, but he always talks about that energetic quality that music has. His background was so broad that you felt *all* of that in his music, and also from him whenever you met him. He collected paintings and was interested in literature, so maybe his intellect *was* very fast. He saw the limitations in using words to describe music, because, let's face it, music is a language on its own and words can't really describe what we do when we play or hear. The relationship of the performer to the music always changes, and I think he liked that changeable aspect, and even a sense of improvisation, though his notation was very craggy. He would have 3/32 bars and 7/16 bars and 4/4 bars, and often people would be playing simultaneously all kinds of different rhythms that made for, you could say, a cluttered texture, or you could say that it was just kind of a multiplicity of things going on simultaneously. It wasn't even counterpoint in the strict sense of rules being obeyed about how certain notes fit together. He seemed to work with various sets of notes that would always fan out. He would start with something very simple, and immediately it would take on different meanings as other notes were added to the texture. That's one thing about his music that is so great, because you couldn't really say it was tonal or atonal. There was always a sense of tonality and a harmonic center, or at least the center of a note at any given point in his music. But it never manifested itself in any kind of harmony but Wolpe's own sense of harmony. [. . .]

When you compare Schoenberg and Wolpe, you see that Schoenberg used a lot of nineteenth-century forms, there's rondo and sonata form and variation form. Although he talked about transformation, it was always set in the context of those rather well-known forms. With Wolpe you really *do* feel a sense of transformation, because you start out with a certain number of pitches being spoken out—it may even start with only two notes, he seemed to like that two-note figure, whether it was the G and B at the beginning of the *Two Instrumental Units* or the A and the B at the beginning of the *Trio*—then he had a way of making, for lack of a better word, some kind of wedge format. It simply spread out and fanned out among the instruments playing. So with Wolpe you see fewer of those old forms, but he had such a great sense of form that it comes out that you know where you are in the piece at any given point. And really that's the test of a good composer, whether he can lead you to expect the right thing to come next, or if he leads you to expect something and then changes that. The change, the surprise in itself is a formal gesture. [. . .]

The man and his music seemed to be inseparable in that way that he had an aura about him. Whenever Wolpe was around, it was kind of like you never knew what was going to happen next. Not that I can relate any stories of weird occurrences, but there was always a feeling that he could turn his attention to any part of the score or any player in the group and give them some inspiration on how to play or how to react to his music that was very important and would make a big difference in playing. And again, it wasn't the words he said, but it was the way he related to his own score. It really wasn't ever clear did he just miss all the mistakes that we made, or did he not *care* about that and was only interested in certain aspects of the flow or even the quality of tone on certain notes. He had a fascination with the way musicians produce tone and how that tone would affect his music. Therefore it wasn't that you lined up the right notes at the right time, [it was] if you were able to *interpret* his music and to say that each note had personality. If you play cello, for example, that if you played something on the A string or the D string, how you fingered things and how you bowed them. His music was not very exactly notated in terms of slurs and separate notes,

[so] it was always a question of how much to play notes separately or connected. That he liked this constant sense of variety always came out in what he would say. You got the feeling that you could pretty much play it any way you wanted, but it had better make sense, and it had better not be too straight or strict.

Fred Sherry (b. 1948) studied cello and chamber music at the Juilliard School of Music. In addition to his role in co-founding several ensembles including Speculum Musicae (1971) and Tashi (1973), he is a frequent performer with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Bargemusic. He serves on the faculty at Juilliard, has recorded several works of Wolpe, and his book on cello technique is now in preparation. Interview: DC, New York City, 22 May 1990.

Harvey Sollberger

Wolpe struck me as an immensely vital person, making all sorts of connections—musical, verbal, visual—things just poured out of him. My main impression was of a person who was very young in spirit. He was someone who was constantly observing and reacting to the world and somehow re-shaping it. And not only re-shaping it, but projecting that outward. It was not just his music, it was his whole persona, and that made the music a little more understandable to me. I remember also rehearsing at his house and being offered something to eat, and declining, not wanting to impose. And then Wolpe boomed out, "Oh, I suppose you'd rather eat a hot-dog in the subway," shaming me into taking a little bit of cheese and cracker. At that time I was very touched by his magnetism and general aliveness as a human being. It's something that is very precious to me, because with the onset of the Parkinson's disease just a couple of years later, there was a tremendous transformation, and it was as if the flame that had burned so brightly was now reduced to conserving itself and parceling itself out in much more careful doses.

By the time I had learned his *Piece in Two Parts for Flute and Piano* and worked hard on it, it made a lot more sense to me. That was the beginning of a real commitment to his music ever since then, because I think of any living composers I've come in contact with, he is probably among the two or three who have meant the most to me. Certainly in my own music the effect of his work and his spirit as it was expressed through the work had a lot to do with the way my music has developed, or the shape it's taken. There are times in people's lives when they are dislocated for one reason or another. Whether it's moving to a new place, or illness, or great good fortune, or great ill fortune, one thing or another dislocates you and causes you to rearrange your thought configurations. I think it was fortunate for me that I came in contact with Wolpe at a time when I was reconfiguring myself in a certain sense and had the opportunity to really absorb what he had and to see its meaning for me in my own way.

In 1963 or 1964 Wolpe gave a lecture at the New School. Howard Lebow and I played parts of the *Piece in Two Parts* and then Wolpe discussed it and put the row on the board, which, as I recall, astounded me, because it had fourteen notes in it. Aside from the technical ways in which he moved the notes around relative to each other, he spoke about some of the underlying aesthetic base, the ideas underlying the ways in which the notes were combined. At that time he spoke very emphatically about treating collections of notes, what he would call constellations of pitches, as almost physical, concrete objects. He spoke about the opening of the *Piece in Two Parts* especially as being almost the equivalent of the space in a room, a sort of spatial metaphor, in which the particular groupings of notes—the flute's opening four notes, piano chords that interrupt—each of these was akin to an object in the same way that a room might be filled with objects of different sorts—a spoon, a table, a dish, a toothbrush, a fingernail. His examples were much better than mine perhaps, but his point was the way in which these objects could all be in the same room, sharing the same space, but not necessarily entering into any profound interaction. They were just there, and you could observe them sharing the space. In the same way he wanted his configurations of pitches, and what we would traditionally call the

phrases, or the groupings of them, to co-exist spatially in this musical-temporal space. At times to get in each other's way, and at other times to avoid each other, at other times to collide and transform themselves. So I got a picture of a very dynamic and vital idea of music, a very dramatic idea of music, in which one was dealing with certain materials which had particular properties, propensities, potentials, whatever, and then (on the basis of the composer's imagination, his technical skills) what might happen in this situation. [. . .]

I think it's important to distinguish between, on the one hand, the other masters of twentieth-century music—Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Bartók, Webern—who were established and known and, to a degree, enshrined, at least by those of us who maintain some kind of twentieth-century pantheon. Wolpe was not, and it was amazing to discover walking down your own streets somebody who was even more compelling than these people in a way, at certain times. I think of the fact that his music was growing out of the shared life and experience that we had here in New York at that time in the early sixties. Bartók and I had very little in common, at least in terms of our life experiences and even the intersection of our life times. The effect Wolpe had on me went far beyond the personal presence and the effect his intellect and spirit made. It was also a very compelling musical effect. I think it had something very much to do with the clarity and vivacity with which he was able to take life as it was being lived in this place and this time, and to reflect it in a very personal way.

Harvey Sollberger (b. 1938), flutist, composer and conductor, studied composition at Columbia University from 1960. He has performed and conducted many of Wolpe's works. He taught at Columbia University, the Manhattan School of Music, and Indiana University. He is currently professor of music at the University of California, San Diego and music director of the La Jolla Symphony. Interview: AC, New York City, 13 December 1982.

Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt

I met Wolpe at Weimar in 1923 through Erwin Ratz, secretary to Gropius. Wolpe sat mostly by himself in a corner writing ecstatic piano pieces that he dedicated to Friedl Dicker, a highly gifted student at the Bauhaus, who came from Vienna to study with Johannes Itten. Wolpe sat in on lectures, especially of Itten, who had a great influence. [. . .]

We were not interested in politics, only the arts and philosophy. He read quite a lot, and had quite a good reference library. We played Milhaud, *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* a lot four hands. Stefan admired Antheil's piano playing but not his music. I had contact with all the Schoenberg pupils, but Stefan was never part of the Schoenberg group. He may have feared to become too dependent on Schoenberg. He was such a dominating personality that young people tended to become snobbish. But Stefan played all Schoenberg's piano music, op. 11, 19, 23, 25, played it, analyzed it, and talked about op. 19. The concentration of form, especially the last one. He played it at least ten times one after another. Of the orchestral works he liked the *Five Orchestra Pieces* especially. He had a chance to become Schoenberg's pupil when Schoenberg came to Berlin in 1927 [recte 1926], but he didn't. I couldn't tell why. Berg he admired very much, and *Wozzeck* was a revelation. Webern he respected.

He had a large group of friends and very close feelings for friends. When they needed something he would share anything with you, his last piece of bread. He was very critical of others and showed it. Of all the composers of his generation he had the most unmistakable idiom. His language was so personal that you could recognize it.

Notes from interview, AC: Berlin, 5 December 1979.

In 1925 Stefan had an apartment in a brand new block at the corner of Wiesbadenerstrasse and the Südwestcorso [18/19 Wilhelmshöher Strasse]. For some weeks I was a guest of Stefan's in his small apartment. It was in November and December of 1925, before the premiere of Berg's *Wozzeck*. Stefan had a Bechstein grand. He was a phenomenal piano player and sight reader, and filled with

his explosive feelings the late sonatas of Scriabin and the piano works of Bartók—especially our favorites, the *Suite*, op. 14 and the *Sonata*. In December Erich Kleiber was to direct the first performance of *Wozzeck* at the Staatsoper. Stefan obtained the piano score and we plunged into the work. To begin with Wolpe played through it from the first to the last measure, and we were both dizzy from the greatness of the impact. We didn't understand anything of the precise construction of the three acts each with their five scenes, each of which is fitted to a different formal type. For a whole week we sat the whole day and half the night at the piano, making notes, looking for and finding the leitmotives, and finally memorized the entire work. Heinz Tiessen, a member of the *Novembergruppe* and leading modernist of the time, lived nearby. He thought highly of Wolpe and encouraged him very much. Tiessen joined us. He was a brilliant analyst and discovered at once the structural secrets of the most complex music. We hardly touched the food which Frau Tiessen brought us. We tried to get an idea of the orchestral sonorities, because the score contained rather detailed indications of the instrumentation. When the performance date was established, I wrote Kleiber and asked—also on behalf of Wolpe—whether we might hear the premiere and the dress rehearsal. I included a couple of essays which had recently appeared. Kleiber answered at once and arranged tickets for us. In early December Heinrich Strobel of Erfurt, who I did not yet know at the time, asked me whether I would write the review of *Wozzeck* for the *Thuringer Allgemeine Zeitung*. He was prevented from coming to Berlin. It was my first serious commission, and I accepted. The review has often been quoted.

