Interview with Rabbi Harvey Tattelbaum and Judith Clurman
Music 194rs: Leonard Bernstein's Boston
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Professors Kay Kaufman Shelemay and Carol J. Oja
Minor editing by Elizabeth T. Craft

**Kara Furman (KF):**

We'd like to begin first by welcoming Rabbi Harvey Tattelbaum, and just thank you for being here and for participating in this class, it means a lot to us. And just to introduce the Rabbi to all of you in the class, a native of Boston, Rabbi Tattelbaum was educated at Boston Latin School. He also attended Mishkan Tefila's Hebrew school in Roxbury and was Bar Mitzvah-ed there. He graduated with honors from Harvard University and the Hebrew College of Boston simultaneously. He received a traveling fellowship from Hebrew College to study for a year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Upon his return to the U.S., he entered the New York School of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion from which he was ordained in 1960. He then served as a Navy Chaplain assigned to the Marines in Parris Island until 1962. His first congregation was Temple Shaaray Tefila in 1962 to 1965. And after a stint at the Village Temple, Rabbi Tattelbaum returned to Temple Shaaray Tefila as Senior Rabbi in 1971. Rabbi Tattelbaum served on CCAR's Chesed committee, the Rabbinical Mentoring Committee, the Committee on Soviet Jewry, the Program Committee and the Executive Board. And he has been president of the New York Association of Reform Rabbis, an HUC-JIR faculty member, and an Adjunct Professor of Jewish Studies at Marymount College. Among his many community and worldwide activities, he was instrumental in the formation of the Yorkville Common Pantry (of which the temple is a founder). He was sent by World Union for Progressive Judaism to the former Soviet Union to nurture congregations there. In July 2001, Rabbi Harvey Tattelbaum was appointed Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Shaaray Tefila after serving there for 33 years. After 44 years in the active Rabbinate, he is now retired. He has recently written an autobiographical work, which is not yet published, entitled *Tales of the Village Rabbi*, and is now working on another book, possibly titled, "Unholy Sensualities of the Holy Scripture." So, thank you very much for being here, and we all welcome you [applause]. So, we'll start off with an easy question, first we'd like to know where and when you were born.

**Rabbi Harvey Tattelbaum (RT):**

I was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1934, in the hospital that became a veterinary hospital for a while and then ceased to exist after a while, the Forest Hills Hospital; it's at the opposite end of Dorchester from where I lived.

**KF:**

I see, you lived in Dorchester, then, when you were growing up.

**RT:**

Yeah, I grew up in Dorchester.

**KF:**

I see, and you attended Mishkan Tefila's Hebrew school?

**RT:**

That's right.

**KF:**

What years did you attend?

**RT:**

That's a good question. Until I was graduated, which would have been at the age of fifteen, having started at about nine or ten. I started at a different Hebrew school, but that was chaos. My parents moved me over to Mishkan Tefila, and it was only a short walk across Franklin Park, about four miles, and I finished there where the teaching was really very, very good; it was a beautiful, beautiful synagogue.

**KF:**

We'd actually love to hear more about what you remember about the Hebrew school and the teachings there.

**RT:**

It was interesting, we came and had a class, I came and had a class, and then from grades, 3, 4, and 5, we had a man who was a refugee from the Holocaust, from Germany, and he loved our class. We adored him, and he kept us for three years in a row, until we all went on again to another rather ordinary Hebrew class in the sixth grade.

[5:00]

He was a math instructor here, I believe he's not alive anymore, but we were very, very close to him after those years. The principal was Dr. Levinson-Levi [*sp?*], I don't know why he had a double name, but I think the Levi was his pen name, but I never saw anything he wrote. But he ran a very good school. And, ah, it was just *the* congregation in the Dorchester-Roxbury area if you didn't want to go Orthodox. And they built a magnificent temple, or it seemed magnificent at the time, a Greek-like pantheon structure just overlooking Franklin Park, and, uh, I remember some very, very happy years. A great number of us went on from Hebrew school there to the Hebrew Teacher's College

high school and college, in addition to regular school, Boston Latin School, and Harvard, so they did a good job with us, I must say, we were inspired to dig in and go on.

**KF:**

Wonderful, what did you learn? Did you learn Hebrew?

**RT:**

Well, we didn't learn how to speak Hebrew, but we basically got trained for Bar Mitzvah, learned a lot of Bible Hebrew, and related subjects, and the community ambiance among the students was something that lasted for most of our lives, really.

**KF:**

Was it a large class, or - ?

**RT:**

We had a class of about twenty people, which was large for a Hebrew school in those days.

**KF:**

What about, was there any musical component of the Hebrew school?

**RT:**

We did some, the singing of some folk songs, but -

**KF:**

Do you recall any of those?

**RT:**

Probably a lot, uh, [sings and claps "*Torah tsivah lanu Mosheh...*"] and things like that, that were connected to the Jewish religious experience. "Moses commanded the Torah on Sinai," etcetera. But the atmosphere of music that dominated the, uh, Mishkan Tefila – very often I've said Mishkan Tefila but have replaced it with Shaaray Tefila, because I spent thirty-three years at Shaaray Tefila – was, what was done in the synagogue, the synagogue services, for a Conservative congregation, were amazing. It was like an opera. I mean, it had to be a left-wing Conservative congregation, and I mean this religiously, not politically, because if it was like an opera there must have been feminine voices so there was a mixed choir, there was an organ, and there was Professor Solomon Braslavsky, who dominated the musical scene. When you came to services you just sat

back and you listened, you weren't supposed to sing. And it was simply a beautiful experience for us. In addition to which, this was at the time of the founding of the state of Israel. And I'll never forget one morning, when I was walking to class, I had my Hebrew books in my arm, walking briskly and a car drove up and said, "Sonny, you going to Hebrew School?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Come, I'll give you a ride." I mean in those days it wasn't that dangerous to do that. "I'm going to Mishkan Tefila," and, I said, "That's where I'm going." And, instead of classes that day it was a deeply moving service because that day the provisional government of the Jewish people in what was then Palestine had proclaimed the Jewish state. And that's what the service was about. And we felt that we were part of it at the time, because we grew up in the years when there was no place for Jews to go, including the United States. The doors were closed everywhere. And the only place that said, "Come to me, I will house you, comfort you, keep you, shelter you" was the provisional government, Jewish government in Palestine, and that led to the founding of the State which was just a shot in the arm to the world Jewish community which had just gone through the horrors and the disaster, and the losses, and the degradation of the Holocaust. Uh, Hebrew school was great, I just loved it. I mean, my kids resent terribly when I say, "But I went to two schools" if they ever complain to me, but I try not to rub it in. I just plain enjoyed it; I loved the social aspect of it, I loved the scholarly aspect of it, and how that one teacher for those three years made a tremendous difference.

[10:00]

I didn't collect stamps, but some other members of the class did and he had all these foreign stamps just to hand out if you behaved yourself and did a good job. And so the memories of the Mishkan Tefila are very warm and very positive. They now are, like the rest of the Jewish community, moved to Newton, Brookline, or whatever it is. I haven't, I think I stepped into the new building, but it just didn't have the feel of the old Grecian Pantheon that existed just beyond the Roxbury border.

**KF:**

So when the synagogue moved, did your family continue to worship there? Or did they change...?

**RT:**

Well, by the time that I finished college, I was gone from Boston, and they were gone from the Dorchester area, like thousands upon thousands of Jewish families, they moved out to the suburbs and the exurbs of the Boston area. And no one really went on to Mishkan Tefila, they went to a synagogue in Wellesley and then Natick and so on.

