AVERY FISHER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Polly Kahn

Columbia Center for Oral History

Columbia University

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# PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Polly Kahn conducted by Gerry Albarelli on April 4, 2019. This interview is part of the Avery Fisher Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

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| Time | Session #1 |
| Interviewee: Polly Kahn | Location: City, Two-Letter State |
| Interviewer: Gerry Albarelli | Date: April 4, 2019 |

Albarelli: Okay, great. This is Gerry Albarelli interviewing Polly Kahn. Today is April 4th, 2019. So, if you would start by saying you name and tell me a little bit about your early life. Where and when you were born, a little bit about your early life.

Kahn: [00:00:30] Sure. Okay, my name is Polly Kahn. It's great to meet you and thank you for this rich opening question. So, I was born in 1947 in New Jersey. So, I'm seventy-one at the moment. And our conversation is focusing on something that happened in my late twenties or the early part of my career. So, I think if I try to quickly trace the story of how I became who I was in my career and my passions. Though I was born in New Jersey, my father was part of the post-war reconstruction of Europe. And we moved to Germany when I was four-and-a-half. And I lived there until I was almost fifteen. And my parents put me in a German school, which was founded by German resistance workers. And I was the only American in the school in this entire childhood. Of course, as a child, I thought this was perfectly normal. [laughs] And it wasn't until I came back to the [United] States that I began to realize how unusual it was.

And the reason that I think it's kind of seminal to my experience is that music, and classical music was part and parcel of our lives as children—and so, the school was, though a tiny walled city outside of Heidelberg, which were the remains of Charlemagne's castle. That was the campus of this school. And it had a little chapel and every Monday, the entire school gathered

together and sang a [Johann Sebastian] Bach cantata to start the week. And when you had what we would now call play dates and kids visited with one another, you played your latest piano piece for one another. We all had recorders and played recorder together on Saturday at midday because school went half a day on Saturday. We would go into Heidelberg and at one o'clock, we would go to the opera. And that was the equivalent of the kiddy matinee in the States.

So, I grew up—my parents adored the arts. We went to lots of, all kinds of performances of dance and music and spent every weekend in museums and traveling all over Europe. I remember it as every weekend, like get in the car on Friday and zoom to Italy and zoom to France and it was a shock when I came back to the States. My father was an appointee in the [President John F.] Kennedy administration, the Department of Defense. We moved to suburban Washington, D.C. I went to this big coed American high school. I had sixteen kids whom I grew up with every year in my class in Germany. There were, you know, I don't know, two thousand kids in this school. It was the first time I experienced anti-Semitism that I knew I experienced. And nobody seemed to care at all about classical music, about the arts. And I think that that set me on my pathway, that this fundamental question of can the arts mean something to everyone and shouldn't everyone have access to the arts really began to form in a very nascent way in high school. And to your story about, you know, reaching out at the age of twelve, I remember at the age of fifteen writing a social studies paper on: is the United States culturally deprived? It places me in time. But I wrote to many people and I remember Erich Leinsdorf, who was the music director of the Boston Symphony at the time, was the only one who wrote back. I can't remember his answer but, you know.

So, if I look back, I think that started me on my pathway. I had played piano always. Not happily. And anyway, I went to Antioch College where I was a music major. I think the previous music major, eight or ten years before me, had been Coretta Scott King. Was very active in music for fun, but anyway, I would say during that time I became obsessed that I needed to play the cello in my life, something that I didn't start until after I finished college and that's a kind of parallel pathway. And I'm now returned as a cello player after not having played for thirty-two years and playing—being passionately involved as a chamber music player now at this point in my life.

Albarelli: Let me just ask—

Kahn: Yes, yes.

Albarelli: —interrupt for one second.

Kahn: Yes, yes.

Albarelli: I hate to interrupt—

Kahn: Please.

Albarelli: —but I would love to hear a little bit more about your mother and father and maybe a little bit more about the school in Germany.

Kahn: Okay.

Albarelli: Because you said resistance, right?

Kahn: Yes.

Albarelli: It sounds like such an interesting story.

Kahn: [00:05:59] Sure, you know, I'm happy to pause on that. So, well, I guess I should say that my parents have both died within the last two-and-a-half years at age one hundred and one hundred-and-two. So, they lived incredible long lives, you know? The story of their journey toward the end of their life is, you know, a more, you know, complicated one as, you know, for all of us. But anyway, they lived long lives. My father was born in 1915, my mother in 1916. Both, you know, children of immigrants. My father's mother was born in the States. So, she was—you know, he was already, I guess, second generation, you know, at that point. The others came from either Russia or Poland. Everybody got here early. I think one of them came in 1888. These are grandparents. Another came escaping the czar in 1907. And my paternal grandfather, I think, had a dry goods store. My maternal grandfather had a textile factory and I was actually—had a kind of amazing kind of realization when I heard Julia Wolfe's oratorial at the New York Philharmonic last month, six weeks ago, *"Fire in my mouth."* I don't know if you read about it, Gerry, but it was inspired by the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. And a very, very, very powerful piece. And as I was experiencing that piece, I thought: oh, my gosh, my grandfather's

factory, it was exactly at this time and in the Lower East Side. I mean, exactly 1920. I mean, this was all happening, you know, at the time of labor unrest, women's suffrage, all happening at the same time. And in the way that always happens as you get older, you begin to put things together and realize, oh, my gosh, this happened as this was happening and I never realized it. So, it was a fantastic, you know, kind of flood of realization and memory.

My parents grew up through the [Great] Depression. My mother's family poorer than my father's. I think my father's family achieved much more middle-class stability but they were both the first to go to college. My father, particularly, very, very brilliant. Very brilliant man. And he was a G.I. [General Issue] in World War II and served in the South Pacific. He was very pacifist in his leanings. My grandfather was a very ardent socialist. My father's first name was Eugene after Eugene V. [Victor] Debs. Very oddly, my middle name is Eugene. Very strange for a girl, right? But also, not only named after my father but Eugene V. Debs. So, you know, just very activist. My mother told amazing stories about my father in World War II when they were sent for training to the Deep South. And my father—thrown off a bus and beaten up because he—my mother and father got on a bus and my father stood up for a pregnant African American woman to offer her his seat and, you know, was thrown off the bus and beaten up. And they were placed by the Army in families to, you know, just to stay because I guess for married couples, maybe they didn't have barracks for them. I don't really know. But it became clear the first night that the family were KKK [Ku Klux Klan] members and they packed their suitcases in the night and went, you know.

So, I would say, you know, there's a long tradition of a sensibility around social justice and, you know, so anyway, after World War II, my father got out of the Army. He went briefly to work for my maternal grandfather in the textile business, which he loathed. And he was recalled into the Army during the Korean War. Those were the circumstances that sent him then to Germany and the minute he got there, he was released from the Army, became a civilian, and was offered a job in the Department of Defense as part of the postwar thing—I'm sure, much to my mother's horror. He probably said to her, "Guess what? We're going to get to live in Europe. And by the way, it's Germany." I'm sure—you know, there were a lot of things that actually never really got spoken about. I can remember my mother talking about how frightened she was. But I could never remember a conversation—was, like, how could we wind up in Germany in 1951? How is this possible? But there we were.