In 1928 there developed with Wolpe a working relationship, which came into effect at the weekends. We made the most comical literary experiments, wrote crazy texts larded with high-flown, mostly homemade foreign words, composed popular tunes with atonal harmony and twelve-tone melodies, sketched new aesthetic philosophies, and more of the same.

Adapted and translated by the editor from H.H. S., Zum Hören geboren: Ein Leben mit der Musik unserer Zeit *(Munich: Piper, 1979), 88–89; "Heinz Tiessen—der Freund,"* Für Her Heinz Tiessen 1887–1971*, ed. Manfred Schlösser (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1979), 11.*

Music critic and musicologist Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt (1901–1988) was born in Strasbourg. In the 1920s he was a freelance composer and worked as a journalist for a number of periodicals including Melos, Aufbruch*, and* Modern Music*, and succeeded Adolph Weissmann as music critic of the* Berliner Zeitung*. He attended analysis classes of Schoenberg (1930–3) and then was forbidden by the Nazis from engaging in journalism. After the war he was appointed lecturer at the Technische Universität in Berlin where, in 1953 he became professor. His many publications include surveys of music in the 20th century and books on Blacher, Busoni, Ravel, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky. In 1974, he was named a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin.*

Josef Tal

The first time I met Wolpe was here in Jerusalem. That must have been the year '36. I was asked to teach at the Academy, and I met Wolpe, because Wolpe was then head of the composition department, and Irma Schoenberg, the head of the piano department. Wolpe already had a background as a known composer. His music, of course, at this time was eccentric, most problematic, and nobody could beat that. And as a person he was very demanding, not easy-going, very, very outspoken with everything. So he and Hauser together make a big fire. Two different minds, and they didn't speak any common language. So Stefan was not at all easy. To have furious arguments with Stefan was not a difficult thing, because to be furious was part of the whole behavior. You had to be furious. That was his way. He left the Academy, he left everything because he was furious. But he could be also a great *charmeur*. [. . .]

I showed Stefan my compositions. He looked at it and then came a funny thing. He said, "Well, if you want, I will take you as my pupil." He knew

that I had studied with Heinz Tiessen. I have nothing against being his pupil, but he had a demand, I had to go to psychoanalytic therapy. You can't study music, become a composer if you don't go to such a psychoanalysis. Well, I knew about that, because I had had some experience with it in Berlin with friends of mine, even with my own father in a very naive way. I knew what it was, and for me it was absolutely a clear antagonism. "No, Stefan, that's not for me. Sorry. It has nothing to do with my music." And he didn't accept me. The story had a sad ending. When he came [to Israel] in '63, he already was quite ill, and he trembled very strongly. We were sitting together remembering things from the old days. I said to him, "Well, Stefan, do you remember your psychoanalytical demand on me? Do you remember that?" And he said to me with a very sad expression, "Well, I wish I were as healthy as you, without the psychoanalysis."

I met Irma Schoenberg, and then came soon after this the request to play the *March and Variations for Two Pianos*. They couldn't find any other pianist but me. Nobody could play that at this time and understand this music. I jumped on it with great pleasure, of course, and we had endless rehearsals with Stefan and without Stefan. So we really worked on that and finally gave a recital in the YMCA, because it was the only concert hall at this time. And we played also classical things—*Haydn Variations* of Brahms, I remember, Busoni. And the whole high society came to this evening. For them the piece of Stefan was really indigestible, impossible, but there was great applause. It was quite sure that the applause was not for Stefan, but for those two pianists who unbelievably could play such a thing. How did they do that? How functions such a mind? Impossible! Because they were music-lovers, all of them, all the Germans came with their pianos and played four hands. So until the Brahms, somehow it worked, but now comes this bomb. But still there was big applause. This of course put me out immediately to the forefront. Hauser came immediately and wanted me to become another teacher of composition. This created certain conflict among us with Stefan and Irma. They wanted to be the only ones, which I understood. There were not many students, and they wanted to be the ones. Finally Wolpe wasn't very happy here, because he understood that as a composer he wouldn't have been accepted here, or perhaps in thirty, forty years' time. So he already prepared to go to the States. And instead of one of the main pupils of Irma as a pianist, Hauser gave me the job. And they were quite cross with me because of that. But I didn't push for that, not at all.

I tried to be on good terms with them, and we had a lot of talks about composition. He once participated in a choir competition in Moscow, in '37 or '38. He wrote some Hebrew songs for the kibbutzim and sent those songs. He tried a lot to work in this style, to make something typical for the Jewish settlers, because twelve-tone music at this time wasn't the right stuff to make out of it a Jewish music. He said to me one day that finally he got the music back, and there were corrections in the score. The too harsh dissonances were turned into softer consonances. This was a big shock for Stefan, he couldn't believe it. He tried hard to be simple, and very successfully. He kept his style. He was quite a good conductor. I heard him several times here making the *Art of the Fugue* once. Very good. He conducted very efficiently.

I remember his working room not far from here in a very old house. He had a small room with a long table, like an architect, on two feet. And all the permutations of the rows around the walls. And he went like Napoleon past all the parade of the permutations and wrote them down. I quite closely watched him while working and discussed his way of thinking about this. His approach to twelve-tone was absolutely different from Schoenberg, because he developed other tendencies besides twelve-tone. Schoenberg very much kept form, the inner building, the texture, I wouldn't say on a really traditional basis, but the relations between motives, subjects, parts were still in line with let's say, after Brahms's time. Whereas Stefan had a very different tendency, I would say very much in common with his physical behavior, his way of looking at things and drawing consequences. He liked to split things. He was interested in a coffee spoon, not in order to take coffee with it, but in order to break this spoon into at least five or six parts and to see how each part is living on

its own.

My function was to observe, not to speak, not to translate thoughts into words. Just look. It was a similar thing as Bach did with Buxtehude in Lübeck. He just copied his score, and I did a similar thing. I watched him, it was a technical interest. How does he combine things? Why? I also did not want to disturb him with questions. This kind of thinking interested me. It certainly also has had a big influence on me. Everything, until today. I mean, you are eating and drinking. That's the way. It's the metabolism of the thought. It was my first confrontation with, in the beginning in a negative way, with the destroying of healthy forms. I saw this already in the *March and Variations*. But then I found out that it was done on purpose in his own methodical way. I used his shock and put it into order.

The whole idea of Hauer with the tropes is, of course, originally taken out of Eastern music, in fact, the Arabic maqam and the Indian ragas. I don't know how much Wolpe really knew about that at this time. This came later that we re-developed the Eastern part in music in order to demonstrate where we are living in the East. Wolpe was, of course, absolutely West, but if he would have stayed longer here, another ten, twenty years, most probably he would be interested in this too. Hauer's tropes is an Eastern idea, as is Schoenberg's permutations. Hauer and Schoenberg are really children of the same mother in thinking. It's very difficult historically to say who was the first. Hauer and his way of thinking tended much more to the East than to the West, whereas Schoenberg was the other way around. But all of this is not by chance. It is very likely that Stefan wanted to make a kind of synthesis of those two approaches. [. . .]

He worked with folk music on purpose as long as he was here. He tried to express himself as a Jewish composer, as we all did under a certain cultural pressure. I am sure that as far as he worked with Hebrew words he studied them thoroughly, because he was an excellent craftsman. No flimsy work. To speak Hebrew, he didn't really have time to study. He was still very much under his past influence from Berlin. First of all, he was with workers and not with the bourgeois. That the worker will turn out to be a bourgeois a little later, this we know, and he learned it in time. But at this time it was the classical picture of the worker, nearly a slave worker. So he had to express that with the worker, and he writes marches and songs for him against oppression. In Hebrew texts you find quite a lot of expressions of this in the Prophets. The Prophets give you a lot of texts which, if you are a good Communist, you can use them also. And there was another problem, how to use Jewish music in order also to be Jewish in musical expression. This was a problem for all of us in those days, because Jewish music then was mainly music from the waves of immigration. In the 1920s, in the middle 1920s, in the late 1920s, 1930s, different epochs of different groups from Poland, from Russia, Romania, and so on, depending where the pogroms have just taken place. So Jewish music in [Kibbutz] Ein Harod at this time was Polish music. Later came the Germans with their songs. And then started to come from the East the Yemenites. This was much more Eastern. And this interested musicians most, because this was leaning on the Arabic music, quarter-tone intonation, rhythmical figures entirely different from the Western, no symmetries, and went in line with Stefan's idea to break up. There was some meeting place. [. . .]

He liked being in Palestine, I know that. It was a kind of schizophrenic relationship, it was a split thing. He liked to be here because the Jewish people were aggressive. They were the sacrifice. He was with the Jewish people because he was persecuted too. He wanted to go here, but he wanted to be a leftist worker, not with those bourgeois, although these workers couldn't follow his music. But he was ready to work with them, to write for them simple choir music. He left too early in order to come into conflict with that too. I don't think he could do it here. He hadn't the patience to work for himself and to wait, and make an influence slowly. Everything had to be immediately. He was everything else, but not patient. I think in the States he changed a bit.

Joseph Tal (b. 1910) was raised in Berlin and studied at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik. In 1934 he immigrated to Palestine where he later taught piano and composition at the Jerusalem Conserva-

tory. When the Conservatory was reorganized as the Israel Academy of Music, he became its director from 1948–52; he later joined the faculty at Hebrew University, and in 1961 founded the University Centre for Electronic Music. He was named a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin in 1971. Interview: AC, Jerusalem, 16 April 1985.

Ron Thomas

I had started a masters in composition at Rutgers, but I was not happy with the program because it was too musicological. I wound up studying at C.W. Post College and had lessons with Wolpe for two years, 1968–70. I had studied with Stockhausen when he was visiting professor in Philadelphia in 1963. Then I went to the University of Illinois, and the players out there turned me on to the great modern jazz of the time. I got really swept away by it. Once I realized I was infatuated with modern jazz I put my compositional interests on hold. So even when I went to Wolpe, I was still trying to make a "jazz, classical" connection.