**KF:**

Okay. You began to speak about Solomon Braslavsky, and I wonder if you have some more memories of him?

**RT:**

Yeah, I do [*laughs*]. He was a character. A real *artiste* of the Viennese extraction who brooked no opposition. It had to be his way. There was one time, I became a student rabbi in my first year at Hebrew Union College [*indiscernible*] of the Jewish community in Needham. Needham, Massachusetts. And either he was retired from Mishkan Tefila or he did this as a hobby, he wanted to help them set up their musical program. And the cantor was a man who had a lovely voice; he owned the local hardware store. And somehow, Braslavsky and his old, elitist, classical music ways just didn't quite fit, and I remember saying to him one time, "Wouldn't be lovely to include in the service the old time folk idiom *Avinu Malkenu*." Those of you who are Jewish I'm sure will recognize it [sings *Avinu Malkenu*]. And I found that without even teaching the congregation this tune and this folk idiom in New York, they all knew it, so it was just beautiful, the congregation would sing. So, I had suggested this to him, and his reaction was, "Ug. *Shmatas*. No." *Shmatas* means "rags," things that you don't want to wear. And that was the dichotomy of taste between Braslavsky and what really has become so strongly the folk idiom in most religious worship all through every possible denomination you can think of, Jewish and non-Jewish. He was a – and the association between him and that congregation in Needham didn't last too long, but he was an artist. He was a great artist. And I remember just being so *moved* by what he did with music at Mishkan Tefila.

**KF:**

Do you have memories of his relationship with Cantor Glickstein or even of Cantor Glickstein himself?

**RT:**

No. Only that I knew that no matter what went on on that pulpit was Braslavsky's commandeering.

**KF:**

I see. Um, you also mentioned the mixed choir that–

**RT:**

Incidentally, there was another cantor, a new cantor that came after Glickstein, Shelkan, Gregor Shelkan, who had a big voice, and it was hard for me to imagine his being dominated by Braslavsky, but by that time Braslavsky might have been out of the scene, I don't remember the dates exactly. . . yeah. I'm sorry.

**KF:**

Oh, not at all, um, you also mentioned the mixed choir, and I was wondering if you could elaborate on – on what they sang, how Braslavsky directed them.

**RT:**

Oh. I – I don't think I really can. I just remembered it was many, ah, many. . . harmonious aspects to it, many antiphonal passages between the cantor and the choir and the organ, I think even today it's rare for a Conservative congregation to have an organ.

[15:00]

Most Reform congregations do, if they are not surfeited with guitars and violins and even drums and so on. So it was very avant-garde in the Conservative movement at the time. And I would imagine that there were many who were on the right-wing end of Conservatism who would not have been happy at Mishkan Tefila because of that.

**KF:**

Were there concerts outside of services, or was that really the center of —

**RT:**

I don't recall. I was a kid, not really interested in, ah –you know, two schools and a little basketball... [*Laughs*]

**KF:**

We'd also like to know about Friday night services at Mishkan Tefila, um, we know that the Bernsteins attended these, and we wanted to know if you could describe what they were like in terms of liturgical content.

**RT:**

The only thing I can remember in a general sense was that the Friday night service was not *the* service. The Saturday morning service was the big service. *Shabbas* morning, Sabbath morning, you went to *shul* and that's where the big musical service was. Many, many Conservative congregations did not rejoice at the institution of the late Friday night service. There's something almost, ah, I'm not gonna say anti-Jewish, but anti-traditional procedure, you go to synagogue first, and then you go home for your *Shabbat* dinner and Friday night was home night, family night. So, I – I, the few times I went, it was not that kind of operatic feeling, it was just a service, let's get it over with, let's, let's be done and then go home.

**KF:**

Can you tell us, did you know Rabbi Rubenovitz and his wife?

**RT:**

I didn't, ah, he was on the pulpit for many years, he got very sickly toward the end and you could see that. But he was there on the pulpit for years until he died. Ah, I did not know him. My Rabbi there was Kazis. Israel J. Kazis who, I think, came long after the Bernsteins had been involved.

**KF:**

Do you remember anything of the Bernsteins then?

**RT:**

No. I did not know them. He was a good deal older than I was.

**KF:**

Okay. Um . . .

**Professor Kay Kaufman Shelemay (KKS):**

Can I ask a question? Was the Headmaster of the Hebrew school during the period that you were at the Mishkan Tefila school, was he of long-standing, might he have been there also as early as the Bernstein years?

**RT:**

It's possible, he was quite eminent in his field. He had a Ph.D., which was unusual for the head of a Hebrew school. Or, put it this way, he was known as Dr. Levinson-Levi [*sp?*], I assumed that it was a Ph.D. And he had been there for quite some time, but I don't know how long. I – I would guess that he was part of the [*indiscernible*] move which included the Bernstein family. But I don't know.

**KKS:**

And just to follow up on some of the memories of the musical traditions, were there any particular Passover songs or traditions that were held in common in the congregation Mishkan Tefila community that you happen to remember? Or was it really familial domestic traditions?

**RT:**

Anything that was folk idiom, to my understanding of it, was, was not really part of the musical presentation. It was all, let me use the word "high-class" and "high-achievement" music.

**KF:**

So, another one of our burning questions: can you talk about, you mentioned that Mishkan Tefila was kind of the eminent synagogue in the Dorchester-Roxbury area. Can you talk more about how it fit into the broader Jewish community?

**RT:**

If you wanted your kids to get a good Jewish education, that's where you turned. Uh, so we had people from – and the Dorchester/Roxbury area was *very* heavily Jewish. I lived on a small street off of Blue Hill Avenue. Blue Hill Avenue was *the* Jewish boulevard. Many people, including Jews referred to it as *Jew* Hill Avenue.

[20:00]

Because if you walked down Blue Hill Avenue you saw Zimmerman's Hosiery [?] and Berenboims Smoked Fish [?], and I mean, one Jewish store after another. And one little synagogue after another, from the very Orthodox observant Young Israel to dozens of other little synagogues, ah, and ah . . . The, the Reform temple of the Boston area was Temple Israel – to the Dorchester – ah, which was in Brookline – to the Dorchester/Roxbury Jewish community, Mishkan Tefila was the Temple Israel. Ah, it simply had a, as to what kind of social impact it had, I really couldn't say, I was really just a student in the Hebrew school.

**KF:**

You also spoke earlier about the founding of Israel and how that, the Zionist movement was such a strong influence in Mishkan Tefila. Were there more services or demonstrations? Did – how did Mishkan Tefila interact with–

**RT:**

Mishkan Tefila and the whole area was ardently Zionist. It was also ardently Democratic – the whole area was Ward Fourteen in Boston, which, I was told, was the largest Democratic ward in the country. Presidential candidates would lead their corteges along Blue Hill Avenue. In order to run for local office, you had to appear on Blue Hill Avenue at the Jewish deli called the G&G, I don't know what the G&G stood for, and there are certain things in Yiddish that it, people said it stood for, that I don't want to repeat it in a classroom as nice as this. [*Laughs*]

**KKS:**

We can take it.