So, that's that story. This school, the name of the school was the Elisabeth von Thadden-Schule, T-H-A-D-D-E-N. And if you Google the von Thadden name, I believe—you're going to have to test my memory, I could be wrong. I believe it was the brother of the woman who founded this school, he was involved in the bomb plot against [Adolf] Hitler. And so, you know, in this way of complicated history, indeed in the German army but then became part of that effort. And she was an underground worker, resistance worker. But, you know, once you have the V-O-N in front of your name, they obviously came from an aristocratic and such. Many of my—you know, as I said, I was the only American, I was the only Jew in the school. It meant nothing to me. I mean, I had just absolutely no experience of that being anything at all. My being American meant that obviously we—our lifestyle was a little bit different, you know? I can remember, you know, the kids, it was very important that we washed our feet every day. And the teachers

supervised that we washed our feet. But that also implied that most of my schoolmates got a bath on Saturday nights where, you know, we had a bath every day. My schoolmates had—you're right, you're triggering memories I haven't thought about. They always looked bulkier than I looked and it's because they had hand-knit underwear: undershirts and underpants and socks from thick wool that was old sweaters that had been taken apart. You know, food was different and kids loved to come to my house. You know, popcorn was a big thing. Peanut butter was a big—you know, these were sort of unknown foods. Corn was only for cows at that point, [laughter] so it was this strange, exotic treat.

But, I think is going to bring the end of this memory: many of my classmates were born in German prisoner of war camps or displaced persons camps and probably got out, you know, as infants. They may not—you know, I don't remember these as conversations with my classmates but what my parents told me, right? One thing that was a very strong memory is my parents were roughly the same age. My classmates, the fathers were very—I perceived as very old, meaning they were in their fifties or sixties. And the mothers were very young. So, when I was six, they were twenty-four because that whole other generation had been wiped out. And many of the fathers were gruesomely disfigured, you know? Gruesome, having been tortured and such. And so, I remember being quite frightened if the fathers were home when you went over to visit. But, you know, you think of this disparity of the young women marrying, you know, men who were, probably many of them, forty years older than they were and my classmates were the children, you know? So, anyway, does that give you—

Albarelli: I'd say, yes.

Kahn: [00:15:38]—that gives you—

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [00:15:39]—you know, gives you something. So—

Albarelli: And one other thing.

Kahn: Yes, yes, yes.

Albarelli: Sorry, but—

Kahn: Yes.

Albarelli: —you know, it's really worth going down these avenues, I think. You said anti-Semitism when you came to the U.S. What was your experience of that?

Kahn: [00:15:56] Well, in an interesting twist of fate, if you Google Arlington, Virginia, where we were and we lived because my father worked at the Pentagon so my parents chose to move there because it was ten minutes away from the Pentagon. It was also the headquarters of the American Nazi Party – George Lincoln Rockwell. You might know the name, right? The founder of the American Nazi Party. The main route, highway through Arlington was and still is Lee

Highway. Interesting – my parents' house was kind off that and the American Nazi Party was a big bannered building as I recall, right there on Lee Highway as you pass by. And my very first day at this high school, there was a note in my desk that said, you know, "We will kill you, kike." I had no idea what it meant. And I was terrified by the "we will kill you" part but I didn't know what—you know, and when I went home and I showed my parents—and they freaked out. And I remember begging them—I was so scared of everything in this place, the presence of boys let alone, you know, this larger sort of cosmic—you know, and the size and confusion of this place. I begged them, "Just let it go. Let it go."

But that kind of set the tenure of, you know, and I would say reinforced isolation, you know? It was, you know, these counties which are now—you know, Northern Virginia is a great spot of liberalism now, you know? This was still the old South in those days. It certainly triggered my activism in the Civil Rights Movement. I was very, very involved. And, you know, you're taking me so far away from this. But, you know, I was at the March on Washington. I was at President Kennedy's assassination. I was standing outside the cathedral, literally across the street. I saw everything, you know? I saw Charles de Gaulle partnered with Haile Selassie, if you can imagine the world's tallest [laughter] and the world's smallest, like, you know, as these pairs of heads of state walked in and out of the cathedral, you know? Interestingly, my best friend in ninth grade, which was my first year in Arlington, was Lyn Glenn, the daughter of John Glenn, and I was actually in their home the day of his space orbit and friendly with the family. She was one of the few people that, you know, I became friends with. And I think we were in the drama club together or something. And they were neighbors up the street and such. So, you know, there were definitely moments of opportunity, you know, that—as always, you know, were evident and

there and present for me because of that particular time in history, my own experience and being kind of catapulted into activism and being in that particular community at that particular time from 1961 to 1965. And then, I went to college.

So, there's that, okay. Okay? I would say, in college, Antioch College, extremely socially progressive school, probably the most progressive college in the country, which was the reason I wanted to go. And it had a curriculum that went five years—I graduated in four but it was a five-year cycle where you had an academic semester that was compressed into twelve weeks. And then, you had a work placement somewhere in the country and then you went back to school and worked. No breaks, every twelve weeks for five years. You know, you switched. And when I had these work placements, I found—and they gave you great freedom to pursue what you wanted to do. I mean, they could help you place—help you find a placement or you could create one for yourself. And I wound up, and I would say I was not a particularly—thinking about this as I went into it—but a pattern quickly emerged and that is I would do one placement that was around social justice, one placement that was around the arts. One placement around social justice and one placement around the arts, examples being I—and we were kids, obviously, you know? We were young kids. It wasn't that we had elevated jobs.

But I worked in a school called the North Carolina Advancement School, which was the—it was started at the time that the governor started the North Carolina School of the Arts, the governor's school for academically gifted kids. And this was a school for underachieving eighth grade boys because research was showing if you don't capture particularly young men at that time that it was a great predictor of not making it through high school. And it was the first publicly integrated

boarding environment in the South. So, kids came in for an intensive three-month period and kids from, you know, from the state. And so, I think I ran the library and I taught French. You know, you got various assignments, which were, what [phonetic]. something. I ran the music club. And, of course, we were immediately targets for the KKK and it was absolutely terrifying. But, you know, it was 1966, '67, you know, heart of the Civil Rights Movement and that's where I wanted to be and the work I wanted to do.