I was working on some things that were still tinged by the Stockhausen influence, and I now acknowledge they were false trails for me. Wolpe was very patient with me and allowed me to work through these scores. One piece had very little notation on it and a tape that went with it of sound materials from the sculpture of Harry Bertoia. Wolpe went right on ahead and taught me a lot of things anyway. He talked about pieces he was working on at the time, about his way of constructing them. He didn't pull out the actual music, but he would do these incredible improvisations at the piano while he was talking. He would demonstrate with a few notes here and there, little clusters and rhythmic shapes, changes in register, ways of using pitches, anything you could imagine that he might be interested in dealing with, almost as if he were doing a commentary on his remarks by playing at the piano. Those improvisations just stuck with me, and I remember taking a lot of notes.

The ideas took root very strongly both in my composition and in my approach to jazz playing. As so often happens with our experiences as apprentices to these masters we work with, a lot of it sinks in and takes root in some mysterious way and bears a lot of fruit later, because a lot of these things don't make sense at first, as they are very new, and fresh, and innovative. Every now and then I'll look at something I'm doing in my music and I'll realize that these things are coming forth out of those wonderful times I had with Wolpe, the remarks he made and the things he shared with me. This incredible freedom to explore music with a sort of unlimited focus, with nothing but your own vision for what you want the piece to be. I am really grateful for having gone through the experience with him. Even as a jazz player I don't play a single old straight ahead F-blues without in some way realizing that what I try to do as a "player" is directly connected with the ideas Wolpe shared with me. [. . .]

The strongest memory is that he really dealt with me lesson by lesson, and he talked about different things each time. But they were always accompanied by these wonderful demonstrations. It was almost as if he were showing me a lot of things about how he thought about pitches, and about how other aspects of composition were so fundamentally important to him beyond the fact of what notes were there. The whole concept of having everything in one work, everything needing to be there. I read *Thinking Twice* very carefully many times. That did support a lot of what he was saying as well. At the same time I was studying with Raoul Pleskow and Howard Rovics, who were sharing a lot of their experiences with me of studying with him.

Ron Thomas (b. 1942) received the masters in composition from C.W. Post College. He is active as a composer and jazz pianist, and teaches jazz at Rowan University. Telephone interview: AC, Coatesville, Pennsylvania, 31 January 1998.

Curt Trepte

On 4 March, 1933, the Truppe 1931 performed *Wer ist der Dümmstmmste*, and sang *Es wird die neue Welt geboren* at the end. The show was banned. I worked almost daily with Wolpe preparing the

songs. He had also other *Kampflieder* which had nothing to do with *Mausefalle*, for example, *Wir sind die Herren der Welt*. These were sung by the troupe at various gatherings.

During the periods of [political] discussion, which often went on for months, Wolpe was always present, but he hardly ever took part in them. He listened attentively in order to transform the results into music, mostly to general satisfaction. Wolpe was a passionate musician. He had a practice keyboard that he used to play on and compose with on the train.

The *Mausefalle* was performed 350 times, 217 times in Berlin alone. Every evening for three months in the *Kleines Theater Unter den Linden*, the theater Max Reinhardt had begun with his cabaret [*Schall und Ranch*]. The theater ticket prices were 75 pfennig to 5 marks. In consideration of the unemployed, they revolutionized the pricing of tickets. In the *Mausefalle* the piano was behind the stage and Inge von Wangenheim played the violin. In 1931 the *Mausefalle* played one week in December and in 1932 for four months in Berlin. Then we went on tour through Germany to Leipzig, Dresden, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Saarbrücken, until the beginning of June. In Switzerland we were invited by a Swiss friend, an architect, to Lugano, opposite the Italian border. He rebuilt a customs house as a weekend house and invited us there in June. We toured the old houses of Gandrie and drank special wines with a good dinner, and when it was dark and the moon rose, the Swiss Alps on the north side looked silvery blue. Steffie Spira walked along the shore reciting *Marie Stuart* [Schiller]. Wolpe and I took a rowboat and saw the lights reflected in the water, then stopped in the middle of the lake and heard the crickets. It was the most marvelous experience.

Wangenheim had written *Da liegt der Hund begraben* on an island in the North Sea. It was prepared too quickly and did not have the same success as *Mausefalle*. In October [1932] the rehearsals began at the Theater am Schiffbauerdam. It played only one month. *Mausefalle* was again performed in Switzerland. Kurt Tucholsky was there in Zurich at a rehearsal. We went once more to Switzerland in August with *Da liegt der Hund begraben*.

On January 29, 1933, Hitler was made Chancellor, and on February 4 was the premiere of *Wer ist der Dümmste?* It was a success with the critics. On February 27 during the performance we learned that the Reichstag was burning. After the performance we went to the Brandenburg Gate to see what was up. It was surrounded with police. We saw the fire in the cupola of the Reichstag and we asked the police who had done this. They answered what was given in the press the next day. Next morning the arrests began. On March 15 began the arrests of the actors. The police had made lists and they surrounded the *Rote Block* and began to round up the artists. Günther Ruschin was detained for ten days in the Moabit Prison. We went to the apartment of Arnold Czempin and discussed what to do. Wangenheim was already in Paris. Czempin had contact with Friedrich Wolf in Switzerland and joined him there. The entire troupe except for Wolpe and Meyer-Hanno went to Paris in mid July. In January 1934, my wife and I and the Wangenheims went to Moscow.

David Tudor

Let's say on the outside he wasn't full of what you call artifice. You could see everything on the surface. He wasn't capable of saying anything untrue. There are people who don't understand that, because they don't live like that. That of course puts him at a disadvantage when he's trying to obtain recognition and commissions for work. The musical politics of that time were particularly difficult. The thing that's most important to me, of course, is integrity. Compromise was a word that he just didn't work with. He didn't know what it meant. Other than that, what was *very* important to me was the dynamism that was so much a part of him. [. . .]

I wasn't serious about the compositional studies that I made with Stefan. I didn't find that my work was convincing. I think even more fruitful I found his classes in analysis. You see his teaching in composition always had an underlying basis of sort of Beethoven-like continuity, which he himself used,

or didn't use, at will. I think it was an underlying method that he used with students to get them started. When I was doing it myself, I was not inspired. I suppose I don't belong to that stream in composition. And it was years after that I realized that I was doing work that I could call my own.

I think I learned the most about him when I was studying the *Battle Piece*. That's a piece you can't play without having his mind. That kind of challenge is, I think, most what I learned from. Something that was new to me, and something I couldn't do to begin with. I recall the first three parts of it were finished. I began working on it as he was composing the fourth part. I worked a little bit on it with Irma. But actually it's the kind of work you have to do by yourself anyway. She helped me as much as she could. I recall we worked on a very small piano in his studio on the fourth part of the piece. I can remember his talking about the compositional concepts. And then I remember enjoying his description of what was going to happen later on in the piece in his amazing joy in finding the last movement, because that piece evolved so very slowly, and he realized that something radical had to happen, and he found it in the last part of the piece. He never spoke of anything in terms which you could call literary, but I think he was greatly depressed by the war. That was quite evident in the way he talked with other people. I remember he felt it necessary to do something, to state the positive view of, not of physical life, because that never was the most important thing to him... uplifting one's spirits is not an adequate term. He definitely felt he had to state somehow the positive view. He did [bring politics into] his work. He had many friends who had gone through the same experiences. Like Friedrich Alexanian, I remember. It appeared to me that he was Stefan's *best* friend. I didn't know Alexanian very well, but they really understood one another completely. I believe he was a writer.

At that point those [analysis] classes were more like a confirmation of his method. The sessions were very intense. They weren't for me, I was not a member of the class, I simply went to observe. I recall that Irma went quite often too. So in that sense I can't say that they were an inspiration. However, the way in which he conducted those sessions was very moving to me. They were what you call nowadays, in depth. You could see his mind at work in doing it. You have to realize that he was a composer, and in these analysis sessions he was actually analyzing the work himself. It was as important to him as to the people who were observing it. In many ways he wouldn't have done it, or he would have done it differently for himself than he did it for the class. I always had the impression that in his early years it wasn't important for him to study other people's music that closely. I think it was probably through Irma that he began to see hidden things in the classics. He might have at one point gone as far as to analyze Schoenberg in the class, and perhaps early pieces of Webern, but other than that he didn't go into things which would have fired my imagination immediately. For instance, if he had analyzed Scriabin. He loved Scriabin. Even if he had analyzed Szymanowski, who he also loved, at least some of the works.

I was also playing other of his pieces, but [the *Battle Piece*] brought us together, because there are certain aspects of it that, I would say, are quite intellectual. The fourth movement of that work cannot be understood without understanding the concepts behind it. In order to perform it you have to invent ways of presenting it which you don't find in the other movements. You find it a little bit in the last movement also. It has to do with the way the continuity is composed. The fourth movement is really very abstract in that sense. It's a piece the length and intensity of which makes it very difficult for listeners. And I recall the first performance of that piece. The audience was divided between people who wanted to experience Stefan's music and people who couldn't wait for it to be over so that they could listen to Dane Rudhyar. [*laughs*] And of course, I understand both points of view.

From the very beginning of the piece there are two thematic elements, and then there's the third thematic element which appears in the second part. During the course of all those first six movements those elements are never integrated. They're developed and changed and all that, but they never reach a state of integration. In the last movement he con-

tinued with the techniques of the fourth movement with making constant interpolations into the linear continuity. This is very hard to recall exactly without having the score in front of me. He finally found that he could make the two by a process of integration of the original thematic material with its alterations brought about by interpolating other material into it. He found that there was a common element observable in the harmonic constellations. So that he put them both together and made scales. The scales are scales of harmonies. So that brought about the integration of the third element, which is an image from Mahler. I think it's from *Das Lied von der Erde*.

The *Battle Piece* is one example of a work which could stand some explanation. For instance, the relationships of the tempi in that piece are very critical. The very few times that I've heard other people attack the piece it can become quite incomprehensible if the tempi are not related. For me it deals with whether the material is in a stable condition or whether it's volatile. That has to be very apparent in that piece, because otherwise there's very little means of differentiating the developments.

The *Battle Piece* made him aware of new possibilities, for sure. For one thing it was important to him that he could not accept the twelve-tone scale. That was very important to him. I think the *Battle Piece*, struggling as it was with the linear concepts, there were two main things he discovered. One was the way he could derive a whole compositional structure from a harmonic row. That was very important to him. If one examines the notes, the incomplete and interesting sketches which appear on the manuscript of the *Battle Piece*, you'll see how that was already present in his mind. It's a concept, actually, which Scriabin used a lot but never developed. Stefan's use of it, of course, is much more elaborate, because the continuity of the composition is very different from what Scriabin had in mind. And the other thing was the possibility that had come about because of his working with interpolation within thematic units, of creating discontinuity. Those two things are very manifest in the studies. [. . .]

