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Robert Cole

IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME!
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ROBERT W. COLE, UC BERKELEY'S
CAL PERFORMANCES IMPRESARIO, 1986-2009

Introductions by Earl Cheit,
Hollis Ashby, and Vladimir Kresin

Interviews underwritten by Cal Performances



Interviews conducted in 2012-2013 by Suzanne B. Riess

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Well Done, Robert!

Introduction by Earl F. Cheit

Robert Cole, my good friend and for 23 years my colleague, found his job at Berkeley the old-fashioned way—through a newspaper ad. In the spring of 1986 there he was, professional musician, accomplished conductor and successful arts administrator, feeling restless in Brooklyn, thinking about his next musical adventure. Looking though the *New York Times*,² an ad from his home state—seeking a Director of Cal Performances—caught his attention. Intrigued, he applied and promptly won an interview. The search committee found Robert and his life experience most appealing, but what may have been the deciding factor was a critical incident at the end of his interview. Sensing that the search committee might not yet know enough about his managerial skills, Robert volunteered, “Oh, and by the way, I’m the guy who checks to see if the piano is tuned.”

The committee’s recommendation was unanimous, and Chancellor Ira Michael Heyman in making the appointment gave Robert something his predecessors never had—decision authority on all artistic matters. Robert’s word would be final on who would perform on campus stages and what the related arrangements would be. In today’s complex and highly competitive arts scene, the Director’s need for this authority would be taken for granted. But that was not the case at Berkeley at that time where for most of the post-WWII years decisions about fine arts performances were made by a faculty committee, the Committee for Arts and Lectures.

The Committee’s decisions had for almost thirty-five years been ably carried out by its secretary, Betty Connors. After Betty’s retirement in 1979 the organization ran into difficult years artistically and financially, and the Chancellor appointed Hugh McLean to lead a committee, of which I was a member, to review the situation of the performing arts at Berkeley. The committee concluded that major change in artistic direction and administration was needed, including what it called “budget augmentation.” Robert became in effect the Chancellor’s agent for change—but not, as I recall, with an augmented budget. He was given the power he needed and the help of an advisory committee, of which I was chairman.

A record of Robert’s leadership of Cal Performances reveals how he nurtured his authority in a difficult campus environment. The guy who makes sure the piano is tuned revealed himself to be an artistic administrator particularly adept at organizational behavior. He had a deep understanding of the bureaucratic axiom that, on the Berkeley campus, influence was often more important than authority. Robert gained influence through the exercise of his artistic judgment. His program choices revealed an artistic sensibility that gained admirers. He used his advisory committee to gain influence by expanding it to include a community representative and adding campus leaders in the arts, some of whom were critical of his authority. With this group Robert began testing program ideas and developing support for decisions that began taking the organization in new directions. Later, when a Cal Performances board of trustees was formed, Robert used its artistic advisory committee in the same way.

Although Robert almost always followed the considered advice of his advisory committee, in one important instance he did not. This was when the Chancellor requested that Cal Performances be willing to help the campus by becoming the administrative home of student

musical groups—the Cal Band, the student jazz program, and a variety of student vocal groups. At that time all of these groups were organizational orphans.

Robert's committee looked carefully at the record of these groups, saw financial disarray, behavior issues and a need for musical leadership, and unanimously advised him to decline. Robert argued the need for Cal Performances to be a good campus citizen, but he gained no converts. In the end, however, he decided to say yes. Robert then spent large amounts of his time recruiting new professional musical leaders and integrating the administration of the student groups into Cal Performances systems. Over time the student musical groups flourished artistically. Campus administrators were pleased, though Cal Performances financial officers not so much.

Robert's leadership benefitted greatly from his disarming personality and his enormous energy. He made friends easily with managers, agents and artists. And he cultivated those friendships. Mikhail Baryshnikov, for example, likes to play golf. So whenever he was invited to perform at Cal Performances he could always count on a round or two of golf with Robert.

The Cal Band provided Robert an important opportunity to use his personal charm when in 1993 the football team was invited to play in the Alamo Bowl. Of course the Band had to be there, but there was no money for about 125 musicians to travel to San Antonio, stay in hotels and celebrate the New Year. Robert solicited the athletic department to help foot the bill with proceeds it would receive from playing in an important bowl game. As events would have it, when he made this proposal, I was the Interim Athletic Director, and had sent a firm message to all athletic department staff to be very careful with bowl game expenses, that unlike Cal's costly experience at the Citrus Bowl, before I was interim AD, the athletic department was not going to lose money this time.

So the Artistic Director of Cal Performances came to the stadium to use his charm and skill to negotiate with the Interim Athletic Director. We compromised—a somewhat smaller than usual band would play at the game, but they would not stay overnight in San Antonio, they would come straight home after the game. Well, Cal trounced Iowa, and a lean band played its part, although Cal fans at post-game parties missed the band and were surprised to learn that it was already on a charter flight back to Berkeley!

Robert's job of presenting a hundred or more events each season involved considerable risk, especially since some events and performers have to be booked one, two or more years in advance. Robert trusted his judgment and lived comfortably with risk, but sometimes the risk was large enough to make him feel the need to hedge it. That was true of his venture into opera. From his knowledge and research, Robert became convinced that Cal Performances should present a Mark Morris production of Rameau's baroque comic opera, *Platée*. Because the commitment and financial risk were substantial, he arranged a meeting to request back-up support, if it was needed, from Carol Christ, then Executive Vice-Chancellor and Provost, the University official to whom he reported, and he asked me to join him. He explained the proposed project and the risk and said he was reluctant to go forward without her support. She knew a great deal about Cal Performances, since she organized and led a freshman seminar on selected performances. Her response was, "Of course, go ahead. I have confidence in your judgment."

Platée was an artistic success and not a financial threat, and Robert never requested another “share the risk” meeting with the campus administration.

Robert is a modest man. He took his job seriously but not himself. Quick to laugh, even in difficult situations he could find humor. As a result, he was fun to work with. In concluding this introduction to his oral history, I think it will help the reader if I say here in summary form what Robert may not have said in so many words in his account of his work. In his twenty-three years as Director of Cal Performances, Robert Cole took a program lacking in artistic direction, losing money, and urgently in need of leadership, and turned it into the major performing arts presenter and commissioner on the West Coast, one of the most important dance stages in the nation and an internationally respected presence in the world of performing arts.

Well done, Robert!

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The Robert Cole Phenomenon

Introduction by Vladimir Kresin

To talk about Robert Cole and his tenure at Cal Performances is a very attractive, but also a very non-trivial task: it is not easy to describe a unique phenomenon. Indeed, there are about 4,500 (!) colleges and universities in the United States, and almost each of them has its own arts center with an annual season. Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley is just one such center, but during Cole's tenure we witnessed a real miracle. This center became a leading cultural institution in the country, similar to that at Lincoln Center in New York City. This phenomenon should be analyzed by professionals in arts management. My field is physics and I am not up to such a task. But the arts and especially performance arts are my main hobby and because of this I will try to approach the topic as a spectator, that is, through my personal experience.

I came to Berkeley in 1979, several years before Robert Cole's arrival. This is a real advantage for my perspective, since it allows me to split time in two periods: before and after he began running the program. When I arrived I noticed immediately that there was a large arts center on the Berkeley campus, but the building was mainly dark. Even the Paramount Theater in Oakland had a more interesting season than Cal Performances.

The Bay Area, and especially San Francisco, has a rather extensive cultural life, but nevertheless, travelling to New York City during my first several years here shocked me because I discovered that New York is a real arts capital. In addition, the contrast between New York and Berkeley was especially strong, because I had come from Moscow, which is also a very culturally rich city.

However, several years later, beginning in 1986, I noticed an important change. To my pleasant surprise, more and more interesting performances started taking place on the Berkeley campus. The transition lasted only a couple of years and soon we were witnessing the "arrival" of Lincoln Center at Berkeley. This statement is not an exaggeration. By looking at the *New York Times* or the *New Yorker* magazine, it was possible to see that many New York events were preceded or followed by the performances at Zellerbach Hall. And very soon I learned the reason for this important and exciting development: Robert Cole had become the director of Cal Performances. This story is a remarkable example of how one person can make a great difference.

It is enough to look at the programs over the seasons run by Robert Cole in order to be amazed at the quality of the performances and their variety. The list including such singers as Cecilia Bartoli, Mirella Freni, Leontyne Price, Renée Fleming, Bryn Terfel, Kiri Te Kanawa, Frederica von Stade, such pianists as Murray Perahia and Richard Goode, violinists Yehudi Menuhin, Itzhak Perlman, Hilary Hahn, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, jazz giant Dave Brubeck, as well as Sylvie Guillem, Marcel Marceau, and many others, speaks for itself. Such ballet companies as the Mariinsky, the Bolshoi, Nederlands Dans Theater, and the State Ballet of Georgia (Tbilisi) have performed here. Mikhail Baryshnikov was coming to Berkeley each year. Mark Morris, who is one of the leading choreographers, thanks to Robert Cole's efforts took up an annual residence here. I also cannot forget such memorable theatrical events as those by the Berliner Ensemble, Dublin's Abbey Theatre, Piccolo Teatro (Milan), and the performance of *Medea* with Fiona Shaw, a pre-Broadway run.

I can only add that I once “complained” to Robert that because of such a season I had so many unique distractions that it led to a shortage of time for doing physics, my main job.

Just coming to the concerts after selecting them from a large seasonal booklet, it was easy to take everything for granted. However, in reality, programming required hard work combined with top professional qualities: experience, mastery in fundraising, contacts with performers in many countries, musical talent—as we know, Robert Cole is an excellent conductor—and total devotion.

In order to clarify the last point, I would like to tell you a personal story. In addition to providing clarification, this story is memorable for me because, thanks to a strange turn of events, my professional foreign travel led to my first personal acquaintance with Robert. In 1992 I spent a month in Germany as guest professor at the so-called Bergische University in Wuppertal.

Professionally it was an interesting challenge, but I was not looking forward to the cultural life in this rather obscure city. Fortunately I was mistaken. I was lucky because while I was there a special festival celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Pina Bausch Tanztheater took place at Wuppertal. I was able to see about ten different programs during this event. Later, after returning to Berkeley, I was so enthusiastic about Pina Bausch and her theater that I wrote a letter to Robert Cole suggesting that he bring this company to Zellerbach Hall. I was so naïve that I thought that I was writing to Robert about something which was unknown to him. Several days later I received a response from him, informing me that he knew the Pina Bausch Theater very well and he had been trying hard for the past several years to bring this theater to Berkeley. At the end of the letter, he invited me to meet for lunch—probably, not many people wrote to him about Pina Bausch!—and this lunch was the beginning of our friendship. To conclude this happy story, let me add that a couple of years later Pina Bausch and her theater did come to Berkeley, and later made three more visits. Robert was able to commission a special program, *Nur Du*, made by Pina Bausch especially for her first tour in the US. The tour, which started in Berkeley, was also organized by Robert, and this program is still performed in many countries.

I want to stress the sentence written by Robert in his letter to me that he had been *trying hard for several years* [emphasis mine] to bring Pina Bausch’s theater to Berkeley. I suspect that many people who came to Zellerbach and enjoyed the legendary theater did not appreciate this aspect. Indeed, it took a lot of work and required a real talent in management to bring such a remarkable ensemble to Zellerbach Hall.

Robert especially enjoyed searching for new talent, and he discovered many new stars. The most remarkable example is Cecilia Bartoli. At present, it is even difficult to imagine that in the early 1990s her name was totally unknown. I remember her first concert at Hertz Hall, which was filled only to half of its capacity. Already the next year when she came to Zellerbach her recital was a sold out event. Cecilia Bartoli was very grateful to Robert for such early recognition, and later, a most sought-after performer, she came to Berkeley many times, driven by her loyalty and the special chemistry that had developed between her and the Berkeley audience. Her last appearance at Zellerbach was on February 22, 2009, for a recital given in honor of Robert Cole. In addition to Bartoli, Robert introduced many other stars, such as Murray Perahia, András Schiff, Julia Fischer, Vadim Repin, Maxim Vengerov, and others.

To be in charge at Cal Performances is a very complex task. Moreover, sometimes it is necessary to deal with published opinions. I remember for example the first recital given by the young András Schiff at Hertz Hall. When he started playing, one elderly lady sitting in the second row, about ten or twelve feet from the pianist, started coughing. After several minutes of continuous coughing, András Schiff stopped playing and told the audience that he was unable to play with such “accompaniment.” The lady left the audience. The pianist resumed playing his very interesting program and did very well, with great success. The next day I read the review in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: nothing was said about the program, the interpretation, etc. The critic focused entirely on this coughing episode, filling all his allotted space with senseless discussion about whether or not it was appropriate for the pianist to make such a request. According to the critic, a real pro was supposed to continue his playing without stopping. Fortunately, this idiotic article did not discourage Schiff from coming back to Berkeley, and he performed at Zellerbach many times.

Zellerbach Hall is a large, but very comfortable auditorium. Its setting and acoustics were greatly improved during Cole’s tenure. He found a specialist acoustics company in Southern California and many performers deeply appreciated the results. For example, I was told that Hillary Hahn, who is one of the most sought-after musicians, even expressed special interest in giving recitals in Zellerbach because of its uniquely good acoustics.

As I mentioned above, I came from Russia and it is natural that Russian culture is close to my heart. Russian literature (Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky), music (Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Stravinsky, Prokofiev), ballet (Balanchine, Nureyev, Baryshnikov) have made great contributions to world culture. And it was very nice to learn that Robert Cole deeply appreciates Russian art. He is even studying the language, and one can hope he will be fluent in Russian. Robert was travelling to Russia as a conductor, and he was bringing the best ballet companies—the Mariinsky and the Bolshoi—regularly to Zellerbach Hall. But Robert also invited the lesser known, but also excellent, Perm Ballet Theater, which performed *Swan Lake*, staged by Natalia Makarova. A number of prominent Russian performers (singer Olga Borodina, violinists Repin and Vengerov, poet Yevtushenko) also made appearances at Zellerbach. I still remember a very nice concert given by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Robert Cole. The program included *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov. Since this gem is rarely performed here, we were witnessing a really memorable event.

Cal Performances is not a new institution: it is 107 years old. Thanks to Robert Cole, 1986-2009 is a very notable period of its history. All of us who greatly benefited during this time wanted him to stay forever. Not only spectators like me; I remember that Mark Morris expressed exactly the same wish during the last year of Robert’s tenure. Unfortunately, such a wish is not realistic. Nevertheless, it is very important to preserve Cole’s legacy and tradition of excellence and to keep the programming at the highest level.

In connection with this, I recall the history of the San Francisco Opera. For twenty-seven years the legendary Kurt Herbert Adler ran the company. In 1981 he retired, although he was still in good physical shape. Nevertheless he felt that he was unable to make another five-year commitment. A new manager took over, and after this dramatic change the Opera began its decline and, despite several later changes, continues to operate at a much lower level than during Adler’s tenure. Maybe such a transition should not be so drastic. Looking back at Adler’s story,

it is obvious that it would have been better for him to have played a key role in selecting his successor, and continuing on for a few years, shepherding the future successor.

Robert Cole's tenure is indeed a golden page of Cal Performance's history. His record should be studied by anyone involved in the complex field of fine arts management.

Cal Performances as an institution is important not only for all of us living in the Bay Area, but also for the University of California. I remember very well the occasion when I was reading the *Moscow News* website which noted that the Bolshoi Ballet was going to tour the USA, performing *La Bayadère*. It was stated that the grand opening of the tour, its first performance, would be taking place at the *famous* [emphasis mine] Zellerbach Hall at the University of California at Berkeley. It was also noted that the prima ballerina of the Bolshoi ballet, Zakharova, would be dancing only this first performance and then would be flying from Berkeley to Milan where she is the principal dancer (Étoile) at La Scala. Such an announcement speaks for itself. A number of colleges in the US are famous for their football teams. Maybe I am old-fashioned, but I have been always pleased when reading during my travels or on the internet that UC Berkeley is famous not only as an excellent school but also as a unique cultural center.

Vladimir Kresin
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January 2014

It Was a Great Run!

Introduction by Hollis Ashby

Robert Cole served as Director of Cal Performances from 1986 to 2009. As we say in show biz, “It was a great run!”

It is not the duration of Robert’s tenure that impresses, however, but rather the quality of the institution that he built. This was the period of Cal Performances’ renaissance, the era in which, under Robert’s leadership, the arts were re-born at Berkeley and flourished to such an extent that, in a short time, the organization was transformed from a regional arts center with modest aspirations, to one of such international influence that artists from around the world vied for a spot on the season.

The identity that Cal Performances enjoys today was not accidental or a stroke of good luck, but the result of Robert’s distinct vision. “When I arrived at Berkeley,” he has said, “I had the idea to make this place more like a London, New York or Paris, where the greatest artists come from all over the world.”

I was fortunate to be a member of the staff during much of that time (as Associate Director, 1995 onward), and all the more fortunate to witness that vision unfolding on a daily basis. Newly commissioned work from Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham, Peter Sellars, John Adams, Laurie Anderson, Robert Lepage, Mark Morris and Mikhail Baryshnikov; grand productions by the Mariinsky Ballet & Orchestra, the Bolshoi Ballet, American Ballet Theater, Matthew Bourne, the Grand Kabuki Theatre of Japan, Lyon Opera & Ballet, the Royal Opera Covent Garden and English National Opera; and distinguished presentations by the Gate Theater Dublin, Propeller, Beijing People’s Art Theater, and the Berliner Ensemble name only a few of the remarkable shows produced and presented by Robert Cole. At the same time, the greatest musical stars of the day—Yo-Yo Ma, Leontyne Price, Cecilia Bartoli, Renée Fleming, Frederica von Stade, Murray Perahia, András Schiff—stood alongside precious, jewel-like performances by Jordi Savall, the Tallis Scholars and the Takács Quartet. It truly staggers the imagination to consider that roster in hindsight.

Robert Cole’s career, as you will enjoy reading about here, would appear to require the combined skills of a diplomat, a financier and a corporate MBA with supernatural ability to corral cooperation from hundreds of individuals at once. It’s true that he does possess those qualities, but what Robert accomplished at Cal Performances and what allowed him to excel in every job he has had is the result of his training as a conductor and an instrumentalist. With a very broad and deep knowledge of all kinds of music—from medieval polyphony to twelve-tone serialism—and his experience on the podium, he brought to his role as impresario the genuine education and training necessary to make sound artistic judgments. Robert is the “real deal” because of his background as a musician, and when he came to Berkeley, he knew how to seek out the very best talent to put on the stage.

The other important contributing factor to the success of Cal Performances under Robert Cole’s leadership is an aspect of his character that is inseparable from his love of music: that is, his love of people. He loves everyone and they love him. Robert cultivated relationships with the highest level artists in the world, and he demonstrated his appreciation for their artistry with sincere

understanding of their talent and with unaffected gratitude. Time and again I have witnessed how Robert's personal warmth transformed professional associations into life-long friendships. The artists wanted to come back to Berkeley *and made a point of coming back* because of their affection for Robert.

It won't be surprising to learn, then, that Robert's approachable, friendly nature set the tone for a pleasant work environment. The business of creating and producing an arts season is infinitely complex, and it takes very little to derail years of planning (e.g. The US Customs Department holding up costumes and sets on the Oakland docks; a blizzard in the Midwest grounding an artist's only flight; charting a 2,500 mile tractor trailer relay race to deliver a set on time without leaving a trail of speeding tickets!). Robert worked extra hard to ensure that his staff had the latitude to be productive, and always, he demonstrated that the chief ingredient in managing an operation of such complexity was to have an open door and to be always available no matter how large or small the problem.

Additionally, while Robert is known for his prescience in selecting outstanding artistic events, he was equally judicious in identifying the unique strengths of his staff members. An individual may not have even realized they possessed such gifts until Robert encouraged them and then gave that person significant responsibility and a wide berth to accomplish something great. We were fortunate to work with some remarkably talented people—Tim Whalen (Development Director), Mark Heiser (General Manager), Danny Nilles (Master Carpenter), David McCauley (AileyCamp Director), Tom Hansen (Production Director) and Laura Abrams (Education Programs Director), among many others—who enthusiastically embraced the mission of Cal Performances in general, and Robert Cole's vision specifically. Typically, while his staff would give Robert all the credit for the tremendous success that he made of Cal Performances, Robert will never take that recognition alone, but rather share and share alike.

It is always gratifying to sit in the audience and appreciate the success of a truly organization-wide effort—like the Bolshoi Ballet's stunning *Swan Lake* or Mark Morris's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*—yet, personally, the most enjoyable times at Cal Performances were spent around the meeting table in Robert's office, where for many years we planned the performance program that the public sees on stage. With my colleagues Mary Dixon (our outstanding Director of Marketing & Sales) and Robin Pomerance (Artistic Administrator extraordinaire), that was where I really got an education in how to run this business, but it was also the space in which we could have fun. Whether recounting tales of outlandish collegial behavior or roaring with laughter over skillfully deployed impersonations of artists and agents (always a flattering homage, to be sure!), our confabs were the most anticipated events of the week. When I am asked to recount the best piece of advice I've ever been given, I quote Robert's professional maxim: "If we aren't having fun, there's no point in doing this!"

As you will discover throughout this memoir, no one can characterize the triumphs better than Robert, but I would be remiss if I did not mention two notable achievements. Certainly one must be to credit Robert with putting Berkeley on the map by the founding of the Berkeley Festival & Exhibition. Through this biennial festival, Robert brought the West Coast early music scene into focus and extended its reach internationally by including the world's best medieval, Renaissance and baroque musicians.

The other was the establishment of AileyCamp at UC Berkeley. Robert knew through his friendship with Alvin Ailey that the choreographer had created a successful arts education program for at-risk youth. The curriculum introduces middle school students to the arts in a six-week intensive summer training program, and is provided entirely tuition-free to campers. Robert launched the first AileyCamp in Berkeley in June 2002, and to date, it has served over 1,000 children and their families. It was Robert's belief that the arts can transform lives and make positive, powerful changes in the community that made AileyCamp a reality here.

Robert Cole was building a new program at Cal Performances at a time when like institutions across the country were struggling to define the artistry and business of performing arts presentation. As a result, the performing arts "industry" in its entirety—from artists and agents to civic and university-based centers—looked to what was happening at UC Berkeley as a guidepost. It is both my personal observation and testimony from countless colleagues that the field developed in close alignment to the way Robert's ideas at Cal Performances played out.

Those ideas and a distinguished career in the arts are captured in this oral history. I hope you enjoy reading it!

Hollis Ashby, Former Associate Director
Cal Performances
University of California, Berkeley
December 2013

Interview History by Suzanne Riess

The Regional Oral History Office at Berkeley first explored doing an oral history with Robert Cole on his tenure as director of Cal Performances back in 2007. He was such a phenomenon, had made such an impact at Berkeley, that even then it seemed appropriate to document his career. Now, some seven years later, we have the interviews, and that is because of the generosity of Cal Performances in underwriting the project, and because Robert Cole at long last had time to settle into a reflective mode. It is immediately evident in the oral history that this man worked full time, mornings, afternoons, nights, and weekends, and he would have us understand that doing anything less would not have given us the stunningly successful venue that Cal Performances ripened into in the over one hundred years since its beginnings as the Committee on Arts and Lectures.

These interviews, which began in 2012, were stirred into existence by Earl F. Cheit, who himself has made many good and generous things happen at Berkeley, and whose 2002 oral history in the University History Series includes a section on his role as the founding chair of the Cal Performances Board of Trustees. Budd Cheit paved the way to make the interviews happen, and because over the years I had completed a number of interviews for the Regional Oral History Office on the cultural history of the University, I was asked to conduct these interviews. The oral history office earlier had completed an interview undertaken in 1998 with the Committee on Arts and Lectures long-time director Betty Connors.

Getting together with Robert Cole took some doing, as he was still in his 24/7 mode—retired from Berkeley in 2009, in 2010 he took on the position of Artistic Consultant for the nascent Green Music Center at Sonoma State University which had its grand opening in the fall of 2012. This was a big job, and had him on the freeway and on the phone fairly constantly! Also Robert and I needed to work around his winter orchestral conducting stint for the Moscow Ballet in Kuala Lumpur in December 2012, and in Istanbul in 2013! But those engagements aside, and holding sacrosanct his tennis dates on Fridays, we met for the ten hour-and-a-half sessions it took to tell this story. We began in November 2012 and finished in June 2013.

The research and preparation I needed to do the interviews naturally leaned heavily on an important set of documents in the form of the binders of Cal Performances announcements. Both Robert and I consulted them, trying to get straight when was what, as it were. Our Cal Performances contact, Christina Kellogg, director of communications, was ever obliging in providing those binders. Hollis Ashby, retired associate director of Cal Performances, and author of one of the three introductions to this Cole oral history, had researched and written the comprehensive 100-Year History, which was a great overview, and underscored the recent highlights of the institution. Over the years, Cal Performances had assiduously saved scrapbooks of reviews and press releases, and they were available to consult. All in all there was excellent material, and for me, a great excuse to get behind the scenes to the working areas of Zellerbach Hall.

Our interview sessions were held at my house in North Berkeley, across the dining room table, with room for notes and documents, tape-recorders, and glasses of water. Robert Cole took the oral history interviews seriously as an opportunity to document the stories of legendary

performers and innovative programming, and a place to articulate his feelings about the importance in the arts world of the achievement at Berkeley. He also came to realize that the oral history was his chance to look back with pride to what was wonderfully fortunate about the job, and about his life in music. It is a true Berkeley story, bringing in community as well as faculty and staff, and the introductions by good friends and colleagues Budd Cheit, Hollis Ashby, and Vladimir Kresin underscore those aspects.

Over the course of the interviews, the job at the Green Music Center periodically heated up, which meant we sometimes had to adjust meeting dates. A smartphone, set down on the table as we began the meetings, told Robert Cole when “they” were calling their Artistic Consultant, and it required discipline to set that aside, briefly.

The gifted and articulate Kathleen Zvanovec brought her skill, and her great enthusiasm for the subject, to transcribing the interviews. When it came to editing—following my transcript review and some re-arranging of the order of stories as well as dealing with the inevitable repetitions—Cole was a fine editor, careful to get it right, and the result is what we have here. As Hollis says, “It was a great run.”

The Regional Oral History of The Bancroft Library is grateful to Cal Performances and to Budd Cheit for enthusiastically sponsoring this Robert Cole Oral History.

Suzanne Riess, Interviewer-Editor
Berkeley, California
February 2014

Interview #1: November 12, 2012

[Tape 1: Side A]

Riess: You were born in San Jose? Why were your parents there?

Cole: Well, my father came there to get away from El Paso, Texas, because I know his father, my grandfather, was a very strict man. And I think my father wanted to get away from that very, very strict Baptist environment. And so he came to San Jose somehow, I don't know how. But he met my mother, of course, in church.

Riess: He was a Baptist?

Cole: Well, he was a Baptist, but when he came to San Jose he was looking for a place to live and he found—this is from what my mother told me—he found a place to stay. But this woman said he could only stay there if he would go to church with her. [laughing]

Riess: I wonder if San Jose then was at all a tough place?

Cole: I don't think so, no. Well, at least not my world, because my other grandfather, my mother's father, was a minister of the [Church of the] Nazarene in San Jose on Twenty-first Street. And so that's where my father had to go to church if he was going to live in this place. And that's where he met my mother. But the sad thing is that just before I was born my father was killed in an auto accident.

Riess: Oh.

Cole: Yes, it was very, very bad, it was very hard on my mother. So then my mother had to get a job, which she did. She went to some kind of business school someplace. She'd been, obviously, in high school and whatever but she hadn't pursued what you'd call higher education. But she did get some kind of a business degree or certificate or something and became what would now be, I guess, a CFO, but was then called a bookkeeper for some small business. She worked all the time.

And so it was—when I was a kid I was surrounded by my grandparents, and it was work, church. [rapping table for emphasis]

Riess: Was church a musical environment?

Cole: Well, that's an interesting thing because it *was*. My mother sang in the choir and sometimes she would direct the choir because the choir director wouldn't show up. She was very musical in that respect, but not professionally.

But when I was about fourteen or something I guess I had kind of rebelled against going to church or said something about the church—I wasn't really happy about it or

something—that caused my mother to take me to the minister and wanted to have me speak about that and my disaffection with the church. And he said, “Well, what’s the problem?” I said, “Well, I don’t care for the music.” [laughter] Of course he had no idea what I was talking about, because by then I had gotten into the idea of Bach and that kind of music. And that kind of music was not played in the Nazarene Church. I only found a few years later when I got to college, or maybe even earlier, that that kind of music was played in the Episcopal Church. So anyway that was my religious background!

Riess: Did you have somebody who was—was your mother trying to find father figures for you or mentors?

Cole: Well, she, for better or for worse—and it was mostly for worse—she remarried, and my stepfather was, unfortunately, an alcoholic it turned out, and so it was a bad combination of a Nazarene woman and an alcoholic stepfather.

Riess: What characterizes Nazarene?

Cole: It’s a very, very conservative version of the Methodists, going back—see, my grandfather had been, I think, a Methodist minister who then turned into a Nazarene minister, which is more conservative than the Methodists at the time, and still I guess. But then I had several uncles rather high up in the Nazarene Church as it turned out, so it was a family thing. One of them became head of the Nazarene Church in California, living in Pasadena. So it was all very centered around the church.

Riess: Where did you take music lessons?

Cole: Well that’s also related to my father. The only thing my father left me was a small ¼-size violin, and I don’t remember anything except that I’m sure my mother started me taking lessons because of, you know, sort of like a—

Riess: A sentimental attachment?

Cole: Yes, that’s what I’m trying to say. And so I had this little violin and I started taking lessons at the age of six. Somehow she managed to find the money for that, which probably wasn’t too much, but at least I had a violin. And I guess I took to it.

Riess: Your memories about this—I guess you weren’t forced to do it.

Cole: No, I really loved it. And at some point I traded that violin for a larger violin, and I had another better teacher, I remember. I do remember changing teachers to get more advanced and better training. So up until the age of about fifteen, I played the violin, that was a big thing in my life.

But I remember my sixth grade teacher wrote in the book which you’d get, the yearbook when you graduate from elementary school, she wrote, “You are so good at

math, you be sure and get a good education.” She meant I should be a math teacher or something.

Riess: So you had that combination, the math and music thing?

Cole: Yes, but I wasn’t really—I was just interested in music.

Riess: Were you a math prodigy?

Cole: Well, I might have been but I didn’t—I wasn’t interested in doing it. I was too busy. So I played the violin, and I played in the orchestra in high school—in those days they had orchestras in junior high schools. And I played little recitals around here and there when I was just very young, for my teacher, that sort of thing.

And then I got into jazz. A friend of mine who was sort of a jazz musician, a pianist, was playing in little bands—I mean kids’ bands, you know. And I thought gee, that looks nice, I’d like to do that, so I started playing string bass a little bit. But then I said I really want to play in these bands, so I took up the saxophone and the clarinet with another teacher, and I *really* took to that. Because I wanted to play in these bands that he was playing in—and by then I was fourteen maybe, and studying saxophone and clarinet, and I really just—that’s all I did. I got into these several bands.

We played at first just for fun, and then we started getting paid, and then when I was a senior in high school I got a full-time job in a very, very high-class night club in San Jose six nights a week. I was still in high school, and we played two shows a night—there was a show between the dancing and dining—and I was making more money than my mother! So I was completely into music. And my musical heroes were, I would say, eclectic, because as a saxophone player and thinking of myself as a jazz musician—which I really wasn’t because I was just reading charts and playing in bands—but it was Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, and then the other side was Bach and Wagner.

Riess: What were you hearing and how sophisticated was your musical knowledge? Did you go to concerts?

Cole: Well yes, I went to big band concerts. Big bands, they toured in those days, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Stan Kenton, you name it, Woody Herman, everybody came through San Jose, and we would always go, me and my friends. We were cool, we didn’t dance, we just went to listen. And then of course I actually also remember hearing Pierre Monteux conduct the San Francisco Symphony in San Jose in those days.

Riess: Did you go up to San Francisco?

Cole: Not much, although I had two aunts who lived in San Francisco and we went occasionally to visit them. Later on when I was in college I started studying clarinet

with one of members of the San Francisco Symphony, so I would go for lessons up there when I was a little bit older.

Riess: You were a musician. That was *it*.

Cole: Yes.

Riess: You must have a lot of sympathy for kids and their instruments, and how you put it together.

Cole: Yes. My wife [Susan Muscarella] is doing that, which is nice. She runs the Jazzschool in Berkeley, and so she has all these kids who are very much like me.

Riess: Were there mentor people for you that you think of back in those days?

Cole: One of them was this friend who was three years older, and he's still around, named Darryl Parker. He was a saxophone player, but he also played piano and became a choral director and so on. But being a little older, he's the one actually that I was in this first band with where I got this first real job. And I had many other jobs with him—a lot of them were in bands where he played saxophone and I would play also in the same band with him.

And then at some point I went down and lived with my grandmother for one semester. This was after I got out of high school and started college at San Jose State University, because it was there and it was free. That's the only option I had, and I never would have thought about anything else, because people I knew, Darryl, my friend was over there. We were playing in the same band together. Every weekend we had a job, weekends, the whole weekend.

Riess: So this could have been your life?

Cole: Yes, I thought for a brief moment, but I realized before too long that wasn't it. But yes, at that time it was my life.

Riess: Were bands drugs and alcohol too?

Cole: No, no. There was some of that, but it was only among musicians and it wasn't rampant in my world. The only people who knew about that were musicians in those days. It wasn't something—and it was kind of cool but it also wasn't something we did, because we were all working and paying attention to practicing, et cetera.

But actually, so Darryl, my friend, was a big influence because he was a very passionate Bach kind of scholar in a way, in his own way. And that led me in that direction more seriously, like playing—I don't play the piano but I did play the piano then, a little bit, and I started with Bach chorales. So I just started playing and really got into the whole thing of Bach being you know—the centerpiece of music.

Riess: Is it the other side of the brain? Is it so different from jazz?

Cole: No, I don't think so. It's just great music, and if you have musical ears that's what attracts you. And did and still does.

Riess: Yes. So you said you went to live with your grandmother.

Cole: Yes, in El Paso, my father's parents. And my grandmother actually was my closest, I guess, family. She and I were very close. Interesting thing was she wasn't my real grandmother, she was the second wife of my grandfather. But when my grandfather died she asked me if I would come down and live with her, would I like to. And so I thought yes, that sounds good, because my grandfather had just bought a new car, so I had a new car to drive and I was seventeen, I think, and I was in the first year of college. So I went down there and transferred to University of Texas in El Paso. I had a playing job there too in a band which played every weekend at the army base there, so right away I was playing, working.

Interesting thing about that to me now, looking back, is we used to go to Juarez, on a regular basis. Me and my grandmother would go there, or me and my friends who were sixteen, seventeen, eighteen whatever, at the most. And we'd go to Juarez and just hang around, go to the bars, listen to music. Not to drink, but to go to listen, because the bands—they were fantastic! The big Mexican bands playing Latin music.

And to think of it now? We were wandering around, two kids at night in Juarez, in the bars and so on. Oh, I can't believe it, that that actually happened, but it did, and that's where I first got into Latin music. Anyway, that was brief, because I decided oh, I want to go back to San Jose. And it's a good thing I did because there were—it was better, obviously, that I did. So I left my new car and my grandmother.

Riess: It was better?

Cole: Well, there were better opportunities here and a lot of things happened that were better for me. As it turned out, one, I had better opportunities playing at that time. And also, I got into realizing that I wasn't going to be a jazz player all my life, that I was going to be something else in music you know. It's nice when you think about it, so many kids say, "I don't know what I'm going to do." I knew what I was going to do I think when I was fifteen, certainly by sixteen.

Riess: Did you love reading or theater or any of those other things?

Cole: Well, actually that's an interesting thing. When I was in high school—I remember this very clearly—and still living at home, because I moved out of my mother's house when I was sixteen. I went to El Paso, and then when I came back I didn't go back to the house, I went and lived with my friend Darryl, and listened to Bach all the time.

But reading—I remember for some reason, and I don't know exactly why, it must have been the thing to do that is cool, or considered cool, and I was only sixteen or

seventeen or something like that, I was reading Dostoyevsky and Karl Marx—I remember clearly hiding *Das Kapital* under my bed so my mother wouldn't see it.

Riess: That's like right after World War II?

Cole: Well, this would be '48—yes, when I was seventeen, sixteen, '47, yes, yes. And it must have been something that was in the air, that people who are cool and educated or whatever, and I knew a couple of them, and I think it was Darryl probably.

I read a lot of Russian stuff, interestingly enough in translation, and now sixty, whatever years later, I started studying Russian. And I learned that the translator of all those books I read is now much out of favor. There was one woman who translated all these books into English, just one person, a British translator, Constance Garnett. And now there are new translations which are much better they say. I read a big piece in the *New Yorker* magazine about it, yes. And now I'm studying Russian!

Riess: Did you graduate from San Jose?

Cole: Yes I did. I graduated and then of course the Korean War was going on, and actually in the interim there, my last year of college, I married my first wife, Charlotte. And she was also a musician, a pianist, and sang in the choir. We went to the Episcopal Church together and sang in the choir, and so we thought well, we should get married of course—what else? So we did. But I was on a deferment because I was in college, otherwise you would be drafted.

Riess: I wondered about that, yes.

Cole: Yes, so very fortunate thing for me. I mean rather than be drafted. I had a friend who was in the air force here, had also come out of San Jose State, and he also was avoiding the draft, so to speak, avoiding the army, because if you were in the army you would go to Korea. So he had enlisted in the air force and there was this very strange thing it seemed—it was great then for me and for him. He'd enlisted in the air force and if you enlisted in the air force and you were a musician, a good musician, you could go to a band training place, which happened to be at Parks Air Force Base, just right out here in Pleasanton. There's still something out there, but it is not what it was. It was a big air force basic training base.

And so I went there, I enlisted, and because of my friend who was already there who had some influence, I was enlisted as a sergeant, not a private or whatever you call it, at a higher rank, first of all. And secondly, when I got out of basic training, which I had to do, that usual thing—and it was weird going around as a sergeant in basic training, I'll tell you that. That was very weird, because I outranked all the people who were supposed to be training me.

But anyway, when I got out I was teaching in this band school, so I became a teacher and band director basically. And the really crazy thing was that the people, the guys in the band, were from Juilliard, all these great schools from all over the country. It

was an incredibly talented group of people, USC, some of them. They were all trying to avoid the draft too, or avoid the army. So I was teaching them—age twenty-one or something, or age twenty, I don't know.

Riess: That's amazing.

Cole: Yes, it was an incredible break, and that's the reason I ended up going to USC, because in this band at Parks Air Force Base there was particularly one guy who had come from USC, had graduated from USC School of Music, who was my closest friend there and also a clarinet player. And we used to go to the opera together and hung out together totally. Because in the air force you don't do anything, you just hang out you know. [laughter] You'd have your rehearsals and march once in a while, but basically there's not much to do. Practice a lot, study, read, and so on—and then hope you don't get sent overseas! But after two years—well, anyway so it's because of *him*, Donal Michalsky, who was a composer also and had studied with Ingolf Dahl at USC, he said, "When you get out of here you should go to USC."

But then after two years I was going to be transferred, and I was offered the opportunity of either going to Okinawa or St. John's, Newfoundland in an air force band. And that was easy choice for me, because the war was in Korea. So I chose to go to St. John's, Newfoundland, which also—I had become an Anglophile because of my Episcopal Church whatever, the whole thing. And I thought well, that's the oldest British colony in the Americas, St. John's. It's a very old city. Anyway, so I chose to go there and that was NEAC headquarters, Northeast Air Command headquarters, so it wasn't just an air force base, it was one of the biggest air force bases and had a very big band. We were worried about the Russians at that time and all that stuff. So I was in this wonderful band.

Riess: The band is basically to keep up the spirits, or what?

Cole: Yes, do parades and play in the officers' club, et cetera, et cetera, which I did. But mostly I practiced the clarinet. And I was studying orchestration with this friend of mine who was at USC, by mail. So I was studying, I was teaching.

Riess: How did you know how to teach?

Cole: I didn't. I learned. But you know, the other thing is that in St. John's, on the base I became the choir director, which was a really big thing because they had a pretty good choir, the wives of the dentists that I knew were in the choir, and the doctors and so on, and then the officers were in the choir, on the chapel on the base. A lot of talented people, of course, who were in the same position I was in. They were trying to avoid going to Korea, whatever. So I became the choir director for the church and that was my first choir job. And then also I got a job on the CBC radio conducting a little group—that's the Canadian Broadcasting Company, and they actually did live music on radio, with their plays and so on. So my first real conducting gig was in Canada, where I actually got paid for broadcasts.

Anyway, so I became the choir director and then they were going to ship me up to a very remote base way up north. Part of the band was going to have to go up there because this cold war was heating up you know, and they were building another base further north, and they were going to send a small band up there.

And my wife, who was there with me at St. John's, because you could have dependents there—and she sang in the choir of course and she was very close to the colonel who was the head chaplain for Northeast Air Command, not just the base, he was a colonel you know. My wife, she was distraught because she couldn't go with me if I went up to this other place—Thule Air Force Base it was called, and it was under ice basically. And she couldn't go, and she was distraught. So she said, "I'm going to see the colonel," colonel so-and-so, "and ask him if there's anything we can do."

So I'm sitting in my office, in my place in the barracks where we hung out. And she had gone to see the colonel, and she told me later on that she sat in his lap and he kissed her and said don't worry, and blah, blah, blah. [laughter] You know she just—she used her ways you know. And now I'm sitting there and I hear the officer in my band answering the phone, "Oh colonel, yes, yes, oh yes he's meant to go, yes. Oh, I understand, okay fine, yes, you need him. Yes, okay, great." We didn't go. [laughter] I stayed there, and as I say, continued studying and working, and preparing to go to USC was the idea.

Riess: That was the place anyone would want to go, right?

Cole: At that time especially.

Riess: Yes. Not Juilliard?

Cole: Well, I wanted to go to USC one, because I was from California, but two, at that time USC was, and LA, was an incredible place. Stravinsky was there, Schoenberg had just died when I got there but he had been there, and Stravinsky was there. Ingolf Dahl—he was at USC—was a very close associate of Stravinsky, and I wanted to study with Ingolf.

Riess: When you said that you were studying orchestration long distance, you could actually do that?

Cole: Yes, well, I had a lot of time.

Riess: Yes, so you, so you entered USC with a lot of experience?

Cole: Some, yes, and I'd studied, of course, at San Jose State, but this was at another level.

I would orchestrate, let's say for string orchestra, something like some Debussy piano piece and send it back to this guy in LA, who was a student of Ingolf's, a composer himself, my friend Donald Michalsky. Anyway I was just trying to prepare myself.

Riess: To orchestrate?

Cole: Well, to become a conductor. That's another story, but I became a conductor because I got this choir job and it seemed to work out, you know. I guess people liked me, and I liked doing it. And then when I got to USC, when I got out of the air force, naturally I needed to make a living somehow while I was in school, although there was some kind of GI support—but not enough. So I had a choir job right away in LA, I got a choral conducting job in a church. I had given up the idea of playing in bands. See, it was now in church music because that was the easiest thing to get into.

Riess: And you were doing that while you were at USC?

Cole: While I was a graduate student. I studied conducting there with Ingolf, and I studied opera with Walter Ducloux. He was I think also Swiss, as Ingolf Dahl was.

I was at USC, and I wanted to stay there. Originally I was going to do a degree in musicology. But I realized after—well, one, my advisor left after a year or two and went to Boston University. And she was a great, great person, Pauline Alderman. That was a big loss, because when your advisor changes, you're in the midst of writing, preparing to do a dissertation—it's a catastrophe. Suddenly you have a new person to deal with and your whole life is ruined.

Anyway, besides that, I was leaning towards actually being a performer rather than sitting in a library the rest of my life. And that was really me, more—my personality was more inclined. Anyway, I didn't follow the musicology thing, although I started that way. I spent a lot of time, I took every course USC offered in music, and I just wanted to stay. I loved it and I didn't want to leave, but I had to all of sudden, because suddenly we had a child. And I needed to get a job, and I had been two years plus at USC graduate school, but I didn't have a degree yet. Anyway I needed a job in a hurry. [laughing]

Riess: Charlotte wasn't working?

Cole: No, she couldn't at that time you know. She had been teaching before. So I went to one of my professors there, a very famous guy at that time, Ralph Rush, and I said, "I really need to get a job teaching, high school, whatever." And he said, "Well, there's a job open in Tulare, California." I said, "Where's that?"

And he said, "I know it's a good job and you can have it. It's yours." That was different in those days. It's amazing. He just called up whoever, the band director there. They wanted to have an orchestra director who would assist with the band, but somebody who would concentrate on the orchestra, and that was me. It was a large high school with a huge band, one hundred forty, two hundred members in the band.

And I was so bored up there, what I did was start an orchestra, a community orchestra, and that's how I started actually having an orchestra. I just did it. Besides

my high school teaching I was starting this orchestra, and it's still there, fifty-two years later, the Tulare County Symphony.

Riess: You were there from 1960 to '73, thirteen years.

Cole: Well, but I wasn't living there, because after three years I called up this same person at USC and said, "Is there anything happening in LA? I'd like to move back to LA and get back there. I want to finish my degree," because I hadn't finished it.

He said, "Well, there is a job at North Hollywood High School. It just opened." So-and-so is going to go to someplace, and he had a very great orchestra at North Hollywood High School, quite highly renowned, and so I just got this job the same way. This person just called the principal and said, "I've got this guy who can do it." It wasn't like it is today. [laughter] I got the job and that's where I met Michael [Tilson Thomas], because Michael was a senior in high school, and he was there in my orchestra. He was in every class I taught practically, harmony, music history.

Later on his mother told me—by then I had an orchestra in Tulare, I had an orchestra in Orange County, you know, these were community orchestras or pickup orchestras kind of like they have around here now. I had a job teaching at Immaculate Heart College, which no longer exists but was then in Hollywood. It was part-time, but I was an adjunct faculty member at Immaculate Heart College, and I had an opera workshop there. I had all these different things going on at the same time I was supposed to be teaching full-time at North Hollywood High School.

So the first day I was there—and as I say, Michael's mother told me this later on—I had my scores there at my desk, preparing for that night's rehearsal someplace else and paying attention to that. And his mother told me that Michael came home and said, "Father, Mother, we have a new music teacher—and he *likes* music."

Riess: Oh, that's so great.

It does sound like a frantic life. Maybe it was easier to drive around LA then?

Cole: Easier than now obviously. I drove every night. Later on, as things progressed, I also resigned from the teaching thing because I just couldn't do it. I resigned from North Hollywood because I was conducting four nights a week and teaching at the college and so on, and so on. And then I had this ballet company I started working with.

Riess: And this is the Ballet Society of Los Angeles?

Cole: Yes, and I didn't know then how famous these people were that I was working with. It was David Lichine and Tania Riabouchinska. Riabouchinska was one of the three baby ballerinas in the Ballets Russes, the original Ballets Russes, when she was fourteen, fifteen years old. She was one of the three famous ballerinas, along with Tamara Toumanova. David Lichine was the star, the male star of the Ballets Russes in Paris, and then they end up in LA.

Riess: This is more of that amazing immigrant culture?

Cole: Well, yes, the artists came to LA, because many of them hoped that they'd make a living in the film industry, whether as a musician, a writer, whatever, and even dancers, because you *could* make money dancing in the shows in those days, in the movies in those days. They actually had *dancing*. And some of them had been on tour. They had been touring and they went to LA and they liked it, so they stayed there. David and Tania had a wonderful dance studio in Beverly Hills, they'd picked the right place you know. Paul Newman and his wife Joanne Woodward were there—Joanne actually took a class there and was a big fan of David and Tania. And so they had a little dance company, ballet company, which I became the director of, both conductor and executive director.

Riess: Executive meant?

Cole: Running the thing.

Riess: Running the thing, there's an experience! And that's the first time you had to deal with the money end?

Cole: Well, Tulare—I had to run that symphony too. I was raising money, organizing a board. But in LA with the ballet company I had Joanne, which was really nice because she was our chair for some years, even when they moved to Connecticut.

So I had all these different things going on you know.

Riess: But you were getting experience dealing with fundraising and boards?

Cole: Oh yes, every one of them I had to do some fundraising, right, absolutely, to keep it going. And that's how I learned to do it, out of necessity. If you want to conduct you've got to make it work. I was doing all these things, and Michael and I kept a relationship after he left high school and went to USC. He studied basically with the same people that I had been working with. Ingolf was his main teacher. But we kept a relationship because I started a little orchestra in North Hollywood, or LA, and we called it the North Hollywood Chamber Orchestra.

And my idea was to play contemporary music on every program, a world premiere, because I knew if we had a world premiere, we would have press in the *LA Times*—that's if you had the right composers, you know. And it worked. Michael helped me in several ways. One, he knew a lot of kids at USC who could come and play for very little money, very good players, and two, you know just that we were friends in that way.

So I was the conductor of the North Hollywood Chamber Orchestra and he was the assistant conductor. And at the big gala we did here at Berkeley—and I knew this but nobody else did—he said, “I'm happy to be here for Robert. He gave me my first conducting gig, and it was the *Siegfried Idyll* of Wagner,” which I remembered and

he remembered too. The *Siegfried Idyll*, do you know that piece? It's a very famous piece, not a modern piece—we always had one, as I say, world premiere or American premiere of something.

Riess: Where were you getting all these world premiere pieces?

Cole: Well, there were a lot of composers in LA, famous and not so famous, but a lot of them. It was an *incredible* place. Really it was like being in Vienna in Beethoven's time, because Stravinsky was there, the greatest composer, and Schoenberg. You can argue which is the greatest at the time. For example, Charlotte, my wife and I went to the premiere of *Agon* which is a very famous ballet by Stravinsky. It wasn't a ballet originally, it was just a piece of music. Balanchine later on made it a ballet. It was the premiere of *Agon* in 1957, June 17, at Royce Hall, and it was Stravinsky's birthday, his seventy-fifth birthday concert. And we just went because it was a concert and it was his birthday, and I knew a lot of people would be there that I knew. I was a young student, I was just a young conductor, and all these famous people were there. But it was like okay, it's Stravinsky's birthday, he's here, but who gave the opening remarks? Aldous Huxley.

That was the world we were living in. Thomas Mann lived there, and all these famous people, because they had to get out of Europe and they found LA as a place where either they could make a living or they could find friends of theirs. There was a whole British group of intellectuals and writers, a little enclave of Brits, Aldous Huxley being one of them.

Riess: Did you learn any languages along the way?

Cole: I studied French when I was in the air force as part of my filling the time. And then I studied German at USC—you know, you had to study a language, obviously.

Riess: And did you pick up Spanish in El Paso?

Cole: Well, I had studied Spanish in El Paso and used it quite a bit down there, but that was just sort of in passing.

Riess: Well, that sounds like a life. But it sounds like a really crazy life. What was the next big break then, music director?

Cole: Well, then in 1973 I was in LA doing all these different orchestras, four different orchestras, the college thing and the ballet thing. Michael had been appointed music director at the Buffalo Philharmonic. And so he called me one day and said, "We have auditioned x number," I've forgotten how many people, "as associate conductor, and the orchestra has turned them all down. Would you come out and audition?"

Riess: What is associate conductor?

Cole: Well, it's the guy who does all the work. [laughter] Because, at least in that orchestra at that time—Michael did twelve concerts a year, I think it was twelve. But you know, he would do, just as he does here, he does x number and then you have either guest conductors, or you, the associate, does it. But all of the children's concerts, all of the *Messiahs*, all of the *Nutcrackers*, all of the parks concerts—and I did two of what you call the subscription concerts, two sets.

Riess: And you do the rehearsals too?

Cole: Yes, yes, and I had to be at all of Michael's rehearsals to cover, or any conductor. I had to be at all the rehearsals and be prepared to fill in, which in Buffalo was important, because sometimes it was snowing, and somebody couldn't arrive and I had to take over.

Riess: What was the attraction of Buffalo?

Cole: I always wanted to go to New York—that was, after LA, and then I wanted to go to New York. And I thought well, this is the right direction.

Riess: And Charlotte too?

Cole: By then we were no longer together. I had two sons with her, but we had separated, unfortunately.

Riess: What are your son's names?

Cole: Alex is one, and the other is Monty, Thomas Montgomery.

I went to Buffalo, and actually I had custody of the two teenage boys, for reasons I don't think I need to go into. But I did have custody of the two boys, and they went with me to Buffalo, rather reluctantly, but they went, and they were in high school at the time.

Riess: Are they musical?

Cole: Well, Alex ended up going to Juilliard and finishing Juilliard as a cellist, went to Juilliard School on scholarship. Monty played violin, and then, and still guitar.

[Tape 1: Side B]

Riess: They grew up in a musical world.

Cole: Yes, they didn't end up being professional musicians, although Alex did graduate from Juilliard, but he just decided he didn't want to have my kind of life. He's an outside kind of guy, he loves surfing. We sent him to the school in Santa Barbara, the Music Academy of the West, when he was very young, and he fell in love with Santa Barbara and the whole surfing beach scene. When he graduated from Juilliard I took

him to lunch and I said, "What are you going to do now?" And he said, "I want to live in Santa Barbara." I said, "Oh."

He did, he went to live in Santa Barbara, and he played in the symphony for some years, but that wasn't a living, that was just playing. And he started a business and that's what he does, he's in the construction business.

Riess: When he said he didn't want to have your kind of life, in some ways what you've described is really hard working, but it's also glamorous.

Cole: Well, but you know he'd be playing cello in an orchestra, and the rehearsals every day inside, and maybe living in Detroit, because that's the job you could get.

Riess: Right, right, but I mean for you did you get a kick out of the glamour end of it?

Cole: That wasn't why I was doing it. I wanted to be in music, and things just developed the way they did.

Riess: But music is not boring, many things are boring.

Cole: Oh no, no, it's always interesting. You know, it's a life—it's always interesting.

Riess: And the fundraising and dealing with people that you had to do back then?

Cole: I really enjoyed it, and I have friends in Tulare that—the ones that haven't died, which is not too many—but who I really had close relationships with. We became like family, because after moving to LA I was still conducting in Tulare, one of my jobs, and we would go there and spend weekends in people's homes, and the kids would go swimming and ride horses there—it was fun.

Riess: Okay, the Buffalo Philharmonic, that's not as far north as Thule, but it's far.

Cole: No, no, it was great. I loved the city, in a way because it's architecturally so rich, which people don't realize, because it was a city that was very rich at one time and with a lot of beautiful architecture, and then declined, but they never tore it down. They didn't build malls, et cetera, at least not in the center of the city, so it is probably still there, and there are a lot of nice things about that architecture. Because as you know, California architecture is limited.

Riess: Did you think that might be a stopping place?

Cole: Well, it was a stepping stone.

Riess: You were there from 1973 to '79.

Cole: It wasn't exactly the greatest experience, although it was something I really needed to do. But being an associate conductor in an orchestra is not the most desirable situation. It was what it was, and I'm glad I did it.

But the interesting thing is—I hope I'm not going on too long here. How I got into this business of running theaters is a very amazing coincidence. One of my jobs at the Buffalo Philharmonic was—I had a series of ten concerts, in addition to all the other stuff I did, which was called a Pops Series, or whatever you call it. It consisted of whatever I wanted. It could be a concert, it could be a dance thing with dancers, or it could be an opera. Just a mixed bag of ten concerts, and my idea was to make it interesting and sell as many tickets as possible.

One of the dance companies I invited was the Dance Theater of Harlem, which was at that time very new and very, very much in the news. The first black ballet company, and it was Arthur Mitchell of course, a very famous dancer from Balanchine—from the New York City Ballet. And so Arthur came up with his company and we did this show in Kleinhans Music Hall, which is the concert hall at Buffalo, which is a wonderful concert hall by the way, a fabulous concert hall. But obviously the show was somewhat truncated because it's in a concert hall and it's a dance company. The orchestra was in the pit and the dance company was on the stage.

It was a huge success of course, sold out completely, as most of those things that I did were sold out, because they were really interesting—I did quite a bit of dance. I brought Eddie Villella there with Pat McBride and Violette Verdy, and all these stars from the New York City Ballet, as I had done in LA with Ballet Society of LA. Well, they were instant sellouts, just the fact that Eddie was *there*. In those days it was different. People from the New York City Ballet were very famous people in those days. It's not like today, where you kind of know about them but they aren't stars. In those days they were stars. We did a whole show and they would do a couple of *pas de deux*, that was it. But just the fact that they were there! That doesn't exist anymore. There's not one dance artist in the world today that you can sell the theater completely because of that person, like Nureyev you could and Baryshnikov you could.

But anyway, I brought all those people and one of them was the Dance Theater of Harlem. And so we did the show and it was hugely successful and I said, "Oh, Arthur, you'll have to come back next year, and let's set a date right now." He said, "Well, we're not coming back unless we have a real theater, because this just didn't work." It was a concert hall, no wings. And I said, "Well, there's this old theater downtown they're trying to reopen, the city's trying to reopen, Shea's Buffalo Theatre." Shea's Buffalo Theatre, a beautiful old movie house, rather like the Paramount only a little smaller and a little nicer.

So some friends of mine who were on the board of the Philharmonic also were involved in this—the city coming together with some of the leading citizens, et cetera—but it was not happening, there was just sort of a lull. I said, "Well, let's go

down and take a look,” and Arthur liked the theater, so I said, “Well, let’s do that next year. The Philharmonic will go into Shea’s Buffalo and do the show for you.”

Riess: And you knew you could make it happen?

Cole: Well, yes, I thought so, because if we sold out in Kleinhans Hall, we could sell out in Shea’s Buffalo Theatre. And we did the show as part of the Buffalo Philharmonic series, but we did it in Shea’s Buffalo. And the people who were trying to bring back the theater said, “Wow, this is amazing.” The place was full. “Actually, this guy knows how to do something.” I guess that’s what they thought. And Michael was leaving the Buffalo Philharmonic before too long and I’d had a few run-ins with the general manager, which I won’t go into. That whole history was horrible.

Riess: You would have become the director if Michael was leaving?

Cole: No, that isn’t the way it works. I would have been out of a job because the music director has the right to bring in people he wants on the musical side.

They asked me—because going back to LA was my next idea—“Would you like to try and make this theater work and be the artistic director of the Shea’s Buffalo Theatre when it opens? And I said, “Well, sure, I’ll give that a try.” I had some friends, John and Judy Fisher, who were very influential and were putting money into this whole project, and they said they would support the whole thing. If I would do it they would support it a lot more. Anyway, I said, “Yes, okay, I’ll do that, that sounds interesting. I can stick around.”

The first season I put together I had Dance Theater of Harlem. And I had New York City Ballet because they were doing an upstate tour because the New York State Arts Council had said, “You have to get out and tour a little bit or else we’re not going to give you all that money.” They were doing an upstate tour and I got them for a week at Shea’s Buffalo, which was amazing.

Then I had Merce Cunningham. How that happened—I’ve always told my younger colleagues to remember, always ask people. If there’s something you don’t know, ask someone who does know. I didn’t know Merce Cunningham at the time, because I had never worked with him—he never uses an orchestra and I only knew dance companies that used orchestras.

I asked, “What company would you like?” of the woman who taught dance at University of Buffalo, “What company would you like to see?” Because I wanted to have a connection to the university. She said, “Oh, Merce Cunningham.” I said, “Great, let’s do it.” I had Merce Cunningham, New York City Ballet and Arthur Mitchell, and it was a huge success, sold out everything of course. I did that for one year, and then I did it for the next year. I think I only did two years there, 1977-’78, something like that.

And then in '79 I got this job at Bardavon [1869] Opera House in Poughkeepsie as the first director, because again, it was an old theater trying to be reopened as a live theater.

Riess: How did you get that? Were you now on everyone's radar?

Cole: I had some sort of track record, because the people at New York State Council for the Arts liked me a lot. I got to know them very well because of this thing I did with the New York City Ballet and it worked so well. In those days, those kinds of things, at least in New York, were very important, the New York State Council for the Arts. They actually had money and they actually gave it to you, unlike today.

So I went to Poughkeepsie. Actually, the guy who was the volunteer director there, he was running this whole thing, was a famous IBM guy who was retired. Poughkeepsie was a big IBM city, still is. He was a famous guy from the beginnings of IBM and had retired, but he and his wife were running this little place, on their own. Steve [Stephen W.] Dunwell was his name. He was, I would say, one of my mentors, like Budd [Cheit], you know a really genius type who had been through a great career, et cetera. So anyway, he was quite a bit older than I was. And he said when he saw my resume he just looked and he said, "This is the guy."

Well, I was a conductor, and he wanted somebody who really knew something about the arts, because the other people had business backgrounds. He wanted somebody who knew something about this. And I had done dance, I'd run a ballet company, I had worked with these ballet companies, so on and so forth. I had a broad repertoire of experience, and so anyway, I got this job immediately. For me it was just getting closer to New York, and it was a beautiful old theater and it is still there. It's the oldest operating theater in New York State.

Riess: What did they want to present?

Cole: Well, they didn't know. [laughter] That's why hired me. The first thing I presented I remember was the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, which then was a very big deal. Charlie Wadsworth was the artistic director, and it was a very hot item. And for Poughkeepsie it was just really upscale. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in Poughkeepsie? I mean, oh my God, this really something! But it wasn't that far.

Riess: Poughkeepsie is a college town right?

Cole: Yes, Vassar College, but that was sort of the center of culture. There wasn't anything else there.

Riess: And the state university system of New York, like SUNY-something?

Cole: Well, there was nothing in Poughkeepsie or around there. It was just Vassar. There was something at Purchase, later in the eighties, but that was only in the summer and

that was there because the Pepsico Festival was very important. But that was just *at* the university, it wasn't *from* the university.

We produced operas there at the Bardavon with the opera company that was then in Syracuse, I guess. We produced operas, and I did one of the earliest performances of Philip Glass and his ensemble, when he was just beginning to be famous.

Riess: How did you get to know these people? How did you know how to do that?

Cole: A lot of accidents.

Riess: Were there arts administration groups? Did you belong to something?

Cole: No, I didn't. But when I became the director of the Bardavon Opera House I became a member of this APAP [Association of Performing Arts Presenters] thing, and I went to APAP meetings, because it was close, first of all. They were in New York and I was right there.

I remember that one of the APAP meetings early on—I had just become a member maybe a year earlier or something. But I told you this guy, Steve Dunwell, who was an IBM genius—we were the first theater that anybody had ever heard of that actually did our financials on a computer, in what? 1979,'80. There were no computers, of course. He had one—it was probably the punch cards. So in our office he had his little computer there that he made, and we did our financials and whatever else he could on this computer. And we were asked to come to APAP and give a talk on how you do this, that this was something you could do. I remember that.

Riess: You were in on the beginning of so many things, it seems like.

Cole: Quite by accident.

Poughkeepsie was a great experience in that respect because I could do anything. It had wonderful acoustics, a nice stage. We did Twyla Tharp when she was just getting really hot, hot stuff there. And as I say we did Merce, and I've forgotten who else in the way of dance. Not big companies.

Riess: You knew about Twyla Tharp? You had heard about Merce from the woman at the University of Buffalo.

Cole: Yes. But then Twyla was sort of like in the air. And then Chamber Music Society, obviously that was in the *Times*.

Riess: You were reading the *Times*?

Cole: Oh yes. I was reading the *Times* when I was in LA. Then it used to be only on Sunday you could get it, back in the sixties. You had to go pick it up. The *New York Times* has been my *rock*.

Riess: And who did you know in New York?

Cole: Well, I knew all the agents. They would come to Buffalo because it was so close. If an artist was performing in Buffalo, often their New York manager would show up, because it's just a one-hour flight.

Riess: Flight? Yes, because New York is a big state.

Cole: Yes, but it's close, you know. It's not like going from here, which is a major undertaking.

Riess: Okay. So now you are launched on your second career, as an arts administrator and an executive director.

Cole: My second *job*, yes. And I actually enjoyed it, and I didn't miss conducting particularly. I didn't do it, and I wasn't seeking to do it, necessarily.

But I skipped one thing that was very important in my development. And that's that in 1969 Michael had been appointed associate conductor or assistant conductor at the Boston Symphony—1969, is that right? It must have been, or '70. At any rate, in 1969 he asked me—and he was at Tanglewood, that's for sure. He asked me if I'd like to come to Tanglewood and just hang out or something, and I knew some people there and he knew everybody there, of course. So in 1969 I spent the whole summer at Tanglewood, just hanging around and going to concerts and whatever. I spent a good part of the summer there, and then I went to Europe and did something, I don't know what exactly.

But then the next summer I was invited to be in the conducting class at Tanglewood, which was a *huge* thing for me, I mean as an experience. There was a class of about ten or twelve, and in those years, it was conductors and composers, and composers who conduct. You know, like Lenny [Bernstein] was a conductor, composer.

Riess: It's like a workshop?

Cole: It's training, it's an institute, yes. The Tanglewood Institute. It was a fantastic opportunity for me, and I really have always thanked Michael for that. Because you didn't apply to this thing, you had to know somebody or be known or whatever. Leonard Bernstein invited Ollie Knussen, who now is a very famous composer—he was then an eighteen-year-old kid. And he and I became quite good friends there and drank a lot of beer together, and so on and so forth.

That was eight weeks, tuition free, everything free. You just go there and stay. You studied, and they have a nice little orchestra, a student orchestra that you conduct. Léon Barzin was the guy that did most of it. But Lenny was around, Leonard Bernstein was around the whole summer. He wasn't always there, but he was there that summer. And so we were with him like every week at least once or twice, and of

course he was also conducting the Boston Symphony and you got to hear the Boston Symphony in rehearsal and concerts, and it was fantastic.

Riess: It was an immersion like nothing you've ever had?

Cole: Oh yes, yes. And this was, as I say, the summer of '70. And then three years later I went as associate conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic, so it really helped me prepare for that experience, to be in this *other* world.

Riess: Yes, and to take yourself *more* seriously.

Cole: Yes, as a conductor. I still have the program from Tanglewood where I conducted the Schumann 4th Symphony—at the final concert of the eight-week period I got to conduct the Schumann 4th Symphony. Michael and Leonard Bernstein were standing in the back at this concert hall where the student concerts were given. I was the last on the program, because I had the piece that was sort of like the big piece, you know, the Schumann 4th. Michael said he and Lenny were standing back there, and I asked him, “So what did he say?” Or maybe he just told me what he said. “So what do you think? What did he think?” He said, “Well, Lenny said you really look like a conductor.”