**RT:**

Grease and *Greps*. *Greps* means to burp in Yiddish. Um, and there was one time that it was, I believe Roosevelt was running for his third term, I believe it was his third term, and the Republicans decided to have an entourage along Blue Hill Avenue. Now the teachers of my school, my elementary school, Robert Treat Paine school on Blue Hill Avenue, thought it would be a good idea to cancel classes for a while, have the whole student body out in front of the school to look at Wendell Willkie. Well, that was the biggest mistake they ever made, because when that entourage came to the school, the booing from the kids was phenomenal, it was overwhelming, and the teachers – in those days teachers had to be single, it was absolutely *de rigueur* that teachers had to be single, so there was a certain tremendous rigidity, and maybe even a certain pro-Republican atmosphere among them – they were mortified, and they were furious at us! And that was the last time they ever let us out for anything like that. [*Laughs*] I, so let me get back to your question, now. I wandered off...

**KF:**

Just, um, what, ah, how did the Mishkan Tefila, ah, were there more services, did they have concerts, were there demonstrations...

**RT:**

Not to my knowledge, I would imagine that they did, and you just got this ardent left of center, Democratic, pro-Zionist feeling of growing up in that whole area. It was just commonplace that this was where you were, and it was nice to note, doing my research on Leonard Bernstein, that he was an ardent Zionist. He loved the state of Israel. And I know that some of it must have come from this whole area, this whole ambiance in which we all grew up. Even in his later life, this business with the radical sheik I'm sure stems all the way from Ward Fourteen and growing up in this Dorchester/Roxbury area where you were human, and you were Democratic, and you were Zionist.

**KF:**

Um, can you talk about the juxtaposition of the Jewish community with the Irish and African American communities?

**RT:**

There were very, very few African-Americans in that whole area, so I, it wouldn't be fair of me to comment – I remember at the Robert Treat Paine school, I don't know if there were one or even two African-American students.

[25:00]

Irish, yes, and we got along just fine. There were a bunch of Irish girls who thought I was cute, I remember, in the second grade, and they wouldn't leave me alone, but I loved

it [*laughs*]. I remember being invited to a party at their home and their mother, beautiful, tall Irish lady, she, I mean she told me she was, she didn't tell me she was beautiful, I could see that, she said, "I made the cake with lots of honey, because I know Jewish kids like honey." And it was very good cake. No, it was, there were Italians, and there were Irish, and there were many, many Jews. You know, it's funny, there might have been as many Irish and Italians as there were Jews, but I just knew the Jews, mostly. But in the school there was never a hint of a problem of ethnic difficulties. At least not where I walked.

**KF:**

Right. So moving on maybe to some of your later memories of Boston Latin and Harvard, can you talk about the curriculum at Boston Latin?

**RT:**

Yeah, it was very classical. W hen you got into the upper class – I started in the seventh grade, which was class six, that was their system of calling it until you got into your senior year, which was class one. It was a very classical, classically oriented curriculum. I had six years of Latin, three years of French, we had sciences and math, but they were not as heavily emphasized as Latin, and then when you, when I reached the, ah, first year of high school you had a choice of Greek and German, and I was ethnically opposed to almost anything German and chose Greek. And it was interesting because those of us who chose Greek took the college boards in Greek, and there were so few all through the country that there was no curve, so no matter what we did, we were up near eight-hundred [*chuckles, class laughs*].

**KF:**

Wonderful. Um-

**RT:**

It was, again, a very–but filled with all kinds of clubs – music and stamp collection, teams – basketball and football and so on, a full high school curriculum, but where the classical languages were thoroughly emphasized.

**KF:**

Do you recall, ah–

**RT:**

And everyone, everyone was on to college from Boston Latin School. And I would say that, of all the kids that I grew up with in Dorchester/Roxbury – we were, for the most part, upper-lower class, middle class, lower-middle, middle-middle, you can, ah, really

take those differentiations for granted – everybody went to college, or everybody was destined for college, in tremendous numbers, ninety, ninety plus percent, yeah. And that was even before the movement to Brookline and Newton and other suburbs of Boston.

**KF:**

Do you recall the headmaster at the time in Boston Latin?

**RT:**

Oh, yeah, when I first came it was Dr. Powers [*in an affected tone*] – very, very impressive man. And by that time he was very elderly. Now, many of us, in order to get to Latin School, you had to take a street car – the elevated, it was a subway, but it was above, you know. Because sometimes it went down, but you would get off before it went down into the tunnel. And there was all kinds of shoving and pushing. And Dr. Powers called an assembly on this problem and he said that, "Those boys who push, they are..." and there was a big silence, "Stinkers!" And the rest of the faculty goes: "Dr. Powers, Dr. Powers," as if he was crashing the, uh, forbidden area with that language, but that's really all I remember, but he was followed by Dr. George McKim, who was a real martinet. Somehow, no matter what Dr. McKim would do, he couldn't spoil what was going on at Boston Latin. The teachers were wonderful; they were really devoted, devoted people. And, boy, you wore a tie, not necessarily a jacket, but a tie, and you called your teachers "sir." There were no women, and – the one woman in this whole school was this very lovely-looking secretary around whom all the teachers congregated on breaks,

[30:00]

but, but that was it. And now it's filled with women, and that's fine. It's hard to accept, looking back. But it – the faculty were a group of truly dedicated, wonderful teachers. They were so – they were not without compassion, either. Sometimes if you couldn't get your Latin translated, sixty verses a night, and if you couldn't get your Latin translation done or your Greek, you told them and they'd be on your side. Just so long as you had done your work. There was, a story, while I was at elementary school, I wasn't that well behaved all the time. But I wasn't bad, and, ah, when I reached the sixth grade, Dr. McAuliffe [*sp?*], who was a very waspy principle and she was a Ph.D. too I guess – my mother said to her that, "I want my son to go to Boston Latin School." And she, "That's only for gentlemen." [*Laughs*] Now, I don't know, whether she meant that in one way or another, I don't even want to go into – my mother was furious! This little Polish lady, my mother, and: "She will never make decisions for me! My son is going to Latin school!" The, somehow you never got close to the administration at Latin School, but you did get close to your teachers. I was there for six years and there were some that I liked very, very much, they were very caring, and quite good sticklers for you learning what they were teaching and, ah, we felt well prepared for college.

**KF:**

And moving on to college -

**RT:**

Oh, and in college, well, in the first year, I didn't live in and that was a big pain. I commuted because I went to two schools, and ah, then my dad said, "You've had enough of this," and I moved into Lowell House. Carrying two curricula didn't really leave too much time to do a lot of other things. I wanted to help out with the tuition, which, do you know that the tuition went up to eight-hundred dollars for the year that year? Sounds [*laughs*], so I wanted to help out by teaching Hebrew school, which I did. So between the two curricula and teaching Hebrew school, I didn't have time for a heck of a lot of other things. I wanted to, there was a basketball team in Lowell House, which I just couldn't even think about. But moving into the dorms really helped and uh, to get the flavor of the university, which was delightful and deep and challenging and remains one of the loves of my life, wife excluded, 'til this day. And one of the nicest experiences – and you'll have to help me out here, if your knowledge can go that far back – was taking Music I. I remember dropping into Music I, and they, for some reason, the professor was leading the class in the singing of "Danny Boy."

**KKS:**

Was it Woody?

**RT:**

It was the last year of the person before "Woody," so that's why people had said, "Take that course because he's retiring," and G. Wallace Woodworth was coming in to replace him, but I don't remember his name. By then he was an older man, and he was marvelous. And I remember, is it still WHRB? The radio station? Well, before each quiz, before each hour exam, before each final, they'd play all the music under the sun, and all I had to do was listen to it while I was doing my other homework, and I got an A in Music I! I loved it! Ah, but that was it for Music I, for the music department. You don't remember the name, do you? If you do, please let me know.

**KKS:**

It couldn't have been Tillman Merritt, because he was there long after. . .

**RT:**

No-

**KKS:**

'Cause he was long after -

**RT:**

No.