And the next job – I went and I was working in the planning for the Kennedy Center before it opened, in the couple of years before it opened. And so, I kept pinging back and forth. And I think it reflected this theme in my life of how do you harmonize a passion for, you know, not—an opportunity for everyone to be engaged with the arts as a matter of birthright, as a matter of social equity without being able to articulate it in that way. I would say that—so, it was my—I had great passion, particularly for chamber music. I was determined to start playing the cello as soon as I could afford it. I was determined to get to New York the minute I graduated. As I said, I finished in four years but I had finished almost all my course work by the fourth year. So, I came to New York at that point and I worked by day in the research library at the Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library. I think I made fifty-six dollars a week, [laughter] you know, and I was the clerk who was cataloguing new acquisitions in the research section. I wasn't that busy, so I was able to do my senior paper in one of the great music research libraries in the world. I ushered at the Grace Rainey Rogers [Auditorium] at the Met [Metropolitan] Museum [of Art] every night so I could hear concerts for free and I got paid three dollars an hour for that. And that paid for my first cello lessons. So, I then—I think we can start to fast forward after that. My dream was to

work for the Marlboro Music Festival because of my love for chamber music and I showed up at their door and said, "What can I do for you?" I—

Albarelli: When would that have been [unclear]

Kahn: [00:24:38] That would have been 1969. So, I graduated in 1970 and—from college, I got [phonetic]—so, they hired me, I went up for the summer. I had the really great honor of being Mischa Schneider's assistant, the cellist of the Budapest Quartet. And he had suffered a stroke and I was, you know, his driver and I lived in his kind of suite of apartments and, you know, was a companion, made meals for him, went everywhere with him, which meant that, you know, I sat night after night at dinners at the home of Rudolf Serkin, you know, sitting all night long with Mischa and his brother, Sasha Schneider, also, the violinist of the Budapest Quartet as they had talked about memories of their childhood. I mean, it was just, you know, in the most modest possible, you know, first job. You know, just one of the great privileges of my life, you know? And he was an incredibly wonderful man and very wise and it was great.

So, that was a summer job but Frank Solomon, the administrator of Marlboro Music Festival, amazingly still so to this day, very kindly offered me a job and I then went to work in the New York offices of the Marlboro Music Festival, which also was a management agency, also ran the New School concerts. And that was really my first opportunity to, I would say, run something, I would say. I was the administrator of the New School concerts, also. I don't know if you're aware of them, but founded by émigrés from, you know, from Europe in the '30s. Peoples' Symphony Concerts, you know, the creation of opportunities to hear music at very, very low cost for

workers. Exists to this day. Both of these programs still exist to this day. And many of the great artists who have been through Marlboro, to this day, they do a concern in—either at the New School or what was it? Washington Irving High School. And then, they do the program at Grace Rainey Rogers or Alice Tully Hall, you know, in the middle of the week and they—but that tradition still continues.

So, I worked for Marlboro and then went up a second season and I worked in the administration the second season at Marlboro. My association with Marlboro, deep, deep, deep ties to this day. I still try to go every summer and have, through my family and my own chamber music playing, wound up close to Marlboro almost every year of my life. Pablo Casals was in residence at Marlboro during the—he was ninety-six years old, towards the end of his life. And at the end of my second season at Marlboro, he asked me to join the administration, if you will, of the Casals Festival, which was a festival that had, you know, happened during his life in Puerto Rico and brought together the greatest musicians in the world for, as I recall, maybe three weeks of concerts. I could be wrong. But it was a summer festival. But, you know, not only artists, Marlboro artists, but you would get the principle players from every great orchestra coming together to play in an orchestra under Casals who, by the way, was quite a terrible conductor. But, you know, one wanted to be in his aura. So, I had the great honor to be in his presence and his life in the last year or so of his life. And, you know, did the planning in New York with the New York team, then went to Puerto Rico and we went on tour to Venezuela. So, that was amazing. And then I came back to New York. Then, I got hired at Lincoln Center. So, this was 1972. So, I was twenty-three, twenty-four years old.

Albarelli: So, now you should slow down.

Kahn: [00:29:33] Yes. [laughter] Yes, because now we're—

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [00:29:35]—kind of entering—am I—

Albarelli: Take me through that.

Kahn: [00:29:37] And I feel like I took so much time on this. If this is—

Albarelli: No, no, no. No, no, it's wonderful.

Kahn: [00:29:41]—this—okay.

Albarelli: It's wonderful. It's exactly—yes.

Kahn: [00:29:42] It's what you want.

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [00:29:43] Okay, okay, I—here I have a lag in memory because I cannot actually remember, like, what got me to meet Mark Schubart. Mark Schubart had been a dean at Julliard when William Schuman was the first head of Lincoln Center. And during those very early years, Mark began to think about how did we create access to the arts? And given all of the traditional ways in, you know, what we now characterize as, you know, the white, Western European arts, you know, all of the kind of traditional patriarchal, hierarchical, long, slow training in any of these art forms—ballet, you know, opera, instrumental music, et cetera—what were also the barriers that were being created that made it difficult for people to find their way, including the way we talked about the arts, you know? That how could you listen to [Ludwig van] Beethoven if you didn't know about Beethoven rather than having an experience that [phonetic] said, "Wow, what is this? I want to know more." And he was beginning to think about that. He was working on a book, which became a book called *The Hunting of the Squiggle*.

And for some reason I cannot explain, because we all look back and we think, my gosh, you know, we were such idiots. How did anybody ever see anything in us? You know? And we didn't know anything. I got an interview with him and he hired me. And there—he had become—I forgot this step. He had become the head of education for Lincoln Center. So, he had moved from Julliard to be the first head of whatever this education would be, which nobody knew what it was going to be. When William Schuman started, you know, opened Lincoln Center, one of the opening things was an enterprise called the Lincoln Center International Choral Festival. And the idea was you would identity the best university-level choruses from around the world, bring them together. Each of them would do a tour, a national tour, come together for a festival at Lincoln Center and also do a concert at the Kennedy Center, which, of course, was also brand

new, pretty close to brand new at that time. There was a man called Jim Bjorge, B-J-O-R-G-E who was running that and who knows why, I got hired as the assistant director of the Lincoln Center International Choral Festival. And it existed—it was not a successful enterprise for them. I mean, honestly, I don't know. Maybe it had two years or three years' worth of, you know, of life. But the man that was running it, this Jim Bjorge, would go all over the world, you know, auditioning choruses.

And so, anyway, I organized these simultaneous national tours. I mean, I developed an awful lot of operational chops, you know, during all of these experiences. And anyway, at the end of one, I would say, one cycle or only one year that I was involved, Lincoln Center closed it down. I think it probably was a huge money drain and, you know, I was not—obviously, I was not senior enough in the administration to have been part of the reflection on whether it was a success or not. I was, you know, the operational person, so I really can only speculate. But it clearly was not returning to them what they might have wished and they closed it down. And at the same time, you know, Mark was starting these conversations about what would become the Lincoln Center Institute and this was right in my wheelhouse of passion. And so, he had brought onboard June Dunbar, who had been in the dance division at Julliard, also very interested in this. And I just started poking my nose in and offering my two cents. And somehow, they did not kick me out the door. I don't know why, but they invited me into the conversation.

And so, I became part of this founding team that became the Lincoln Center Institute, which consisted of the three of us and a fourth administrator that came in and some founding teaching artists, you know, all of whom remain my best friends to this day. And all went on to become

education directors of—one remains to this day at Manhattan Theater Club. The other remains to this day at Symphony Space. One is retired from—as director of education for the Joyce Theater. I can describe what happened to me after I left, which I will try to do in five minutes. But in any case, we spent two years talking. And how interesting, I'm sure, in this day and age, one would never be given two years to produce absolutely nothing. But we sat and we talked. What would look like to completely reinvent arts education in this country? What would it look like to actually create a new profession, which is now a ubiquitous—teaching artistry of people who are fine artists in their own right who have equal skills and passion in teaching about and communicating about an art experience, but without reference to technical or historical knowledge as the baseline? I think that's' the easiest way to describe it.