Riess: From the *back*!

Cole: Yes, right. You know, if you look like a conductor, that's a start! [laughter]

Riess: Did you ever have stage fright?

Cole: Not really, not in that sense. You do before you're doing it, but then once you get up there [exhaling] then it's like, you know—fortunately, it goes away. I think I'd have stage fright if I speak, but if you're conducting you just get into it and you stop thinking about that.

Riess: I'm glad you remembered Tanglewood.

Cole: Yes, the Tanglewood thing was important, and I thank Michael for that.

Riess: Were you putting down roots and renting houses or buying houses along the way?

Cole: Oh yes. We bought two different houses in LA before my wife and I separated. And then, of course it was a little transient, because I did move different places. And then I married again. I'm not going to get into my personal life too much here, but I did.

Riess: Well, enough to answer practical questions.

Cole: Yes, like how is it that I have a stepson who is now a very famous conductor—and that was my second marriage. My stepson is Julian Wachner—if you read today's *Times* there's a review of one of his concerts. And the interesting thing is there are

two reviews of his concerts. One of them mentions his name, because he's the music director at Trinity Wall Street Church, downtown. The richest church in America, by the way.

And the other concert, which it mentions in the *Times*, is the New York City Opera—they did what they call VOX, which is excerpts of these new operas. And it goes through the summary of every opera. If you're a *Times* reader you can look [November 11, 2012]—it doesn't mention the conductor was Julian Wachner. I think maybe because there were two reviews and it's the same conductor, maybe they said, "Oh, just leave him out of this one." [laughter] But it was really funny, I was reading the whole thing to see if he mentioned his name. You know, he did all six of these operas, and it speaks about each opera but it doesn't say who conducted.

The other concert—he did the B-Minor Mass, which there's a review of, where he talks about it. I think that was the idea, something about him and his B-Minor Mass. Yes, because he said, "It's no small feat to throw together a B-Minor Mass in three days." They did it as a benefit for the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

Anyway, that's my stepson, from my second marriage.

Riess: When does that fit in terms of time, that second marriage?

Cole: Gosh, I should know—in the seventies. We were together in Buffalo, so '70—we got together in LA, just before I went to Buffalo.

Riess: And she was a musician?

Cole: And then she came along to Buffalo. She's a pianist, yes also, of course. [laughter]

Riess: Let's give her a first name.

Cole: Mary.

I mean—obviously I was infatuated with her and all that. Julian is a wonderful guy, a wonderful kid.

Riess: How much did you have to do with his upbringing?

Cole: A lot, because he was six or so when we got together, maybe five. But the interesting thing is that we were in Buffalo, and he sang in the local Episcopal Church, men and boys. He was a boy chorister. Then I got this job in Poughkeepsie, and Julian was just *devastated*, because he had to leave his choir, which he loved.

I—again, the *Times*—I'm reading the *New York Times* and there's a little advertisement saying open auditions for boy choristers at St. Thomas Choir School, New York. I said, "Julian, you should go audition. You should do this. We'll be in

Poughkeepsie and you can," because they go to school there. It's a day school. He auditioned, he got in, he had a scholarship. Of course, you know, it's free.

He had a fabulous education. He sang in the choir for all those years, from elementary school through when his voice changed, middle school, or whatever. Great education, he had a great experience. That's a great choir, and basically his musical education was *there*. He didn't need to go to conservatory. By the time he got out of there he'd done everything. And that was my idea, so I take a certain credit. I always worried that he'd end up being spoiled or whatever, but he's not.

Riess: Spoiled because he was so accomplished?

Cole: His mother had been raised in a certain way, let's put it that way. And I had not, as you've heard from my background. We were very different in that respect, which was not good. But Julian is really very grounded.

Riess: I'm glad that happened to come up. The marriage came apart before California?

Cole: It came apart in New York, yes.

From Poughkeepsie I went to be director of the performing arts at Brooklyn College, which was a very unsatisfying experience for lots of different reasons, the administration, et cetera. And one day—again, the *New York Times*, the *New York Times* has led my life in a way, it helped my life. I'm in New York and I look and there's an advertisement for a director of performing arts at UC Berkeley. And I thought—my mother was living out here at the time. Well, she'd always lived here, but she wasn't too well and she was living in San Jose. And my two kids were in LA by then, and so I thought well, you know, this sounds good. I'll check this out.

Actually I had already agreed to take on another job which I—at the time, I thought what I wanted to do was run an opera company. That was my goal. And I had agreed to take on this little opera company, which I thought would maybe lead to something. I came out and did this, thinking I was really going to take the opera company position, but I could see my mother, you know.

I did this interview, and I've told the people since, who were on the committee—which includes my present wife by the way—I told them I really wasn't that interested, I had this job already—but I thought, well, I'll do it. And I think that's why the interview was so easy, because I was relaxed.

Riess: Right. Okay, there's a lot to talk about. What was the opera company?

Cole: Oh, it was called Tri-Cities Opera. At that time it was—I think it's still functioning—but it was Tri-Cities in Binghamton, upstate New York, but it was still New York.

Riess: The Brooklyn College job was so bad? You didn't want to just stay in New York?

Cole: I didn't want to stay at that job, yes. I wanted to get in the opera business actually. That was my goal. At that time I thought that's what I wanted to do.

Riess: That was the ultimate ambition for you then?

Cole: I'm still an opera nut, fanatic, so to speak. If I had it to do over I would like to have been an opera conductor and run the company too, like Adler did. But that no longer is the model.

Riess: Oh my!

Cole: Yes, if I could have been Kurt Herbert Adler. [laughing]

I was kind of late in the game—because that doesn't work. Like they have Peter Gelb running the Metropolitan Opera now, who is not a conductor.

But anyway, that takes us up to Berkeley. Sorry it's so long.

Riess: It's perfect, a life in under an hour.

By the time you got to Berkeley you were fifty-five.

Cole: Exactly, yes a lot of people retiring, and I was just getting started.

Riess: I referred to Europe earlier and you said you went to Europe lots.

Cole: Well, mostly when I'd go to New York, or when I was at Tanglewood, because I was there—in the summer I would go over to London, mostly London at that time, just for a week, to see an opera, or to see something—mostly opera.

Riess: And would you introduce yourself around?

Cole: Well, a little bit, but I've always been a bit shy. Less now—thank God, finally, maybe I'm less shy. But I think I'm still somewhat, not in this way, but if somebody's famous I'm not necessarily going to call them up and say well, I'm so-and-so. I'm not that way. I wish I had been more, because it's a very good way to move your career up. It doesn't hurt, it helps, but it's not been my nature so much. Insecure, I guess is a word also. You know, as a young person and because of my background, which you've already heard. I had no reason to be secure. Only now do I feel more secure.

Riess: Yes, but it doesn't sound like you had defeats along the way.

Cole: No, things worked out, always seemed to work out somehow. Not that I had a huge career. You could say it didn't work out, because I didn't become a famous conductor. But actually it turned out—I don't really strive for that. I don't care about that, you know. Maybe I thought about that at one time—I'm sure I did, because I worked really hard studying conducting.

But about this guy Richard Lert, he's another one I studied with. He was a famous conductor from Europe and he came to LA with his wife, Vicki Baum, who wrote the book—what is it called? *Grand Hotel*. Anyway, she was a writer and they made the movie *Grand Hotel* out of one of her books. They came to LA to make the movie, and then the war started, so they never could go back, or they couldn't go back at that time. That's why he was here. He was a conductor in Germany of several orchestras, and she was a harpist with the Berlin Philharmonic. So that's how he was here, and then he stayed after she died and he conducted the Pasadena Symphony and a few other places, and then he became mostly a teacher.

Interview #2: February 27, 2013

[Tape 2: Side A]

Riess: You are just back from a conducting stint in Kuala Lumpur. You're in demand.

Cole: No, no, I wouldn't say in demand. I have a few people that I know who know that I know these ballet pieces, and by *know them* I don't mean just the music, because if you're doing ballet you have to know the music and you have to know the ballet as well, so that it reduces the number of available conductors.

There are thousands of conductors, let's say, who could conduct *The Nutcracker* or *Swan Lake*, the music, but they don't know about the dancing because they haven't done it before. You have to have done it before, and I've done it many, many times. So I have—this friend of mine who's a producer, he hires me to do the different ballet shows that he either tours in America or, as in this case it was touring to Kuala Lumpur, same company. He hires me because I know this stuff and I've done it before.

Riess: What else is in your repertoire?

Cole: Well, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Giselle*, the standard stuff. But I don't find it standard because doing ballet is so much different than a symphony concert you know, there are so many, as I say, moving parts. There are so many things that come up that are surprising, interesting, changing. I find it very interesting. Whereas I've really kind of lost interest in conducting just normal symphonies, concerts, it doesn't really interest me anymore.

Riess: I'm curious, do you attend the ballet here, the San Francisco Ballet?

Cole: I do rarely. I like the New York City Ballet. I was just there a week and a half ago. I went to the New York City Ballet because I'm a big Stravinsky, Balanchine fan. I consider that to be the greatest artistic collaboration of the twentieth century, without any doubt. So I went to see a Stravinsky, Balanchine program. I go occasionally here. You can't do everything. I go to the opera. I'm working, as you know.

Riess: The Hamburg Ballet was in town.

Cole: I missed it. I would have gone to that. When was that? I think I was in New York.

Riess: Now, you arrived today saying that you were feeling sort of warm and fuzzy because of the Fellows Dinner? Tell me about that.

Cole: Well, it was just very nice to see people there that I have known for years—as I say, two of the vice chancellors that I worked with, John Heilbron who now lives in the UK, famous, great, his field is the history of science, and Paul Gray, another vice

chancellor that I worked with, such a wonderful guy. I think I would talk about them later perhaps as we go. But also John Cummins, who was the chancellor's chief of staff for many, many years and one of my great friends there—and many other people that you would know. It was very nice.

I have to mention, by the way, the chancellor's wife—she is such a wonderful person, and to see her too was great. Bob Birgeneau's wife, Mary Catherine. A lot of people know I'm working out at the Green [Music] Center. And then some people had heard that I was conducting ballet, and one friend of mine said, "You were in Moscow?" No, I was in Kuala Lumpur conducting for a ballet company from Moscow.

[laughing]

Riess: Talking about the people you worked with, that gets back to your first arrival here. I'd like to hear about what you took over, what the situation was with Susan Farr, your predecessor.

Cole: Well, it was a transitional stage I think, her time here. Before Susie Farr there was Betty Connors, who was there for thirty-some years, I think thirty-six years. She was a graduate of the music school, or Music Department, I should say, at Berkeley, so she was a musician, a violist as well, which I also was, as it happens. Betty worked with a committee of faculty who—they kind of decided what they wanted, and Betty had, I'm sure, much input into that. But she then had to go out and make it happen.

And all those years were very, very distinguished years and exceptional, they had some exceptional people, Glenn Gould, et cetera. A lot of famous people came to Berkeley even though they didn't have a real concert hall. Before Hertz Hall they had really nothing, they had the gym. Glenn Gould played in the gym, Harmon Gym. And also a lot of other people, the San Francisco Symphony played in Harmon Gym, and George Gershwin played there, his one concert there just before he died, or a few months before he died so young.

Betty ran a very distinguished program, but it was complicated because it was this faculty committee, which, as I understand it—and this is just what I've heard from Betty and from what other people have told me—the committee kept getting bigger. And you know how it is with any committee, it's gets complicated because you have so many different views coming up. I don't know how Betty ran it.

Riess: Self-appointed committee?

Cole: No, probably appointed by the chancellor, I suspect.

Riess: To represent every possible aspect of the arts?

Cole: Probably, certainly the Departments of Music and Dance. But also other people who were just interested in the arts, which was fine. That has existed on other campuses as well, but this was probably one of the most active, nationally, of that model. I think it really only worked as long as it did because Betty was so brilliant in holding it

together. It's very hard to hold together a committee that size and get something done, and when you're in a business that is very fast moving and very—of course then it wasn't as fast moving as it is now. It was much slower.

Riess: The committee had to sign off on everything?

Cole: That's my understanding, but I'm sure Betty had a lot of influence because they had a lot of respect for her—the fact that she was a professional musician and she was trained in music, and so on.

Then when Betty retired they hired Susie Farr, and as I understand it—and again this is just what I've heard—Susie was hired to work with this committee in the same way. And as I understand it, that did not work out. There was friction, to put it mildly—not surprising in a way, because Betty had found her own way to do this. I also understand that along with this friction as far as interpersonal relationships perhaps, there were financial issues. Of course there are always financial issues in this business. It's very tough, and there's a slim margin.

Therefore this extreme friction, as I understand, developed between the committee and the director, Susie—I guess that was her title. And the chancellor, who was then Chancellor Heyman, Mike Heyman, abolished the committee—and it was a highly unpopular move—at the request of the director, Susie Farr. Therefore, she was highly unpopular with the faculty as well. It was very contentious.

Riess: She was just running it by herself?

Cole: She had her full authority to run it. But that didn't last long, because then she left. But during the time that she was here there were a lot of hard feelings and disagreements, and it was kind of campus-wide is what I understand and have heard.

Riess: It sounds like one interesting thing—maybe this looms larger than it really was—was the contracts with Bill Graham and pop music in the Greek Theatre. Had that been a tradition before?

Cole: They had done that, yes, that goes back a ways. I think it accelerated, probably because of the appearance of Bill as a figure on the popular music scene, and the university made a deal with him—and I don't know when that happened originally, but I know it grew.

Riess: But that was a big revenue stream?

Cole: That was a revenue stream, right, and it still is.

Anyway, given all of this, these circumstances, when Susie Farr left, the chancellor appointed a committee—or maybe before she left, I'm not sure—to study Cal Performances. That's what academics do, you know. They appointed a committee,

and I think Budd Cheit was not on that committee, or if he was on it he wasn't the chair. But anyway, the chancellor appointed a committee.

Riess: Well, is it called the Cal Performances Review Committee?

Cole: Yes. Chancellor Heyman appointed this committee, and they presented a report after a lengthy study. I think that study was done before I came, during probably Susie's last year or something like that. There was a sense of "This is not working, we don't like it, we've got to figure out what will work."

They came back with this report, and I've read it many times. I kept it right in my desk, in the second drawer of my desk, the whole time I was there. And this report recommended, as I remember, that there be a director, but that there also be a committee, to keep a similar style to what they had—I don't know what the differences were—but they had a lot of recommendations.

The chancellor took the report—and at the same time they were looking for a new director, and that turned out to be me—but Chancellor Heyman went ahead and said, in response to this report, that there would be a committee, but the director would have full responsibility and authority. He would work with the committee, he would listen to the advice of the committee, but he or she would not be responsible to follow their advice—he would *seek* their advice.

Riess: And the director would report to the vice chancellor, that's the structure?

Cole: That's right, so there was a new structure when I came. Now the amazing thing is that when I came I knew none of this. No one even *hinted* that any of this had ever gone on. And I have to give you—maybe I'm going on too long, but you just tell me.

Riess: No, no. This is all very fine.

Cole: I have to give you an idea of why I would be so unaware of the circumstances at Berkeley, because Berkeley's a famous university, it had a very active performing arts program—Zellerbach Hall by now, and Hertz Hall, and so on. And they did a lot of stuff. And I came from the Bay Area originally. I went to San Jose State originally, and I went to USC. But I was in New York.

But the main thing is, I was in the music business. I had trained as a musician, as a conductor, and I had not too long ago, before I came here, had been conductor at the Buffalo Philharmonic and before that was conducting in Los Angeles, ballet and concerts, opera, whatever, trying to make a career as a conductor and succeeding, somewhat. I've told you about that history.

Anyway, I came from the music business and then I kind of morphed into this, what we call, *presenting* business, which is what this is. And I didn't do it consciously. I kind of did it a lot even as a conductor, because I would organize events where I would produce stuff and then I would also conduct it, for the Buffalo Philharmonic,

for orchestras even when I was in LA. So I had already been doing that kind of thing, but it was really orchestras that I worked for, orchestras or ballet companies, because I did both in Los Angeles and in Buffalo.

When I got into the presenting business it was quite by accident. I told you I brought Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theater of Harlem to Buffalo to dance on the Kleinhans Music Hall stage. And I said, "Arthur, you have to come back next year," and he said, "Well, we're not going to do it unless we have a real theater." So we got Shea's Buffalo Theatre and they came back the next year under the auspices of the Buffalo Philharmonic, and I was conducting and we did, I don't know, three nights.

And to make this story short, they asked me to run this theater, to open it, to start it as a performing arts place instead of the movie house, which had gone out of business. So I did, and the first year I had the New York City Ballet, I had Arthur Mitchell back, I had Merce Cunningham—that was my first-year series. And it was a huge success, of course, because how can you go wrong? The New York City Ballet sold out for a week.

Suddenly I was in the presenting business. And I thought, this is interesting, I like this! I had a broad palette—I could do a lot of different things. Then I was hired to do this job in Poughkeepsie, again reopening an old theater, which had been a theater, then had been a movie house, and now was reopening as a theater. And I was hired really because of my resume, because I was a musician, I had conducted a major orchestra and I had also run a theater. So I got the job, and my goal was to get to New York, or near New York, and Poughkeepsie was pretty near. I took the job and I liked it too, I really enjoyed it.

But I'm still a musician, that's who I am, and I was on the East Coast, and this is what I'm getting to about how I didn't know about Berkeley. I was on the East Coast and then I got a job briefly at Brooklyn College, which is in New York, which was my goal. I was in New York, working in New York, living in New York.

And when you're in New York, or near, as I was with Poughkeepsie, and even Buffalo, you deal with the agents in New York directly. You don't deal with the western rep or the midwestern rep, or all these other people that come out of New York and deal with Berkeley, deal with Arizona, deal with whatever, Seattle. I had only dealt with the people in New York, the direct managers of the artists. I didn't know anybody in the "presenting" business, I didn't go to regional meetings, I didn't go to those kinds of meetings particularly because I didn't see any need to—I was in New York, I was coming from the music business.

The organization that I had belonged to was the American Symphony Orchestra League, which was a different thing entirely, different bunch of people. The other one is called the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, APAP. I did start going to that, but I didn't really know anybody except the people in New York pretty much. So that's why I didn't know about the situation in Berkeley, because I wasn't in that crowd, group, whatever.

Riess: And how did they know about you?

Cole: Well, I'll tell you. I'm an insatiable—what's a better word, inveterate—committed reader of the *New York Times*, for many years. Every day, and I still am. Even in LA when you could only get it in the mail. Anyway, I'm reading the *New York Times* one day in New York, and I see this little ad that says they're looking for a director at Berkeley, of the, whatever—I guess it was called Cal Performances then, yes. "Well, that's interesting". And I think I told you that my mother was living in San Jose at the time, and she was not too well. I'd come out to see her occasionally, but it was hard, and I was concerned.

Riess: And your marital status then?

Cole: I was kind of in between.

Riess: It was not holding you?

Cole: It was not holding me. It was not good. It was unfortunate. Anyway, so I thought, one, I'd like to go see my mother. Two, it sounds interesting, but I don't know anything about it. Berkeley—of course I'd heard of the university, I knew that was great. But I really didn't know anything about the business out here, you know, the rest of the country, I just kind of knew the East Coast and LA.

Anyway, I sent my resume in and said well, let's see what happens. I was asked to come out here for an interview and I thought great, and I don't remember really much about it except the room where it took place, which was the chancellor's conference room in California Hall. After the interview I was having dinner on Shattuck Avenue where this young woman was playing Chopin in the restaurant. I thought, wow, this is great. It turned out to be Sarah Cahill. I introduced myself. I said, "I'm going to be the new director at Cal Performances, and really nice to meet you." I just walked in and she was playing—we've been friends ever since.

Riess: So you got the job on that interview?

Cole: I got the job on that interview. And after dinner—I didn't rent a car, which was stupid because I wanted to go see my mother in San Jose—I got on the BART and of course, it didn't go to San Jose. [laughter] You know, a typical New Yorker.

But yes, I got the job. And before I came here I had the time—it was summer, and I went to London because there was an opera I wanted to see. It's not so far from New York to go to London, it's pretty easy. I went to see this opera.

And interestingly—what happened was one of the first guys to call me was Donald Friedman—he's a faculty member, a member of the English Department, and he was on the search committee. He called me after Chancellor Heyman had called and confirmed that they wanted me to come, and I said, "Are you going to send a

contract?" And he said, "We don't *do* contracts." [laughter] I said, "Okay, what do you do?" I think he sent me I guess a telegram confirming it.

Then I got a call from Don, and he said, "Well, congratulations, I look forward to having you come." And I said, "Well, I'm just off to London tomorrow because I'm going to go see this opera by [Harrison] Birtwistle"—an English composer who's quite famous now, who was well known then but is now very famous. Don was so impressed with the fact that that's what I was going to do, going to London to see this opera by Birtwistle. Only people like Don would even know who he was—nobody had ever heard of him here, probably. So that cemented out relationship, and we were friends, very close, for many, many years, still.

When I came here, when I arrived, there was no board, there was no support system built in. There was a staff, but the first years here were very difficult for me, in a way because I was so naïve and I didn't know any of this stuff. I didn't know the history, what I just told you.

Riess: Where were you, were the offices in Zellerbach?

Cole: Yes, in Zellerbach, same place.

Riess: Not terribly prepossessing.

Cole: No, but that was okay. Listen, the Metropolitan Opera, their offices are not so fancy either. People talk about the offices in theaters—there are very few that amount to anything, because the main thing is the *theater*.

Anyway, what I didn't know was that one of the staff members who was still on the staff, who *was* on the staff when I got there, had been a candidate for the job as well and had not been successful. Ella Baff was her name. She had been a candidate, which I didn't know. I didn't know her, I never heard of her. And it was very difficult and awkward, because a number of members of the staff, especially the senior staff, really wanted her to be the director. They wanted her. Well, the committee didn't choose her, but I didn't know any of this. I arrive and I've got a staff that's sort of divided, not really supportive of the new guy.

Riess: But the staff knew that the reason all of this was happening was because the university thought it was an organization in trouble.

Cole: Well, I don't know if they thought that or knew that or understood it. It was sort of like—the staff is so distant from the university in a way, not really connected. They didn't really know a lot of this or understand a lot of it, because they didn't meet with the committee or the faculty. There was very little interaction between the faculty and that organization. In fact, really zero, because there was such animosity. In fact, it was total separation.

Anyway, I went there with this situation. I had a staff that was divided, not really supportive of my presence even, and no board. And I had a committee that had been appointed by the chancellor to work with me, advise me, so I had the authority, but I should listen to their advice, et cetera. The one, thank God, thing that happened that was so great was that Budd Cheit was the chair of that committee. That really made the difference, because there were people on that committee who absolutely had no respect for Cal Performances or anybody associated with it, they just didn't, and they were members of the faculty.

Riess: Was that because of the history?

Cole: The history, yes. But of course, as I say, not knowing that I just went ahead and went in there and assumed that we would all just get along *great*. And mostly we did, but it was difficult.

I can talk about a few things that—one of the things was that the program had been really, as I say, very distinguished when Betty was there, in various ways. And it had been very respectable, I would say, after that, respectable but not really over the top under Susie Farr.

Riess: It looks like they continued programs they had been doing for decades.

Cole: Yes. But there was no George Gershwin there, there was no Pablo Casals that had appeared in years before--the really *great* ones.

Riess: Well, 1984-'85 Merce was there. Martha Graham. A lot of dance, very strong dance.

Cole: That's because Ella was interested in dance.

What happened was that Susie Farr had just kind of turned over this whole thing, the artistic part, to Ella, and she was interested in dance, right.

Riess: The business divides into the artistic part, which I would think would be *the* part, and the management part?

Cole: Yes, and because of Susie's lack of interest in doing that, she passed it on to Ella.

Riess: Susie was more interested in what?

Cole: Just kind of running the place, the business part of it. It's a model that I don't particularly think is good, so I didn't come here to do that model.

Riess: Yes, all right. So Merce, Martha Graham, Trisha Brown, Twyla Tharp, Pilobolus Mummenschanz, Joshua Bell, sixteen years old. Christopher Parkening, the Guarneri Quartet. That looks good.

Cole: Yes, it was all fine, but there was still this break between the faculty and the organization, which I had to somehow work with. As far as the artistic side, there were, you notice, very few, if any, singers. And the first person I personally engaged, picked up the phone and said what about so-and-so—because I was on a short time line—I came here September of '86 and we were booking '87-'88. It had probably already started, but we had to quickly put it together, because you go to print in about February, March, something like that, of the next year. The first artist I actually just said let's do this was Leontyne Price. It was the end of her career, but I had presented her in New York, in Brooklyn. She was still doing recitals, she wasn't doing opera anymore, but she was doing recitals and they were fabulous. She came here and that was '86-'87, I noticed.

Also, I think it was this year—I remember on the plane coming out I had written down a few notes. I had particularly thought about three pianists that were then very young, kind of unknown and up and coming, so to speak—András Schiff, Murray Perahia, and Richard Goode. “Unknown, up and coming.” [laughing] And I see that in the first season that I actually booked András and Murray—and then Richard came along later.

Riess: The other programming out here, at Stanford, at SF Performances or whatever, they weren't pulling those people?

Cole: Well, yes, Ruth Felt was underway. She'd started her organization a few years before, and she was doing really good things. I just happened to—I don't think they had been here before. I don't know that for sure, I just know that they were, at that time, just at the beginning of their American careers, certainly András.

Also, if you notice, I paid more attention to what you call early music. I had the Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century the first year that I booked. I was going in that direction where they had not gone before. And the first appearance of Mark Morris was in my first season, and that's because I had seen Mark Morris at the Pepsico Festival in the summer of 1985, which was up in Westchester. I went up there during the summer pretty much every weekend. The one weekend when Mark Morris appeared in '85 I saw him, and I thought well, he's pretty good. And then the next year I came here, and I immediately was able to get him.

Riess: You transport them out here when you book someone?

Cole: Yes, yes. You have to pay a fee that covers their transportation, hotel, and somehow something else. That's all negotiable. That's what you do.

Riess: All of these people you are talking about, the pianists, Leontyne, Mark Morris, they have their agents?

Cole: I think Mark Morris was what we called *direct* at the time—you call up the company. Now they have a manager

Riess: What do we call it, a manager or an agent?

Cole: A booking agent. They have a booking agent now who's a good friend of mine, but because when we started with Mark we worked directly with Mark, my good friend the booking agent who signed up with Mark later on after he got more famous has never received a penny from the performances at Cal Performances. Because it started direct, therefore it stayed direct. So he doesn't get a commission. It's 20 percent, whatever, 15-20 percent. That's the way it works. If you start with somebody directly, as I did with Mark, the agent is left out.

Riess: But you have to work with the system. There is a system of agents and—managers, are they something else?

Cole: Well, in the classical music business—yes. There are booking agents, and that's what I said about the East and the West. When I was in New York I only dealt with the managers. Like say, Murray Perahia, he has a manager, IMG Artists, but there's a booking agent who does the national bookings. Well, I would only deal with his manager, because I was there and I knew this person. This is an example. But if you're out here you would be dealing—most people deal with the booking agent, the national booking agent, and then they talk to the manager and try and work out this puzzle of where these people are going to go, et cetera.

Riess: And they have your back in terms of telling you if somebody's going to be someplace that's right next door?

Cole: Well, it's all exclusivity issues. If I'm booking a certain artist in Berkeley—when I first got here it was very difficult to get certain people to come to Berkeley, the pretty famous, great people. In fact, when I called about Leontyne, the guy I talked to, I said—"How come we don't have," there were certain artists, I've forgotten who, famous singers, let's say, and classical artists, particularly, classical musicians. "How come we don't have so-and-so?" "Well, I was told you didn't want them." "That's before me." "That you're not interested in that."

"Well, we *are* interested," I said. "Just cross that out. We *are* interested. I want Leontyne." And Kathy Battle too—the next year I brought Kathy Battle, who was then very, very famous. She's had hard times with her career since then, but at that time she was a huge hit and very gifted.

Riess: When you do that quote unquote thing around classical, what does that mean? When we're talking classical music—that's not what you mean?

Cole: Yes, well, I do mean that in this case, because there was not a big emphasis as you saw—look at the program—you said, "Oh, modern dance." That was the strength and the emphasis, which is fine, but I also thought that we should have an emphasis and compete with—not compete, but be number one in presenting great singers, great pianists, ensembles.

- Riess: For Northern California.
- Cole: For California, yes. Because there was no place else, really, that was doing that at that time, at the level that I was thinking of. I really pushed hard, and as I say, the first year I brought Murray and András, two of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century. And it was amazing, now looking back, that I actually got them. But they were young and they were available. They were not that well known then in 1986-'87.
- So that was kind of the direction I was going, and also the early music world, Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, Gustav Leonhardt, people like that, who—some have died now, but they were very famous at the time, famous in Europe.
- We still did the modern dance stuff. Merce was the first modern dance company I ever worked with, in Buffalo, and then I brought Merce to the Bardavon Opera House, which was very nice because it's just a few miles from where he lived at the time in New York. So anyway, to broaden, but to make sure—because the fact is, to build your donor base, the donor base is in serious classical music, and particularly opera and singers.
- Riess: That first year, the programming was already in place. You were working on the program for the second year?
- Cole: Yes, the second year, '87-'88.
- Riess: And you booked a more expensive, perhaps, season?
- Cole: A little bit, maybe.
- Riess: Did you have always to be looking at a budget?
- Cole: Oh yes. That was huge, and it was my job. But I have to tell you—I talked about this rift between the departments and Cal Performances. My first “scheme” or plan—I shouldn't say scheme. In the UK they call it schemes.
- Riess: It doesn't have the implications.
- Cole: It doesn't have the implications that it does here, right. My first plan to make that happen, to really bring the Dance Department, the Theater Department, which was the same, Dance and Theater, and the Music Department closer to Cal Performances, I said, “This '87-'88 will be the twentieth anniversary of Zellerbach Hall, so we should put together a program that shows off the arts on campus and celebrates that anniversary and somehow resembles the opening concert which was twenty years earlier when Stravinsky was here.”

I put together this program, which is right here, and it was on April 29-30, which is almost exactly twenty years after the opening. [reads] “Stravinsky's *Symphony of*

Psalms, performed twenty years ago at Zellerbach Hall's opening, the program is repeated this season by the Departments of Music and Dramatic Art in cooperation with Cal Performances." That is, we paid for it.

Riess: I see, but put on by the department.

Cole: Yes, but we paid for it. "To honor one of the finest performance halls in the country, performances are by the University Symphony, the University Chorus, the University Dance Theater, the Student Musical Activities vocal groups, and the Piedmont [East Bay] Children's [Choir]." Everybody had a part. The program—John Thow, was a good friend of mine, he was a composer in the Music Department, he wrote a new piece which we commissioned and that was performed.

Choreography was by David Wood, who was head of the Dance Department and really disliked Cal Performances enormously. And the star dancer was his wife Marni Wood, world premiere. Dancers: University Dance Theater; music: University Symphony, conductor: Michael Senturia. Michael was the conductor of the University Orchestra at the time.

Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* is one of Stravinsky's masterpieces. I had seen him conduct it, actually, in LA when I was a student. Stravinsky conducting the *Symphony of Psalms*. "University Symphony, University Chorus, Student Musical Activities vocal groups, conductor Vance George." Vance George, you know, became conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. And then there was Stravinsky's *Persephone*: choreography: David Wood, world premiere, et cetera. I went all out.

And my committee—because all these people were on this committee, or most of them, or they were related to it somehow, they seemed to just eat it up! I think—I don't know what Budd thought, because it was costing money, and I don't know how we raised the money, we did, somehow. But it was a big show. It was huge, and this was my first real year. It was my second year, but my first real year.

So that was sort of like, "Come on guys, we're together on this. We're working together and we're going to *do* this." And it was a great show and everybody loved it. But it didn't dispel all of the animosity. It quieted down a bit. We would have monthly meetings, something like that, monthly meetings of the committee, and I would talk about what I was planning to do, and this was one of the things that I brought to one of the meetings. I said we should *do* this! And what could *you* do? And what will you do? What would you like? I talked to John [Thow] about writing this new piece, and to Michael [Senturia] about conducting the *Symphony of Psalms*.

Riess: They were on your committee?

Cole: Not all of them. But representatives of the Music Department, and then I would go to these people separately. I was wheeling and dealing and trying to make this happen, besides all this other stuff. But this was like the centerpiece. Anyway, I had forgotten

when this happened, but it happened quickly, because I only got there in September of '86, and this happened the next spring.

Riess: Well, you really sized the situation up.

Cole: I knew it was either this or else it wasn't going to work, because we had to make friends.

Riess: Why were the Woods not keen?

Cole: Well, the Dance and Theater Department has Zellerbach Playhouse—had and still does. That's their laboratory, so to speak. And Zellerbach Hall was kind of—actually, I think it was thought of in '68 somewhat in the same way. The Committee for Arts and Lectures could use that. There was a question of who owns this place, this space? It wasn't clear, and it was definitely controversial, unfortunately. It's not that way anymore. We've worked through that, but it was very difficult.

Riess: There are these odd little places on campus, like Dwinelle Studio Theater.

Cole: Oh yes. Well, that's a place we have used, but that really belongs to the Theater and Dance Department. And we would have to ask. But the idea was to work out a relationship that you could ask people, you could talk to people and say, "We'd like to do this, and could we...?" And that's what we did. It took years, but this was the beginning of that effort.

Riess: You couldn't spend a lot of time sitting in your office, because you had to be out.

Cole: No, I had to be out, trying to make friends. And besides, dealing with people all over the world to bring in other stuff. And I have to say that at that time Ella was helpful in a lot of these things. But she didn't want to be helpful, she wanted to run things. And that's where we ran into—our heads met, or whatever. That's where we got into trouble. Because I wanted to have—I was happy to share the work, because there's a lot of work. If you're going to get x, y, z, all these different things, somebody has to get on the phone a lot. And that's before we had e-mail. You have to delegate—you do this, I do that.

Riess: Did you have a weekly meeting with her maybe?

Cole: I had a weekly meeting with her, at least weekly and more than weekly probably. But the trouble is that she wanted to run things. I didn't know that. She was representing herself as being the—whatever.

Riess: You mean when she was in touch with people? That she was the director?

Cole: That's right, right.

And I didn't know that until sometime later. I learned it through various ways, unfortunate ways. Anyway, my main goal at first there was obviously to pull this thing together so that we could work with the faculty and become close in various ways, and it was a process that took time.

Riess: Was there anyone else in the running for the job, besides you and Ella?

Cole: Oh yes, yes. I don't know all of them, I know some of them, and I have to say, it wasn't a very distinguished field.

[Tape 2: Side B]

Cole: [talking about the design of the brochures] Cal Performances has had pretty distinguished programs, but these are really over the top. The '87-'88 program was the first season that we had this designer. We hired an in-house designer. I had learned the hard way, when I was in Poughkeepsie running the Bardavon Opera House, that the design and printing of materials can be the thing that really kills your budget, because you're outsourcing and you lose control over the cost. Somehow, I don't remember the details, but we found this young woman who was an excellent designer and I hired her full-time, so that we brought that function in house. She turned out to be quite exceptional. I wish I remembered her name.

Anyway, we brought in a different design team, and the interesting thing was that there was an international organization called ISPA, the International Society for Performing Arts. They have annual meetings in New York, and they still do, and I was a member from the outset pretty much. I liked it because it was international, because they also had meetings in Europe and I attended a couple of those, which I'll get into later. But they had a contest each year, at that time, for the best brochure of the year. We won that contest three years in a row. I would go to the meetings in New York—you never knew who was going to win, it was secret—and they would announce it. And three years in a row, we won! It was really kind of awkward!

Riess: But it was three years with the same designer?

Cole: Yes, yes. And I think it was this designer, this woman whose name I cannot recall.

Riess: What do you think about this as a design?

Cole: I think I wouldn't do it today.

Riess: I see here, Brochure design by Diane Levin and Janet Mumford, Ben White. Design Resource, San Anselmo?

Cole: I just don't remember. But I think we went from that to—maybe this is when we hired the other woman. I can't remember, but I know we took a different tack, and the idea was to make a statement. See, and these are all commissioned.

Riess: Original art.

Cole: Original art, yes.

Riess: It's art that could be posters.

Cole: Exactly. And that was the idea, to try and make a statement that would attract attention, and it did. I wouldn't do it now, because now we're in the electronic age.

Riess: It served a purpose of announcing that you're really a new game in town.

Cole: Yes, that we're going in a different direction. Yes, these are pretty amazing.

But that program, the *Symphony of Psalms*, come on! Stravinsky, this is one of the greatest pieces ever written in the history of music. And I invited this guy to do this and paid for the whole production—because it was a production. There were lights, the scenery, the design. It was a huge project.

Another thing I would mention about the committee, which was interesting to me, and is historically important, I think, was one of the members of the committee was one of the most distinguished musicologists of our time, Joseph Kerman. When I met Joe Kerman—I knew he was here, but when I learned that he was going to be on the committee and actually met him, the first meeting, I was really impressed, because when I was a student at USC I started out as a musicologist. The idea was I was going to be a musicologist, at least that's what I thought. But that didn't last too long.

I did work at it for a couple of years, seriously. I was working with a woman, a very famous woman in her way, at USC. First of all, there weren't too many well-known women musicologists at that time, but she was *the* one in America. Her name was Pauline Alderman. I was a student of hers, and she was my mentor when I was there, on that side of my work. The other thing I was doing was studying conducting with Ingolf Dahl.

When I met Joe Kerman, first of all I told him, "I loved your book and read it when I was a student." *Opera as Drama*—I don't know if you know that book, a very famous book to musicians, and so on. I said, "I'm amazed, I read this when I was a student, and here you are!" And he said, "Well, yes, I wrote it when I was in my twenties." [laughter] And he liked that, the fact that I'd actually read his book. He'd never met somebody in my business like me—they saw people like me as bean counters.

That's what they were thinking, one of those people who don't know anything about music, and that's unfortunately true in so many cases. I didn't extrapolate on that, but they're right! But by telling him that I had studied his book and was interested in that book, et cetera—and *then* when I told him I had studied with Pauline Alderman, we were friends. They, obviously, had been very close, the same generation. And she was

quite a remarkable woman, and Joe, of course, was the most famous musicologist, probably, in America at the time.

Riess: Amazing the people Berkeley gets.

Cole: Yes, and Joe was a very big name to those of us in that field.

But as I say, and I kind of skipped over this before, the other reason that people, when I came here, people in the presenting business in America, and I'll just say the Bay Area and California in general, they didn't know who I was. Who is this guy? Where did he come from? Just like I didn't know who they were, because I came from the music business! I don't know where they came from, but they didn't come from the music business. None of them that I met were musicians or had any particular artistic, professional background—either professional or educational.

Riess: You mean none of the presenters.

Cole: Few of the presenters. Anyway, you could see why the faculty would maybe have that negative point of view. I'm not saying universally. I'm just saying in some cases, and certainly that was the case in this case.

Riess: You explained the mistrust from Dance and Theater, but why the Music Department?

Cole: Well, especially the Music Department. Oh, especially, because music is such a—how can I put it—it's a field in which there's a lot of detail to know in order to be accepted. If you don't know what year J.S. Bach was born, *forget it*, or when he died, et cetera. You have to know things! Music actually uses physics, you know what I mean? It's a science. It's based upon science.

Riess: I remember the student musicians at the Noon Concerts who were physics majors!

Cole: That's right! That's absolutely right.

Riess: There's a good reason for that?

Cole: Yes, of course. My e-mail is 415. Why is that? Because that's a tuning for music in the time of Bach. Now it's 440, your piano is tuned probably to 440, A. But at the time of Bach and before, it was lower, 415 was the standard.

I was talking to a guy from London the other day. He called me about this English concert group, and he recognized my e-mail, and he said—this is now, you know, he wants to bring this group out here from London—he said, "Oh, I just want to let you know that they play at 392." [laughter] I said, "Well, it's okay with me. I don't care!" Even lower!

It's that kind of stuff that if you're not a musician you don't know. And if you don't know this stuff the Music Department thinks you're—who are you? You're *nobody*.

And that's kind of like the situation. I had to convince them that I know this stuff. This is who I am. I'm like you.

Riess: I really didn't know that characterization of music departments or musicians.

Cole: Yes, it's a knowledge-based world, field. I think musicians, at least I'll speak for myself, find hard to accept the fact that there are other people who want to be in the music business but they don't want to take the trouble to study music, because they don't realize that it's a knowledge-based field. Even, I would say, other academics, let's say people who study—I wouldn't say physics, but say chemistry, maybe, they may not realize that there's just as much to know about music. There's just as much knowledge, hard knowledge. I don't mean soft knowledge, because of the nature of what it is.

Anyway, that was the division between the Music Department and Cal Performances, this feeling that Cal Performances was oh—and I think probably the fact also that the emphasis before I came, just immediately, was pretty much modern dance—oh this and oh this, which is not fair, but that's the way it is.

Riess: And the Greek Theatre events.

Cole: And the popular music stuff, yes, which they *really* didn't like.

But shall I go on a little bit? Move forward? I noticed in the second year I actually booked, I really went all out in the early music area, and this was leading towards the creation of the Berkeley Festival.

Riess: You had that in mind.

Cole: I had it in mind absolutely, as soon as I met Joe Kerman, and the chair of the Music Department, Philip Brett. I met some of these people and "Wow, they're all important people in the world of music scholarship." Philharmonia Baroque had just been organized, and I got to know Laurette Goldberg and some of the other pioneers of that field in the Bay Area and in Berkeley in particular. Laurette was another one outside of the university.

I had this in mind, yes. I knew about the Boston Early Music Festival, which was started in '81. They perform in odd years. I saw the opportunity to create this festival in even years to be the West Coast version of the Boston Festival, so there'd be one on each coast. There were lots of other smaller ones around the country, but a big one, a big festival.

Riess: Recently I read an article about Noah Greenberg, and *The Play of Daniel*, early music, and I remember being very taken with that, and it seemed all new.

Cole: Twenty-five years ago?

Riess: Yes. Why, exactly, what happened?

Cole: Well, it was very much amateur hour kind of thing at that time. Now it has become professionalized. In Europe it was professionalized much earlier, with people like [Gustav] Leonhardt and [Frans] Brueggen and different people like that who were scholars and players, like in Amsterdam and certainly in London. But here it was sort of like oh, let's get a couple of recorders and—because there was no training here. There was no place you could study this in this country. When I was a student at USC there was one famous harpsichordist there, from Europe of course, Madame Ehlers was her name, Alice Ehlers, and she was the only one who did early music.

Riess: Was Davitt Moroney here at Berkeley then?

Cole: He had been here, and I think he had graduated already. I think he was a student here and then he had gone, so he wasn't here teaching, no. He wasn't around at that time I don't think.

Riess: That keyboard instrument on the stage at Hertz.

Cole: Yes, it's an Italian organ or Spanish organ.

Riess: It always suggested some historical thing going on.

Cole: Yes, well, there's a lot of it—mostly it was writing books about that kind of stuff more than playing it. And now there's more playing of it, actually, and performing.

At the Juilliard School, for example, they have a Department of Early Music. It didn't exist when my son went to Juilliard in the eighties. And now it does exist. Just like there's a Jazz Department at Juilliard now. That whole thing has changed.

Riess: You mean early instruments when you say early music?

Cole: Early instruments, instruments from that time. What I'm saying is that what I was trying to do was something that has now happened.

Riess: In the 1988-1989 season program it is called Music Before 1850.

Cole: That was a big discussion, yes, with Joe Kerman, and certainly Laurette Goldberg and maybe others, trying to decide what would we call this. Early music, what does that tell you? But if you say Music Before 1850, okay. We all know that. Why? Because Bach died in 1750, and then if you go to 1850 it was sort of like a watershed. For various reasons, which I won't go into, too complicated, 1850 is a good hallmark. We had long meetings about what we should call it. It was fun, because I had this musicologist DNA in me that enjoyed that kind of discussion and appreciated their points of view. But we put up with this—it was not exactly marketing speak, but it satisfied all of us around the table, especially the academics.

Riess: And by 1988-1989 you started bringing in some early music groups.

Cole: Yes, some very famous people from Europe, like Musica Antiqua Köln, the second year, with Reinhard Goebel, who is totally crazy and totally a genius. He came for the first time. Les Arts Florissants, with the famous conductor, Bill Christie, who's French but he's really not French, he's from Buffalo, New York. He became famous in France because he's smart enough to realize he couldn't become famous in this country. I knew his parents. His mother was on the board of the Buffalo Philharmonic when I was a conductor there.

His father was a big construction guy, a builder, and his father said to me, "I don't know what my son's doing. He's in Paris." I asked, "What is your son doing?" "He's in Paris playing harpsichord. I don't know what the hell he's doing." [laughter] And he became a famous conductor, *the* most famous conductor. Anyway, I brought him the second year I was here. And the Academy of Ancient Music did Handel's *Orlando*.

And I brought—this is really great—Brueggen, Leonhardt, and Anner Bylsma together, as a trio. Anner Bylsma, he was the greatest cellist of the time on the old cello, the Baroque cello. Once in a lifetime, the three big names of that time, in early music—I would like to say just *in music*, but. These were the top three people in the world, at that time, in that field. I don't know how we got them, but we did, because nobody else was doing this, really, at the time.

We had the Frankfurt Ballet, I see, the second year I was doing this, which was pretty cool. Nigel Kennedy came, who became famous and then burned out because he's totally eccentric, but he was a great genius. Astor Piazzolla came! That was the greatest thing. You know where I heard him? I heard him at the American Music Hall, whatever it's called, in San Francisco. The Great American Music Hall. I heard Astor there, and I said, "Oh my God!" So I brought him the next year. It was his first time. He came again later.

Riess: I noticed that in the brochures categories change—World Music and Dance.

Cole: World Music, because we couldn't think of another title. We still can't! Everybody's still struggling with that. What does world music mean? It means music and dance that is not in the Western European tradition. That's what it means.

Riess: Recitals and Chamber Music are two more categories. Chamber Music doesn't overlap with Early Music?

Cole: Well, it does, and that's interesting, because even today there's something called Chamber Music America—my wife is on the board because she's a jazz musician—and Chamber Music America took over jazz for various reasons I won't go into. Anyway, she's on the board of Chamber Music America, I'm on the board of Early Music America, and these are two separate organizations, which is kind of silly

because this is the same kind of music, just earlier, as this music, which is later! Someday these two organizations probably will come together, maybe.

Riess: And then part of the program was called And More. And More included MJQ, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Astor Piazzolla.

Cole: I never liked that, but it was—you just give up finally. It's like KDFC, not now but they used to, they would say, "And then some." When "And then some" would come on the radio we'd turn the radio off. Oh please!

Riess: The next year [1989-90], there is one more of the great big beautiful brochures.

Cole: Yes, and we have a John Cage score and a saxophone—I don't know why the saxophone, but the John Cage score does mean something—and a manuscript from the fourteenth century or something.

Riess: Candlelit.

Cole: Yes, right, which sort of gives you some idea about *really* old—*really* new. And that year, 1989-'90, a couple of significant things came along. One was Music before 1850, on period instruments it says, by the way, which included the English Consort, the most famous group in the UK; Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, the most famous orchestra of its kind in Europe; the Tallis Scholars, the most famous choral ensemble at the time. Anner Bylsma again, the Hilliard Ensemble, Sequentia, Ensemble for Early Music, et cetera. Unbelievable.

Down in the corner is a little ad announcing the Berkeley Festival, which is going to happen on June 10-17 of 1990, it says. It was another piece of this thing of getting closer to the faculty, besides my inclination to want to do it anyway. But I felt this would be really something to get the Music Department involved and get them closer to Cal Performances and vice versa.

It says, "The first Berkeley Festival Exhibition debuts as a major event in one of the world's most active and important centers of early music. The festival is being produced by Cal Performances in cooperation with the Department of Music and leading individuals and organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area early music movement." In fact Cal Performances was paying for it, at that time, completely.

"Concurrent events include lectures, panels, master classes, and the annual meeting of Early Music America." I had managed to get them to agree to have their annual meeting in Berkeley, which they still do! I'm on the board now—my job now is to *keep it here*.

And now here's a very interesting story. [talking about program] "Alan Curtis is a renowned baroque scholar and famed conductor of early operas. Mr. Curtis will conduct the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and international soloists in an opera to

be announced." Well, Alan Curtis was also a famous member of the faculty. Did you know him, or know about him?

Riess: No.

Cole: Okay, all right. It's an interesting story. Alan became famous in Italy as a conductor of Italian opera primarily. He was a scholar and a harpsichordist, still is. He's still there. But all the time he was on the faculty here—he's retired some years ago now—all the time he was on the faculty he was actually mostly in Italy conducting, and of course Italy at that time was supporting the arts. It was like the other guy I mentioned, Bill Christie, who went to France. If you go to France and do French music you're going to make a career, if you're gifted, and so on, because if you'll do that music they'll pay for it.

Alan had that going, and it was great. I got to know Alan and I went to see one of his performances in Venice, an outdoor performance of a baroque opera done in baroque style. Then I invited him—he was a member of the faculty still, tenured member of the faculty of the Music Department—I invited him to come and do an opera in this first festival. At that moment we didn't know what it was. And then another piece was *La Resurrezione* by Handel, with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Nick McGegan, music director, and Ensemble Hespèrion XX with Jordi Savall, the first appearance of Jordi Savall here with his *own* ensemble, which is fabulous. Can't afford it now, it's too expensive. [laughter]

And then we produced something called *Carmina Burana*, which is really funny, because this was something we produced and it was actually done by this famous guy at the time, Thomas Binkley, director of early music studies at Indiana University. I got to know him through Joe Spencer, who was a good friend of mine who used to run Musical Offering. Joe knew Tom Binkley, and so we asked Tom to come out here and produce this show. Well, you know *Carmina Burana* was also a piece written by Carl Orff, a modern piece. The amazing thing was this was the real *Carmina Burana*, from ancient times.

Riess: I didn't know that.

Cole: Other people didn't know it either. They thought it was Carl Orff, and they bought tickets! It sold out completely. And then they came and it was this medieval music, and it was a little crazy. It was our own production. And we brought other things. John Butt, who was a member of the music faculty, organist, he did concerts and so on, so forth. John was so wonderful. He's a Brit. He's now back at Cambridge or someplace—no, he's in Scotland now.

We did other things—oh, this is important. We did the *Mass and Vespers of the Blessed Virgin*, Monteverdi, 1610. The Berkeley Chamber Choir and the Whole Noyse under the direction of Philip Brett—that's an important name. He was a musicologist of significant renown, a very famous guy, a Britten scholar and also

English music, early English music. And I invited two of the faculty members to conduct the major concerts of this first festival. How far can you go to be friends?

Riess: You went straight into politics!

Cole: Right! What else do you want?

The other thing that developed is that we did this, and it turned out to be a pretty fabulous festival for the first one. It was funded by a grant primarily from the Hewlett Foundation, which we should talk about more later. The funding—\$100,000 in 1989 was a lot of money for something like this.

Anyway, the thing that topped it off was a review in the *New Yorker* magazine, which I still have. The critic, Andrew Porter, a very famous Brit who at that time wrote the music column for the *New Yorker* magazine, he wrote a long piece about the festival. This was amazing! And all of these people were mentioned in the *New Yorker* magazine. This doesn't normally happen to academics, they don't often get into the *New Yorker*.

Andrew Porter came out, and I don't remember—there was something else going on maybe that he came for, sometimes there's an opera they want to review and that's why they were here—but it was a long piece that he wrote, and I have it at home. It made the *Times* as well.

So we got enormous publicity out of this first festival, and I thought okay, now we're on the same team. We're all going in the same direction. I got very friendly with Alan Curtis and brought him back to do other things. Philip and I got along great as long as he stayed here. He left and went to another university after a few years. John Butt and I were very close and did a lot of stuff together. So it was really a big thing in closing that gap. I won't say that it solved every problem, but certainly they knew that I know what they're doing, I'm one of them. That was my goal, because I am!

Riess: And that was the most important one. Dance and Theater were not.

Cole: Well, it was another different kind of problem, or issue. I shouldn't say problem because something that you don't want to deal with is a problem. It was just something I had to deal with, an issue. That was a different issue, first of all because dance is not something that's written down. There's not so much "scholarship" around it, obviously. There is scholarship, I don't want to demean it in any way. But you know what I'm saying. We don't have documents from dance of the fourth century, fourteenth century, twelfth, et cetera. It's not a field in which there is that kind of "scholarship."

Riess: And theater likewise?

Cole: Well, theater is a different kind of scholarship.

Riess: Shakespeare.

Cole: Certainly the scholarship around Shakespeare, because there is a written text. Right. Anytime you have a written text you have scholarship, but with dance it's different.

Riess: Does dance become more academic because it *is* dependent upon music in some way.

Cole: Well, yes, it depends on who the choreographer is, whether or not—how much they depended upon music. Merce didn't depend upon music really. He depended on John Cage. He didn't really care about the music, because they were created separately, you know, and only put together at the last moment.

The thing also with the theater—and it was theater and dance, you know, the department is one, and there's a chair. And the chair may be from theater, or it may be from dance. When I first arrived David was the chair, David Wood, and Marni was the assistant chair, or something. Later on a young guy from theater, whose name I have forgotten because I haven't seen him for years [Lorne Buchman]—he became the chair, and he and I became quite close—and he was on the committee, because whoever is the chair would be on the committee, for sure. That was automatic.

I got to know [Lorne Buchman] quite well, and he was very friendly and he liked what I did. We got along really well, so much so that—he went off and he had a job running the California College of Arts and Crafts, he became president or dean, or whatever you call it, and when he left that for another job, higher pay, he called me up and asked me, “Would you like to do this?” He was so impressed with the way I ran Cal Performances.

I said, “I don't know anything about that! I only know about *this*. I don't know anything about that stuff *at all*, about visual arts. How could I possibly do that? I'm flattered that you think I could do that,” because they were doing a national search. It was interesting that he thought because I could do this, I could do that.

Riess: Well, it's a certain perception about your job.

Cole: Yes, but anyway, that's how friendly we got, that he thought that highly of me to say I could do something I know nothing about!

Now you asked about the Dance Department. Well, that year we also did one of the most remarkable things I've ever done in my whole career, which was something we called Celebrating Merce Cunningham—you have a program there, I see, which is just that event itself. That's not for a season. That's just for *that* event, which was a two-week event [September 16-24, 1989]. We brought Merce and John here for two weeks. John was still alive and still very active at the time, and a character. They'd performed here before but they'd never had a residency of this kind.

And this was my idea to really get close to the Dance Department. Besides, I was a big fan of Merce, as I told you, for many years, going way back. The program is

"Celebrating Merce Cunningham, a Festival and Symposium on the Contemporary Arts." And this same year I was announcing an early music festival and doing a contemporary arts festival, music and dance, if you consider John's music, which I do.

In the 1989-90 brochure I say, "In September '89 Merce Cunningham, one of the greatest choreographers of our time, will be in residence on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley. The highlight of this Festival is the creation of a new work, commissioned by Cal Performances, which will premiere on September 22-24, followed by performances in other cities across the U.S. Performances, master classes, lively forums and panels, an open rehearsal, and a film and video screening of seminal works will unite students, dance scholars, critics, artists, and dance lovers in the study of the chorography and aesthetic of Mr. Cunningham and the impact of his work on 20th century art." This was my bow to the Dance Department—come on guys, you're part of this! Join us and do this. And they did, to a certain extent.

Riess: You were in consultation with them when you put it together?

Cole: Yes. But it basically was our deal. But there was no one in the dance world who—whether you liked Merce's work or not, you could not help but admire him. It was not like there was anyone who says, "Oh, Merce." No, everybody admired him.

We did this thing and it included an exhibition of etchings by John Cage in the University Art Museum. And among the events was a Merce Cunningham and John Cage interview called "Rehearsing the Human Situation." It was "an informal conversation between Merce Cunningham and John Cage" moderated by David Vaughan. David Vaughan was a historian of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, had been for years and still is, even though the company no longer exists.

And then also in that week there was a panel discussion with Merce Cunningham about music, an open rehearsal, a lecture demonstration and a panel discussions, "Modernism and the Arts," with different people who were on the panel. I'm trying to see if some of them are interesting.

But there's a little story I have to tell about Merce and John, which is *classic*. They're being interviewed by David, and he's trying to bring out the history, the great stories about Bob Rauschenberg. You know what Bob Rauschenberg did, he drove the bus, when they had a Volkswagen bus, and it was Bob, John, and Merce, and then a couple of dancers, and they would tour around New England. I asked Merce, "So what did Rauschenberg do?" "Oh, Bob drove the bus. And then he would make a few things for the décor, but he drove the bus. That was his main job." [laughter]

But anyway, they're being interviewed by David, and David asks, and he's from the U.K. [imitating English accent], "Now, any questions from the audience?" Somebody says, "Well, yes, Mr. Cunningham. So what's your relationship, you and Mr. Cage?" And Merce and John kind of looked at each other, and I've forgotten the exact order,

but it was something like, John says, “Well, Merce does the cooking and I do the dishes.”

Riess: That is *so* good!

Cole: I think it was the other way around, I think “I do the cooking and Merce does the dishes.” It was so funny. It just broke up the audience—it was so great.

Riess: That’s so *smart*.

Cole: Yes, isn’t it? Because that *is* realistic!

Riess: There was a lot of programming for that which was pitched to the students.

Cole: Well, as much as possible. They were involved for this Merce thing, and to the extent that in our music festival we had actually some student performances, performers, you know. And of course, going back to the year before when I did that thing for the twentieth anniversary, that was mostly students.

Riess: In the case of the Merce program, did the Dance Department require that the students attend?

Cole: Oh, I’m sure, I’m sure. Yes, to a certain extent. I have to say, the faculty changed over the years, and towards the end of my time there there were some young faculty that were really into it. I can get to that later. It changed over time. Not so much before.

Then we did a Contemporary Music Series and a Jazz Series, which was kind of new.

Riess: I noticed Spalding Gray on your program.

Cole: Yes. And he was a great performer and a great guy.

Riess: Did you spend time with him yourself?

Cole: No. He was sort of a private guy. I knew his wife quite well, she was his manager, and so at meetings I’d see her. He was, as we learned—we didn’t know, but he was a troubled guy and killed himself, sadly. But he was a great performer.

Riess: I wondered about that kind of programming, the one-man show.

Cole: Well, that really required us to get the [Zellerbach] Playhouse. When you could get the Playhouse, we could do something like that, and that included Spalding Gray, later on [Mikhail] Baryshnikov, for example, and also the guy who did the Met’s *Ring Cycle*, the director, Robert Lepage. To get people like that we *had* to have the Playhouse. That’s a very practical reason for having a good relationship with the Theater and Dance Department, because you have to call up the chair, have a

meeting. “We can get Baryshnikov or we can get Robert Lepage for these dates,” and we had the Playhouse for those dates. You can’t tell Misha when he’s going to come, he’s going to come when he’s going to come—or not.

Thank God we developed a relationship that worked enough so that we could bring all these companies, the Irish companies that we brought later on, you know. It all depended on the Playhouse. You couldn’t do it in other places. So, that was the proof of this relationship.

Riess: One more element of the program that year was jazz.

Cole: Jazz—yes, we were trying to go in that direction. Of course, when I was sixteen years old I wanted to be a jazz musician. I played saxophone and made a living playing in bands. Anyway, 1989-'90 was the turnaround year and we ended it that year with the Berkeley Festival and Exhibition in June 1990.

Interview #3: March 13, 2013

[Tape 3: Side A]

Riess: We wanted to start by talking about the administrative system at Berkeley that you worked with. Michael Heyman was chancellor until 1990, and Rod Park was his vice chancellor. What were your dealings with them—how did that reporting work?

Cole: Well, I met with Rod. He was my boss, the vice chancellor, and it was always the vice chancellor for academics. This is an important issue—the vice chancellor for academics, in other words, the executive vice chancellor or provost. Because at some universities people like me in my position would report possibly to the vice chancellor for administration, not academics. It was my feeling—and Budd supported me on this very much, Budd Cheit—that it always be to the academic side, because we were part of the academic program. I thought that was right—it made perfect sense to me.

Riess: Was this structure in place when you arrived?

Cole: Yes, this is something that they had put in place. I don't know, I guess it was that way before, but certainly that's what was in place when I arrived, yes. Anyway, I reported to Rod Park who was then the vice chancellor, and one of the most interesting—Rod was an always interesting guy and very brilliant, as all of them were, which I'll talk about as we go along.

But the one thing that happened—it was sort of a big issue involving the vice chancellor, the university, the Cal Band, and the Advisory Committee, of which Budd was chair—was at one of my meetings with Rod. I would go every four to six weeks, there was no regular weekly thing, because actually I didn't ask any of these vice chancellors, with rare exceptions, for anything. I didn't go in and ask them for more personnel. I didn't ask them for more money.

Basically I just kind of told them what I was planning, how I thought it would work, what the status of things were. And that was such a relief, many of them told me. It was such a relief because most of the people that came to them were asking for money, and I was just telling them what we were doing and how it's going, and what our plans were short and long term, and so on.

Riess: Did they have to sign off on anything?

Cole: No. Overall, not really. I ran my own ship and they knew about it. They knew what was going on because I told them and they saw the numbers, and so on. I always had detailed budgets every time. That's what also impressed a lot of them, because they don't generally see that from an academic department, a detailed budget every time they meet. But I'm obsessive with numbers, so I always did that. I just assumed that was what you're supposed to do.

Anyway, the particular incident was Rod was having a sort of a little nightmare with dealing with student musical activities. That's the band—the Cal Band—the choruses, Cal choruses, which includes the Men's Octet, all these different pieces of it, student things, and the jazz ensembles. These are all student musical ensembles, which still exist. It's called SMA [Student Musical Activities] and they're not for credit but there are a lot of students involved. There are usually around six hundred all together, including the band, et cetera. But for some reason this was reporting up to Rod, and a lot of things can go wrong when you have six hundred students, and it's not the kind of stuff that the vice chancellor wants to deal with exactly. [laughing]

Riess: Well, hardly academic.

Cole: Well, you know, that's a question as to how you look at it. See—I think it's academic, because it's music teaching. But yes, you're right, the university did not look at it that way, because it was non-accredited. At that time jazz was not a part of the Music Department in any way. Subsequently it has become, to a small extent, but not then, and that's not unusual. That was nationwide pretty much. It's totally changed now, every major music department in America now has a jazz component.

Anyway, I went to one of my meetings with Rod and he said, "You know, I've got this SMA thing and it's a lot of problems," and whatever. He said, "I think you could do that." Or it was more like he said, "You're *going* to do that"—he had a very straightforward manner about him. And I was new there, what am I going to say? I didn't know that much about it actually. I knew something about it, the Cal Band of course.

I said, "Well, let's talk about that."

I went back to my Advisory Committee—there was this Advisory Committee and they were supposed to give me advice—I brought it back to the next meeting of the Advisory Committee. They were totally opposed to it, for a number of reasons. One, they thought it would deflect my attention from my main job, which was running Cal Performances and making it work—which was not easy, it had a lot of problems, as I've told you.

And secondly, again it was the sort of bias of the academic side against these non-academic musical activities, which were seen as sort of like oh, you know that's just playtime or something, whatever. Actually a lot of great people went through that program who are now famous scientists or engineers, they played in the band or they played in the jazz group, and they're now grown up and successful people.

Anyway, I brought it up with the Advisory Committee and they were, as I say, unanimously opposed to it, and Budd, who was the chair, shared that view. It's interesting that he reminded me recently that he and I crossed swords on that subject. Because I felt actually, while I wasn't looking for any more work—I didn't think I needed any more work—I felt that because, as Rod said, I had been a band director, I

had been a choral director, I had been a jazz musician—hello, this is obvious! I can do this, I know how to do this.

And I said to Budd, “One of the issues that I see around here is that Cal Performances is too separate from the university, from the students, from the faculty. This is a way to get closer to the students. We’ll actually have six hundred students as part of our organization.” These things, especially the Cal Band, they’re seen as important on the campus. Unfortunately they’re not always funded to the level that they’re seen as important. It’s a double standard.

Anyway, I thought it was a good idea, even though I knew it would be a ton of work to get it going, at least at the beginning. So I said to Budd and to the committee, I said, “I think it’s really important that we do this.” *We.* [laughing] And they acceded to my feelings and my point of view, and I went back and told Rod, “The committee, they’re not in favor of it but they agree that if I think I can do it, fine.”

Then there was this whole process of six to eight months, whatever, meeting the different people, learning how the whole thing operates, and injecting it into our organization. Who reports to whom? The three directors reported to me, that is, the band director, the choral director, and the jazz director—and then they had other people who reported to them, so I just had three extra reports.

Riess: And they had been reporting to Park individually?

Cole: I think they had been reporting to somebody in Park’s office, but if there was a problem it ended up on his desk. My goal was to never have a problem from SMA end up on his desk, or on any vice chancellor’s desk, and it never did. If there was a problem, it only got to my desk. Anyway, that was a big thing, because I basically had to override the point of view of the committee, and they were very much against this for all the reasons I just said.

Riess: That Advisory Committee was all academics?

Cole: Yes, they were, except there were a couple of students I think as well. Also John Cummins was on it, who was chief of staff to the chancellor. There were people like that, administrative people. He was one of my great friends and allies, John Cummins.

Anyway, that was a major thing, and I did that and it still exists. SMA is still a part of Cal Performances.

Riess: You must have earned eternal gratitude, which—that could be a good thing.

Cole: Well, I don’t know. I don’t think it hurt. I think that people recognized the value to a certain extent, the fact that I took that over. But of course many people forgot, after a while, that it didn’t used to be that way.

Just to extrapolate one step further, the kind of problems, for example, that came up, were always budget problems, especially with the band. There were budget problems with all of them, because they never have enough because this university doesn't support them basically. They have to raise their own money pretty much. There is some university support, but it's small and it has diminished over the years. But the university does not tend to budget in a forward-looking way with certain aspects. For example, if the football team is invited to a bowl game, which happens occasionally—not every year, but you never know.