**Professor Carol J. Oja (CJO):**

It wasn't Archibald Davison?

**RT:**

That has a ring to it –

**CO:**

He directed the Glee Club.

**RT:**

Yes, and of course Wallace, G. Wallace Woodworth, did the Glee Club after him. My roommate was in the Glee Club. I don't know; it might have been Davison. Yeah. So that would have been in my sophomore year, I believe, so, and I graduated in '55, (so '54, '5-), '52 – the year that the head of the music department retired.

[35:00]

Oh, did he teach a nice class!

Took courses in philosophy with Professor Demos, I don't know if you remember him. He was already elderly then. Ah, wrote my thesis with Talcott Parsons, sociologist, sociologist not only of the long researches, but of the looong sentences. [*Class laughs*] And it was in, under his tutelage that I managed to combine everything that I had learned – not everything, but a lot that I had learned historically at the Hebrew college with, I majored in soc-rel. Is that department still called soc-rel? Social relations, where they combine psychology, anthropology, ah . . . .

**[Unidentified voice]:**

I don't know [indiscernible]

**RT:**

All the sociology and psychology were in one department then, and I wrote on the history of the Messianic movements in Jewish history and interpretive study in collective behavior. It's probably in the archives somewhere [*laughs*]. I have, I think, one copy left, having foolishly loaned them out here and there, but I did have . . . Ah, but, you

know, I know you're studying Bernstein – I really, I really never knew him, and I didn't know him in those years. But, later on, when I became a student rabbi and had a huge youth group in Westchester, for some strange reason, *West Side Story* had started on Broadway, and I was able to get about forty tickets [*snaps*] just like that. Took the whole youth group. And I'll tell you – it was something none of us ever forgot. I mean, I don't know necessarily what your own orientation is to the varied works of Bernstein, but that play hit all of us with a gigantic force, and I never for – I mean, to this day, I'm not gonna do it for you, but I could sing every note of every song.

**KF:**

Wonderful! Thank you so much, um . . .

**KKS:**

[*Addressing the class*] Are there other questions?

**CJO:**

Does anyone, maybe Emily, know the exact date of Aaron Copland's Norton lectures? They're early '50s . . . '51, '52, somewhere in there.

**Emily Abrams:**

'52 – I think, it's '52.

**CJO:**

Which might have been during your time–

**RT:**

It could very well have been, and I believe, I did go to Adelaide Stevenson's lectures in those years, but I didn't go to Aaron Copland, and I, looking back now at this moment, I certainly regret.

**CJO:**

So, the early '50s, Leonard Bernstein probably wasn't a name, he wasn't a celebrity yet, in terms of –

**RT:**

No, no. I really didn't, didn't know of him. Although, for some reason, his ability to play piano was, was known in the community. As a – just simply as a pianist. Ah, that I

had heard of. Why, how, if you ask the origin of how I knew that, I don't know. But, someone said, "Oh! If you can get Bernstein, he's a wonderful pianist."

**CJO:**

And he was teaching at Brandeis during, off and on during those years. But, you probably don't – there wasn't any opportunity for you to have seen him on campus, or [*indiscernable*] heard about Brandeis.

**RT:**

No. But, ah, my son did go to Brandeis for a couple of years, and I think he left behind a lasting impression. A member of my congregation became president of Brandeis for a while and somehow, you saw the name here and there around the campus, but I, it didn't really make a dent on me.

**CJO:**

Well, his celebrity hadn't skyrocketed yet. Early '50s, so, no.

**RT:**

No, it hadn't.

**CJO:**

Should we invite in Judith? Marc?

**KKS:**

Yes, why don't we invite in Judith.

**Marc Gidal (MG):**

I have two quick questions: one is, do you remember the name of your Hebrew school teacher who you loved?

**RT:**

Carl Cohen [*sp?*].

**MG:**

The second is, your story about trying to get Braslavsky to sing the folk version of *Avinu Malkenu*, do you remember his version?

**RT:**

No. No, I don't think I could possibly sing any of the music that he commandeered at Mishkan Tefila. It was all very complicated, and very, highly professional.

**MG:**

And actually, to follow up with that, since, in your years being a rabbi, have you heard his style of music penetrate the, any of the Jewish liturgy that you've heard–

**RT:**

Braslavsky, you mean?

**MG:**

Yeah. Or is it just its own thing -

**RT:**

No. Now and then.

[40:00]

My cantor who, with whom I worked for over twenty, for about twenty years at Shaaray Tefila, whose wife you're going to see in just a little while, would include a Braslavsky work every now and then in the repertoire. And I remember some very tuneful, lovely things, but I couldn't sing them for you now. You'd be at a disadvantage if you asked me to sing.

**CJO:**

Oh, there's a question over here.

**[Unidentified voice]**:

Do you remember if the choir at Mishkan Tefila in the days of Braslavsky sang mostly, primarily in Hebrew, or did they do some –

**RT:**

Oh, I think there was a lot of Hebrew. It was – I think it was all Hebrew, as a matter of fact. It was a Conservative congregation, so -. And I don't recall any of the things the Reform movement brought in, like antiphonal reading between the leader – in English – between the leader and the congregation, or collective reading as still exists very

strongly. No, it was all a very – quite traditional service. Ninety-nine percent of it in Hebrew.

**KKS:**

Scott?

**Scott Kominers:**

You mentioned that your instructor, Carl Cohen [*sp?*], taught math.

**RT:**

Yes.

**SK:**

Do you know how long he did this and where and what he taught?

**RT:**

I don't know. He always said to us he was a math instructor – I think very low level – in Harvard. He lived here in Cambridge. Lovely story of his life, that he got out of the Holocaust with his totally paralyzed wife, whom I met at his home a few times. And wrote, I think just one article in his entire life on – oh, the name, I shouldn't have said this 'cause the name escapes me – Franz Rosenzweig. He wrote an art– and that was about it. And we corresponded until, oh, a few years ago, and it just, I guess he must have died. Lost contact.

**RT's Wife:**

May I say something?

**KKS:**

Yes, please.

**RT's Wife:**

Harvey and I have been married for forty-six years, hard to believe, and most of those years he's lived in New York, he came to New York when he went to Rabbinical school. And yet, he is so very much still a Bostonian. And those early years, which we've been talking about with you today, are so much a part of him and I would assume would have been a part of Leonard Bernstein, that I think of him always as a Dorchester boy, not a Manhattanite. Which may tell you something about the love and the warmth that these guys felt for that period of their lives, that location, the people that surrounded them. He

still talks about the boys he played stickball with on the block. I don't hear that much from other people that I've encountered through the years. But that crowd remembers and is still very much attached to those years.

**RT:**

You can take those boys out of Boston, but you can't take Boston out of those boys.

**RT's Wife:**

No you can't.

[*Pause*]

**CJO:**

Well, so Lily, would you introduce Judith? [*Judith Clurman comes to the seminar table, microphones are adjusted]*

Judith, this is Lily Yeh who is going to be interviewing you.

**Judith Clurman:**

Hi Lily.

**Lily Yeh:**

Hi. [*To CO*: shall we do the form now?]

**CJO:**

I think we can do it later.

**LY:**

Okay, okay. And also, it is to my knowledge that you brought something for us to sing.

**JC:**

Yes!

**LY:**

Would you like to do it before or after the interview?

**JC:**

Why don't we do that first.

**KKS:**

Do you want to introduce her, though?

**LY:**

Oh yes, of course –

**CJO:**

Wait a second, [*indiscernible*].