I think [Stefan] must have achieved it somehow by coming to terms with his body rhythms, because that was how he had to experience music. And I think he probably began to experience rhythmic continuity in a more complex way. Not just simply dealing with the motor sensations through the body, but dealing with the breath also. I can remember at times his singing [*laughs*] his compositions, or singing his sketches.

The *Passacaglia* is one of Stefan's (what you call it) great works. It's completely coherent. However, it is possible to experience it as though it was coming from the stream of Brahms. I don't think that's what people were looking for in Darmstadt [in 1956]. As much as they talked about links with the immediate musical past, I don't think they ever took it seriously. As much as Boulez talked about Debussy, nobody took that seriously. But what an *important* composer he [Debussy] was to many, many people, and even to Stefan. I have notes, compositional notes, which he wrote to himself, which I would like to see published. They deal a lot with Debussy's compositional technique. They're just notes, but they're vital to compositional procedure, they're definitely applicable to the *Battle Piece*. [. . .]

He didn't [listen to much jazz], but he had a lot of jazz people come to him. He appreciated any type of popular music. He always welcomed any opportunity to get into a field that could be called popular, like *Lazy Andy Ant*, for instance. I remember he was really pleased and excited. I think it's simply that he never thought of himself as a specialist the way composers nowadays are able to. He wanted to be able to do everything. He thought his music as capable of universal expression. *Every* kind of musical experience he wanted to be able to incorporate in his music, but it had to be his own. He studied *so* often. I recall his telling me how he had pored over every work which included musical quotations. That interested him a great deal. That's one of the reasons why he kept studying the works of Berg. It played such an important part, because that was very important to him. I don't think he thought Berg was successful in every case, but he was very interested in how it was done and why, how it affected the composer's thought, what were the con-

sequences of having done that in the composition.

Stefan must have heard both [Boulez *Second Sonata* and the *Sonatine*]. I recall playing the Boulez at the Artist's Club on Eighth Street when he was there on an upright piano. The reaction of composers present without exception, except for Stefan, was that it was not possible to play that, after they had heard it. [*laughs*]

Of course, Stefan, like any composer, he heard things in his mind that he tried to put on paper, things like sonorities. You have to put your imagination to work to understand what's there. One thing that Stefan and I definitely have in common is an interest in his great friend Busoni. How transformed my own studies became when I started to work on Busoni! Those ideas are so important—notation is the work of the devil. Stefan never believed that, but he knew it. It was through Stefan's talking about [Busoni]. I recall at one point I felt an inadequacy in my handling of the piano, and I realized that I needed something that I had to find. So I began to study everything I could about Busoni, including all of the students who had ever written anything about him. It went so far as finally I stopped studying with Irma. Probably, by continuing meticulously with her methods I might have come on what I needed, but I also needed the background in it a great deal. I needed to understand what virtuosity was about. A lot of things happened because of that. I worked very intensely on lines that Busoni had put down in the writings.

Did Stefan talk about Satie? He loved it, he loved it, he loved it.

David Tudor (1926–1996) was born in Philadelphia, where he studied organ with William Hawkes, piano with Irma Wolpe Rademacher, and composition and analysis with Stefan Wolpe. In the 1950s he became the leading interpreter of avant-garde music for the piano with his performances of music by Boulez, Brown, Bussotti, Cage, Feldman, Stockhausen, Wolff, and Wolpe. From 1960 Tudor was active as a performer and composer of live electronic music for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Interview: AC, Stony Point, New York, 4 October 1982.

Estéban Vicente

I was one of the members of the Eighth Street Club. I don't know whether Stefan was a member or not, but he was a friend of everyone, and he used to come very often with Hilda. At the same time in that period, when there was a concert of contemporary music, the audience was the artists and the musicians, nobody else. In painting it was the same. An opening in New York City in a gallery—who were there? The other painters and the musicians too. So it was like a family. And eventually always he appeared. At that time, it was beautiful in that sense, because everybody was close. There were disagreements and discussions, but yet was this human aspect that was very fine. And Stefan was very much part of that in Black Mountain, too, and everywhere he went.

From the moment I met him I had the feeling of a superior man, as a man with a great integrity, a real sense of dignity that these days is gone. So from that moment on we became very close. Then later I went to Black Mountain College, where he was, and I remember a piece, *Battle Piece*, he called it. He told me that he thought that this *Battle Piece* was related to a painting of mine. I remember I was with him in Madrid once. He came with Hilda, and I was there visiting, so I took him to see the frescoes of Goya in the little chapel in Madrid. And we spent the whole time together there, and it was a wonderful experience with him. [...] A very warm person, very human, full of passion. He was the most decent person I know. No malice, nothing like that. He was not competitive, he was not playing politics, he was free. And that, to me, is the image of Wolpe.

He had a mind. Coming from the North of Europe Wolpe had that power. My suspicions are that he was keen about the Expressionism of Germany, very much so. But I don't think he was affected by the things that happened later, like the surrealism in painting. I believe constructivism was also important. Because I remember for instance that when he was talking about music at Black Mountain and other places, one thing that was stressed so many times were the intervals. And intervals, to me, were very related to painting in many ways. In painting's

terms the interval is the space between forms. An interval becomes a form itself. Intervals in painting are very instrumental, because they didn't exist with the impressionists. By instinct the man that had that without trying to specify except in the work itself was Van Gogh. The interval to me is part of the whole structure of the work and its form. So that's what he was talking about in relation to music. When Stefan talked about intervals and all the elements, it is exactly the same as what happened in painting. These problems in painting have been clarified in the twentieth century only. The aspect that did that was Cubism before anything else. Cubism is a purely plastic movement. Surrealism is not, it is a literary movement, not plastic. Surrealism in painting is an addition to something, it is not fundamental. But Cubism is the essential of the whole thing. What comes from Cubism is that everything should be solid, everything should be related, and moving. And I think Stefan did that. So Stefan in that sense was keen about Cubism. I was very receptive to the structure especially. He was so clear and so solid, in a way, that it relates to my ideal in painting too, which actually, I think, comes from Cubism. So I see similarities between things that happened in Germany in that period in music more than in painting. Because Expressionism is fine, yet doesn't have the structure that the Cubists brought back into painting. And this cubist structure is related in a way to Wolpe's work. That's my theory. So I remember the quality of his sound in the music, the way it was related, the way it was put together, very solid. His music on the one side has the background of the part of Europe where he comes from, Germany, and on the other is what he is as a person. It's a combination of things, the structure in his music and this kind of freedom is what I call Mediterranean. So he was really a very complex person. Wolpe was a very incredible person in many ways, and full of mystery. What remains in spite of everything as a memory is his passion, his emotion.

I don't think he was interested in Primitivism the way the painters that time in Europe did it, like Picasso and everybody else, looking at Black art, and the African art. I know he loved Cézanne, but I think he loved also Juan Gris. I think the cubism of Picasso was important, but Bracque too. I prefer Bracque. Not quite Léger, more Paul Klee. He sometimes talked about Klee. Paul Klee I think was much more in his feelings than any other painter. Paul Klee has been it seems to me one of the great influences in painting in this country. Stefan was more a man that was involved with something basically formal, and yet with the formal has the freedom to move. [. . .]

When I came was when Albers left [Black Mountain] and went to Yale University. And the man who took over was Charles Olson, the poet, a wonderful man, an incredible man. And Wolpe has been there already for some time. Stefan was very much aloof in a way, and yet part of the whole thing. I could not think of him being part of a group. Stefan was very involved with any kind of thing that related to life, but at the same time he was aloof in his own way. He was not the type that by nature needs to be involved with others in terms of ideas about his work. I remember that he and Olson went to Texas to see a very wealthy old lady, asking for help. They didn't get anything from her. [. . .]

Wolpe was very much involved with nature. Very much the opposite of Varèse. Varèse didn't like nature. Varèse couldn't stay in the countryside ten minutes. He needed the city. And by the way I think the music of Varèse is fundamentally the sounds of the city. Stefan's isolation [at Black Mountain] was a need in order to do what he had to do at that point. Otherwise, certainly, the city to him was very important, as much as the countryside. To him both were important.

Another thing is he didn't have nostalgia, which is very healthy. He was involved with actuality, reality, the reality of the moment. The interesting thing to me is that from the beginning he looked to me physically like a Spaniard, physically. I didn't know if his family was Sephardic. To me he was a Spaniard completely, his face, his temperament.

A first generation abstract expressionist, Spanish-born (1903–2000) painter Estéban Vicente's work can be found in virtually every major museum collection in the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum, the Smithsonian, the Mu-

seum of Modern Art, and the Guggenheim. Vicente is one of the last surviving members of the New York School of artists, whose members included de Kooning, Pollock, and Kline. He recently presided over the inauguration of the Estéban Vicente Contemporary Art Museum in Segovia, Spain. Interview: AC, New York City, December 1984.

Jonathan Williams

I was in New York City in 1949 studying graphic art with Stanley William Hayter, and I went to one of the Composer's Forum concerts at Columbia—MacMillin Theater, I think it was. The concert was divided between two composers I'd never heard any music by, but both of whom I'd heard of [Dane Rudhyar, played by William Masselos, and Stefan Wolpe, played by David Tudor]. [. . .] It was a curious evening, those two people in the same room. In those days the New York musical world seemed rather small and so you would see Varèse ase and Wallingford Riegger there. I don't know who else, but those two anyway I remember. David Tudor launched into the *Battle Piece*, got about a minute into it and obviously completely blanked out. Sat there for about two minutes and then started over. I don't know, it must be over a half an hour long. I think he played it with no score—incredible performance. A lot of people couldn't get it. Some people were very angry by the time it was over, and someone yelled before the applause, "It stinks!" which made Wolpe very annoyed. It was well received, but there were the dissenters. I haven't heard the piece played since, I don't have the recording. So, that's the first time I actually saw him and heard his music.

I'd never heard anything like it. It was tremendous. I guess my heart had been more in the Dane Rudhyar camp, some piano pieces called *Granites* [1929] I've always liked. Those were the days when as far as I'd gotten along in music was Messiaen. Rudhyar did have affinities to that kind of sound. *Granites* was played by Billy Masselos, who, of course, was a great Ives and Copland player. I heard him give the first performance of the Ives *First Sonata*, so I guess I was still more in tune with that than I was with Stefan. But, I'd never heard anything like the *Battle Piece* in my life. I don't think many people had. [. . .]