So, we spent two years, we launched the first summer session. We announced the creation of the Lincoln Center Institute. It is now known as Lincoln Center Education, you know? It's in its forty-second year or something. And I would say, though it has, it's a whole other discussion, but I think maybe not claimed as much space in the public imagination as it might have. Its influence is felt in every arts organization in the country and really internationally. And that is, you know, that, number one, the teaching of arts education, you know, here's where Beethoven lived and died and here are fifty-five Italian terms and, you know, is really nobody—I'm saying independent of a conservatory focus, right, is not the way we think about approaching the arts, the notion of kind of flyby arts education, you know? One big concert that's going to change our lives. It may have done that to some of us but for ninety-nine percent of the population, you know, there are other ways to enter an arts experience that are richer and deeper and more personal and more meaningful. And the fact that, you know, there are tens of thousands of

teaching artists in the world, there are master's programs in teaching artistry, et cetera. So, it's a program that has had a huge influence. Let me just finish up with the rest of my career and then I'll flip back to get, finally, to Avery Fisher.

Albarelli: Yes, yes, no, I mean, that's fine. But, in fact, I was going to say continue to slow down and tell me, because this is still part of your story, you know, you had just come—so, you had this job, this wonderful job in New York. And the year would have been—

Kahn: [00:38:35] I was there from '72 to '82.

Albarelli: So, you were living in New York in 1972. What was it like there? And then, maybe tell me a couple stories about Mark to sort of illustrate his character and, you know, what was New York like in the—what are your memories of New York in the '70s, early '70s?

Kahn: [00:38:52] Well, you know, we look back and, you know, you kind of retrofit your history, right? So, well, I can say my first year that I moved to New York, the year when I was working at the research library and before I'd, you know, officially graduated from college, I was living with a friend in Brooklyn. But then, I quickly moved to New York and I had a sublet on 64th Street, next to the old Picholine, now, like, Atlantic Grill, yes, and—for which, I don't know, I paid about seventy-five dollars, you know? And it was, you know, it was bad. [laughter] So, there was nothing. You know, I mean, we all know the story of the—you know, the urban—Robert Moses, as you were saying before we started talking and sort of the Lincoln Center as an urban renewal effort in those days. And, you know, the displacement of just so many people,

which still has reverberations to this day, right, you know, of—I think Aaron Copland's home was razed during the creation for—because I think he lived on the lower end, maybe upper fifties or something, growing up in Hell's Kitchen and such.

What are some stories? I can—there was a place that we used to go for lunch across the street in what is now the Mormon, the Latter-day Saints building. So, is that One Lincoln Center Plaza or something? I think maybe, you'd have to correct me, maybe that was the first, like, high-rise that went up as part of that. But in that spot was this old place called Wursts [phonetic], as in German sausages. And it was a German, old German place: these grizzled waiters that had been there forever. And I remember that they had a rack of black jackets that were shiny, old, never dry cleaned or over dry cleaned or whatever, one in every size. And if a guy walked in there and didn't have a jacket, "Jacket!" And so—[laughter] and they would look at you and pull one of these, you know, rags off and put on—so, like, you'd have—you know, because, I mean, people were still wearing jackets and ties to work and stuff. But if you didn't, people were in these, you know. But we would have lunch there then. And the only place that's still left, which many of us still, you know, like twice a year like to go have a grilled cheese sandwich there is a place which we call Old John's, which is an old coffee shop that was actually, I think, maybe a couple of doors down and it moved. It is now, like, on 67th Street. I think it's a block over from Julliard, right off of Eleventh Avenue, right there. And it is a total old-style coffee shop. I mean, really—but if you go in there, full of Julliard students always, but full of many musicians of a certain era who remember when they were Julliard students and they want to go have a chocolate milkshake at Old John's. That's kind of the last vestige.

But comments about Mark: he was [an] extremely urbane guy. I kind of think of him when I think of New York before my day, of the '40s and '50s and of—like the early days of *The New Yorker* and the Algonquin [Hotel]. And so, he wasn't part of that but I think of him in that way. He had been a journalist. There was a newspaper, I can't remember the name of it. Doesn't exist anymore and went away a long time ago. It may have gone away—I don't want to misspeak. It could have gone away in the early '50s, I don't really know. But he was an arts journalist. He was, you know, always very, very elegant. He was a gay man at a time that it—he was very closeted. And it always was this kind of a source of pain, I think, for people who cared—who were around him because it just—it felt as though it was a real source of pain and stress in his life and less—I mean, no one can speak for anybody else but it was, like, oh, you know? We were all so closely connected with one another that the need to keep things so private and unspoken felt unnecessary, you know? We were, we all—we spent a lot of time together, you know? We knew significant people in one another's lives, including in Mark's life. It wasn't that we were closed off from people in his life but there was just a piece of him that he needed to keep very, very quiet.

To this day—you know when I was saying, Gerry, that particularly the group, the founding group of teaching artists, that we all remain really one another's closest friends, we were all in our twenties at the time. And that was, you know, we were kids, you know? And we grew up together and grew up with one another. And so, when we get together, though everyone had their frustrations with Lincoln Center Institute and myself included as the years went on and everyone moved on and did other things, we all always talk about how important, not only in terms of our personal connection, but what an extraordinary time of intellectual opportunity that created. And,

you know, we all felt we were just crackling, you know? We were just crackling with possibility and nothing was closed down.

And Mark, we kind of describe a little bit as the Wizard of Oz. He was not somebody who would roll up his sleeves and enter in that game. So, if you would think of a group of people who would be sitting around, literally, for two years talking to each other and throwing ideas up and trying ideas, he would be kind of the person who was sitting there listening. And he would go off and raise money for, you know, that—I mean, he was raising money for this at a time that nobody knew what it was. So, he did heroic work in explaining a total abstraction. And, you know, we were all too young and naïve to understand or fully appreciate what he was doing. So, there was a sense that without Mark, none of this would have happened. He created the possibility for this to happen. But his intense private nature, which played itself out in the way that I just described, but also a little bit intellectually made you never quite sure what Mark was thinking, except that he allowed all of this stuff to happen so that he must have given blessing to it.

But he used to particularly frustrate the artists. I mean, I think, you know, I was a growing administrator. I think I had an intuitive, probably, maybe better sense than they did of the complexity of what it would be to start something and raise money for it and make the case for it and navigate politically through, you know, the board and all of that. Even though I may not have been able to describe it, I think I understood, you know, and from a strategic point of view that his job was different than our job. But he remained this kind of mysterious, mercurial, private figure to the end. But I think, in the same way that I certainly have an incredible sense of gratitude to all the people who gave me opportunity along the way, nobody more so than Mark

for seeing whatever spark he did in me and these others, you know, for putting up with probably our impatience, and I think really loving us, you know? I think there was a great deal of unspoken just kind of pride and love in what we had created, you know? And when we—you know, and we brought in—I mean, sitting here in Columbia campus, you know, very early on, Maxine Greene, who was, you know, a professor of philosophy at Teachers College, author of the seminal books on arts, on aesthetic education. And, you know, she became my and others' great mentors, and you'll—you know, and she—very generous towards us in her acknowledgements in a couple of her books and such, so that the intellectual capital that was around the table in these early years of having, you know, a Maxine Greene offering this kind of philosophical frame, these crackling artists, you know, around the table thinking of completely new approaches to works of art, and then, you know, June Dunbar and I, we're negotiating with John Houseman. I mean, to your, you know, your memories of—your work in the theater, of—in the first summer, we asked them to put together a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for us and one of the kind of artifacts of the Institute for many years was that you would see a work of art twice. You would see it once, you would mine your impressions, and then you would work, work, work, work, work and come back and see it again and see the transformation, you know? So, I will just share with you, and we have to go on, the cast, which was from the actors' company in these early years of Julliard: Robin Williams was Puck, Diane [Venora]—Verone, Veronae, Verone—was—what am I thinking? Wait, let me say who was in—Christopher—Superman—

Albarelli: Reeve.