**LY:**

Alright, this is Judy Clurman, and she is the director of choral activities at the Julliard School. She is also the co-director of the Bernstein Festival that is coming to Harvard in October 2006. A native New Yorker, Miss Clurman has worked with New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra of Saint Luke's, among other ensembles in the United States and in Europe. In 2002, she was invited to conduct, lecture, and direct master classes at England's Cambridge University. Miss Clurman founded the Juilliard Choral Union, which was chosen by the mayor's office to participate in the televised memorial service at the World Trade Center site. Please join me in welcoming Miss Judy Clurman.

[45:00]

[*Class applauds*]

**JC:**

I'm all about performing, so I think the best thing to do is to give, if you could share these – this music, and I have a really wonderful picture on the front of the music, and I'll explain why. . . . [*Passes out music*]

I was one of those people in the world very fortunate to have met Leonard Bernstein. I grew up with Leonard Bernstein and hearing about Leonard Bernstein my whole life, and I met him after a concert about a month before making my conducting debut in New York, and he spoke to me for an entire evening about how he hated music critics, but his career survived despite the fact that music critics might not always be nice, and he gave me the New York premiere to do of *Missa Brevis* and, um, I have a great affinity for his music. And my husband served as cantor with Rabbi Tattelbaum in New York, and that's why, when I was given this assignment, I remember hearing about this music director from the synagogue, and I said, "Why has no one ever written about the

relationship with the music director and Leonard Bernstein?" And, last year, Professor Oja and I went into the archives, and I went, "Oh my God, oh my God, there's, like, books here." And had fun looking at it. But one of the things about Leonard Bernstein and myself, that we really have in common, was growing up in traditional Judaism. And the first music we ever heard probably was synagogue music. Leonard Bernstein wrote a letter, that we found down in the synagogue archives, in 1963, saying that this was the first music he ever heard. Traditional modes, folk songs, and that sort of music, and I prepared a little bit for this, and I looked at the pictures on the web, and if you look at this picture, this is a picture of Lenny playing Palestinian folk songs at the Dorset Hote – following the Gershwin memorial concert, and I think Professor Oja, I gave you infor–or a program or some pictures of that recently.

**CJO:**

Mm-hmm.

**JC:**

Um, at the Hotel Dorset. And I think his Hebrew school education is what really made him Leonard Bernstein. And that's what we could sing through, and on the Thursday night performance, I'm including a traditional three-fold benediction which will open that concert. "May the Lord bless you and keep you. . .," etcetera, etcetera, that was arranged by Solomon Braslavsky. And the program on Saturday night opens with the same text, the *Y'varech'cha* text, that Leonard Bernstein then set for the opening of Carnegie Hall in 1986. And you could segue from that arrangement based on traditional *nusach* or prayer modes into that piece on Saturday night. And later on, he was writing this one in 1986 and I think he was probably freaking out, his Hebrew transliteration was not right, and I was called and he was in the room, and I remember him screaming at his assistant Jack Gottlieb saying, "Is this right? What is she saying? Am I writing the right letter down?" Because he was always one of these Jews that said, "Oh no, no, no, no, that's not my only part of my identity. I'm an American person," but he just went back to this Judaism. Over and over and over again, and that's why these pieces and these programs are so important. Um, the Palestinian folk songs where you see him so happily playing these pieces in 1946 that I've included in the program is, are an arrangement by A.W. Binder who was a very important American Jewish composer who was very active in the Reform movement. And he took this wonderful Yemenite melody in 1927 when Bernstein would have been a student in Hebrew school, "*Na'aleh L'artseinu*" which is – and this is the first piece we're going to sing through, where it's saying "We're going to our land with singing, *Yom gilah*, a day of joy, a day of singing, a day of rest, a day of holiness." And this piece of music, I want to show you this joy that he had in his music with the Palestinian folk songs where [*sings another melody*], and then Lenny in 1946 takes [*sings another melody*] and sets that. And the *Kaddish* Symphony is

[50:00]

[*sings another melody*] in-to [*sings another melody*], the *Chichester Psalms*, which is a fulfillment of the *Kaddish* Symphony, which is in a way a fulfillment to maybe having a good relationship with his father through this music. And all of those things and going back and paying homage to Solomon Braslavsky. And that's what I'm so passionate about, and I think we should sing through some of this music so you'll see what I'm talking about. And I'll try to [*unclear*].

So are there any sopranos around here? No sopranos. Nobody sings? At Harvard, you're supposed to all sing. Well, could there – any – everybody pick a part on this "*Na'aleh L'artseinu*"? I don't even have complete pieces. And you could just sing it on "la-la-la-la-la," you don't even have to sing the words, into "*Simchu Na*." And by the way, "*Simchu Na*," which you see the translation on the bottom, it's a song of celebration. Where he took a folk song and set this "*Simchu Na*" … um… The manuscript to that piece was lost. And there's inaccurate information in everything you're going to be reading about this, 'cause when you go to the Library of Congress and look through the materials, you see part of a manuscript because Lenny was beginning to orchestrate this piece. And it would be fun if somebody finished the orchestration one day. So anyway, let's go through these pieces. And I will accompany you.

In "*Na'aleh L'artseinu*," the melody is just [*plays it on the piano*]

You wanna just sing the soprano line, everybody, on just "la, la, la"? Two, three, go -

[*Class sings the melody on "la"*]

And that repeats.

[*Class sings*]

And go on.

[*Class sings*]

And the next page, just repeat again. [*Rolls a piano chord quickly*] Stylistically, which then you see in Lenny's music all the time, one would have danced these pieces. And Hebrew – the Hebrew language keeps repeating. This was a time before the state of Israel was founded, and for me, words keep repeating over and over. The language is – Hebrew's first developing. And that's why these words are the same over and over again. Okay, let's do this again, let's go to the next page, and I'll do it differently. Ready, and - [*Plays "Na'aleh L'artseinu," with class singing, and then transitions to playing "Simchu Na"*]

Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah – it photocopied this wrong. You're supposed to go from the first – ohh. Go to – it's just the idea, I'm sorry, the wrong thing was copied. Go to page 5.

**CJO:**

Page 5 of?

**JC:**

Page 5 that [*sings*]

**CJO**:

Oh yeah.

**JC:**

This is the wrong – it's the wrong thing – it was photocopied wrong. Sorry. But it's [*sings and plays melody*]. It's just the idea that you need to get today. And then it goes [*plays piano*]. It's just that sort of quality over and over again. And the – and you see that in the arrangement, um, it really just is a very, very simple arrangement, and if you look at page 7, where "*Ura*," if I'm not mistaken -

**CJO:**

I don't think -

**RT:**

Wake up!

**JC:**

Wake up – get up, get up.

**CJO:**

I don't think we have that.

**JC:**

You have page 7, don't you? Don't you have -

**CJO:**

No.

**[Unidentified voice]**:

We do.

**CJO:**

We do – where? Page 7 here?

**JC:**

Go to the last page. My apologies here.

**CJO**:

Oh, I see. I see.

**JC**:

That's okay. Where it's, he would just [*plays piano chords*], which became the same sort of quality in *Chichester Psalms*, as you get to know that piece. And you see that he didn't write these melodies, but he's always, you know, the beginning of *Chichester Psalms* is a Hasidic frenzy. And this is what this man really grew up on. Subconsciously, that's – he just did it in his music without even thinking about it.

[55:00]

**RT**:

Incidentally, when I talked about the fellow who picked me up in his car to take me to the service, he sang that – exactly that – the entire way. Uh, 'til we got to the service itself.