I had to leave Black Mountain because I was forced into the army medical corp. I chose to do that as a conscientious objector [rather] than go to jail, which seemed to be where I was headed. And I would come back to Black Mountain every once in a while. [. . .] That would be where I met him. I designed a piece of advertising, a mailer, for his record that came out in '55. Maybe I simply designed it at Black Mountain and had a printer in Germany do it that I'd used while I was over there earlier. I'd printed the first volume of Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems* in Stuttgart in 1953, and I imagine that's the printer I had do the mailing piece. That's when our friendship started. And I was in and out of Black Mountain a lot in 1954–56, until the college closed. I saw a great deal of him and his wife Hilda. He came to the house here in Highlands on several occasions. We became very good friends.

The thing that impressed me most about [Stefan] was the kind of intensity that he embodied, or that Charles Olson embodied, or that Aaron Siskind embodied. Zeitgeist, I suppose. Here we were in that terrible McCarthy period, in the bland days of Dwight D. Eisenhower, but the energy that those people emitted was stunning, I mean it was absolutely stunning. It was wonderful to be there, and to be able to work with them and talk with them. I studied with Siskind in 1951 there and kept up my relationship with him closely until he died. Unfortunately, with Wolpe and Olson, after the college closed I didn't see them very much, but their example was all-important to me as a young person, as a young writer.

I was just reading a new novel by Peter Straub called *The Throat*, and there was something in there that struck me that you might apply to people like Wolpe. The exact quote from the novel is, "Do you believe in absolute good and evil?" And the answerer says, "No, I don't. What I believe is in seeing and not seeing. Understanding and ignorance. Imagination and absence of imagination." To which I think you could, in the case of Wolpe and

Olson, also add that it was heat versus cold and attention versus carelessness, which was really what I got from them. The application was so tremendous in both of them, and the energy that came forth thereof. They had a lot to do with each other. I don't know whether Wolpe wrote about Olson or said much about him, but they were very close, I think, at times. I was witness to some very interesting conversations.

Olson really knew very little about music and I don't think really cared much. That of course could be a problem. I remember him listening to the Boulez *Sonata No. 2* that David Tudor played at Black Mountain and saying, "Oh, it's the greatest thing I've heard since Buxtehude." Well, I mean, I was amazed he'd even heard of Buxtehude, but he surely hadn't been listening to much in between, as they say. I don't think music was his thing at all, though he seems to have been pretty interested in Cage and Cunningham, and so on. But that's probably the first time he had ever heard Boulez, and perhaps the last, [. . .] yet [Olson] himself I thought was as "symphonic" as anything you'll encounter. The poetry is symphonic and grand, like Charles Ives or Carl Ruggles can be, when you heard him do it. I pride myself on being able to read some of it pretty well, following his lead. It does have this wonderful spaciousness to it that you don't often hear in poetry. The range. As he put it, *near-far*. It's close and it's extremely expanded and distant. It just has this amplitude about it, the breath like a bellows—a big man.

I don't know B-flat from D minor, but that didn't seem to bother Stefan. It didn't bother me, either. In New York on several occasions we went to concerts together. I remember one night, it must have been 1960, it was the Mahler centenary. All the symphonies were being conducted by a group of conductors.

[. . .] The night we went we heard Mitropoulos conduct the Philharmonic in the Fifth. Stefan was absolutely overwhelmed. He was crying. He said, "Have you ever heard anything so beautiful?" He thought it was wonderful. He hadn't heard it in a very long time. [. . .] Once during Black Mountain days we went over to Brevard, which is about 25–30 miles the other side of Asheville from Black Mountain. There's a summer music festival at Brevard. The North Carolina Symphony was playing. They did a performance of *Das Lied von der Erde*, which was rather ambitious for them, and again, he was very moved by Mahler.

Born in Asheville N.C. (b. 1929), poet and author Jonathan Williams studied art history at Princeton University (1947–49), painting at Phillips Memorial Gallery (1949), engraving and etching at Atelier 17 (1949–50), and attended the Chicago Institute of Design (1950–51) and, intermittently, Black Mountain College (1951–56), where he met Stefan Wolpe. Founder of The Jargon Society, Inc. (a poet's press), Williams is very active internationally giving lectures, readings and seminars. Interview: AK, Highlands, North Carolina, 10 April 1993.

Beatrice Witkin

What led me to Wolpe was all these teaching-learning experiences I had which I found somewhat frustrating. I'm studying with Mark Brunswick in '43. When I brought my scores in, my assignments, he said I was writing too much, and how could I write so much. This has a lot to do with Wolpe, because it shows you a different way of teaching. So Mark Brunswick said you have to analyze every composer, you have to compose in the style of everybody before you can start composing on your own. First we start with a sixteenth century motet, Orlando di Lasso, and then we're going to go to who comes next, and then we're going to go to who comes next. With the motets I was interested, because I had never done that before as thoroughly, and it was fascinating, because you have your small palette, and you do the most musical you can with a small palette. It ended up finally when he said this is the best work I've ever had, and this should be published. He encouraged me. But then when he said to me you have to go on to imitating every composer, I was just wondering about it. So then by '45 I worked with him for two years, and the two years only the sixteenth century and only Orlando di Lasso.

Around '58 or '59 Irma Jurist said to me, "If you want to [compose], you should go to Stefan." I said, "I don't know. I heard his piece at the Philharmonic [*The Man From Midian*], but I don't know." So she started carrying on with me to go see him. "He's right for you." And I resisted. I said, "Oh well, I'll go with Ursula [Mamlok]." So the both of us went. And the first thing, we brought scores. I brought my scores from a long time, and she brought her pile. She brought more than I did. And first thing, Stefan looked at us and said, "Burn everything!" I thought that was the most marvelous thing I had ever heard. I thought, my God, how wonderful! Right when you start fresh. This man is really wonderful. Of course he said other things. He said, "What do you two think of Stravinsky now writing in the twelve-tone?" He started asking us. I said, "I don't know. I really don't know whether he should, because I had my fill with the twelve-tone, counting the tones." He said, "That's a good idea he should. He has to try something though. I think that's very good that he's doing that. He's getting into a new way." And [that] was just like the sunshine, because I thought this was really a marvelous thing that he told me. Just what I needed.

He didn't teach notes, concepts, scales, or anything. He gave me an attitude which started with "burn everything." The attitude was what got me out of this rut, and from then on I knew what to do. Even these *Cantillations*, my latest piece, I know what to do, because he said, and this was important, "You are the god of your composition, and you ordain what is going to happen, and you make up the rules for your piece. Call it a system, call it anything you want. You can write the piece based on three tones. You can write a piece based on a hundred tones. But make a decision what it's going to be, and then stay with it, and that's how you'll get unity. But you make up your own way of doing it, and the piece will have some cohesion, but you're the one who does it. Don't listen to anybody else. You're the composer, and you decide. So now when I have this *Cantillation*, I made up my own system. I'm still doing what he told me.

And then he brings in psychiatry. This is what I got out of him. He said, "When I was in Israel, my psychiatrist,"—you see, what we were talking about was the block that I couldn't write. And he said, "All composers have a block. I mean that's part of it." And he said, "When I was in Israel with a psychiatrist, he gave me some very good advice. His advice is, don't wait for the idea to come from your conscious. That's what creative people do. It should come from your own unconscious, that's the best part. But if you wait for the idea, that's where the block comes, that's where the stress and anxiety come. Work from your unconscious. Go sit down and put down notes, anything. Just write, make charts. Write, and write, and write from the top. It works the other way. The bottom influences the top, and the top influences the bottom." That's what he told me. So you start with the top of your brain, it'll influence your unconscious, and your unconscious will give it to you, and that's the way. These are the things that he gave to me. He got me working again. You're the god. If you work, make up your own system. That's what he meant by break with the past, and you don't have to have anyone tell you what to do. Start working. Don't wait for the idea. Just start writing, writing, writing, writing, writing. The idea will come to you, and then you'll handle it. He said, "The heck with all the harmony, and theory, and counterpoint, and everything, because all that was a waste. Throw it all out. It's not useful." I don't agree with that. It's useful. He had it But that's what he said. "You don't need it. You do it all by yourself."

He was, well, the word is democratic. There was no such thing as student and master, and master and student. And he was not a snob. If he liked you, he liked you. He didn't demand that you give him any worship, or look up to him, or look down. You were always a one-to-one relationship. You were equals. And he liked women, and he liked men too. He was very open and friendly. He was an original that way. He didn't have any aura or mystique about him, he was very approachable, very human. He was interested in the human aspect of people, in the individual. He liked to go to parties, and he didn't act like a great man. But he was really upset because his music wasn't played, he wasn't getting recognition. He was very aggravated about it. That's why I got

going organizing.

Composer Beatrice Witkin attended Hunter College, and studied composition with Mark Brunswick, Roger Sessions, and Stefan Wolpe. In 1968 she was invited to work at the Electronic Music Studio at the New York University School of the Arts. Two years later, her electronic composition Glissines *was a winner in* High Fidelity *Magazine's Electronic Music Contest. She was also recipient of the ASCAP Standard Awards, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation. Interview: AC, New York City, 18 December 1984*

Gerald Wolpe

I met [Stefan] at a concert, and we began a delightful relationship that was regrettably short. We spent a great deal of time talking about the family background. The Wolpe family originated in Lithuania, although there was a tradition (later established by a genealogist in the family) that we were the descendants of a convert to Judaism from Italy. We were not able to trace a direct relationship, but we found enough instances where we were related to the same people to establish that we were cousins. He was delighted to know that we were related to Arnold Volpe, who was born in Lithuania in 1869 and came to America in 1898. Arnold was a fine conductor. He founded the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts in New York in 1918, and then founded the University of Miami Symphony Orchestra in 1926. After Arnold died in 1940, his wife Marie was executive director of the University of Miami Symphony Orchestra, and Stefan indicated that he wanted to be in touch with her. I am not sure if he did.

As I went through my rabbinic training Stefan and I would meet from time to time. We had one important evening's conversation about my work in rabbinical school. He surprised me with his knowledge of Jewish sources, and I had the feeling that he was in the midst of a search for some of his religious needs. His connection with leftist causes was clearly articulated, but there were also piercing questions about the meaning of the Tradition as I understood it. He was clearly sympathetic with my choice of career.