Kahn: [00:50:45] Chris Reeves

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [00:50:46]—was in it. William Hurt was in it. I mean, it was an unbelievable cast. It was just, you know, the level of talent in those early years that Julliard was putting together, and we had access to all of that, you know? I put together a [Igor] Stravinsky *Soldier's Tale* with musicians of the Philharmonic that I produced. You know, I mean we were just able to dip in. Anyway, it was an incredibly rich time. Mark died way too young, you know? Had a heart attack on the street, died very quickly. And I think, you know, I think as we look back, I think Mark was a little bit of a man of mystery but he lit small flames that grew. And I have to assume that on the Avery Fisher program, but he was also a person of, I would say—my instinct is to say of great modesty but I'm not—I think he spoke so little about himself that it—I'm not sure that he was—you know, I think he was a person of very healthy ego. I think he knew what he had achieved. But he would never lay claim to it. He would be the person who would be standing in the back like this, watching, you know? He wouldn't need to be the person that greeted you at the door. Somebody else could do it. And I think he was just always much more comfortable making things happen behind the scenes.

But I think he had a lot more influence in the early days at Lincoln Center than one would think. I'm going—and this is speculation and others, including Mary Lou [Falcone], would probably know better than I. But the person who was heading Lincoln Center at the time and certainly in the formation of the Avery Fisher program, John Mazzola, he was a business guy. I don't

remember what his—I think insurance, maybe, something. I don't remember him as a man of tremendous subtlety or refinement or that—somebody who expressed, in my experience, any real passion for the arts. Like, he was the guy who made the business run. And, you know, the whole history of Lincoln Center and its relation to the constituents to this day remains an unbelievably complex one where most of the constituents would prefer Lincoln Center to truly be the landlords managing the sixteen acres and being sure there's, you know, no cracks in the travertine as opposed to being in a competitive artistic space. That's always been a tremendous source of tension and I suspect that Mazzola was—he was effective in raising money and managing the place but he wasn't a person of vision for the organi—you know, and that Mark was much more, as maybe the second in that hierarchy and in influence, more the person that represented the, you know, an artistic ambition for the place. That's speculation. Again, I wasn't high enough in the hierarchy. But let me just quickly finish the remaining forty years of my career— [laughs]

Albarelli: Sure. Sure, sure.

Kahn: [00:54:50]—and then come back to this.

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [00:54:53] So, I was there from '72 to '82. My daughter was born in December of '81. I wound up taking a little bit of time off during this time. We also started the Avery Fisher program, obviously, we're going to go to. When I left, I spent the next four years, when my

daughter was little, consulting. I ran a—Off-Off Broadway theater company called Practical Cats. I managed a modern dance company, can't even remember the name of it, and I was a consultant to a Channel 13 series on creativity for young children. I can't remember the name of it; I could find it. It was hosted by Penn [Jillette] and [Raymond] Teller, who were at the very, very beginning of their careers. So, I was the music consultant on that. And then, in 1986, I was hired by the very iconic Omus Hirschbein at the 92nd Street Y to be director of education for the Tisch Center for the Arts at the 92nd Street Y. I was there for seven years, until 1993. I kind of had taken everything I had learned at the Lincoln Center Institute. I was champing at the bit to start creating my own programs that were definitely, definitely, deeply, deeply influenced by the work of the Lincoln Center Institute but began to take them in a little bit of different direction.

I was then recruited to the New York Philharmonic by Deborah Borda when she came in for her first tenure. And I became director of education from 1993 to 2000. When she left to run the Los Angeles Philharmonic, I went—during those years, I was becoming increasingly, though I was obviously—I was running education for the New York Philharmonic, I was increasingly obsessed with orchestras, what—why they were so weirdly dysfunctional and—with arts organizations. My interests were growing beyond arts and education. And always has included arts and education but it was around organizational structure, leadership, dysfunction, how boards functioned, how executive directors—you know, I was watching executive directors kind of repeat what seemed to me the same dysfunctional patterns over and over again throughout their careers or in different orchestras and such. And so, I began talking to the League of American Orchestras, the national service organization for all American orchestras. I think I

have always had a habit of kind of poking my nose in and asking questions and observing things sort of beyond what might be my particular box.

I was then hired by them as vice president of this national service organization, overseeing all eight hundred American orchestras to develop all of their professional development work. So, training work for, again, for boards, for execs, for music directors, musicians—not around performance skills but around leadership work. I ran the national conference for the industry for fifteen years, built all kinds of fellowship programs. Also, oversaw education and built several national awards, competitive awards program that were efforts to kind of raise the standards of arts education and community focus for American orchestras. And I did that for fourteen years. And so, when I left that—it'll be five years this summer—then I opened my own consulting practice, PK Orchestra Solutions, PK Arts Solutions. It's extremely boutique. It's just me and an occasional second and I take on one, two clients at a time around—I do executive search, executive coaching, organizational assessment and program redesign, strategic planning. I did a whole community reorganization plan for the Philadelphia orchestra. I'm doing one right now for the New York Philharmonic. And, you know, when I said I was passionate about the cello, I worked hard at it for ten years. When my daughter was born and my career was taking off, I had to stop. I started the day I stepped down from my full-time life five years ago and, you know, I play as much chamber music as I possibly can and in as many places as I can. So, that's the story. [laughter]

Albarelli: That's great.

Kahn: [01:00:17] So, now let's go to my sort of—

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [01:00:20]—paltry memories of—so, here's what I recall. So, I was at Lincoln Center. You know, now I was—you know, by then, I mean, I guess, if I'm correct, the first year was 1976 for the Avery Fisher artist awards, is that correct?

Albarelli: Mm-hmm.

Kahn: [01:00:46] Am I right? Okay. So, it either would have been late 1975 or either in 1976 but I had been at Lincoln Center at this point, you know, for four years. I can't remember exactly what title I had because I had various titles, you know, as I was there. But I was either already at that point assistant director of the Lincoln Center Institute or about to become it. maybe some title below that, I can't remember. And Mark and Mary Lou, whom I was meeting for the first time at that point—and Mary Lou and I are friends to this day. It's a wonderful thing about our world, you know? It's a small enough world that we all remain deeply connected. And John Mazzola—so, I was called in. "What's going on?" And they told me that there was this idea to start a new awards program that would, you know, honor the best American artists and would I be interested in becoming the administrator for the program? And I remember I was very shocked and I was very honored. This kind of took me back to my roots with the Marlboro Music Festival. You know, everything winds up tying together, and the Casals Festival, because through both of those programs, you know, I had been just soaked in all of the next generation of

great artists coming forward as well as having the opportunity to be, you know, in some close connection with—among the greatest artists of our time.