And one year they were invited to a bowl game, which they had not expected, and of course that means the band should go or *has* to go really. And there's an expense—we didn't budget for that, we don't have any money to do this. This particular occasion is very interesting, because that year Budd Cheit had been asked by the chancellor, then I think Chancellor Tien, to be interim head of the Athletic Department. Budd, who was my chair, who had been my chair—I don't think we'd formed the board yet, but anyway we were very close. And he was head of athletics, I was head of the band, and there was no money to take this trip to wherever it was, San Antonio, or someplace in Florida, with the football team for the bowl game.

We had a meeting. The meeting was Budd Cheit, and John Cummins, who was chief of staff to the chancellor, who was making sure that all this stuff comes together because it's important, it's a bowl game and everybody's going to go, all the big donors, and so on and so forth. We sat up there at the athletic office and Budd said—Budd, who was very good at budgets, as you know, and very good at all that kind of thing, managing things—he said, "Well, could maybe half of the band go, so we'd make an appearance?" I said, "No Budd, half a band is not a band." [laughter]

Riess: That's right! That's like half the football team.

Cole: Yes, half a band is not a band. I said, "They have to go or they don't go, it's either one or the other." I've forgotten what the numbers were, but it's an airplane flight, it's an overnight hotel or maybe two overnights depending on how they work it, because you have to arrive and then play and then they're still there.

It came down to okay, we'll do the flights and we'll do one night hotel, and then after the game they'll fly back so we'll save one night hotel. Budd was very good at finding ways to cut, shave things off. Then this is very funny—he's told this to me so I don't mind telling it. [laughter] Of course he went, because he was up there in the area of the administration where that was the thing, and he's the athletic director, and besides he likes to do that sort of thing. He went to the game, and I think they won, and after the game there was this big celebration, but there's no band. And people were saying, "Where's the band? How come they're not here?" And Budd had to sheepishly say, "Well, they're on a plane going back." [

We've always laughed about that because it was the one time that he and I were on opposite sides of the table. Our whole time together we were always on the same side of the table, agreeing on, working on something, making something happen. Here we

were on opposite sides trying to make something work, even though we took different points of view.

Riess: That's a great story. I'd think the Athletic Department had unlimited funds.

Cole: Well, not unlimited.

Riess: But deep, deep pockets.

Cole: Well, they have big losses every year, but the university covers it, so that's a deep pocket, yes. But Budd was trying to be very serious about it, because I think sometimes others have not been so serious about the budget. He was trying to be that way, but it sort of went back to bite him, you know?

Anyway, that was an interesting thing. First of all, it was about me taking over SMA, and this was one of the most extraordinary things that happened in the time that I was doing that. Anyway, it was a really good experience. For all those years I enjoyed various aspects of that.

Riess: Do you think that the quality of the programs improved over the years too, by association?

Cole: Well, certainly I was able to resolve issues quickly and make things happen for the people, the directors who were trying to run these things on a minimal budget, on just peanuts. Robert Briggs, who was the band director when I took over, he'd been there many, many years. He'd been a student, he'd been assistant band director, he became the band director, and when I came he was the director. Anyway, Bob Briggs told me he was so relieved because when he used to need reeds, saxophone reeds, clarinet reeds, he would have to fill out an order, a purchase order, send it up to somebody's office, and they would send back, "What is a reed? Why do you need them?"

He said, "You know, *finally* I've got somebody who understands." I could cut through that stuff. These things just happened much easier, and so yes, from that point of view—I never will forget Bob Briggs saying that to me, and how grateful he was he'd gotten rid of that bureaucracy that was surrounding him, because that's the way it is.

Riess: Each of those entities had a director, but that's not like a full-time job is it?

Cole: Yes, it is a full-time job. Because there are many choruses and there are many jazz groups. There's not just one.

Riess: Each chorus has a director?

Cole: No, there's a director, and then in the case of the choruses they have an assistant director. In the case of the Jazz Ensemble there's just one person. In the case of the band it was only one person, which was really terrible, because most major band

programs in America have at least a director and assistant director. Bob Briggs did it all by himself. Bob Calonico, who's followed him, does it all by himself, as far as I know still. And as I say, every major band program in America pretty much, UCLA, USC, you name it, they all have assistant directors at least.

Riess: Well, the university is always trying to save money, and that's a cut that a lot of people would be looking at.

Cole: Yes, but it's interesting also how every time you see a fundraising piece for the university, pretty much the Cal Band is on it. In other words, they value them but they don't show how they value them. The kids really raise the money pretty much themselves, and they pay money to be part of it. It's a very unusual structure from that point of view.

Riess: That was a good beginning with Rod Park.

Cole: Yes, it was a very good beginning, because he was happy and we got the committee on board.

The other thing I wanted to say about the early years, and one of the things that I don't know if we talked enough about last time, but that I really felt was necessary—and I'll give a few examples of how we went about it—was to reach out to the faculty and the community. I mentioned already some of the things that we did, the big productions we did with the music and dance faculty, but also other things.

For example, there's the Berkeley Symphony, which you know about. When I came the Berkeley Symphony played concerts in the church across the street, the First Congregational Church, and I went to the concerts at various times. I don't exactly remember the time frame of this, but it was within the first, well maybe five years that I was there, I would go to the concerts.

At some point I thought—and I had gotten to know Kent Nagano—I thought, there's no reason why they couldn't play over here, in Zellerbach Hall. There are reasons why it's complicated, but there is no reason why it couldn't be worked out. I proposed to Kent, and his then-managing director, whoever that was, I've forgotten, that the Berkeley Symphony come and play in Zellerbach Hall. But the proposal I made was that they play on Thursdays, because obviously we needed the weekends and we needed a calendar that we could really work with.

Riess: Is this how Thursdays became Berkeley Symphony night?

Cole: Thursday nights, that's right! That was my idea, and you can blame me for it or praise me for it, but actually it's a pretty good thing. Because one, they can rehearse Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and play on Thursday. That's really good, when you can rehearse in the hall where you are going to play and you don't have to worry about being kicked out or something. And actually there are reasons why sometimes weekends are hard, because there are so many competitive things going. Thursday's

kind of a neutral night, where there's not that much else going on. Anyway, that's the deal we made and it's worked out really well and they have good audiences. So that was something else that I did to reach out.

Riess: What's the financial arrangement there? They would have been paying more at Zellerbach than at the First Congregational Church.

Cole: Well, it wasn't a huge difference or else they wouldn't have done it. I don't remember the details, but it wasn't a huge difference. The fact that they could *rehearse* in Zellerbach, that made a huge difference.

Riess: I have here a letter dated July 31, 1990 from you. [reads] "Dear Friend, As you know, the Berkeley Symphony moved its concert series into Zellerbach Hall last season... And we would like to remind you of...the return of the San Francisco Symphony to the East Bay..." Et cetera. Tell me about all this if you would.

Cole: Fabulous. I don't recall this letter. Yes, I signed it, and Jeffrey [Shattuck] Leiter [President, Berkeley Symphony Orchestra]—he was a great guy.

Riess: And you bring up Herbert Blomstedt and the San Francisco Symphony.

Cole: I also wanted to make nice with the San Francisco Symphony, because I was trying to, again, reach out.

I had met Blomstedt through—what happened was that I was asked by the then-managing director of the symphony, Peter Pastreich, to be a candidate for a job as general manager over there, after I'd been here four or five years. I've forgotten, this is 1990, so it must have been around then. I'd just come from an orchestra, that's the world I came from, as I told you, but as a conductor, not as management side. I'd never really wanted to be on the management side for an orchestra, for reasons I won't go into, because I'd seen it from the musical side.

Anyway he did ask me to come over and would I be interested. It was a very big organization, and this is sort of like—you don't just say no. So I went over and I had interviews with Peter Pastreich and others, and when I was there I talked with Blomstedt, a very nice guy.

When I was very young and a student at USC I had been involved in what was called the Dimitri Mitropoulos Conducting Competition, and one of things was that, maybe the second round or something, you come to the San Francisco Symphony and you conduct a piece as part of this competition. I've forgotten what the first round was, how you got to that level. I was in LA at the time, but I'd come—I studied with one of the clarinet players in the symphony who was still there when I came—anyway, I conducted the San Francisco Symphony for about twenty minutes many years ago when I was a student.

When I met Blomstedt we talked a little bit and I said, "Well, you know, I actually conducted this orchestra once, years ago." He said, "Really? Great." I told him the situation, the circumstances, and he said, "Well, maybe you will again!"

Riess: Oh, that's tempting.

Cole: That was tempting. But anyway, the point is I did not take the job as general manager of the San Francisco Symphony, but I was trying to make a connection. I was always trying to make connections. Also I invited the symphony to come, I don't remember which year, one of the years that Michael Tilson Thomas was the guest conductor. The reason I did that was of course because it was Michael Tilson Thomas, and we had this relationship going way back. So they appeared.

But in this letter I was trying to make the point that, come on, this is an important place, and remember how it used to be important to the symphony? Let's try and remember that, and bring back those times when Zellerbach Hall was seen as a major center, which had kind of gone away, Davies Hall was built and et cetera. So that was part of that.

Riess: For many years the San Francisco Symphony had performed regularly in Zellerbach. And then there was a hiatus of seven years.

Cole: Well, one major reason for the change was, you see, when they performed at the opera house, when the opera was there they had no place to go, or when the ballet was there, so that was the big change. When they built Davies Hall then they had a place. Now they have the opposite problem, they have too *many* dates. [laughter] Before they had not enough dates, now they have too many dates, and neither one of them are good problems, although I think the first problem is the better.

Riess: Too many dates, you mean too many performances?

Cole: Well, you have a hall sitting there, and it's empty unless you're playing a performance. And not only do you have the hall, but now they have a fifty-two week contract. Musicians are being paid whether they play or not, so it's very important that they play many, many concerts.

Riess: The Berkeley Symphony—Kent Nagano, tell me a little bit about him.

Cole: One of his champions and supporters in Europe was a very important guy in our business, Gerard Mortier, who became the director of the Salzburg Festival. Before that in fact, Mortier had a lot to do with a lot of things that I was involved with. Mortier was the director of the opera in Brussels, and that's where, of course, Mark Morris got his *real* start as far as an international career. Mortier invited Mark to come and be the house ballet, which was really kind of strange in Europe, to have a modern dance company. I think Kent had gone there too at some point. I know Mortier was very fond of Kent and he promoted his career a lot and also Mark's career.

And you know where that came from, interestingly—at least the Mark Morris part—I think Peter Sellars had recommended Mark to Mortier, because Peter knew Mortier, so there's this connection. Mortier had this very, very important position, and he was able to do things because he had a budget, he had an orchestra, a chorus, the whole thing, a production crew, everything. And when Mark went there he could just do all this great stuff that he couldn't possibly have done in this country, there's no way. *L'Allegro, il Penseroso [ed il Moderato]*, *The Hard Nut*, all these major pieces that we still see were done in Europe.

Riess: They could offer him an orchestra?

Cole: Everything.

Riess: He got hooked on having an orchestra.

Cole: Well, he was inclined that way anyway, but yes, he had the pleasure of doing it there of course. But not only the orchestra, he had the costume shop, he had the chorus. Anyway, Kent and I—we didn't have a lot to do with each other, beyond the fact that I made this proposal, they came in, they did it, it worked, and I was very happy.

Riess: In this letter you say, “Now they can be heard again in the intimate setting of Zellerbach Hall.” [reads] “For many years the San Francisco Symphony performed regularly at Zellerbach Hall. Last year the orchestra returned for one concert after a hiatus of seven years. Now they can be heard—”

Cole: That was probably Michael Tilson Thomas when I refer to the previous year.

Riess: “—in the intimate setting of Zellerbach Hall.”

Cole: Well, that's my little, my subtle way—[laughing] I was trying to make a point probably, and it's a valid point. At that time Davies Hall had almost three thousand seats, approximately. Zellerbach is two thousand seats, so by comparison it is *very* intimate. It's not intimate, but it's all relative. The issue—it was a big issue then that Davies Hall had been built with close to three thousand seats. There were acoustic problems and there was all this talk about trying to fix it. Eventually they did do a major rework on that hall, \$10 million plus, more than that, acoustic revamp, and that reduced the total seating also as a result.

I was trying to make a point that there's a huge difference between Davies Hall at three thousand seats and Zellerbach Hall at two thousand seats. Anyway, I am glad you had that letter.

Another thing I wanted to mention about the early years is the SchoolTime program that we started, because that's something that didn't exist. How that happened was another epiphany—like I went to the Berkeley Symphony concerts at the First Congregational Church and I remember one time they did a really big piece with extra players, and they were spread all over. There was no way that they could get

their orchestra actually seated properly, the way they should be. And I thought this is really silly. That was sort of like an epiphany, when I went to the concert and I could see the need to do something.

SchoolTime came after I had a similar sort of epiphany earlier on. The Alvin Ailey Company was in town and they were performing x-number of performances, whatever, at night and matinees on weekends and so on. I was walking by the hall and thinking well, they'll be here tonight, and I said wait a minute, they're over in the hotel—they could do a show, there's no reason not to do something during the day, for kids.

[Tape 3: Side B]

Cole: The reason I had this in my mind also is because as a conductor in Buffalo I always did more children's concerts, or at least many, because the potential audience for children's concerts is almost unlimited. You can just keep doing them, and all these school kids can come. In Buffalo we did a lot of them, and I did a lot of them when I was with all the orchestras in and around Los Angeles.

I thought this is silly, they're sitting over in the hotel, they could be here performing. We should have something like that, something like I used to do with orchestras. I said to my staff, at some meeting I said, "We should start something for school kids." The first opportunity we had to schedule a company that was coming not too far in the future, probably the next year, was Mummenschanz. I thought that would be something that would be effective. You need something that's visual usually, and entertaining.

Mummenschanz was a huge hit at that time. It was a long time ago when they were at the height of their fame. They'd been on Broadway and everything. So they were coming the following year, and we got them to agree to do an extra performance during the school day, not a weekend, but during the school day, and it would be like eleven o'clock in the morning. I asked one of my staff members to work on this. That means calling schools, telling them we are going to do this, when it's going to be, and would they like to sign up, et cetera.

Well, you wouldn't *believe* the resistance of the schools. "Oh, we can't do that, we can't get away, we can't get a bus, we don't have the money, it's impossible." It was months, months, months. It was like pulling teeth to get people to come, because there again, they're in a bureaucracy where there's no money or there's a limited amount. Also, I was a school teacher once so I know how it is—"Don't bother me, I'm just getting by here!" [laughing]

But on the other hand, as it turns out, if you're a school teacher, you were like, "Whoa, this is nice! We get a break, we get to go down to Zellerbach Hall, the kids have fun, and besides it's very educational. You learn all these things and so on and so forth." It was like pulling teeth to get them to come to the first one, and that was Mummenschanz, and what year I've forgotten but it was early.

Riess: Nineteen eighty-seven, apparently, you started it.

Cole: Really? SchoolTime. Well, that's amazing. I guess I must have had the epiphany the first year I was there. I remember the woman that was working on it. She went crazy trying to get it done. We had one performance that first year, of Mummenschanz, and I think we charged one dollar. We wanted to charge something and it was one dollar per student. If they didn't have the money we would find funds to subsidize that school, so anybody could come actually. In subsequent years we increased it to more performances, like maybe three, and then four, and then twenty and then whatever. When we only had three or four, then more people wanted to come than we could possibly accommodate—it became, "How come we can't get in?" That was something that really grew fast.

Riess: You had to pay the company more too?

Cole: A little bit, yes, of course.

Riess: But they were into it?

Cole: They were into it, yes, certain companies more than others. It was a wash on the expense side, but that grew into the larger educational program, educational for K-12 let's say, not on the campus but off campus. Reaching out, what they now call community outreach, which is a vastly overused term, but anyway that's what that was.

Riess: Did your staff or somebody put together packets for the teachers?

Cole: Yes, that was all part of the deal. That's why I say we expanded into a real educational program. I think probably for the first one we had something about Mummenschanz, and who they are and what they do, and the kids would know that before they come. Later on we would have the artists go to the schools before the show even, when possible. It has grown into a big program which is, part of it, a much larger program now of K-12 education stuff.

Here again, Budd, as chair, was always a little concerned, and I think the concern is well founded, that organizations like ours, like the symphony, whatever, they're doing what we used to do in public schools.

Riess: They're doing the job that the public schools used to do?

Cole: Yes, when I was briefly teaching at the LA city schools we had many fantastic opportunities to go to concerts, take our students, plus we had a great orchestra that I was conducting at North Hollywood High School. The high school orchestra was unbelievable, and that's all gone now. Organizations like ours, the symphony, et cetera, have all these programs which are supposed to replace that—they really don't—you can't replace what we had, going back to the sixties at least, when I was teaching, briefly. You can't replace it with something else, but you try.

Budd was always a little concerned that we were pulling our attention away from our core mission, but there's really no choice. You have to sort of broaden your mission as you go along, as you see a need for it and the possibilities for it. Anyway, SchoolTime was something that I brought from my symphony background.

Riess: Seems like no end to what you wanted to take on. You're not a lazy guy are you?

Cole: Well, I just think that it was so much fun, in a way. At least—that's what I call fun.

Riess: It sounds like you had a staff that you could rely on though.

Cole: Well, that's an interesting thing. At that time the staff thought I was a little—I can't talk about everyone being the same because they weren't, they were different individuals, but there were some who thought I was a little crazy because it had been going along in its way, which was fine, it was great. But SchoolTime, Berkeley Festival, Cultura sin Frontera—I wanted to talk about that too—all of this stuff, plus everything else that we're doing anyway. We're doing a hundred performances a year without any of this other stuff, and so some of them thought I was a little nuts, but we did it somehow. And we did it with a very small staff.

Riess: Your staff in 1987—you had a business manager, Anne Aaboe.

Cole: She for example did not really understand what I was doing, but anyway. She thought I was a little nuts. [laughter]

Riess: Ross Bellingham was communications.

Cole: Yes, he had been there before too.

Riess: These are people who were in what they thought were career jobs, doing their thing?

Cole: They were, and they also had been hired by Susie [Farr], or maybe some before, and some of them had certain loyalties to this other person I mentioned earlier.

Riess: The program director Ella Baff, did she get with the program, as it were?

Cole: Yes. But it was just that I was going in many different directions at the same time, and it's more work for everybody, and that's not something that everybody invites, but anyway we did it.

Riess: What is operations manager?

Cole: Well, that's the production side. The company shows up and you have to get them on the stage.

Riess: Are these people who learned on the job, or are these jobs you train for?

Cole: Well, a little bit of both. The stage people usually learn on the job as younger people, and then they go on. But we had a very capable stage crew, and a long history, which I won't go into because it's too complicated.

Riess: These people I've just named, could you depend on them to do their jobs?

Cole: Well, they weren't thinking in the same way that I was thinking. I've mentioned I came from a different world and I can't say that—it's just that's the way it was. I came from this musical world, this professional musical world, and they had never encountered anyone like me. I was from Mars. And there was—we got along and all that, but it was just a different mindset than something they had been accustomed to.

I remember one person who is on that list there, he was a very nice guy and I really liked him a lot and he was good at what he did. But I think when we got to the idea of having an international festival of early music in June—my God, you're supposed to be on vacation in June! He said, "Robert, there are boundaries, there are boundaries." I said, "Well, let's just get this done and we'll talk about it." Anyway, as I said, there was a certain resistance to all these things going on, and I was just doing what I'd always done, doing this stuff that seemed to me normal stuff.

Especially like with the festival, Joe Kerman, Philip Brett, we had all these people who were here, and we had Laurette Goldberg and my great friend Joseph Spencer, and so many other people in the community who were really behind this. The idea of it was exciting to them, and I just couldn't listen to my financial manager, or whoever, or marketing, whatever about what should happen. There was a bigger thing going on.

Riess: Could you be accused of being all vision, and they have to make it happen?

Cole: No. No! No, because it wasn't like it was that much more work, it's just it was that they had never heard of these things. They had never done these things.

This Cultura sin Frontera thing, there's an interesting back story there if I may. Cultura started when?

Riess: That was 1990-'91.

Cole: That's when we started, okay. But there was of course a lead-up to that, and that is in the beginning years. And it was kind of the model for things that came later, inasmuch as the spark for that came from my time in New York.

I would say there are three places that I took inspiration from: there was the Pepsico Festival that I told you about with Christopher Hunt, who was the director of that. I used to go every summer and I saw Mark there in 1985. And there was, of course, the Brooklyn Academy of Music where Harvey Lichtenstein was the director, who was really the godfather, the father, whatever, of this whole business in our time, and created from nothing—talk about making a staff crazy! Harvey was really pushing all

the boundaries. There were no boundaries. He was in Brooklyn in a building that was falling apart and in a neighborhood that nobody would ever go to, and he created the Brooklyn Academy of Music. And he was right. So Christopher Hunt at Pepsico, Harvey Lichtenstein at BAM, these were people that I observed. I was in New York for some years there, watching, seeing what they were doing before I came here.

And there was also Joe Papp at the Public Theater. I used to go to his Festival Latino, which he did I think in the summertime at the Public Theater. I've forgotten when he started it. I lived over on 23rd Street, not too far, on the West Side, and I could go over. And it was always interesting and fun, and I love Latin music. First of all I have a long history, going back to my childhood almost, of Latin music because of my years in El Paso and going to Juarez and listening to Latin bands, and playing in Latin bands.

I didn't know Joe Papp when I was in New York. I just used to go to the shows and I knew what he was doing. When I got here I made a connection, through his staff, with him personally, and when I was in New York I met with him and we talked about replicating or collaborating with Latino or Latin artists from around the world, kind of as he did—that means theater, music, dance, the whole deal.

Riess: The advantage of collaboration for him is what?

Cole: He would bring stuff to New York, and then I could bring it here.

Riess: That's good for the artists?

Cole: It's good for everybody. Someone could come from Spain. The first theater piece we did was fantastic. It came from Spain, and I would never have been able to get it here, financially or otherwise. But they presented it there, and it was called *La Cuadra de Sevilla* and it was a theatrical version of a piece by Gabriel García Márquez, and it was a *fantastic* play. That was the first presentation that we did as a collaboration with Joe Papp and the Public Theater.

We created this brochure, which you see here, both in Spanish and English. I was thinking big, foolishly in a way, in this case. We also brought El Teatro Campesino, which is a local theater company. By local I mean in California. They have their headquarters in San Juan Bautista. I knew the guy who founded it, Luis Valdez, I knew him and one of the hottest things going on at the time was this play he did on Broadway, *Zoot Suit*, which was a huge hit, and so we brought them in this first season.

As I said, we did a whole separate brochure, Spanish and English. It was great. One of my great moments was sitting with Joe Papp in Central Park talking about all this, waiting for one of his shows to start, and we were talking about different things and—but sadly, he became ill shortly after that and didn't live too long, so our connection, it was no longer a personal connection and then I was dealing with the staff people and it just wasn't the same.

There were two reasons why this did not last and does not—like SchoolTime, some of these other things still exist. One was that Joe Papp died, and I didn't have a real partner, and you need a partner to do something like this in this country, a major partner, somebody who really is out there doing things. The other reason was that I thought doing something like this that was so bold—and we were doing a separate brochure, two languages, back in 1990—I thought it would be funded by various funding agencies.

They were always talking about let's have more diversity, but that isn't the reason I did it. I did it because I liked the stuff, and I had a good partner who also liked the stuff. But there was not really the support. It seems often, and I can't make a blanket statement, but often foundations—and there are many, many exceptions—but sometimes, if it's not their idea it's not really a great idea. It was *your* idea. [laughing]

Riess: That's unfortunate.

Cole: Right. It is unfortunate, I thought this was a great idea and something that should have attracted a lot of funding, but it didn't. And as I say, Joe Papp was gone. I didn't have a partner.

Riess: Maybe because this is a poor culture, the Latino culture.

Cole: Well, at that time Spain was not poor. Spain was important, Spain, Portugal, South America.

Riess: Yes, but you weren't getting funding from consulates.

Cole: No, but we were looking for funding from American foundations that wanted to see worldwide collaborations. They talked about that. They talked but they didn't act.

Riess: What about on campus. Was there enthusiasm?

Cole: Yes. The other wonderful connection we made relative to this and things like this was with the [Doreen B.] Townsend Center [for the Humanities]. You know what that is I think. The Townsend Center, and it just had opened or it was opening about the time I got to Berkeley, and the first director was Paul Alpers. It's directed by a faculty member, and they have a five-year appointment, and then they have a staff person who sort of keeps the continuity going.

Riess: Christina Gillis.

Cole: It's a different person now, who I saw last night actually—I attended an event there.

Paul [Alpers] was great, and I sought him out, and I've forgotten what projects we did, but this was the kind of thing that was certainly in his interest to broaden it to the faculty and so on. That's the idea of the Townsend Center.

- Riess: Lectures and stuff like that?
- Cole: Lectures and different kinds of events. Paul was the first director and a very good friend of mine and a wonderful guy, very open to getting things done. So that was good, the Townsend Center, and they're still going.
- Riess: Had you thought of this as every year, or was this going to be biennial?
- Cole: Every year, and we did it for three years.
- Riess: I didn't see any other brochures.
- Cole: There were, but I haven't seen them either—maybe we just put it in the regular brochure. It's possible we folded it in because we didn't have any money.
- Riess: I think you did fold it in, and you marked it with a little Aztec sun next to it.
- Cole: That's right, you've seen that, that's what we did. We made it a part of our brochure, but we tried to make people realize, look, we're doing this stuff!
- Riess: You mention the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival as being a collaborator.
- Cole: Yes, and I don't remember who was there at the time. There must have been a person that I knew and worked with, but I can't remember who it was.
- Riess: Okay, let's consider that we're talking about cultural outreach now. The tradition of visits from the Grand Kabuki Theater, how did that begin?
- Cole: I had a friend who ran the Japanese Cultural Center, something like that in Los Angeles. It's an important organization and he was the director of it, and he helped those of us in this business and the major presenters.
- Riess: Shimizu USA tour—is that a name that helps you think about it?
- Cole: Well, that's the first one we did with the Grand Kabuki.
- I'm quite sure that this was brought about and related to my one and only, first and only trip to Japan. And it was because this guy who was director of the Japanese theater in Los Angeles, he invited me, and I'm sure others who I don't remember, to go to Japan and meet with the various people. Because in Japan, and other places too, but especially in Japan, you don't just send a letter and invite somebody or whatever. You have to go there and have a meeting and look them directly in the eye, and have tea, et cetera.
- We did that, and it was very interesting, and I spent a number of days in Tokyo. Also I had an appointment to go to one of the other important cities, historic cities, I think it was Kyoto, to meet with a Japanese woman who was a very big early music fan,

internationally. She was going to support some of our early music stuff, coming from Japan.

Riess: Support with money coming or groups coming?

Cole: Groups coming and she was going to pay for it. I had an appointment to go to visit her, and I got a very terrible cold while I was in Tokyo, unfortunately, so I missed that pleasure. She was a wonderful woman. She came here once for one of our early music festivals and brought an ensemble from Japan, or they came with her. Anyway, I got to know her and I was going to visit her and her husband in Kyoto.

So I went to Japan on this one occasion, and then we had the Grand Kabuki. This is like bringing the Metropolitan Opera. It's a huge, huge event, and of course it sells tickets, people come, all kinds of people. First of all, because they hadn't been here in I don't know how many years, I just don't know. But it had been many, many years, if ever. There's a Grand Kabuki, and there's a Grand Kabuki. This was the *Grand Kabuki*.

Riess: And they were just coming to Berkeley, or did they go to Los Angeles?

Cole: I think they went to LA, I'm sure also, because he brought them down to his place. But they played here, very successful, and subsequently I think two more times after that, different occasions. It's very difficult to get them here, because they're busy playing there all the time. It's going every day, I guess. It's an amazing, amazing event. As I say, it's like bring the Metropolitan Opera to Tokyo or something, it's huge!

Riess: Yes, and how to deal with all the niceties—because it's a Japanese thing, how to have their dressing rooms right.

Cole: Well, there's that, but also the interesting thing is that the Japanese Consulate—they were very supportive. We always had a special party where they invited all the stars of the company to a reception, which they would hold in their beautiful house up in Pacific Heights. It's one of the most beautiful houses in San Francisco. They would always give a very nice reception, and there was some financial support from the consulate and the government, and all of that was great and really exciting, because of course also the public came out. And they came back a couple of times.

But talking about dressing rooms and all that stuff, I don't recall which of the three or four occasions when they came, but one time they came and the star—in Grand Kabuki there's always one person who is *the* star, and he's really way above the other people. And of course in our theater there's one star dressing room, and then there are dressing rooms. This one occasion we had the star, that is he's an actor, in the star dressing room, where he should be, and so that's where he was. This was a run of three or four performances, so it was a week of rehearsals and performances, and so on, because we'd give at least three or four, which were sold out completely.

Then it seems that the man who owns this company, owns or manages or whatever, the head guy—he's like the Sol Hurok of Grand Kabuki—he arrives on the scene, and suddenly the star is relegated to one of those other dressing rooms. This guy and his wife are now ensconced in the main dressing room, in the star dressing room!

[laughter] I heard that he was here and I wanted to meet him. It's very interesting though, because that would not be the case in our world, to have the manager come in and take over the star dressing room. That was a little unusual.

Riess: Then Grand Kabuki stopped coming to Berkeley?

Cole: Well, it's just hard to get them. It's like moving this giant elephant.

Riess: You say it was the biggest thing you ever presented and you had to raise a lot of money locally. Who did that? Your development director, Laura Brehm, did she do that work?

Cole: Well, she and I together. The truth is, that when you're a director, or something like this, you have to be there. But she was great. Laura was wonderful, and she went on to a terrific career at the university here and then she went to Montana, for whatever reason, I don't know, became the director of development at the University of Montana. She was my first development director.

I can say something about that. Laura was working in the development office at a rather low-level job, because there are all levels of jobs in that place. And she had worked I think for Rod Park. I was then reporting to Rod and I said I didn't have a development director. There was no such thing in my shop, it was me. I said, "You know, Rod, I think I know someone who would work out"—I had gotten to know Laura somehow, I've forgotten how—"Laura Brehm, you know her."

He was the kind of guy—this is what he would say, "If you want her, go ahead. Yes. It sounds good to me. It's okay with me." It was just like, "Sure." In other words, I wanted to ask because it was a whole new idea, us having a development person in our own shop, because that didn't exist at Berkeley at that time, where each unit had its own development director or development office or development effort. Although we had an effort, we didn't have anybody except me to do it! So I hired Laura, and she was my first and she was *great*. She was the beginning of a new idea about how to run this place.

Riess: Well, of course it makes sense to hire internally.

Cole: Yes, she had experience with the local people—she was great, and I was sad when she left. She got an offer to go to the business school or the law school where they have real money! I lost her, but she was great and we had a great time together.

Yes, we had to raise some money, and she helped on that. But you could go to the Japanese Consulate, and also there's a bank that's very connected with Japanese culture, Union Bank.

[Tape 4: Side A]

Riess: Your Advisory Committee—was anybody raising funds for you there?

Cole: No, but I had created what we called the Producer's Circle.

Riess: I see, there's the Business Council, and another support group, FoCAL.

Cole: Yes, they had something they called FoCAL here before I came, and that means you wrote a check for whatever, \$50, \$100.

Riess: On top of your ticket or something?

Cole: On top of your ticket, and there was no development office doing this. They just sent it in. It was in the brochure, I guess, and I think the first year I came we would raise maybe like \$50,000, something in that neighborhood, between \$30,000-\$50,000.

But I had this idea of let's create a little body separate from the Advisory Committee to raise money. It was around the first festival, but it was in general—we need to raise money for this place and let's talk about that.

We had many meetings, and they were always lunch meetings, and they were at the Claremont County Club as it happens, because a couple of the people who were involved, they belonged to the club or whatever and so we could have lunch over there. It was Carol Upshaw, Peggy Graupner, and a few others. We used to see—I remember Edgar Kaiser's wife, widow, lived there. [laughing] I always thought perhaps maybe I could get some money out of Bobbie Kaiser! Anyway, we used to see her there.

We started having lunch like once a month or something, and I remember Laura was part of that effort, Laura Brehm, because she used to go with me. We used to drive over there and strategize how we can get people to write checks. We had this table where we could seat about ten or twelve people in the room she would reserve—Carol I think was doing that then, Carol Upshaw. We would have a meeting and we would talk about some of the artistic plans and what it was going to take and how can we fund this, et cetera, and have a nice lunch.

And this was called—I called it the Producer's Circle. Carol and I agreed upon that. The idea was that if you gave a little check, maybe we can produce something. We did this every month for several years, and it grew and grew, and finally the table was pretty well full, ten or twelve people fortunately. And the idea is just to belong to this group you had to write a check of at least \$1,000 a year. That seems rather small now, but that's what it was, so that was good—\$1,000 is better than \$50, and it was very nice. That was the beginning of the civilians, so to speak, the non-academic folks, the civilians as I called them.

We had that, and we also, as you just mentioned, had developed this Business Council. We had somebody—I've forgotten who I knew, maybe it was a Wells Fargo person or Bank of America. There was more than one, but it was a small group, maybe four or five, who were officers at a bank or something like that. We had occasional meetings with these people, just occasional because it's not like individual giving, it's corporate giving.

So we had these three meetings going on. You had the Advisory Committee, Budd chairing, that was a monthly thing or every six weeks or so. We had the Producer's Circle over at the Claremont Country Club, and they wrote checks in order to have the privilege of coming to lunch. And then we had the Business Council, which met irregularly but the idea was that they were supposed to try and get their company and other companies, to write checks to support Cal Performances. We had these three things going on. It was a little complicated, and it got a little unwieldy. But I really enjoyed it.

Riess: You couldn't just ask—they had to be coddled in some way?

Cole: Well yes, but it wasn't like they would be pushy or say you should do this or that. It wasn't like that at all. I think they had confidence in me, and what I was doing, and we all liked each other, and that was all good. They didn't do it unless they wanted to. They wanted to be part of it. There were a few ruffles here and there, but I don't recall anything that's important.

But anyway, as a result of this, the culmination—the most important thing I think I ever accomplished was creating the board. And I might as well just finish talking about this, although it goes up to '96. How that happened—of course it was an evolution, it didn't happen in a moment. First of all I discussed it with Budd *sotto voce*, not with anybody else, just with Budd, that wouldn't it be a good idea—well, first of all it was, "Wouldn't it be a good idea if we invited Carol Upshaw," who was head of this Producer's Circle, "to be on the Advisory Committee?" See, that was my first little step.

Riess: That's the first insertion of town, or civilians, as you say.

Cole: Right. And Budd agreed, yes, and he got the committee to agree. Ooh, that was scary. So Carol joined the Advisory Committee, maybe a year or whatever, and that was their inserting a civilian into the Advisory Committee, and interlocking these groups.

Then I said to Budd, "We really need a board." And of course the model for that was the museum had a board, the university museum, and they had a rather functional board. I've forgotten, I don't know how long it had been in existence, but it existed, so there was a model for it. It's not like we'd be the only one.

Riess: The issue is the model within the university structure.

Cole: Yes, it's not common to have a board.

Riess: Yes, and the university likes to raise its own money.

Cole: And likes to be in charge and control.

But there was a model for it, and Chancellor Heyman's wife, Therese, was on that board, the museum board, because she was very interested in the museum. There was a model for it, which had been approved by the chancellor. I said to Budd, "We need something like that, we need to do that." And he agreed.

Now how are we going to do this? I went up to see Rod Park and I said, "Rod, we need to put a board together." I think it was still Rod, but this may have been in '95 because it took some time to make this actually happen. Maybe it wasn't Rod.

Riess: Tien was chancellor until '97, and Carol Christ then was your vice chancellor.

Cole: Anyway, whoever was vice chancellor I went to and said, "We need to do this and this is how we'll do it. We've already got a start for it and there's a model for it." They said, "Fine, do it." [laughter] Then Budd and I went around talking, we discussed this with all the different groups, and everybody seemed to think it was a fine idea, and we had our first meeting in December of 1996. Budd was unanimously elected chair, and that was, as I say, I think the most important single thing that I accomplished.

Riess: And you and Budd selected the members?

Cole: Well, we took all the people who were on each committee and we just put it together. The Business Council, whatever, if you were a member of one of these groups, in good standing, you were a member of the board. We called them founding members, and they're still listed in the program, I think, as founding members. And that was that, and then we didn't have to go to all these different meetings, we had just one.

Riess: What about your Artistic Advisory Committee?

Cole: That was part of the board structure. We had committees within the board, yes. And that was a similar committee to what had been the Advisory Committee, but now it was a board committee. We had a Finance Committee, we had an Artistic Advisory Committee, and of course others—nominating committee, that sort of thing, the usual. It was very structured and I liked that, and Budd liked it too, of course, we saw the same way on those kinds of things.

I like structure, I like process, and we created this very structured and process-oriented organization in which, you know, everything was done by the book, and it worked. You have to do things right, even to run a business like this, and maybe especially.

Riess: The Advisory Committee Budd had been chair of was a rotating bunch of academics?

Cole: Yes.

Riess: Did they fall away?

Cole: No, they became members of the board. They were invited—some may not have chosen to, but they were invited. Then we created a set of bylaws which we borrowed from the museum, much of it. Michael Smith, a wonderful guy who was the chancellor's attorney, helped us modify them, along with Budd and myself, but he was very active in modifying the bylaws from the museum to fit Cal Performances.

We said some of the members will be ex-officio members: the chair of Music, whoever that is; the chair of Theater Arts and Dance, whoever that is; two students; one faculty member at-large, so we had this way of making sure that we had a structure. We're not going to decide who's going to be from Music, but whoever's the chair is going to be invited to be on the board. And then that chair will appoint another person from the Music Department to be on the board.

But if the chair—it got complicated—if the chair is a composer, because they had composers and musicologists—if the chair is a composer, then the other person has to be a musicologist, and vice versa you see. And from Dance and Theater, if the chair is a dance person, then the other person has to be from theater, so we kind of covered all these different areas by law, bylaws. That was the process.

Riess: You liked doing that.

Cole: Oh yes, I like structure and I like to make sure that everything is clear, and that's what we did. It, for the most part, worked. That was not a powerhouse fundraising organization at its outset, it just wasn't. It was raising money but it wasn't a powerhouse, because it had kind of come from the roots. We needed then to reach out, which we did ultimately. By the time I left we had some powerhouse check-writers who were also wonderful board members in other ways too.

Riess: The Gettys, what was the relationship with the Gettys?

Cole: Oh, that was an entirely different relationship. It had nothing to do with the board. We used to have events up at the Gettys', at Gordon's house. For example, maybe the third time that Cecilia came, Cecilia Bartoli, the post-performance event was at the Gettys' house—and probably more than once. It would be a very, very exclusive, very beautiful party and that sort of thing.

We've had events—I remember one night Chancellor Tien at the table with Gordon, and Gordon's going on about some scientific idea he has, and Chancellor Tien is listening so carefully. I thought it was so interesting to watch that, how polite Chancellor Tien, Chang-Lin was. Gordon is very interested in science. He's interested in science and music, those are the two things he cares about really, mostly.

Riess: It was not that it was important to have a Getty on the board?

Cole: No, no, no. We had a relationship with Gordon, and I still do. He sees himself—he *is* a musician. That's his life, music, and if you're into music he's into music. I got to know him pretty well and he's a good guy. So that was an important step.

And I wanted to say a thing about the programmatic processes, okay?

Riess: I don't know what programmatic processes means.

Cole: Well, what I've been talking about is all about the structure of it all, and the bigger visionary kinds of bigger projects.

I was just looking through some of the brochures, and I think I told you when we started that when I came there was really no recital series. The first year I was here, which had been planned by my predecessor, there was one pianist who gave a recital, and that was it. There were no singers, no violinists. And I saw that, as I mentioned before, as a need. The first artist I actually booked, solo artist, was Leontyne Price. I figured go to the top, start big! She came the second year I was here.

I noticed that in the season 1990-1991 we had recitalists: Cecilia Bartoli, her first American tour, and Dawn Upshaw, her West Coast debut. Mirella Freni, who was still a great singer at the time, she was here. Murray Perahia, Richard Goode, in one little recital series. That was just part of what we were doing. All these—some of them who were totally new to this area, some of them had been here before. Murray had been to us before, because I told you when I first came I wanted to get him and I got him the second year.

And on the chamber music side, which also had been, I think, sorely neglected, we had that year the Takács Quartet, the Guarneri Quartet, and the Emerson Quartet.

Riess: These people still are around, amazing!

Cole: Yes, some of them are still around. Takács is still at their peak, but they were very, very new then. Guarneri was definitely at their peak at that time. They were fabulous, and Emerson was also very good—Guarneri was my favorite quartet at that time. Obviously, they don't exist now. The Takács became the Guarneri, in a way, to the extent that in those days if you announced the Guarneri, it sold out by subscription. That was it. And later on the Takács was the same way. Takács sold out on subscription, which was great, you know, in Hertz Hall.

Riess: The programming we will talk about in depth. Could I ask a few other questions first?

Cole: Sure.

Riess: The Music Department. You talked about getting their attention with the Stravinsky festival.

Cole: With the twentieth anniversary festival of Zellerbach Hall, which involved Stravinsky's music, yes. And he was there at the opening in 1968. I was a big fan of Stravinsky, still am. When I was a student he was in Los Angeles, he was actually there, and I used to see him occasionally.

Riess: I wondered if you got suggestions from the Music Department for programming?

Cole: Not really.

Riess: Not really? You must have seemed accessible to them.

Cole: Well, Don Friedman, who was on the Advisory Committee and a wonderful guy, English professor and he knows a lot about music, one of my great friends—I told you he and I first got to know each other when he learned I was going to hear this Birtwistle opera. He's the kind of guy that would know about the latest Birtwistle opera. An English professor—kind of amazing to me, but that's the kind of guy he is. And he's married to an opera singer. But in general it wasn't like they were suggesting what I should do.

I learned about Alan Curtis when I came here, being a rather famous conductor in Europe of baroque music, especially Italian baroque music. He was on the faculty and I met Alan, probably met him here, and we talked. He performed in the first festival. (By the way, I have here the reviews I referred to from the *New Yorker*, and also the *New York Times*, of the 1990 festival. Andrew Porter from the *New Yorker*, and John Rockwell from the *New York Times*, both reviewed the first festival.)

Anyway, I met Alan before this festival, obviously, because he performed in the first festival. I wanted to see what he was doing, what he does in Italy. He invited me—he was giving a performance in Venice, outside, a baroque performance, a baroque opera, done in the baroque style with machinery that you push on the stage and push off the stage, and with candlelight, and outside in a piazza, or a space. You could see laundry hanging out the windows next door and stuff like that. There were seats—four or five hundred maybe, at the maximum, in Venice. I went to see this opera, and this is my way of seeing who this guy is and what does he do? "Would this work for a festival?" I went to Venice just for this reason, to see him in action.

And as a result, for the first festival he brought his Italian singers and he did this opera, which was very, very rare. If you read the piece, Andrew Porter—it wasn't a great performance, because nobody liked the stage director. The music was pretty good, that is, the performance was pretty good, quite good, I would say. But the opera itself is—it's not Handel, if you know what I'm saying. *La Schiava Liberata* was the name of it, by Niccolo Jommelli, somebody nobody ever heard of, but for a festival it was kind of nice, because it's something rare—it had never been performed in this country.

That's how I got to know Alan, and that was my relationship with the music faculty. This guy does this, this person does that, and when I say guy—this person, because I

worked with some of the women faculty members very closely later on. But I wanted to find somebody who does something special, that can be part of this program, and make a connection and also make something that you can't do any other way. John Butt did a performance of a Scarlatti opera that hadn't been performed since its first performance, that had been resuscitated from the UC Music Library, I believe, and we performed it. [*L'Aldimiro* performed in 1996 festival.] That kind of thing, that was more of the relationship, me seeking *them* out and saying, "Oh, you can do this. Could you do that?"

Riess: And to go back briefly—we talked about Merce, but did you have a close working relationship with him like you did with Cecilia Bartoli and Mark Morris?

Cole: Well, it's a different kind of relationship. The relationship, where it started, was back in Buffalo.

One story—when Merce came to Buffalo, back in the 1970s, Shea's Buffalo Theatre was an old theater with old equipment. And his company is up there dancing, and right in the middle of the piece one of the speakers goes on fire, the speakers down in front of the audience. You could see them blast into fire! I'm sitting up here watching all this, freaking out. Thank God my house manager runs down and with an extinguisher puts it out, right in front of the whole audience. And the show just goes on. John Cage is in the back doing his thing. Of course, it was so loud it blew out the speakers, you know! [laughter]

The point is, I knew him and had worked with him before, and we had that story that we all remembered about the fire, because this was pretty startling to have fire in a theater. God, it's scary during a show, but the show never stopped. The dancers just went on like nothing happened. That was my first relationship with Merce, and I brought him to Bardavon Opera House when I went there a few years later. When I came here he had already been coming here.

Riess: He came here in 1971. I was surprised.

Cole: I'm sure somebody out here said to Betty Connors, like I told you this person in Buffalo said to me—when I asked, "Who would be good for modern dance?" she said, "Merce." I said, "Great, let's get him." That's before I knew much about modern dance, because I'd only done ballet. We had Merce every other year. That was kind of the idea when I first came here, and that was great. He'd bring something new every year, and sometimes we did premieres, and it was all good. Then he did this piece *Ocean*, which is kind of jumping ahead, but I think I might as well tell about it.

I heard about *Ocean* from his manager then, Art Becofsky and Merce himself. They were going to do this piece, and I think it was going to happen in Brussels and Amsterdam. I said, "Well, I want to see that. That sounds interesting." It's a piece to be done in the round, with 112 musicians, and that right away should have told me to *forget it!* [laughter]. But I wanted to see it. In their whole lifetime of work it was the biggest thing Merce and John Cage had ever done together—it's David Tudor's

music and it premiered in Brussels. I went to Amsterdam to see it, and they did it in a theater where they made it in the round by having the stage, and then building out the stage. It was kind of in the round but not really, because it was in a theater. They tried to make it in the round.

"Could you make a dance in the round?" John Cage asked Merce Cunningham before the James Joyce/John Cage Festival in Zurich, in June, 1991. He had in mind a dance performed in the middle of a circular space, surrounded by the audience and then musicians, in concentric circles. There being no suitable venue at the Swiss event, Cage's idea was set aside, and a little more than a year later, he died, quite unexpectedly. Cunningham went on to make dances that seemed to subsume Cage's death—among them "Doubtletoss" and "Enter"—and to carry forward his notion, moving, as in "Breakers," ever closer to the sea. Cage's grand concept was first fully realized in Brussels on May 18, 1994, at the vertiginous theater-in-the-round called the Cirque Royal. There, for the first time, 112 orchestra musicians played a complicated 2,403 page score, "Ocean 1-95," by Andrew Culver, elaborating on Cage's initial plans; and at the same time, David Tudor introduced his live electronic soundscape, "Soundings: Ocean Diary," comprised of eerily reprocessed underwater noise. Marsha Skinner's sea-inspired leotards and filmy dresses painted the dancers in purples, turquoises, oranges, mauves, violets—the colors of the sun, the sky, the untroubled sea. The dance itself was an amazement: 90 teeming minutes of a dance perfectly without front, back, or sides. It contained (about 26 minutes from the start) a figure—dancers in a circle, arms linked, variously balanced—from the very center of a Cunningham work called "Beachbirds," made in 1991. Also carried forward, though subtle means of casting and configurations, were threads from his other Joycean epic made with Cage, "Roaratorio," which itself had since been echoed in "Enter." [Nancy Dalva, [Danceviewtimes](#), 2005]

Riess: Rounding the angles.

Cole: Yes, and they built out from the stage.

I saw it, and I thought this is really great. I talked to Art and I talked to Merce, and I said, "We should bring this to Berkeley." They asked, "Where?" I said, "Well, since it's supposed to be in the round we could do it in Harmon Gym." That was before Harmon Gym was transformed. This is the old Harmon Gym—now it's called the Haas Pavilion. But Harmon Gym, you know what that was like.

It happened that they were planning to renovate Harmon, change it into Haas Pavilion and make it huge, and so they would close it for a year or two to do the renovation. In the time I had planned for *Ocean*, it would be the last event of any kind in Harmon Gym. I made sure that was possible, that the people in charge of construction here agreed to it, and I got Merce to agree to come and do it at that time.

The American premiere of *Ocean*—this was huge, and the thing that made it possible really—well, it was a lot of different things. We had to raise some money and all that, but the daunting thing was the 112 musicians. Where are you going to get 112

musicians on our budget, which was very small? There was this PhD music student [Anthony De Ritis] with whom I became friendly, a wonderful guy who became head of the music department at Northeastern University after he graduated from here. I proposed to him, “Tony, could you do this orchestra? Could you get together 112 musicians for this show?” Students, people—not a union orchestra? I won’t go into the complexity of this music, but it was very complex, very difficult. And Tony said, “Yes, I could do that.” I was so thrilled.

[Tape 4: Side B]

Cole: We did it in Harmon Gym, and as I say, this was the last event in Harmon Gym before they renovated it. And of course Harmon Gym, while it’s much smaller than the present Haas Pavilion, was a big place for a performance, a dance performance of a modern dance company.

The lighting was very complex, especially putting the lighting in a gym. I walked in when we were preparing for the show, and we had our crew over there—this is what I mean about boundaries! [laughter] I walked into the Harmon Gym, and the crew was working on the lighting, and all the lights were on the floor of the gym. It was okay because the gym was going to be changed and nobody was worried about the floor too much. But when I saw the lighting fixtures—it all had to go into the sky. I thought oh my God! But we did it, and it was amazing. They got it up, we didn’t go broke, and as I’ve mentioned to you earlier, we had a review in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

It was huge! I went to Amsterdam first to see this—that’s the kind of a thing where you had to go there, like the Japanese event, the Grand Kabuki. You had to go there. I had to go to talk to them but I also had to see, is this really something special and will it work? It was so nice, because the review in the *Times* started out with the fact that the reporter, whoever it was, I’ve forgotten now, said that he was on the Berkeley campus and there’s this big line waiting to get into Harmon Gym for the American premiere of *Ocean*. He talked to one of the students and asked, “Are you going to the show?” And the student said something like, “Oh yes, John Cage, this is cool.”

Riess: That’s good! Somewhere I read that they used the I Ching and a computer to “guide aesthetic choices.” I wondered how the complexity of that played out.

Cole: Well, that was John’s idea about chance, and Merce took it over too, and that’s one of the ways they worked.

Because we did *Ocean*, we had skipped a year. I was telling you we did Merce every other year, and because we did *Ocean* we didn’t do his repertory. When I say we did Merce, we did his rep, his new pieces. He would do at least two new pieces every year, and he’d bring them to Berkeley, and maybe we’d have one of them as a premiere. One had been performed in New York, and so on. Because we did *Ocean*, we missed his new work, because he was doing that too.

I said to Art, the manager at that time, and to Merce, I said, "Well, we have to catch up here. We did *Ocean*—that was great, but we missed this, and this, and this, these new pieces that you did at Brooklyn Academy and wherever else, and in Europe." I said, "From now on I want you to come every year, because we're going to have to make up for what we missed and also not miss anything." Merce was getting older and I didn't know how many more years. After *Ocean* I think we skipped a year, because we had to plan ahead. Then they came back every year, from then until—I've forgotten when—there was a break in there which I will talk about later. But for some time they came every year. As far as I know, it's the only place in America where they came every year.

Riess: Always a sellout?

Cole: Well, it wasn't a sellout. Merce was never that popular. *Ocean* was a big success, but we were in a huge place. We sold almost two thousand tickets. I think we did two performances, almost two thousand each time, which was pretty good for Merce. You know, Merce is not hugely, broadly accepted.

Riess: If he's not hugely, broadly accepted, why is it incumbent upon you to have him every year?

Cole: Because he was definitely the most important modern choreographer—really modern, contemporary—definitely the number one. Ask any dance person, they'll agree. He was number one, and there's no one to take his place yet. Other people agree with me. Alastair Macaulay agrees.

Riess: This isn't where you go to the board and argue for it.

Cole: I had board members that definitely supported me on that, yes. There were a few people who were former dancers. One wonderful board member, Susan Marinoff, came from Mills College. She had studied dance there and she—to the people in the know, Merce is the one.

Riess: Was there any kind of friendship between Merce and Mark Morris?

Cole: No. Mark very much admired Merce, but—they were in a different world, artistically.

Riess: And that is the gay world, isn't it?

Cole: Well yes, but that's not really relevant. That's interesting that you bring that up, the gay world. I grew up working with, and it's ridiculous to say, people who were gay. I never thought about the fact, and I'm talking about in the sixties. I worked with this ballet company in Los Angeles I told you about, with David Lichine and Tania Riabouchinska—but our ballet master was a guy who, now looking back—I knew he was gay then and I never thought about it. It's nothing, so what? It was irrelevant. Only years later, when I came here, did this whole thing about people being gay—I don't know, I just never thought about it. I knew his partner. He worked, of all places,

at that think tank in Santa Monica, at RAND corporation. He was a major guy at RAND. We used to hang out together, and we worked, of course, a lot together. Anyway, that's to me, irrelevant.

Riess: Okay. Another question, would you tell me what the Intercampus Cultural Exchange is? Does that fit in? I wondered how that worked.

Cole: That was something that existed, never had much effect, unfortunately. It was an idea, but not great results.

Riess: In theory it means you share with other University of California campuses the burden of bringing people and paying for them?

Cole: Kind of, yes. But it never really happened. I was involved in that to the extent possible, but not much resulted.

Riess: All right. Now where are we on your list?

Cole: We've done the Berkeley Festival, and we've done Cecilia's first appearance.

Riess: But we haven't done Cecilia's first appearance really. I've read about Cecilia's arrival, but I haven't heard you talk about that.

Cole: Well, I can talk about Cecilia, because she was, in some ways, the biggest success artistically and financially. Cecilia, that was a fortuitous thing. I thought I mentioned it to you earlier as part of one of my many theories about this business and how it works, and so on.

Anyway, I met Cecilia's manager, a guy named Jack Mastroianni, a wonderful guy, and I still have a great relationship with him. He was then a young artist manager who had been a development director at the Houston Grand Opera, so he had come from the opera world, he was educated in the opera world too, he was very well educated in music, in opera. He looked like an opera impresario. And I was very much into opera, as I still am, but probably even more so then. I used to go to the opera a lot, and I knew people over there quite well. So I would, as I say, hang around the opera house.

Riess: This is the San Francisco Opera.

Cole: Yes. Remember, the first opera I ever saw was at San Francisco Opera house, when I was a student at San Jose State University. I go way back with San Francisco Opera in that respect.

I was at an opera one time, and someone, perhaps Sarah Billinghurst, who was then the artistic administrator of San Francisco Opera, and went to the Met after that—I think it was Sarah that introduced me to Jack Mastroianni. Jack had just started, not too long before that, in the artist management business, and he had this young soprano he told me about that he was working for and working with named Cecilia

Bartoli, and would I like to have a listen? And he gave me—in those days it would have been a tape, and I think I still have it. Yes, like that. [points to Riess's cassette tapes] I listened to it, and I said, "Wow, this is amazing." I called Jack immediately, and I said, "Yes, let's do this."

And we set a date for her first American tour. I think she had done something in New York at the same time or just prior, but it was her first American tour. I set a date, a Sunday. Because I could only get Hertz Hall on a Sunday, it had to be Sunday for me. And it was the first date on the tour, because I was the first one who committed to this tour. Nobody else ever heard of her, and not many people are going to commit to an Italian singer you never heard of, unfortunately.

But there was this one other guy who was in Kansas City—and the organization still exists, and it's called the Harriman [Jewell] Series—his name was Harriman, a wonderful guy, and he loved vocal music and he had presented the first recital in America of Pavarotti. He was older than I by quite a bit, he'd been around a long time, but he was really interested in vocal music. He was the kind of guy—he had presented the American debut of Pavarotti, and he was always going around to all the opera houses of the world listening to singers, and so on—he was wealthy, and he ran this series for his entertainment, and others, in Kansas City.

He had heard about Cecilia, and so he got a date just before mine with Jack, otherwise I would have had the American debut. [laughter] Mr. Harriman did instead, because that's what he wanted to do, and I didn't care, because I wasn't into the fact of having the debut. I just wanted to have her. Anyway, her first performance on the tour was in Kansas City, and then she came to Berkeley and did her first performance here.

Jack has always reminded me why our relationship is so great. One reason is because at the intermission I reengaged her for the next year, not after the show but at the intermission! I said, "Get me a date!" And he did. [laughter] And the only place she ever performed in the Bay Area was at Berkeley.

Riess: She moved out of Hertz rapidly.

Cole: Yes, well, she did two concerts at Hertz and then she was in Zellerbach the third time. And it was completely sold out in Zellerbach, and the second performance in Hertz was sold out. The first performance was not, of course—nobody had ever heard of her. But she was great, and Jack was fabulous to work with.

There was a big piece, which I don't know if you saw, in the *New York Times Magazine* [March 14, 1993] by Linda Blandford, a wonderful writer and terrific woman. She went with me to the airport to pick up Cecilia. And here she talks about the fact that I didn't go to the airport to pick up every artist, by any means!

Riess: Cecilia—it sounds like it was really difficult for her, the touring thing.

Cole: Oh, she hates flying. It was difficult for her, yes, and that was one of the things, but Jack always came with her. He was taking care of her, making sure she was as happy as she could be, given the fact that touring is not something she likes to do or liked to do. She did it at the beginning, of course, because that's the way to build a career, and then when she started making recordings the record company always wanted her to do an American tour when she had a new CD coming out.

Riess: You would always set something up so that there was a party for her? Was that for her sake? Or for whose sake?

Cole: That was for the donors, absolutely. I always said that Cecilia was like an endowment for us. It was the biggest—she probably had more to do with our fundraising capacity growing than any other single thing we did, because people wanted to have tickets to Cecilia. You couldn't get tickets to Cecilia unless you were a donor—I mean good tickets. Many people were donors, I'm sure, just because of her.

Riess: I can't tell from this article—is she warm and lovely, a wonderful person?

Cole: Yes, she is. She really is.

Riess: And is she still in your life?

Cole: No, I don't see her, because she's only in Europe. She's now producing—she's the director of the Whitsun Festival at Salzburg, and whatever she does, she's in charge of it. She doesn't just go sing for somebody else, you know? If there's a production I'm sure she chooses the stage director, the conductor—she's in it. At Salzburg she's in charge of the whole festival. It's a week-long festival at Whitsun, and it's the predecessor to the summer festival. It's a smaller version.

Riess: She's ambitious.

Cole: Yes, and she's smart. She's produced these records that are unbelievably great, several recent ones where she's the producer. She decides on all the aspects of it.

Riess: And she doesn't have to travel overseas.

Cole: She doesn't have to travel overseas. Yes, she's not flying. The other person who doesn't fly is Wynton Marsalis. He goes by car, bus—it's amazing. Cecilia, she flies but she doesn't like to fly, and probably now she doesn't fly..

Riess: Did her mother travel with her?

Cole: I can't recall if she was on the first tour. She might have been on the first tour, certainly early on. She was a major influence.

Cecilia was just great, and the fact that she came here every time she was in America—and she didn't need to do that, because she could have sung in New York,

Boston, Washington and gone home. But every time she was in America she came here. The other place she went on the West Coast was Vancouver, where Leila Getz also booked her on that first tour. Leila Getz is a friend of mine and she loved vocal music and loved music and knows something about music and cares something about music. So pretty much every year she came to America she also went to Vancouver.,

Riess: Eventually did she get priced out of Cal Performances?

Cole: No, no, no. We made money on Cecilia! [laughing] It was expensive, but when you sell so many tickets and you have so many donors contributing—the fee was, you might say, absurdly ridiculous, but it was not really. I think it was up to \$100,000 when she came with an orchestra.

Riess: I don't know. I always look around performing spaces and wonder.

Cole: Well, first of all, we would gross at least \$100,000 just on the ticket sales for her. But you had countless donors writing huge checks just because they wanted to be donors and because they loved her—many, many people, including Gordon Getty, who was a big fan of hers of course. The last year, 2009, when she came for my last season, we had donors from Louisiana, Texas—donors, not just ticket buyers, because they couldn't get a ticket unless they were donors. And they flew here for the concert. People flew from all over for the concerts, because she only performed here on the West Coast. It was only here the last couple of times. If you wanted to hear Cecilia and you didn't want to go to New York or wherever—I don't know where else she performed, I'm not sure it was even *in* New York. She would do a few performances, and then if you wanted to hear her on the West Coast you had to come here.

Riess: And she was bringing her own orchestra?

Cole: Well, a couple of times she came with orchestra. Usually she came with just a pianist.

Riess: Martin Katz?

Cole: Well, different people. But Martin was the one that you read about in that article, yes.

Riess: Does Jack continue to represent her?

Cole: No. No. She's kind of on her own. She represents herself.

So that was really—just one of those things. But as I've said to other younger colleagues, "Hang around the opera house!"

Interview #4: March 20, 2013

[Tape 5: Side A]

Riess: I'm interested in what sort of cooperative arrangements you had with other performing venues around here.

Cole: We worked with UCLA, certainly, and with the Orange County Performing Arts Center. Dean Corey was one of my good colleagues down there, and he's still there and retiring this year. He is a director of something called the Philharmonic Society of Orange County, which actually used to be an orchestra. Years ago when I was a student at USC, it was an orchestra. Over time they decided this wasn't working, so they decided to become a presenter of orchestras. And it is one of the most important, in the whole country, and really as a result of Dean Corey's leadership. He was one of my very good colleagues.

It didn't happen too often that we worked together, because his thing is primarily orchestras and ours was not, for various reasons, one of them being that there is so much orchestral music being played at Davies Hall I didn't see that we should compete with the San Francisco Symphony. It's just too much product. And secondly, especially when I first arrived, the acoustic qualities of Zellerbach Hall were wanting, let's say. They were not terrible but not really wonderful for music of that kind.

But we did collaborate. For example, the final arrival of the Vienna Philharmonic to Zellerbach Hall, which happened just the year after I left, was largely because of my collaboration with Dean, because he had brought them once before, and he and I used to both go to Salzburg and try and get them to come to the West Coast, because they seldom did come to the West Coast. They'd usually go to New York and go home. Anyway, it was because of Dean's effort, and we worked together on that. Finally they did come actually to Orange County and to Berkeley. That was one collaboration that was very fruitful.

We collaborated somewhat with the Orange County Performing Arts Center where they did big dance companies. Although often they had their own schedule, different than ours. But that was one of the major presenters that we worked with. It's the same venue as the Orange County Performing Arts Center, but the Philharmonic Society presents orchestras in that venue, so they're two different organizations down there in the same place, Orange County Performing Arts Center, Segerstrom Hall, and now there's a new hall—they have two major venues.

There has been no really major presenter of the performing arts in San Jose, which is an interesting phenomenon. There is an orchestra, which has had its ups and downs and troubles, as have most orchestras in this country. There's a ballet company, which is very nice. I've seen it recently. And there's an opera company, which has been quite successful, given the difficulties of running an opera company. But there has been no major presenter in San Jose. So we didn't have a collaborator in that respect.

As I say, it was UCLA, Orange County. I had a good collaboration with my friend in Vancouver, so that in fact Cecilia Bartoli's first American tour included Berkeley and Vancouver, as I mentioned last time.

As colleagues we were very much dependent upon interest and willingness to get on the phone—especially on the phone then, as there was no Internet at the time, in the early days—and talk about something. “Could we do this, and could we both do it?” And, “When could you do it and when could I do it?” This gets complicated, and you have to have people who are, first of all, passionate about what they're doing, like getting Cecilia—once she came, then the two of us who had her here on the West Coast wanted her back. It was a matter of collaborating on the dates that would work for both of us, and make sure we got the hall—in Vancouver Leila Getz was renting halls. Those collaborations were more West Coast, sometimes national.

Riess: What about the Western Alliance of Arts Administrators? Was that good to belong to?

Cole: That's an organization where everybody comes to a meeting once a year—everybody in this business.

Riess: Western is west of the Rockies?

Cole: It includes Denver, because we've had meetings in Denver, so I guess it's everything Denver and west, and it includes New Mexico. We've been there once, and Arizona, and LA—obviously California. Seattle is another place we've had meetings.

There was this annual meeting of APAP, which I mentioned before, in New York, in January. And that's been going on for years. Then at some point people felt—well, this is entirely too big, and some people didn't want to travel to New York or couldn't afford to or whatever, and so they started having regional meetings. And one of them was the Western Alliance, which is one of the largest of them all now. There's also a southern meeting, there's a midwest meeting.

I told you that when I was in New York, having come from the music world and not the presenting world, and then working in New York, I didn't go to any of these meetings, because I was just there and I could see all the people I wanted to see any day. These organizations like the Western Alliance grew out of the fact that in California you can't just walk down to 57th Street and see Yo-Yo's agent.

Riess: What happens at the meetings?

Cole: Usually by the time I got to the meeting I pretty well knew, at least for the coming year, what we were going to do. We planned very far ahead, especially for the big stuff, at least two years out. When a lot of people who were there were planning a year out, we were planning at least two years out, and that would be true also of some other larger—like Dean Corey, he was certainly planning two years out. And with the Vienna Philharmonic I was planning ten years out, as it turned out, because that's

how long—more like fifteen years it took to get that done. There are other projects that took five years, yes, or six or seven years.

And then there are many other projects that never happened. You work on them for five or six, seven years, and they never happened, because—whatever. For example, the Robert Wilson, Philip Glass opera [*Einstein on the Beach: An Opera in Four Acts*] that just came—we worked on that for fifteen years! Twice it was canceled.

Philip's manager, in New York, Linda Brumbach, worked on this and I really admired her for working on it for so long and trying so hard, because it's very hard to get Bob Wilson and Philip Glass together to work on something and *then* talk about a tour of it. They might—they got it together twice in New York, to do it in New York—and that was before Linda's time, I think, but the idea of touring it is very complicated. And in fact, it failed twice. We had it on our calendars, we were one of the partners—and we didn't bail out, we stuck by it, but other people bailed out. Or else Bob would get busy with something, Bob Wilson.

Riess: Why did they bail out?

Cole: Well, often it was financial. The financials were just too daunting for various presenters, or maybe there was a recession, which would come on suddenly. Who knows, all kinds of different problems. And that's where you really needed, for that particular piece, you needed multiple partners to make it happen in this country, even though there may have been partners in Europe that were willing at that time, when Europe was richer than they are now. These kinds of things, the gestation of major projects like that, often took a long time. We were always looking two years out, at least, two or three years out.