Cantor David Putterman commissioned a work from Stefan, and, since I knew both of them, I was present at many of their meetings. The Third Annual Sabbath Eve Service of Liturgical Music by Contemporary Composers was held at the Park Avenue Synagogue on May 11, 1945. While the compositions by the other composers—Bernstein, Milhaud, Tedesco, Binder, etc.—were given complete, only an excerpt of the *Yigdal* was performed. Some time later Putterman arranged a concert of liturgical music at the Seminary. It was, to my knowledge, the first time that he created a concert outside of the Park Avenue Synagogue. It was an extended program of both instrumental and vocal music, but unlike the Park Avenue Synagogue concert, it contained more liturgical pieces. I remember Leonard Bernstein's *Hashkevanu* and Stefan's *Yigdal*. To my recollection it was the debut of the complete *Yigdal*.

Frankly, much of the music was above the understanding of the audience. There were some students from Juilliard, which was at that time directly across from the Seminary. They were enthralled. Many of the others wondered why it sounded different from the pieces they were used to hearing in the synagogue. I was a little uneasy for Stefan. His ire was not directed toward the audience, but rather to the musicians, for he felt that the chorus and the soloists were not chosen well. We had a cup of coffee together after the concert, but it was not one of our most pleasant meetings. He was clearly upset.

Rabbi Gerald Wolpe (b. 1927), a graduate of New York University, received his Doctor of Divinity from the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he later became Director of the Finkelstein Institute. He spent 46 years as a pulpit rabbi, of which 30 years were at Har Zion Temple, Penn Valley, Pennsylvania. His career also includes a twenty-five year history of teaching in medical schools and numerous publications on ethics and theology. He retired in 1999. Written communication, 1997.

Irma Wolpe Rademacher

I met Stefan in 1923. I was just freshly come to Berlin and I went to a concert at the Hochschule. A strange person came close to me and to everyone looked them deeply in the eyes and walked away. It was Stefan. I asked him why he did that, and he said, "Because I want to find out who will be my friends." He was such a strange animal and I was a strange animal too. I was overawed by what I saw. He was so sophisticated, he knew it all, and I was just a baby from Romania who didn't know a thing.

I was born with a certain sense for value. When I see someone, especially when there is value, I have a feeling, I have them in the palm of my hands. I know the weight and the value of a person. I don't know how, I have instant grasp of that, and I knew with Stefan right away that he was very poetical, writing letters no one could understand with most beautiful language. He had a poetic command of German. He was born with this kind of abundance of images, which actually is his own. I don't know of any German who writes like this. Well, let's say, Hölderlin might come close to that. It's more musical than Rilke. It has a sense of its own. The word and the image were purely verbal, well of course musical too. But Stefan was not necessarily a poet in the sense of concepts. It was music.

All I heard about Busoni was that he *adored* him. He just had no words when he thought about Busoni, about the greatness of Busoni as a pianist. As a composer he asked Busoni for advice, and Busoni said, take the *Marriage of Figaro* or *Don Giovanni* and try to reorchestrate a few measures, and then you learn from it.

I met the father a few times, but never met the mother. His father was from some eastern Prussian place, originally from Kovno, because that's where the family was. There is a place called Volpa, and that's where they all come from. His father was very successful before and during the war. But then at the end of the war his business broke down. He was a manufacturer, even had a factory in America. They had a beautiful life, but when Germany broke down, this broke down too, and he had a very hard time afterwards. He even for a time had a movie house, or rented or managed it, and Stefan used to play for silent films. Even this went bankrupt. We supported him for a number of years from Israel. Stefan broke his father's domination. His father always gave him his hand and expected Stefan to kiss it. After the revolution of 1918 he hit his father's hand and did not kiss it. He was sixteen and he ran away from home. Stefan was walking barefoot down the Potsdamer Platz and ran into his father. His father was scandalized. Stefan scorned his father.

Stefan had a genius for the piano, but no talent. In a strange house he would rush to a piano and was lost to the world. He couldn't learn fingering. He'd play five notes and then begin to improvise. His piano playing could have been extraordinary, but for his intensity and joy in destroying. He wrecked every piano he played on. He had an infallible way of making strings snap. The strings were hanging out like guts. The same for conducting. He was too subjective.

The Bauhaus was a revolution, an aesthetic revolution, turning their back to all this pompous and empty overgrowth of a mixture of eclecticism. [Stefan] went to the Bauhaus in search of his ideal. They were searching there for the essence, for the pure form, and at the same time the perfectly functional. He was a great young friend of Klee, and he accompanied Klee when he played violin.

Schoenberg was at the same time in Berlin. This group was so closely knit and so attuned to Schoenberg that you learned everything from Schoenberg, even how to light a cigarette. They had to be completely devoted to him, to his ideas, to his way of thinking. They were having an open house for students, and they used to come every week, and had analysis classes. [Schoenberg] exerted a very powerful influence, but [Stefan] said it was too confining for him, the twelve-tone. He needed to develop, and the twelve-tone in the beginning didn't develop for him until he found his own way of developing. He had such an oblique relationship to Schoenberg. Schoenberg was not concrete enough for him. It was too, not diluted, but it was not what Stefan understood under concreteness of shape. He needed more concrete shapes. I understand this very well. Except I love in Schoenberg not the twelve-tone so much as

the in-between time, the pre-atonality.

After Dalcroze I had turned away from piano playing, but I learned to improvise. I learned theory and harmony and those things, and I started to see what I needed. I could play, I could even concertize, and I could start to teach. I started teaching in the Dalcroze seminar in Berlin, which was affiliated to the Hochschule für Musik. There was a very progressive administration after the revolution, which was actually a cultural revolution. I went in summer time to do courses of the Dalcroze school in Laxemburg, which is a castle near Vienna, and it was very interesting and beautiful, one of the great schools of moden dance there. Stefan came and visited me there.

Stefan asked me to play. [The *Novembergruppe*] were trying to branch out and attract another kind of public. There were some very brilliant people among them who tried to interpret what was happening to a literate, middle class public. There was an inauguration of some building, and some music of Stefan's was going to be played. He asked me to accompany something of his, some songs or a piano solo. I played, and we started to be very good friends. He lived in the vicinity and asked me to drop by, and so we got acquainted. That was in 1927–8, in the earlier years before he entered the Party. He turned away from the poetic and idealistic "l'art pour l'art" atmosphere, which was actually his element and his inner life. The *Hölderlin Lieder* are the lyrical essence of his creative personality, but he was forced by the times to discover the social commitment and to say, "I'd rather compose a Lenin text than a love song." I can still hear him say that.

In the beginning we started playing endless organ Bach fugues four hands. This was still when he was up to here in the Communist Party, playing only his own stuff for the performances. I took him back to music even later. We met at Philharmonic concerts and heard again Brahms. He had never given it up. It was inside him, only the moment demanded political action, committed action. He felt like a soldier. He not only joined the Communist Party but also a kind of free university in dialectical materialism. You should have seen Stefan struggle with Hegel, trying to understand the philosophy behind it. Stefan went to school and studied and on his bicycle raced through Berlin and put posters wherever the Party wanted him to put them. Spent his time training workers' choruses in back rooms of some dirty café in in proletarian parts of Berlin.

In 1933 they were performing night after night *Da Liegt der Hund begraben* at the Theater Unter Den Linden, the most prestigious spot of Berlin, and the Nazis sending already trucks to get everyone, all the cream of the cream, in the concentration camps. A big policeman was standing in front of that little theater where they played. So I said to Stefan, this is out, you are not going to stay. [He said,] "Ah, this is Berlin, this is my home town." I had made Stefan move into another part of the city where I stayed, out of [his] apartment where the rowdies, the gangs of the Nazis were roving. [He and his brother] were very much observed by the Nazis. They caught his brother, took him to a cellar, beat him up and tortured him, and he lost an eye. By some way he escaped the cellar and was brought to his parents, and there Stefan saw him. [Stefan] admitted he was ready to leave Berlin. I got him a new suit, I inspected his pockets and burned all the Communist books. Stefan left late in March, and he went to a Czechoslovak town nearest the frontier, Brno, where a sister [Bobbi] of his was married. His passport was valid only for another half year.

The Gestapo had come to his studio in the basement of Mrs. Schlomann's house and had taken all his manuscripts. They took whatever they wanted, but brought back the rest. They were orderly Germans. Whatever the Gestapo brought back I took with me. I cut off the political texts and brought him whatever I found in that cellar to Zurich, where we met in April, after the boycott of the Jews, which was April 1, 1933. He went to Leningrad, and he stayed in Russia till August. [He said] everything was so beautiful. He thought there is a chance that he might get a job as a conductor in Kiev and that he would write an opera with [Sergei] Tretiakov. Something in him saved him from staying there. All of a sudden there was a letter from him that his passport was expiring and that he was coming back. He came back on the day before the passport was still valid. He to the German consulate in Geneva to

have his passport extended. They looked his passport over, found Russian visas in it, and they said we don't do things for Germans like you, a refugee Jew. He put in a telephone call to [Georg] Schünemann, the director of the Academy [Berlin Hochschule], a remnant of the old regime, a very decent man. Schünemann had great sympathies for Wolpe, and he managed that he had his passport extended for another year. This is what happened within a crucial week of his life. He saved himself from being caught in Russia in the nick of time, and he could still slip over the border of Switzerland and get an extension of the passport and come back to Austria.

He went to Webern to study for a while. He tried to learn orchestration from Webern. Webern said if you have a real idea, it doesn't matter whether it is performed on a little mouth organ or a *Furzhobel* [fart-machine]. He wrote me beautiful letters about this *Passacaglia* [*Pastorale in Form einer Passacaglia*], because I was not in Vienna any more. The voices of the woods were in it. I called Stefan the unicorn, coming out of the depths of the woods and absolutely ignorant of everything. He has a truth of his own, and a knowledge of his own in everything. All of a sudden he wrote to me that the Austrian Government wants to deport him because he is lodging in an apartment of a woman known for hiding Yugoslav Communists. He said he had protested. With his sense of right and wrong he didn't see again it was mounting, the sense of complete lawlessness taking over Europe. So I went to Vienna in December and I took him to Romania. The day we arrived in Bucharest [29 Dec 1933] the premier [Ion Duca], a very liberal man, was shot by the Black Guards. It was a country in which antisemitism had been invented as a slogan. We stayed there till April-May and he finished the *March and Variations*. There are several streams meeting there in this *March and Variations*. There is the march idea from his proletarian phase, and there is the *Great Fugue*, Beethoven last period. This was an obsession with him, the energy, this ten thousand volt intensity, or a hundred thousand. And Mahler, maybe, the last movement. Stefan is a grandson of Mahler, absolutely directly. Not grandson, actually son, as generations go, but there came that big revolution.