So, you know, that, I was very, very honored and humbled to be asked but it also pulled this together because in this new work that I was doing, you know, it was more tangentially engaged with artists. And so, I said I would be, you know, just so honored and I would do whatever I could within my portfolio to make sure that I, you know, could accommodate, you know, that it wouldn't be a problem. And then, they sent me to meet Avery for the first time and that was just, you know, love at first sight. I mean, I went over to his apartment. I remember that we talked for a really long time and this was a very, very wonderful man and you'll probably—I don't know how deep you are into your interviews but I would be amazed if everyone with whom you speak doesn't pause to say what a remarkable, gentle, beautiful human being he was. And I don't know if you ever went to Avery Fisher Hall when it was still named, I mean, when it was still named Avery—and the picture of him was on—and you saw those extraordinary eyes. He had these just very—there was a gentleness about him. You know, here was a guy who had been, obviously, a wildly successful businessman. You know, a pioneer, you know, a huge pioneer in the audio world and I think probably one could say to this day we all benefit from, you know, his work in the creation of stereo sound and his fiddling, you know, with early high fidelity systems and stereo systems.

And so, he obviously was in—a very, very, very successful and very astute businessman. But this isn't what radiated from him when you met him, you know? You—I mean, we've all met in our world through our boards and, you know, people who have—you know, and met with

tremendous, tremendous success in their professional lives and can radiate that kind of success and power that has come from that success. I only say that because he was almost the antithesis of that. He just had this gentleness about him and what radiated was his love of music and musicians. That was like almost nothing else. Like, you might almost meet this person and not know there was anything else about him except that he was, like—I guess in today's parlance, you would call him a superfan of superfans, right? But it wasn't an idolatry that was around, "Oh, I want to be with" or around the most famous. It was like the artistry of, you know, of these great artists, and particularly, you know, this emerging generation that, you know, was largely defined by Marlboro, of artists that came through, you know? So, like, the first artist in the prize in the first year were Murray Perahia and Richard Goode, as I recall. And they were, you know, the—I mean, I wouldn't say that they were an alpha and omega because their artistic styles are so different, not at all. But they were, like, they were the two emerging great artists in my first and second year at Marlboro.

You know, so it's like, you know, these artists that were coming into maturity, late twenties, early thirties, even, you know, a little—some a little younger but who were just—they were the amazing generation that were going to step into the legacy that those of us of a certain generation, you know, revered in the Rudolf Serkins and the [Arthur] Rubensteins and [Sviatoslav] Richter and just—Emil Gilels, you know? These great—I'm all, these are all—happen to be pianists. But, you know, representing a certain generation and the feeling that these were the artists—Manny [Emanuel] Ax, a little bit younger at that point, you know, who were stepping in. You know, Yo-Yo [Ma], who, you know, was going to—stepping in to Casals—you know, it was just this incredible time. And so, I just remember sitting in his apartment and

talking about music and musicians. I mean, I guess it was an interview, [laughs] you know? It was an interview, because clearly this program was a very intimate program. It remains so to this day. And so, clearly, you know, they were putting together a team, Mary Lou, me, in the early years, you know, we were about it. I mean, we were it. Was the only staff, so to speak who were going to work on this. And clearly, you know, needed to be people that Avery felt a resonance with.

Albarelli: Say a little bit more about that first meeting in terms of—I mean, even describe the apartment where he lived and, you know—

Kahn: Oh, gosh.

Albarelli: —try to think of something [unclear]

Kahn: [01:08:46] Well, I remember it as a Park Avenue apartment. You know, here's where I could be so wrong. So, if somebody else says something else, go with them. [laughs] I realize this isn't a deposition, so, no, I—

Albarelli: Oh, no, yes [phonetic], that's fine.

Kahn: [01:08:59]—there are no bad consequences if I have my facts wrong. But I certainly remember and certainly was on the East Side, upper eighties, I think. Park Avenue, I think. And, you know, I remember it as—I mean, I guess I would say I have been in so many of those

apartments over the years and they're not necessarily modern, you know? So, I guess one would say, okay, a Park Avenue apartment probably quite big. But, you know, kind of the old chintz, like what you would remember as elegant of the '50s. That's what I remember, you know? But comfortable. I mean, I only remember being in the living room. And his wife Janet [Fisher], always very, very gracious. And, you know, his kids were a lot younger than—I can share another story from years later when his son opened a gelato store. [laughter] Shall I tell that story?

Albarelli: Yes, yes.

Kahn: [01:10:15] So, this—fast forward. This is such a silly—a silly anecdote. But I think maybe it's indicative of Avery's influence. I guess that's why I'm remembering it. So, his son, Chip, I don't remember how old his kids were. Probably in their twenties at this point. I don't remember. But fast forward. So, my daughter went to Hunter [College]. So, that's at 94th and Lexington and Park, okay. So, when she was in—that's a program that starts in seventh grade. So, I know this was when she was in seventh grade. There was a gelato store that had just opened around the corner. But you didn't have to buy anything in it. And they were really nice. I remember her telling us, they were such—and we could sit in the store and have our lunch there and they were really nice and we didn't have to buy anything. So, I thought, well, you know, usually when somebody has a store, you should buy something because they—you know, and she said, "Well, I have penny candy." I said, "Okay, buy a Tootsie Roll. If you're not—you know, it's just something."

And then, it turned out it was owned by Chip Fisher and I don't think it lasted very long. [laughter] And there always, like, this group of twelve-year-olds, you know, and they didn't want to eat in the cafeteria and they discovered this place around the corner that these really nice people said, "Sure! Come on in and have your lunch, it's fine!" And none of them had any money or thought—or were allowed to buy ice cream every day or whatever. Anyway, I always enjoyed that story because I thought, you know, that would make a lot of sense to Avery. [laughs] And, on the other hand, you know, you'd think he was probably raising his children to know how to make a profit. But, on the other hand, he was so soft-hearted. Anyway, and the other thing I would say was we had this wonderful conversation and I went home and I went to work the next day and said, "Great, we're going to make this happen." And I got home from work that night and there was a big box. And it was a Fisher stereo system that he had sent over. And I was mortified. And I thought I can't accept this. It's not right. I can't accept this. And I remember I agonized over this, you know? And I knew he meant it in such a sweet way. And probably now, I would call and would say, "Thank you so much, this—you know, I mean, you didn't need to do this. So nice," like somebody sending you, you know, flowers or a box of candy the next day. But I said I can't accept it, I have to return it. And I returned it and he was so gracious about it. And, again, you know, it was an act of a twenty-six-year-old or whatever. But now, I think, oh, I would handle it in a different way. But I thought it didn't feel—you know, that he shouldn't—and he was sweet enough to say, "No problem" and everything.