Riess: But you had some ability to be spontaneous?

Cole: Yes, spontaneous, absolutely. Occasionally it happened.

Riess: I read the piece in the *Times* about the San Francisco Symphony not going to Carnegie Hall, and what the fallout of all of that is. It's a lot of money and people have lots of feelings about it. What are your feelings?

Cole: Well, it's a serious problem. And of course, as it mentions in that piece—I read it this morning also, in the *Times*—often these strikes come down to the moment just before a major tour, because it seems like that gives some impetus for a solution, a resolution. In this case it did not, and so the tour was canceled. It wasn't a long tour, but it was important certainly, and there was a lot at stake.

It's quoted that Carnegie Hall is going to lose some money, but they're not going to lose that much because they don't have to pay the fee. Who's losing is the San Francisco Symphony, because they have to pay everyone who they employ, but there's no income.

- Riess: The threat is somewhat diminished because they'll be in New York in the fall.
- Cole: But right now they're not getting a fee from Carnegie Hall, and yet they have to pay everyone. It's a very unfortunate situation, difficult.
- Riess: The audience for traveling orchestras, is it that there is such a different sound? Or repertoire? What is it about the difference between orchestras?
- Cole: Well, that's a very subjective thing perhaps. But it's something that does exist, and it exists less now than it did thirty or forty years ago, or fifty, whatever. It used to be that each orchestra had its very distinctive sound, especially—let's say Russian orchestras versus French orchestras versus London orchestras versus German orchestras and American orchestras.
- American orchestras have always been kind of a mixture, obviously, because most of those musicians originally came from Europe. Like the Boston Symphony originally was made up of people who had been trained in Europe, let's say. Now that's not so true, but there are still musicians who—many of them have come from Asia, trained at Juilliard or trained at different places in this country, Curtis Institute of Music.
- Because these orchestras used to be trained in specific places, they played in specific ways, and each one was different. That's less and less true, although there still is a very clear difference between a Russian orchestra sound and an American orchestra sound, and that has to do with the way the woodwinds sound and the brasses sound, and various things having to do with technical matters I won't go into. [laughing] There is still a difference, but not like it was, and that's becoming more homogenized worldwide.
- Riess: Neither a good thing nor a bad thing?
- Cole: I don't think it's a particularly good thing, from my point of view. One reason I like to hear Russian orchestras is because they *do* sound different, and it's interesting to hear that sound. Even an oboe player in London is different than an oboe player in Germany, for example, still.
- Riess: The person who appreciates that is a person who goes to orchestral music all the time.
- Cole: Yes, you have to be pretty well tuned into the details, right.
- Riess: Many people might do their once a year of going to the orchestra just because it's the Vienna Philharmonic.
- Cole: Yes. And they have their own distinctive sounds too, because you see there, that's like a long time ago, let's say, many years back, but there most or all of those musicians were trained by their teachers who used to play in the Vienna Philharmonic. It is a kind of a company town, and therefore you have a homogeneous sound, which makes for a great orchestra. That's one of the real issues in orchestral

music today, is to try and find people who are all thinking in the same way, and listening in the same way, looking for the same sound, and that doesn't exist in many places now.

Riess: I should think that would be very difficult.

Your relationship with Michael Tilson Thomas, how have you taken advantage of it?

Cole: Well, I wouldn't say taken advantage. How have I enjoyed it? I mentioned earlier that I was a high school music teacher in North Hollywood High School, and Michael was in the orchestra, so I got to know him there. He went on to USC, where I had just come from, studied with the same people, and made a wonderful success. We put together a little chamber orchestra to do new music in Los Angeles, my theory being that if we did new music we'd get reviewed in the *LA Times*, which we did! And that's where Michael—I am repeating myself—conducted the *Siegfried Idyll*. This orchestra was devoted mostly to contemporary music, but we'd always do a world premiere of some composer, either LA composer or American composer of some kind.

Then Michael went to the Boston Symphony as associate conductor, and I saw him at Tanglewood during that time, when I was invited to go there in the conducting class in the summer of 1970. And he went to Buffalo Philharmonic as music director, and after being there a year or two he invited me to come and be the associate conductor, which I did until 1978.

Riess: Have you ever thought about collaborating with him on something here?

Cole: I thought about it, but he is so busy with his other activities. You have to remember he has this other orchestra in Florida. And he was, for many years, the principal guest conductor of the London Philharmonic, and there are many other places where he guest conducts.

The nicest thing for me is that when I go to the concerts at Davies Hall I get the chance to see him and go backstage and say hello, sometimes before the concert, sometimes after. In fact, just now at the Green Center, where I have been consulting for two years, the San Francisco Symphony is playing four concerts a year during the winter season, and we're just finishing up our first season. I saw him a week or so ago and we had a chance to chat in the dressing room before the concert, which was nice. It's a fifty-year relationship.

Riess: What's your favorite seat in the house?

Cole: I like to sit on an aisle, first of all. And there are obvious reasons for this. I want to be able to come in at the last minute, because if I'm backstage or in the front of the house, talking to people, whatever, I still can get to my seat quickly and easily and without causing too much fuss. Also, if there's a problem onstage or backstage or whatever, or in the house, I like to be able to get out fast. That's something I've had

to teach my colleagues up at the Green Center that I can't sit on house right, for example, because on house right you have to cross the hall to get out. I need to sit near the door, which is near the stage door.

Riess: Does it make any difference where you're sitting in terms of the sound?

Cole: Well, the sound is usually best if you sit in the balcony, actually, most places. But I can't do that because I have to be able to get in and out easily.

Riess: That's really true? The sound is best in the balcony?

Cole: I think in most halls that's probably true. But of course you diminish the experience by being so far away. People who prefer to sit in the front row, they're hearing something entirely different, which is okay, it's just entirely different. Because it's like being—in a way, the worse seat in the house is the conductor's podium, because you can hear everything that's going wrong. But of course that's good, because the conductor's supposed to fix that or try and fix that, or try and at least be aware of it. That's where you hear all the clams, so to speak, but if you go way back you might hear less of that.

Riess: All the clams?

Cole: Clams is the word for mistakes. It may be a jazz term. I don't know. It's musician talk.

It's too long a story to talk about how my musical tastes have changed, but I'll just say quickly that while I studied to be a conductor, and studied primarily the standard repertoire, from Mozart to let's say Stravinsky, about a hundred and fifty years, or two hundred, whatever, my main interest now, as far as hearing music, is music from Bach and before, and Stravinsky and after. I have less interest in the standard repertoire. It's just because I've done it so long, and I've listened to it for so long. There are of course pieces that I still am attracted to, but I have less interest, unfortunately. That's just the way it is. I don't know that it's unfortunate.

Riess: Well, that suggests that the interest—that you like to have your brain working when you're listening to music.

Cole: Yes, I would rather hear something new. And there is so much music—I'm a board member of Early Music America, and of course I started the Berkeley Festival, and one of the reasons I started it was, I have a great interest in music that has been ignored for a long, long time. You have to remember that even Bach was ignored for many, many years, until Mendelssohn did the first performance of a great Bach piece. Mendelssohn conducted the first performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*. Mendelssohn was a smart guy. He recognized talent!

There is so much other music before Bach that has been ignored for centuries and is now being paid attention to. It's not just a hundred years or two hundred—it's a

thousand years of music. If you go back, let's see, Bach was born in 1685, lived to 1750. If you go back five hundred years, six hundred, there's a ton of music, great music, that most people have never heard—until recently. Now in this country it's happening some—earlier it happened in Europe, and now here—but there's so much more still, untouched. While we've heard all four of Brahms's symphonies many, many times!

Riess: Davitt Moroney conducted that work that involved four choruses.

Cole: Yes, *Striggio's Mass*, for example, that we did at the last festival, the 2008 festival. There's a good example of a piece that was unearthed, and was very interesting. It wasn't the greatest, perhaps, piece of that time, but it was certainly one of the most interesting, and really a fascinating piece.

Riess: When you say maybe not the greatest piece of that time, then what?

Cole: Well, there are other great pieces, from many other great composers of that time.

And then I'm interested in new music too. For example, even the music of Stravinsky, who is a well-known figure, we think we know Stravinsky, but in fact the late works of Stravinsky are hardly ever played. In fact, *most* of Stravinsky is hardly ever played. If you want to hear Stravinsky you have to go to the New York City Ballet, pretty much, if you want to hear a lot of pieces.

I was just there a few weeks ago, and I went to a performance of the *Symphony in Three Movements*, which is the name of a musical piece by Stravinsky but also a ballet by Balanchine. And that piece is hardly ever played in concert. It's amazing. It's a wonderful piece, but it just has not become central to our musical appetite, unfortunately. There's this whole bunch of music that Stravinsky wrote toward the end of his life, a lot of it liturgical music, and some of it was choral music, choral and instrumental.

Actually my stepson [Julian Wachner] is presenting a festival of all of these works in the end of April at Trinity Wall Street. And it may be the first time in America, I don't know. I very much want to go, but I'm trying to figure out how, because I have some other conflicts here. But it's an amazing thing that music that was written really so long ago, by someone who was living in this country—he's Russian, but he was living in this country—is seldom, seldom played. To have it all played in one festival—it's actually over three days. He's doing all these pieces.

But this is the music that now interests me most.

Riess: It's something that you hear with more awareness.

Cole: Well, musicians all hear differently, obviously. I think we all perceive *everything* differently, and music is just one of those things. But music is one of those things that is—I don't mean that you have to have technical knowledge to hear it better, because

I know there are many people who have no technical knowledge of music who have great ears. They just never took lessons.

I know, for example, that my wife Susan has better ears than I do. I envy her. She hears things that I don't hear sometimes. It's amazing! But she is a professional musician.

Riess: What's an example of how that works?

Cole: Well, listening to music she'll describe a harmonic progression that just happened, and I—"Ah yes, you're right," and I'll think about it a little then. She hears these things and immediately she knows what they are and can describe them.

A great example about that was when Mozart, as we're told, went I guess it was to Rome, and he heard this Mass that—it was performed but no one ever could have a score of it, it was a secret. I've forgotten the name of the piece, but it was a famous piece in music history. [Allegri's *Miserere*] And the story is that he went home and wrote it out. That's what I mean by good ears, compared to somebody who can say, "Well, I remember that, kind of." He wrote it out.

Riess: When I was taking piano lessons we would have what was called solfège.

Cole: That's what I'm talking about, the ability to hear and replicate.

[Tape 5: Side B]

Riess: The Oakland Symphony used the Zellerbach in 1988. What was the relationship?

Cole: The Oakland Symphony was an interesting case, another sad case in the world of American orchestras. What can I say? I knew the conductor of the Oakland Symphony when I wasn't here, when I was in New York, Harold Farberman. I think he was conductor still when I came here. And then there was another wonderful young man who was a conductor briefly, who I had met in LA, so that goes back even earlier. The young man was killed in an accident on a lake [Lake George]. I can't recall his name at the moment.

Riess: Calvin Simmons?

Cole: Calvin Simmons, yes. Calvin. I met Calvin in LA, actually in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, because I was conducting a ballet and he was there to do something else, which was going to happen the next day. We met there, which was the one time I had a chance to meet him, because I was in LA and he was here.

But anyway, when I came here, I guess Harold was still conducting. I'm not absolutely sure. But it was still a functioning orchestra. They hadn't gone bankrupt yet. I guess they were looking for a place to play, and we made a deal with them. I think they had played more regularly in Zellerbach Hall in previous years, but it all

came down to money and how they could make it work financially, and that became a serious problem as years went on with them, very quickly. It was kind of a disaster, unfortunately.

Riess: And the Berkeley Symphony under Kent Nagano—he was admired for finding obscure works, but what might be listed as obscure is no longer obscure. They mention Hindemith as obscure.

Cole: [laughing] Yes, right. That's what I mean about—Hindemith is really a long time ago. But I can understand, because Hindemith is not a composer that really most people take to easily, maybe too intellectual.

It's interesting that when I was in the air force, and especially when I was stationed up at St. John's, Newfoundland, in the Northeast Air Command, and I was band director there, I had nothing much to do, so I spent almost all my time practicing the clarinet and studying Hindemith's book called *Elementary Training for Musicians* when that was a fairly new book. It's a very good book to work on. Every musician should work on it.

I was preparing to go back to graduate school, and this was something I had, and it was, as I say, fairly new, and something where you could do it on your own. These are not just intellectual things, but they're exercises in rhythm and so on and so forth, and you could just take this book and work on it and it would train you or help you learn certain fundamental things of being a musician. That's a very famous book. He was at Yale, he taught at Yale.

Riess: This was from a review, noting Kent Nagano's ability to find new music, “obscure Hindemith” for example. They go on to say that it's the Berkeley audience. The Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, “does the kind of programming that other conductors say they would like to do but insist would lose their audience.”

Cole: I think that's pretty true. I think it's amazing that there is an audience here that has gone along with contemporary music more than many places. And there are various reasons for that. Of course, there are a lot of intellectuals in and around Berkeley. I think there's a certain pride about Berkeley as a place, which people have—which is true at other places, but here the idea was to have something that was different.

The support for the Berkeley Symphony—Kent was and is an adventurous guy who did stuff that would work here and probably wouldn't work many places. But it's a difficult balance, and it's not easy whether you're doing old music—and by old music I mean Brahms, standard repertoire. In other words, whether you're doing standard repertoire or doing new music, it's difficult to keep an orchestra in business. It's just a very, very difficult problem.

Riess: And is that why an orchestra travels?

Cole: No, that's even more expensive!

Riess: You said something about Zellerbach acoustically earlier. Can you say more?

Cole: You mean when the electroacoustic system by John Meyer was put in? It's an interesting story. We were going to do this gala event celebrating the hundredth anniversary of Cal Performances, and that would have been 2006. And this is jumping ahead, but it's interesting how this came about, because the sound system is in there now. It's so much better than it was without it.

Riess: So much better than the twenty years or so before?

Cole: Yes, because it was not a very lively hall. The hall was built by people who were thinking about speech. And if you're thinking about speech, that's not good for music, and vice versa. All those years I was there, until this moment came around, it was really—I avoided doing orchestras pretty much. One, they're very expensive, and two, there's so much orchestra music being played, and three, it's not the best place to put it because it doesn't sound so good—all those three reasons. There were occasions when I went ahead and did something, like when we brought Les Arts Florissants with Bill Christie, I had no place else to put him really, and that was an opera also, so there was vocal music, and it was a huge success.

Anyway, we were going to do this hundredth anniversary gala program, and it had to do, of course, with fundraising, but it was also celebratory. We were also printing this book at the same time, which Hollis Ashby was responsible for doing and did a beautiful job, *The Cal Performances Centennial, 1906-2006: [100 Years of Performing Arts Presentation at the University of California, Berkeley]*. So we were planning an event, a performance, and then there was going to be a dinner. It was also related to the Centennial Campaign, which we were working on, trying to raise \$16 million, which seemed like a lot of money then—and still is a lot of money! And that's in addition to the annual \$2 to \$3 million we had to raise just to stay in business.

Anyway, the program that I had in mind, because we wanted to show all the different aspects, was that we would do something with the San Francisco Symphony. I invited Michael to come and do something, and he actually found the time to do it. He came with a wonderful young singer [Lisa Vroman] whom we both know, and performed at the piano and talked a little bit about our relationship and then performed with this singer. And somehow, either I had told him, or somebody had told him, I think, that one of my favorite songs is Cole Porter's *So in Love*, so he did an arrangement of that, and then he gave me the music. He said, "This is Cole Porter à la Rachmaninoff," and it was really quite wonderful. It was really great.

At any rate, the program involved Mark Morris Dance Company performing a piece to the Schumann piano quintet, so that was live music with a dance company on the stage. It also involved Michael doing his thing at the piano. Also excerpts from John Adams and Peter Sellars's little opera, which was amplified—excerpts from that piece I thought was important, because here's a piece that we commissioned, produced, and that had then a worldwide life. It's gone on to be quite a successful piece. *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*.

I wanted that program for Zellerbach, because when you look back the history did involve the San Francisco Symphony, years ago before they had Davies Hall, much more. I couldn't get the symphony there, but I could get Michael, and that was, I think a fine representation of the symphony.

But I also wanted the opera for the program, because the opera had performed in the Greek Theatre many years before Zellerbach was ever built. *Aida*, and so on, all this stuff. I was trying to connect these local institutions that had been part of Cal Performances' life before it was Cal Performances. I wanted to involve the opera, so I invited the opera orchestra. I had an idea about a piece to do, but I needed an orchestra and I needed a big chorus, and then I could also involve the student choruses, because I wanted a big chorus. Obviously, if you're going to do a thing like this you want something big.

I hit upon the idea of doing the prologue to Boito's opera—they're going to revive it this year at the San Francisco Opera. What's the name of the opera? *Mephistopheles*. It's not a very well-known opera, although as I say, they're bringing it back, which I'm happy about, this coming year. I saw it years ago here, the production, and it left a big impression on me. I'd heard the music before, but I'd never seen it live. The prologue to this Boito opera is a magnificent choral orchestral meld—it's fabulous, really. And then also I'm a big fan of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.

Anyway, that way I had the symphony, the opera, the student choruses. I had a children's chorus. I had John and Peter's opera, and Mark Morris doing a ballet, a dance, and so on. Well, you know when I discussed this with my staff—this was probably a year and a half, whatever, before we were going to do it, because I had it all in my head, but that was it. I discussed it with my production staff and I had a little quiet meeting with them and I said, "This is what I have in mind." [laughter]

And of course, we all realized it's not *possible*! You can't do that. There's no way you can go from one thing to another, because you need to bring in the shell for the musical part, and you need to get rid of that shell for the dance part, et cetera. So there's no way.

Riess: Shell being that white thing?

Cole: Yes, an acoustic shell of some kind, yes, only we needed something better than that, and we had talked about doing something but it was too expensive. The acoustical problems, the moving stuff around to make this happen—it was just impossible.

Somehow, I don't recall how, somehow I mentioned this to John Meyer, and Helen, because they really work as a team, as you may know. John said, "Well, maybe we can do something about that. Maybe we can come up with another solution other than you getting a million dollar shell that will take you a half an hour to move." I said, "Oh?" And that's what started it. He said, "Well, we could—we're thinking about this." I think they were just—it was in their planning mode too. I don't think they had done one of these before, but they had been working on it, I guess.

Anyway, to make it brief, they set up a bunch of microphones over the stage, and then a bunch of tiny microphones all through the theater, so that the sound was fine without having any shell. The sound was *better*, let's put it that way, without having a shell, a physical shell. It's an acoustic shell. It's an electronic shell. It conveys the sound from the stage to the hall, not through a microphone with one speaker or something like that, but with many, many speakers, and the idea is you don't know where it's coming from. It just sounds like it's coming from the front.

Riess: And that was a permanent installation?

Cole: Well, that was the first time we ever used it. It was not, by any means, perfect by then, because we'd only had a couple of rehearsals and it was the first time we ever used it. And of course, it's so complicated, but it worked.

Riess: Do you have to keep tuning it?

Cole: Well, John and his people worked on it for years after that, and for different events. There'd be a concert and we'd all listen to it, and he'd do this and that, whatever, and make improvements and changes. Finally, with the help of the Zellerbach Foundation money and the contribution of John and Helen Meyer, who really contributed a lot to completing this project, we made a permanent installation, because that original one was temporary. Now it's permanently into the hall, and they can still adjust it, but this was in 2006, seven years ago, that we did this. Anyway, it's so much better.

So that's how it happened, because of necessity. Necessity is the mother of invention. And because I thought this was such a great idea, to put all the different things together in one night! But of course, you can't have a forty-five minute intermission while you're moving stuff around, you know? [laughter]

Riess: That's a very good story. Early in your tenure there was something called Onstage Zellerbach?

Cole: Yes, that's an interesting thing too. We wanted to have the opportunity to do work that didn't require having two thousand people every night, that could be more intimate, and so on. There's a lot of stuff out there like that, there is and there was, but we didn't have any place except the Playhouse, and the Playhouse, of course, was available to us on certain occasions, and most of the time it was not, because that was a place for student plays and dance work.

So we came upon this idea—and it's been done elsewhere, it wasn't a new idea but it was a new idea here—of doing things *on* the stage, where you put up risers on one side of the stage or on both sides, depending on how we wanted to do it, and you have the playing place be in the middle of the stage. That meant you had a capacity—I've forgotten what it was, but maybe 150-200.

Riess: It says 280 seats.

Cole: All right, 280 was the max. We did a little bit of that, yes, you're right. And it was interesting, but it was economically *totally* unfeasible. Putting it up, taking it down. It was an experiment which we hoped that we would find the funding for, someone to support such an idea, but it didn't materialize.

Riess: I also read criticisms of the sight lines in Zellerbach. Has the seating been changed?

Cole: I think it's better now because we redid the seats.

Riess: Well, that criticism was from 1988.

Cole: That's the old seats. They put those seats in before I came, in fact, *just* before I came, in 1986. And I have to say they were wretched in a number of ways. One is that the backs were metal. It's ugly, looks ugly, feels ugly, sounds ugly. But the most serious problem was that the seats, the cushions, were not properly made. And it's not too difficult to know about this, but if you use a seat like that for ten years or something, they start to squeak, because they're made with metal in them, I guess.

So when I went to see Bill Zellerbach about getting money to replace the seats, and this was one of many lunches—not many, but we did have lunches to talk about stuff like this—I said, “Bill, the squeaking is so loud you can’t hear the music!” He said, “Really?” And he actually came over to hear those squeaky seats, not for a performance. He was in the empty hall with me, and maybe somebody from my staff, and I said, “Yes, Bill. I’ll show you.”

We went in and I am thinking, “Will I pick out a seat that actually squeaks?” Some were worse than others, obviously. I went and sat down, and that seat squeaked a lot! [laughing] He was totally satisfied that I was right, that the seats were too squeaky. Not everybody hears this, but it’s an ambient sound, people moving around in their seats. Anyway, that had been going on for years, and I had to finally find somebody who’d give us the money to replace them. And we did replace them in 2005 with seats that I think are still in pretty good shape, although now they’re pretty old. I don’t think they’re squeaking that way because they’re fabricated differently. Those little things you get into.

Riess: Now, from an article by [Robert] Commanday about the star system. He talks about a need for new energy, that Yo-Yo Ma, or Ashkenazy, or Elly Ameling, never disappoint, but he would go out of the way to avoid Itzhak Perlman. [reads] “Tossed-off performances and shameless coasting on reputations...symphonies booking celebrities, sending artist fees skyward.”

Cole: [laughing] When was this?

Riess: This was 1991. “Concert life is supposed to be about music, not performers, as such. Series at the universities, led by Cal Performances and the Lively Arts at Stanford, are caught up in the star wars and engaging events from afar, in broadest possible pattern of types and origins. It seems to be beneath the dignities of our universities to present

fine concerts by excellent local and less well-known artists from elsewhere for the sake of the music itself, at a ticket cost of under \$5. Some might consider *that* the logical and educated way to draw students to concerts. Concert life is supposed to be about music.” Anyway, this is a rant, but what do you think?

Cole: Well, there are many responses to that. First of all, the best example of having an unknown artist was Cecilia Bartoli, who turned out to be a huge star! So is that a bad thing? No, it isn’t a bad thing. [laughter] And there are other examples of that. Dawn Upshaw came as an unknown and became a huge star, and many others.

It’s true, and I think it is very unfortunate, but it’s true, that the general public, if you have a two thousand seat hall, which is another thing that is a fact of life—one would like to have maybe a twelve hundred seat hall, like right now I’m working in a fourteen hundred seat hall, which is a rather nice size—if you have a large hall you have to fill it with performers who will bring a large number of people.

Unfortunately, and I think in this country and other places, but in so-called classical music especially, people go to a name they’ve heard of, Itzhak Perlman being an example. Going way back—this is ancient history now—I’m sure he was on the Johnny Carson show, and right away he reaches millions of people, and they will buy tickets. They don’t know anything about the violin, and maybe they don’t even *care* anything about the violin. But they saw him on Johnny Carson or something, or they saw him on TV with the Muppets, and that’s the way it is.

That’s what happens, and it is unfortunate, and I’m still living with that in my present situation, trying to get people to buy tickets to a fourteen hundred seat hall, or actually, when we open the back it’s up to five thousand, so you have to have really big names, well-known names, let’s put it that way. That’s why I expanded, enormously, the recital programs, which hardly existed when I came, doing art songs, for example, lieder concerts, or as they say in Germany, liederabend. This was just not done before I came. Under Betty Conners they did that sort of thing, but my immediate predecessor did not.

I did a lot of it, because that’s something that I really care about. And sometimes you hit it lucky and you get a Cecilia, or you get a Vengerov. Maxim Vengerov made his debut here—a great violinist who has now kind of disappeared from the scene, but he’s an example, and there are others that we brought here that were totally unknown, and they made a big impression on the four hundred people who came to hear them the first time.

Riess: People like Richard Goode would be moved into Zellerbach.

Cole: Later on, yes. When Richard first came, and when Murray first came, they all played in Hertz Hall, Yes. But that’s just the nature of life.

Riess: A little like how they do the programming at the de Young, for instance, they go with reputation, and they bring the *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.

Cole: The so-called blockbusters.

That was on the radio today, by the way, just this morning as I'm driving, all about that.

Riess: You mean the problems at de Young?

Cole: Yes, the fact that there are no term limits, and so on, which is another issue. We never had that problem because our bylaws were very clear. My first chair, Budd Cheit, understood that perfectly and everything was done by the book, so to speak. We have term limits for the chair, for the officers, and for the board members. That's what this is about at the museum right now.

Riess: [interruption in recording] So we're going to pick up with Baryshnikov.

Cole: The year was 1992-'93.

Riess: I think he had been here before.

Cole: Maybe with the American Ballet Theater, but his ballet dancing career was over by the time I came here.

[Tape 6: Side A]

Cole: We had made a connection with Mark Morris, and then Mark and Baryshnikov got together and formed what they called the White Oak Dance Company. It was organized at a place in Florida, White Oak, funded by a very generous guy [Howard Gilman] who had this place where they could work and develop something. So they put together this modern dance company, because Baryshnikov—may I just say Misha? It's easier. Misha's career as a ballet dancer was over, of course, but he was and still is a very creative guy and wants to do stuff. And the idea was he could get into the modern dance world, and working with Mark it was perfect.

Riess: Are they a likely two people to be pals?

Cole: Well, not necessarily, but the talents, their two talents. It was a good time, because Mark's a choreographer, Baryshnikov's a famous dancer. It worked, because Baryshnikov—he hired a bunch of really great dancers, and he could hire anybody he wanted, because he was well funded. And when Baryshnikov comes the tickets are sold. All the things work, economically *and* artistically. That's why it was good to have Mark, because he was doing some chorography and then they were picking other choreographers who were very good. This was a huge success for us, and really a windfall. It was just luck that this all happened at the right time.

Riess: And they started coming here?

Cole: They started coming here on a regular basis. This meant we had Baryshnikov—Mark of course came separately with his own company, because they worked together on this only a short time, and then it was Misha's project. We were having Mark coming, doing new work with his company. And we were having, not every year but fairly often, the White Oak Dance Company with Misha. And this was very successful—if you put Baryshnikov's name in the brochure people really wanted to see him no matter what he did. It didn't matter. It's still that way, as you know.

Anyway, it was great fun. The shows were really good, and it wasn't just because of his name, they were really good—good choreographers, great dancers, and wonderful shows. And of course he's part of it, which is nice. Also, he and I played golf. He was, at that time, an obsessive golfer. I am not an obsessive golfer, but I had played when I was younger, so we would play golf every time he came here pretty much, because he was, as I say, obsessive. He always wanted to go practice on the practice course first, and he would practice for forty-five minutes until I was exhausted! Then he would go out and we'd play eighteen holes!

Riess: Where did you play?

Cole: We played at the Claremont—some of my donors would invite us to come there. We played at different places. Anyway, he's not doing that anymore, and I'm not either. I'm playing tennis now. But that was fun and it was good, because it was wonderful work and the company was a wonderful company. There aren't many modern dance companies that can sell tickets like one that's run by Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Riess: Was he connected mostly with Berkeley rather than San Francisco?

Cole: The performances were here, yes, because we had the stage and we had two thousand seats. It just comes down to the practicality of it. We were fortunate to have a theater. And there was no one presenting that stuff in the Opera House, it was not available.

The same year, 1992-'93, there was one remarkable event when Twyla Tharp and Misha came together. We had had a history with Twyla, and she is a really great talent and a very special person. When she and Misha came together that was really an enormous opportunity for us, and they did this one tour together and then that was it.

Riess: She was the chorographer?

Cole: I think it was all her work, but Misha was in the mix.

And the same year we had Cecilia back, so that was a really great year in lots of different ways.

I want to mention another thing. My main project, in a way, from '86 till about this time, was to get closer to the faculty, as I've mentioned before, to mend the fences, the bad feelings that existed when I came, which as I said, I didn't know about, but I

learned about gradually. And of course, I learned rather brutally when I read this report of the Cal Performances committee which had been commissioned by the chancellor, talking about all these bad relationships between Cal Performances and the university faculty, and so on and so forth. I had this report in writing. I'm reading this thing. Oh my God! This all happened before I came, and I didn't know about it?

Anyway, my goal was always to get closer to the faculty and have more integration of our work with the academic work, because first of all it's practical, and secondly it made sense. And one of the things that we were able to do that 1992-1993 year was I got very friendly with the young man who became the head of the Theater and Dance Department. His name was Lorne Buchman.

Riess: I don't remember that name.

Cole: Many people have forgotten him, because he went off to other things. He was not from the dance side, because it had been Marnie and David Wood. When Marnie retired, or whatever, stepped down from the chairmanship of the department, as it happens, that's the way it goes, Lorne Buchman came in. That year he directed Tom Stoppard's play *The Real Thing*, which I see is in our brochure, and I remember very well, because I love that play, and I loved Lorne and his work and working with him. Anyway, that was when we really had a great relationship with the Theater and Dance Department, and we continued to, which was wonderful, because it meant a lot.

Riess: What made it a great relationship? What did you do about the fact that he was doing *The Real Thing*?

Cole: Well, we promoted the show. And he and I had a very close relationship, where we could sit down and talk about when could we use the Playhouse? What was he doing that we could help with, and how could we work together? It was really that kind of a close relationship.

Riess: And this is the kind of thing that has to happen at the top? You can't just have your somebody go and talk to his somebody.

Cole: No, no. It was really about building relationships. In fact, it was such a good relationship that quite a few years later, when he went on to some other job, and then he was going to leave that, he was recruiting me to take that other job because he thought I was a good manager. I said, "Lorne, I don't know anything about this other stuff you're talking about. You may think I'm a good manager, but it's not my field. I only know a limited number of things!" [laughter] But anyway, he was great to work with.

And by the way, I noticed that that year—you asked about the staff, and so on. One of the new members of the staff was Jake Heggie. I'd hired him, and he was doing PR and writing program notes, editing. I had met him at UCLA when we had a meeting down there my very first year, I think. He was working for the performing arts at

UCLA, and I met him there and we had a brief conversation. Subsequently, some years later, he told me he wanted to move to the Bay Area and did I have any jobs?

Well, when I met him I had realized this guy is brilliant. I didn't know anything about his composing, I just knew he was a pianist at that time. I hired him immediately, just on the basis of the fact I knew he was so brilliant and he knew so much about music. He was on the staff for I think two years probably, and then he went to the opera and did something similar, and then of course the rest is history.

Riess: Interesting to get into the business in this way, but I guess much is learned by being on the staff.

Cole: Well, he had to get to know the right people, and he was able to do that. Especially when he went to the opera, that was perfect for him.

That year we also started something else that was new, which was called Family Fare. The idea was to do performances that would bring in people with their kids. I know it is still going on. I'm not sure they call it that now, but it's the same idea. The material had to be something that kids could relate to, but also that adults would enjoy, so it was a family thing. We did a number of those. They were quite successful. It would be reduced prices also, so you could bring two kids or three kids.

Riess: What connection if any has Cal Performances had with film, or with the Pacific Film Archive?

Cole: As far as I know the PFA has always been part of the museum structure, and we've had a few relationships with them, but very few. One was recent, when we did that piece with Merce Cunningham in my next-to-last year, I think. It was made into a film and it was shown at the Pacific Film Archive, and it's the only time it's going to be shown as a movie. Normally it appears only in museums, like the Tate museum, you don't go in and sit down and look at it like a movie. But in this case they showed it at PFA. The artist, Tacita Dean, was willing to let it happen here only because it had been created here.

The other thing we did there—remember the opera *The Death of Klinghoffer*, that John Adams wrote? He didn't do it here, he did it at San Francisco Opera, but the film was shown at PFA under our auspices. We co-sponsored it, because it was an opera. And we got John to come and give a talk, which was very interesting. I guess he talked before the film and maybe after, maybe both. And it was a pretty big crowd, because the opera had been at San Francisco Opera, and it was a controversial piece, as you know. The libretto was by Peter Sellars, whom we're going to talk about soon.

But the really amazing thing—at this PFA event a question-and-answer part came at the end of the film, and one person in the audience asked a question, and I forgot what the question was, but it was obviously not in sympathy with the idea of the libretto, let's put it that way, which was Peter's work not John's. And it turned out this was

either a cousin or nephew of Mr. Klinghoffer sitting in the front row! Well, there were a few moments of unease there, let's put it that way. But John handled it.

Riess: In 1990-1991 the program has the first use of the slogan “All the World’s On Stage at Cal Performances.”

Cole: I don’t know who came up with that, I don’t remember. It wasn’t me. I’m sure I agreed to it, and probably enthusiastically agreed to it. It was a marketing thing, and we were trying to come up with different ways. Some years later we went to a whole rebranding, where we involved one of these companies that does this kind of stuff. But at that time we were doing it on the fly, on our own. Low budget. [laughing]

Riess: It began to have a consistent look.

Cole: Yes, we tried. We were going through different staff and different designers, and different people came, different marketing directors and so on. I was the only one who stuck it out for twenty-three years.

Riess: In the centennial book you say that the best audience development strategy is “to put something special on the stage,” and that Zellerbach is “in a community anchored by the world’s greatest public university,” and “Cal Performances audience was ready for a challenge.” And you talk about Peter Sellars.

Cole: This again goes back to the Pepsico Festival, where I first saw Peter’s work. I don’t remember that I met Peter there, but I do remember his work, because he did the three Mozart operas, the trilogy so to speak, *Così Fan Tutte*, *Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*—[Mozart Trilogy (1980s) Sellars-directed trio of operas with texts by Da Ponte had Don Giovanni as a coke-snorting slum thug, *Così Fan Tutte* set in a seaside diner run by a Vietnam veteran, and Figaro getting married in Trump Tower.] Later on they were filmed. But he did them first at the Pepsico Festival.

This was a new idea, at least in this country, of updating. I remember so clearly the set for *Così Fan Tutte*, which was a diner, one of those American diners. And it was very, very nice actually. I liked that particular one, of the three. I liked all of them in different ways, but I think *Così* was my favorite. I saw all those pieces there. It was just one of the things I was doing, going to the theater.

It happens that Christopher Hunt was brilliant enough to bring Peter’s work there when no one else was doing it. Peter had done some stuff in Boston. When he was at Harvard he did a Handel opera there, and I think it was quite successful, but it didn’t get beyond Boston. Anyway, so that’s where I saw his work and that’s how I knew about him. I just spoke to Christopher Hunt the other day, we’re still in touch. I told him how much I appreciated everything he did.

Anyway, I knew about Peter’s work. I didn’t know him personally, but I knew about his work. My goal was to bring those operas here, when I first came here. It was like wanting to get Murray Perahia here, or wanting to get Mark Morris here. I wanted to

bring those operas, or at least one of them, here. I talked to Don Friedman about it and I talked to other people about it. It was really difficult. I don't remember all the impediments, but there were many, and that didn't happen.

I wanted particularly to bring *Così*, because I thought it was really brilliant and so unusual. And it would never happen at the San Francisco Opera. It's not such a big piece, it's a smaller piece, it wouldn't be competing with the opera, it's different.

Riess: So many logistical problems.

Cole: Well, it's expensive, and trying to get Peter to focus on it, trying to get the cast together, trying to get the whole production here. When it happened at Pepsico it just happened at Pepsico, that was it. They had the money, because it was Pepsico paying for it! But to do it here you'd have to get a tour, where you'd do it in several other places, and somebody would be the producer. And of course by then Peter was off doing other stuff.

Riess: And that's the issue of getting him to concentrate.

Cole: Yes, to get him to focus on that and to think about that was very difficult, because he had so many other things he was doing. So the Mozart operas didn't happen.

But somehow—I suspect that Peter came to me with the idea of doing this new opera, and doing it with John and also involving June Jordan, who was a member of the faculty of the Theater Arts Department, a poet, doing the libretto. And this was my chance to do not *Così Fan Tutte* but an opera that Peter would be director of. I was very enthusiastic about this. It was in '94-'95 when we produced it, but when Peter and I were talking about it it was probably two years earlier at least.

We had never produced an opera, we had never produced anything of this magnitude from the ground up. I jumped at the chance to try and make this happen, although it was not easy. First of all, we had to have the Playhouse, because it was going to be a chamber opera. So we had to find a time when we could do it in the Playhouse for an extended run. It turned out to be a three-week run. That's a long run for us. In order to make it work, given the expense, you had to play it enough times to try and recoup some of that.

And we had to produce it, as I say, from the ground up. We had no place in the hall to rehearse this kind of a piece, on a daily basis, for weeks, without the orchestra. You start out with just the artists, the singers, who have to be directed by Peter. So we rented a storefront down on Shattuck Avenue, which was not too expensive. And this is not unusual, it's what people do when you're trying to produce stuff on a budget and you don't have a proper rehearsal space. We rented a storefront, and Peter worked down there with the singing actors that he had, which were I think about seven people in the cast, for weeks, and then with a pianist.

I would go down there and watch the rehearsals sometimes and see how it was going, and I really loved that creating from the start, from the beginning. And Peter was there every day.

Riess: Were the singers from around here?

Cole: They were from LA and New York I think.

Then, of course, John was finishing the music, and it was for a chamber orchestra, a small ensemble, electronics and piano and so forth. We had this conductor, Grant Gershon, a very gifted young guy from LA who is still working there, who John had known and I think Peter knew as well. So we got it all together.

We had to raise some money, of course, that was a big job. One of our principal donors to that was a wonderful woman named Peggy Graupner. Peggy was on our board. In fact, she had been on the Producer's Circle that I referred to earlier, where we sat around the table at the Claremont Country Club. Peggy was the lead donor, and I remember, exactly, the gift. It was \$20,000, which seemed like quite a bit then for one piece. It was directed to this production. And we had to raise other money too. Of course there was box office income and so on. But Peggy was the lead donor, and she admired John a lot, she loved John Adams. She was a wonderful woman. She herself had been a singer.

Anyway, we got it on the stage and it was called, as you know, *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky*. It was about the earthquake in LA, and it had a lot of political and social overtones to it, because this is what Peter is interested in and this is what June Jordan was interested in.

[Tape 6: Side B]

Riess: What about sets?

Cole: Well, they weren't grand, but Peter actually got someone to do something that looked like graffiti—it was graffiti, and it was done by a graffiti artist and it was very nice and well lit, and so on. So it was a professional show.

I think it was really some of John Adams's really very good music, sort of like when you think of Leonard Bernstein, what do you think of? You think of *West Side Story*. Now Leonard Bernstein didn't like that, that you thought of *West Side Story*, because he always wanted to be thought of as a classical music composer, not as a Broadway composer. But in fact, his greatest piece is *West Side Story*. And I'm not saying this was John's greatest piece, by any means, but I'm saying it was very, very good. And these are songs interspersed with text—with speaking and a love story, et cetera. I think it's very well done.

Riess: Have any of the songs entered the recital repertoire?

Cole: No. They're not songs in that sense, but the opera has been performed all over the world, and it's been recorded more than once, I think. It has been done in Finland and all over Europe and different places. It's had a life.

I remember the opening night—and as I say, we did three weeks, six or seven performances a week. The opening night there was a cast party and a donor party and the whole thing, the usual opening night party. I'll never forget—in this libretto there were some naughty words, a few here and there, because they were a bunch of kids from LA, you know, and it was about their life. And I'll never forget, Peggy, who was a very proper woman, who went to the Episcopal Church over here by the Claremont Hotel. I don't know if you know where that is?

Riess: Yes. St. Clement's.

Cole: St. Clement's, yes. She lived right around the corner in a beautiful house there.

Peggy comes up to John and in her sweet way she says, "John, it was wonderful. But you know there were some things I did not really appreciate, and you know what they are." [laughter] John did know what they were! Maybe a few naughty words. Peggy—she wasn't mean about it, she just was letting him know that she didn't approve of that. Of course, that wasn't John's work at all! It was June Jordan's.

Riess: Peter Sellars seems a character. What is he like?

Cole: To me he's always been pretty much the same. He and I have a kind of a special relationship, for various reasons, one of which I'll tell you. I just mentioned that my son is doing all these late works of Stravinsky, which is very rare any place, but especially in this country. One of Peter's ideas, one that he and I talked about—he talked to me about it and I said, oh great! He said he wanted to stage these late Stravinsky works, and he *has* done some of them since. I know these pieces, and I was very enthusiastic about it. This was years ago. This was after we did this John Adams piece. I was very enthusiastic about the idea. I said, "Peter, let's do that! That's great!" He said, "I couldn't believe that anybody even *knows* this music, much less wants to *do* it!" [laughing]

We had this special kind of relationship.

Riess: He didn't expect this of you.

Cole: No, he didn't, didn't expect it of anybody who's in my business, because many people in my business are not even musicians, and they don't know—especially they don't know the late works of Stravinsky. Anyway, we bonded over that subject. He never has done this project, unfortunately, and I wish he would.

But I have to tell you that before I brought Peter Sellars to do this show, and going way back to when I was just thinking about the operas that I wanted to do, which was my main goal, actually, with Peter—it was so difficult, as I told you, when I came,

trying to find a way to communicate with the staff that was here. I had come, as I said, from the music world, and that was something that had not been the case here. And also, I came from the professional music world. I had been in New York, as I said, and I was fortunate at the time because there was stuff like the Pepsico Festival going on, and Harvey Lichtenstein was doing fabulous stuff. It was a wonderful time in New York, in the eighties, because of those two people, actually. The most interesting things that were going on were happening under their auspices. And I was going to all of them.

When I mentioned this to my staff—I've forgotten what year, but probably not long after I came, because I had this idea about these operas—I mentioned I wanted to get Peter Sellars here and we'd do something with him, because he's really something. He was just a young guy then, he had not been out of Harvard too long. And they thought I was talking about the actor Peter Sellers! They said, "What's he going to do?" "No, it's the theater director Peter Sellars." "Oh, never heard of him."

It's interesting that the person who really knew about Peter Sellars was Don Friedman. I mentioned he was this English professor who's retired now and still a friend of mine. He knew all about this stuff. He kept track of who's doing what in the music world all over. He knew about Peter Sellars, and I think maybe Budd Cheit probably, because these people had more of an interest in the music world—the music *world!*

My staff had never heard of him, see? It was sort of like an uphill climb, because first of all, I want to bring him and do a \$100,000 opera or \$200,000 or whatever it's going to cost. And secondly, "Who is this guy? He's an actor?" [laughing] Anyway, that was an uphill climb, but we got it done somehow.

Riess: If people out here weren't reading the *New York Times*, then they didn't know what was going on.

Cole: No, and these people weren't. That's something I always suggested to my staff, always have, my staff and other people in this business. I say, "Read the *New York Times* every day before you go to work, because you don't want to go to work and find out something happened and you don't know about it and be embarrassed." [laughing] Now I not only read the *New York Times* but there's this blog I read every morning, which is very convenient because it has articles from all over the world about the arts only. I read that, and then I read the *Times*. And sometimes the same article I just read is in the *Times*.

Riess: You mentioned Harvey Lichtenstein. The big presenters in New York are Jane Moss and Harvey Lichtenstein?

Cole: In New York it's Harvey Lichtenstein. You have to give Harvey credit because he took something that was *nothing* and made it into something.

Riess: And that's the Brooklyn Academy of Music?

Cole: Yes. Jane Moss has done a great job, but before she came there was somebody else doing pretty much the same thing. She's at Lincoln Center, she has a huge budget, she has theaters, she has a staff. Harvey had nothing. And Harvey took incredible risk, *incredible* risk! All of them paid off except one. All of them worked except one. And I can talk about that too, because I almost got sucked into that one myself! Harvey was a genius really, and he did something that nobody else could do or would do. [See story of Zingaro and the horse ballet in Interview #7.]

Riess: I think of Laurie Anderson as one of his regulars.

Cole: Yes, that's where I first saw Laurie Anderson. But many other things—Pina Bausch I first saw there. These are people that I then was able to bring here, but I wouldn't have known about them really, and been so gung-ho about it if I hadn't actually seen it in person.

Riess: How did he know about them?

Cole: First of all, Harvey was in New York. People *want* to perform in New York, so if you say to somebody, "Would you come to New York and perform?" they don't ask, "Is it in Brooklyn?" You know what I'm saying? If they live in Germany, they don't ask where in New York—it's New York. That was an advantage. And he had a theater that was empty, whereas at Lincoln Center, of course, you don't have a theater that is empty, you have a lot of theaters that are full. For Harvey, that was an advantage.

But the disadvantage—it was Brooklyn, and at that time Brooklyn was not a place—not a lot of people in Manhattan would think about going to Brooklyn to see a show. They did, but only gradually, and it took years and years of Harvey's life to make that happen. And it was not dissimilar from my situation when I came here. There was a certain common experience. I was in Berkeley, and people from San Francisco would say, "Why would I go to Berkeley to see a show? Are you kidding? I go to the opera, I go to the symphony, I go to the ballet. I'm not going to Berkeley."

Well, how do you overcome that? You bring Pina Bausch here, and because this is the only place they can see Pina Bausch—they have to go to Berkeley. They had to go to Brooklyn, so they went to Brooklyn, and similarly here.

Riess: But that's a smart audience in New York. They're already looking for Pina Bausch.

Cole: Well, there was an audience here for Pina Bausch too, but of course New York is New York. It's not necessarily smarter, it's just bigger. But yes, Harvey did great things, and I benefited greatly from it, and Pina was one of them.

Riess: How did you two work together once you were here.

Cole: Well, I had been working in Brooklyn too, so I got to know him when I was there. Not really well, but I got to know him, because we'd see each other at the theater and back of the house after the show and I'd see him like that, briefly.

But when I came here, I remember vividly I had a long meeting with Joe Melillo, who was his assistant at that time, second in command—when Harvey retired he became director. I had a long meeting with Joe Melillo, a lunch meeting, where both of us got quite drunk I'm sure. For me, because I don't drink much or hardly at all, but I did because I was celebrating. We were having a great time, and we were talking about all these things we were going to do, we could do, because I was going to Berkeley. I wanted to see Harvey but he was out of the country or something, so I talked to Joe, because I knew him quite well.

And the interesting thing is it didn't work out. It was difficult to collaborate at that distance, and for a lot of different reasons which I won't go into. Anyway, we had a great time right there on Eighth Avenue in this restaurant, talking about what we were going to do. Some of it happened, but not very much. I wish more had happened, but Harvey was kind of winding down.

Riess: Was the Pina Bausch a collaboration?

Cole: It was a collaboration, but not with Harvey. It was a collaboration that turned up because there was a manager in New York who managed Pina's American career, so to speak, limited as it was—she managed to put together this tour. Again, you needed four or five places to make this happen. And we were one of the four or five. I think Austin, Texas was another one, University of Michigan was another one, and I've forgotten the other—maybe there was one in New York.

Riess: University spaces?

Cole: Yes, pretty much. But again, with Pina—you asked once before, does one have to go to see the performance before you sign them, well Pina was a case where, yes, I went to Wuppertal and spent a week there. She gave a festival every year in the fall, a three-week festival of her work, and I went there for one week and it was fabulous. Wuppertal is an industrial city in Germany, like a small Pittsburgh, or something, a kind of a strange town, because it's divided by steep hills, and connected by a rail line. Anyway, I went there, at the encouragement of this friend of mine who was her American agent, Rena Shagan, who was trying to put this tour together.

I saw her there, and I saw a lot of her work. I had seen only one or two pieces in Brooklyn, but there I saw more pieces and newer pieces. She was always interested in the new piece, not the old pieces. Another time I went to a conference in Berlin of ISPA, the International Society for the Performing Arts, where Pina received an award from the organization. I was one of the presenters, because I had known her. So I saw her in Berlin, I saw her in Wuppertal, and we had a relationship and that helped make that happen. But that's kind of the way she was.

I give credit to Rena who put the tour together, got four presenters to agree to do this. We did two different things with Pina Bausch that I remember. In 1999 [October 15-17, 1999] she came and did *Nelken* ("carnations"), one of her most famous pieces, which I had seen in Brooklyn. But earlier she came and did a world premiere, which

was supposed to be about the West or California or something. We had the world premiere at Berkeley, and then it went to LA—UCLA, and Austin, Texas, and I think, Michigan. It was about California, and so the set was these giant redwood trees.

Riess: Was that the one that was called *Nur Du*?

Cole: *Nur Du*, yes, “only you.”

Riess: And that was 1996 [*Nur Du* was premiered in 1996, *Nelken* came in fall 1999.]

Cole: Yes, that was a gestation that took years and years and years. But again, she’s another one who hates to fly, and she didn’t want to even come to America because of the flying part. One of the reasons she didn’t want to fly is because she couldn’t smoke on the plane! She was a terrible smoker, and that’s what killed her, sadly. That was her main thing against flying. Some people just are afraid to fly, but she just—she was hooked on tobacco.

Riess: The Next Wave Festival, that was Harvey’s thing?

Cole: Yes, he started that.

Riess: And what was that? What did that mean?

Cole: It was a marketing thing actually. It was in the fall, and they still do that, but it’s kind of like—it was a marketing thing. The idea was that you’re going to do all this new work, and you’re going to do it within one period, generally in the fall. It didn’t have any ironclad—it wasn’t like a festival in Europe, where it starts on this day and ends on this day. It was like, we’re going to do this in the fall, starting in October, let’s say, and we’re going bring you new and interesting things.

Riess: Did you try to do that out here?

Cole: No, only with the early music festival. We were so dependent on the tour part, and they were not. Things were coming to New York, so that was it. But we were dependent on other people to make it happen. It was difficult to say, “Okay, we’re going to have a contemporary arts festival in the fall,” because you don’t know when it’s going to happen.

Riess: How about Jane Moss? Anything that you might say about working with her?

Cole: Well, I know Jane Moss, but I never had, that I can recall, any working relationship with her. I think we tried a couple of things, but I don’t recall anything actually materializing. She does mostly recitals, concerts, a lot of the same things that we do.

Riess: And Ruth Felt, over here?

Cole: We were great friends, and yet competitors obviously, professionally. I can tell you one I think rather interesting little story about our relationship. I met her first in New York, at one of these conferences. And being from San Jose and having been in San Francisco, where the first opera I saw was San Francisco Opera, and the first symphony I ever heard was the San Francisco Symphony, and I studied with a member of the orchestra, I had ties here, obviously. I was then working in New York, and I met Ruth, and somebody told me that she had just started this presenting organization in San Francisco.

I met her in the lobby and I never will forget it. It's so clear to me. I said, "Ruth, you're doing what I would *dream* to do. This is my dream, that I could be a presenter in San Francisco. My home town, so to speak." That's all I said to her, just, "I think it's such a great idea that you're doing this, and I wish I could do something like this. It sounds wonderful." I didn't know I was going to come here, I thought I was going to be in New York. I congratulated her on her vision and what she was doing, and with a little bit of envy. And then it turns out I came here and became her biggest competitor! Friendly, but competitor, because there are only so many Cecilia Bartolis, there are only so many Jordi Savalls, Nigel Kennedys, et cetera.

Riess: You are the more adventurous presenter?

Cole: I had opportunities. And I had a theater and a concert hall.

Riess: Certainly a broader scope. Is that because of the university?

Cole: I think it's because—one, because I had this experience of living in New York, and two, I had a variety of venues.

Harvey was brilliant and really somehow a genius. I don't know how he knew all that stuff, but he had incredible instincts. He would bring Les Arts Florissants, just as I did, because he understood that this was really great. And at the same time he understood that Pina Bausch was great. Not everybody has that sort of breadth of understanding, that a Rameau opera, if it's done by Bill Christie, is just as interesting as a new piece by Pina Bausch.

I read a review—speaking of Bill Christie, when he came here with Purcell's *Fairy-Queen* in 1995, Josh Kosman reviewed it and said, "To say it was far and away the musical highlight of the year is accurate but meager praise. I expect to count it among the chief musical delights of a lifetime." This was Bill Christie and Les Arts Florissants. They have come to New York on a fairly regular basis—not regular, but often. But getting them here was *really* hard! Nobody else in the country even knows who they are. I think I told you, I knew Bill Christie's parents in Buffalo. His mother was on the board of the Buffalo Philharmonic. That's before he was so famous.

Riess: That's really important. Okay. I think we're good.

Cole: All right? I'm exhausted.

Interview #5: March 27, 2013

[Tape 7: Side A]

Riess: The Berkeley Festival and Exhibition—we have talked about this off and on, and I want to make sure the whole story gets down here. It's the first thing we're going to talk about today.

Cole: Good. There are several reasons why doing the festival seemed important to me. One was the strong group of early music practitioners in the Bay Area, and a very important music department, some of the famous people in musicology. I've talked about Joseph Kerman, et cetera. It was a way of getting closer to the Music Department, having them participate—we could do something together. That included Alan Curtis, who was a conductor, and Philip Brett.

One person I think I only mentioned briefly is Joseph Spencer, who was not on the faculty, but he was the proprietor, along with his wife Jean, of the Musical Offering, a cafe and a record store concentrating on early music recordings, across the street from Zellerbach Hall. They came shortly after I came to Berkeley. They had been living in Los Angeles, where I had been before. I didn't know them there, but I knew some of the same people that they knew.

Joseph knew all of these things more than anyone else. He knew the music, he knew the artists, he knew the record companies. This is in the days when CDs were still a big thing. The early music recording stuff was mostly happening in Europe. He was very knowledgeable about all of that. But more than that, we became very good friends. I would say naturally enough because, I don't know, he was just a lot of fun and very smart and knew a lot, but he wasn't an academic. He played the harpsichord. He wasn't a performer professionally, but he knew an awful lot about early music.

Riess: You became friends because you hung out there?

Cole: I hung out there a lot, with him and with Jean. He and I were very close. What really made it possible to start the Berkeley Festival—he was key to that, because we had talked about it as just an idea and wouldn't this be great? How do we do this? There was the Boston festival, which I mentioned earlier, which was a model, and that started in '81, I believe. But it comes down to money really, some kind of funding, because we were not raising a lot of money at that time. This was probably '87-'88. He introduced me to Barbara Barclay, a very important person who happened to have a PhD in musicology, but she was also the program director for the arts at the Hewlett Foundation. Now this was very important.

Riess: This is a name I've not heard before.

Cole: Yes, Barbara Barclay, and she's a wonderful person. She's still around the Bay Area. He knew her somehow from Los Angeles, before. So that was my first meeting with a

program officer from the Hewlett Foundation, and she thought this was a splendid idea, of course. We very quickly had a \$100,000 grant from the Hewlett Foundation for the Berkeley Early Music Festival, which was now going to happen in June 1990, because we had \$100,000 and we had some ideas, and that's what triggered the fact that we could say yes, we're going to do this.

That was the biggest gift, at that time, that we had ever received. The interesting thing is—the Berkeley Festival was biannual, not every year, but the Hewlett Foundation was very, very good about continuing that gift each year. If we didn't have a festival it went toward supporting music, other kinds of music, whatever. That gift continued, and I'm sure it's still continuing. I don't know what the amount is now. But in 1988 or so \$100,000 was a lot of money. Anyway, that made the festival possible, and that's when Joseph and I went off, with all these other people, and we formed the steering committee made up of different people in the community I mentioned before, Laurette Goldberg and others.

Riess: How did Laurette figure in things?

Cole: Oh, Laurette was such a character. Actually, I don't know if I mentioned before, when I really was focusing in on this idea—I'd talked to Joseph about it and I'd talked to other people I'm sure, but I had never really gotten that serious about we're really going to do it before we had nailed down this funding. I knew that Laurette was a very important person in this field, because she had been the founder of the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and she was still very involved with that, and her own Music Sources.

I called Laurette up and I said, "Could we have lunch? I'd like to speak to you about early music." And Lee McRae, a very good friend of hers who became a friend of mine came along. She's still around too, thank God. We had lunch and I proposed this idea of having an early music festival, and it would be as I have described, involving all these different pieces, the university, the community, Philharmonia Baroque, et cetera, et cetera. And she felt, of course, it was a splendid idea too!

Laurette was not the one who had the money, but she had a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of great ideas. Her central focus in her life was Bach, the music of Bach, which was great with me, because that's the pinnacle of music, not just early music but any music. We got along great, and she endorsed this idea wholeheartedly. Between Laurette, Joseph, and the Hewlett Foundation gift from Barbara Barclay, it all came together.

Riess: Your steering committee also included faculty?

Cole: Yes, absolutely, and some of that faculty was still on my Advisory Committee, so I just formed the steering committee as another separate little entity to meet with, and we had great fun, because it was a lot of off the wall thinking.

Riess: Did you model it on the Boston Early Music Festival?

Cole: Well, yes. Joseph and I went to the Boston Festival. I think it must have been in 1987. We went together and we looked at the exhibition, and there's a certain way you do that, with all these instruments and so on, and we learned a lot about how to do it. Joseph had started something similar in LA, but of course then he left, so it didn't keep going. I think he'd started something smaller, and LA's a very difficult place to start anything. Having done it, I can tell you! [laughing] Yes, we went to Boston. And then it all just started.

You've read the reviews in the *Times* and the *New Yorker* magazine of the first festival—it was widely written on, the *LA Times* as well, and of course locally. And it had its weaknesses, because it was a first attempt and effort, but it also had its strengths, inasmuch as there was some really good music and we had a lot of people who did a lot of these fringe concerts, that have now become a very, very big thing, where people just come and present *themselves*.

Riess: How does that work?

Cole: Well, you set up a system where somebody wants to present a concert, and they want to come here and do it because it's a festival. They want to be heard, but we're not going to pay them anything. They just come here. We help them find a venue, and then we'll also promote it online—in those days it was not online obviously, but we help to promote it. And if people buy tickets they get the money, so there's some income for them but there's also some risk for them, because they have to pay for the venue.

Riess: But it's good, because it fattens the whole festival.

Cole: Oh yes, yes, one of the keys to a successful festival is to have a large fringe festival. The Edinburgh Festival is the best example. The festival itself is large, but the fringe is enormous! And so that has been our goal, and actually the last few festivals that I was involved with, the fringe was sixty-eighty concerts, and the regular concerts were maybe ten, twelve, fourteen—something like that. That's a good balance, because you have hundreds of people who come who are there to perform. That means that performers become your audience, which is a really intelligent, highly knowledgeable audience, which is great. And besides—there are regular people.

In early music—that's one of the interesting and I think very good things about early music, if we have to put it in that category, is that so many of the people in the audience are actually players. They play recorder—they're amateur players, but there are more amateur players in that field than there are, let's say, people playing Brahms sonatas at home. You know what I mean?

Riess: Yes.

Cole: Of course that used to happen two hundred years ago, a hundred years ago even. Anyway, that's a little bit of extrapolation on that.

Riess: Where do people come from? Do they travel across the country to the festival?

Cole: Yes, they have, over the years.

Riess: I mean audiences?

Cole: Yes. Numerically it's not such a large number. It was, when we were tracking it, when I was there, around 15 percent of the audience, which is not a lot of people, but it's very important that they came from New York, Cleveland, et cetera, places other than the greater Bay Area. That's really important when you have a festival. Of course we also invited Early Music America to meet here, their board meeting—I'm on that board now. But all those other folks would come, for example the [Viola da] Gamba Society of America, the [Historical] Keyboard Society of [North] America, and they would have their annual meetings here. Again, that increases your audience and the whole mix.

Riess: And when you talk about the exhibition, does that also mean that people selling things along the sidelines?

Cole: Yes, people who make old instruments, harpsichords, gambas, whatever, come here and show their wares and hopefully sell them. That happens in Boston and it happens in Utrecht, where I've been to the largest early music festival in Europe. It's really big in Utrecht! It's amazing. You wouldn't believe it. And it's large also in Boston. We had a pretty good exhibition here, mostly local makers—some from outside of the Bay Area, but there are a lot of instrument makers in the Bay Area. Just that alone makes a pretty decent exhibition.

So that was really a lot of fun. Unfortunately, sadly, Joseph died way too young and we didn't get to continue our fun.

Riess: And the festival, does it continue?

Cole: Well, it continues. It's difficult. It's not funded the way it needs to be, and it's just a little bit uncertain right now, and that's about all I can say, I think. It's uncertain.

Riess: And other summer festivals, there is the thing now called Ojai North.

Cole: That's a contemporary music festival, entirely different. Ojai North is something that happens in Ojai. By the way, I went to that festival when Stravinsky was there as one of the principal participants, when I was at USC, and Ingolf Dahl was there. All the people around the LA music scene were really prominent in that festival in those days. Anyway, that's a different thing entirely, because it happens in Ojai and then it comes here, which doesn't necessarily bring people from around the country, because if they want to go to the festival either they can go to Ojai or they can come here.

The early music festival, the idea is to be distinctive. Things happen here that *aren't* happening anywhere else. That's the goal at least, and that was when we had various

artists. When we first brought Jordi Savall, for example, he had never been here with his ensemble. Then in 1994 I invited him to conduct the Philharmonia Baroque, and he had never conducted in America, and that was his first conducting engagement in America. Those kinds of things are really unique, both at the moment and in retrospect.

Riess: Where does Nick McGegan fit into that story?

Cole: Well, he was very involved—I guess he did conduct at the first festival. There was some conflict with his own schedule, because he has a festival that he conducts, or has in the past, in Europe, which sometimes would prevent him from being here. That was a Handel festival in Göttingen, in Germany, where he was the music director. Sometimes he couldn't be here and sometimes he could, but it was depending on the year.

Riess: Keith Jarrett playing Handel. Would that work?

Cole: I tried that. I thought about that. We discussed it, because those of us who admire Keith Jarrett as a jazz musician, we thought it would be really interesting for a festival to put that in, but it's not that easy. Keith doesn't do that. [laughing]

Riess: And why is LA impossible for a festival?

Cole: Well, it's not impossible for a festival, it's just difficult to organize things there. Look at the difficulty they've had having a ballet company, which they still don't have, a major company in Los Angeles, whereas we do here.

Riess: Is it the geography?

Cole: Simply put, it's—Los Angeles really responds to stars, for obvious reasons, because one of the principal industries is the movie business. When I was a young conductor there, living in Los Angeles and working there, I was directing this ballet company, I was the executive director, music director, and chief fundraiser.

The only way we could really make it work in LA was to bring Eddie Villella, Violette Verdy, Peter Martins as a dancer—that's before he was director of the New York City Ballet. With all these stars from the New York City Ballet we would fill Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, on a Monday night, because it was the only night we could get it. We did that for three or four years, and it worked, but it doesn't establish a company, because you can't have Eddie Villella there every night. He's not going to live there. He's in the New York City Ballet.

And it's been really hard establishing an opera company there, but how do they do it? They got Placido [Domingo]. If you have Placido you can have an opera company in LA, but if you don't it's pretty difficult. In other words, he's a *star*.

Riess: The Russian ballet companies have the audience.

Cole: Taking it seriously.

Riess: Yes, so you don't have that in Los Angeles?

Cole: You don't have that *anyplace* in this country, like *that*, not like Russia. But Los Angeles particularly.

Riess: What is the Russian thing?

Cole: Well, they're brought up to think that this is really important. At the Bolshoi—you know there's a place where the czars used to sit, and that's where Stalin used to sit and where Khrushchev sat, et cetera. Everyone tells me that it didn't matter whether it was the old regime or the new regime, they sat in that box. If the head of the country is there every week, it makes it a really big deal. Any time you add politics to art it becomes much bigger.

Riess: Did you have that opportunity?

Cole: I always try to avoid politics, because it's so messy. It's so crazy. [laughing] But I did get Willy Brown on the stage of Zellerbach Hall, along with Wilkes Bashford, and that has to do with the *Hard Nut* story, which we could segue to.

Riess: We could. Last night I was at the Musical Offering Café. Back in the music section, you wonder who's buying CDs and what's going on?

Cole: Not like they used to, that's for sure. We used to have the post-performance receptions there, with large groups of people. Jordi would come and everybody would come over, of course, to hang around with Jordi and he would sign CDs and people would buy CDs. It was quite a scene.

Riess: Would Cecilia Bartoli come by afterwards?

Cole: Cecilia sold a lot, but she would stay in the hall. We would have someone from Musical Offering come over and sell Cecilia's CDs, and she would sign them.

Riess: What's the future of early music, of CDs even?

Cole: It's hard to predict—that's not my field.

Riess: Well, I don't think it's anyone's *field*.

Cole: Well, some people, that's their business. But there is this revival of 78s, which is going on right now, so who knows. The purist will say that the sound is better on a 78, so they're actually manufacturing 78s now and bringing out the old ones, et cetera. I don't know how that will go. Music won't go away, one way or the other, and music of all kinds, of course.

Riess: And scholarship about early music.

Cole: I think actually the whole early music world has grown enormously since the time I'm talking about. Just now the New York Philharmonic is doing a festival of Bach. A "festival" of Bach that is a week where they have different conductors conducting the New York Philharmonic, one of them being [Masaaki] Suzuki, the famous Japanese conductor conducting a modern orchestra.

I just read in this morning's *Times* that Carter Brey, who's a wonderful cellist, the principal cellist of the New York Philharmonic, played a concert on a baroque cello of all the Bach suites. They're really a challenge, of course. Of course Yo-Yo plays them on his modern cello. Other cellists do too. But Carter Brey was playing on a baroque, somewhat modified cello, and a baroque bow, all of which makes it more difficult in a way, especially if you're not used to it. Not more difficult if you're used to it.