**JC:**

See how we're connected. [*RT laughs*] In all ways.

Anyway, the other two parts of the programs – I hope, I want all my questions. But the other two parts of the program are the liturgical part of Leonard Bernstein, and this is really important. Beginning with the Braslavsky arrangement of *Y'vawrech'chaw* and his love of this text – this universal love of this text, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord cause" – well, forget it.

**RT:**

Light to shine upon you.

**JC:**

Light to shine upon you, and give you peace. And I'm showing the analogy of this liturgical text of Braslavsky's arrangement of the melodies of a traditional *nusach* melody

with Leonard Bernstein always going back to liturgical music. And in 1950 … fifty! There are two different dates. One in an article by Jack Gottlieb about, Leonard Bernstein's assistant, on the… when this piece "*Yigdal*" was written, and one in…other information was …two discrepancies. This is, um, a liturgical piece, um, "May the Lord be glorified in praise. God is blessed, God is infinite, God is unique." And this is a three-part round that he wrote for Hebrew schools in America. I don't know if he was ever paid, but it was published in a book called *The Songs We Sing*. And it's one of the first books like it to ever have been published, by Harry Coopersmith, by the Conservative movement in America, which Lenny grew up in. Um, and published by, yes, United Synagogue. And this is really a lot of fun. And nobody ever really does this piece. And we can learn it – the round – just on "la-la." Everybody, let's go through. One, two, three, and – [*Plays piano, class sings*]

Isn't that great? So he wrote that for kids. And again, the rhythm, everybody [*clapping hands*]: "baba baba ba ba baba baba ba ba."

And at the Library of Congress, I've gone through some of his works from Harvard University and many unpublished things that he did and counterpoint exercises. You see that he's always writing a *horah* – that's a *horah* rhythm, a dance rhythm. And he wasn't ashamed to call things *horahs*, which makes me very happy about him. And it wasn't just a counterpoint exercise. And by the way, he got B minuses and C's on his counterpoint exercises at Harvard University, and they were, he probably did them the night before. And there was red ink all over them. [*RT chuckles*] Go look at them because it's a lot of fun.

So let's do this as a round. [*Pointing to each group*] Could I have Part 1, this group? Part 2, back there, and over there. And Part 3. Are we ready? Are we going to try? [*Laughter*]

You're too passive! [*Laughter*]

You're not passive. You're Harvard students. Let's do it in unison once. One, two, three, and - [*Plays piano, class sings*]

Keep going!

First group! [*Singing continues*]

Second group. [*Singing continues*]

Third group.

[*JC stops playing the piano, singing continues unaccompanied*]

Let's stop. Let's stop. Or we're gonna go on forever and ever. [*Laughter*] And we have other things to do. But I think this is a delicious little piece that he wrote, and I'm very happy to have programmed it.

**CJO:**

Great.

**JC:**

Okay!

**LY:**

Thank you very much.

**JC:**

Sure.

**LY:**

So you mentioned that Bernstein, so, he took some of the traditional Jewish melodies in music – in *Kaddish* -

**JC:**

Right.

**LY:**

And *Chichester* and other songs –

**JC:**

Well, that's the wrong way to say – traditional Jewish melody. He didn't say something – use something tradit- – he wrote his own.

**LY:**

I see.

**JC:**

Remember, *Kaddish* has twelve-tone rows in it. You know. He used, um, rhythmic elements. He used… more of synagogue modes.

[60:00]

Now, I'm not an expert on all of these things. But there are certain modes that go with certain holidays or certain prayers in traditional Judaism in different times of day. I don't even know if he was ever so schooled in this, but like myself, you grow up hearing all of this, and it's just in your head. So yes, he might have used a minor third on a certain note, and it would make sense, but he didn't copy. That's all his own music, in those symphonies.

**LY:**

I see. So, um, we just interviewed Rabbi Tattelbaum. He mentioned that he also heard Braslavsky in his childhood. He mentioned that, um, when Braslavsky went to another temple and they tried to sing a folk melody, Braslavsky said, "No, we can't – we don't want that folk stuff." And –

**JC:**

Right, right.

**RT:**

That's what he called *shmatas*.

**JC:**

I knew you would tell that story. You've told me that story a hundred times. Um, yes. And you want me to - ?

**LY:**

Um, so, what would that have influenced?

**JC:**

I think this is a very, very significant thing. I am not – I will say this publicly – I'm not the greatest fan of Braslavsky's music. I think he probably struggled – like many Jews did. The only place he got recognition, even though he was trained by a, in Vienna by a student of Liszt, and wanting to be in the secular world, he probably, like many Jews, was not accepted in mainstream society. So, he had to become a composer for the synagogue, rather than keeping some of the simple melodies, or the simple prayer modes and expanding on them, he tried to reinvent. This is what I fight against also in Leonard Bernstein's music, his prayer, his setting of *Hashkivenu*.

And please don't quote me on anything here, but, I – I've never been able to relate to this piece, because I said, "Oh my God," after I've gotten to know Braslavsky's music this year, I said, "Oh, he learned from Braslavsky, rather than learned from himself." He was – when he got back to some of his liturgical music writing, Lenny, he was struggling with, "How do I do this? I want to be a composer, and I want to put these traditional elements in, but I have to add another layer on it, rather than be a simple composer. Am I – am I making that clear? I mean, you know, it's, if you could take, for example, the opening arrangement that I'm doing on the Friday – the Thursday concert, [*sings melody*], which is called *Sh'losh R'galim nusach* which is the prayer modes for Passover**,** *Simchat Torah* and um…

**RT:**

*Shavuot*.

**JC**:

*Shavuot* for traditional Jews. And this is why this arrangement by Braslavsky is beautiful. You would love this one. Because he's using something simple, rather than, "I have to compose, and I have to put a twelve-tone row in, and I have to do this, and I have to do that." And um, in this way, I don't think he was the greatest influence on Leonard Bernstein. It's funny, but I have to take that opinion after going through about thirty pieces of Braslavsky.

**LY:**

Thank you. So, um, you mentioned, um, that Leonard Bernstein struggled to, on the one hand, to incorporate his Jewish tradition, and on the other hand, to be accepted by the, the critics.

**JC:**

Right.

**LY:**

And you also mentioned that he hated the critics.

**JC:**

He hated the critics. That's right. Well, the New York Philharmonic – the New York critics were not great to him. But this is an important thing about assimilation. And if you really learn the musical *Candide*, that song, "I Am Easily Assimilated," where he keeps it in a, in a synagogue mode, and yet he's going all over key-wise in that piece of music. I have never sat down to really analyze it, but I hear it.

Braslavsky, in this mode, in this piece I'm doing on Thursday night, the whole thing is in D minor. He stays within the traditional synagogue mode. And then at the end of the piece, he says, the last bar, "I'm gonna be an American." And he makes a major third interval happen. And in a traditional synagogue, they wouldn't accept that. A really traditional synagogue. 'Cause he's suddenly out of the mode.

Lenny, in this *Hashkivenu*, for me, is ….is…is fighting this. And going in and out of… I don't know – I don't even know what traditional is. But just… not keeping it simple enough, and trying to be the composer. I think Leonard Bernstein struggled like, um, a lot of people I know wanting to be accepted by American society. Coming to school here, and not being allowed to do a lot of things because he was Jewish. But he made Harvard work for him. And these were things he always struggled with. But, he could have struggled with it, but, um, if he was still alive and I were to have a conversation with him now, he always went back to his roots.

[65:00]

In reading about his bad relationship with his father, and all of those sorts of things, and I think he really loved his father, and he loved his people. And he, um, um, he just had a hard time with it.