But anyway, so here I have to say my memory is going to disappoint and I can't quite figure out why. You know, there was great secrecy about the deliberations. And what I can't remember is if the secrecy extended to my not being in some of the conversations. You know, the committee—

so, the committee, obviously Avery was very important on the committee. Mark was on the committee. I suspect that Mark was probably chair of the committee and the others were probably the heads of—you know, it was probably Nick Webster, who was the head of the New York Philharmonic at the time, Joe [Joseph] Volpe, the head of the Metropolitan Opera. I was—you know, who was it representing the New York City Ballet? I don't remember who the heads of the other constituencies are. I remember Martin Segal, who was the chair of the board of Lincoln Center at the time, being very involved. And it's very possible that he stepped in because, again, John Mazzola, the head of Lincoln Center, was just—he wouldn't have had anything to say about this. But Marty Segal was—I think he and Avery were friends and very much peers. Also, an extremely sweet, sweet, sweet, gentle man and utterly gaga over art, the arts, and artists. So, I remember him as being very active.

But I don't—you know, this was—both of these awards, the prize and the career grants, I mean, I think part of what was revolutionary about this was, you know, it wasn't an open competition. So, you didn't apply for this. And it was people listening to you and, you know, sending notes to their friends. So, in a way, it was a little bit of a private—it was a private club, you know? I do not remember, because—and I also am not—am no expert in the world of sort of arts competitions. But I think that the—we, either of us, could Google this. I think that the Gilmore piano prize is another competition where there's no competition, you know? Where there's a network saying who is the greatest emerging young pianist and all of a sudden you win this amazing, huge, rich prize. Most competitions are highly public and juried. And there's, you know, is the sort of Van Cliburn [International Piano Competition] model, right? This was the anti-Cliburn model. And I can't remember, was it the first to do it that way? That would be in—I

mean, I realize I'm not supposed to ask you questions, but let me ask it rhetorically. I'm sure it was among the first or the fewest—it would be interesting to know if it was.

But, and here's where, when I was panicking before this and saying I don't remember anything about process, of wondering if this really was a series of, like, people going up to Marlboro in the summer, people, you know, saying—reaching out to a few—I mean, at that point, there were still—there were fewer managers than there are now and there were kingmakers, you know? It wasn't Sol Hurok; it was sort of the next generation. But there were these few iconic people, you know? "So, tell me, who's the next hot this and that", and they—and that it went through these pipelines of a series of phone calls and business lunches. And many of these people would, you know, they would go to Marlboro in the summer, they would—the Chamber Music Society was picking up a lot of the young players from Marlboro who weren't part of the original musician core, though Ani Kavafian, who was an early winner, was one of their people.

So, I can't speak to people sitting in a room, how the process happened. I only remember: here's who the winners were. So, I think I must have been kept out of that. And, you know, Mary Lou and I would have to compare notes because she, you know—I know it was Mark who also introduced her to Avery and she also had this feeling of a sort of bond with Avery from the beginning. But she was very, very powerful from the beginning on managing the decisions as I—that is my impression.

Albarelli: Tell—talk more about Mary Lou. I mean, you—

Kahn: Okay.

Albarelli: —were together at the very beginning.

Kahn: [01:20:04] So, Mary Lou has always had an extremely storied legacy in the arts world. Mary Lou and I are very close to the same age and, as I said, you know, have known each other and been friends over all of these years. I always thought Mary Lou was way older than I was because somehow, she had this kind of—she seemed to have this—both maturity, this—wisdom, this kind of wisdom, inside track, the confidence of kind of the kingmakers in the industry from the beginning. Why that was and how she got both that reputation and, in fact that—I really don't know. And I suspect that it's a little bit of a kind of a parallel version of my story—was, like, how was it that I fell into these relations with—you know, how was it that I was with Pablo Casals and I was twenty-two-and-a-half years old? Or, you know, with the Budapest String Quartet when my whole high school life, it was, like, the Budapest String Quartet! Are they real? You know, like, how—it just happened and set me up for all of these other relationships that I've enjoyed to this day.

And I suspect that with Mary Lou, there's probably some similar story that, you know, somebody thought she was amazing who was in some position to, say, help me out. But she has always been known as a kind of kingmaker. She has always had this utter boutique PR [public relations] firm from the beginning. She has never been—like, Herbert Breslin was another storied person of—and had—like an artists' manager where—I mean, I hate the terminology where they would say, "I have a big stable of artists," you know? And it was really in the old days—

Albarelli: Yes.

Kahn: [01:22:23]—the way people talked about their artists, you know? "Have I got a violinist for you!" And, oh, so-and-so is sick. "Well, let me look in my stable. Oh, here, I've got another one who can play the same piece," you know? I mean, really, just the language that was used. And so, Herb Breslin is another one that I remember in the press world. He represented many, many artists. I mean, his—the most famous of whom was [Luciano] Pavarotti and—but Mary Lou never had that kind of business. She always had one or two or a small number of people. And she only had people whom she deeply, deeply, deeply believed in. And then, you know, she built this iconography around their gifts. Renée Fleming would be a primary example and they parted ways a few years ago, just as—I think they had maybe a different perspective on how to manage as Renée Fleming was kind of—you know, she's in a long process of sunsetting her—she stopped singing opera but still active onstage in classical music. But she's also doing Broadway and other things. I think maybe they had a different view of how to manage that. But they had a very, very long relationship.

So, not only just how Renée Fleming has managed her career, the kind of persona that she represents. Not only making the most of her beauty and her fashion sense but also that this is an incredibly smart person who has a great interest in, you know, the brain in the arts and is hosting conferences for the NIH [National Institutes of Health] on brain health and, you know, thing—she—Riccardo Muti. She believed in Jaap van Zweden long before Jaap van Zweden was the music director of the New York Philharmonic. She's always just done a few things incredibly,

incredibly well. And she created this kind of shining star around the Avery Fisher brand, if you will, so that from the beginning, it leapt in importance, I would say. There are other prizes that I would—I'm going to speculate. I'm going to speculate here but, you know, it's not an unreasonable speculation. The [Walter] Naumburg prize is a very—was for many years. Less so now but was for many years very, very highly regarded prize in the music world for artists that were important. Not necessarily the superstar, you know, competition flashy winner but the people of real substance, like Marlboro players, like these players. And I think it developed its reputation because of the artists who won it over the years, not from day one. But as you looked and thought, oh, look at the who the Naumburg winners are, there's a consistent profile. It's not just that one year somebody won it and next year somebody else won it and you—they don't seem to have anything in common because one is just a super flashy virtuoso and one is a deeply sensitive, thoughtful artist. No, no, no, they're all in this world of the deeply sensitive, thoughtful artist. You know, chamber players where you really wanted to pay attention—where with the Avery Fisher awards—and here's where I would intuit the kind of smarts that a Mary Lou represents—is by going with a Murray Perahia and a Richard Goode in the first year of the prize, they immediately claimed a highly visual place of great respect because for the cognoscenti of a certain type of artist, these two were the shining lights of the generation. Does that make sense?

Albarelli: Mm-hmm.