The *Times* critic was saying how Carter Brey is a great cellist, but he had to really struggle because he was working with unfamiliar materials, these instruments that are very different. I thought that was interesting. He just started fairly recently doing this, and they put it as part of this Bach festival. Anyway, interesting that just today I read this review of Carter.

Riess: Well, the lack of control over early instruments is in evidence when you go to Philharmonia Baroque and things go haywire.

Cole: Yes, sometimes. It shouldn't. That's unfortunate when that happens, but it has to do with the instruments. For example, the trumpets have no valves, and the clarinets—or not clarinets so much—but oboes and flutes have different and fewer keys, and they're more difficult. But the sound is wonderful. And that's what we care about, isn't it?

Riess: Well, it is. And the musicologists, and people like Davitt Moroney, the scholarship could go on forever, because you can keep digging back.

Cole: That's right. And they always wanted new music in those days. That was the thing. It had to be the latest thing. That's what they wanted.

Riess: And there was a time when every young woman played the piano.

Cole: Every educated person, exactly, the upper classes. Part of your education was to play music, and knowing how to dance was part of it too.

There was a very interesting—well, it's another subject, but it has to do with Russian ballet. Once when we had Mariinsky here doing *Sleeping Beauty*—that was it, the one time that we did *Sleeping Beauty* with Mariinsky Theater—a musicologist from the Music Department gave a talk. We had a panel, and it included Richard Taruskin, who is on the faculty, who's the expert on Russian music, and one of his students who

was studying Russian music. Anyway, she read this very interesting diary. She said, “This is the diary of a young man in Petersburg,” in 18—whatever, I’ve forgotten the year. It was a premiere moment of *Sleeping Beauty*, of Tchaikovsky.

She reads this thing and it talks about a young man who goes to the first performance and he goes to the second performance, he goes to the third. It turns out, of course, this was the future czar of Russia. Yes—I think it was the last czar. But it was very interesting, because she read how he comments on it in his diary, about, “Went to *Sleeping Beauty*, went back to *Sleeping Beauty*. It was so great. Went back to *Sleeping Beauty* the next day, and in between I did this and that—” played a little polo, or whatever they did. But *Sleeping Beauty* was the center of his life for about two or three weeks there, and he was the future czar.

Riess: That’s lovely.

Cole: It does say something about the history of music in Russia, and dance and so on.

I was going to talk about—I don’t think I mentioned the Lyon Opera Ballet occasion, which was a really big forward motion for us. That was in 1995, and I know because it was the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The two things were related, and I’ll tell you how it happened, because it was interesting and it was one of those things that happens, like many things happen. You don’t plan it all out, but it happens. Maybe you’re ready for it. Let’s put it that way.

Riess: I see, ripe.

Cole: You’re ripe, yes. What happened was it was the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, and of course that was very important. All the celebration was going to happen in San Francisco, in the Opera House, where the United Nations Charter was signed. And the French government—several governments participated, but the French, of course, participated, artistically, the most. And they decided to bring the Lyon Opera, Ballet, and orchestra here for this occasion. Now this is big! Because you’re talking about hundreds of people, and they would do a full ballet—it was *Romeo and Juliet*, a production of *Romeo and Juliet*, not a traditional production but their own production. And two operas—I think *Madame Butterfly* and the other one I think it was *Cinderella* of Prokofiev. And a full orchestra, of course.

I heard about it, and well, we had a relationship with the Lyon Opera Ballet, which we had presented before this time, but just the ballet. The Lyon Opera Ballet was really a modern dance company. It wasn’t, strictly speaking in the classical sense of a Russian ballet company. The director was a man named Yorgos Loukos, of Greek background, and a very smart guy, and we became very friendly. Anyway, they were going to bring the whole thing, and it was being brought by the director of the Lyon Opera. In other words there was the director of the opera, then the director of the ballet, and there was the conductor. And I think by this time maybe it was Kent Nagano. I’m not sure, but I believe it was.

Anyway, they brought the director of the opera to the [San Francisco] Opera House, and someone who worked for the opera was showing him around. I'd been to Lyon Opera and it's an eleven hundred seat hall, a beautiful, small opera house, typical of Europe. So when this director of the opera came to the Opera House and he saw the size of it—it's a wonderful opera house, but it's what, twice as large or a little more than twice as large as the one in Lyon—he said, "It's a little *big*. Is there anything around here that's a little smaller?"

This person who was showing him around said, "Well, there is Zellerbach Hall." He didn't know it, because the opera had never been here, that is, the Lyon Opera hadn't been to Zellerbach. And they called me and asked me if we could show them around. He came over, and we showed them around. He says, "Oh, this is very nice. This is good. Let's do the ballet here, and one of the operas here. And we'll do one of the operas in San Francisco." And of course my thinking was, well, what's this going to cost? It didn't cost anything! [laughing] They just *did* it. And we worked out some kind of relationship with the income. We didn't make anything probably, but we didn't lose anything. It was really great. We probably actually made something, there was probably some net income, because it was financed by the French government and we sold a lot of tickets.

Riess: That's so interesting—you think of the gilt and the chandelier and the velvet of the Opera House

Cole: Yes, I know, but this guy was really concerned about size. As I say, if you've been in the Lyon Opera House you can appreciate that. It's entirely different. Not that Zellerbach is so small, but it's what he wanted.

[Tape 7: Side B]

Riess: Does that issue have to do with the dancers, what their kinesthetic experience is?

Cole: Well, it could be. I think it was the decision of the director of the opera, whose name I cannot recall right now. He later on became head of the Châtelet Theater in Paris. He's retired now, but we became quite friendly as a result of all this and I've been to Lyon several times.

Riess: It sounds like it was a real plum.

Cole: It was one of those things that drops from the sky, and I would say that that was a turnaround moment.

Riess: You received the Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters in June 1995.

Cole: Yes, and the consul general came from either Washington or New York. The local consul general, I knew him and his staff. It was very nice and it meant a lot to me, because I appreciated the fact that they support the arts in the way they did then especially, at that time. It was quite remarkable.

That year, and for the next few years, there really was a change of so many things. Because one, it takes that long to get yourself in a place where you can do the kind of thing you want to do, where people actually know who you are or know where you are. And also by then, '95-'96, that period, we had our first meeting of the board, which was December of 1996, so it means a lot of things were going on behind the scenes, organizationally, structurally.

The staff had come to the point where we were all on the same page. Even if they didn't know what I was up to, at least they went with it, you know? [laughing] "Okay, this is what we're doing." Whatever. Things took off, and that decade, from '95 to 2006, was very, very fruitful for us and we did a lot of interesting things.

Riess: I imagine the word would get out. If something goes well, that good word gets out.

Cole: Or the fact that there's someone who's interested in this kind of thing, these kind of productions.

Riess: Well, wouldn't *anyone* be interested?

Cole: Well, it's a matter of—I have rather catholic interests—is that the right word? Broad interests. And therefore, if it's opera, ballet music, modern music, old music, jazz, world music—it all interests me, for whatever reason.

I was on a trip once that was devoted to modern dance in Europe, and we were, I think, the guests of the German government, one of those things. And it was interesting, that's where I first saw Sasha Waltz. We saw probably twelve companies, and I saw one that I thought was really interesting, and that was Sasha Waltz, and we brought her here for her American debut and then brought her back again later.

Anyway, we were on this tour, and there were several other presenters from America. We were in Stuttgart or Frankfurt, one of those places, and we had a night off, and I said, "I'm going to the opera. Anybody want to go?" *Nobody* was interested in the opera. "Opera? You're going to the opera?" It was weird. It just struck me, "Who *are* these people? They only are interested in dance?" That's what I'm saying was the world I was living in, where people—they like this and they like that, but they don't like the other and don't care.

Riess: I am surprised.

Cole: Well, I was surprised too, but now I'm no longer surprised, because I know how this works. I know these people. Anyway, I had a great time going to the opera, and I did find Sasha Waltz on that trip, and it was worthwhile in that respect.

Riess: Tours of presenters? That should be a fun kind of a boondoggle.

Cole: Yes, it's a boondoggle, often.

Riess: Sponsored by governments?

Cole: Well, I was invited to go to France on one occasion, sponsored by the French government. And that was very interesting and it was productive, to a certain extent.

That was when—long after this '95 occasion with Lyon I was in Paris, and I went down to Lyon to see a new piece, because if you're in Paris it's very quick on the train. I went just overnight. I got there, got to the theater to see Yorgos Loukos, my friend, and the dancers had gone on strike that afternoon. [laughter] Well, then we had dinner at the Lyon Opera House, and that was a very useful dinner, because the Lyon Opera House has a very nice restaurant right in front overlooking the plaza, which is the central plaza of the city, and the restaurant is quite narrow along the front of the theater, and you look out, and so on.

I thought, wow, this is great! We could do this in Zellerbach, do the same idea, if we had a kitchen, if there was any running water up there, if there was any way. That dinner in Lyon really sparked—not that I hadn't thought of it before, but it just gave me more of an idea. This is a perfect thing, the way they did it, because it was a really narrow restaurant. I thought, well, we could have a very narrow restaurant too. And that's what we have in Zellerbach and now you can have dinner there. We didn't build out but we made the mezzanine larger—there was a big hole in the middle, and we filled that in so that you could have more access to what is now the bar, kitchen, whatever you want to call it, where they serve the food. We created that, so that you could have food service or have dinner, et cetera. And a good part of that came from my obsession with that after I was in Lyon.

Riess: And those areas are designed for people-watching, though it can be a disappointment at Berkeley. People don't dress up, so nobody looks all that gorgeous!

Cole: No, but sometimes they do, it depends on what the show is.

Riess: On the subject of the presenters on tour, perhaps the difference was that you were the only university presenter, and you are more eclectic or more catholic?

Cole: No, I think it's just the nature of the business. I could give you another example, which was startling. Remember I did not come from this presenting world, I came from the professional, performing music world. Anyway, this was the first time I went to Munich for a meeting of what was called the International Society of Performing Arts, ISPA. They would have an annual meeting in Europe and an annual meeting in New York, and this one was in Munich.

I seldom could go because I was just too busy, but I did go to Munich for some reason, I had time, or whatever. And so there was a meeting, four or five days maybe, probably four days. But at night you could do pretty much what you wanted. This was not a tour going to different shows. The second night I was there, in fact on a couple of nights, there was an all-Wagner program at the Munich Philharmonic. And they

had a great singer, whose name I've forgotten now, but it was a great program. All-Wagner in Munich!

Now am I there? I'm *there*. You know what I mean? I'm not going to miss that. And the startling thing to me was there was only one other person from the conference there. There were probably a couple hundred people at the conference, maybe a hundred and fifty, whatever. And there was only one other person from America, at least of the people that I knew, and he's a guy who at that time was director of performing arts at Michigan, a wonderful guy. He was also from the music world, interestingly enough, he had come from the professional music world. He was there and I was there, and we were the only two of this whole conference!

I was thinking, "Who are these people, that when they have a chance to hear Wagner in Munich don't realize this is a huge opportunity?" Occasionally this would happen, these startling things when you realize that you don't know what business you're in, really.

Riess: Well, it would make you a bit of a snob about the whole thing.

Cole: No, it's just more that for me this is not a *job*, this is my life! And if it's not your life, well it's way too hard and it doesn't pay enough.

Riess: You said that your staff gradually came to understand, and they got behind you. Your staff was changing?

Cole: There had been some changes. People had left and I'd hired new people. It was just that I got a team going that was really functional, and willing to take risks, not just willing but appreciated the fact that we were doing these things which were premieres.

Riess: The staff, the contact with the press, they were essential in talking the program up?

Cole: Well, I'd hired a very good PR director in Hollis Ashby. At some point, I've forgotten when, but she was there for fifteen years, a long time. I hired her first as a PR director and she was very good. And a lot of things that happened, she was very helpful in making them happen. She also wrote this hundredth anniversary book that she put together [*The Cal Performances Centennial, 1906-2006, 100 Years of Performing Arts Presentation at the University of California, Berkeley*].

And when we did a premiere, the world premiere of *Ocean*, for example, of Merce Cunningham, and the American premiere of *Platée* by Mark Morris, which came from Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and a number of other things that I could mention, she had really good instincts about how to get to the New York press, and one of the things that she did was we would hire Ellen Jacobs in New York to help us making these contacts. We had a number of good breaks in that respect, getting publicity that really helped the thing move forward.

Riess: Getting Anthony Tommasini.

Cole: Getting Tommasini here and other people before him.

Riess: Was there anyone on your staff you could send off to do the things you were doing?
Was there a second-in-command?

Cole: Hollis did some of that. I remember one particular occasion we'd been asked by the university to plan something for the opening of the Library for Southeast Asian Studies [C.V. Starr East Asian Library]. We were asked to put together something for that occasion, and you know, that's not so easy, to come up on this particular day, two years ahead, or whatever, to find something from China that's actually going to show up in Zellerbach Hall. We had to really look around. Although we'd done quite a bit of stuff from China, they came when *they* wanted to come, not when we wanted them to come.

But we had a connection somehow in one of the major cities in China, not Shanghai and not Beijing—I can't think of the city now. There was this dance company that I think we'd seen video of, and they wanted to come to the US. I didn't have the time to make this trip, and I asked Mary Dixon, my marketing director. She was happy to go to China. I wanted her view of whether this thing will sell any tickets and is it any good? We knew it was good, but I wanted to get somebody's direct impression. So she went to China and came back and she said, "Yes, it's the real thing." We made the date work and we actually got it here for the opening events [Guangzhou Ballet, *Mei Lanfang*].

There are reasons why you have to go places sometimes, and sometimes you *don't* have to. If you don't have to, you're so busy—to say nothing of budget issues, but really it's *time* that you don't have, you're working seven days a week. And there's no such thing as a vacation. But that's okay with me, because I'm not really big into vacationing anyway.

Riess: Seven days a week? That was the way that job worked.

Cole: Oh yes.

Riess: That is because of the weekend performances.

Cole: Yes, people always say, "Have a good weekend." Well, our weekend is *working*!

Riess: Now let's attempt to cover your, and Cal Performances's, relationship with Mark Morris.

Cole: Yes, well we could talk about that a bit. I mentioned before that I first saw him at the Pepsico Festival in 1985, and I introduced myself very briefly, not knowing that I was coming to Berkeley at the time. I was impressed, and I saw a lot of dance companies in New York at the time. There were many at the Pepsico Festival and other places, at

the Joyce Theater and so on, besides the New York City Ballet. Anyway, when I came here we got in touch with the company, which was then a very small entity. They were coming out here to do something—oh, I know, Mark did the choreography for *Nixon in China*, part of a production at the Opera House [1987]. And looking ahead, we could see that they were going to be here, and I think we got them to do one night here.

It was shortly after that that they went to Belgium, because of Gerard Mortier, who brought them there to be the national dance company of Belgium, which was a shock to people in Belgium. [laughing] That's where Mark did a lot of his greatest work, because he had everything at his disposal there, an orchestra, chorus, et cetera. I think that the reason why Mark worked for Mortier, besides the fact that he was introduced by Peter Sellars, is that Mark really only wanted to perform with live music. And of course they had an orchestra right there, all the time.

As it turned out, Mortier made the right choice, although the people in Brussels didn't think so. But we know now historically he did, because he found a chorographer who could do large works at that time, and very successfully, and using the orchestra, and so on.

Riess: Did the people in Brussels actively resist?

Cole: Oh, I think there was quite a bit of resistance from what I hear from Mark and the members of the company who were there. There was a lot of, "What is this? What are you doing?" They were used to classical ballet, and I've forgotten who the predecessor there was, a very famous chorographer. [Mark Morris was preceded by Maurice Bejart.] This was a totally different thing. It was just off the wall. "Who's this American guy?" But that's where he did so much of his really great work, all of which we were able to bring here.

I mentioned the *Dido and Aeneas* production we did in Zellerbach Playhouse, which was so fabulous because it is Henry Purcell's music. We had the Philharmonia Baroque, Nick McGegan conducting, and Mark dancing, still, at that time. It was a wonderful production and hugely successful. By the way, we had also the UC Chamber Chorus, so we had the students involved from the campus, and they've done this a number of times with Mark's work, student choruses have worked with him. That same year is the year we brought Les Arts Florissants with Bill Christie doing the *Fairy-Queen* by Purcell. So we had two fabulous Purcell pieces in the same year, which is kind of amazing.

I remember that we also had, going the other direction, the only time that the Ensemble Modern from Berlin has ever been here, as far as I know, with John Adams conducting. Ensemble Modern is like the Berlin Philharmonic of contemporary music. It was one of these amazing groups.

Riess: John Adams conducting his own work?

Cole: No, it was mostly other composers, but very, very difficult music that they play so easily and like no one else can. They were the number one group at that time. Now there are groups similar to that, in New York particularly, which are really good. One of them, for example, is the International Contemporary Ensemble, which is run by a young woman named Claire Chase. But at that time we hadn't quite caught up with the Europeans. Because the European groups are all subsidized. And even today, Claire Chase and the International Contemporary Ensemble, and others like that, they have to make it on their own financially. It's very difficult.

Riess: What size groups would these be?

Cole: Well, they could be any size. That's the beauty of it. It's not like you have a hundred musicians under contract. You have this body of people who are willing to work together. Contemporary music often is different instrumentation, it's not just standard, and so you bring the people you need for that show or those pieces.

Riess: And you might have the composer there too?

Cole: Yes, that was something that we started doing. We started doing what we called Composer Portraits, and we did them in collaboration with the presenter George Steel at Columbia University. This was later on, but the idea was in my head for a long time with just getting it off the ground. And before George Steel, before that whole relationship began, if I could get a composer here, like once we brought Conlon Nancarrow, who was living in Mexico at the time.

Riess: Tell me about Conlon Nancarrow?

Cole: He wrote music that nobody could play, so he started writing music for player piano. [laughter] He was a very interesting character, and we got *him*, and this was really with the help of Charles Amirkhanian, who knows every composer in the world one way or another, and was very helpful in getting Conlon to come here. He did a concert in Hertz Hall. The idea was to get a composer who does his music, that nobody else is doing.

Another time we had [György] Ligeti, and he had a pianist that came from Munich, who played—I think at that time there were eight piano études, which are really fiendishly difficult. I think now there are twelve, but he played the first eight, and it was the first performance in America. It was amazing, because we had Ligeti here in person.

You have to go back in time. He was a very big figure at that time in music, in contemporary music. But this was in Hertz Hall and we never expected to sell that many tickets for these contemporary music programs. If we sold four hundred, five hundred, we were really happy. Sometimes maybe only three hundred. But if you had Conlon there, big crowd. If you had Ligeti there it was like a rock concert. When I walked into the lobby of Hertz Hall that night I couldn't believe it! There were so

many young people there, milling about, because this famous guy was there from Europe.

Riess: Because he was famous or because they knew his music?

Cole: They knew his music, but it was because he was actually *there!* If we'd just played his music it would have been nice, we would have had three hundred people. But because *he* was there—this was a moment in history. It'll never happen again, it's your only chance. I've had moments like that. I've seen Stravinsky because of that. I went because he's *there!*

Riess: The Music Department would be strongly behind that and getting their students to attend?

Cole: I think they were. I don't recall exactly. The Music Department, the composers changed over time, and there were different composers. We worked very closely with Jorge Liderman who was one of the composers. The Music Department is musicologists and composers pretty much, and of the composers there's Olly Wilson who we've worked with among others.

Riess: I'm asking how do you account for the crowd?

Cole: I think it's just the fact that we had a very famous person, someone who attracts. But it was startling to me that it really created such a buzz. It's kind of like the buzz that was created by *Ocean*. You hope people will come, you hope they'll realize that this is a special moment in the history of dance, in that case, and they did. There aren't many moments like that when something happens, really special.

I have to say there is a Berkeley audience that is very good in that respect, because they will show up for something like that. I don't mean thousands, but at least hundreds. Some places, probably even in those days, if Ligeti showed up it wouldn't make much of a stir. But in New York, and here—I can't think of too many other places. [laughing] I don't know what kind of a tour it was, I don't recall where else he went on that particular occasion.

But anyway, it was important for us to be able to do that and we tried to keep doing things like that, getting the composer there, including John Adams later on and Lou Harrison and other composers. My idea is if we could have a contemporary music program where we could have the composer there, that was a big plus.

Riess: Did you expect the composers to talk about the work?

Cole: Well, maybe we'd do that before the concert, sometimes we'd do it after the concert, or sometimes we'd do it during the day and invite students. But yes, of course.

Riess: At Berkeley Symphony last night I heard a new work, and it was the first time I heard it and probably the last time. It went nowhere in my mind, it didn't plug in. How many times do you have to hear new music? How does new music work?

Cole: That's something that's very difficult to answer. But I can say that when we heard, for example, those études of Ligeti—of course I'm a musician, but they are memorable. I think anybody who hears them, who has any musical instincts at all, they are remarkable pieces, and they remain so. This was a long time ago when he wrote the first eight, and then he wrote some more, as I said. But they are very, very memorable. They're works of genius, you know?

[Tape 8: Side A]

Riess: Okay, back to talking about Mark Morris, and your baby, *The Hard Nut*.

Cole: He was here in a couple of what you call repertory programs before *The Hard Nut*, because *The Hard Nut* was in 1996.

Riess: It was 1991 in Brussels.

Cole: I saw it in 1992 at the Brooklyn Academy. We'd been working with Mark since he came back. We did a couple of shows, I've forgotten what they were, repertory shows, just the company and various pieces, whatever. And then I went to New York to see *The Hard Nut* and I thought it was great.

I said to him, "You have to bring it to Berkeley. It's absolutely fabulous." But the technical crew says, "Oh no. It's too big. It's too deep." It was built for Brussels, which is an opera house with a very deep stage, and the Brooklyn Academy is not as deep, but it was deep enough to get it on there. They said, "Oh no, we can't. It's not deep enough a stage."

I persisted. I said, "You could modify this. You have wings, like one, two, three, four, whatever. You could have a set of three, then it's not so deep. [laughter] *The Hard Nut* was a whole thing, it was a set that was made for Brussels. After being very persistent and so on, they finally agreed to bring it in 1996, and the technical director worked out a way to get it on the stage.

But the story is interesting, because what happened was I saw the piece in 1992, and they had a conductor who did it, I didn't know who he was, but he was very good, and they had the local orchestra there. When they were going to bring it here they were going to bring the same conductor, and that was great, and we just had to hire the orchestra, which was basically the Berkeley Symphony, or at least they contracted it as the Berkeley Symphony Players. So that was all done, we had contracted the orchestra, the program was all set for December of 1996, which by the way was the same month of the first board meeting, interestingly enough.

Then I don't know how long, maybe a month, maybe a month and a half, before the performance, the conductor that they had bailed out on them, because he had another opportunity. I believe the other opportunity was in Las Vegas, which sounds like money to me. So things got very busy.

Mark, or Nancy Umanoff, whoever, called me and said, "Could *you* do this?" Of course I could *do* it, I've done hundreds of *Nutcrackers* in my life, but I've never done this one, and I only saw it once. There are hundreds of cues and tempos that are just for this particular piece, different than any other *Nutcracker* tempos, and they're very precise. In many ballet companies, more or less is good enough, but not this piece. Anyway, I said I could do it.

I got a video and I got the score, and I had maybe two or three weeks to prepare for this event, and it was really, really rough. The problem was that I had scheduled the rehearsals for a guy who has already done this, you see, and of course I'm trying to keep the budget down by having fewer rehearsals. But that would have been okay because he'd done it before. He only needed three rehearsals, a rehearsal with the orchestra, a rehearsal with the company on stage, and a dress rehearsal. If you've done something many times, this is fine.

Okay, so that's what we scheduled. And now I was stuck with that schedule, and I had never done this piece before, and I couldn't change the schedule because it was already set, the budget was set. There should have been another rehearsal. But it happened. It was not entirely satisfactory to me, but whatever. Then we brought it back, I think two years later.

Riess: There were several performances, weren't there?

Cole: Oh yes. We did nine performances.

Riess: And it got better and better?

Cole: Yes. But I have to say, the Berkeley Symphony was not then what it is now. And the *Nutcracker* is a very difficult piece. People think it's just a little piece, but it's not. It's *so* difficult. In fact, the overture is one of the most difficult pieces for the strings ever written, along with the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture of Mendelssohn, the two pieces that every conductor fears and every string player fears.

Anyway, yes, we repeated *The Hard Nut* every two years and sometimes we'd do it every year. I've forgotten exactly. It was certainly a regular thing that still is going on, and for a while we did it every year it was so successful. We changed some of the orchestra situations that we had, so it got better. It was only really, I think, at the fully professional level around 2004 or something like that. It took a while. It's a very difficult piece.

I've done it in New York, where the orchestra was quite good, really wonderful, and I've done it in London, where the orchestra was very, very good. And it's just a very

difficult piece. It has a really difficult trumpet solo, for example, and the whole string section has to be really good to get through this thing. You can't take it lightly, like a children's ballet. It's not! It's the most difficult score he ever wrote, technically more difficult than *Swan Lake*. I just did them both in Kuala Lumpur so I really had a measure of which of the two is the most difficult for the orchestra. It's *Nutcracker*, way more difficult technically.

Riess: The Berkeley Symphony, is it a last choice or is it fine?

Cole: No, it was the best choice because they were here and we had a relationship, and I knew the people there. The Berkeley Symphony is referred to among musicians as one of the many freeway symphonies.

Riess: Freeway symphonies?

Cole: Yes, they drive the freeway to go here, go there. The Berkeley Symphony's one of them, and there are a lot of them. There's the Santa Rosa Symphony, there's the Marin Symphony—you name it. They are the freelancers who—in LA a lot of them would be playing in the studios, but here it's mostly freelance symphony work. It's not always the same personnel, and if you needed this particular person for that particular job you can get them.

Also I was not hiring the Berkeley Symphony, I was hiring the members of the Berkeley Symphony as we needed them, not just the whole orchestra, or whatever. Sometimes we needed particular people for particular parts, as I mentioned earlier, the trumpet part in *Nutcracker*. Some things are very, very difficult and you need a special person, and you may have to pay them more.

There were other pieces that Mark did that required a conductor, a few other pieces, not many, where there was an orchestra, one called *Lucky Charms* [Jacques Ibert] that I did here and I did also in New York at BAM. There were a few pieces like that that I did for Mark also. But going forward with working with him, and with other people, of course, I mentioned earlier the coup that we were able to achieve by getting the company that Baryshnikov organized with Mark [White Oak] and they kept coming back. First of all, that was a Mark Morris project along with Misha, but later on it just became Baryshnikov coming here. And then one of the big events of '96-'97 was the premiere, the West Coast premiere, of Mark's piece called *Falling Down Stairs*, with Yo-Yo performing the Bach Suites for Cello, which you may have seen. That was a real coup.

Riess: Who put that together?

Cole: Well, it was a matter of I knew Mark, and I knew Yo-Yo, and I said, "Let's do it here." I think it premiered at Tanglewood.

Riess: That's the kind of piece where you would announce it ahead of time and it would sell out completely.

Cole: Yes, completely. In 1996-'97 we did *Hard Nut* the first time, and this *Falling Down Stairs* the same year. It's kind of amazing.

Riess: Earlier you had done *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*.

Cole: Had we done that before? I guess so.

Riess: In 1994 [and 2000, 2003, and 2009].

Cole: Yes, that's right. We did *L'Allegro*, and that was the West Coast debut of *L'Allegro*, which is to the music of Handel and is really, I think, one of Mark's masterpieces, one of the greatest things he ever did. That involved Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra [PBO], of course, because it is baroque music, with Nick [McGegan] conducting. While there had been two previous performances in the U.S., we were the first to do it with a baroque orchestra. And every future performance in Berkeley was with the same orchestra. I learned that there have only been two other subsequent performances with a period orchestra, one in New York with PBO, and one in Canada with Tafelmusik, the Canadian baroque orchestra. I think this makes an important statement about Cal Performances and our commitment to quality and authenticity.

Then that same year, '96-'97, we did three world premieres by Twyla Tharp, and we did a world premiere by Pina Bausch. I can't believe that we did all of those new pieces. That's what I mean, that things really took off in a startling way. Because that was the same year we did our first Grand Kabuki. We had the Grand Kabuki, *The Hard Nut*, *Falling Down Stairs*, Pina Bausch, Twyla Tharp—three world premieres in one year. And we had many other things too! [laughing]

Riess: *The Hard Nut* choreography, the performance, has it gotten better?

Cole: I think the first, early performances were the best. It had the original cast. Nothing wrong with the cast now, I'm just saying that you can't recreate something like that. It's just never quite the same, unfortunately.

Riess: Mark, is he a friend, like Misha?

Cole: Well, you know, these people are professional colleagues, and it's not like a friend, like Joseph Spencer, because they're not here. They come and go. Misha, we played golf together, but he's all over the world, he's everywhere. And I really appreciate him and respect him a lot. He's a very humble guy and very intelligent and very polite. He never stops thinking about something that you can do new, even if he himself cannot do it. And now he's acting. The stuff he does is very interesting, because he has an interesting mind. He doesn't just do a show because it's a show. It's something really interesting. And he's opened this Baryshnikov Center in New York, where he has other people do interesting things, to give a chance for young artists, young choreographers. I think he's a very, very great person.

Riess: And Mark?

Cole: Mark has his own place. He's built that fabulous Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, which is really a brilliant thing. And of course he's fortunate to have this wonderful woman, Nancy Umanoff, who's worked with him for years as general manager, general director, whatever her title is. She's held the whole thing together administratively, a brilliant person and very nice, Nancy Umanoff.

Riess: When you first met Mark Morris you went backstage and introduced yourself.

Cole: I introduced myself just because I wanted to say, "Congratulations, I thought the show was really good." As I said, I was going to Pepsico Festival every weekend and seeing a whole lot of the stuff, and sometimes you don't think it's so good, you know? Most of the time, in fact. But I did think it was really exceptional, so I went backstage and introduced myself there, just for a moment. I really had no place—he was playing in New York, and I had no place I could necessarily work with him. It just happened that a year later I came here and then we tried to make that happen.

Riess: You're in a business that's about connections.

Cole: It helps, yes. And speaking of connections, Gerard Mortier has played a big part in the history of recent events in the world of art, performance art, because he brought Mark to Brussels and gave him a huge opportunity there, which he took advantage of and really made the most of. Then circling around, when we did the John Adams, Peter Sellars opera, *Ceiling, Sky*, who came to that performance? Gerard Mortier came, and the director of the Salzburg Festival came, Helga Rabl-Stadler. This was like—you're opening up connections and building connections, because of Peter Sellars, Mark Morris, and Mortier, these things all go together, and the Salzburg Festival where Mortier subsequently went as a director.

When Helga Stadler came for that performance I remember I was so surprised to see her, I didn't know she was coming. It turns out that she's still the director of the Salzburg Festival, not the artistic director but the managing director. And an interesting thing is that her sister, whom I met later on, lives in Oakland, and we became quite friendly and she came to Zellerbach occasionally. I knew Helga in Salzburg, but I also knew her sister, Suzy Stadler here. All these things are interesting.

Riess: Keeping up with all of that, I can see it's seven days a week.

Cole: Juggling balls, yes.

Riess: And being a nice guy with a lot of people all the time.

Cole: Speaking of that, I run into, fairly often, people who ushered, volunteer ushers at Zellerbach. I ran into one just the other night—and I don't recognize these people, most of them, because there were so many over the years, but she recognized me, and she said, "I ushered at Zellerbach for fifteen years." I said, "Really!" The nicest thing

is when she said, “And you were always so friendly.” [laughing] I was just passing by.

Riess: The show wouldn’t go on until you appeared, because you were the last person in?

Cole: Yes, I was out working the crowd.

Riess: I’m interested in Paul Taylor and Zellerbach Hall. I’ve heard that so long as Mark Morris was there then Paul Taylor wasn’t going to be there.

Cole: Well, we had Paul Taylor before Mark came, actually, or maybe when Mark was in Brussels.

But there are two things. One is Paul Taylor was presented by Ruth Felt over in San Francisco on kind of a regular basis after we started really concentrating on Mark. And it’s true, if we had Mark Morris—because sometimes we would do *Hard Nut* and another rep show too, because he was doing all this new work all the time and we didn’t want to just do *Hard Nut*.

Riess: There would be two different chunks of time.

Cole: Yes, two different times they’d be here, and then you have other things. I think Paul Taylor is a great, great genius, but it’s just that we concentrated on Mark’s career. He was younger, much younger, and had, I thought, more potential. And of course it turned out right, because he did these really big pieces and I had a big theater. For me it was better to go with somebody who did big stuff. Also his relationship with Yo-Yo, his relationship with Misha—with Baryshnikov—and with Mortier, all those things were very, very good for our institution. Not necessarily for me, but for the institution and its growing recognition, and so on.

I know it got to be kind of a thing like, “Why don’t you bring Paul Taylor?” Well, and then I don’t think he wanted to come. Paul, at least in my time, never traveled with his company. The company came and you didn’t see Paul Taylor, at least in the time that I was working. Merce always came with his company. Mark always came with his company. I liked to have the artistic director there, and that was a small little side thing in my mind.

Riess: How about *Platée*? Can we talk about that?

Cole: Well, *Platée* was one of our biggest successes, I have to say, not only artistically but financially. I saw Budd Cheit a few weeks ago, and he reminded me, which I appreciated—we were reminiscing about moments during those years, and the various vice chancellors that I’d worked with. And when *Platée* came it was Carol Christ who was vice chancellor. She was there for seven years. And when she was no longer vice chancellor here she went to be, and she still is, president of Smith College. She is a wonderful woman, with a broad interest in humanities—she was an English professor originally—but also the performing arts. She came to almost

everything we did, all the really good things, great things. And I reported to her and had meetings with her on a regular basis.

Anyway, Budd reminded me that when we were presented with this opportunity to present the American premiere of *Platée*, which was coming from Covent Garden, Royal Opera House—I don't remember the numbers at all, but it was expensive—he and I went over to see Carol. This is the only time I did this in the whole twenty-three years I was there. Budd I'm sure thought it was a good idea that we do this, check in with her and just tell her, "We want to do this. We think it's important. Would you back us up if it comes out to be too much of a loss? We want you to know, first of all, about it, but at the same time we want your support in advance if maybe it doesn't go well financially."

Well, she was, of course, enthusiastic about it, because she knew about this kind of stuff. She knew what it meant to bring something from the Royal Opera House, and she knew Mark's work, of course. We didn't know about *Platée*, because it hadn't really happened yet. Anyway, we brought it, and I think the first time—because we brought it twice—the first time it was part of the Berkeley Festival of 1998.

It was perfect, of course. Here's a baroque piece, and it was the centerpiece of this festival, which was huge anyway, and it was a huge success. It sold out completely, I think three performances in Zellerbach. And of course we had fifty or sixty other concerts going on at the same time! So anyway, we didn't need Carol to bail us out. It worked, you know? It worked financially and artistically. We brought it back two years later during the regular season, because it was so successful. Then it went to New York City Opera and had a big success in New York.

Riess: You had a symposium in 1992, "The Body Eclectic, Mark Morris' Dances and Art Issues of the Nineties," with Joan Acocella and Alastair Macauley.

Cole: Yes, we had Joan Acocella, who now writes for the *New Yorker*, and Alastair Macauley, who now writes for the *New York Times*. And who else?

Riess: Janice Ross.

Cole: Janice Ross who is over at Stanford, a faculty member over there.

Riess: And Mark Morris. And this took place at the Townsend Center.

Cole: Yes. I can tell you that we had a very close and good relationship with the Townsend Center the whole time I was there. That was at the time when Paul Alpers was the director of the Townsend Center.

Riess: They would do a program like that for the campus and the students.

Cole: Yes, not just the Music Department, not just the Dance Department, but for all the academic world. To realize that—at that time Joan Acocella and Alastair Macauley

were not as famous as they are today, but they were the up-and-coming writers on the subject of dance in the world. I remember that. It was really great. And of course Alastair has been out here a number of times since then, and Joan as well.

What else did we do with Mark? I've forgotten. We did so many pieces, but I guess we've covered most.

Riess: He came back recently and did a *Romeo and Juliet*.

Cole: Oh, that was my last year. Yes.

Riess: And that was less successful, wasn't it?

Cole: That was less successful, and it's a long story, and not my fondest moment or memory, not because of the work necessarily, but because of all the stuff going around it. This was a piece that was commissioned by Leon Botstein, who is president of Bard College, and the conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra in New York. I've known him actually for many years. I met him when I was working in upstate New York, before he became a conductor. He's a wonderful musician, a brilliant academic, fundraiser, genius. He raises money like nobody else in this country, probably, in the educational business or music business. He was a pianist when he was young. He studied with the same teacher as a friend of mine, Richard Wilson, in Cleveland when they were both kids.

Anyway, Leon Botstein was going to do a Prokofiev festival. He does a festival every year at Bard College, and that year was going to be Prokofiev—interestingly, this coming summer it's Stravinsky. And he had heard about this different musical version of *Romeo and Juliet* that a musicologist from Princeton had discovered, and that interested Leon. He thought, well, this is great, he would do the premiere. But instead of just playing the music, he thought it would be great if he could include a dance, and he asked Mark to do the choreography. Now this was a big deal, to finance some project like this and premiere it at the Bard Festival. When I heard about it I said, "We should do it immediately after they do it, because it's my last year"—well, regardless of that. They would do it in June [2008] and then we would do it in September, so we would have the second performance. And so fine.

I'd heard from Nancy Umanoff that it was a reduced score, a smaller score, and a different musical ending. It turned out it actually *is* a different ending, slightly different, musically, for the last few pages, and so that was a musicological discovery of interest. The dance had a slightly different ending too, as you may remember, on the stage as well, but I'm talking about the music now. I'd also been told that it was a reduced orchestration. The original orchestration is what we call winds in threes, that is, three flutes, three oboes, three clarinets, three bassoons, four horns, at least, et cetera, and a full string section of sixteen first violins, fourteen second violins, et cetera. That's the normal orchestration for *Romeo and Juliet*.

When I heard it was a reduced orchestra I said, "Well, this is good, this will be less expensive, because you don't have to have so many musicians. Sounds good. Besides, it's a musicological first to have this piece." However, I kept asking how many—because I have to hire the orchestra. Even though it's only June, I have to hire six or eight months ahead, to make sure I get the players I want.

Riess: *You have to do it?*

Cole: I got the Berkeley Symphony to do it, but I was very involved in who was going to play, how many, obviously, and the budget. Nancy told me, "Five first violins will do." She's hearing this from the musicologist in Princeton—I can't recall his name right now, it doesn't matter—because she doesn't know about music, about scores, about orchestrations.

I said, "Five firsts? Are you kidding? If you have five firsts you have four seconds." "Well yes, this is a chamber orchestra." "Is that real?" It was okay with me if this was real, but I hadn't seen the score. I was busy, and I just took their word for it.

[Tape 8: Side B]

Cole: I kept getting mixed messages. No one was being clear on what the orchestration really was, just that it was smaller, *much* smaller, because Prokofiev wanted that, that was the original version, and it was the Soviet regime, Stalin, that insisted on having a large orchestra. That's why this original version had never been done in Russia.

Well, the new score never materialized, and apparently there was this big fight brewing, which I didn't know about, between Leon and Mark about the score. Actually Leon never said there was such a score. This musicologist told him there was a score but he never came up with it. Well, I went in July to the premiere at Bard College, and I went with my friends from Vassar College, Richard Wilson and his wife, who are very good friends with Leon. I sat through the first act, fully expecting to hear this new score, and I hear the orchestra, and it's the same score that I've always heard, the same exact orchestration—winds in threes, et cetera.

I go back at intermission, and I say to Nancy, "Nancy, it sounds the same, like it's the same orchestration I've always heard." And she said, "Oh, oh, yes," and that there was a big fight. And I still didn't know why. I went back—we hadn't got to the end yet, which is different, but anyway, this was not going well. I hear the second act, and see it, and the ending is a little different musically, and so that's interesting, worth doing maybe. But I go back to the dressing room to see Leon, and I say, "I want to look at the score, Leon." I look at his score and it *is* the same orchestration I've seen all my life. There's no difference, except at the end there's some different music, but the same orchestration. This is what Mark and Leon had been fighting over for, I don't know, months, or weeks anyway, in rehearsals. Really bad. I said to Nancy, "Look, it's the same score, it's the same orchestration."

This was an unbelievable—what can I say? Sham, charade, fake! “What the hell is this? Are we crazy? We’ve been telling everybody this is going to be a different orchestration, and it’s not!” It was so weird that it could actually happen, and I’ve never talked about it until now, to anybody except my wife and my friends, because it was so ridiculous! How could somebody say it’s a reduced orchestration when it isn’t? You just look at it, and you can see it in a moment that it’s the same as the original.

The thing that drives me really nuts—people who don’t know anything about music, who think they do, but if they can’t look at the score and see that it’s the same! And they can’t, because it’s just a lot of black spots if you’re not a musician.

Riess: And there were consequences.

Cole: Well, the consequence is I had to come back and hire an orchestra with the proper orchestration, which was okay, we did it.

Riess: It does sound like a low point.

Cole: And how do you think I felt? My last season, I’m putting all my effort into doing this thing, plus trying to keep two people I know from fighting with each other. You know, sometimes you get a commission and you’d be better off if you didn’t. In other words, Leon came up with the money, because he’s a brilliant fundraiser, and he made it happen, and all he got for it was a lot of grief.

Interview #6: April 10, 2013

[Tape 9: Side A]

Cole: At some point I want to talk about the profound effect that I think Carol Christ had. I can't say exactly which year she became vice chancellor, but it must have been around in the early '90s [1994]. When Chang-Lin Tien became chancellor [1990] Carol Christ became vice chancellor.

I had really enjoyed working before that with John Heilbron, who preceded her, who was only there for a couple of years as vice chancellor, a brilliant guy and lots of fun, very open to our discussions and very interested. His field was the history of science, and one amusing thing I recall was that when I suggested that we—I said we were going to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of Zellerbach Hall, and we were going to do this and that, various things, and big performances and so on. He, in his very amusing way, said, "Oh, that's really not such a long time." [laughter] In the history of science, in his work it wouldn't be.

I don't know if I already said this on tape, but I've told many other people about it because it was so funny. "Only thirty-five years?" Well, yes, right, but thirty-five years for Zellerbach Hall was important. He was a great guy, but he didn't stay long. He went to the UK and—I just saw him the other night, and he is at Oxford.

Anyway, he was followed by Carol Christ, and she had a very great interest in the arts. I think her field of study was Shakespeare, or at least English literature. She had a great interest in the arts, and very broad, and really was a leader in helping those of us in the arts on the campus. But it particularly affected Cal Performances.

The Townsend Center we worked with before, which was already there. I worked with them on something almost every year, some project or projects, we would have one of our artists give a lecture, this sort of thing, in one of the Townsend Center series or whatever.

But when Carol came she helped us to put together what was called, at that time, the Consortium for the Arts. It was only possible because she was there and she supported the idea, and she supported it in a small way financially. Modest, but certainly it was something. And that meant that we would meet, we, the museum, the arts departments, whoever was interested in doing this collaborative kind of thing. And we would have small amounts of money to deal with, very small. But there was support that could make the things happen that otherwise wouldn't.

Riess: Collaborative.

Cole: Yes, collaborative things like bringing a few people together. I've talked about it a few times, where we'd have people from the faculty, let's say like Richard Taruskin or Joe Kerman or somebody from the Music Department. And they'd be joined by

someone else from some other university to discuss whatever we were doing at the time, projects that we were working on that related. And they were, of course, also with things to do at the museum. It was a university-wide kind of activity which really benefited the students, and I think was good for the faculties to get to know each other better.

Riess: The kind of thing you would think a university would do!

Cole: Yes, that's it, just normal stuff, right. [laughter] But it was because Carol was there and she supported it, and as I say she supported it modestly in a financial way as well. So that was great. And it affected really everything we did. Not only that, but she came to almost everything that we did, the major performances. Not everything, because she was very busy, but she came to all of the major performances that we did at Cal Performances. And I used to see her at the opera. She was a real culture vulture and really a pleasure to work with.

Riess: You say it affected nearly everything you did?

Cole: Because I was working with someone who really appreciated what I was doing, what we were doing. And that can make a big difference. Also, it happened that this was a time when things were going very well for lots of different reasons. One, I had a wonderful development director, fundraiser, Tim Whalen, and things were going really well in that respect. The board had been formed, as you remember, in 1996.

Things started to take off in the way of being able to raise more money, the artistic program was really expanding—and not just expanding but being more interesting because of the things that we could do and the relationships we had built over ten years. The timing of having Carol, having a great development director in Tim Whalen, and what Hollis Ashby was doing, had done—she came on as a PR director, and then subsequently after some years became the associate director. It was a conglomeration of different things coming together at the right time. And it was before 2001, 9/11, you see, where everything changed and got more difficult. That period between '98 to 2001—of course there were good things after that, but also a lot of problems—those were really wonderful years.

Riess: Did that mean more work for you when you involved the consortium?

Cole: No, not really. It's always a pleasure to get things done and to have people who are willing to collaborate. It's not more work. I have to remember this is—none of this—[laughing] I was saying none of this is work. If I saw it as work I wouldn't do it, it's just too much. But it's a life, it's not a job.

Riess: Well, how many people can say that?

Cole: Not many, and that's one reason I feel very fortunate, because that's a very big deal. What is it Freud said, "Life is work and love." A lot of people recoil from that. "Work? Oh my God!" [laughing]

Riess: This was before your marriage to Susan—how about that part?

Cole: Well, I'd rather not get into my personal life.

Riess: [laughing] But I have to ask!

Cole: Except for Susan, who has been such a blessing.

Yes, I was totally—the only thing that was happening was I was working, and that was great. At the same time I started doing more conducting, which I had done only in my earlier life when that's all I did was conduct, and helped to run orchestras and a ballet company, and so on. I started conducting again and I started going different places. Mark would ask me to do something—like *The Hard Nut* in New York, or *The Hard Nut* we did in London.

I have to say, I want to put it on record, that whenever I went away and conducted I was paid something. Not very much, because I was doing these things with friends and so on. But I was paid. So I always took vacation time, it was like my vacation—I never “took a vacation.” Every vacation I probably ever took at the university was a working vacation. I was conducting someplace, and that was my vacation.

I remember that when I was in London, doing twenty performances in two and a half weeks of *Hard Nut* at Sadler's Wells, in the midst of that we had a finance committee scheduled. So I was on the phone in London with my finance committee, which included Budd Cheit and several others. And the finance committee is always a difficult meeting, and it's *very* difficult if you're in London and they're in Berkeley, and you've just done a matinee of *Hard Nut* and you have an evening performance. And you're on “vacation.” [laughter] In the midst of the twenty performances I had this finance committee phone call, which I'll never forget, because it was long, et cetera. But that's the way I did it. I was very, very concerned that people didn't think I was just going off and had two jobs. I took a vacation, and I went off and conducted when I could.

Riess: Did things fall apart when you went away?

Cole: Not really, because at that point, as I say, we had a really good staff and people like Tim and Mary Dixon, my marketing director, and Hollis. And I was always in touch. That's why I'm saying—I wasn't really on vacation, I was really working. I was doing two jobs.

And when I was in London doing *Hard Nut* at Sadler's Wells, I had several meetings with Askonas Holt people, which is the biggest arts agency in the world. I had a meeting with them, which was very valuable, and I didn't have to fly over to see them, I was there—on vacation! [laughing]

I went out during the day, I had lunch with my good friend Robert Rattray at Askonas Holt, and we talked about several things that did come to fruition. I had met him

before, but this was the time that I had an opportunity to meet him for lunch. Usually I would go to Europe, if I went, in the summer, but this was not in the summer, and a better time to meet. In the summer they're running all over, to festivals and so on.

Riess: Well, you must have been considered quite a powerful person. When you came to London people were seeking you out.

Cole: Well, and I was seeking them out. It was a collaboration, and they knew that I was interested in some of the people they had. They represent sometimes only worldwide; there was no American manager, they were the worldwide management of some artist.

But that's the way all of that worked. It was very intense but really great and I'm really happy that I did it and had the opportunity to do it. And also the Edinburgh Festival where I conducted, there I did a lot of business. It was just always during the day with business, and at night it was conducting.

Riess: You couldn't go to other performances.

Cole: I couldn't go to other performances, but the last time I was in Edinburgh I stayed over and saw [Gustavo] Dudamel for the first time, conduct. He conducted a Swedish orchestra at the Edinburgh Festival, and I stayed an extra day to see him and also see some other people on business, Cal Performances business, on my vacation.
[laughing]

Riess: Dudamel conducted a Swedish orchestra in Edinburgh?

Cole: Yes, that was a long time ago. I saw him earlier, before he came to LA. But I'd heard about him, and it was just an opportunity to see him.

Riess: Did you introduce yourself?

Cole: No, I didn't. I was actually with the former director of the Edinburgh Festival. I hung out with him a little bit, and he's on the arts council for the UK, and so on. No, I don't do that sort of thing if I don't really have business to see somebody.

Riess: "That sort of thing"—call it schmoozing—you don't do that?

Cole: Not unless I really have a purpose, like I wanted to bring Dudamel. But I didn't want to. That wasn't my goal. The goal was just I wanted to see him conduct and I wanted to hear the orchestra. And he is a very gifted young guy—that I certainly learned. But as I say, I had other business going on with people I was with there.

Riess: Let's get back to the Consortium for the Arts.

Cole: Yes. The point is that my feeling was always that the arts are about education, and it really annoys me that people don't get that. They think it's some sort of—

Riess: Extra stuff?

Cole: Extra stuff. And it's not that I have anything against athletics, because as you know I'm an obsessive tennis player. But how educators cannot understand that the arts—it's one of the great legacies of civilized society. It's not like playing stickball or something, which is also fun but it's a different thing entirely. It astounds me that some very educated people don't really understand that. And as I'm saying, Carol Christ did.

Riess: Would you say it's particularly a problem in this country?

Cole: Yes, absolutely in this country.

It's very frustrating if that's your life and people don't value it, don't value what you're doing, as a society. Now, the audience values it, because we had a very strong audience, people bought tickets, they were screaming for tickets, begging for tickets, giving us lots of money so they could get tickets.

But for example, I was looking in the 2000-2001 brochure, and as I told you before, we had started the SchoolTime program for school kids to come in and I had started that probably '87 or '88—'88, something like that, and it's still going on now. That was going on, and then we had, of course, other things where we would bring in the public. But my main focus was to try and make it work on the campus.

One of the first things, of course, that I don't think I've mentioned before is—I think it was the first year I was there, or not later than the second year, '87-'88, somewhere in there, I was in Wheeler Hall at some event, and I don't recall even what the event was, but it had something to do with the arts. Some student spoke up about Cal Performances, about the fact that the prices were too high, they couldn't go there. They actually said that in this discussion.

I heard that, and I just—oh! I had this Advisory Committee then, as I told you, with Budd Cheit as chair. I told them at the next meeting, I said, "We really have to do something about this." My proposal was that we have a half-price ticket for Berkeley students.

Riess: A good ticket?

Cole: Any ticket. That's the point, you see? And that was very controversial at first. "What's this going to do to our revenue?" Of course, it's ridiculous, because students don't come enough no matter *what* the price is. They just don't. But certainly, we don't want the price to be preventing them from coming.

Anyway, I proposed that we have a half price for students, any ticket, any time, and then there was some research, of course, done by various people, I think including Budd, about other universities. They looked at the University of Michigan, and I think the University of Illinois, some of the major universities that have large presenting

programs. What they learned is that at those universities they have—you can buy a lower-priced ticket, but only in certain sections, and there were all these restrictions. I said we shouldn't have any restrictions. They should be able to buy a ticket anytime at half price, and that's what we put into place.

Now the fact is, students do not buy subscriptions. Maybe a few, but not many. And the subscribers, who pay a lot of money, they get their tickets early on, because that's what they do. Students, at the last minute they decide to go and they go and get it half price. Sometimes it's not only half price at the last minute, it's student rush, maybe \$5, a \$50 ticket may be for \$5, or whatever it is now. But I wanted students to be able to plan a week ahead and buy a half-price ticket, and a good ticket, not just a certain student section. Anyway, so that was a very big deal. It seems perfectly normal now, but it was controversial for quite a while there about what that would bring.

I noticed this from the last pages of the brochure of 2000 where it talks about SchoolTime and Community Events and then The University [reading], "As part of UC Berkeley's Consortium for the Arts, Cal Performances brings visiting artists together with the campus' internationally acclaimed student body. Master classes, lectures, demonstrations, and symposia by visiting artists and scholars, created in partnership with the UC Berkeley faculty, are a regular feature of campus life..." and so on, so forth.

And at the bottom, "In addition, UC Berkeley students can always take advantage of a half-price ticket policy established exclusively for the campus." That was almost my main goal, but you could have your main goal not be the one that most people notice, because they just don't pay attention, and they didn't know what it was like before. They didn't know that this was something new, and the whole idea of integrating it into the campus life was my idea. I pushed around a lot of things to try and make that happen. And of course, you never achieve what you'd like, it's not possible, because people are just—they're not thinking that way.

And people come and go. Carol was there and then she left.

Riess: You would want the Music Department to make sure the students were attending particular events, and so on.

Cole: Yes, I wanted them involved in it. Fortunately, I had some wonderful people on the board, like Don Friedman. I've mentioned him before. He was on the search committee and he was on the board for many years as a faculty member at large. People like Don, and others too, were encouraging their students to come to these things, and they were very helpful in that way. And there were very many others, I'm sure. Richard Newton, the dean of Engineering, a very great man, he was very much of a renaissance-type person who was very supportive of the arts. His wife subsequently became a member of the board. I recruited her and I think she's still on the board. Richard, sadly, died at a very young age.

One example of how Richard was one of the people who were paying attention to what we were doing—when I first got there, and for some years, the box office would be closed during the holiday period at the end of a year, December or whatever. They would close the box office because everybody was gone it seemed like, and people could take a little vacation. Well, Richard called me up, and I knew him only slightly, but I knew he was dean of Engineering, and he said, “I wanted to buy tickets for my staff, and I went over to the box office and it’s closed. What can I do?” It was holiday time and he wanted to give presents, and he wanted to give them subscriptions to Cal Performances.

Riess: Nice, nice!

Cole: This guy—he’s my kind of guy. And we changed our policy. We kept the box office open during the holiday period so that you could buy tickets for gifts, because that was something that people did, wanted to do, but they wouldn’t think about it till the last minute. There was that kind of interaction. As I say, Richard and Petra, his wife, became very good friends. It’s just sad that he died so young. But anyway, there were people like that around.

Riess: Were you ever invited to be a lecturer, or to teach a class in arts presenting or any such thing?

Cole: Not really. It’s kind of a strange thing, actually when you think about it. There were people who talked about it but it never happened, which is okay. But I’m just saying it’s kind of strange, because I have—there are universities around the country, UCLA, I think, is one and USC, I believe. And certainly I know that Indiana University has a very strong program. A friend of mine is the director of that program. I understand there’s one recently established at Swarthmore, of arts administration.

The problem with many of these programs is they’re run by people who don’t know anything about the arts—I mean, have not done it. They don’t have any professional experience is what I mean. They may *know* something about it but they’ve never done it.

Riess: They believe there’s a skill set that can be taught?

Cole: Yes! It’s like saying can I be on the Physics faculty? No, not unless I’ve really studied physics. But there is this idea that you can be an arts person and you don’t have to know anything about the arts. And there are many of them. And that’s the problem with some of these programs.

Now I believe we are talking about the ‘98-‘99 season. And I see New York City Ballet came that year, and Mark Morris came and Merce Cunningham came. And [Alvin] Ailey came every year. And we also did, that year, the Bay Area recital debut of none other than Renee Fleming. And we had Lorraine Hunt, the great Lorraine Hunt, and a lot of other things. A lot of things were happening.

Riess: And a lot were repeated. If something went well you could say right then and there, "You've got to come back next year."

Cole: Like Cecilia, as I think I mentioned before. She was singing in Hertz Hall, and Jack Mastroianni, her manager, was with her. We were sitting together, and at the intermission I asked him could he find a date on the calendar for next year *right now*.

Another example of that was Sasha Waltz. I brought her here, and right after the performance I said, "Can you come back next year?" It was a small enough company and they were flexible enough that they could. It's not like the New York City Ballet where they plan five to ten years ahead. Sasha was just getting started in her career, and so they came back the next year, which is great. And then things changed.

Riess: Your recitalists often came back year after year.

Cole: Richard Goode came often, Murray [Perahia] came. I told you I had them on my list when I was flying out here the first time.

When you have somebody new—an example of that is Robert Lepage, who didn't come along until the year of 2000 I guess. Yes, Robert Lepage, 2000-2001. And here's a person who is still in the news, of course, in all kinds of different ways. Yesterday's *Times* review is pretty terrible, about the reopening of the *Ring Cycle* last Saturday, when the machine stopped. The only thing was it stopped in a different place than it did last time! [laughing] It was really sad, and I love Robert and I think he's such a genius.

I'll tell you how that came about, because he's a pretty famous guy now. But when we brought him no one had ever heard of him out here. He worked in Montreal, in Canada. I'd heard of him, but that's about it, I'd never seen his work. And you asked earlier about agents, and did I have agents who I particularly trusted and knew and worked with and liked. Yes, and one of them was a wonderful guy named Menno Plukker. He's actually from Amsterdam, but he lives in Montreal. I knew Menno pretty well. I've forgotten what we had done with him before, something, I'm sure, various smaller things. He did theatrical things, that was probably his main interest, theatrical stuff. Because he lived in Montreal, in a place where the arts are supported a lot by the government, he had these projects.

Menno had Robert Lepage, and he talked to me about that, I don't know when, but it must have been probably two years before it actually happened, because of planning ahead. And we had to get the Playhouse. This was not easy. I had to arrange it, and it's complicated, because they have their schedule, we have our schedule, Robert Lepage has his schedule. We finally put it together, and he came out and did this show called *Far Side of the Moon*, which everyone will agree, who has seen his work, is the best thing he ever did, at least that we've seen here. And we've seen almost everything he's done since then.

Riess: It sounds like it was a complicated piece of work.

- Cole: Well, it was, but it was beautifully done and a real work of genius.
- Riess: The description [reads] "... in which he juxtaposed the Cold War competition of the Americans and the Soviets and the space race with the story of two Quebecois brothers, one straight, one gay, and their competitive relationship."
- Cole: Well, I would say it was more interesting than the description. It made sense and it was a beautiful piece. And we ran it for probably a week, it was not just one show, because it was the Playhouse is a very small place and it was a very successful show, and at the end it was completely sold out. Right after I saw the first performance I said to Menno, "Bring him back." I think Robert came back and did at least four different shows, things that were small that could go in the Playhouse. That's before Peter Gelb got him to come and do the Metropolitan Opera.
- Riess: He's called a writer-director-actor.
- Cole: He is all of those things. He's quite brilliant and a wonderful guy. That was why Menno brought him to my attention, and then we became very close. And nobody else was doing this kind of thing, theater from Canada, from Quebec.
- Riess: And the score by Laurie Anderson?
- Cole: Yes, well we did a number of things with Laurie.
- Riess: But the score for the *Far Side of the Moon*.
- Cole: Oh, is that by Laurie? I'd forgotten! But that's undoubtedly true.
- Speaking of young artists and new artists on the scene, that same year we presented Julia Fischer at seventeen, the young violinist, and that also was—Jack Mastroianni, her manager. Again I said to him immediately, at the concert, "She has to come back, she is amazing!" And that was her American debut recital and tour. It got complicated with her because—well, she played several times for us, and she *only* played for us in the Bay Area. It was kind of like Cecilia and Robert Lepage, they played at Berkeley and that's it. But then she had a child, and then I think she had another one, so it got complicated, obviously.
- I love Julia in so many ways. I won't forget, I was once in New York and she was playing with the New York Philharmonic, the Sibelius concerto. She played the concerto and then she came and sat with me because I had some tickets from her manager Jack, and we were all sitting there together. Except Jack was someplace else, I don't know where he was. I was sitting with Julia for the rest of the concert, and Lorin Maazel was conducting. We were going to go backstage to see Jack and see Lorin and so on, and I said, "Oh, I can carry your violin." She said, "Oh no, no. My insurance won't allow anyone to carry my violin." It was so funny, you know.

But anyway, and interestingly enough, I noticed when I was looking at this stuff, we presented her when she was seventeen. And we also presented Sarah Chang, her first concert in the Bay Area at seventeen. That's hard to believe, because she's now a grown woman. I don't recall how I got connected to Sarah. Maybe I heard a recording, I just don't know. But she was a star, of course. I think she played her first performance in the Bay Area with the California Symphony, but this was her first recital in the Bay Area. It's a different thing.

Riess: And the Bay Area includes Stanford?

Cole: Oh yes.

Riess: Is Stanford a competitor here?

Cole: They didn't do the kind of stuff that we did really. Fortunately—fortunately for us!

Riess: Robert Lepage—he wasn't commissioned by Berkeley to do the *Far Side of the Moon*.

Cole: No, because we didn't even know him until he came to do that, for that show.

I would say, as far as commissioning, that one of the main things that was really important that we were able to do—and as I say, it was because these years were good years financially. We were struggling—struggling is *good*—but we were managing. We commissioned a new work for Merce Cunningham, which was a great success and is a huge hit worldwide, still, today. It's called *Biped*, and we did the world premiere in the '99-2000 season.

I got something just the other day from the Merce Cunningham Trust—Merce is gone now and there's a trust that oversees his work worldwide—and it mentioned that *Biped* is being played in Munich. [*Bayerisches Staatsballett staged by former company members Robert Swinston and Jennifer Goggans*. June 2013] This was a brilliant piece of work, and one of the most genius things, of the pieces he ever did. We did the premiere and then we brought it back a couple of times. Now, of course, it's playing around the world. He's gone, the company doesn't really exist, but other companies are doing this work.

Riess: It works well for other companies.

Cole: Yes, well, this one does, yes. Some do, some less so. But this was such a huge success in every way. People just loved it.

Riess: And what kind of space did it require? It wasn't like *Ocean*?

Cole: No, it wasn't like *Ocean*, it was just a regular stage. It had music by a very interesting composer, a British composer [Gavin Bryars], which was also a good thing.

And also, that year, 2000-2001, we did the American debut tour of Ian Bostridge, I noticed. I thought, “Geez, I got really lucky! Robert Lepage, Julia Fischer, Ian Bostridge all in one year!” It just was a really good time. And I didn’t think of it at the time, but I’m sure it made fundraising a little easier. These things were selling out completely. Everything.

Riess: Selling out, but if they’re new to you, then they’re *really* new to your audience.

Cole: Yes, that’s true, and yes, there’s a certain risk involved there. As it turned out, you don’t make money on these things, but if people love Robert, which they did—many people just were completely taken with his work, especially the first piece—they’re more inclined to be donors.

Riess: Did he make himself available—

Cole: Oh, Robert was very, yes, very available.

Riess: —to meet with donors and all that?

Cole: Yes, well yes, to some extent, but he’s always very busy, because he’s acting and producing, directing. Not like Jordi Savall. We presented Jordi Savall more than anybody else in the country over the years, we presented him first and we presented him continuously, and he was fabulous with our donors. He absolutely—I could hire him as a development director! [laughing] It was just his charm.

Obviously we never talked about money around him, but he charmed people, and we would occasionally—we have done with him home concerts, where he’d play his regular concert in the church, but he’d give a private concert in a home for our major donors and major prospects, and so on. People loved it, because not only is he a great player, but when you’re close up—his gamba really sounds great in a nice, big living room. His personal charm was also fabulous and it still is. And it’s real. In fact, he does not like to think, and I never let him think, that it was about fundraising. I never discussed that with him.

Riess: But that was a rare quality in him that you could ask him to do that. You would not, maybe, ask Renee Fleming?

Cole: Well, not a home concert, no. You need something intimate, more intimate. Like we used to have string quartets. The Takács Quartet has played, and things like that, but Jordi was a rare breed in that respect.

Riess: The Takács has done home concerts?

Cole: Yes, and we pay them a little bit, yes, not very much, but something. When Jordi was here he’d be here for three or four days, and so we’d find one night where he’s free.

Anyway, those were great years. And looking back on it, it was pretty amazing and fun. But I wanted to get—how much time do we have?

Riess: We have another fifty minutes.

Cole: I don't know if you remember the premiere, the debut, of *Il Giardino Armonico*. This was another thing that really took off, and it's kind of an interesting story because they combined with another artist, an important artist. At the 1996 Berkeley Festival we did the American premiere of *Il Giardino Armonico*. I'd only heard recordings of them, I'd never heard them live. I might have heard more about them from Alan Curtis, who was in Italy, my friend Alan. I'd been to Italy to see his work and I'd brought him here to do operas for the festival, and he may have told me about them. But somehow I heard a recording. It was fabulous. So they came to the Berkeley Festival in 1996 and they completely blew the audience away. It was just unbelievable, the great audience reaction to their playing.

Riess: Are they a quartet?

Cole: No, it was about six people, six guys, and they played seventeenth century Italian music, but in a way that you'd never heard before.

Riess: Like Fabio Biondi?

Cole: Yes, only more wild! They were really great. They were all great. And the leader of this group was a guy—Giovanni Antonini was his name. He played the flute and recorder and so on, but he was also the director of the ensemble. And it was a huge success at the festival, and then we brought them back the very next year as part of our regular season, which was in '99-2000. Every time they came back they were a huge success, completely sold out in advance. You wouldn't have to worry about filling the church.

Riess: The early music crowd was always there?

Cole: Well, there was a crowd of people who really appreciate that kind of great, great performing, and they came back several times, always with great success. We had done their American debut, and so they were really connected to us. But it became a problem when Antonini, the director, became a conductor. And I always say that's a problem. When a pianist becomes a conductor, or a flutist becomes a conductor, it's a problem, he's not paying attention to the group—and the group broke up.

As Antonini became more involved in his conducting career, Giardino was not happening anymore, unfortunately. But the interesting thing that I'm getting at is he, Antonini, is now a well-known conductor, and he is one of the conductors who very often and maybe primarily, conducts for Cecilia Bartoli, and we also gave her American debut!

[Tape 9: Side B]

Cole: I just heard last night that at the Zurich Opera, which is one of the really great opera houses in Europe, and it's where Cecilia primarily works, next season she's doing *Norma*—I believe it's *Norma*. Antonini is conducting. It's amazing, these two young kids that I brought here so many years ago.