Then I decided the only place to go was Israel. At that time it was mandate country, British-controlled, you still could get a certificate. So I took him to Israel, and it was the most happy time of his life. We took a boat and landed in Jaffa. Jaffa did not have piers, it was not a harbor, and our luggage had to be put in a little boat and then taken to the sandy shore. This man talked Arabic with all sorts of gestures, that guttural kind of talk, and Stefan was *fascinated* by this. He said, "This is my sound!" He was a Mediterranean. This side of him was at home. He loved it from the very first minute, not the Jewishness, but the native atmosphere, the beautiful vegetation, and the sun. Four weeks after he arrived in Israel some *kibbutz* was celebrating some big thing, and of course Stefan went right away to there and started writing music for them, teaching them songs for a performance. A whole culture of the way of life of *kibbutz* had developed there, and they needed that for their celebrations, for their big days. It was still a very militant time of socialism. Then Stefan broke down, because his whole world had broken down. All of a sudden he was in a state of anxiety that he couldn't cross a street. He was absolutely lost for a few months. By some wonderful chance we found an analyst [Erwin Hirsch], very understanding. After three or four months with this man, maybe a winter, he started to compose. During his analysis all of a sudden he couldn't sit down any more. He was like this, frozen. It is amazing, because it was a feeling of what was going to happen, this tragic situation [Parkinson's]. The immobilization was something that fascinated him in his creative work, how to stop the flow. He said whenever he had an idea there were already a dozen voices encroaching on the idea and stopping it. This was the curse of his talent, or maybe the creative situation with this wealth of antagonistic forces always fighting each other and blocking each other. He created that extraordinary density of struggling in his music.

On an empty lot there was a little Arab shepherd playing a little homemade flute with a flock of sheep around, and Stefan standing there transfixed. When he came back with three Hebrew songs, oh,

the utter playfulness and gracefulness, a playful tinkling, charming, erotic, it was a revelation. The spirit of the country was revealed to him. He said he was inspired on a Saturday afternoon, the little Yemenite girls were parading there on the main street of Jerusalem, with the bracelets tinkling.

After a few months something happened to him, a return. He told me a series of extraordinary visions. Stefan was a person who when he closed his eyes had hallucinations. Somehow the deeps woke up. He told me some of his fantasies—some genie came back and took him—and it was amazing to watch. It didn't happen right away, but gradually he started to work with the utmost intensity on his way of handling twelve tones. He brought the *Passacaglia* to me page by page. He was involved in every fibre, physically in agony. He always said he felt like a child-bearing woman. You know the material he was using in these four pieces [*Four Pieces on Basic Rows*], and they are deeply involved. In Jerusalem Wolpe and I played it on two pianos. We played it on various occasions in our home. Here I played the first performance as a solo piece.

He actually was very happy there, unbelievably happy. Nature, and sounds, the friendships, and the whole atmosphere. What he needed was this Israeli nature. Actually his best work he did in Black Mountain because he was in the woods. A natural being he is. There is something in him of the utmost naivete, in a sense of primordial feeling for natural growth. Everything else was on the surface. He didn't have any kind of need to read a newspaper or a novel. He never did, he couldn't, he didn't know what for. Only poetry or music and painting he understood very deeply. These he knew. There he heard the grass grow. Everything else was on a superficial level. Stefan was a utopian character. He was sure everything would end in a utopia, in a beautiful world in which nothing could go wrong. He found in the Prophets these prophecies of a world in which there would be only joy, and where the lamb would graze with the lion. He didn't really belong to this world of politics. For him only situations in which the utopian world, poetry, these were real to him. He didn't have a sense of reality, of Jewishness, or not-Jewishness. The Prophets appealed to him, and they were his flesh and blood.

We stepped on the soil of this country in Ellis Island in some waiting room. We looked around for Josef [Marx], and he wasn't there. We went through those hours of investigation, and finally we were released, and Josef was on the street waiting for us because he had forgotten to get himself a pass. The moment [Stefan] left Israel he fell in love with Israel and he couldn't get over the fact that he had left it. He was in mourning for Israel, for the people, the sun, every single student, every single aroma. He met Sara Halevy, a little Yemenite girl who had made a name for herself as a performer of folksongs. She was for him Israel, and he fell in love with her madly, and four weeks later he simply left me alone, not looking for a job or anything, just trying to find something of Israel, or life with her, and not coming home for days. He started to lose his days in some absolutely hopeless plans of having a cabaret with her, a nightclub, European style, a little theater. From then on it was one infatuation after another.

We saw Aaron Copland quite often. He felt very close to Copland's early compositions. When Stefan took the *Passacaglia* to Steuermann, he handed it to him on his knees. Steuermann looked at it and said, "But Stefan this is a score not a piano piece. Write it as a piano piece and then I can read it." Then Stefan was mad, and he took a whole year to redo it. Then he gave one copy to me and one to Steuermann. I played it to him two weeks later and he changed the dedication. I learned it in ten days on a wretched piano in Fort Clyde, Maine, at the private summer school run by Henriette Michelson, a piano teacher at Juilliard.

A year later [1941] Stefan had a tremendous experience of the tide. The *Toccata* was conceived to give back to nature its shudder—*Der Natur ihr eigene Schauder entgegenhalten* [to counter Nature with its own shudder]. He had to break the model of the serial music he wrote in the *Passacaglia*. The *Toccata* was a new way of going on. When I left him, he stopped writing for the piano. His last piano piece was *Enactments* for David Tudor, Jack Maxin, and me, but we never played it.

He loved Scriabin. I played it for him. He melted away when I played this music, any kind of music,

great music. I have some Satie of his. You know he was a dada. He had a fine sense for Satie. He adored Debussy. We analyzed with him *Les pas sur la neige*. He was crazy about the *Etudes* and the *Preludes*. He admired Brecht very much, and in his heart he was still with the Communists, because at this time he didn't know what to make of the trials. We suspected, there was much to be seen, but he was much too naive to see. Only when they started to restrict their own composers, Prokofiev, or Shostakovich, he was *indignant*. At this time Zhdanov tried to teach Prokofiev how to compose. [Stefan] was *furious* when it came to light what Zhdanov had done. He said, "I hope that Prokofiev is going to give him a piece of his mind." I said, "You are not going to see that." It was the other way around. Then he was silent about the whole thing. He just ignored it.

This time I started having my two boys, Jack Maxin and David Tudor. They were my constant companions and my great love. I had two boys to raise, and they saw in Stefan the father figure. They needed Stefan very much, and they came every week to New York. I couldn't deprive them of Stefan. It was my feeling of responsibility for these boys which kept me together [with him] for a few more years.

I played the [*Studies on Basic Rows*] again in Boston at a recital in 1975, where I played only Wolpe, the first all-Wolpe program of piano music in history. I've had such a vivid sense of Stefan these last few days. It comes over me in waves. Like Monday, something woke me very early, and I couldn't get the heat on here, and I got very depressed. I had such feeling of his presence, which I've really had the last two or three days, terribly intensely again. A kind of violence sort of comes over me like that. I feel I can't survive without him. It's only half true. I will survive, but in one sense it is sort of true. You don't know what it was like to live with, what a fortifying presence, in spite of everything around. I knew I'd be despairing if he were alive, as ill as he would be now. I would be in misery. But in another way even at the edge of that misery there was something, some marvellous thing that's so irreplaceable. The basic optimism of the man is what I miss in everybody around me. Nobody has it. The shining view of man, of his possibility. It's so tremendous, and so lacking everywhere. It was so unbroken in him actually. And to live with it, it really helped you live in spite of everything. I miss the loving quality of his nature, that constant kind of warmth.

Irma Schoenberg (1902–84) was born in Romania. She studied the piano and Dalcroze eurythmics in Berlin. In 1934 she immigrated to Palestine with Wolpe and they were married in Jerusalem. She concertized actively and taught at the Palestine Conservatoire. From 1939 to 1942 she taught at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia and became active as a concert artist. She was on the faculty of Swarthmore College from 1943 and then in the 1970s at the New England Conservatory of Music. In 1949 she married the mathematician Hans Rademacher. Her gifts as a performer and as a teacher brought her many outstanding students, including Jacob Maxin, David Tudor, and Garrick Ohlsson. Interview: AC, New York City, 22 November 1979.

Katharina Wolpe

I met Stefan in about 1948, when he came to Europe for the first time after the war. I remember being terribly excited about meeting my father, and I had a very clear picture of what he was going to be. But to my eyes he was an American gentleman of middle age, and I was very disappointed. He was delighted about everything that proved that I was now a grown-up, as he didn't like children. He liked the fact that I was a pianist, and he wanted me to be more interested in contemporary music than I was at that time. This came to me much later in England. I had finished studying, and I was very much looking around for some concerts. Somebody said go and see the head of the ICA concerts, he might be able to give you something. I went to see him, and the next day he rang me up and said could I play half the Schoenberg piano works and the Webern *Variations* for a concert in five weeks. And I said, oh yes, of course. So I sat down and learned

all this day and night and got very interested in what great composers these people in fact are.

Stefan told me that Scriabin was one of his major early influences, his first great idol. Stefan hated his formal studies at the Berliner Hochschule, and thought them tedious, boring, sterile, dead. So what did he do? He went to Busoni and to the Bauhaus to study form. Then he went to Webern. Who would have thought of studying with Webern and Busoni? You studied with Webern or Busoni, not both, because they are such diametrically opposed influences. Imagine being able to handle that as a young man! If you go into music with such fanatical depth and energy, it's going to take a long time to put all of this together. Stefan wasn't an intellectual composer, but he was a man of infinite variety, and his music shows this. Therefore, you can't at first identify a Wolpe phrase just like that. One can recognize Stravinsky through five closed doors, but it's not so easy to do this with Wolpe. Speaking as a performer, one's got to remember that although it may be difficult, and very concentrated, his music is above all beautiful.

I think the most significant contribution of the avant-garde music of the second half of the century is its rhythmical liberation, but being liberated isn't necessarily a piece of cake. Stefan has an enormously close relationship with this rhythmical liberation, where rhythm at one fraction of a second expresses exactly this and nothing else, and at the next exactly something else. The idea of things happening simultaneously that are exactly opposite is deeply interesting in Stefan's music.