Kahn: [01:27:20] These were two artists—these two artists would never have won the Van Cliburn competition. They are the alpha and—they are the opposite of the flashy [Pyotr Ilyich] Tchaikovsky concerto player. If you've ever seen Richard Goode play, he's a very eccentric

performer. At the time, even more eccentric than he is now in that he mumbled all—he kept up a steady line of some verbiage the entire time he played. He was impossible to record. He's not a prepossessing looking person at all. He was a terrible dresser. You couldn't get him to wash his hair, you know? There was nothing glamorous about this guy. And then, he would play and—(sings melody) like that. He drove people crazy, I mean including everybody who loved him. And, you know, but he's a great, great artist, so—and he played [Wolfgang Amadeus] Mozart and he played chamber music and Murray Perahia, you know? I mean, look, they can play everything but he played Bach, he played [Frédéric] Chopin. He wasn't—neither of them had an overriding interest in new music.

So, it was a completely—you understand the picture I'm trying to paint—so, completely different type of artist. But for people who know and respect this world of musicians' musicians, let me put it that way, these were the best of the best. And they were young enough in their career that nobody was saying, "Why would you waste a prize on them?" But here's what I do think I remember. It was a very strong way to announce the presence of the Avery Fisher awards. But that feedback about: do these guys really need our help? Because what was behind Avery's wanting to honor these artists was help people at a certain point in their careers. So, the conversations about—are we pitching it at the right level? Because these people's careers are launched. They have high visibility. They're making a great living, you know? They don't need our whatever the award amount was at the time. But if we really want to help people at a more critical point, do we need to dial it back a little bit?

And so, I think it was the next year, if I remember correctly, that was the first year of the career grants that went to these four artists who were not at that same level. And so—and here's where, you know, I just don't have complete confidence that my memory is accurate. And to a certain degree, honestly, I'm retrofitting a logic to it. But I feel like I'm right. But I really love Mary Lou's affirmation that the memory is correct, right? That we did debrief afterwards. And I think it was an internal reflection. It is possible that I brought some of that to the table in just getting to know Avery better and hearing him talk about wanting to really provide critical help at a critical point in raising the question: "Well, I'm not sure these people need the help that you're describing, you know? And there [are] these other people where we can have a high degree of confidence that their careers are really going to take off but they're not household names yet and maybe they are still struggling a little bit." And so, it is interesting to me—I mean, I had to remind myself then who were those first winners? And, you know, none of them wound up actually having the highly visible careers, which is interesting. I would—I mean, Ani Kavafian went on to have, you know, to this day—very respectable chamber music career. But she was always a chamber music player. I don't know even to what degree she had much aspiration of a big solo career. She and her sister did a bunch of—that was also a violinist, did a bunch of stuff. But she was a better chamber music player. Heidi Lehwalder, a harp player, was—a harpist is never going to have a solo career. I have no idea. I have absolutely no idea where her career wound up. Ursula Oppens, who probably was older than any of them, including Murray and Richard at that time has always made her career around new music and does to this day a highly, highly respected—like, a pianist that nobody but musicians have ever heard of because she plays a very narrow—the most contemporary repertoire. She was never going to have—big public career but—you know? And Paul Schenly, I think his career went nowhere.

So, that's interesting because, I mean, if you look back on some of the other people, I would say, you know, I mean people have had pretty damn good careers. But, you know, and then it's interesting that we quickly settled into, well, let's do both, you know? Let's give the prize to honor people who are—acknowledge that it's more midcareer rather than early career, but people who—and I would say almost all the people who have won in the prize, they are—they're wonderful citizens of music. You know, there's something—gosh, I would so be loving to do this with Mary Lou and hear her perspective. I certainly don't remember any conversations that were around character. I don't remember, that that wasn't like an overt factor—and are these also nice people or good people or contributing people? But as I, you know, as I was sort of refreshing my memory, I would say it's—there's extraordinary good citizenship here. You know, I mean, Yo-Yo being, of course, the personification of an artist good citizen, you know? Manny Ax. I mean, more recently, like, Claire Chase, who won in 2017, the founder of ICE [International Contemporary Ensemble], this—a contemporary music consortium that's been enormously influential, both artistically—and they are trying to enfold a creative and a social mission at the same time. So, I think probably underneath it, you know, there's some feeling of kind of honoring Avery's legacy in this. So, that's about all I can say I can remember.

Albarelli: Oh, okay. That's just great and I'm going to put this on pause for a second.

[break in recording]

Kahn: [01:36:06] I wish I did. I mean, I guess the only thing that I could add to it would be secondhand memories. So, I assume you're going to interview Manny Ax. Is he on your list? Or am—I don't know if I'm not supposed to ask who others are. But are you going to interview any of the artists—

Albarelli: Yes, yes.

Kahn: [01:36:35] Okay, because, you know, I remember a—particularly Manny, who is just one of the most gracious human beings on the face of the Earth no matter what, but just—and we've been friendly just a little bit over the years—how wonderful Avery and Janet were to him and to other artists. And so, Manny is not the only artist to—you know, comes from a—extremely modest background. And immigrants from many countries as Yo-Yo's family was, living in New York by virtue of the children's gifts. And it's the children's gifts that got them all to this country. And then, kind of handed off from one to the other and scholarship to scholarship but very, very, very modest means and how generous Avery was. And just going over to his house to play. And I remember him saying he always had so much food, [laughter] which tells you something, you know? That it wasn't just cookies and tea, you know?

Albarelli: Right.

Kahn: [01:38:20] That he would, you know, that they would feed them. They would literally feed them and set up recitals for them in their home and I think in other homes, maybe, as a way of also being able to give them a fee and just give them—put some money in their pocket before

anything was happening for them. And, look, I mean, even if you took that dumb, embarrassing story that I shared of, you know, handing me a stereo the day after meeting, that maybe you could intuit from that, he was just an endlessly generous and kind person. And I suspect that there were many acts of private kindness from Avery and Janet to young, struggling artists along the way. And I know that, you know, as artists are making their way, one of the skills that they have to develop is they have to learn how to make their way with board members, with people of wealth and in a different, perhaps, social strata that they're not comfortable with but are part of moving their careers along. And I know Avery was never experienced as "other" by them, you know? Was never experienced as duty or—

Albarelli: Right.

Kahn: [01:40:03] You know? He always embraced you as though you were family. And he had no pretense to him. And I think he made everyone feel very comfortable. And then, I think, you know, I think he would find artists with this just deep gratitude and reverence for him. He never called attention to himself. And, in fact—again, Mary Lou—I always feel hesitant to speak outside of what I feel I know, you know? And I want to say here's something I sense rather than that I know and I wish somebody else could—my impression was when Avery gave the eight-million-dollar gift to the hall, it was not Avery who said, "I want my name on the hall and my picture in the lobby," that others in his family were more insistent on that recognition. And it may have even been—who knows? It could even have been Lincoln Center that wanted that because, you know, putting a name on something is a good incentive to somebody else who says, "I want my name on that. I want my name on the bar, I want my name in the lady's room, I want

my name"—you know, you can leverage it. So, I don't know, it's—but I think it also doesn't feel like it would necessarily be—like, he would just give the fit and say, "Here. Here's the gift" and others would say, "Well, we need to do that." And that would be interesting. I don't think it was an issue around the career grant or the prize, though, having his name on it.

Albarelli: So, to be continued.

Kahn: Okay, great.

[END OF INTERVIEW]