If you look, for example, at the *Kaddish* Symphony, this beautiful lullaby that we're doing on one of the concerts, what I discovered at the Library of Congress, and it's not published, is a piece of music he wrote called, "Song My Father Used to Sing in the Shower," based on an old Yiddish song. And this is a movement from the *Kaddish* Symphony. It's quite amazing.

It's … I think if he didn't struggle, he wouldn't have been the great person that he was. Struggle is important.

**LY:**

Um, I think I heard, um, in one of Bernstein's songs, it's called, like, "Invocation." And I heard finger snapping in that song. I wonder whether finger snapping is part of the traditional Jewish setting -

**JC:**

No, I don't think finger snapping. I think the songs were very rhythmic. And I think, people – the Jews, beginning the state of Israel, had a lot of struggles. And I think they used music to survive. He once wrote a letter to Helen Coates, his secretary, and he said, and I got this from the Library of Congress, that the state of Israel needed music as much as they needed bread to survive. And I think this is really very significant. It's just… rhythmic. You could finger-snap; you could do whatever you want.

**RT:**

A lot of clapping.

**JC:**

A lot of clapping.

**LY:**

Um, thank you. So could you tell us, which of Bernstein's works did you premiere and um, what are those experiences?

**JC:**

Um…The first thing I did was… a group of pieces based on dance rhythms on a choral concert with my professional chorus at the time, the New York Concert Singers, and did "*Simchu Na*" in a public performance. I met him, and then I did the New York premiere of the *Missa Brevis*, which is based on *The Lark*, which was incidental music for a Joan of Arc play.

I prepared the chorus for his memorial when he passed away in 1990. It was *Chichester Psalms*. Um, I knew that piece; I sang that piece in high school, so I knew that piece inside out. And I just seemed to understand that piece in every dynamic that he's writing on that piece. Um, and I think, one has to give Solomon Braslavsky total credit for that piece on a certain level. He just really remembers. And he gets it, and he gets the liturgy from the dynamics. I don't know what it is totally. Sometimes I can't explain why I understand what's on the piece of paper. But it just makes sense.

Um, what else have I done?

I've done the *Kaddish* Symphony. Um… I know the musicals; I grew up hearing the musicals. And then, I was very pleased, I conducted the *Chichester Psalms* at New York City ballet; Peter Martins choreographed the *Psalms*. And that's what I did recently.

**LY:**

Thank you. Um, so…

**KKS:**

I'd just like to ask a question. You said that you felt that Braslavsky should have credit for the *Chichester Psalms*?

**JC:**

A little bit, a little bit. In the understanding of the – some of the liturgy, some of the dynamics. I mean, it was his mentor. The important thing about Braslavsky that I really feel is I think he probably taught Leonard Bernstein who Gustav Mahler was, who all of these great composers were. He didn't have all this at home, after reading all the books. Braslavsky's coming over from Vienna, he's a schooled musician; he meets this young little genius, um, and if you start looking at the programs of the synagogue, where he would – Braslavsky would put in Mendelssohn and would put in different sorts of composers. This is where Lenny probably heard his first secular music. I can't answer that; I've not done enough research, but I kind of think this is what this relationship was about, somewhat.

**LY:**

Have you gone through some of Braslavsky's works?

**JC:**

Well, I've gone through a lot. Um, some of his instrumental music, as well as his liturgical music. Um, there's a book the synagogue gave me of high holiday music. I think his strongest piece is, I will tell you, is a piece called the *Un'tane tokef*, which Leonard Bernstein paid for publication in the '50s. That's a brilliant piece of music that Braslavsky wrote. He let his heart write it, rather than, for me, wanting to be a composer. And he used *great* compositional style. And I heard that this was one of Leonard Bernstein's favorite pieces of music. The cantor, by the way, told me a wonderful story, that Lenny went back to, ah, Mishkan Tefila once and threw the organist off the bench,

[70:00]

without any rehearsal for the High Holidays, and just took over. [*RT laughs*]

And he did a great job.

**RT**:

Did Bruce ever include that on the - ?

**JC:**

No, not at all. It's really a beautiful piece. We don't have enough time on the program. I would love to do it. It's a 20-minute piece of choral music. But this, to me, is elegance. It's the greatest piece.

**[Unidentified voice]**:

Sing a bit.

**JC:**

Um, let me see… [*Sighs, slaps table rhythmically*] what I read. There's a great moment where you go [*sings melody*].

Something like this. I don't – I – I ditched it from the program probably six months ago, and I don't have it here with me, but it's – it's quite amazing. And he – the prayer is so significant in a Jew's life on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and the holy days. And he *really* breaks it up in parts. And he has a great fugue, he has great imitation, he has great unison writing. And, um, Braslavsky, remember, the stuff that I'm being critical of are the things when he first came over to America. And this is very significant. When he wanted to become, as Jews would say, to become a Yankee, to really relax and become American. And suddenly in the '50s he probably was, felt, "I'm now important; I know who I am, and I'm going to write a better piece of music." And it is a better piece of music.

We all go through stages – even Leonard Bernstein. Good ones and not so good ones, musically.

**LY:**

Thank you.

**JC:**

Hmm-hmm.

**LY:**

So how did you first become acquainted with him?

**JC**:

I grew up in a house where my mother played all sorts of music. I – I think most Jewish houses in America had *West Side Story* playing, and the *Kaddish* Symphony playing, and *Chichester Psalms* playing, and Leonard Bernstein was a major hero to my parents. But I also watched the Young People's Concerts. And he was a hero. I mean, this was a very significant thing when he made his – when I read, read, I have tears streaming down my face to see this first generation person – Jew – becoming so involved in music and getting recognition in this country. This was really, really significant. I wasn't there in the '40s; I don't know. But I remember him – oh! I forgot something that was important to talk about…um…I remember him in New York when I was growing up in the '60s. But I should also say I sang in choruses with him, and I'm on a couple of recordings. I was really…. A great memory of doing the chorus for Mahler's Second Symphony… five performances with the New York Philharmonic. He became Gustav Mahler when he conducted. And somebody brought me to his home in Connecticut, and in his – now I'm

remembering things – in his conducting, in his compositional room in Connecticut there's a wall of pictures different composers. But then there's an entire wall of pictures of Gustav Mahler. And um, I think he thought he was Gustav Mahler. [*Laughter*]

**[Unidentified voice]:**

When was his Mahler Symphony recorded?

**JC**:

When was his Mahler Symph? I don't remember. I can't – I could look back at the programs…

**[Unidentified voice]:**

Approximately.

**JC:**

Late '70s, I guess? But then I also did Mahler's Third Symphony. And I'm on that recording. Um…you know, when you make a recording sometimes and everybody's screaming, you don't remember it as well. [*Laughter*] There's other things. However, his conducting – if you all know the Mahler Third Symphony… his conducting of the last movement of that – nothing I will have ever sung – how many of you know that – the last movement? Nothing that I will ever sing in my life – nothing – will be like Leonard Bernstein conducting that. He knew – he conducted every note with love. I – I really get upset when people criticize his conducting style because I've studied conducting, I teach conducting. And if you watch some of the current videos out on him, it's some of the most simple, elegant conducting in the world. And then there are other times, sure, he got a little flamboyant, but he had such love and passion that every quarter note was treated differently than every eighth note. And I was always amazed watching him conduct the performances of the Mahler on successive evenings, how it became a different creation all the time. But he was drenched at the end of performances. And that's what I mean he thought he was Gustav Mahler. I guess he thought he was Brahms, and he thought he was Beethoven, and that's what's so important. I also – I'm just talking away. I said to Jamie Bernstein when I was interviewing her, I think we're going through an identity crisis in the classical music industry, which way it's going, and I attribute all this with the death of Leonard Bernstein. If you really start reading, when articles came out, we don't have an icon… like that. We don't have a political icon, we don't have a Jewish icon, we don't have a musical icon that could say, " I'm going to give a concert and raise money for something."