He would have loved to have written music that was popular, not because he wanted particularly to be so successful, but because he so terribly wanted to communicate with workers and ordinary people. It was a terrible pain for him that he couldn't do this, that his thought processes were in fact simply of a different nature. He wrote a wonderful piece called *Street Music*, one of my favorite pieces of his—very funny, volatile, absolutely wonderful piece for speaker, singer, and lots of instruments. Great fun for educated musicians, but street music it isn't. So I said, what do you mean "street music"? And he said, well, when they will know more, then they will like it. He really had this idea that people will grow into it.

The *Form* pieces are enigmatic. *Forms* II and III don't exist. The scheme was that there would be two piano pieces and some chamber pieces, but his horrible illness intervened. He could no longer walk, and you would have thought he was extinguished as a person. He said to me once, very slowly, "I'm so tired of composing from memory." His writing was so slow, but his mind was still very quick, and he had to remember what he had thought and then painfully write it down. Nevertheless he wrote this absolutely marvelous piece [*Form IV*].

Born in Vienna and residing in London, Katharina Wolpe has performed a wide range of piano repertoire, including music of the twentieth century, especially the Second Viennese school. In 1991 she recorded the complete piano music of Schoenberg (Symposium 1107), and has issued further CDs of Beethoven, Iain Hamilton, Schubert, and Wolpe. Excerpted from the transcript of a symposium conducted in Jerusalem by David Bloch, 26 June 1983.

Charles Wuorinen

I've always regarded Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Varèse as the ground figures that established the language that I inherited. Then, immediately after, the three people who were seniors in my youth were always Carter and Wolpe and Babbitt. From Babbitt, I absorbed the whole range of systematic possibilities of the twelve-tone system; from Carter, ideas about morphology, musical time, other kinds of macro-structural things; and from Wolpe, something not quite so specific in one respect, but more specific in another. In the specific case, certain gestures of mine (I always thought) come directly out of gestures of his, especially the confined, rapid, equal-note articulations of restricted pitch-class collections, so typical of him; on the other hand, his extraordinary spontaneity and intuitive rightness. An awful lot of what he did structurally, the connections he made, were really intuitively found rather than systematically generated. Before I encountered his music, I had always had a kind of undis-

ciplined Ivesian inclination to throw everything into the pot. What I found in Wolpe along these lines was a somehow more credible or organizable way of introducing cross-systematic, or cross-stylistic elements and gestures on a ground of solidity.

At that time, and earlier in the 1950s, we were all receiving the latest masterpieces from the postwar European avant garde. I always had a good deal of trouble with that music. What struck me about most of these composers was that they didn't seem to know what to do with notes. They were so busy avoiding on ideological grounds references to musical shapes of the past on the one hand, and on the other, developing algorithmic, and later aleatoric, means of pitch generation, and so busy refuting Schoenberg, that after a few years of this I think they lost their ears in a fundamental way and really couldn't tell the difference between a good note and a bad one. On the other hand, one found in Wolpe someone who although in many respects (at least locally) treated musical continuity in somewhat similar ways as these guys did, nevertheless the notes were always wonderful. Discovering that in him took care of the European question for me. Being very young at the time I would always wonder, maybe there's something in these great geniuses who are so heavily promoted that I'm too stupid to get. But I realized after I came across Wolpe and saw how it works with someone who knows which notes to put down that in fact there wasn't anything to get. It wasn't my fault, it was their fault.

Take the Boulez *Sonatine* and the Wolpe *Piece in Two Parts for Flute and Piano*. Harvey Sollberger and I played both of them. The Boulez always struck me as a kind of ideological statement, a piece of almost utilitarian music, the use here being to promote a fiercely anti-traditionalist point of view which is achieved by a lot of banging around, much of it physically impossible. That of course immediately achieves a kind of modern sound. For all that, it's really very conventional. It's impossible to balance and is a complete failure as an instrumental combination. My attitudes along these lines were not made more positive when we played it once for Boulez, who said that it didn't really matter if we got a sixteenth or so off in some of the fast places. I had busted my behind to learn the stupid thing as well as I could, and I was now being told that it didn't matter whether I played it right or not. Now the second movement of the Wolpe piece also has some really impossible things in it. But that is a piece whose mission it is to make music. Like all his work, it embodies very high artistic aspirations without an extra-musical agenda. One sees a composer whose total concern is making the best possible work of art that he can. So whatever the problems in the Wolpe are in performance, say, or the occasional miscalculation about balance, they are not epidemic the way they are in the Boulez. Whatever those difficulties may be, they are minor compared to the overall worth of the work. If I had to make a comparative judgment of the two pieces, there would be no question of superiority of the Wolpe: it is infinitely superior in every way.

Coming back to the question of pitch relations, two things are very clear. There really is no special reason except for very general statistical ones why any of the notes in the Boulez have to be what they are. There are the characteristic tritone predominance, and fourth plus tritone sonorities, which I think of as characteristically French, but that's about it. But I would never dignify pitch relations there or indeed in any of his music for that matter with a phrase like "structural harmony." But in the Wolpe *Flute Piece* you get right away at the beginning an absolutely clear statement of the tetrachord that's going to govern the whole work. When the second tetrachord is introduced, you get a very simple statement of that. All that pitch-relational parsimony, especially at the beginning, is balanced with an extremely fluid and flexible rhythmic, articulative, and registral behavior that makes a perfect balance. In other words, the complexity of the registral scatter and the rhythmic physiognomy of those opening pages is a perfect complement to the restricted pitch-class content. That's very classic and very traditional at the same time as being new to the time when the piece was composed. That is the kind of progressivism or avant gardism that I have always admired in music, not the kind that says we have to invent music again every time we write a new piece.

The first performance of Wolpe's *In Two Parts for*

Six Players, which I suspect was not very good but was very enthusiastic, made a very deep impression on me. Certainly that was the first ensemble music of his I had ever heard. All of the characteristics I've just mentioned struck me very forcibly all at once in that piece, so much so that I gravitated very strongly in that direction when I wrote my *Trio* of 1962. My two-part *Symphony* and *The Golden Dance* are directly reflective of Wolpe's two-part form. I found the pattern very congenial. The idea of a gradual build-up of activity, intensity, gestural density is something that goes very naturally in that kind of shape, because it is not dependent on gross contrasts the way the classic three- or four-movement setups may be. There's a kind of prelude and fugue sense to the form, which means that one establishes the environment and deals with it at a somewhat slower pace in the first part than in the second, although there can be a lot of cross-cutting between them. One of the pieces I wrote shortly after getting involved with his music, which I would not have undertaken without his influence, is my *Flute Concerto* (1964), which has a shape that unwinds from a high density at the beginning, in an irregular way. I doubt that I would have taken that kind of shape-idea for the span of a whole movement if I hadn't seen how successful Wolpe was in controlling variable density. But it's not something that you would think of as derived from Wolpe just from hearing it.

In 1961 Charles Wuorinen (b. 1938) co-founded the Group For Contemporary Music, and in 1970 became the youngest composer to win the Pulitzer Prize in music. He has taught at Columbia University, the Manhattan School of Music, and Rutgers University. Telephone interview: AC, New York City, 25 January 1998.

Eli Yarden

I came to Wolpe with my compositions for an interview in the fall of '39. He said, "Well, you're a composer, therefore you have to be in the composition class. But you don't know harmony, and you don't know this, so you have to be in all the classes." I remember asking him if he thought I had any originality, because I was very shaky. He looked at me and just shouted in horror, "Originality is a bourgeois virtue!" For a year I had four hours a week and one individual hour with Wolpe. [. . .]

One of the most striking things about him, which influenced me strongly, was the idea of teaching as a compositional activity, that teaching provided the same kind of creative or expressive needs as composition. He didn't seem to think that it was very important to compose if he were teaching. And I think that this influenced me also, the whole idea of composing in front of other people as a way of being in the world as a musician and as a creative process. His idea of teaching composition was to continue to inspire the student until he finds inspiration within his own being, within himself. So the idea of being an external source of inspiration was completely congenial to him.

Every once in a while he would mention Hindemith as a teacher and very negatively dismiss his way of setting up rules and of thinking that musicianship is something you study prior to composing. At the same time he respected his music enough to make us study *Mathis der Maler* for orchestration. Wolpe's idea is that anybody can compose and that composing is the way you grow as a musician. I am only now realizing the extent to which I was influenced by him in this respect. [. . .]

Everything composed in front of the students was accompanied by the most remarkable use of language and metaphor, so the idea was being expressed that every musical element stood for some event, that something special was happening. Metaphor was dragged in from any place under the sun, from cooking, from sex, from traffic control, from warfare. You name it, everything got dragged in. This metaphorical imagination was important because it was not an exercise. I remember fellow students being very, very confused and disturbed, as very few in the harmony class were able to understand what he was doing. According to the group of people I hung out with, to think about music in that way was almost as bad as program notes. At the same time we were all turned on. His idea was to disturb, and I think that was the main thing that happened. Before that, music was notes on paper,

it was almost fruitless, there was absolutely no connection with anything. But for me Wolpe's way of doing it was immediate, alive, and never trivial. It wasn't a description of something, it was going on there. It was an insistence that music was part of life. [. . .]

In the individual lessons, if he saw a student confining himself to one mode, he would make suggestions. "Why are you using only these notes? You have these, and these, and consider this as a possibility." He was very, very anxious not to distinguish systems of tonal organizations, because that would represent some kind of ideological commitment. So he talked about the twelve-tone system, but never taught it. He talked about tonality and tonal organization, but he wouldn't teach it. He wouldn't teach rules of cadence or anything like that. [. . .]

He was very open with students. When he left the classroom, his idea was to take a bunch of students and go and sit some place where the real thinking takes place. I remember sitting around in cafés afterwards with him and other students who would just enjoy being around him. Wolpe started talking about how he had written worker songs when he was in Israel, and how people sang his songs in the street. He was preaching his whole ideology of the relationship of music to ordinary lived life, and that to write songs that workers would sing in the streets was more important than writing symphonies. He said that he came into conflict with the authorities in the Histadrut, the main workers union, and they wouldn't publish his works, but that people sang them in the streets anyhow.

After the sessions with Wolpe I did nothing but think music to the point of not sleeping for two nights in a row. After graduating from high school, I decided to try the University of Pennsylvania for a while. When I sat down in my first harmony class, I said, "But when do I do composition?" The harmony exercises were trivial and meaningless. After I explained my background, the chairman of the music department said, "Well, we're not going to recognize the work you did with some refugee composer." That was the last straw. My family moved to California, and that was the end of my studies with Wolpe.

Eli Yarden studied with Wolpe at the Settlement Music School in Philadelphia in 1939. Wolpe's influence is apparent in most of his work, as well as in his politics and in his dedication to teaching. Interview: AC, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 8 March 1986.