I was talking to Vladimir Kresin, my friend, who came up to the concert at the Green Center last night—he always knows what's going on in all these places—I said, the trouble is they've probably already sold out. Probably true. Anyway, so these people went on and they basically don't come to this country anymore. Cecilia doesn't. If you have Cecilia Bartoli anyplace it's going to be sold out.

Riess: Even before it's announced?

Cole: Well, they know because she sings there on a regular basis. Her husband is a regular there also, a baritone, so there are personal reasons to be there. Also, when she sings there she has—I'm sure they've given her carte blanche. "Sing what you want, sing with whom you want, pick your conductor." It's not like going to most opera houses where they hire you to come and do something and they tell you what you're going to do. It doesn't work that way with Cecilia, or at least it seems that way.

Riess: And she gets better and better?

Cole: Well, I haven't heard her for a long time. She can't sing forever, obviously, but she has taken more control of her career by singing with people she wants to sing with, singing where she wants to sing, what she wants to sing. Not singing in huge opera houses, but small places like Zurich and other European opera houses like that, but mostly in Zurich.

And then she's working at Salzburg, the Whitsun Festival, which is coming up in May. You can go. You can't get a ticket, but you can go! [laughter] She's the director of the Whitsun Festival at Salzburg. She is singing, but she also is the artistic director, so she's already looking to the future, obviously, when some day she won't be singing and she'll be doing what I do. She's a very smart woman. You could tell that from the very early times. She was a smart girl. Anyway, that was an amazing kind of a confluence of two artists who—they both came from Italy but they were in different worlds.

Riess: I think that happened because of you.

Cole: [laughing] Well, I was just lucky to be part of it in some way, really lucky.

Riess: Talking about house concerts, in an article I read by Joshua Kosman he was saying that chamber music originally was composed for *playing* by real people, that is, rather than just to being listened to.

Cole: That's one of the remarkable things about what's referred to as the early music movement, or whatever you want to call it, it's kind of passé to say early music—in other words, music at that time—is that the people who were listening often also played. First these were the aristocracy, and then the upper middle class as a middle class developed in Europe. Upper middle class. Many people in these small concerts were also players of instruments, amateur players. And the king often, the count—

Riess: They composed.

Cole: —they were often composers, players, that was part of their education. It was assumed in those days, at that time, that educated people played the piano or harpsichord, or sang madrigals, or all those kinds of things. That was part of your life. Instead of watching television you sang madrigals by Gesualdo, really interesting hard music. But it wasn't hard because you knew how to do it. Especially in England that was a practice, it was common. Yes, it's true that at that time more of the audience were actually participants.

It's still true that more of the early music audience—if you go to a concert where they're playing baroque music or pre-baroque music, it's more likely statistically that there are more people in that hall who actually play something or sing as an amateur, participate, in other words, in some way. It's very, very important, because it's a really different kind of an audience. And for a musician, for myself, for example, it's very satisfying. Because when they heard Il Giardino, many of the people in the audience *play* those instruments. And my God, they've never heard them played like that! [laughing] And they know how hard it is.

The normal audience at a symphony concert, only maybe what, two or three percent of the audience would be actual players. And it becomes a completely different experience. When people yell and shout after the end of a baroque concert, let's say if you have something like Il Giardino or some of these other really great groups, it's because they are fully appreciative and understanding of how difficult this is and how amazing this is. You just can't get that in a group of people who have never played an instrument, have never studied music, let's say, and don't participate in musical activities themselves. To me, that was one of the really great things about the festival and other things that we did like that, but the festival particularly. Everybody who was there practically, almost 99 percent were players, singers, participants—musical people. And that is a really great thing.

When I was a student at USC, graduate student, I took what's called collegium musicum, where you study old music. Fortunately, there were a couple of great people there. One was the very famous harpsichordist from Europe, Alice Ehlers. She actually had a harpsichord! I'm talking about in the late fifties, early sixties, when I was a graduate student there. But there was also a guy named Ingolf Dahl, a composer and conductor and so on. He knew all about early music, Gesualdo and Bach, of course. He was a real scholar besides being a composer, which was more typical of people, I think, in those days than perhaps now.

What I'm getting at is we played old music, but with modern instruments. I played viola—I played a modern viola. No one played original instruments, except Alice Ehlers had her harpsichord—at that time. Now, of course, at USC or many other universities, but at USC they have a wonderful baroque ensemble. At Juilliard they have a wonderful baroque ensemble, students, and they are taught by famous people. In the case of Juilliard they bring people from Europe often, and different people. Jordi has been there, and Bill Christie has been there. So that whole thing has changed.

Riess: People were building their own harpsichords during the sixties.

Cole: Oh, they still are. Their own, yes, it was trendy. And some of those guys, or people, became professionals, and I know some of them. John Phillips is one of the great harpsichord makers in this country. He's a Berkeley guy, and I don't know exactly how he started, but he's brilliant now and he's known all over the world from his harpsichords. He goes all over to help people rebuild their harpsichords.

Riess: Is anything of what we're talking about here a problem that needs to be remedied? Or is this just the way it is?

Cole: It's just the way it is. You know?

Riess: Nobody gets the right kind of education in music.

Cole: There are so many other problems, and this is just my little problem that I've dealt with. But how do you deal with a problem like that? You present something and people say *wow!* A lot of people do—not everybody does.

Riess: What about your standard San Francisco Symphony? The audience knows the music, the repertoire, because they go year after year after year.

Cole: They're experienced concertgoers, right, and we need those people, yes, thank God for those people. One reason is because it's a much expanded number. We're talking—if you go back to the eighteenth, seventeenth century, there was a small number of people in these concerts. In fact, there weren't public concerts until the eighteenth and nineteenth century really. Mostly they were private things in private homes, or in the chapel, in the church—most of the music that's going on in the church was actually in Europe. It's a completely different world.

You have three thousand people, twenty-eight hundred people in Davies Hall. This is different. It's a different thing entirely when it used to be in your living room or in the church, or in a music hall of some kind, a very small place. To try and recreate that feeling—one thing that's very important is to pick the right place to play this kind of music, and that's why I was so lucky to have a big hall like Zellerbach, a small hall like Hertz Hall, seven hundred seats. But also this wonderful First Congregational Church. And St. Marks, the Episcopal Church which is even smaller, that was really good for medieval music or sixteenth century—earlier stuff.

I had a space for every kind of music, except Zellerbach Hall was not the best space for music, let's just be honest about it. But for smaller things, for old music and so on, we had these wonderful spaces. Zellerbach Hall was great for theatrical things, for dance, for the Grand Kabuki.

Riess: I remember wanting to hear the Guarneri, or the Tokyo String, but not being able to afford good enough seats, and it was going to be a poor experience from the balcony of Zellerbach.

Cole: Oh yes, well those days are over. I never—not never, because for a very short time, when I first got here, we used to present string quartets in Zellerbach, but I was totally opposed to it.

Riess: And there was that white divider thing to make a shell?

Cole: Oh yes. That was a mess. It was a very bad idea, and it's something that used to go on. And you could say well, it was a good thing, because the Guarneri Quartet, which was a great quartet—the greatest of its time at that time—they could fill a two-thousand-seat hall in those days. And that's a good thing. But on the other hand, acoustically it's just the wrong thing. I stopped presenting chamber music of any kind in Zellerbach very, very soon. We presented all that kind of music either in Hertz Hall or in the church.

Riess: But the Guarneri is too major for Hertz.

Cole: No, I even went with the Guarneri. Of course, they were winding down their career as time went on here. But they were great still when I first came here, great guys and a wonderful quartet. I presented them once in Zellerbach, but it's a terrible thing to do to a musician, to put them in a big hall like that. I didn't like it. It's just that it had been historically done that way, or maybe I couldn't get Hertz Hall. I finally decided okay, I can get Hertz Hall on Sunday, so I'll only do chamber music on Sunday, because I'm not going to do it in Zellerbach Hall.

Riess: Isn't Zellerbach large for a pianist too?

Cole: Well, piano is a little bit easier, because of the nature—it is a percussion instrument naturally, and you hope it's not too percussive, in fact, the opposite. To me a piano's a little bit different, you can play in a larger hall. I heard Horowitz only once live, in Kleinhans Music Hall in Buffalo, when I was with the Buffalo Philharmonic. He was presented by this presenting organization locally there and I got to hear him. That is a seventeen-hundred seat hall with wonderful acoustics, and it was Horowitz, so it was fine. He filled any hall he went to. But it's very different, I think, strings as opposed to a piano or even winds.

Riess: You might have Paco de Lucía doing quiet stuff on a guitar way down on stage.

Cole: Sometimes these things are also amplified to some extent, so that makes a difference. As soon as you get into amplification—and then, like with Paco, it was also lit, so you needed the theatrical aspects of Zellerbach, see? It would have to be lit properly so that it looks very sensual and whatever, and you can only do that there.

Riess: Is that something you would think about, the lighting, the sensual quality?

Cole: Yes, but we had technical crew. When you think about where you put somebody, like this fado singer named Mariza, who I presented first here years ago.

Riess: Really? Now she's at the Jazz Center.

Cole: Yes, a few weeks ago. I asked somebody who went to see her there—that's not a theatrical space, it's just a concert space—I asked this person that had seen her many times at Zellerbach, where it becomes a theatrical space, it's lit, it's very dark and with colors. They said that was all missing from her performance. She's a theatrical person, and she needs that. It's not just a concert where you simply turn the lights on. Yes, it's important.

That's why Zellerbach is so great, because while it's big, it's two thousand seats, it's not three thousand seats, thank God. It has its really great qualities. It's just that it's not good for chamber music. It's better now with the new sound system that we put in. It's much better now, but it's still a little big that's all.

Riess: One of the theatrical things about the Zellerbach space it is the architectural business on both sides, and those bits of intense color.

Cole: Yes, yes. That was the architect's idea. Vernon DeMars. I think it adds something. It lightens it up—because it's a little bit heavy-handed, the architecture. That lightens it up a little bit, to me, yes.

Vernon and I used to talk about that. I got quite friendly with him over the years. Fortunately I didn't have to ask his permission when we renovated the mezzanine so that we could have food service, because he would have been, I think, probably opposed to it. And then the completely renovated restrooms that are on that level and that other wing on the house-right side where there's a ladies' restroom. My idea was to have more ladies' restrooms. We made it a lot better, because it used to be horrible the way it was when I first came.

You realize that when I came there was no running water on the mezzanine. Not only was there no restaurant, there was no running water, no refrigeration—there was *nothing*. The idea of having someplace where you can eat and have food of some kind, food service, was important to me. I felt it was something we were really missing. I told you about how I went to the Lyon Opera House, and they had this wonderful restaurant, and it was configured very much like what we added up here.

Riess: I've read that you wanted to have a festival of contemporary chamber opera. What is contemporary chamber opera?

Cole: Well, in the *New Yorker* just recently Alex Ross was writing about operas he's seen in New York by smaller opera companies, including the New York City Opera, which is run by a friend of mine, George Steel. That's an example of what's going on, and it's a very good article talking about this.

It's the kind of thing where my hope was to do things that nobody else is doing. Why do something that—it's not just that I want to be different, but you can't compete with the San Francisco Opera, so why would you do *Traviata*? They can do it much better. And you can't compete with the San Francisco Symphony, because they're doing great stuff over there with what they do. But they don't do what I wanted to do.

And in that vein, when I was actually teaching at Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles, one of the things I did was I had a little opera workshop which I created, with the support of the people around me. We did one-act small operas, where you do two operas, two one-act operas. At that time Menotti was fairly new. I'm talking about a long time ago. And there are other things. The San Francisco Opera will never do all these pieces. There are many, many wonderful, interesting one-act operas or short operas or small operas that opera companies never do.

Now in New York they do, increasingly now, and the piece in the *New Yorker* talks about that. But it's something that if we could have done that—I told you, the first project I wanted to pull off when I got here was to try and bring a Peter Sellars production, not that they were short operas, they were Mozart operas, which is small.

Riess: But his staging?

Cole: The staging also was very, very portable, because he didn't have a huge budget when he did those pieces. It was a modest budget, and it was a very good result.

Riess: You were thinking of a festival?

Cole: I wanted to do a contemporary music festival, and we started that, but it was too difficult in those times. I just thought that that was something we could and should do. It kind of came about when the Lyon Opera came. I told you they preferred to perform in Zellerbach rather than the opera house, because Zellerbach was a little smaller. They did their *Madame Butterfly* there, and that was a lucky break for us.

That's the kind of thing I had hoped that we could do, but it was just very difficult. We did a lot of other things, but that's something I think that there's a big opportunity for. And now it's happening in New York, in a big way. New York City Opera is basically doing that kind of stuff, and a number of other small opera companies.

Riess: What about *Monsters of Grace*, the 3-D work by Robert Wilson and Philip Glass with the poetry of Rumi [1999]. Amazing!

Cole: I wouldn't say it was such a great work of art. It was okay. I think I saw it first at UCLA. I went down there—I think that was the reason I went down there—and I stayed with Betty Freeman, who was one of the great, great patrons of contemporary music in this country. Number one in this country, and a big patron of John Adams but many other composers. She used to go to Salzburg, I would see her in Salzburg, but she lived in Beverly Hills. I think I went down to see this piece before it came here.

I stayed several times at Betty's place, because she did that. She liked to have people hanging around who were in the arts. She herself is a wonderful pianist, but then she became a photographer, and she took some wonderful pictures and had books printed of her work, mostly of composers and musicians, conductors and so on, that she knew, but mostly composers. That was her thing.

One time when I stayed there, and I think it was maybe this occasion, she told me, "The bathroom's kind of a mess. I'm sorry." I said, "What happened?" She said, "Bob Wilson was here last night and he turned the water on and then forgot about it." [laughter] The bathroom was soaked with water, and it was Bob Wilson's fault! But that's the kind of people she had hanging around her all the time. Betty Freeman was such a great person in the musical world and, as I say, known worldwide. She did so much.

Riess: Do you have anybody up here that you think of in the same way?

Cole: No one that spends her life really supporting contemporary composers. That's what she did. That was her main thing. That was her goal. And as I say, she was a great fan and supporter of John Adams.

Riess: Could you turn to her for anything?

Cole: You know, I never did, because we didn't have that kind of relationship. We were friends. It was like—she wasn't on my hit list, so to speak. [laughing] We had a good time together, and kept it that way. And whether it was in Los Angeles or Salzburg, or wherever I would see her, it was just better to keep those things separate.

But yes, I wanted to finish up today with this 2001 9/11 experience because that was huge. It was huge, of course, in our *world*. And huge because it affects those of us who are depending on people traveling around and going different places.

Riess: And the very apropos *Silk Road Project* was conceived after that?

Cole: No. As a matter of fact I'm looking at it right now, at the 2001-2002 season we had, I think it was the first iteration of the *Silk Road Project*. And that's an interesting thing too. It was very interesting for me. I was invited by Yo-Yo Ma to come back to Tanglewood for the first run-through of the *Silk Road Project* at Tanglewood one summer, probably the summer of '98 I would guess.

He was working on this project, and it was going to be a recording project too. Peter Gelb was there—he was then head of Sony Classical. Yo-Yo was there with his wife and his family, and he invited a number of presenters, from around the world really. There were maybe six of us there who had committed to—if you’re going to do this, yes, we’re interested. “So come and let’s see what we’re doing and let’s get it going.” I heard the first concert of the *Silk Road Project* at Tanglewood. And I was sitting next to Peter Gelb, as it happened, that’s where I first met him. I didn’t know him before that, but I got to meet him there briefly, because he was the guy who was going to put it on records and we were the ones who were going to tour it nationwide. And the *Silk Road Project*—they were here in 2002 in April.

[looking at Cal Performances brochure for 2001-2002] There were some things in this brochure, because of the fact of 9/11/2001, that were moved around. And that’s what I wanted to mention to you. We had planned the *Silk Road Project* with Yo-Yo, and that all happened, because that was later in April. And we had, I see, scheduled for that year *Platée*, and that happened also, that was in October. But remember, this happened on September 11, 2001, right? And what we also had planned was for Mark Morris to come out and do a show October 4. Well, that was really close to just after this 9/11 happened.

And remember, Mark Morris and his company lived in New York. None of us can appreciate what it was like for people who lived there. We were here and they were there. Anyway, the brochure says that they’re going to return with two Bay Area premiere repertory pieces, *Dancing Honeymoon* and something called *Sang-Froid*. Well, that isn’t what happened. What happened was that Mark had been preparing a new piece to the music of the Schumann Piano Quintet—the whole piece has three movements and it’s a big piece of music, a great piece of music. He’d been preparing this on a commission from Sadler’s Wells in London. It was meant to have the world premiere at Sadler’s Wells, and they’d commissioned it. I don’t remember even if I had heard of it yet, because it was between them. Eventually it would come to us. But it wasn’t planned to come to us in October of 2001.

But after 9/11 happened Mark decided he had finished this piece, that it was ready and he wanted to premiere it in this country. And the title he gave it was V. Now, I can’t recall exactly his thinking on that, whether there was anything—if you’re old enough you know about the V for victory in the Second World War. There was some of that on the stage. I don’t know whether that title came after 9/11 or whether it was already the title. I’m not sure.

The main point is that he decided he wanted to do it in this country, and he wanted to do it right away, and we were the obvious place. It was October 4, and he just simply changed the program and I don’t think he told anybody—I’m sure he didn’t—at Sadler’s Wells. I don’t think he discussed it with them. He just said to us, “We’re going to do this new piece.” And it turned out to be, I think, one of his really great masterpieces.

Riess: And it had all of that feeling associated with it?

Cole: Well, I don't know. I think maybe it did because of the moment. But the music is powerful music. And I think the dance was a very successful work in every way, and it reflected the power of that music. Anyway, we were very fortunate to get this piece. I don't know if it hurt their relationship with Sadler's Wells. [laughing] I guess not, because subsequent to that I went with them and we did twenty performances of *Hard Nut* at Sadler's Wells.

This piece, I think he knew it was one of his masterpieces. This is a great piece of music. It's big! And we've done it how many times, I don't know, time and again after that. In fact, when we did our hundredth anniversary celebration—[laughing] John Heilbron would have thought, "Well, a little better than thirty-five years"—when we did our hundredth anniversary event, that was the opening piece on the program, *V*, because I wanted something that represented the different things we do: music, dance, the symphony, and the opera. Remember I told you a little bit about that? And that's how we got the Meyer Sound System.

But the opening piece was *V*, because that was a most significant piece.

Riess: You were artful about celebrating something, making every year important, in the "Director's Note" that prefaced the Cal Performances season's brochure.

Cole: I think it was a way to get people to pay attention to what we were doing and do something special for this reason. A lot of it came back to fundraising, of course.

Riess: The *Silk Road Project* seemed very significant in terms of 9/11, of being aware of another world.

Cole: It was kind of prescient, wasn't it? That's Yo-Yo. He's thinking ahead.

Anyway, many other things happened that were difficult. Everything was difficult that year. We brought a company from Europe with Joachim Schloemer, the director-choreographer, and also someone who's better known, René Jacobs, a conductor, from the Tanztheater Basel, and we did a theater piece—my goal was to get René Jacobs here, whatever it took. I just wanted to get René Jacobs here. He came once, and that was the occasion, but it was *really* difficult. Nobody knows how difficult it was.

Riess: You mean to fly at that time?

Cole: Yes, everybody, the flights—a lot of the dancers didn't want to come, they didn't want to fly. The musicians didn't want to—it was like pulling teeth to get them to come from Europe. But this was November, and we actually got them here, they actually performed. And that's the only time René Jacobs has ever been here.

And we had American Ballet Theater on September 19-21—I don't think they came. [laughter] I see it here, but I just can't believe that they actually got here. I know they were here a couple of times—maybe they actually came here, but that would have

been tough. [Cole later sees the following press release.] But yes, it seems from the press release they certainly did come. It was amazing!

UC Berkeley Press Release: The New York-based American Ballet Theater is dedicating its West Coast tour, which starts tonight (Wednesday, Sept. 19) at the University of California, Berkeley, to victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and associated relief efforts. The theater company and Cal Performances will encourage support for relief organizations, distributing envelopes for contributions to the American Red Cross at ballet programs tonight through Friday. The three performances are expected to draw about 10,000 patrons. "Not one of us will be untouched by the events on the East Coast this past week," Robert W. Cole, director of Cal Performances, and Kevin McKenzie, artistic director for the American Ballet Theater, said in a joint statement. "While we will mourn the losses of our fellow Americans, we will also find cause to express gratitude." The dancers' determination to continue their scheduled performances is symbolic of the spirit of New York and hope for the nation, they said in the statement. Tonight's American Ballet Theater performance marks the resumption of regularly scheduled events by Cal Performances, which cancelled a Sept. 16 program by vocalist Tania Libertad due to the national tragedy.

Riess: Maybe going to theater or going to music is just exactly the thing you should do at a moment like this.

Cole: Well, but people were not doing it so much. And of course, the flying part was the hard part, and especially if you had a big company and especially if you're coming from Europe.

One of the other great artists who was a regular for us was Cesária Évora. Do you remember her?

Riess: Oh yes. I do. Barefoot!

Cole: She sang with bare feet, yes, and smoked on the stage, which is against the rules. But she was really great. I used to drive her around and she would sing while I was driving her.

Riess: Oh! That's so great. You would sing with her?

Cole: No, no, it was under her breath. Anyway, so that finishes this off, doesn't it, for the day? I can't do any more.

Interview #7: April 17, 2013

[Tape 10: Side A]

Riess: You were saying something about family, and marriages?

Cole: My life—I was working for all these orchestras around LA in different places, on Monday night, Tuesday night, in fact, every night. And then weekends were concerts, so I was gone a lot then too. During the day I was around, but the boys were at school or something. It's just that I wasn't—I was gone a lot. I was not distant, but I was—at night I would be gone. The best thing in my childhood was my grandmother. And my mother—my mother was always with me, she was there. Sometimes you take what you've got.

Riess: Thanks for talking about that a bit. And now, predictably, I take you back to some of the earlier programming, 1999, the Berliner Ensemble.

Cole: Oh yes, that's an interesting story. We could start with that and then go on to some of the other theatrical things that we did, which were unusual and interesting. Berliner Ensemble, I'd forgotten about that, I didn't see it in the brochure. I know why I didn't see it in the brochure, because it was the weekend of July the fourth. It actually happened around July 4th, which is a terrible time, of course, to present anything.

When this opportunity came to our attention the Berliner Ensemble was the most famous theater, in Germany certainly, and this was East Germany at that time, or had been for quite some time East Germany. Then it was West Germany when they were reunited. It was a legendary company. They had decided, for whatever reason—I've forgotten the reason—to disband. These were going to be the last performances of the Berliner Ensemble anywhere. They were going to do this little tour, and it was arranged that they come to Berkeley. I invited them. I think they were going to LA after that and then that was it.

I'd only heard of them, I'd never seen them before. And the play they were going to do was a famous one in their repertoire—I have to remember the title—*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. It's a tale about the loss of freedom and democracy, et cetera. It's a metaphorical kind of play. Anyway, it was offered to us, and I've forgotten if it was exactly on July 4th, or just that it was that weekend that you would not do *anything* [performances were July 1 and 2, 1999].

Riess: What does that mean, "it was offered to you?"

Cole: I don't even remember my connection. It was someone in Europe that I knew. Or it might have been David Eden. These are the kinds of things that you hear about, and you may even hear about them for years, two or three years, four years, whatever, and then suddenly it can happen. [see later comment about Goethe Institute]

But the first thing I would have said is, "This is terrible! Can't you come some other time?" But that's the only time they could come, because they play every week, companies like that. It's like Russian companies. In Moscow, for example, it's not like they can take a couple of months off, because they're playing every week, every day. This was the same. And they only had this time they could come. I said, "Okay, let's do it." We planned two performances, and I was thinking well, maybe nobody will come and this will be a real problem.

Riess: This was in the Playhouse?

Cole: No, it was in Zellerbach Hall, it was a big production. I don't know—maybe I didn't even have the Playhouse available. But still, it was a big production, a major kind of thing.

People who are in the know kind of know about this play, there seemed to be some knowledge of this play. It was about Hitler, and his rise and so on. So in the beginning of the play—you know, in front of Zellerbach Hall there's this little balcony overlooking lower Sproul Plaza. The artistic director suggested to me, and I thought it was a fabulous idea, as people were gathering, coming into the theater and getting ready before the show, this guy who plays Hitler would come out and make a speech on this balcony.

Riess: Wow.

Cole: It was very dramatic, because people were coming to the theater and out comes this guy looking like Hitler and he starts giving a speech in German, as an introduction to the subject of this play.

Anyway, we did that, and actually it was very successful. I don't recall if we sold out completely, but it was very successful, and we did two performances. It was one of those really risky things, the idea of doing something on July the fourth weekend! It worked! And as I say, the Berliner Ensemble, to people who know theater, is legendary. It goes back, it has this enormous reputation—people came from all over the Bay Area, because this is the only place it was happening, and the only *time* it ever happened, that they'd ever been in the Bay Area as far as I know. It was a really amazing event for people who are interested in theater. Apparently there are quite a few! I'm kind of that way myself, so I understand, if something like that happens, you don't care if it's July the fourth, you go!

Riess: And if you don't fully understand it, the German, you're in the presence of it.

Cole: There were subtitles, so it was quite clear to understand and it was very, very good. As I said before, I think my goal, one of my goals, certainly, was to try and do things that other people are not doing. Don't do what is already being done. What's the point? Well, that was one thing that no one else in the marketplace was doing, international theater. We had a lot of success with things like that, but they had to be very, very special. Things like the Berliner Ensemble, like the Abbey Theatre.

I think it was shortly after that we did a production of the Abbey Theatre's *Medea*, with Fiona Shaw [November 2002]. That was in the Playhouse. We did about ten performances, and it was a brilliant production, and of course, she's a brilliant actress, and that was very successful. After we did *Medea* with Fiona Shaw and the Abbey Theatre, the next year we did the National Theater of Greece doing *Medea*, in the Greek Theatre.

The Greek Theatre thing happened in the summer period [September 2003]. Mark Griffith, who was a very distinguished scholar in Greek studies, Greek language, a professor of Greek at the university—he and I were friends already because he was a big music lover too, and he plays the guitar—he gave a wonderful talk in the Greek Theatre, seated at the bottom of the Greek Theatre with the public around. He gave a pre-performance talk about the history of the play, and the history of the place, because it was a Greek theater and it was the 100th anniversary of the theater!

All this was very rare, because the National Theater of Greece had also never been here before. And within a year we had two *Medeas*.

Riess: Seems like it was the obvious place where this kind of theater would come. You had created a force field, and you had educated an audience.

Cole: It was also—I was working very closely, for example, with the Gate Theatre. That was a production that was brought by my friend David Eden. I was working very closely with David Eden, and nobody else in the Bay Area was working with David Eden, and he's the one who brought the Abbey Theatre, the Gate Theatre, the plays that we did. What else was it? Let's see here, the theater from Dublin, and this Abbey Theatre, that was his as well. Everything except the Berliner Ensemble was from David Eden, so it was these connections. David is a Russian guy who lives in New York who is very interested in international theater himself. That's pretty much what he does. And it doesn't go to many places, because not many people are going to present stuff like this in this country.

Riess: People who subscribe to Cal Performances are predictably interested, educated.

Cole: Yes, there's a certain audience for that, and it's not enormous but it does exist.

Those were interesting things to me. I didn't grow up as a theater person, but as I said before, I'm interested in doing things that other people aren't doing, things that are really unusual, like in this case, international theater. And there are a number of reasons why other—maybe I mentioned before that if you are a LORT theater [League of Resident Theaters] and if you're a producing theater, the union does not allow you to bring foreign artists. That is, there are problems. I don't know all the details of it.

This meant that we could do that and Berkeley Rep cannot. They cannot bring in a foreign company and just put it in the theater for six weeks, which I could do, for six days or whatever. It's the same thing with ACT. I don't know that they had an interest

in doing that, but even if they did, they couldn't. Whereas Lincoln Center Theater—Lincoln Center, let's say the festival can do that, because that's not a LORT theater. They're not under these union regulations.

Riess: This is very interesting.

Cole: Well, it's just the way things are, and it makes sense, in a way, because if you didn't have some unions trying to protect American actors—on Broadway you have to get permission to bring a British actor. There are ways to do it, but it's not that easy.

Anyway that, to me, was an opportunity. No one else is doing this, no one else *can* do this. The fact is, no one else even had an *interest* in doing this, because they don't think it's going to sell tickets. And it turned out they're wrong—if you bring something that's really unusual and internationally famous, people will show up. And we did a fair amount of that.

Riess: How about Peter Brook? Didn't he present some things?

Cole: Peter Brook, yes, while I was there I think they had a number of projects. We may have had one of them actually happen, but I can't recall. It was one of those things that I worked on for years, and sometimes they happen, and sometimes they don't happen.

I think it's relationships. Like everything in life, it's really about relationships. And I had this relationship with David Eden, in the case of these things I'm talking about. We talked earlier about Robert Lepage, and that was because of Menno Plukker, the guy from Montreal that I mentioned. It was because I had a very close relationship with him. He knew that if he called me up and said Robert can come to the West Coast, that I would pay attention. Why should he call anybody else?

Riess: What if it was in a year you couldn't do anything about it, because you would have everything booked?

Cole: We were usually working two years ahead, so we were always in close contact, on an almost daily basis, or a weekly basis. It's something you just keep—it's in your head.

Riess: Telephone time.

Cole: Well, in those days, and now it's mostly e-mail, thank God! I love e-mail!

Riess: When you weren't there, the very few times in your 24/7 day, who picked up the phone for you?

Cole: Well, in the more recent times it would be either Robin, who was my close assistant there and associate, Robin [Pomerance] or Hollis Ashby, for example.

Riess: And they could say yes or no for you?

Cole: They would say yes, yes—well, if it's David Eden, "Yes, that sounds good," or there would be something we'd probably already talked about but, "When is it going to happen?" or, "Is it really going to happen?" et cetera. "How much is it going to cost?" These things, they have long gestation times sometimes.

In the case of the Berliner Ensemble, that came up all of a sudden. We'd been talking about it for a long time, but nothing was happening, and then suddenly they want to come to the US. "We want to do this." I think the Goethe Institute got involved. That's it, yes, it was the Goethe Institute. That's the other connection. I was very, very connected with the Goethe Institute, for a number of reasons. There was one guy there at the time, whose name I do not recall, who was the director of the Goethe Institute. He was the one who actually made that happen, as I remember now, yes. He was my connection. And also he helped me with Sasha Waltz, the German dance company. You have to seek out these people in the French consulate, the Goethe Institute—it's relationships.

Riess: They would in some way be a sponsor?

Cole: Well, they would help you maybe financially, but they'd also help you in other ways.

Riess: How about housing the performers?

Cole: No, it's easier to put them in a hotel, and we do that. But making the arrangements—sometimes the consulate would do the flights. For example, in the case of Berliner Ensemble I'm sure that was part of the deal, because that was a big company and a lot of people. It's not like an American theater company with six or eight people—this was a *huge* company!

Riess: With sets?

Cole: Yes, with sets and the whole deal. It was just a lot of people. You'd be surprised how many people it takes to run a company when it's run by the government. It's a big operation.

Riess: I can't imagine, and I don't think we've really addressed, how complicated the whole job is, putting the people up, getting them here.

Cole: Well, you have a staff. Once you get this thing set then you turn it over to your production staff, and they—in this case Robin did a lot of the arranging for the hotels, but mostly it was the production staff. There are not too many choices here in the way of hotels. We had people in the Durant Hotel almost all the time, just constantly.

Riess: But you made yourself indispensable, probably the same way that comes very easily to you up at the Green Center.

Cole: Well, indispensable to the people like David Eden and Menno, because no one else out here would do this kind of stuff. And it was either they'd come here or they don't

come at all. Either they came to Berkeley and worked with us, or they wouldn't do the Bay Area. They had a connection at UCLA for theater stuff for quite a while.

Riess: Was there a person at UCLA like you?

Cole: Yes, a guy named David Sefton. He's a friend of mine who was there—he's not there anymore. He came from London, actually, and I knew him there slightly, and his main interest was theater. This is different than myself, because that was his primary interest. He did a lot of very off-the-wall theater stuff, that some of it was good, some of it wasn't so good. I was more selective. First of all, he had a theater available to him all the time for theatrical stuff that was six hundred seats, whereas I didn't. That was his main interest and he really focused on that, I think to his detriment because he actually had a wonderful concert hall and he should have used that more productively if possible.

The other thing I've been thinking about—it really has to do with this subject of building relationships, but one other thing I wanted to talk about was when we brought the horse ballet here, in 2002. Because it's not just about a horse ballet, it's about a relationship that I had with one of the faculty members at the Department of Music. Her name is Kate van Orden, and it's very interesting, because she's a very interesting person. She's a musicologist, but she also is a player, which is an interesting combination. I mean she's an active player. She played this weekend in the Philharmonia Baroque concert that you may have heard.

Riess: What does she play?

Cole: She plays bassoon. The unfortunate part—it's fortunate for her, I guess, but it's unfortunate for us, is that she has just been hired away by Harvard, so she's leaving. She's been here for many years, because she was there many of the years that I was there. Kate and I were quite friendly, she was a very curious and interesting person, and interested in many things.

I have to say at that time there was a group of people, women, who were very interesting in the Music Department. One of them was the then-chair of Music, Wendy Allanbrook, one of the most wonderful persons I ever knew on the campus, and also as chair of music. Wendy Allanbrook. She hired, or they hired, during that time period, a couple of younger women, one of them being Kate van Orden and another one being Mary Ann Smart, who's still there. She's a brilliant young woman whose specialty is opera. Also, she did panels for me, different things, when we'd do operas. Another woman, Katherine Bergeron, she also left, first to be dean at Brown and now she is going to be president of Connecticut College.

But Kate and I—we would do different things and talk about different things. But the big thing—I had been invited by the French government to go to Paris. There was a big flurry of interest among people in our business in this guy in Paris who was still functioning—he's a very famous guy who does a horse show, horse ballet show in Paris. His name—I think it's [Bartabas] Zingaro. It has been going on for a long time,

and I was invited by the French government to go to France for a week or ten days, many years ago. One of the things that they wanted me to see was this [Theatre Equestre] Zingaro.

I did go see it. I knew about it. I was interested, because Harvey Lichtenstein, who is my hero, as I told you, had done that at BAM, and while it was a big success it almost put him out of business, it was so expensive. It was well known that this was great, but it was also dangerous.

Riess: I mean come on! You'd have to bring the horses?

Cole: Yes, you have to put the horses on a 747. Harvey did it, and it was successful, but financially disastrous. And wouldn't you know—he did it again! He did it more than once. I couldn't believe that Harvey would do it twice. The second time they did it down in Manhattan someplace. They found a place. That's one of the big problems, finding a place, first of all, where you can have all these horses for a week or two weeks.

Riess: Like the Armory or something.

Cole: Yes, well something outdoors is usually better. A tent. It's outside of Paris, in a tent. It's very nice, but it's not downtown. Anyway, my other friend, Dean Corey, who's so brilliant and such a risk taker, he also did it in Orange County. And each time it was offered to me on these occasions when it would come to this country—"You can do it too." Especially when it came to Orange County, I could have done it. I looked at the numbers and I said this is not going to work. We were always under financial pressure. You lose a few hundred thousand dollars and you're just dead.

Riess: That isn't one that you would have wanted to take to Carol Christ.

Cole: No, it was too big. It was too big, too much. Besides, it seemed to me like it wasn't artistically that important. It wasn't like Berliner Ensemble. It was a show. It could have gone to Las Vegas. It was very nice, and it was very interesting, and I love horses and I know that there's a huge interest in horses—you're always trying to reach out to a new niche audience. There was a horse niche audience. [laughing] I knew that already.

Anyway, Kate was writing a book on the history of this phenomenon in the seventeenth century, when the court had these horse ballets and they wrote music for it and they had costumes and it was all choreographed very carefully, and it was a big deal. It was a regular thing, the Place des Vosges in Paris is where it happened. I actually went there, I think I went with Kate, to look at it. It's a place where there are markets and stores around and a circular place. But it was where they used to do these horse ballets.

Anyway, she was writing a book on the history of this phenomenon in France—the main thing was Paris, that's where it happened, and she told me about it. I told her

about Zingaro—she knew about Zingaro—and I told her that I wouldn't do that, it's too expensive and too risky. But then we thought maybe we could do our own. We could recreate—instead of trying to do a show of today, we could do a show of the seventeenth century. And we could do that with horses that are already here. And we could use the music—she had the music from the Paris Conservatory, or the library in Paris, the music that was written for these horse ballets.

Riess: And that authenticates it.

Cole: That authenticates it, right. It really was the same music, and we had the music. Who knows what the horses did? Nobody knows, so we could just make that up. We also—I met Kate in Paris, and we both were there for different things but we happened to meet up in Paris—we discussed the other issue, which was the costumes. We needed something really great. You can't just have horses—and local riders, who were very good, by the way, there are a lot of great horsewomen around here, horse people, but mostly women—you need beautiful costumes. And it turned out there was a set of beautiful costumes in Brussels that Kate knew about, so we bought those costumes or rented them, I've forgotten which.

So now we had the beautiful costumes, and we had the original music from the Louis XIV court. Then we got in touch with a very talented woman here who is in the horse world, where they do dressage and they take it very seriously. We asked her to put together a show with her people, and we would provide the costumes. And *then*—you see why my staff thought I was crazy! [laughing] We're coming up to a Berkeley Festival, and maybe we had a year to go, and I had to figure out all this other stuff, like where are we going to do a huge horse show around here? It's not so easy.

I asked my production director, and also Laura Abrams, who worked on the festival a lot with me. I said, "We need to find a place where we can do a horse show."

Riess: Who was your production director?

Cole: Tom [Hansen].

They scurried around, looked at all these different places where horses can be or were, or whatever. The place we settled on, which was excellent, was Heather Farms in Walnut Creek. It happens that the place was owned by Bing Crosby. I understand it was his ranch, and he, I think, gave it to the city of Walnut Creek, something like that, willed it to the city of Walnut Creek. So it's out there, it's not too far, and it's quite nice, and we rented it. This was like—"This guy's crazy! A horse ballet—are you kidding?"

Fortunately, Kate's very good friend was the one who did the conducting, and we hired a baroque—a seventeenth century band of twenty musicians, horns and sackbutts and all those things, cornettos, sackbutts, et cetera. And of course the horses rehearsed, and I would go to the rehearsals and Kate would be there. And we got the costumes. So anyway, for the festival we did a horse ballet.

Riess: It must have been the biggest deal of the festival.

Cole: It was the centerpiece of the festival. It made the front page of the arts section of the *New York Times*, definitely—there were wonderful pictures. It was something that attracted people just because it is very visual, those beautiful horses, and so on. I think we played three performances in Walnut Creek for the festival, maybe two, I've forgotten, but it was very well attended. We had between two thousand and twenty-five hundred people for each performance. This is a different audience. This is not just an early music audience. It's a horse audience!

Riess: And you had them seated?

Cole: Oh yes, they were in bleachers. Yes, bleachers which were there. But of course, you have a lot of issues about producing something like that. You have to have—parking, you name it.

Riess: You have to have hay.

Cole: Well, all the issues involved with horses. Someplace to put the horses overnight, because you have rehearsals, and then you have—it's complicated. But my staff, they jumped in. And of course we had twenty other concerts going on that week, at least twenty.

Riess: Yes. And they don't want to be upstaged by these horses.

Cole: Well, they *were* upstaged by these horses. [laughter] So we did it once, and then I think two years later we brought it back, because we had the costumes, we had done it before, it was very popular. We redid it two years later, the whole festival was different but we had this horse ballet.

Anyway, that shows the relationship with Kate. Shortly after that she published her book, which I have a copy of, which is interesting. It talked about how all this was a big deal in the seventeenth century.

Well, that was a big project which was unusual, to say the least. The interesting part about it for me is that I dodged a bullet in not doing Zingaro, and then I figured out a way to do a horse show without spending a million dollars. It was actually fairly inexpensive. The horse people—we didn't pay them, we just paid for the expenses of taking care of the horses and all that sort of stuff.

Riess: It sounds like your policy would be to say yes to the challenge. That would be your operating mode?

Cole: You mean like Zingaro. Yes, but I also could look at the numbers and see that it didn't work. It just didn't work. I'm obsessive about numbers; I really am superobsessive.

I look at the box office numbers every morning. And now I look at them on the Internet, which is so nice. I've told you maybe, when I first came here I asked for a box office report and it took two days to get it. That was the way it was in those days, I'm not saying it was unusual. That's the way it was in those days, and that would drive me crazy. But now, of course, it comes on your computer every morning at six o'clock.

Riess: How does it actually affect what you do that day?

Cole: Well, it doesn't. I just need to know. I'm obsessive about knowing how the numbers are going. It always surprises me when I'd call up—I used to, when I'd call up my colleagues—I'd ask, "So, how's it selling?" "Oh, I don't know. I haven't looked at it." "You haven't looked at it—are you *kidding*?" I look every ten minutes!

Riess: It isn't like when the stock market is going up you look all the time. When it's going down, you don't look.

Cole: Well, no. I look anyway. Today it's going down I noticed. I always paid attention to the numbers. I find it interesting, actually.

Anyway, so that was one big project. It was great also that it was an academic thing that became a production thing. It was very interesting, I think, in that respect. There aren't too many things you can do like that. We had been talking about the events of 2001, which were so traumatic for everyone, especially people in New York, and of course for a lot of people I work with, like Mark Morris Company, et cetera, who were in New York when it happened. Of course it affected the economy, so it affected our business, very negatively. But somehow we managed to struggle through, and we did the horse ballet in the festival of 2002. Of course, it was low budget, but as I said, we saved money by doing it ourselves.

Riess: I'm interested in how involved the faculty was with that programming.

Cole: Well, various times and in various ways, to some extent. We reached out. You found that very interesting piece on the Consortium for the Arts. It was because of Carol Christ that that existed. And that made it easier to do these things that you're referring to where you reach out to other members of the faculty, arts departments, and non-arts departments. It was during this time that this support came, and so yes, we had opportunities that we wouldn't maybe have had. With the Consortium for the Arts we actually met with other colleagues on a regular basis. I don't mean every week, but we had meetings, and we made plans. It was really great to have that kind of leadership from the vice chancellor's office, where she was—not in charge of this, but she certainly was in support of this.

Riess: For the Silk Road Project you would reach out to perhaps the Center for Middle Eastern Studies?

Cole: Yes, right.

Riess: And in what way would they be involved?

Cole: Well, there'd be panel discussions, and we would bring people. Sometimes it would be faculty from here along with some of the musicians. I remember we had several of these. But I remember one where the musicians—these are people from different Middle Eastern countries, and they would have their instruments that they would demonstrate. People would talk about them who were on the musicology, historical side, and they would talk about them from the practical side. There was a lot of that, and it was very interesting, because these are things that people have never seen, pretty much, here. And that was really Yo-Yo's idea from the beginning.

Riess: Also, 2000-2001—you had a lot of world music stuff here. Paco de Lucía.

Cole: Yes, he was wonderful.

We were the largest presenter, I think—I'm sure certainly in the Bay Area and probably in the West, of what's generally referred to as "world music." It's a very bad name, but no one's come up with a better one at the moment, at least that I know of. And so we called it world music. Also there was international theater. You get the idea. In other words, music that does not come from the Western European tradition is the long way to define it. We were the largest presenter of music of that kind. Cesária Évora, and you mentioned Paco.

Riess: And Oumou Sangaré.

Cole: Oumou Sangaré and Youssou N'Dour from Africa. We had all those people. And then later on Mariza, who is a fado singer who is now so famous. And who's the guy, the great composer from Argentina? Astor Piazzolla. Well, but first of all, Gilberto Gil. We had him a couple of times. Anyway, we were known for that because we did so much of it. And when you look at our budget, this was the only area in which we actually showed a net profit. [laughter] And I mean small, I'm not talking about making money here, because if you actually factored in all of your other costs, you're not making a profit. But as far as the expenses of the artist versus the ticket sales, we had a profit. We had a net income, let's put it that way. Net income.

Riess: Why is that?

Cole: There are a lot of different reasons. If you know what you're doing, you tend to bring people who are going to fill the house. Youssou N'Dour filled the house.

[Tape 10: Side B]

Cole: With the world music, what happened over the years was because we were so successful with these artists we started noticing that we were competing with other organizations, for example SF Jazz, San Francisco Jazz Festival. They started doing that in the Paramount Theater. A San Francisco Jazz Festival doing world music in the Paramount Theater! [laughter] And in concert? Basically these were artists we

presented before. Obviously, people could say wow, I wish I could fill the house and not have a lot of production expenses.

It started to happen that other people were trying to play the same game. Not many. Anyway, you follow the path, but then. “Oh, let’s just do more of that. Why do something else when obviously we’re making more money on this?” Well, of course, that’s the danger, because the other reality of it is that the people who come to these world music events, they are niche audiences.

Persian music, for example—they are known generically as the Masters of Persian Music, and they were brought to us through a relationship with Robert Browning, a very famous guy in New York, famous to people like me. He is a wonderful guy who knows all about these kind of things, who has spent his life learning, studying, and getting to know people, especially in places like Persia, Iran, and different places in the Middle East. He brought to me this Masters of Persian Music and they sold out completely! I’d never heard of them, but that’s the way it is, you can’t know everything, you have to rely on other people’s advice. And the audience, everyone out there seemed to be Persian or Iranian. It was just me and Budd Cheit and them!

I was discussing this up at the Green Center just the other day, about these niche markets, because we have a Latvian singer who’s coming. She’s a great opera singer, number one, worldwide known, but she happens to be from Latvia. Elina Garanča. And my marketing staff was saying, “Well, we’re trying to go after the Latvian audience.” I said, “Well, the Latvian audience is probably kind of small, so maybe you’d better concentrate on the opera audience.”

But the other thing I was saying is how if you have a great, famous Persian, Iranian musician, they’re all going to come out. Or you might have a great, famous Indian musician, let’s say, but it depends, there are exceptions, and I’ve had the experience of sometimes someone will say, “Oh no, but he’s from North India. We don’t do that.” You have to know very specifically who is your audience here in the Bay Area. Where are these people from? It is somewhat like in China, because there are the two languages, Mandarin and Cantonese.

It can get down to very specific things—will they actually come out? Look at this whole thing about the Bolshoi Ballet. The Russians take all this stuff very seriously, and the Russians who live here, who have come from Russia, still take it very seriously, much more seriously than the average native born American. They show up. I always say you can count on the Russians.

The business that I’m in, of presenting artists, people think well, if we can do this artist and sell all the tickets, and make a thousand dollars net income, well let’s just do that. I’m sorry, but if we just do that you’re out of business. You need this underpinning of contributions, you still have to raise money. And the trouble is that the people who come to these niche things, they’re not your donors. They come to *that* thing and they’ll come next year if you bring them back, but they don’t

necessarily come to everything else. And they don't necessarily write checks. So therefore, it's a losing proposition.

You're bringing in a new audience, and that's great, and some of them may come to other things, but not many of them, percentagewise. And they're not your donors. Your core donors are the people who funded your number one, Cecilia Bartoli, those are your core donors. I'm not saying they don't do other things. I'm just saying that's the reason they love me. [laughing]

We had a relationship with the Takács Quartet. They played for us *only* for at least ten or twelve years. And people loved them. They came not only once, they came twice a year, and sold out. But there were also donors—for the Takács Quartet, I would say probably 80 percent are donors. Whereas if you look at the donors in the Persian music audience, maybe 2 percent.

What they don't fully understand at the Green Center is that you have to build the base of your organization from the bottom up, not from the top down. In other words, if you can get somebody to give you a million dollars, let's say to advance the organization, and just say the hell with everybody else, that's not going to work. As soon as the million dollars is gone, then you have nothing. What you need is a thousand people who will give you a contribution every year. And every year some of them get bigger, it gets larger and larger. And then you have a few at the top who give more.

If you don't concentrate on building this base, and building it in a sustaining way, you're out of business. People think, oh, let's do Broadway shows. With Broadway shows you don't make any money, number one, because the producers take all the money. And number two, they're not donors. They buy tickets and then they go away. [laughing]

To me the number one thing about this business, and the thing that's made it the most interesting and satisfying, was relationships. And it's relationships with the people who brought artists to you, like managers, and worldwide. Relationships with artists, of course, but you need to know the managers who are going to bring these people. Because you can't know all these people and know their schedules, as I said. And then relationships on the campus with people who can help you, like Kate van Orden, and Richard Taruskin, and Joe Kerman.

But also relationships with your patrons, relationships that start with somebody buying a ticket and showing up, and then making a contribution, and then maybe bringing their friends and they're making a contribution. Buying a ticket does *not* make something work. It just doesn't, in our business. And as soon as you give that up and just do Broadway, you're selling tickets and that's it, because you can't raise money from those people. They're not donors. They're ticket buyers.

Riess: Is that how your board worked, developing more relationships? Of course, the board *was* the donors.

Cole: They were the donors a long time, and long standing.

It's really the institution showing, "Look what we do! Isn't this interesting?" And, "We have to go, because Robert Lepage is there, Mark Morris is there. Cecilia's there." And it's, "When we come there we feel like—we see all of our friends, like-minded people." That's another thing, bringing together like-minded people.

I remember when I was in high school I was the only person—well, there were two of us, me and a friend, who were really just completely music freaks! That's it. Just two people. When I got in college there were more. And then when you get out into real life and you're conducting a symphony orchestra you know a lot of them! People who are interested in the arts find there's not a like-minded person in every corner, but if you bring them to Zellerbach Hall and they're all together it's fun. You have a feeling of compatibility and shared interest, which I guess is the same way you feel when you go to a baseball stadium.

Riess: I think it's great that you're talking about this. At a low point in any concert you turn to the back of the program and see who all of the like-minded people are.

Cole: Well, yes!

Riess: And how does it happen!

Cole: You have a development director, a development team actually. I had five or six people at the end, fundraisers, with different functions. Some were just thanking people with letters and stuff like that, the basics. I told you the best fundraiser I ever had was Tim Whalen, and he was there for ten years with me, and those were the best years in that respect. After he left I hired Lauren [Brown] Adams, who was a consultant only—she didn't want a permanent job and she still doesn't. But she's another one of those really great fundraisers that I knew and she was a consultant with me for quite a few years. I think this is the centerpiece of how to do this and why it's not being done, because people don't think this way. They only think of numbers in a very superficial way. And this business doesn't work that way.

Interview #8: May 1, 2013

[Tape 11: Side A]

Riess: Apropos the unfortunate recorder malfunction in the last interview, I want to ask you if anything comes to mind when you think of disasters in the Cal Performances twenty years that we're talking about? And how did you deal with them?

Cole: Well, it's not the disasters that I remember so much as the errors I made. I mentioned one of them, when I turned down the Bolshoi Ballet the first time they offered to do a little American tour and it was during the time I was there. I already mentioned that, I think.

Riess: I think that that was not in the interview, because of the tape-recorder problem.

Cole: Well, this was one time when I did not follow my instincts and it was a huge mistake. The Bolshoi Ballet and Orchestra was planning an American tour and it had been offered to us. This must have been late 80's or early 90's. I thought it was a great opportunity, but it was expensive, that is, in comparison to what we had done before. So I discussed it with my staff and I suspect with the Advisory Committee. Everyone felt it was too much risk and I reluctantly let it go. They went to perhaps four venues in the US but not Berkeley, where they had never been. As it turned out, everyone sold out completely, and after we had passed on the show a major national sponsor came in to support the tour. So not only was it a huge artistic and box office success, everyone involved made money.

This was at a time when the Bolshoi was still somewhat of an exotic event. You know, art mixed with post cold war politics! If there had been just one donor that had made even a modest gift I would have taken the plunge, and it would have great for the organization in many ways. But we had not yet created a fundraising model that was functioning. I remember that this timidity on my part was central to the discussion when we convened a board retreat a few years later to plan for the future. Rather like "remember the Maine," it was "remember the Bolshoi."

Everyone agreed at that time that we needed to be ready for such opportunities in the future. And thus when we planned the Centennial Campaign it included the "creative venture fund." The Bolshoi came back at least twice after that, including in my last season, but it was never again perceived to be quite as special as it was when I turned it down. And, you know perception means a lot in any business but especially in the arts. Of course the recent problems at the Bolshoi have put them on the front page again but not in a very positive way. So that is one of my errors that was a learning experience for all and I will just try and forget the others!

Riess: No other near-disasters? Maybe with curtains or sets?

Cole: I can't recall any problems like that. We had a very smoothly running operation. There were things—I can't remember anything like that that happened. And if I don't remember it it couldn't have been too bad!

Riess: No traumas.

Cole: There are traumas all the time, but they're sort of normal to the business. Someone cancels, or—but you know how to deal with that, it's part of your experience. That, I think, is the thing that the people who are not in the business, and then get into it somehow, by accident or whatever, they don't realize that that's just part of it.

Singers—I was talking to a friend of mine who's in the management business the other day—singers change their mind all the time. If you're running an opera company or presenting singers in a concert series, that's just the way it is. Singers particularly, because their instrument is their body, it's a difficult situation.

Riess: Okay. Now I know we want to be on course chronologically. Let's say 2002. The *Silk Road Project* was that year. And *Peony Pavilion*.

Cole: Yes, and I was looking back on something here and I realized—you had asked about the *Silk Road Project*, and I had forgotten that the first time they came they came for two weeks, which is really amazing. It wasn't just for a couple of performances. They were here two weeks, and there was all the stuff in it having to do with the students and the faculty and all that. It was really great, and I had forgotten the details of that until I was reading about it someplace.

But the *Peony Pavilion*—well, that was with Peter Sellars, of course. We didn't talk about that?

Riess: No.

Cole: Well, it was an interesting time. *Peony Pavilion* is a well-known story in Chinese culture. There had been this very highly noted production in New York, which I'm sure you heard about, which was I think a two-day thing. It was a marathon *Peony Pavilion*, and it went on for hours and hours and hours and hours. It was at the Lincoln Center Festival, I think [1999].

Riess: But then there was the business about Shanghai not allowing the company to come to New York with that production.

Cole: Oh, there was that problem too, yes. All those issues were in the news, is what I'm getting at, the long production, the fact that there was a political problem.

But so Peter decided he wanted to do a production like this—on this subject I should say. And he was commissioned by a theater in Vienna, and we were part of that as well, and maybe others, I've forgotten who else. Anyway, I went to Vienna to see it,

and I saw, of course, Peter. We had already agreed to do it, but I just wanted to see it before it actually came here. I saw it in its premiere, and it was interesting and so on.

It was very much an au courant subject. Everybody was talking about the *Peony Pavilion*, the whole theatrical world. And so it came here and it had its American premiere in Berkeley, and then it went other places, which I've forgotten now, not very many other places. But because it was the American premiere we got a big piece in the *New York Times* about it, a giant picture and an interview with Peter and some things about myself, and so on. The production itself was not a giant success, but I think it was something interesting, and certainly because of the time, it was our contribution to the *Peony Pavilion* craze.

"One of the most compelling arts stories at the end of the 20th century was the escape of "The Peony Pavilion" from the iron grip of China's cultural authorities. The great 55-scene Kunju opera, often called China's "Romeo and Juliet," found a new, glorious life in the West in two competing versions, radically different--but both profoundly important. The 400-year-old opera got a controversial updating by Peter Sellars for the Vienna Festival, and a rare rendering in its complete 18-hour form (with subtle but telling modernizations) for the Lincoln Center Festival last summer. Together, these versions have so significantly enriched the notions of what world culture can be, and what opera can be, that neither genre is likely to ever be the same again." Mark Swed, *LA Times*, January 17, 2000.

Riess: How do you measure whether it was a giant success or not?

Cole: Well, theatrically it had its limitations. And the audience, I think, was enthusiastic but not wildly enthusiastic. [laughing] You do these things, and there are giant successes, and there are successes, and there are events that are worth doing for different reasons.

Riess: Things that are edifying.

Cole: Yes, it's interesting because you learn a lot of things. Also it's a matter of—Peter was able to get things like this produced, which were very, very difficult to do, because he had good connections with people in Europe who would actually spend the money to produce these things, which we could never do here. So there's that as well. You get things on the stage that just would be impossible otherwise.

Riess: You mentioned that you got a great review in the *New York Times*. You know that I've been wanting to have you talk about reviews and reviewers. I wonder if we can do that? And asking you as an audience member, do reviews affect *your* experience of a performance? Do you read reviews?

Cole: Well, yes, I read them.

Riess: I mean if you're going out for your own entertainment, like you're going to theater in San Francisco?

Cole: I read them less in the local paper than I do in the *New York Times*, for example. And that's because there's not much written in the local paper.

There aren't that many critics writing. And I'm more interested in certain writers. Like I very much follow [Anthony] Tommasini in the *New York Times*, and I very much followed some of his predecessors. I also follow Alastair Macaulay in the *New York Times* and Alex Ross in the *New Yorker* magazine. Those are some of the more interesting writers today, I think, on the subject of the performing arts.

Riess: Is that because they help you think about things?

Cole: Yes. A lot of people get annoyed with Alastair Macauley, because he's kind of harsh sometimes, people think. Of course it's easy for me to say that, because he's always been very complimentary to me. [laughing] And even though I'm just a ballet conductor, the lowliest of all conductors, a ballet conductor, he actually mentions my name and remarks on what he thinks about the score, which is unusual for a ballet critic. But anyway, he is interesting because he does know a lot about the history of ballet. If he writes about something he's not just—I don't really care what he thinks about it, or what *any* critic thinks about something, is it good, bad, or otherwise. What *I* care about is what they can tell me about the history of this piece, the history of this production, the other things like that. That's what's really interesting about reading a critic in the newspaper. Whether he likes it or not is irrelevant to me.

Riess: But that's you.

Cole: The general public, unfortunately, they take it more seriously. [laughing]

Riess: Thumbs up, thumbs down.

Cole: That's just the way it is. But a really good critic doesn't do that. I think you can say that of Tommasini. He seldom, with any particular passion, puts in his own view of whether it's good or bad. He tells you about it and he tells you what happened, and the history of the particular event. Alastair does that also, very well. And that's what people should know. But he'll also say well, he didn't like this piece. And he's done that, I know, a lot, especially with New York City Ballet. I know that Peter Martins finds that very annoying, and I can understand.

Riess: But your local critics—you open the *Chronicle* every day to see whether this year's Alvin Ailey pleased people?

Cole: Right, right. Yes, well—I did, yes, but it really—I was there. So if it was a huge success I didn't need to read that. And if it wasn't, I didn't want to read about it.

Riess: But it counted for Cal Performances.

Cole: Yes, it did. But it wasn't the most important thing, because if something is really good, even if the critic is lukewarm about it, it's going to be a success.

That's not so true sometimes. For example, I told you when we had Matthew Bourne's *Nutcracker*, it wasn't an upbeat *Nutcracker*. And the person who happened to be sent to review it disliked it and didn't find it interesting. I found it interesting. But fine, that hurt us, because we did have seven performances, or six performances, something like that. But generally speaking that was not a huge issue.

Riess: The critics, like [Robert] Commanday—I wondered if you had a relationship with any of them. Did you nurture them in any way?

Cole: Yes, I knew them—and I know Bob very well, for a long time, and he's a good friend. And of course, now he's not a critic. I think you can say that you can be a good friend—I've always—there's not a rule, but it's a good idea not to be too chummy with critics—just be friendly, collegial, and that's it. Don't talk about the business with them. Don't discuss the work. Just hi, how are you. How have you been? How's your wife? [laughing]

Riess: Okay. And just make sure they've got a decent seat.

Cole: Oh, yes, all that. We always take care of that.

Riess: Do they come backstage?

Cole: No, no. They go away. [laughter]

Riess: And Joshua Kosman?

Cole: Joshua came on, yes, while I was still there. And he was, I think, Bob Commanday's choice—I'm sure he recommended Josh, and Josh is a very intelligent guy, so we've been very friendly too. But as I say, it's not something that you become—have a really close relationship with, a personal relationship with a critic. I don't think it's a good idea.

Riess: Marilyn Tucker was the other critic at the *Chronicle*.

Cole: I knew Marilyn quite well. She was always very nice and I was sorry to see when she stopped reviewing. But you know who's a very good critic also is Allan Ulrich. Allan really knows a lot about dance and writes very intelligently about it. And there again, one thing I like about his writing is he tells you about the work, which is interesting. Whether he likes it or not is something else, but he tells you things that maybe you didn't know, or the general public doesn't know, and that's useful.

Riess: Where else would you be reviewed? The *New York Times* and the *Chronicle*. But do trade publications review?

Cole: Occasionally, but it's not relevant really. The *New Yorker* magazine is a pinnacle. At least it has been over the years.

Riess: Are there any trade publications where you would get information that would be useful for you? You might read *Opera News*.

Cole: Well, I do read *Opera News* and I have for many years. We would get a notice in there occasionally. When we did *Platée*, for example, in its premiere, we had a review, I believe, in that publication. And the Association of Performing Arts Presenters has a little publication, but that is not really relevant to what we do.

Riess: I was wondering about them, APAP, they have all kinds of activities, workshops on the business of presenting. Did you participate in any of that sort of activity?

Cole: I really wasn't—I went to the meetings and I was there, but I can't say that I participated a lot. I think one reason was because the executive director of APAP, for most of the years that I was at Berkeley, was my immediate predecessor in Berkeley.

Riess: That's right. Susie Farr.

Cole: That's right. Well, I did make a trip to Washington to see her when I first got the job, I think in the first year or the second year maybe, I made a special trip when I was back in New York and went to Washington to see her in her office. We never were able, I think, to get really on the friendly terms that I would have liked, it just didn't work out, so whatever.

Riess: Going to Washington, going to New York, going to Vienna for the *Peony Pavilion*, lots of traveling.

Cole: Yes. But of course when I was there I was doing other stuff too. I'd never go for just one reason. There are always multiple people you want to see, need to see. I was always working on trying to get the Vienna Philharmonic, for example, to come to Berkeley. And so any time I got near there I was working on that. And I was always trying to hear singers that I hadn't heard yet, that I'd heard about. That was a problem then, and it's equally a problem now, that people less and less want to come to this country because of various reasons. Why should they come here when they can just play in Europe, perform in Europe?

Riess: I think the Vienna Philharmonic is coming next year.

Cole: Yes, yes, that's true, yes.

Riess: And how is it going to sound in Zellerbach?

Cole: Well, I heard them the last time that they were here, when they first came, which I had worked on for so many years and then they finally came the year after I retired! And I told you that the president of the orchestra read this little preface to the concert, it was before the pre-concert talk, and mentioned the fact that I had been to see him so many years ago, and that only now is he getting there, kind of apologizing or explaining how long this has been in the works. [laughing]

Riess: I ask about how it's going to sound, because I was reading an article that listed the nine great concert houses of the world, or the eight or the ten great. The article was also about the new Mariinsky.

Cole: Yes, it has very good acoustics. I've been there.

Riess: The new one I guess is what they were discussing.

Cole: Well, the old one has fine acoustics. I don't know why he wants a new one, because they have a fine theater where it is. It's an old theater. I suppose there are a lot of mechanical things in the old theater that are probably way out of date.

I read about the new theater. There aren't many successful new theaters, unfortunately, acoustically. In the world, the best theaters are the old ones! One of the best theaters, acoustically, concert halls, is the Green Music Center up in Sonoma now, because it was built like an old theater, all wood. The whole building is just wood, wooden. [telephone interruption]

Riess: I want to get back to what we were talking about when the recording failed last time. You were talking about relationships, and you made it really clear that that's the business that you were in.

Cole: Yes, I think that is important. And I think in every way that that is important. And we can talk about my relationships with donors, let's say, or patrons, whether they're donors or not, patrons. But also the staff. I notice now that when I go back to Zellerbach, many of the volunteer ushers are so friendly to me. I think I told you. People who—I'd recognize their faces but I didn't really know them. I think, now that I remember, I always acknowledged them, and I think it's a matter of showing people respect at whatever level, whether they're one of your biggest donors or one of your volunteer ushers.

It has been very gratifying to go back and they remember me so well. And there are so many that I remember only some of them, but it's just really nice, because obviously, I must have paid attention to them when I was there, even though I was just walking by. And I think that's really important.

But to get to the relationships—the campaign that we did was really important. But I wanted to talk about relationships with patrons and donors in general. One example of that which I have mentioned before was that I always tried to pay attention to people who showed special interest in what we were doing. That is, did they buy a whole lot of tickets to a whole lot of different things, especially the most interesting things?

One of them was Vladimir Kresin, who for some time now has been my Russian coach whenever I have a minute to work on that. But this has to do with Pina Bausch, when she came for the premiere of the piece—and she came several times actually. I had been to Wuppertal, and Vladimir Kresin, who's a scientist, a physicist at Berkeley, the university, had also been in Wuppertal. He had been there for a physics

conference, and while he was there he went to the opera house and saw Pina Bausch. So when he came back—he was a patron, I didn't know him at all, but he and his wife came often, very often, to the things that we did—when he came back he wrote me a little note saying, "I saw this wonderful company, Pina Bausch, in Wuppertal. Is there any chance you could bring them here?"

I got the little note and I wrote him back or called him, I've forgotten which, and asked him to lunch. I asked him to have lunch because he seemed like a really interesting guy, so interested in this—and then I checked to see what they came to. They came to *everything*. All these great things, they came. And we had lunch and I told him I had Pina Bausch coming, signed up for the next year. And so that was something, because I'd been at Wuppertal also to meet with Pina and talk about what she might do.

The thing is, to pay attention to people I think is really important. Another example of that—there are so many. When I first met Scott Mercer and his wife Kathryn, and this was fairly—well, it was 2002, 2003, 2004, something in there. Always, whenever I would receive a contribution from someone new to us, that we didn't know—well, if it was a \$5,000 contribution from somebody I'd never met and never heard of, this was always brought to my attention. It would come on the radar. So we received a contribution from someone named Scott Mercer, and it was \$5,000, and I looked up the ticket history and they had been buying tickets to the ballet, particularly. And it turned out that they had had their first date, so to speak, at the Kirov Ballet, I guess in 2002 [November 2002]. Kathryn Mercer was a former dancer, and she's a physician at Stanford Hospital.