[75:00]

People don't flock the same way. There was an energy that was *absolutely incredible*. So that was my relationship with him, whatever that meant. We're all – you know, you

watch him on television doing the Young People's Concerts, and I even watch those now, and if you could watch those, it's – they're – it's incredible. It's *so* incredible.

**LY**:

Thank you. Um.

**JC**:

Sure.

**LY**:

So, you also talked with Jamie Bernstein about how, like, he said, "We talked about bringing . . ."

**JC:**

Is that what I said?

**LY:**

This was in a conversation with Bernstein. He said, "We talked about bringing the worlds of popular culture and classical music together, and how good music was good music, no matter what the style."

**JC:**

Right. Right.

**LY:**

So, can you tell us about the conversation?

**JC**:

Sure. I – look, we all know that Leonard Bernstein was totally eclectic. And that's what I respond to. I mean – you've, you had Sid Ramin, I know, here last week, and he talked about the influence of George Gershwin. I - I have to say also that if Gershwin lived, and Bernstein got to know Gershwin, American music, I feel, would've been totally different. Or it would've been so creative in a different way. I – who knows; one could always speculate.

Um. If you look at the *Kaddish* Symphony, there's popular music, there's classical music. There's Arnold Schoenberg influence. There's – there's Webern influence to me. There's Braslavsky influence to me. The same way if you look at the *Chichester Psalms*. Um, if you look at, I don't know the *Jeremiah* Symphony as well… but you know,

growing up and going to see *Wonderful Town* and *On the Town* and knowing those scores backwards and forwards. Yes, you have Braslavsky synagogue music and synagogue modes in some of the music there, like you do in George Gershwin's music. His father was a cantor, and that's all over his music too.

Um, a great composer has to – what do I say – has to use who they and what they are to be honest when they create. And, I mean, I could just go on forever. Let's – let's take, um… [*sigh*]… I can't think of a piece right now. Give me a piece. By Leonard Bernstein. Who knows – anything – the Clarinet Sonata, right? Just the Clarinet Sonata! And you listen to that – it's totally jazzy, right? It's totally… American. Whatever that means, you know, at that time. There's dance music in it from *West Side Story.* There's, there's everything, I mean…

You look at the Palestinian folksong that he wrote. There's…suddenly, we're going to call it jazzy. No, but it's – it's, there's a different sort of rhythm, and he draws on all these things to become Leonard Bernstein.

And by the way, a lot of people in the classical music industry didn't like that about him. Um, and I am finding this out when I talk to people about Leonard Bernstein right now. You know, they wanted Leonard Bernstein to be a serious composer. I loved the fact he went in all different directions.

And coming up here on the train, I happened to watch a DVD of *Mass.* I was telling Professor – Professor Oja, I never loved *Mass.* I said, "What is he doing in *Mass*?" He's struggling with all these different styles. He's fighting his Judaism; he's loving his Judaism. He's fighting dance rhythms. He's, he's putting a hodge-podge together. And suddenly, I had this cathartic moment yesterday, where I said, "Oh my God, he's putting it all together!" And it really makes sense to me.

And it's a different stage in my life than it was 15 years ago, as I've grown as a person and musician, that his music has – has just grown on me. And I understand it. Um, but it's totally eclectic – eclecticism. And I think this is why some people really don't like… *Mass.*

Yes.

**CJO:**

I wonder if there are questions around the table, either for Judy Clurman or Rabbi Tattelbaum. We've asked them a few already, but are there any follow-up questions from anyone, or . . .?

**JC**:

Derrick!

**Derrick Wang**:

Rabbi Tattelbaum, actually, it was, um, you were mentioning that on the way, in the car, that you were hearing, um, one of the songs…. that was sung by the driver. Which one was it, just for clarification?

**RT:**

"*Na'aleh L'artseinu*." Again and again and again. Until we got there.

**JC:**

How old was the driver?

**RT:**

Oh, he was not young. He must have been in his 50s. I mean, for me, at that age, when I was 13 or 14.

**JC**:

There are books. I went back to the books from …. I did not get a response from the Boston Conservative movement phone call that I put in. But, um, the same books came out from the Board of Jewish Education in New York, and I got books from 1915, 1925, 1930, and I really wanted something very authentic. And this would've been a piece of music he sang.

**RT**:

Hmm-hmm. I remember that. That book from -

**JC**:

Of course.

**RT**:

From – from Hebrew School.

**CJO:**

Stephanie?

[80:00]

**Stephanie Lai (SL):**

This is a question for Judith Clurman. You mentioned that you were, um, part of the chorus at his memorial – Leonard Bernstein's memorial service. Could you talk about what was it like to be there, what was said, and who – who was present?

**JC:**

Well, there were two memorial services. I remember I went to the first memorial service, and everybody was so stunned when he passed away. I remember sitting with the composer, uh, Ned Rorem and his partner. And everybody just sat and cried. It was at Carnegie Hall. And that was – he died in October, on October 14. That was probably … I don't remember the date.

**AT**:

At the age of?

**JC**:

I have a program, I could give you guys the program; I mean, I'd be happy to.

**CJO:**

At the age of 72.

**RT:**

72.

**JC:**

And, um, I think everybody just left stunned. I mean, I was looking over my Bernstein materials recently, and I saved the front page of the *New York Times* when he died. And he was a musical icon – he made us who we were and who we are.

Um, there was a big memorial service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in which I was involved in on December 31st of that year. And leaders came from all over the world. Uh, Lukas Foss conducted. He had never conducted *Chichester Psalms*, and this was the moment it happened. Kathleen Battle sang, André Watts played, and everybody sat and cried. I – I'm still crying that he's not around. I think I really would have been able to… I'm so sad I never prepared choruses for him and worked with him in that way, because I just feel… real soulmates in certain ways. And I felt that one of the great things about Bernstein, whoever he was speaking to, like the evening that I spent about two and a half hours with him, he just zoomed right in on me, and we just talked like this. And it was *absolutely* incredible. And Betty Comden and Adolf Green were in the room

also. And it was just very magical. And you know, sometimes, I reme – I just sit back and remember that moment.

Does that answer your question enough? I really, you know, sometimes something's so sad that you don't remember every little thing about it.

**KKS:**

Did he leave any instructions for what should be played at his memorial services -?

**JC:**

No, I don't think so. I can't tell you that. I remember I went, and a fun thing I did was when – and I looked at his marked score for *Chichester Psalms.* Harry Kraut gave me permission; Harry Kraut managed Leonard Bernstein. And it's fun, because – and that's what I'll bring to this performance. He put in some changes than what's published in the score. And on the later recording, with Vienna, some of those changes are there at the end. It's kinda fun. That's a good thing to do. I've gone – if you get to the Library of Congress, to go through, to take the score of *Chichester Psalms* and compare it to his manuscript, it's fabulous.

**CJO**:

Any questions?

Thank you very much. It's been a great day. We appreciate your time and energy and the memories.

**KKS:**

The two of you.

**RT:**

Pleasure.

**JC:**

Well, thanks.

[*Applause*]

(Interview ends at approximately 1:23:30).