[Tape 11: Side B]

Cole: The point is that I got this information about them because of this very generous contribution from people I did not know. I can see that they're coming to the ballet a lot and a few other things. And, they live in Atherton, which is a long ways away to come to performances, and very big traffic problems. Besides, his name is Mercer, and my mother's family name is Mercer! So I got in touch with him, I wrote him or called, whatever. I think I wrote him a note and thanked him for their gift—of course, that's the first thing—and we got to know each other. I would seek them out when they came, and I got to know them a little bit better. Very nice people, very smart, intelligent.

I really saw him as a potential board member, a valuable potential board member, for lots of reasons. One, he's a very smart businessman and knows how to run things, how things run, let's put it that way. And he also really understood the whole idea of nonprofits. I asked him to have lunch, but what I wanted to discuss was board membership. He agreed to meet me in San Francisco. Even before I had the meeting with him he sent a check for \$50,000, an unsolicited gift, which is a very significant amount of money to just have show up. I thanked him profusely when I saw him. He said, "Well, I know how this business works, and you have to have this kind of support." Anyway, there is that kind of paying attention to people.

And of course, whether it's \$1,000 or \$50,000, it's worth paying attention. But you don't just pay attention because people give you lots of money, because in the case of Vladimir, they were not necessarily donors, but they came to a lot of things. He and his wife were very, very—well, they had both grown up in the Soviet Union, so they'd seen all these things when they were kids, all these great orchestras, Russian orchestras, and ballets and operas and you name it—theatrical things, which were happening in Moscow when they were young students.

And then we developed this campaign.

Riess: Just a minute, did Scott Mercer join the board?

Cole: Mercer joined the board, and he has been one of the most wonderful people to have. And when he was working in Los Angeles, which he was a lot during the time that I was there, he would call in when he couldn't get there, and sometimes he would fly up and he would get to board meetings. It was just amazing what he would do given his work schedule, because he was working, running a company in LA for a good part of the time.

Riess: I know you want to cover everyone. Are there other stories of cultivating a particular board member?

Cole: Well, one of my dearest friends in that respect is Louise Gund, who is a wonderful woman. She's generous but anonymously so, which I respect. The wonderful thing about Louise, and the thing that attracts me to people like that, like Vladimir, is that they, people like that, are as passionate about what we do as I am!

I think I said before that it's a whole life of trying to find other people like me, because of my childhood experiences where I always felt so alone, and even in high school I felt that way. I wasn't having a bad time, because I was playing in bands, and that's where I found friends—I was a working musician when I was fifteen or so. But outside of that there weren't many other people around who were—the main thing on my mind was Wagner, Bach, and Duke Ellington! [laughing] In my business then I had the opportunity to seek out people like this. It was my job.

I can't think of another job where that would be your job, to seek out people, like-minded people necessarily. Most businesses have to do with seeking out people so that you could make money. It's not whether they are in your world. You don't care. If you can sell them a gizmo, that's fine. But in this business, what you want to find is people who are like-minded and are interested in the same things you're interested in.

Now, of course that means you have to be smart enough to realize that your interests may be primarily this or primarily that, but really, to be successful, you need to have a very broad interest. You need to be able to really see how, let's say fado singing, from Portugal, is interesting if you just get into it. But then you need to find the greatest fado singer, so that the person who is an expert in that subject, which you're not, will find this to be really, "Wow! How did that happen?"

This thing of having a broad palate was really, I think, the greatest thing about being a presenter rather than a producer of this or a producer of that, because then you're stuck in one thing as I said before about running an opera company, which I've always thought I'd love to do. But really, I'm not so sure given the fact that—well, there are a lot of different things. There's repertoire and so on, so forth, and what's realistic, what you can do, where as a presenter you could do *anything*, big, small, otherwise, and in between.

Anyway, Louise was very helpful. She became a huge ballet lover from the ballet that we brought, because she'd really never seen, I don't think, things like that, the big companies, particularly the Russian companies. She loved that, I think because a lot of it was the musical part as much as the dance, the spectacle and so on. But then she became a huge opera fan. And actually, she and I went to the opera together a number of times, in San Francisco and at the Metropolitan Opera. She remains a huge opera fan, which is, I think, great. I feel that is a big part of her life, which didn't particularly exist before. She just got into it now.

Riess: I guess people who know you see that you are someone with the same passion.

Cole: Yes. I suppose some of them, they probably have similar backgrounds, but because I'm a professional musician I was always in this place. I feel so lucky because of that, because at fifteen or sixteen I was a professional musician, and while I wasn't doing necessarily what I would want to do, I was doing something. Whereas a lot of people go through a lot of life and then only later on they realize what they really love is music. I know a number of people like that, who retired to be musicians, from whatever else.

Riess: To do music, to make music.

Cole: Yes, because they played a little bit when they were younger, and then they had a job for thirty or forty years, and then they've retired and now they're—what they really want to do is play music or do both, play and—I know a doctor, and that's all he does, he's a jazz musician, a pianist. He was a surgeon for many, many years, and now all he wants to do is play gigs. He's a student of my wife's, of Susan's, by the way.

Riess: People enjoy music in so many ways.

Cole: Yes. We all enjoy it I think in different ways, because everyone perceives everything in a slightly different way, which we don't really understand completely.

In New York, I was at three concerts that my stepson Julian Wachner conducted of Stravinsky's late works. And when I was there a friend of mine, the composer Richard Wilson, who I knew back at Vassar College when I was living in New York, he was telling me that Stravinsky, who I consider the greatest composer of his time, is said not to have had perfect pitch. I said, "Well, that's interesting, because that's

always a musician's idea, the greatest musicians must have perfect pitch." He said not necessarily.

Stravinsky and Schoenberg—and they were both living in LA when I was a student there, can you imagine that? Stravinsky and Schoenberg in one town? Richard said, and he seems to know these things because he studies this stuff, that Stravinsky and Schoenberg, who were both twelve-tone composers, neither one had perfect pitch. Well, this was significant news to me. I won't go into it now but there are some stories which indicate that Schoenberg didn't have perfect pitch, because he was conducting once and he was not hearing things at all which you'd think he certainly would hear if he had perfect pitch. Both Stravinsky and Schoenberg wrote the most difficult music, and occasionally they conducted their own music.

Anyway, that's all irrelevant, but what I'm saying is that everybody perceives things differently, and we don't know what that is. You just don't know. You only know how *you* perceive it. You don't know how other people perceive it. That's because we all perceive it differently. When it brings you joy and you're willing to spend a good part of your life, like some of the people I know who go to the opera rehearsals and they go to the performances—all four of them! Those people are really having a great time, and their life is meaningful, even if they don't have much else that they have to do or want to do. That's what they want to do, is hear music.

But I'm trying now to get to talking about the capital campaign. This whole thing of fundraising was not a big thing when I came, at all, as I told you early on. But of course it became a necessity, and something, as we've been talking, that I did not find onerous necessarily, onerous only that it took so much time, there was so much time devoted to it.

A campaign, first you do a planning stage. And what we did, and what is normally done, is you hire a consultant to do the planning stage, and then we hired someone very skilled who goes out to your constituency and asks them, "What do you think about Cal Performances doing a campaign? Would you participate in that kind of thing?" They're not asking them for anything. They're just asking them what they think.

And so you get about fifty responses from key people, let's say. That gives you an idea of what your constituency is, what your potential is. Then internally, working with your board, you form a committee, by this time, of people who are willing to suffer through this. [laughing]

Riess: Some people on your board could beg off the capital campaign?

Cole: Well, they didn't have to be on the committee, and you know you wanted people who were willing and that you know you could enjoy working with. And actually, I always looked at it—you try and make it enjoyable.

Then you start the campaign, after you had this information, you set a goal—we set our goal at \$16 million. But it's not public. You don't publicize it in any way. Then you start going to see individual people, first of all your highest potential people, and asking them for what you call a lead gift. And the first person we went to was Louise Gund. And I say we—it was Tim Whalen, my very skilled fundraiser at the time, who really went through this whole thing with me. Anyway, we took Louise to lunch and she agreed to make a generous contribution to the campaign, a significant number.

So there we had a commitment for a significant gift right from the first, from the beginning. And then I went to see Barney Osher, personally, and he was also very generous. In other words, that's how you start out, with four or five, six people, and maybe the Hewlett Foundation and people like that.

[Press release March 26, 2008: CAL PERFORMANCES RECEIVES \$800,000 KRESGE FOUNDATION GRANT, THE LARGEST CAPITAL CHALLENGE GRANT AWARDED CAL THE UC BERKELEY CAMPUS
PERFORMANCES' CENTENNIAL CAMPAIGN FUNDRAISING GOAL OF \$15 MILLION IS SURPASSED A CELEBRATION LUNCHEON AND PERFORMANCE OF NATALIA MAKAROVA'S SWAN LAKE TO BE HELD SUNDAY, MARCH 30 BERKELEY.]

"Cal Performances Director Robert Cole announces today that the organization has achieved its \$15 million Centennial Campaign fundraising goal and, consequently, has received an \$800,000 challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation. 'Actually, The Kresge grant was so effective in its encouragement of our fundraising activities,' says Cole, 'that we surpassed our goal by one million dollars.' This is the single largest challenge grant The Kresge Foundation has ever made to a department on the UC Berkeley campus. The grant required that Cal Performances raise \$14.2 million in private funds before receiving The Kresge Foundation funds. Cal Performances raised a total of \$15.9 million before the closing date of February 2008."

"Cal Performances' Centennial Campaign, publicly announced at the Centennial Celebration Gala on May 12, 2006, was designed to support three initiatives: to invest in new artistic initiatives; to increase the endowment; and to expand production capacity and audience amenities in Zellerbach Hall through capital improvements. Zellerbach Hall projects that have been initiated are upgrading lighting and acoustic systems, and renovation of the mezzanine café and restrooms (to be completed in August 2008); and the replacement of seating in the performance hall (completed during the summer of 2005)."

"The announcement of the Kresge Foundation challenge in July 2006 provided an exhilarating stimulus and a vote of confidence in Cal Performances. Using the leverage of the prospective Kresge Foundation grant to inspire a sense of urgency and commitment, the Campaign Committee moved forward with increased vigor to cultivate and solicit newly identified prospects for major gifts and grants, and to return with a strengthened case for support to as-yet-uncommitted prospects."

“‘Cal Performances is deeply grateful for the support The Kresge Foundation has shown to our institution. This challenge grant has inspired our donors to give at their most generous level and has encouraged Cal Performances to aspire to new heights of commitment from the arts funding community,’ says Cole. ‘The Centennial Campaign has enabled Cal Performances to begin its next century of service to the University community and Bay Area audiences with greater strength and stability, while presenting an even richer array of world-class artists.’”

“During the final six months of The Kresge challenge period Cal Performances initiated a Seat Naming Campaign to reach out to its broader public. The Seat Naming Campaign gives donors the opportunity to have an engraved name plaque placed at the top of a seat in Zellerbach Hall in honor of a person or group. The Seat Naming Campaign, as well as the Centennial Campaign, remains underway until June 30, 2008.”

And then we had many, many dinners! Most of the time, I can't remember if it was the whole time, but a good part of the time, Joe Neil was the chair of the board. And Joe and Carol, his wife, hosted many dinners at their house, where we would invite four or five people who were either board members or potential donors, maybe not board members but potential donors, certainly, and we would sit around and talk about the campaign, and that would be dinner. It was very nice, because they have a lovely house here in Berkeley and we just did a lot of those things. That's how you do it. Three or four people, maybe five people, but including me at the table and Tim and Joe and Carol, so that you have four people already, then you maybe can have four or five more.

Riess: Joe and Carol had already committed at a very significant level.

Cole: Oh yes, well, I should say that actually the first person we asked for a gift was Joe. That's the way it works, you're right. I wasn't asking him for \$3 million, but it had to be a significant number and it was, and he agreed to it immediately. I did that, and once he committed then we were off and running. And then, of course, we went to see people like I said, people who were going to give a gift of \$1 million or more, the few people that we had—and we had a few.

Riess: Well, you make it almost sound too easy.

Cole: No, it was not easy. But you have to do it in a very methodical way and make it fun as you go along.

What I wanted to say was that it was very much process-oriented. Tim really knew what he was doing. We had a good consultant on the front end that did the study for us. And Joe and Carol were so generous about having these dinners, these fundraising dinners, campaign dinners I should call them. Because at the same time you have to raise annual funds, so that's a separate thing.

You're still trying to raise \$2 million a year annually, while you are trying to raise the \$16 million over a period of some years. And the \$16 million was specifically for three things: improve the building, Zellerbach Hall; some money for endowment—and I mean real endowment, not quasi-endowment, real endowment; and some money for artistic work that was like quasi-endowment, where you could only spend so much each year, so a donor could say, "I want mine to go to the artistic venture fund"—that is what we called that endowment.

Riess: How did you use the endowment?

Cole: Well, it becomes operating income, but you can only use 5 percent a year, something like that. And it grows over time and it's the most important thing you have, because it ensures the future of the organization.

Riess: You had an endowment already.

Cole: We had an endowment when I came here, which had come from Clark Kerr, I believe. But anyway, that was from many years ago. It had grown, but the idea was we needed to grow that, we knew we had to in order to ensure the future.

So there were these three parts, and the main part was the endowment and the secondary was to improve the building. The third part was for artistic enterprises, because some people, like Barney Osher, wanted to give money that would be spent within a reasonable period of time. He wasn't interested in endowment. Each donor has their own interests, so that way you give them the opportunity to give to some aspect of the program.

Riess: And have their name attached to it?

Cole: Well, in some cases, but not really. It was just a general campaign. No, there were no naming opportunities.

Riess: It's not like when somebody underwrites a whole production?

Cole: No. That's annual fundraising. This was a separate thing, entirely separate.

Riess: It's very interesting. I'm sure you figure out with the university who you can or can't talk to.

Cole: Yes, there was some of that, especially at the beginning, but as we went along it became more like we had close contact with people that someone at the university did not. I just mentioned a few of them. Or we had closer contact with them let's say.

The one great advantage of a performing arts organization, as I've told my young colleagues up at the Green Center, is that you know where your donors are. They're sitting in this seat, this night, and you can see them at intermission. And if you don't, you've missed a huge opportunity. If you just sell them a ticket and don't go say hello

to them, or don't take them to the patrons' room for a little drink afterwards or before or intermission, whatever, you've missed a huge opportunity. Many organizations, they have to find their donors. But our donors in performing arts come to *us*. And they come to us at a time when they're very, very exhilarated by the performance, you hope. And that's another huge advantage.

Anyway the campaign was a success, and it was brought to a close by this big centennial—not to a close, but it was announced publicly at the centennial celebration in 2006. I remember that that was the idea—it was a centennial celebration coinciding with the public announcement of the campaign. That means when you've raised all but about a million dollars, of the \$16 million you've raised, let's say, \$15 million.

Riess: The quote that I have here is that Chancellor Birgeneau came on stage to announce the public phase. He said, "Eleven million already had been raised."

Cole: It was \$11 million. I didn't remember.

Riess: That meant it was reachable.

Cole: Oh yes, and it was. And we were successful. Of course the downturn hit, but we'd pretty much finished it by then anyway.

Riess: Did you reach your goal?

Cole: We did. There were a few—something happened with one person that I won't go into, for example, but mostly we reached our goal.

But the other thing that really struck me—I was in the theater the other night. I went to an Alvin Ailey performance, just before I went to New York, because that was the only night I could go. I went to the opening night, which I usually wouldn't do, but I was going to New York the next day. Anyway, I was thinking about Zellerbach Hall and all the things that were made possible mostly because of Bill Zellerbach's money from his family foundation—so many things in that theater that people just take for granted.

I guess I'm the only one who knows, for example, the main curtain was replaced shortly after I got there, because it was just falling apart—we had to ask Bill for the money to replace the main curtain. Now it needs replacing again! It's badly worn. When I first came there was no air-conditioning. Can you imagine? Sometimes it was *incredibly* uncomfortable. I convinced Bill that we needed the air-conditioning—not very often, but when you need it you really want to have it.

Riess: Wouldn't you think the architect would have figured that one out?

Cole: I can't imagine, but there are a lot of things I can't imagine. Also—I told you about the seats, how the seats after a few years I was there were squeaking. So we had to replace all the seats, and they're still in pretty good shape, which is amazing. I was

thinking that when I was sitting there the other night. They're not squeaking yet. I told you how I asked Bill to come over and come to the theater with me, and I sat down on one and it squeaked! I was lucky on that. No, a lot of them squeaked. There was a terrible ambient noise going on.

Then of course we built that whole wing on the house right, which is now called the Zellerbach Room, and then there's another ladies' restroom and the press room. It had been a balcony. And why this balcony was there, I'll never know, because there was nothing—the doors were locked, you couldn't go on the balcony. But it was there.

I said to myself, when I first realized it, that this should be a room. There was a concrete floor and there was everything—but it's just sitting there and nobody ever used it. That's where we put that addition. We could put an addition on it without spending so much money, but that was with Zellerbach money. It is a really nice addition, and it didn't solve it completely, but it certainly helped with the ladies' room problem. We have many more ladies' rooms than we have men's now, which is as it should be, and it should have been in the first place.

And we have talked here already about the final big thing that we did to improve and change the building, which was to rebuild the mezzanine completely and make it possible to serve food. You said didn't they think about the air-conditioning? Well, they didn't think about water either, or any means of serving anything up there in the mezzanine. And now, of course, there's a quasi restaurant up there that operates, and is quite nice. I told you that part of that idea came to me from being at the Lyon Opera where they have this lovely restaurant right along the edge of the mezzanine level.

Anyway, this is all about fundraising, and that particular part of it, the Zellerbach part, mostly came from the Zellerbach Foundation, not all of it but most of it.

[Tape 12: Side A]

Cole: I was saying how generous Bill was and what a great pleasure it was working with him over the years. Amy, his daughter-in-law, Tom Zellerbach's wife, and Tom, they're really wonderful people. They don't need a lot of accolades. They do it because they want to do it. And of course that's your favorite kind of donor.

Riess: Are the Zellerbachs music lovers?

Cole: Bill was involved with the symphony years ago, and his daughter-in-law was on the Cal Performances board for some time. Tom Zellerbach, Bill's son, is very supportive, but Tom works all the time, so he just doesn't get to much.

But also in that case it's family. It's Bill's father, Tom's grandfather, who made a first gift to the university. So it had to do with their family, which is also important. I think, Thank God there was a family there with a foundation or else that building would be closed, because so much of the money that has kept it going has come from

the Zellerbach family. And without it—because the university was not willing at that time—I don't know about now.

Riess: You kept up that relationship with the Zellerbachs. That was your job, not the Development Office at the university.

Cole: No, I did all of that.

Riess: We're talking about a lot of the things you did to relate to people, and there is that. But you had particular skills because you were a musician.

Cole: Well, I think having some professional, really professional experience. Someone else who I think has done a really wonderful job in this business, so to speak, in the Bay Area, is Brenda Way, who has a wonderful modern dance company Oberlin Dance Cooperative, but she also has built a place for modern dance, rehearsal halls, a theater. She has done all of this, and she really is able to do it because she is a real professional in every way. She knows what she's doing, and she's done it and she's still doing it. She's an example, I think, in the dance world, of someone who—she's a professional and she knows what she's doing, and she's really done a magnificent job in what she's achieved in the Bay Area.

Riess: Were you involved in finding somebody to take over when you retired here?

Cole: I wasn't very involved in the transition. I was consulted on a few occasions. One occasion—I was asked to come into the committee when they were getting close to making a selection. They had narrowed it down to three candidates, and the three candidates had been interviewed, and I knew them all, one way or another. Actually, I did not know the one who actually got the job, Matías Tarnopolsky, but I had met him during the interview process. The committee asked me to come in and comment on the candidates. It was towards the end of the process, and there were people on this side and people on that side.

As I say, I knew the other two candidates quite well, but I did not know Matías, except for the one meeting. And my input was, I said, "You do not have three candidates. You have one candidate, and that's Matías." And I was right, and I think that turned the tide, or it certainly affected—not that he wasn't—he was a favorite of certainly some of the committee but not all at that moment, because people, they're not sure. They don't know these people, they don't know much about the business—they don't know really, sometimes anything about the business!

I did my best to put my two cents in, and I said, "Look, you don't have three candidates. You have one candidate."

Riess: In other words, "You have no problem."

Cole: Yes, well, you may have a problem, because if he doesn't accept the job then you have a *big* problem. And that's what concerned me, the fact that just—if you only

have one candidate, it's risky, because then you don't have—a lot of bad things can happen. So that was how I put it and it worked out.

Riess: How important is personality in the business?

Cole: Well, I think it's very important. You have to like being around people, you have to enjoy meeting new people. I've always considered myself to be rather a shy person, so I don't think I was as good at it as I could have been had I been more—well, bolder or, what's the word, gregarious. Other people think I am, but I'm comparing myself to people that I know who are more than I am. I've gotten less shy than I was, let's say thirty years ago. I think you have to really enjoy it. If you don't enjoy it it's a miserable job. You have to really enjoy people and being around people and making new friends and seeing old friends and so on, so forth. It's very much of a social thing.

Again, it's people who are like-minded. Now if you have someone who's not like-minded and they want to give you a lot of money, well, that's nice. You don't turn it down, you know. But it's not likely that it's going to happen, because they're interested in the New York Mets or something, or the 49ers, and they're giving the money to something else probably. Or maybe they're not giving their money to anything. You have to find people who love what you're doing and who are generous, and who follow Andrew Carnegie's dictum, which was something like: it's not a sin to be wealthy, but it's a sin to die wealthy. I think *rich* is what he used: "It's not a sin to be rich, but it's a sin to die rich." [laughing]

Riess: I've asked before, but how do aspiring arts administrators prepare to be successful at this work?

Cole: There are programs. I don't know how valuable they are, because I don't know—I only know about one, and that's a friend of mine who is teaching at Indiana University, who's one of the greatest presenters in the world. He's now retiring, but he ran the Pepsico Festival, which I referred to earlier and he's now teaching at Indiana University, Christopher Hunt. Christopher Hunt is a brilliant guy, and I'm sure that if you work with Christopher Hunt learning about arts administration you really learn something. I fear that some people who are teaching arts administration have never done it, so I don't know if they can teach it. Really I don't know that much about it. That isn't how I learned, I learned by doing it.

Riess: The people you admire, who were more extroverted, perhaps, who would they be?

Cole: Well, you mean admire or envy? [laughing] I'm talking about someone like Peter Sellars, who can talk a producer into a \$10 million production so easily. Peter's just a brilliant guy. He's not in the same business I'm in, but it's similar inasmuch as he's looking for places and ways to do things that are hard to do.

I just mean that—if I had known—of course it's true of all of us I'm sure, all of us, right? If I had known when I was thirty what I know now, I would have had a lot

easier, more success, because you learn these things as you go and then that's it. What I'm doing now, the pleasure I have now, is trying to share some of this with the people I'm working with at Green Center, who are very young, just starting out, and starting out with a completely new project, which we opened. That has been a great pleasure, because the things I've learned over fifty years I can tell them.

Riess: You're showing them the way, how does that work?

Cole: Well, one of the big things, and I think it's not just there but every place, in this business, is that people concentrate on, "How many tickets did we sell?" And that's all. What they don't realize is that if you're in the nonprofit world, which we are—in the nonprofit world it's not just how many tickets you sell, it's who's there. It's not how many people are there, it's *who*'s there. Obviously you have to have people there, but if you just concentrate on selling tickets to people who come once and then go away, and you never get to know them, forget it, because you're going to go out of business. Because the model is that you're losing money every time you do a performance.

That's something that the people like, for example, I'm working with up at the Green Center really didn't understand. They've never understood this, that the idea is not how many people are counted—my idea is *who* is coming and let's get to know these people. Let's make them be supporters and investors in the whole project, for life, not just once or twice. That's a fundamental thing that is basic to this kind of an operation, and a lot of people just don't understand it.

Riess: Before they committed to the operation up there did they know they had a donor base?

Cole: Oh, they had a donor base.

Riess: I mean more than the Weills and the Greens?

Cole: Well, they've had the Greens from the beginning. Then they had a lot of other donors. But they were donors to the building. Now, donors to the building—one, they can die. They're not even there anymore by the time you open, since it took fifteen years. In any situation, a donor to a building is one thing. The donor who will give you annual money because of your performances, because of what you do, that's the donor you're looking for, who will every year write you a check and not expect to see another building go up, because God knows we have enough buildings, we have too many buildings. Of course, it's not as bad as in China. They tell me in China it's really a problem. They have all these concert halls, opera houses, and no one knows how to run them, they're not really—they're just buildings. And we have a lot of that too.

You find the donors by getting artists to come that people who are donor-inclined will come to hear. You have to match the artist with those people that you don't know yet.

Riess: You need local knowledge?

Cole: Yes, well, local—we look at this as being regional. It's like Berkeley. When I came to Berkeley, nobody would come from San Francisco, so you've got to make it so they *have* to come from San Francisco. And we did. It became quite easy. I told you the last year—well, we're not there yet—with Cecilia certainly we had donors from LA, from Texas, from Louisiana, who wanted a ticket to Cecilia. The only way they could get one was to be a donor.

Riess: Okay. And before we wrap up today, we need to get back to our chronology.

Cole: I wanted to talk also about the Ailey Camp, but in the context of other things, because I went to the Ailey performance the other night, and I went to a reception for the Ailey Company, which was held at Sandy Weill's house, because his wife, Joan Weill, is the chair of the board of the Ailey Company.

And of course during the time that I was at Berkeley I was the biggest presenter of the Ailey Company in the world. We used to do not just six performances, which they're doing now, which is fine, or maybe seven a week. But we used to do ten at least, because we would start on a Friday, do Friday, Saturday—two on Saturday, and one on Sunday, and then reopen on Wednesday. On Tuesday we would do a SchoolTime show and Wednesday we would do a SchoolTime show. We would do ten performances for the general public and at least two SchoolTime shows, and all kinds of other things, demonstrations and classes, and stuff like that.

Anyway, a long time ago, early on in our relationship with the Ailey Company—by the way, I had met Alvin Ailey in New York, in an elevator. That was the first time. But then I got to know him here. Sadly, he died shortly after I came here, but there was one time when he came here with the company still, and I was here and that was probably '87, or just before he died. But I'd met him in New York because I was involved with some dance company where they rehearsed in the City Center Building, in the same building.

Anyway, and then I talked with him one time when he was out here about Ailey Camp, just briefly, because something similar was starting in New York, and maybe Kansas City I think too. I always wanted to do that, and every time they would come here we would try, and we would talk to somebody about giving us a gift for Ailey Camp. I did it every year: we would have something, and some effort. One year we took some people to lunch at Chez Panisse, and they had different executive directors along the line from Ailey that we were working with.

Riess: They were keen on it too.

Cole: Yes, they were keen on it, but it wasn't, for them, a high priority. For me it was a high priority, because we already were presenting them, and now this Ailey Camp was something new that we could do.

But I wanted to really make note of the fact that—you remember I told you that when I wanted to start the Berkeley Festival, and this was in my mind in '87 or '88, I was lucky to meet Barbara Barclay, who was then the granting person in the arts from the Hewlett Foundation, and she gave us \$100,000 for the Berkeley Festival. That gift has continued over the years. It now—I don't know how much it is, but whatever it is it's still there, I'm quite sure. That was Barbara Barclay with the Hewlett Foundation.

Then when I wanted to do the Ailey Camp, I remember now how we did it. We would have lunches every year when the Ailey Company would come, and we would invite donors, potential donors, whatever, to come, and it was Judith Jamison by then who was their artistic director. We would have these little lunches, and the idea was to raise money for Ailey for Cal Performances, and always in the back of my mind was for Ailey Camp. I would bring it up as something we were thinking about, would like to do, but not yet, can't do it yet unless we raise some money for it. We did that for some years, talked about it.

One year we did this little lunch, and it was very nice, and this time there was a woman named Melanie Beene, who was then in the position of arts funding for the Hewlett Foundation. She was there and she had come before, probably, to these things. And as we walked out of the luncheon Melanie said to me, "You want to do this Ailey Camp?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Let's talk." Boom, like that. I think they gave us \$100,000 again, for Ailey Camp, something like that. It was significant. It meant that we could start it right away. That was a ten-year project.

Riess: As you say, these things may have a long gestation.

Cole: Yes, a long gestation. You just have to keep at it. The Ailey Camp starting was because of a gift from the Hewlett Foundation.

The other great thing that happened when we started the Ailey Camp was that we found a wonderful director, and I have to credit Hollis Ashby, certainly, for finding this guy, David McCauley, who was the director, still is the director of Ailey Camp. But it wasn't easy.

As I remember, that gift was an initial gift. It wasn't an ongoing gift from the Hewlett Foundation. Whereas for the Berkeley Festival it was an annual gift, this was a startup gift. Then when we had difficult financial times, as we always did one way or the other—well, one year I said, "We just can't go on, we just can't do this again, because it's expensive." There was no income, no earned income, it was all expense and then contributed income. And actually, the contributed income to Ailey Camp may take away from other things. *May*, you don't know. But I believed in doing it. So I said—sometimes we do things like this—I said, "We can't go on unless somebody steps forward and helps us."

Riess: You said this to the board?

Cole: To the board and whoever would listen, yes. And I have to say, we had a really good response, and we did raise some extra money, which kept it going, and it's still going, and I think it's a really big success. Susan Marinoff and her husband Tom Schrag were key in the fundraising for Ailey Camp/

Riess: You couldn't use endowment money for that?

Cole: No, well—you needed operating money, annual operating money, because it's part of your annual operating cost. In addition, it's a cost which has no income, as I said, no operating income, so you really have to raise money.

The Hewlett Foundation has played a major part in keeping Cal Performances going, the funding. The last person I worked with there was Moy Eng, who was also very supportive in maintaining our support from the Hewlett Foundation.

Riess: What's the name again?

Cole: Moy Eng. Those three women played a major role, I think, in making things happen, because as I say, while the Ailey Camp gift was a one-time gift, if I recall correctly, the annual giving from Hewlett Foundation was the most significant foundation gift. That was until we got the Mellon Grant, which was many years in gestation also, and it finally came through the year I left. [laughing]

Riess: Did you have any Silicon Valley money?

Cole: Hewlett Foundation *is* Silicon Valley.

Riess: That's true. I'm thinking of Apple and Google, those people.

Cole: Well, the Silicon Valley money also was Scott Mercer.

I remember so well driving down to the Hewlett Foundation, I guess every year for some years, and Tim and I used to go together, Tim Whalen. It was a long ways, but it was always worth the time. [laughter] They actually listened and paid attention to what you're doing and cared about what you're doing, which was really wonderful, and I have to say, unlike many other foundations who—they want to tell you what to do, and then if you do what they want you to do they'll give you some money, maybe. Whereas the Hewlett Foundation, at least in my experience, they want to hear what you're interested in doing, and can you do it, and if they think it sounds reasonable then they give you the money. And if you do it they'll give you more!

Riess: And what kind of report do they need from you?

Cole: Oh! Very, very detailed. It's more detailed now than it used to be. I know that. That's just the way things are.

Riess: How about the NEA?

Cole: Oh, the NEA—well, I have one really positive story about the NEA. When I first got here, very early on, I used to be on NEA panels occasionally. They invite people in the business to sit around and decide on different things.

One of the panels that I was on, early on, I realized that the real money—they were giving endowment money. And I said, “This is the real money,” because otherwise it’s \$15,000 here, \$20,000 there. It doesn’t really amount to much, it’s hardly worth the paperwork. Although then it was more, certainly, than now. But they were giving endowment grants of, as I recall, up to \$250,000. I recognized this, I heard about it or learned about it.

The one we got—they put in \$250,000 and you had to raise another \$750,000 and you had a million-dollar endowment. That was the first endowment money we ever raised, and that was a long time ago. So besides the \$6 million that we raised, I think that was the number, for the campaign in endowment money, we raised a million dollars and a quarter million was from the NEA, probably back in ‘88 maybe, something like that. A long time ago.

It took us a year—I think we had a year or eighteen months to raise the matching money. Well, that was really hard for us, to raise \$750,000 in addition to our annual fundraising, when we weren’t in the fundraising business hardly. We struggled, and I think we raised something like \$500,000—whatever. Anyway, we were at least \$200,000 short when the deadline was coming. We were going to lose the NEA quarter million, plus probably everything else. But for sure we were going to lose the NEA money if we didn’t raise the money by this deadline.

So there was a wonderful man, who was then the chief fundraiser for the university, and he was formerly a faculty person. His name is Dan Mote, and he became the president of the University of Maryland. But at that time he was the development director for the university, having come from the faculty, and a really good guy. He loved the arts and was very interested, and paid attention to what you did in lots of different ways—of course, he had the whole university to worry about. Anyway, he was leaving to take this job as the University of Maryland president, and I went to see Dan and I told him just straight up the situation.

I said, “Look, here’s the situation. We’ve raised x amount and we need to raise another \$200,000,” something, it was around that amount that we were short, “by this date or else we’re going to lose the whole thing.” And Dan—there are always donors who give the university money and who say do what you want with it. It’s undesignated money. It’s not like it’s difficult, it’s just a matter of what you are going to do with it. He could see that this was a very good use of somebody’s money and he asked the donor.

I saw him just the other night at a dinner a few weeks ago. He comes back for these dinners occasionally, the Berkeley Fellows. I saw him and thanked him, again. Because the few times that I see him I always remind him what a help that was to me and how much I appreciated it. And he told me the details, of how he spoke to the

donor, and he told him the situation, and he got their approval to designate this gift to make this possible. That was the first endowment money that I ever was responsible for raising. That was very important, I thought.

Riess: I've read that the budget in 1996 was \$7 million, twice what it was in 1991, and 18 percent from the university, 50 to 60 percent from ticket sales, and the rest from fundraising.

Cole: By the time I retired it was probably 5 percent from the university, maybe 3 percent, because at the time the formula changed.

Interview #9: June 4, 2013

[Tape 13: Side A]

Riess: In a note to me this week you suggested my asking why you did what you did as an overarching question.

Cole: Yes, why overall, not specifics necessarily, but overall. I think I have discussed that some before. I don't want to repeat, but this is like the wind-up, getting towards the end.

The other question I was going to suggest—you mentioned it before, but that David Littlejohn quote in the *Wall Street Journal* about how my programming was more varied and broader than BAM and Lincoln Center. That's not an exact quote, and this is not, in any way, to take away from them. The fact that what we did was different than what they do, in a way which was not replicated anyplace else, is what I'm saying.

I should explain what he meant by that, because just reading it it sounds like—hmm, you know—but that's not what he meant. There were specific reasons why he said that. And it's not totally obvious to most people. For example, I worship Harvey Lichtenstein at BAM, but he had this agenda, and Jane Moss at Lincoln Center had her agenda. I had my own agenda, and they're different.

Riess: And the question of being both presenter and producer, is that an interesting question?

Cole: It's what it is. Within the context of some of the other things I wanted to refer to I will refer to that. It is important, yes. But it's rarely possible, and it's a rare opportunity, which you take when you can. Essentially, what I did was *presenting*, primarily.

Riess: Could you give examples of yourself as producer rather than presenter.

Cole: Yes, when you ask about producing versus presenting, we were primarily presenters. That is, we would find events or artists or whatever, to come.

However, there were certain areas, for example in our relationship with Mark Morris, much of his work, we hired the orchestra. Working with local people here we hired the orchestra, arranged for the rehearsal schedule. All of that has to do with producing. That was, of course, in concert with talking to the Mark Morris Company, what they needed, and so on, so forth. These pieces—the music part was done here and the dance part came from someplace else. That's a kind of producing, part of it.

But more so, we developed a series of contemporary music programs which we called Composer Portraits [Series, September 2005] and this was really through my relationship with my very good friend George Steel, who was at Miller Theater at the time, at Columbia University. George has gone on to be the director of the New York

City Opera, the famous and infamous new director of the New York City Opera, who has really done a fabulous job there and left the State Theater and created his own vision, because he's a visionary. Anyway, George was doing this kind of thing and I was trying to do this kind of thing.

My idea with contemporary music was always that if, for instance, I was going to do Ligeti, I wanted to have Ligeti *there*. If I was going to do Conlon Nancarrow, I wanted to have Conlon Nancarrow *there*. And that's hard to do when you're on the West Coast. Actually, we did those two things, if I bring those two up, because Ligeti actually came here and we did his *Études*, as I've mentioned before. Conlon actually came here and we did a bunch of his music with him here. But on the West Coast it's difficult to get many of those people.

Of course, we did that kind of thing with John Adams, because John Adams actually lives here. And we did it with some of the composers from the faculty, like Jorge Liderman.

I got to be very friendly with George Steel when he was at Columbia, and we started collaborating in various ways, particularly on this contemporary music thing. We formalized this in about the season 2004-2005, maybe a little earlier, where we had a series of Composer Portraits. I think it was 2004-2005 we had John Zorn, Magnus Lindberg, and who was the other one—I guess John Adams. Those three composers were all here.

John Zorn came here. I talked to John, on the phone, which was really an interesting experience. [laughing] We arranged a program through our discussions, and he brought some musicians from New York, and we hired a wonderful choral director here to do a choral piece, which was extremely difficult. Lynne Morrow is her name, and she deserves a lot of credit for even getting through it. John said it was the best performance of that piece he's had, including the ones he had in London and Paris. So that was a production. It was a small thing—it wasn't small, it was big, but it was a production.

Riess: You wouldn't have asked these people if you didn't think they were going to be interested? You had a certain persuasive power?

Cole: Well, not power, but John Zorn, we had done his music before, but we hadn't brought him out here to participate in it. See, that was my goal, if you're doing contemporary music, to have the composer there live and participating. And as I say, it's not easy, because mostly people live in New York or Europe or whatever. Only we were just very fortunate that John Adams, who over the years that I was there became the leading American composer, he lives in Berkeley. That was great. We did a lot of things with John, as you know.

Riess: Was John Adams a pull? Is he a reason why Ligeti and others would come?

Cole: Not necessarily, no. But he certainly became one of our assets, let's put it that way.

That's a kind of producing that I think is really useful, where you focus on something that nobody else is going to do. No one else really, hardly, that I can think of, especially then, would do a whole program of John Zorn's music. I don't know if you know John Zorn's music, but it's very difficult and very interesting. He does his own series in New York. He's quite an interesting guy.

Riess: And was it a sell-out here?

Cole: No. But it was well attended, and partially—to a large extent, just the same with Ligeti when he came, I told you it was sold out. When Conlon actually was there it was sold out, and when John was here in person you sell a lot more tickets. It has an artistic goal, but it also has a practical goal, that if the artist himself is here to participate in the event, either playing or conducting or doing something, at least there to talk about his music, before the concert, after the concert, et cetera, it makes it much more interesting. Of course, you couldn't bring dead composers, obviously.

Riess: You've talked about working closely with the Music Department.

Cole: As I say, we did some of these Composer Portraits with Music Department composers. We did one for Olly Wilson, and certainly Jorge Liderman, who sadly died way too young. We did his fiftieth birthday concert and just a year or two later he died. He was one of my closest friends and colleagues up there.

Anyway, that was one aspect of that that I think was really important, that is real.

Unfortunately, I think when you bring up the subject of producing, then the subject of commissioning comes up. Too often in our business people are “commissioning” just to get—I don't know what. It doesn't mean anything. It *can* mean something, but it doesn't necessarily mean something.

It means something to the artist who gets the commission, and that's all very nice, but to the presenter it only means something if it's a really great work. And that's something that you have to be very lucky or very smart, or both, to make happen. Without coming up with examples—there's an awful lot of that going on in the business which is ridiculous and doesn't mean a thing. It's just because six people want to get together and commission Joe Blow to do whatever.

Another thing I wanted to talk about was my basic philosophy of the artistic focus—what do you do and why do you do it? Because you have so many choices, which is what I love about being a presenter, which I found out by being one, which I think not every one appreciates. What a great opportunity it is compared to running, let's say, an opera company, where you do opera, or running a symphony orchestra, where you do symphony concerts, et cetera. A ballet company does ballet. I could do *everything!*

But most important for me, and I think it is fundamental, you need to do something that somebody else is not doing better or more often. You don't want to just replicate that which is already going on in your market, because if you do you're really foolish.

As I think I've said before, I wouldn't think of doing *Madame Butterfly*, they're doing it in San Francisco much better than I could ever do it. I actually did one production of *Madame Butterfly*, but it was because the Lyon Opera brought it and it was very different than anybody would do in this country.

Riess: That means you have to know everything that's going on!

Cole: That means you have to think about what's in the market already, and I can only talk right now about the Bay Area, because that's what we're talking about.

And also, I had a large theater, Zellerbach Hall. Zellerbach Hall is not a concert hall. It's a theater. It has a proscenium arch, and it was built to be—it's primarily a theater. Then we had a concert hall in Hertz Hall, which is smaller, with seven hundred seats. And we had another theater in Zellerbach Playhouse. And we had churches where we could do concerts of the earlier music, and so on. We had places to do certain kinds of things.

I did not, as I've said, do a lot of symphony concerts. I tried to avoid them, in fact, because they're doing fifty-two weeks a year at Davies Hall, and we didn't really have a concert hall that was suitable. Whereas where I'm working now [Green Center] that's what it is! It *is* a concert hall—that's all it is.

Also, no one was doing international theater in this market, which I was always kind of amazed at, because there were places where that could have been done. And so we really did a lot of that, given what's out there. Every year we did something, and some years we did a lot. We did that primarily in Zellerbach Playhouse. Even in a big hall—like we had the Beijing People's Art Theatre [September 2005, "The Teahouse"] That was a huge success. We had the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, which you probably saw. Things like that, since no one else was doing it, it made sense for *us* to do it. That was really the fundamental driving force or compass that I was looking for.

Riess: Doing what no one else was doing.

Cole: Doing something really good that no one else is doing.

Riess: To know what those things are seems daunting, personally daunting, because so much of it seems to fall on you.

Cole: Well, it does, but you just have to keep your eyes open. I have these relationships with these management people that I've mentioned before, David Eden and this other guy from Montreal, Menno Plukker, who brought interesting things. And they were pretty desperate to find people who would do this stuff. It's not like—there are not ten presenters in America, or even five, that will do Piccolo Teatro di Milano, or Robert Lepage. There are maybe three or four.

On the West Coast, at certain times, there was only one, and that was Berkeley. If they got the idea that you were interested in this kind of stuff, they were *on you*! Fortunately they turned out to be some of my best friends also, subsequently. But you have to let them know that you're interested in this kind of stuff and you will actually make it happen. It wasn't easy, because we only had the Playhouse when we could get it.

Riess: You make it sound like money wasn't the object.

Cole: No. Money was a huge problem, and we'll get into that more in a little bit.

Another area that was fertile for us, as I've mentioned before, was Russian ballet. Well, there's a ballet company here in San Francisco, and you'd say, "Why would you do ballet?" But they don't do Russian ballet. They do *other* ballet. It's a great company and all that, but they don't do what we ended up doing, because no one else was doing that. That was another opportunity, because there's a huge Russian audience for that particular kind of work that don't necessarily go to San Francisco Ballet because they're very narrow in their interests, let's put it that way. [laughing]

As part of that we did this fabulous symposium, "The Ballet and Music in Russian History and Culture, Arts and Humanities at UC Berkeley" [November 2004]. It was organized by the Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, the Department of Music, and Cal Performances.

Riess: Driven by Cal Performances.

Cole: Well yes, but I had some really good partners. I'll tell you who they were. When I started the Early Music Festival in 1990, one of the reasons, as I mentioned earlier, was because we had some really great faculty people here at that time, whose specialty was old music, Joe Kerman and others I've mentioned before. And at this time we had in residence on the faculty of Music, the world's greatest expert on Russian music, Richard Taruskin. Primarily his work is on Stravinsky, but his field is Russian music.

Also I got to know a wonderful person named Vicky Bonnell. I've forgotten exactly which department she was in, but her interest was Slavic and East European studies and languages and culture. It happens that when she was younger, much younger, she was a dancer, so she had that background. Vicky Bonnell and Richard Taruskin and others, joining with the Consortium for the Arts, we put together, in this one instance for example, this whole conference, which went on for several days. Vicky really ran the whole thing. Richard came in and did his thing. Vicky helped me organize it. She was very good at that sort of thing, moderated and brought people together, and published this very nice booklet on the subject, which I just read yesterday, and it's really fascinating.

That's just one little thing, but it's something that nobody else was doing, is what I'm saying, nobody else in the country was doing.

Riess: In some way it was natural that because you're a university you could or would do these things?

Cole: Yes. It was possible. Who else has Richard Taruskin? Nobody! I was just in New York at the series of concerts we've talked about that my son Julian [Wachner] did, which has probably never been done anywhere else. I tried to get Richard [Taruskin] involved in it, but it was too late. Anyway, in my case Richard was here, so it was—I wouldn't say it was easy, because he's a very busy guy, but it was possible, let's put it that way, to engage him.

We were focusing on those things that no one else is doing, or no one else can do or will do, which included, as I said, the international theater, the modern dance which we really focused on more than anybody else in the marketplace, and great Russian classical ballet which no one else was doing. Then also we were doing contemporary music in the way that I'm talking about, where you have the composer here participating in these events. We commissioned John Adams to do a little opera years ago, which brought John Adams and Peter Sellars here—some of our best friends over the years.

If I may just segue to the other, I think, really important part of whatever success we had—and I don't want to make it sound like it was easy, because you just brought up the business of the budget and I'll talk about that in a minute, but I think going on with what I just said, there are several legs to this stool, maybe three. One is doing important things that other people are not doing. Another is to establish relationships with artists who you believe—and hopefully you're right most of the time—have a great future, and establish it to the extent possible. And this happens—the relationship builds or it doesn't build.

When I look back upon the artists with whom we had an exclusive relationship in this marketplace—you talk about the budget, this is what kept us alive. I've mentioned before our long and very fruitful relationship with Cecilia Bartoli. She brought more attention to Cal Performances, nationwide, worldwide, than any other single artist. Similarly with Mark Morris and his company. Cecilia only performed at Cal Performances in this market, in the whole time that she came here and that I was there. Whenever she came to this country she was with us.

People got to understand that, and that this was very important, and that they, to be part of us, that they be a member, that they be a donor, that they be a subscriber, et cetera. And similarly with Mark, his career started with us with one performance in 1987 and continued to some great things that happened for him and for us. But people knew that they could only see him at our place in Berkeley.

And of course, I was just really fortunate—I think looking back on it now it was really great fortune. I was the beneficiary, we were the beneficiary, that at that time Baryshnikov was dancing, not ballet but he was dancing, and he came here fairly often. He came only to Cal Performances, either with his White Oak Company that he

had dancing modern dance, and then later on as an actor, as you know. There's no other star bigger than Misha. He is a huge draw to the public and for good reason.

Riess: Are you saying it was luck? You keep talking about good fortune.

Cole: No, well—I went after Misha. Misha wanted to do these little tours with this White Oak Company and we were on it, we got it. It could have gone someplace else in the Bay Area, but it didn't. It came to Berkeley and then it kept coming to Berkeley. It never went anyplace else.

I told you that Jordi Savall we brought here for the first time. He only came here and performed here. The Takács Quartet, which we started bringing, they only came to us. Peter Sellars—all of his work in the Bay Area was done with us.

Riess: You can say in your advertising that this is the only appearance, et cetera.

Cole: Well, we didn't always say that, but people kind of figured it out. Because it sounds a little bit, whatever, over the top to always say that. I'm saying it now because I want to say that this is the way, if you want to be successful, you need to do this. You need to find artists that people maybe don't know about, or don't know that they're even doing this—everybody didn't know that Misha was starting a modern dance company and going to tour. But we got on it and we got it here, and it kept coming back, and that was, for us, a very good thing.

There are other artists, for example, that we brought here for the first time, vocal artists, besides Cecilia. Bryn Terfel, this is the only place that he sang recitals. He sang at the opera of course, occasionally, but he sang recitals for us, which were always fantastic. We brought Rolando Villazón, and he was a huge hit. Then he had trouble with his voice but now he's come back fabulously, and I'm so happy about that. He's come back, not here, but in Europe. He's a huge success again as he's recovered.

Riess: Did Dawn Upshaw start here?

Cole: She did. Her first Bay Area recital was with us. Ian Bostridge came to us for his first Bay Area—I think West Coast performance.

[Tape 13: Side B]

Riess: In some of those cases you were just taking a chance, weren't you?

Cole: Yes, yes. For example, Arcadi Volodos—nobody had ever heard of him in this country, he'd never been here. But I'd heard of him—I've forgotten how. This is a case where—what I'm saying is you try to find somebody who has a future, say like Mark. Nobody'd ever heard of him here, but I thought he had a future so he came here and he did have a future—and he delivered.

Arcadi Volodos is a great pianist—he still is. He came here I think once only, for his debut, American debut. He hardly ever comes back to America, like never. He just stays in Europe or wherever. Somewhat similar with Maxim Vengerov, who is one of the greatest violinists around. He came for his debut here, American debut, and he came back once I think, and that was about it, and now he's become a conductor. Poor guy. [laughter] And we brought Julia Fischer, who does come back, but she's had a couple of children since then and that has changed things. But it is finding these artists and trying to build for the future, and you hope it works. In the case of Volodos it didn't work, because he didn't want to travel, he didn't want to come.

Riess: Is there some way to put pressure on them to be exclusively yours?

Cole: It's not pressure, no. They have to be willing, want to. They have to like performing here, and it's also—it's a relationship you build. You took a chance on them first. I know that's how Cecilia felt, and her manager at the time, Jack Mastroianni, but it was mostly her. She decides what she wants to do.

Riess: And the relationship is with the performer, not with their manager.

Cole: It's mostly with them but it is with their manager too. Especially when they're young their manager has more influence. As they get older their manager has less influence.

Riess: I would think that the manager would want to spread them around, like if Julia comes to town, let's take her to San Jose and LA.

Cole: Yes, as things go along that is sometimes true. There are a lot of artists like that. I told you that when I first came I brought Murray Perahia, Richard Goode, and András Schiff, who had not been here. But they subsequently have played other places and that's great, that's fine, I have no problem with that. I'm just saying that there are opportunities that come that can make your program stand out and build its future, if you can build some exclusive relationships with very important artists, like Mark, like Misha, like Cecilia, like Bryn. And there aren't many in that list.

And where does that get you? That brings us to the subject of money. Of course they're going to sell tickets. All these people I'm talking about mostly sold out every show. But it also affected your fundraising. That was the primary thing. And you're building—what are you doing? In any business, you're building a brand. That's what I *do*. That's what I did. And I think that's what any businessperson does.

Your brand is more important—it's like your personal reputation is the most important thing you have, and if you sully that brand in any way or let it get not focused, you're just throwing away everything you've worked for. By focusing on keeping this brand—that is not to say that we didn't do some things that did not necessarily strengthen the brand.

Riess: Is this your way of viewing it now? Do you think back in the beginning you had this idea that you were building a brand, which seems so corporate or something like that?

Cole: I've always thought that way. Because how people—listen, we were in Berkeley. Nobody from San Francisco wanted to come to Berkeley. It was absolutely out of the question! But if you build a strong-enough brand, they will come—and they being people who have money among them. [laughing]

Another example of working with an artist and hoping you can have a future with them, et cetera, and you really believe in them, another artist that was exclusive to us was Pina Bausch. That's really important. She had a very niche audience—some people hated her and other people loved her, and the ones who loved her showed up and you could count on them. But she only performed here.

Merce Cunningham, of course, the same. He only performed at Berkeley when he came, until later on, right towards the end, he did a couple of performances at Stanford. But for many years it was only Berkeley, and we did every year, not every three years, but *every* year with Merce, and many, many world premieres et cetera. The William Forsythe, the Billy Forsythe Company only came here when they came to the Bay Area.

But what I wanted to finish with is that there are other artists like—it's interesting how we brought Mariza, this fado artist, and with great success, quite a ways back. Another one, for example, was Cesária Évora, and this is what is under the general rubric of world music, which as I've said is a very bad term but it's the only one people can come up with. But it means music not in the Western tradition, and that's it. And we did a lot of those.

In fact, getting back to the budget idea, world music was the only series that showed a net revenue every year from just ticket sales versus artist expense. The trouble is, the people who come to world music performances—each one is a niche, you have this group or this group or this group, and they don't necessarily write checks. They're not donors, because they only come to see Cesária, that's it. They'll come back next year when you bring Cesária.

Anyway, world music was very successful. The interesting thing was that it was so successful that after a few years—I just mentioned two, but there are other artists like this—San Francisco Jazz Festival started presenting them. And not only did they present them, but they presented them in Oakland! The San Francisco Jazz Festival would present Mariza in Oakland. Well, okay, fine, we didn't have an exclusive on everything, but it was kind of ironic. We'd look and, "Oh my God, Mariza is playing down the street!" Because she sold tickets and she was a great artist. In fact, I'm presenting her up in the Green Center next year.

Anyway, so that was the thing. One, to establish the fact that you're going to do things that no one else is doing, if possible. You don't want to do what other people are already doing, like ninety-five symphony concerts and twelve more *Madame Butterflys*, et cetera. So that's one. And two is to establish relationships with artists who have a future and will build your brand, collectively, from all different kinds of worlds.

One of the most interesting things—look at the program for 2006-2007, for example. People are always saying oh, there's too much just Western music. Well, that's ridiculous! We did not do just Western music. In 2006-2007 we had a China initiative, and we did a nine-hour *Peony Pavilion*. I had really forgotten about it until I looked at the brochure talking about it. But it was so interesting, because that year we also did the first performance here of *King Arthur* with Mark Morris and Philharmonia Baroque. That was an American premiere. We brought back the Lyon Opera Ballet. We did *Silk Road* with Yo-Yo. We had the John Zorn show and Conlon Nancarrow show. That's when Conlon was no longer alive unfortunately.

This *Peony Pavilion*—remember we did a production of *Peony Pavilion* with Peter Sellars?

Riess: Yes.

Cole: It was not hugely successful, but it was interesting. There was a big thing in New York, which was going on at the same time, and it got a lot of press in the *New York Times*.

Well, this man came to me named Kenneth [H.] Pai. He was an emeritus professor from UC Santa Barbara, and a very intelligent guy, I could tell, and very interesting. But he's a professor and I didn't really know—is this real? He was telling me about this production he had done in China, and he had done it in universities, Chinese universities, and he wanted to bring it to America. And it was the *Peony Pavilion* thing, which is this huge Chinese story. It was going to be a nine-hour event, so we had to do it in three nights: first part, second part, third part—Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday, whatever. Three different shows to complete the whole thing.

I thought, “Well, this is really getting in deep.” [laughing] A nine-hour *Peony Pavilion*—they did that in New York years ago and it wasn't all that successful. I didn't want to have a big disaster in my closing years here, so to speak. Besides, we were struggling financially, as always, so that's nothing new.

He [Pai] showed us some video of what he'd done, and I got in touch with the people in Santa Barbara and they said they would like to do it because he's from there. His chancellor was a Chinese guy, so there was very good reason for it. I think at that time Chang-Lin [Tien]—I've forgotten if he was still here. But we had done several major things from China, and partially because of Chang-Lin's great legacy, and just because he was such a great guy and so influential and wonderful.

Anyway, we went down this road of investigating it, and we ended up doing it in the 2006-2007 season. And it was a *huge* success! It was just—I couldn't believe it! That something that had been done—*Peony Pavilion* had been done so many times in New York, and we had done it—but *this* one was a huge success. It was a wonderful show. It was a beautiful, beautiful show. And this guy had young Chinese artists, really very young people.

Riess: The whole thing came from China?

Cole: The whole thing came from China. Beautifully costumed, beautifully produced, and it was a huge success with the public and I think it sold out, and it was just wonderful. Coming from an academic—of course, he wasn't really just an academic, he was an academic who happened to know more about this particular thing than anybody in the world probably. Anyway, we did it with I think three other universities: UC Santa Barbara, maybe UCLA, and I've forgotten who else. We did the premiere here in Berkeley, again, and that was something that I wanted. [laughing]

That same year, 2006, we also did a production of *Twelfth Night* in Russian, directed by Declan Donnellan, that came from the Chekhov International Theater Festival, which I actually—you ask about did I travel to see things—well, sometimes, and something like this, Yes! You don't know if you want to do a Russian production of *Twelfth Night* until you see it, because that's a little risky. I actually had a chance to go to Petersburg—or was it Moscow, I guess, where I saw this? Yes, I was there for the Chekhov International Theater Festival, and there were a lot of things going on, but this was the main thing I wanted to see.

Declan Donnellan is a very famous British director, but he was working in Russia quite a bit and produced this with this company. I asked him why he was working in Russia and did he speak Russian? No, he understood Russian some, but he said he worked in Russia because in Russia he could have the greatest actors who would work in this theater company. They're not doing TV, they're not doing movies, they're working in the theater company, the greatest actors in Russia. That's why he would go there and that's why we brought them here, because these were people you can't get in this country. Americans or Brits, they're all doing something else.

Anyway, so that was an interesting year. We had the *Peony Pavilion* and we had the Russian Shakespeare play that was directed by Declan Donnellan. And also we had the *King Arthur* of Mark [Morris] with Philharmonia Baroque. It was a really great year.

But you ask about budgets, and if you want me to talk about that for just a moment and how it relates to all of this stuff.

Riess: I do, of course.

Cole: Well, I told you earlier on that when I first got into the business of actually running a theater—I had run orchestras, because in order to be a conductor I started an orchestra—one of my goals always was to start something that had a life, had a future. And I told you before that the orchestra I started in 1960, in the Central Valley of California, still exists. I conducted at their fortieth anniversary, and at their fiftieth anniversary in 2010. That still exists. And I organized it in a certain way.

Riess: And it still exists because of the way it was organized?

Cole: Yes, because you had to make sure you had a support structure. You can't just start an orchestra and then go away. You have to have a support structure that is going to be sustaining.

But financially, of course, I think this issue of building a brand is the number one thing for financial sustenance. Now we went through several crises, as you know, in the time I was there. The crash of October '87—I had just arrived and the stock market drops five hundred points in one morning! Fortunately that was a short disaster, but it was very startling for a few days.

And of course 2001, the disaster in New York, and then the high-tech bubble bursting, whenever that was, 2001 I think also, around then. That really affected us in a very bad way. And I had the very bad luck of my last year being the worst financial crisis in our lifetime. I watched the Dow drop from 15,000 to 6,000 in the time I was finishing my last year. Fortunately, and we'll talk about it later, the artistic side, the last year was so artistically strong we sold a lot of tickets. But we couldn't raise a lot of money, because people were not writing checks when their stock market accounts were just going away.

It was a real crisis, as you may remember. And I was so focused on what I was doing I hardly—I paid attention to it because I had a little bit of retirement income, but I was just focused on trying to get through the year and trying to survive it physically, because I was doing way too much, conducting ballet, et cetera. It was all related, but it was just—I was stretched very thin.

Riess: And this really was your last year.

Cole: I had announced two years in advance that I was going to retire in September of 2009. I wanted to give a lot of time for the transition.

Riess: But you wanted to go out with a bang too.

Cole: Well, you had to plan. If you're going to have your last year you need at least two years ahead to plan that last year. And of course I'd been around to my friends, "Oh, it's my last year. Could Yo-Yo please come? Could Cecilia please come? Could John Adams do something?" And on and on.

Riess: You used it.

Cole: It was endless. [laughter] It worked mostly. It did work. And that saved us, because we had such a strong season. Cecilia of course sold out. We had donors coming from all over the West, certainly, and we had a lot of new donors. They didn't necessarily continue, because if Cecilia's not there they're not donors.

And Yo-Yo did something very special. I'm kind of jumping to my final year now, but talking about the financial support. Yo-Yo did a concert—he wanted to play the Bach solo cello suites, that year, that's what he wanted to do. And Yo-Yo does what

he wants to do and it's fine with me. We put it in a church [First Congregational Church], and Yo-Yo's fee is fairly high, which it should be, but the church has only seven hundred seats. I think we charged \$250 a ticket, something really outrageous, but it was sold out. Plus, you had to be a donor to buy a ticket. First of all you had to be a donor, then you had to pay a ridiculous amount, \$200 or more.

It was financially viable, but also, it was an artistic experience beyond anything you'd ever heard. Who hears Yo-Yo Ma playing in a seven-hundred seat hall? Nobody. So that was a strategy. Okay, it's going to cost a lot and we're going to put it in this small place, but you're going to get a lot of donors.

The other thing that anybody in this business has to really recognize is that if you have Yo-Yo and you have Cecilia and you have Mark doing something really great that people want to see, and you have Misha or whatever, the fact that they're on this series, you're selling subscriptions, people will buy all these other things because they *have to*. And this is something that I hang onto as a presenter even now up at the Green Center. The theory is, and every marketing person in America will tell you this, people do not buy subscriptions. Well, they are talking about symphony orchestras. People do not buy subscriptions the way they used to in 1956—they don't do *anything* like they did in 1956.

Riess: Nineteen fifty-six?

Cole: Yes, well that's what they're thinking about. In the fifties, and even the sixties, the symphony orchestra was king in this country. It was the center of musical culture, and people bought subscriptions and they went to the concerts. It's not that way anymore. They do *not* buy subscriptions as before. Our life is different now than it was then. But, if you're a presenter and you have Cecilia, they will buy subscriptions, I guarantee it, because they *have to*.

Riess: And write off the rest.

Cole: Well, they'll find other things, assuming you don't just have Cecilia. You have other interesting things too. If you have Ian Bostridge and Cecilia and Bryn Terfel—that's a nice little package. And then you can go see Mark do something too, *Dido and Aeneas*. You can see Yo-Yo play his world premiere with Mark that he did. You have to have other things, but I'm saying that people *will* buy subscriptions, and I've had trouble with people understanding that up at the Green Center.

If you do it right they will buy subscriptions, because they *have to* and because they want certain things. If you have those things they will buy subscriptions. It doesn't matter that their lives have changed. It's just—a presenter is different than a symphony orchestra or an opera or a ballet, which I've said before. You have to figure that out right at the outset.

Riess: But when you talk about *people*, you're talking about a moneyed crowd.

Cole: Well, if you get a 20 percent discount and you buy four events and one of them is Mariza and one of them is—I'm not talking about Cecilia—but they will buy subscriptions to other things too, because they want a good seat for Mariza. And the only way they can get it is to buy the subscription.

Riess: But you've also said, I think, that even though you get subscribers, they don't have value to you unless they become donors.

Cole: Well, that's the greatest value. But there's value and there's value. A subscriber is very valuable, because they buy tickets in advance. They loan you money with no interest. That's the only place you can get a no-interest loan.

Riess: I wonder how that money is invested and how real that is as income.

Cole: Well, on our financial report it shows as a debit. We owe these people this money, until the show happens. And then we paid them back. But they loaned us the money, and they loaned us the money a year and a half ahead sometimes, or a year ahead. Like right now at the Green Center we've sold a million dollars worth of tickets and the fiscal year is not over. That's for next fiscal year. Somebody has loaned us a million dollars for the next fiscal year.

Riess: Do you make money on that money?

Cole: I can't really say, because every organization is different. Sometimes you're just squeaking by, it's called borrowing from Peter to pay Paul, isn't it? You know what I'm saying. But on your balance sheet it shows as a debit. You owe them this money. Here it all goes into the university pot. We keep track of what we owe to the fund, but they're dealing with the money, we don't ever see the money. It goes someplace else and then comes back to us, and we fulfill our obligations.

But I'm just saying that subscribers are very important. And subscribers who become donors are doubly important. The way you do that is what I've just been saying, by having these artists who people get to know and feel connected to. It's this feeling of connection, "Oh, did you see Cecilia last year? "Yes, wasn't she great?" "And she's coming back this year." "Oh, let's go, but we have to buy a subscription and we have to be a donor." And that's powerful.

With a symphony orchestra you really don't have that power, because you might—let's say you have a great artist coming playing with the orchestra, but it's still an orchestra concert. It's like *last* year's orchestra concert. It's not something that we haven't had for four years, and *now* we're going to have it. We've had it every year. And that's really the big power, benefit, and the wonder of being a presenter.

You can create this world, which is totally unique and totally surprising. "My God! They're bringing the Beijing People's Art Theatre? I saw those people on a DVD!" This is a Chinese person talking, you know? A person from China. They know all about this, and it right away clicks to them. You can say that about all these different

niche markets that we were talking about, hundreds of niche markets, and the thing is to find the niche market that nobody else has already got.

Riess: How do you know what is going to get your niche audience to the box office?

Cole: Well, if it's something I don't know obviously I ask somebody else who *does* know. I told you about this first experience of presenting a show of Persian artists that I'd never heard of, and it came from my friend Robert Browning in New York. He worked at the World Music Institute, now retired, and he knew about all these different people from all over the world.

In the case of the Iranian audience, Persian audience, where we had these artists who were very famous in Iran and not known to me, at least then, well, I had some trepidation, because how many Persians did I know? Actually I knew an Iranian person, I've forgotten who it was now—actually one of my doctors was Iranian, but I didn't ask him—and they said, "Oh, this one guy especially is very famous and it'll be a big success."

[Tape 14: Side A]

Cole: But we sold out completely. Budd Cheit was there with his wife June, and he said to me, "Wasn't that amazing? You and I were the only two people that—that we knew each other!" [laughter] I mean, these other people all knew each other, but we didn't know any of them!

And it wasn't the regular sort of Cal Performances crowd, it wasn't the regular Berkeley crowd that you see at the theater or Berkeley Symphony—none of those people! Just a bunch of other people. That's an amazing thing, that's a thing a presenter can do. You can't do that with any other kind of performing arts institution or organization, and it makes this world so *interesting*. Your world—your work makes it so interesting. Just to do another nineteenth century symphony! And trying to figure out why that is different or unusual or special, it's impossible. Everything now is a festival. If it's really boring they'll make it a festival and try to make it sound interesting.

Riess: The Persians were in the World Music Series?

Cole: It was part of our World Music and Dance Series. We had two series, as I told you, that always made a net profit against expenses. But that was a very unusual situation, because it was beyond—some people who like classical Western music also like Brazilian music. However, it's a small group that crosses over between say grand opera, Wagner, and Persian music. [laughter]

Riess: The Persians. What did you do with them to welcome them, et cetera?

Cole: Often with something like that someone in the community will put together something, like for a Cuban show, or often a Latin music show, someone will have a big party at their house.

Riess: And do you go?

Cole: Oh, yes, yes. It's fun. It's exhausting, but yes, often that would be the case. And when we did things with Japanese artists, like I told you we did the Grand Kabuki on a couple of occasions, which was also a complete sellout. It's not like you have to worry about it. Just announce it and it sold, and very high prices, because they don't like low prices. They want high prices! They expect high prices.

And there's a special thing, called a hanamichi. Have you ever heard of that? Hanamichi? In Grand Kabuki you don't just have the stage. You have the stage, but in Tokyo, in Japan, they have a thing that's built out from the stage, which is like if you could think of a beauty contest or a fashion show, it's a walkway built out into the theater in a certain way. Of course because of that you lose a certain number of seats, but the seats *around* this hanamichi, if you have a seat right here, you're looking up at the main artist at times and you're really paying a lot for that seat. That made it extra special if you had a hanamichi seat. I think that's what it's called. I don't know if it's the right pronunciation. So that's a very, very special thing.

Anyway, all of those things were so interesting to learn. It's a treasured experience to have had these experiences with people from all over the world. Like Cesária Évora coming from an island off of Africa, and Mariza from Portugal. Every one of these people brings something that is so individualistic, besides the fact that they're great artists. They're culturally so different than my life experience. But it's like now I've *had* that life experience, I've had all these life experiences, I've been all over the world, and I didn't necessarily have to go! [laughing]

Riess: Did you keep a journal, a diary of all this stuff?

Cole: No, I wish. I'm not disciplined. I've told you how undisciplined I am.

Riess: How about a calendar?

Cole: I have some from the last four or five years that I've probably kept. I just toss them in a drawer.

Riess: It sounds like you wouldn't have time. You meet all these people—is that because it's in your nature? They don't necessarily need to know Robert Cole, do they?

Cole: Well, a lot of them got to know me because they would come back. I often would say, "Oh, you have to come back. When can you come back?" I would engage them.

Riess: Do you think that other presenters have more of a bureaucracy to work their way around? Were you more independent?

Cole: Well, I think it's more—thankfully I was independent, but also responsible. I had to make it work financially, but I had the freedom to make these decisions. If you don't you just can't do this, because you've got to act fast. For example, I had a contract with Anne-Sophie Mutter—did I ever tell you this?

Riess: No.

Cole: This is one of my great regrets, or failures. I was in London the year before I came here, the summer before I came here. And I went to the Proms and I heard this wonderful young violinist whose name turned out to be Anne-Sophie Mutter. She played the Dvorak concerto. At the intermission I went to one of the bars there, and I knew this guy who was her manager, a guy from Columbia Artists, Douglas Sheldon, I knew him quite well. And I said, "Doug, what are you doing here?" He says, "Oh, I'm managing this young violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter." This was in 1987—no, '86—and she had never been to this country.

I said, "Well, she's fabulous Doug. I'm going to Berkeley in just another month, and I'd like to have her. Any time, immediately, whenever you can get her there!" He said, "Okay, great, fine, wonderful." He's excited—here he's got a date already and she hasn't even finished her program!

But it turns out that when you come to the West Coast—I had never been a presenter out here although I came from here, I was a conductor when I was out here before—I learned that they have West Coast representatives. I'd always just worked with Doug because he's the manager in New York. And since I told Doug, I figured well, this is a done deal, Anne-Sophie Mutter, she's going to come. Nobody ever heard of her, but she's great.

Then I learned you have to deal with this West Coast guy. I did get together with the West Coast guy, he came by and we met each other and I reminded him—I said, "I saw Doug, we want a date. Let's get a date in the calendar." So fine, we got a date in the calendar. This was when I first got here, it was the very first couple of months. I've forgotten this guy's name, but it doesn't matter, because he became—he was an alcoholic and he did not last in this job.

And he also lost me my date, because somehow he didn't communicate with Doug, and I, because I had been told this is the way we do it in the West now, we deal with our West Coast representative, I didn't get back to Doug and say, "Doug, remember?" Doug forgot about it, and this guy forgot about it because he was drinking too much. I learned this later on, twenty years later, and what happened is Anne-Sophie Mutter made her debut with Ruth Felt.

I was *really* upset with Doug and with this guy that was drinking all the time. I had a date, I'd been holding it for six months! But I said well, she's young. "Just move on, just forget it." But then of course she became very, very famous, and she became for Ruth like Cecilia was for me, almost. She's sold a lot of tickets, she's really a great artist, et cetera.

It was one of those things where if you don't keep on it, you lose it.

Riess: In general was that necessary? You have to worry?

Cole: You have to be paying attention. And because of this change from the East to the West—I didn't realize that this could happen, I never thought that this could happen. Only, as I say, twenty years later did I learn from Doug that—this is amazing, I learned from Doug because he finally told me, when I started working at the Green Center and I wanted to get Anne-Sophie Mutter to come up there, he told me—I said, "Doug, you owe me. Remember what happened?" He said, "Yes, I remember."

I think it was one of his assistants who told me that—because even Doug didn't want to—he said he couldn't get a date for Anne-Sophie, because he'd forgotten about the fact *I* had a date. I was willing and anxious to present her, but he was just looking for dates for this young artist that nobody ever heard of. He offered it to Ruth, and Ruth said the fee was too high, \$10,000 or something, and she would do a split. Now, you don't do splits unless you're really desperate, you know what I mean? And of course I'd already offered a fee.

Riess: And you didn't do splits.

Cole: No, that's mostly done in popular music, where you guarantee a huge fee, and if there's any more they get a piece of that too!

That was one of those really incredible, mixed-up failures on my part because I wasn't paying attention, and one of my biggest disasters. It worked out well for Ruth, and I'm happy for her, but that's an example of why you have to pay attention and be really on it.

Riess: After you'd been here for a while and you had an organization behind you, did you still have to follow up on everything?

Cole: Oh, that kind of thing I had to absolutely. And then other people did all the work as far as the contract and so on.

Ruth and I are great friends, and I admire her so much for what she did. When I came out here we became, and there's no other way you can put it, competitors in certain areas. She only does recitals and some modern dance, so we didn't compete in every area, but in those areas we did.

Riess: Recitals is a big one for you.

Cole: It's a big interest to me and it's a big interest to my audience. We both—she does it very well, and I think we did it very well.

Riess: When you talked about the really tough days and how Yo-Yo could still sell out a performance at a very high fee—did he ever give you anything for nothing?

Cole: I would never ask. What Yo-Yo did for us and for the world—it's so over the top.

His fee is high but he's totally worth it. For example, when he did the *Silk Road Project*—he could keep on playing the Dvorak cello concerto for the rest of his life and make the same money, and solo recitals with one pianist. That's much easier and he makes more money. But no, he put together the *Silk Road* thing, and it was a lot of work, a lot of expense. Now he has to share the fee with six other guys, six or eight or whatever, who play all these unusual instruments.

No, his gift to the world—I've never what you call negotiated with his manager, who's a wonderful person also and really looks after him. The fee is very reasonable given what he does for your institution and what he does for your public. Other people are different, but he—he could charge more and get it, but he doesn't. I'm not saying he's not paid well, he is paid well, but he's worth it.

The same with Cecilia. The first fee I think was \$10,000 and the last one was \$125,000! I think that was with an orchestra too, which of course is more expensive. It's interesting that Cecilia came back—maybe I told you before, but Cecilia came back I think on two occasions in the later years with an orchestra conducted by this guy Giovanni Antonini, to whom I had given his American debut with *Il Giardino Armonico*. He was a recorder player who became a conductor, and he became Cecilia's favorite conductor. Twice they've been here together after I, in both cases, gave them their American debuts, but in different capacities. And right now, this summer, they're performing together at Salzburg Festival. They're the big stars of the Salzburg Festival, Cecilia and Giovanni Antonini.

Riess: It sounds like there is huge money on the line out there, and you need the agent because you don't want to talk money to a performer.

Cole: No, you don't. That just takes away the relationship. It's not like—well, it's true, none of us are doing this for money, even the people who are making big money. That's not why they're doing it. Cecilia would do this and I'm sure Yo-Yo would do it, just to earn a living, because they love doing what they're doing, even though they work so hard. In fact, I worry about people like Yo-Yo who work so hard. But everyone I'm talking about here—it's really hard work.

I'm reading this book by Renée Fleming right now, which is about her career. It's very interesting, because it's not just about her life, it's about how to become a singer when you're totally insecure and frightened of even going on stage or *talking*, and that's her.

Riess: Even though such a star.

Cole: Yes, regal and secure. But she's a regular person. She almost became a jazz singer. She was a jazz singer—that was her life almost, because she was singing in clubs, touring a little bit around upstate New York, where she was from, Rochester. Then she went off and became an opera singer. But when she talks about the work that she

went through, it's incredible! First of all, they have to learn how to sing, and then they have to learn how to sing in six languages—or three or four at least. So it's an amazing thing being a performer.

Riess: And they have this instrument, their voice, and something can happen to them, so they're fragile.

Cole: Well, especially singers, where your instrument *is* you and somebody says it's not good. That's very personal. If you say, "Oh, I don't like your violin-playing," well, it's just a piece of wood here. But if you don't like my voice, that's *me*. That's my body. And she says this in her book—it's obvious.

Riess: Have you nursed some performers through cases of nerves at the last minute?

Cole: Not necessarily nerves, because each one has to handle that in their own way, and you have to know whether you should talk to them or just let it go. But there was one singer who, maybe I mentioned before, she came and she wasn't really prepared. I think it was—I know in fact it was her psyche, her psychological state was not too secure. You could call it nerves, but it was more than that. Anyway, she came, she wasn't prepared, she was nervous, and the first part was a disaster. She was a famous singer with the Met. She was not a kid, she was not a beginner, she was famous at the Metropolitan Opera.

Anyway, the first part was a disaster, and I thought this is going to get worse. I knew her from New York a little bit, personally, I'd met her, that sort of thing. I went backstage at the intermission and I said, "I'm so sorry. I know you're not feeling well. Maybe you should just not do this, because it's not going well and I can tell you're not feeling well." She said, "You're right. I just can't do it." So I went out and announced that the artist had to discontinue the concert.

I didn't have to pay her. [laughing]

Riess: You didn't?

Cole: No, because if she doesn't finish—if she'd finished and it was a disaster you'd still have to pay her, and the audience is really upset. If you go out and say—this is the only time I ever had to do this—you go out and say sorry, she can't finish, well the audience is upset, but at least they get their money back and you don't have to pay her. If you let her finish they don't get their money back and you have to pay her.

That was the one time that I saved the day from an artist who—it was nerves partially, but she had psychological problems.

Every time I go to the stage myself, as a conductor—I can call it nerves, I don't know what you'd call it—it's very, very tense. It's one reason I'm not into conducting anymore. It's like I don't *need* that, I'd rather play tennis! [laughter] That's tense enough. It's a lot of stress, performing. It's a *huge* amount of stress.

My wife, Susan, she doesn't want to play anymore because she has to practice all the time, and she's a perfectionist. She doesn't practice all the time, and she doesn't have time because she's working all the time. She doesn't want to play unless she's perfect, and that's the way a performer is. Or else you're not a performer. The stress of being perfect all the time is *huge!* And of course, you're showing yourself in front of everybody.

Once I get in the pit, for example, myself, what I've been doing in the recent years, I'm okay. Once I get started I'm fine, I'm not stressed, everything is fine. Unless something goes wrong and for a moment you're stressed. But it's like because you're always—your mind is then in another place. You're not thinking about the future. You're thinking about this moment. And that's the wonderful thing about being a performer.

There are very few times in a human being's life when you can only live in the moment. Dogs live in the moment, but people are always worried about the future or regretting the past. And when you're a performer, for that moment, for the time that you're performing you're in the moment. Especially, of course, a jazz musician, which I can relate to my wife and jazz musicians, because they are not only in the moment performing, they are creating the music in that moment. It's not something they learned before, they're creating it, so it's really in the moment.

As I say, when I'm conducting I'm not thinking about the past or the future, I'm just thinking about that moment, which is a great relief.

Riess: But you might be thinking oh, here comes that measure that I've blown six times.

Cole: Yes, or they've blown six times. But it's a great relief just to get started.

Riess: The in-the-moment thing, even as a tennis player you've got to stay in the moment.

Cole: That's true. That's one reason I love playing tennis, because you have to focus on this moment, and you need to get out of the whole thing of worrying about the future or regretting the past. And this is—there are a few ways to do that. I seek out those opportunities. Except that conducting is so much stress, or performing. There's so much stress beforehand that it's a balance.

[Tape 14: Side B]

Cole: The Centennial Campaign was begun, as I say, at the worst possible time, with the housing crash in 2006. And it was the start of a long process. There are many things—you have to do a study to see how many donors will actually give you money, and then you have to form a committee, and you have to hire a firm to help you with this, a consulting firm, because we didn't have the staff to do this. Then you have to set the goal, and it's all very silent and quiet. Then you start raising money from the people that you think have real money, and you ask them for big gifts, way beyond what they would give annually.

The first major gift was a gift for the endowment, because we had these choices. A donor could make their choice. The first major gift we got was for \$3 million, for the endowment, from one individual. Well, that was a good start on a \$15-million goal. And the next gift we got was \$1 million, from a very generous person, a good friend of mine, a wonderful philanthropist, for the creative venture fund. That was his choice. And so on. And that was when I had my, as I told you, my wonderful development director, Tim Whalen.

Anyway, there were some gifts that were uncommitted or unspecified. People would just give—"Okay, here's \$50,000 I'm going to give to the campaign and you can do what you want with it." Now this is about managing money, very much towards the end of my career here. It was the Centennial Campaign, and the event where we announced it publicly in 2006.

"The air crackled with anticipation as the dressed-to-impress audience poured into the dimly lit Zellerbach Hall on Friday to celebrate Cal Performances' centennial gala. The lineup promised to be exquisite: Mark Morris, John Adams, Michael Tilson Thomas, Lisa Vroman, Michael Hayes and myriad other musicians and singers. The evening began when UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau came onstage to announce the initiation of the public phase of Cal Performances' \$15 million capital campaign. He said \$11 million already has been pledged. Then the Mark Morris Dance Group took over the stage. Accompanied by MMDG Music Ensemble, the group performed Morris' "V." Oakland Tribune, May 16, 2006.

When we had announced it we went public, which means you go out to everybody who'll give you \$10. We announced that we'd made our goal, and it was then that the big crash came. It was the 2008-2009 season. And I think it was probably towards the end of that fiscal year, the end of the fiscal year would be June 30. We had a finance meeting with my finance director and myself, and probably my general manager, and we're looking at the numbers and there's a million dollars in undesignated money in the campaign fund. Now we were very, very clear about the campaign fund and the annual fund. We never spent money from the campaign for the annual fund, although we needed it, but we didn't. So we were looking at this: we had a million dollars left of undesignated gifts in 2009.

My concern was—because I wasn't the only one freaking out! The university was freaking out, the whole country was freaking out. What's going to happen? You don't know what's going to happen. I knew someone was going to be replacing me the next year, and I was concerned that that million dollars, if it were sitting there on our balance sheet, undesignated, would maybe be just taken over by the university. Because who knows?

Riess: Because it happens.

Cole: Yes. Somebody else is going to be here, a new guy, a new person. And so I convened a meeting of our board Finance Committee, and I said I suggest that we designate this million dollars, which is undesignated, to the endowment, so that it will be part of Cal

Performances' future rather than subject to any tax, or whatever you call it. They agreed that was a good idea and so we did. We took our million dollars and put it under the endowment, and that made it I think to \$7 million for the endowment, because I think we'd raised \$6 million before and then it became \$7 million. We never talked about this outside of the board Finance Committee, and the board was then told at the next board meeting, this is what we did. This is what we're doing.

But you asked about balancing a budget. So at the end of that fiscal year, which was the worst fiscal year of my life, June of 2009, we had a \$307,000 deficit. But of course nobody really knows that we had a million-dollar surplus that I designated to the endowment so that it wouldn't be taken away. Because often in bureaucracies, and certainly in the federal government you know, or in state government, if you have any money left over they take it away from you.

Riess: At Cal you always spent the money that was left at the end of the year.

Cole: Exactly. I didn't want to spend it, I wanted to save it, and that was my one, I think, triumph financially, because we had an extra million dollars and we put it in the endowment, and it has probably grown to—now that the stock market has gone up it's probably worth \$6 million! With the blessing of the finance committee of the board, I took a million dollars that we had in unrestricted gifts and put it in the endowment in order to protect it from ending up in some other pot.

Riess: In the Cal Performances 2010-2011 annual report they talk of a balanced budget and they list entities that must have been part of your years there, the Mellon Fund, Wells Fargo, the Zellerbach Foundation, the Hewlett, the Osher. They were all on your watch, weren't they?

Cole: Mellon Fund only came in the year after I left, but it was a done deal before I left. They actually called me, the program officer there, Diane, called me when I was still there and said, "This is going to happen. But we can't commit it until we know who your successor is," which was I think very smart of them, only when they knew. Because it was based primarily upon the musical programming that we had done. It was in concert with two other university presenters, so it was a done deal, but they couldn't commit it until they knew that they would have somebody replacing me who would continue at least something of value that they're going to give the money to, so then it came through the following year.

Riess: Mellon Fund is national, unlike your other major donors that are Bay Area.

Cole: Yes, Hewlett being the most wonderful. And Osher of course, Barney Osher. And Zellerbach, of course.

Next time we can just wrap up with the centennial event and my good-bye event, because those are the big two.

Interview #10: June 11, 2013

[Tape 15: Side A]

Cole: This will probably be our last session together so I thought well, that means it's kind of a summing up of what we've been talking about, my time at Berkeley and things relative to that before I came to Berkeley, how I was prepared, or unprepared. And I thought of a book that I had read when I was very young. I told you I did all my reading when I was a teenager. And I haven't had time since.

I was a big fan of, as I told you, Russian novels, but I also read a lot of British writers, and one of my favorites was Somerset Maugham. I don't know if you know his little book called *The Summing Up*, which is a summing up of his life and his work. I couldn't find the book, because the books I read when I was a teenager, I don't know where they are! I couldn't find it, so I couldn't read it or look at it, but it's in my head.

I thought this final session should be kind of that. By talking about the last two seasons, the season of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, it is kind of a summing up, because a lot of the things that we did in those years, it was my attempt to say okay, this is what I've been thinking about, and we'll try and stuff it all into two years. I was into 2007-2008, 2008-2009, especially 2008-2009, and I had announced my retirement two years prior to its actual happening. I announced my retirement in 2007—it was essential, I felt, in order to give the university time to make the transition—and I retired in September of 2009.

But in my mind, also, I wanted to cram in a lot of things that I had thought about, had done, and maybe do again. Things I really liked, I wanted to bring them back, and particularly—I was fortunate, I went around begging some of my friends, like Cecilia, et cetera, which I'll talk more about later, to appear in the last season. It wasn't exactly convenient for some of them, but most of them came through. Anyway, I would say that the program that I tried to develop—you sent me a note asking about my musical taste, and I might just say a word about that.

Riess: I don't think we've talked about that in so many words.

Cole: No, musical taste, but also just taste relative to the arts. As you know, I trained to be a conductor. In our world, especially at that time when I was studying, that meant conducting symphony orchestras primarily. Although as I told you, I had a brief time when I was conducting for a ballet company, early on, before I even knew what I was doing, besides my earlier time when I was playing as a jazz musician, or playing gigs and so on as a saxophone player. So I've had a broad experience. But anyway, this training period was lengthy and very focused on studying the standard repertoire, all the Brahms symphonies, the Beethoven symphonies, the Mozart symphonies—the primary ones.

But at the same time, when I went to USC as a graduate student, I had somehow decided I wanted to be a musicologist, which seemed to make sense then. And my focus was early English music prior to Purcell, music from [John] Taverner to [Henry] Purcell, and so I studied what's called the In Nomine. I was writing a thesis or a dissertation on the In Nomine, and I won't go into all the details of the In Nomine, but you can look it up. It's a form of music peculiar to the English composers of that period, and it had a very interesting history.

Especially it was very interesting then, because someone had just discovered, not long before this time—this was in '56 when I started in graduate school—someone had just discovered why they were called In Nomine. Thousands of pieces that were written, and no one knew why they were called In Nomines, all of them, except that they had one common cantus firmus, and then someone had traced that cantus firmus to a particular piece, and voilà, they found out why they were all called In Nomine. Besides studying the *Meistersinger Overture*—(the opening music of an opera was always referred to as an overture until, I think Weber and then Wagner. His early operas had overtures but later he called them preludes as with *Meistersinger*. So the correct usage is prelude, but overture is often used even for *Meistersinger*, perhaps as it is so often performed as a separate concert piece as with many other "overtures." If it is confusing it should be just prelude, as it is further on here). I was writing about all this old English music and collecting things from the Bodleian Library in England, in the UK, and devoting myself to that for a couple of years.

Then I came to the realization—just as I had realized earlier I wasn't going to be Charlie Parker—that I didn't want to be a musicologist. I didn't want to sit in the library for the rest of my life, I wanted to be doing something with people. I had this wonderful conducting teacher, Ingolf Dahl, and I took several of his classes, and I had a chance to conduct the USC orchestra. The first piece I conducted, of a full orchestra, in my life, was the *Meistersinger Prelude*. I guess that pushed me over the edge.

Now what I'm getting at is—you asked about my musical taste. I no longer have much interest in going to hear a standard symphony concert. It's just really boring to me. Oh, there might be exceptions if there's a certain conductor, certainly the Vienna Philharmonic maybe. But it's very rare that it's of interest, unless it's a contemporary piece like Michael is doing—Michael Thomas is doing "*The Rite of Spring*." That's still an interesting piece to me. But there aren't many like that that are programmed on symphony concerts that are of any interest to me anymore, because I've either conducted them or I've heard them and so on too many times.

Riess: With "*The Rite of Spring*" there are still surprises?

Cole: Well, that's so great. That's another thing completely. Most of Stravinsky's output is totally interesting to me. Alban Berg and things like that, and other music. That's why I say that my interest mainly now is in old music and new music.

However, I have broad interests, and that's what I think the whole thing of running Cal Performances really required—and I was very clear about that to my committee when they were seeking a successor—it required someone with a serious musical background. Not someone who went to a concert once and decided they loved music, but someone who studied music, because there are all these things you need to know in order to really do it properly, I think. And one of those is to present a really fantastic dance program.

I was just looking at the last two seasons, where we had the Joffrey Ballet—and I'll talk about this in a moment—the Mark Morris Dance Company doing *Mozart Dances* with Jane Glover conducting, the Berkeley Symphony playing. No, we had the American Ballet Theater, I'm sorry, with the Berkeley Symphony, and Mark Morris's *Mozart Dances*, which was a great piece. We also had a couple of Russian ballet companies, but the problem is that in all of those you had to organize an orchestra. This is a producing project. The company's going to come, but in these cases—sometimes it was different and they came with their own orchestra.

Riess: But *you* had to organize an orchestra.

Cole: Yes, I had to organize it. There was nobody else there that knew how to do this. You *could* get somebody else, but I didn't have anybody else and I didn't need anybody else, because that's what I know. So you'd have to find out what's the repertoire? No, this is not going to work. But mostly, what's the repertoire? Okay, what's the orchestration? What kind of orchestra do we need? What are the difficult parts, and does that mean you need a really great trumpet player because it's *Swan Lake*? It can't be just any trumpet player—things like that.

In my next-to-last season, first of all, we did an unusual thing, and it was because of my personal background and my work I had done years ago with Twyla Tharp. I decided I wanted to do something *for* Twyla. Well, but Twyla doesn't want you to do anything for her. [laughing]

Riess: What would that mean? "To do something for her?"

Cole: Well, I thought she has done a lot of great things in her life, and she's a great talent, but she's a particular kind of talent. It's her. It's different. She's a genius, really, and she's a hard worker.

Anyway, I wanted to do this and I wanted to seek her collaboration, cooperation later. I wanted to get her here actually, as I told you about, like composers. I wanted to always *get* them here if I could if they were still living. And it's always difficult. It was particularly difficult because Twyla was busy doing Broadway shows. I don't know if you remember, at that time she was doing Broadway shows. One was successful, one was not successful.

I had the unfortunate bad luck that one of the times I went to see her in person preparing and planning this, she invited me to a little dinner and then to the dress

rehearsal of this piece that was *unsuccessful*. It was a very dreary thing because she was so tense. Twyla is tense enough, just under normal circumstances. But when she's seeing this show that's not working, and I'm sitting next to her!

Anyway, we did what I called Focus on Twyla Tharp. We brought three American ballet companies—people think I'm only into Russian and they're wrong—I brought Joffrey, American Ballet Theater, and the Miami City Ballet because they all were able and willing to do a piece or pieces by Twyla Tharp. These are all famous pieces, not just pieces, because one of them was *Deuce Coupe*, which was done in the sixties, a very famous piece, and a lot of the people who saw it originally hadn't seen it since maybe. So that was my little tribute to Twyla. I had presented Twyla when she was just beginning with her own company in the early eighties when I was at Bardavon Opera House, so I presented her then and now.

And I think a lot of people appreciated it, and some people didn't maybe.

Riess: But she appreciated it?

Cole: I think she did yes. But I couldn't get her out here because she was too busy. Twyla's a hard worker, she's focused. She gets up every morning at five o'clock in the morning, gets dressed, gets a cab and goes over to the gym and works out. That's it, and then she comes back and works. She's a worker.

And at the same time, that year I brought back this great dancer, Nina Ananiashvili, who was with Mariinsky Theatre for many years, but she's really Georgian, that's where she came from. She had been asked to take over the state ballet of Georgia, when Georgia became a separate country. This is some years ago. She is or was the number one *Giselle* in the world at that time, and this was the end of her career, but she was still the number one *Giselle* in the world.

People who saw it here I think appreciated it. But I saw her last performance of *Giselle* at the Metropolitan Opera with ABT, and it was pandemonium. Oh my God, people from all over the world were there, and I was so lucky to be there too, because people realized, in the larger dance world—I don't mean the local dance world, I mean the dance *world*—that she was the greatest *Giselle* of our time.

Riess: How old was she?

Cole: She was in her early forties, I guess. I brought her to do *Giselle* and she also brought, which was really wonderful—we did two different programs—a piece by Alexei Ratmansky, who I think is now probably one of the most gifted if not *the* most gifted choreographer living today and now working with American Ballet Theater. We did a premiere of his here that he took other places and it has been done often since, and also a piece by Yuri Possokhov, who was from San Francisco Ballet. So we had Nina here that year, for the last time.

Also we did this production of *Swan Lake* by Natalia Makarova, who lives here. I could never understand why the dance community doesn't recognize more the fact of who she is and how great she is. This production was certainly the most beautiful production I've ever seen of *Swan Lake*. It was done by this Perm Ballet.

And you say, "Perm, why Perm? And who's Perm and where is that?" Well, it has a very interesting history, which I'll try and give in thirty seconds or less. Perm was, first of all, the birthplace of [Sergei] Diaghilev, the greatest presenter in history. I went to his house, which is now a museum, when I was in Perm to see this company. But also, the other interesting historical thing is that during the Second World War it was the home of the Mariinsky Theatre, and opera and ballet.

Riess: Where is it?

Cole: It's near the Urals. It was away from the war was the main thing. They sent the whole company there during the war to get away from the Siege of Leningrad. Anyway, it was there, and of course the Soviets built this giant dance school in Perm, which was just like Mariinsky, and that giant school still exists. And so there's this tremendous history of training dancers, because when they went back to Mariinsky and back to Petersburg—or Leningrad at that time—everybody went, except the school stayed. They have a lovely opera house, which was built, by the way, in Diaghilev's time. His family was one of the contributors to the building of it—a beautiful opera house.

And so that's the history of the Perm Ballet, and it has a great corps de ballet because it has a great school. Just like Balanchine said, "I have to have a school, then I have a company." And that's true of any ballet company. You need a school and then you could have a company. Otherwise you don't have a corps de ballet that's really ready.

Riess: But most of the people graduate out of it, don't they?

Cole: Well yes, that's one of the problems they have in Perm, is a lot of them graduate and go to Mariinsky, or they go to God knows where, Covent Garden. I brought them because of Natasha, her production, which she produced with such care and love—and they have a great corps de ballet, and in *Swan Lake* the corps de ballet is almost everything.

Riess: Was that a kind of comeback?

Cole: Well, she hasn't been noticed around here in the way that she should have. She goes all over the world and sets ballets. Right now she's doing *La Bayadère*, which I'll also talk about in a minute. Then she was doing *Swan Lake*, because she knows these pieces like nobody else. But I thought she should get a little acknowledgement here in her hometown. Anyway, that was a big dance season, but a lot of it has to do with music, as you can hear, because in most—not every case but in most cases we were hiring a live orchestra, and that was the Berkeley Symphony, or "Members of the Berkeley Symphony" as we called it. But it also was the last performance in Berkeley of Pina Bausch that year. So it was a sentimental thing.

Riess: Were you conducting that year too?

Cole: Some, but not much. I did *Giselle*, yes, because I had done it before with Nina, we had done it a number of times before in other places. We opened at the Edinburgh Festival with *Giselle* the day that the war started in Georgia. It was on the front page of all the newspapers in the world, including in the UK, that Nina was in town doing *Giselle*, and the war just started, or vice versa, so that was a very stressful opening and dress rehearsal. Anyway, that was that year.

But the other thing I really cherish, looking back on it, is that we had these special events usually each year, special events meaning you can't buy them separately. You have to buy them with—you have to buy something else.

Riess: It's often Yo-Yo Ma.

Cole: It's often Yo-Yo, and it was Yo-Yo Ma that year. It was also Bryn Terfel, the great baritone, and it was an opera we produced with San Francisco Opera called *The Little Prince*, an opera we also put in our Family Series, which we did for families and they could bring kids. The opera was part of that, and it worked wonderfully. We sold out, I don't know, six performances. It was very successful. It also had been played, or was played later I guess, at New York City Opera, but it was a very successful project.

Also that year, as one of our special events—looking at the brochure reminded me—I had brought Rolando Villazón, the great young Mexican tenor, just the year before, for his debut here. It was in Hertz Hall. It was a huge success. People went nuts. I immediately reengaged him for the following year, which would be 2007-2008. I didn't do that very often, but I did it with Cecilia, I did it with Rolando, and a few people like that. They were still young enough at that time that yes, they could come back the next year. They weren't that busy yet. As it happened, Rolando's career took off like a rocket, but at the same time he had vocal problems. So while he's in the brochure, he didn't sing this concert because he started to have vocal problems. Now that's history, because he's fine and he's singing brilliantly again, and I'm trying to reengage him.

Anyway, these were our special events. I refer to that because I want to talk about it a little bit in the final season, where it became a very big deal for various reasons. Also that year, in addition to Mark Morris's *Mozart Dances*, which was a series of dances put to Mozart's music, which was fabulous, with Garrick Ohlsson playing the Mozart piano concertos, so great—we also did *The Hard Nut*.

And we had a great recital series, and all that stuff, and you asked about twentieth century music—we did, again, our series of Composer Portraits. One of them was Jorge Liderman's fiftieth birthday celebration that I told you about. And we had Christopher Taylor playing Messiaen, Olivier Messiaen. He's not alive, so I couldn't bring the composer here, but he did a very big piece. And we had Dawn Upshaw and a piece [*Ayre*] by [Osvaldo] Golijov, doing the piece with a group called eighth

blackbird. So we had the Composer Portraits Series that I talked about earlier, for contemporary music.

And we had the Takács Quartet. I mentioned before that we had certain artists that were exclusive to us, just because of various things—personal relationships with the artist or with the management. Cecilia was an example, the Takács Quartet was another example. I presented them here first, we really liked each other, the audience really liked it. It became so popular we were sold out on subscription in advance. And then we started doing two concerts. And in my last year [2008] we did two concerts, which I'll talk about. Well, and we did two concerts in this [2009] year too, and they were different, not two of the same concerts but different concerts.

Riess: You started this interview talking about your early interest in music scholarship, and in a way you have become a professor of music, and the university is your classroom.

Cole: Well, I have a very eclectic taste, I would say. I don't know why, it just is. As I say, I started playing violin, then I played saxophone and clarinet, and was a working musician. Then I became briefly a musical scholar—well, I was always interested in that music and still am. One of my favorite composers is Purcell, absolutely. I'd much more happily go to a concert of Purcell's music than nineteenth century music. It's just much more interesting to me.

Riess: You were a serious kid. I don't know why I would not have realized that.

Cole: I was just devoted to working. I think part of it was because I had not a very good home life, because of what I told you before. I had problems at home because my father had died and my mother was working and doing the best she could, and so on. So I turned myself just into the work—work and reading. It's funny how when you're young you have so much more time.

[Tape 15: Side B]

Cole: When you're young you have time to do things like read long Russian novels. I don't know how that's possible, because looking back—I thought I was pretty busy then, but I had time to do that. Now, since then, since I've started my working life, I really don't have that time. There's so much to do to get it done! Anyway, it's different for some reason. It seems like when you're young you have more time.

Riess: But that metaphor of you being the professor, I want to ask whether you had this student body, this entity of the university in mind—this seems like a bad yes-no question—or were you doing Cal Performances for a larger community?

Cole: Well, in the last season I wrote a little piece for the program book, the brochure, and I say [reads], "Throughout my career I've considered myself first and foremost a teacher, whether it be in the role of conductor or director of this exceptional organization," et cetera. I do see it that way. A conductor, a maestro, is somebody's teacher. You sent me a little note asking did I think I reached students? Well, the

trouble with that question is does that mean did ninety percent of the students at Berkeley go to Cal Performances and have their life changed? No. But it's not about a numerical counting.

It's interesting, and just when this is on my mind, the other night I was channel-surfing and there were the Tonys, the Tony Awards. I didn't watch the whole thing, but I just happened to catch when they announced the best play, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. It's by Christopher Durang, and I know his work. Anyway, he got on the stage, and this is a play that started at the McCarter Theater, apparently, and then it was on Broadway, of course, and won the Tony Award for best play this year.

The first person that I recall hearing him thank—they always thank all the people involved in the gestation of the work—was a young woman named Mara Isaacs, who was a Berkeley student, had worked for Cal Performances, and she's now the producing director of the McCarter Theater, which is in Princeton. She's been there for years. She was involved in putting on plays here and she worked for Cal Performances—I've forgotten what she did, because it was so long ago, but I've never forgotten her name. "Thanks to Mara Isaacs," because she was the producing director at McCarter Theatre, which got this thing started.

Riess: And I know that you had some internships at Cal Performances, or jobs for students?

Cole: Oh various jobs. They were real jobs. It might be in the box office, it was all kinds of different things. And Mara did things. But she also was doing little plays. Because remember, I had Student Musical Activities, and that was jazz, it was chorus, but the choral groups also did plays, because it was—like musical theater, so the choral groups—some people don't know that, but they also did plays.

It depends on what students were there. If there were students interested in doing plays, they did plays. It's like Peter Sellars at Harvard. He did plays and operas, that's what he did at Harvard.

Riess: Student Musical Activities, SMA, did you basically hand that off to someone? You couldn't be in charge of that too.

Cole: No, no. But I had the directors and they did all the work, but I definitely had a close relationship with all of them. I paid attention, but they did all the work of course. I didn't have to do anything besides just make sure that—especially if somebody left. When Susan [Muscarella] left, it was really hard.

Riess: You mean your Susan?

Cole: My Susan, yes. Susan Muscarella. She was director of the jazz program in Student Musical Activities. She graduated from Berkeley as a composition major, and her instrument was piano, but it was also a jazz piano.

Riess: I think I went to noon concerts by Susan.

Cole: Really! I missed those, probably because I wasn't here. She studied with Andrew Imbrie here at Berkeley. The idea is she was studying composition, because that's what jazz is, it's composition. She was studying with this very, very wonderful composer. But when she left, then I had a big problem, I had to find a replacement. And that's where—even though I had a lot of experience, I didn't have a lot of success in replacing her.

Riess: The jazz thing, have you continued to play clarinet, or be part of a group or do anything with it?

Cole: I gave that up years ago. Probably the last time I played was when I was in LA. And you know, you have to practice every day if you're going to do that, if you're going to be a player.

Riess: Any instrument? Or are you saying that the wind instruments particularly?

Cole: Well, everything. Any instrument, but maybe more so a little bit because of the physical issue of the embouchure, and so on, which you can lose fairly quickly.

I used to play violin, and viola, of course, because when I lost my violin chops, so to speak—most violin music is harder than the viola music, so if you're a violin player who hasn't practiced, maybe you can play viola, so I did. And this relates to my final season also—I'll get to that. When I was a student at USC we used to have chamber music nights, because I was still playing then. Not jazz, but playing clarinet, and we used to have chamber music nights, where I would invite string quartet friends of mine over, and we would play Mozart's Clarinet Quintet [in A Major]. There's only one, and it's the greatest piece.

I could play that, and I would play that. And we would play Mozart viola quintets, and I would play second viola, because I could do it, still, in those days. We would have a whole evening of Mozart, and I could play on both the clarinet and the viola. And of course some of my favorite pieces, music that *I am* still interested in, are the Mozart viola quintets. These are the greatest pieces. There are six of them, and they're fabulous, and I played them all because, as I told you, that's what I did.

So for entertainment we would have these chamber music nights, these soirees, and Alex, my young son, at the time he was very young, was playing cello. Occasionally he could sit in on something, like we did the Schubert [String] Quintet [in C Major] where there's a 2nd cello part, so he would occasionally sit in too, as he grew up. But I gave up playing completely. After I got into managing theaters, playing was not possible.

Riess: Would you ever request, for instance of the Takács, that they play a particular piece?

Cole: Yes. I was going to talk about that. I will tell you about that. Yes, exactly, I very much did, and it's an interesting story I think, an interesting event in the final year.

That kind of covers the next-to-final year. Can we just talk about the final year and wrap it up here? I had announced my retirement by the time I was really getting into this. I had thought about it before I announced it, of course I had thought about it for several years.

Riess: Were you thinking about it quietly to yourself, or with Budd Cheit or anything?

Cole: No, just mostly to myself. He knew that I was thinking about it, I mentioned it occasionally.

I was so busy, frankly. I was just way overcommitted, because every time—it's not just like presenting concerts. Every time we do one of these things it's a major project. And if you're putting the orchestra together and you have to plan the rehearsal schedule and who's going to be the conductor? Is it going to be this conductor or that conductor—Jane Glover, for example, or somebody else? It's not like doing a series of concerts that you present. It's like doing a series of productions that you have to juggle, and it's also not like an opera company where you just do six productions a year maybe.

Riess: The idea of operating both in the here and now, and in the future, is hard on the head.

Cole: Well, that's actually fun though. It's very fun.

Anyway, my final year I wrote this—is this the right one? [looking at brochure] Let's see. Somebody on my staff, it might be Hollis or I'm not sure who, came up with the idea that the final year of the brochure I would write these little vignettes about the program. You see how it was done here?

Riess: Yes, yes. Sidebars.

Cole: Sidebars they're called, yes, exactly. Some of them are kind of interesting, looking back, to me, because it's all true. Like the special events, remember I said that became more and more of an important thing as time went on, as we built up this reputation, and some of these artists became so famous that we had presented, and we had exclusive presenting rights to them. It became very important because it really helped our ticket sales. You could only buy Cecilia—you had to be a subscriber, and then we had moved it up to you had to be a donor also, that's how we survived. This was just business, this is how this business works.

Anyway, our final season, our special events, the opening event was Angela Gheorghiu, the great soprano, and this was a co-production with San Francisco Opera. We had the opera orchestra, and I did not pay for the opera orchestra because they wanted to do it, and so they gave us the orchestra. We collectively, the Opera and ourselves, paid the soloists, but the orchestra came as a gift!

Riess: Was that a tribute to you?

Cole: No. It's a long story, it's complicated, but it was something that they needed to do because they had a contract with Angela, and they didn't want to do it or couldn't do it in the opera house. And so we collaborated to make it work, because they wanted to have Angela as part of their roster. But it didn't work out in this particular time, and anyway, in the opera house it wouldn't be as good as at Zellerbach. It turned out it worked for them, and it worked with us, so everybody was happy, because we sold out completely. It was with the orchestra and a wonderful conductor that came along from New York that I know, Marco Armiliato.

Then also, Cecilia Bartoli was one of our special events. I had, not begged, but I had asked if she would consider one more time to get on the airplane to come out and do this concert, which she did.

Yo-Yo was touring that year, but he hadn't planned on coming here because he'd been here so many times. And he was only doing the Bach Cello Suites, suites no. 1, 3, and 5 for solo cello. I told you this earlier. There are not many places you can do that, you can't do that in Zellerbach Hall. And so you can't pay Yo-Yo the fee that he deserves and requires from the ticket sales, normally, in a smaller hall where you should do this. Maybe some people did it in a bigger hall. I didn't, as I told you, I didn't want to and I wouldn't. So we put it in the First Congregational Church, and we charged very high prices, but it was only available to donors. You couldn't buy it unless you were a donor. And so it helped our contributions and it was full, it was sold out.

Riess: First Congregational has more seats than Hertz?

Cole: No, it's about the same, a little less actually. But it has more resonance.

Riess: Would you ever consider Grace Cathedral?

Cole: Actually, that last year or the year before maybe, Tallis Scholars was another one of our exclusive presentations. Either 2007-2008 or 2008-2009 we started doing two performances of Tallis Scholars, just as we did with Takács Quartet, because they were so popular they would sell out. And one year we did two performances of Tallis, with one in the church, First Congregational, and one in Grace Cathedral, because I wanted to get Cal Performances out there. But that was a one-off thing, because there's not much music that's really appropriate to Grace Cathedral. It's *so* resonant it's way over the top, whereas the First Congregational Church is kind of in the middle resonance-wise.

I notice we also did something which normally is only common in the popular music business, where if you put on Sting or somebody—I don't know if Sting is the right one, but a very, very hot artist—you don't let people buy more than, let's say, a certain number of tickets, because otherwise the scalpers will buy them and they'll resell them. Well, I knew it would be the same case here. We limited it so could only buy four tickets per person or household, and that was true of the Angela Gheorghiu, Cecilia Bartoli, a limit of four tickets per person or household. With Yo-Yo it was a

limit of two tickets per person or household. In other words, you could be a donor, but you still could only buy two tickets. You couldn't buy more tickets for your friends, is the point.

Riess: You talk about the significance of those concerts in your program notes here.

Cole: Yes, that's when I said that [reads], "My last season as director of Cal Performances would not be complete without a visit by two of my colleagues on this year's Special Events series, artists who have been central to the success of Cal Performances. In a now legendary 1991 recital in Hertz Hall, Cecilia Bartoli made her first West Coast appearance and since then has enjoyed an astonishing career." Which is all true. So she came.

And then I talk about Yo-Yo, how he not only played recitals, but he came and we launched his acclaimed *Silk Road Project*. We were the first to do the *Silk Road Project* and it wasn't just a concert, it was a two-week event. And he also did, with Mark Morris, the West Coast premiere of *Falling Down Stairs*, the Bach Suites with Mark, and a piece called *Kolam*, which involved Yo-Yo and Mark Morris.

Anyway, that year our Dance Series—after having all these American companies the previous year, now we had the three best American ballet companies, that is, outside of San Francisco Ballet. I mean, I don't need to present San Francisco Ballet, they're here. But anyway, the other ballet companies in America, the American Ballet Theater, Miami City Ballet, and Joffrey. It doesn't mention New York City Ballet, because they so seldom tour, and it's so difficult. And why is it difficult? Because of the musician's union.

Anyway, so the next year, the final year—you've asked me before, do I like themes and the answer is I don't like themes, because it locks you into stuff. But one of the themes the previous season was Twyla Tharp, as I mentioned. But the theme also was international dance, because we had Pina, we had Nina Ananiashvili, we had Mark Morris, we had Twyla—it was international.

Riess: Do you think people noticed these themes?

Cole: I don't know if they do or not. I don't think so, because the people who are interested in Pina aren't necessarily interested in *Giselle*. That's fine, I'm interested in *all* of it. I know that there are people who just like this or they just like that, and that's fine. I don't think it should be done just because I like this, and then I don't like that. You know what I'm saying.

Anyway, the Dance Series in my final season, it had some highs and lows—or not lows, but highs and not so highs, let's put it that way. And the highs certainly—well, at least the thing that I thought was fun or the greatest thing was probably we brought back Mark Morris's *L'Allegro, il Penseroso [ed il Moderato]*. That was a masterpiece and we did the West Coast debut of it years ago. It involves the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and again, it's a production. You have to get the orchestra set up,

you have to bring a conductor in—we brought in Jane Glover from London. And you have to have the singers.

We also did something that nobody else, probably, has ever done. And it was kind of the way things fell out, I didn't decide to do this and then go work it out, it's just the way things happened. The Kirov Ballet and Orchestra—which is really good, to have the orchestra with the ballet—was going to be doing a tour, so I thought great, let's do that. I knew the guy who was arranging it, and it worked out on our schedule. But they were not doing full-length, they were doing what you call a mixed program, and I did two mixed programs.

And one of the things they were offering on the mixed program was the Kingdom of the Shades from *La Bayadère*—do you know that? It's the second act of *Bayadère*, and it's a very famous piece. It's a corps piece, corps de ballet, and it's fabulous, and the music is fabulous, and the dancing is very beautiful and it's just hypnotic it's just heavenly. So that was going to be on the Kirov Ballet and Orchestra program, one of the mixed bills.

And then I learned that the Bolshoi was going to tour too. And they were offering a couple of different ballets, but most of the ones we had done. They were probably offering *Swan Lake*. We'd done that many times. *Don Quixote*, we'd done that. And they were offering *La Bayadère*. We'd never done that. That had never been done here, and it's not done in this country very much, hardly at all. And the other thing about it is that you can't do it unless you have a great corps de ballet. It's not easy for an American company to do that, because you have to assemble this great corps to make it work.

Riess: You mean a larger corps?

Cole: Not larger, but greater. Large and great, where every dancer looks like they came from the same school, which they *did*. Anyway, they were offering *La Bayadère*, and I thought that would be interesting maybe for people, because people don't see this in this country. They would see The Kingdom of the Shades, the most famous part of *La Bayadère*, and then they would see the whole *Bayadère* in the same season.

Riess: Yes, how terrific!

Cole: I remember when we did the Kirov production, and we had the Zellerbach Room, which is where high-end donors can come and have whatever, or board members, and so on—I knew them all, all the people who would come there—one of my favorite people, Charles Linker, came in after *Bayadère*, Kingdom of the Shades, and he'd never seen it before, of course. Most people there, even though they'd seen ballet, they'd never seen this. He came into the room and he said something like, "This is the most beautiful thing I've ever seen." He is a very famous physician who specializes in cancer treatment, retired now, a very good guy.

Anyway, we did these two Russian ballets with ballet companies, which was sort of like—too much of riches, the two greatest ballet companies in Russia here in one year. But also, we had Mark's *L'Allegro* and we had Merce Cunningham [November 2008]—that's another big story.

We had Merce Cunningham, and we did a lot of different stuff, because we had premiered and commissioned so much of Merce Cunningham's work over the last twenty years, some of the greatest work, one of them being *Biped* and other things which we repeated in this last year. And he also did a lot of work with the Dance Department. There was also a whole sort of "happening" up in the Pauley Ballroom organized by this young woman, Lisa Wymore. She's a faculty member who had come fairly recently and was wonderful about working with us on things like this. There's a description of it in here someplace.

We did a full week of Merce Cunningham, with two weekends, and it was really a retrospective of his output. And we did this happening that Lisa organized with the company and her dancers, the student dancers, up in the Pauley Ballroom, and that was fantastic. The students were performing and it was all very, very great.

The other thing that happened, which is not in the brochure—because Merce was going to be here and I've worked with him for so many years, back in Buffalo in the seventies and then in Poughkeepsie in the eighties, and then when I came here—Merce did, for years, what he called *events*. That would mean he would just—he could be in a space, in a gym or whatever, and he would just take various things and put them together. There might be music or there might not be music, you know? And they would do this stuff and people would come and watch. They were different every time. It was very extemporaneous, like jazz.

[Tape 16: Side A]

Cole: That year I brought to the attention of Merce and his company manager the fact that there was this wonderful venue out in Richmond called the Craneway Pavilion, which is owned and was developed by a very good friend of mine, Eddie Orton. He was on my board for quite a few years, that's how I got to know him—he's a developer and this is one of his development projects. If you've been there you know it's a wonderful open space in a magnificent building built by Henry Ford, the Ford Company, in 1923.

I took Merce out to see it. Maybe that was the year before, I don't recall. But at some point before he got here I took him out there—it was quite a bit before he got here, obviously—to see this place. He was completely blown away with the space, because it had this light—it's on the water.

I said, "Maybe we could do an event out here. You've been doing this all these years, and I've had the pleasure of seeing many of them, but we've never"—I don't think we did them much here because we had no real space for them. Besides, we were so busy, like when we did *Ocean* in the [Harmon] Gym, that was such a huge project,

we couldn't do something else. It was too much. But this year I figured we could do *anything*. And also, Eddie Orton, who is such a great guy, he was up for it. He said yes—he'd just gotten this place and opened it but nothing was happening there, pretty much, and he wanted something to happen there. I said, "Let's try this! Let's see if anybody will come." It's Richmond and it's Merce Cunningham, God knows if anyone will come! [laughing]

Merce got interested in it and said, "Yes, let's do this." He had been working with Tacita Dean, who's a very famous—what would you call her? She's an artist and she works in film, but it's not like making a movie, it goes into a museum. She'd worked with Merce on something previously, and so they knew each other. And somehow we got Tacita here to see this place. I think they came together, Merce and Tacita, and they both loved the space. "This is great." Tacita says she wants to do this. She wanted to make a work of art out of this event, which she did.

Anyway, they rehearsed there, and—they were doing all this other stuff too, five different programs in Zellerbach Hall, plus the thing with the students, and somehow we managed to do this too. I don't know how. Tacita filmed the rehearsals, and I guess she filmed some of the performance too. Anyway, we had two performances. I think it was on a Sunday. I think one of them was at one and one was at four, something like that, both the same day.

Riess: They're extemporaneous?

Cole: Well, Merce works it out. It doesn't look like there's any plan to it, but there is. It's just that he works it out with his dancers, and they know how he works, and he kind of just makes it up. But it's not like *Biped*, which the next time you see *Biped* it will be the same. This is something that's different every time.

So we did that, and Tacita filmed it and then she did whatever she did, and it ended up in the Tate Museum. It also ended up in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. And of course Eddie Orton was delighted! The Craneway was suddenly in the *New York Times* with a picture of Eddie! [laughter] It was great, really, because it did two things—because Eddie and his wife Amy had been so helpful in so many ways, both to Cal Performances and me at Berkeley, but also to Susan and her Jazzschool. So that relationship has meant a lot.

The funny thing is that because this was such a success—and it was an international success, ended up at the Tate Museum—that's where it went first [in 2011]. But it has been in other museums, I'm sure, because Tacita is quite a famous artist.

Riess: It's in the Turbine Hall at the Tate?

Cole: I don't know, but I guess, a place where you go and sit down and you look at this for as long as you want. Like in any museum. You look at it and then you leave. That's the way it's meant to be seen. The only time it's ever been shown as a movie was here at PFA [Pacific Film Archive]. Tacita agreed to have a show of the whole thing

here, because it was done here, but otherwise it's only in museums, and it's shown as you see it in pieces. But here it was shown one night or two nights, I've forgotten, the whole thing. It was very beautiful, but it's not what she has in mind, but that's what we wanted to see once at least, those of us who were involved with it. Anyway, those were some of the highs.

Riess: Just a quick question, apropos PFA and the University Art Museum, did you ever work with the dancer Anna Halprin on anything?

Cole: No. But I saw her backstage at one great event when Baryshnikov did this retrospective sixties performance that some people loved and some people hated. It was like he reconstructed these pieces from Anna Halprin, and people like that, of that period. His company was fabulous, if you like that stuff, which I did, I think it's interesting. There are a lot of people around here who like it because they know some of these people.

Anyway, I went backstage after that and there was Misha and there was Anna Halprin, and all these *other* people from that world, who came here, some who live here and some who don't. Names—I don't remember them all. I just wish I'd had a camera, because they were all in one room, and most of them are probably dead now, unfortunately. It was an amazing night, and they just all showed up because I think this was maybe the first performance of this particular production that Misha created. Misha is a really brilliant guy, he does these interesting things.

Anyway, so that's some of the backstories of that final year.

I made a couple of other notes here. Remember I told you in my first year I came here I wanted Richard Goode, Murray Perahia, and András Schiff? Not all in one year, but I wanted some sometime. So, in my last year I had Richard Goode, Murray Perahia, and a guy that is also so interesting that I had here a number of times, Krystian Zimerman. Besides being a great player—he's a totally wonderful player but he's from Europe, so he's not so available to us. But the other problem why he's not available to us is because he only travels with his own piano.

Riess: What kind of a piano is it?

Cole: It's a Steinway, a European Steinway, a Hamburg Steinway. Krystian's a wonderful guy. He's not a kook, he's just a perfectionist. He gets his piano, probably picks it up in New York. Then when he comes to the West, where he'll do three or four or five concerts on the West Coast, he'll pick up a piano in LA or something, or in San Francisco—I think in LA. And that piano, he drives with it—that is, he has a driver and he has the piano in a truck, I guess, or in a trailer.

When he stops in a hotel at night, if he has to stop overnight, he takes the action out—the action can be pulled out, you take a couple of screws off and the action comes out. That's all the little hammers and all that stuff. He takes it to his hotel room, usually a motel or one of those places, like in Santa Barbara or something, and he works on the

thing. He works on the hammers, perfecting the feel of them. The body's just sitting in the truck, and he's got the musical part here in his room. When he comes here he does the same thing. The first time I ever met him, when I brought him here the first time, I'm on the stage, because he's here for his rehearsal. I want to meet him and greet him, and so on. And he walks in carrying the action in his hands.

Riess: The hard drive!

Cole: Yes, right! [laughter] Somebody else moved the piano in, but he has the works in his hands. He comes in, shoves it in there, gets out his screwdriver [imitating the sound the tool makes] and then he sits down and plays. He had been working on it all the night before. But as I say, he's not a kook, he's just a perfectionist. So I had him that last year [April 24, 2009], along with these two greats, Murray and Richard, who are willing to come and play on the piano that you have, although they are particular. You have a technician come in. But Zimerman *is* his own technician. He doesn't rely on any other technician. But it makes it difficult, because as I say, he drives, he doesn't fly, and he's always with his piano. He sleeps with his piano.

Riess: It's interesting that you say he's not a kook. That means that you've had your share of kooks over the years?

Cole: Not too many. A serious musician who makes a serious career like this—they have to be serious people.

Riess: You would think Glenn Gould might be one.

Cole: Well, I never knew Glenn Gould, unfortunately. But Glenn Gould was a perfectionist on this order, only more so perhaps. He only wanted to record, because then he could control everything. That's why my Susan doesn't play concerts, because she's such a perfectionist. Or she plays very seldom, because it has to be perfect or she doesn't want to play. Well, that's what an artist is, and it makes it difficult for people that either have to deal with a piano, and Glenn had to deal—he'd go around and he'd come upon some crummy piano—he'd have to play it and he couldn't stand that. If you only record—besides, people are coughing and all that stuff.

Riess: Is Joshua Bell in your camp?

Cole: Oh yes. Joshua played for us a lot of times. He's a wonderful artist and a wonderful guy, yes.

Riess: You didn't have a special thing with him?

Cole: Well, it wasn't exclusive, let's put it that way. He came whenever I could get him, whenever he could come, but he played at Davies and he played for Ruth [Felt] and he played—I didn't present him first. I've mentioned there are a few artists that I've presented first that I'm totally in love with, like Maxim Vengerov, the great violinist.

But he became so famous so fast that he hardly ever came back to this country. And then he became a conductor, which is even worse!

But just a word about the theater series that we had that year. We had the Druid Theatre Company from Ireland, which we'd had before, and they did this whole series of plays by John Millington Synge. [October 2008]

Riess: Did that get you a different audience?

Cole: It was a theater audience, because this is a very famous playwright, famous among people who know the theater. And of course done by an Irish company, and nobody else does this. It was sold out and very successful. It's very strange theater.

Laurie Anderson came—again, one of my special friends in this business, and people I really admire and love. And as I said in my little note here, I first saw Laurie in the early eighties at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, when she was championed by Harvey Lichtenstein. And I think anybody who knows anything owes everything to Harvey Lichtenstein—not everything, but an awful lot. Harvey wasn't into music so much, but he was a brilliant guy who made the Brooklyn Academy of Music work when nobody else could.

Laurie came and did one of her wonderful pieces, and we commissioned it, along with others. Robert Lepage came back, not his best piece but it was good. I think I told you, his best piece was his first piece. But he's a very gifted guy, and I'll always be grateful to him for what he's done, what he did here.

Earlier you were wondering—didn't you ask about do I ask them to play certain things or certain pieces?

Riess: Yes, I wondered whether you had some input into their programming.

Cole: I did year to year with the chamber music more than anything else, because my problem with a chamber music series, most of them, is that you have this quartet, that quartet, this quartet, that quartet, and it's boring. A Haydn quartet, followed by a Beethoven quartet, followed by a Shostakovich quartet.

There's a lot of chamber music, obviously, that is not just quartets, but that means you have to bring in extra persons, because there are lots of quintets, sextets, things that are never heard, people don't hear them because it would cost an extra whatever amount of money to get this person here and they have to have an extra rehearsal. Whereas the Juilliard Quartet could tour the world and never do anything but quartets!

And I told you about my fondness for the Mozart viola quintets, which are among the great masterpieces of Mozart. The G Minor I recommend particularly, and the C Major and the D Major, they are the three best.

Anyway, for my last season—the Takács Quartet, as I told you, was kind of exclusive to us and we had a long history with them. We were going to do two concerts, again, because they were always sold out. I said to their manager, who is a great, long-time friend of mine, Seldy Cramer, and this was just really in passing, like, “Oh, Seldy, wouldn’t it be nice if for my last season, maybe on one concert they could do the Mozart Clarinet Quintet [in A Major],” because I’ve played that myself many times, and it’s a great piece, “and the other program could be my other favorite Schubert piece, the Schubert C Major Cello Quintet, with that extra cello.”

I was just talking, I wasn’t really thinking that this would actually happen, because it’s a lot of trouble. You have to get an extra player and you have to have had the extra rehearsals, and so on. But Seldy herself is a cellist, a professional musician, and she manages Takács and other groups, and we’re great friends for many years. And she’s a doer, she gets things done, and that’s the kind of people I like. So this one day, maybe it was Monday and I was going to New York on Wednesday, I was getting on the plane, and I got this telephone call. Seldy said, “Okay, I’ve got it set. Dick Stoltzman’s going to do the clarinet.”

Riess: Oh perfect!

Cole: And Peter Wyrick, a friend of mine who is assistant principal cello at the symphony here, would do the Schubert. She had it all set up in three days, with the quartet of course agreeing. That’s why I’ve always loved Seldy. That’s the way she did things.

We did the American String Quartet that year too, and the important thing about that is it was with Menahem Pressler, who is this great pianist—he’s still performing, but he’s getting pretty old, and it was a gift to have him there. And we had Julia Fischer come, leading the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, before she had her baby. And one of the artists that I just fell in love with, and she’s no longer with us, Cesária Évora. We brought her several times, but she came in my last season which I really appreciated.

[Tape 16: Side B]

Riess: About your conducting life, you conducted the Moscow [State] Radio Symphony Orchestra when they were here.

Cole: That was the year after I left. I agreed to do it, because I realized I don’t have a lot of time, and I knew this guy who was doing it. He sent me a recording, which sounded pretty good, but once I got into it it was miserable. [laughing] I said, “No more of this, that’s it, I’m done.” This was really bad, but the trouble with conducting *any* orchestra, when you get a certain age or whatever, and you’ve done so many things—not that I’ve conducted so many things, because I kind of gave it up years ago, that is symphony orchestra conducting—one of the reasons is you cannot achieve the perfection that you wish you could achieve. You can if you’re with the Vienna Philharmonic, but I’m not with the Vienna Philharmonic, so why do it.

- Riess: And you get how much time, usually, to rehearse?
- Cole: Well, it doesn't matter. Never enough. But no matter how many times you rehearse, certain orchestras, it doesn't sound the way it's in your head and the way you want it to sound. It's not their fault. It's just—that's life.
- Riess: Do you begin to doubt that your own ear after a while?
- Cole: No, you just get frustrated and say I don't want to do that anymore. Besides, if you're going to do symphony concerts, people want to hear the same old pieces that you've done before. They don't want to hear something new.
- It's interesting, I was just thinking, my first concert with the Buffalo Philharmonic was my favorite concert of my whole life. I should have just done one and then left! It was a very interesting program, all of it was interesting to me. And you just can't do that, because there's not a public for it. I did the Opus One of Anton Webern, the Mozart Symphony no. 38 [in D Major], the "Prague," one of the great Mozart symphonies. And then the big piece was the Ives Second Symphony. Was I crazy? [laughter]
- I had come from LA, where I'd been doing stuff like that. I thought well, this is a nice program. Start out with an early twentieth century piece, and then do a masterpiece of the Mozart canon, and then do a great American piece, which I had done a lot before, here in LA, the Ives Second. I was a big Ives fan. That's the kind of thing that still interests me. Michael does that kind of stuff, but not many other people do it.
- Riess: The audience is often expecting one big thing.
- Cole: Oh, they want the Brahms Second, which is great, but it's been done. [laughing]
- Riess: But you got paid. You weren't doing it just out of a love of doing it.
- Cole: Yes, but not enough—not enough to make it worthwhile. It's too much work. Way too much work.
- You know, one of the things we did in my last season is this opera—this is important because I want to honor some people who really were so important to me—we did this opera by Jake Heggie [*Three Decembers*]. It was music by Jake Heggie, book by Terrence McNally, starring Frederica von Stade, Flicka. It was co-produced by Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Cal Performances. It was a small piece, that is, not a big opera, but it featured Flicka in a very big role. And it was a wonderful thing that we could do that, because both of those people, Jake and Flicka, are very great friends of mine and very helpful in so many different ways, which I'll talk about when we talk about the final event, the party.
- Just one quick thing about that opera, I wanted to do it with Berkeley Rep—I wanted to do it at Berkeley Rep, and Jake did too. And we had many meetings with Berkeley

Rep to discuss that. Terrence McNally! Come on! One of the greatest playwrights in America, and a big opera buff. We had Terrence, we had Jake, we had Flicka, and yet I couldn't get it done at Berkeley Rep, so I did it in Zellerbach, which was really a little too big for this opera. Anyway, we did it and I was happy because it got done finally.

This was a matter going on for years, talking to Berkeley Rep about it, and I don't know—for some reason it didn't fit in with what they wanted to do.

So, that covers the last season.

Riess: You never have said anything about the Berkeley Edge Festival.

Cole: Well, because it was so damn frustrating. As I've told you, I have a very eclectic interest in music, old music, new music. In fact, one of my big goals when I first came here—in the late eighties I went to something in New York which was so great. It was called the American Music Festival, and it was something that was going on at that time where one year they'd be in New York, the next year they'd be in Miami, et cetera. There was a loosely organized or disorganized group—like Early Music America, and I'm on the board of that, and Chamber Music America, all these other things that exist—this was called New Music America.

I got very interested, and I went with Charles Amirkhanian to the New York version of it. My goal was to have it happen in Berkeley. Well, forget it with new music! You just can't get it organized and raise the money needed.

Riess: You mean here at Berkeley?

Cole: Any place. This was big. This would be a festival like the Early Music Festival, with very big projects, very big productions. I wanted to have an early music festival one year, and a new music festival the next year, at the end of each season, that was the idea. We had it for a couple of years [2003 and 2005], but I just couldn't do it anymore.

I couldn't do that and do what else we had to do and keep the budget in check, because of course the other big happening of my last season was the recession. I told you we had all these great artists, so we sold tickets fantastically. But we couldn't raise the money as well as we should have—let's put it that way. It was a disaster in that respect, trying to raise money towards the end as the stock market went to the bottom.

Riess: And the Strictly Speaking Series—was there some reason you started a lecture series at that point?

Cole: It seemed like we didn't do it at first because there are so many lectures on the campus, but it actually was something that Hollis and I discussed coming back from San Juan Bautista, having seen a play there by [El Teatro] Campesino—I ran into the

guy just the other day in San Jose at a meeting, who was a producer of that company and still is.

Anyway, we were on the way back and we started talking about the next season or something. And we both agreed, we should do that! We hadn't done it because of all these other lectures. But Cal Performances was originally called the Committee for Arts and Lectures, you know. And we thought—we were always kind of afraid to put our foot in it, because the faculty might be offended or annoyed, think we're stepping into their territory. But we did more general lectures, not specific, not a chemistry guy or a physics guy, although we brought what's his name—the famous physicist who's in a wheelchair, Stephen Hawking. Twice I think we brought him. But anyway, we decided when we were in the car together coming back that this would be a great idea. My contribution to it was the title, and then Hollis pretty much did most of the work.

Riess: "The world's greatest thinkers in the arts, literature, science, and politics."

Cole: Yes, that was the idea. I said well, how about calling it Strictly Speaking? And she liked that, but then she did it because she liked to do that and she was good at it, and I was busy.

Riess: I want to ask how much the craziness of Berkeley has been a plus or a minus? Berkeley has a reputation.

Cole: It has and deservedly so! It's not something that I'm really—I love Berkeley. It's just so wonderful in so many ways. For example, Sunday morning Susan and I went out to play tennis—we sometimes go to the Claremont to play, or sometimes go to Walnut Street. They were both booked. We got there too late. So we went to the university courts right across from the museum, which are okay, but we don't love those courts because there are too many courts and they are not separated. Anyway, we played there. But the Campanile bells started ringing. We *love* that!

The idea of a university campus in a town where—the idea that you have to be kooky, I don't know. What I compare it to was I had just come from New York, I had been living in New York before I came here, and before that LA, and before that in Buffalo for a few years. I grew up in San Jose and I wanted to get out of there, so I went to LA and I liked that, and especially at that time it was fabulous, all these great people were there and I was going to a great school, and so on. Then I went to New York, and in New York there are a lot of kooks, but nobody pays much attention to them. Here they get *famous*! There it's irrelevant.

I have a great sympathy for the chancellors that have really been so badly treated. And the vice chancellors too, have had things thrown at them and bombs. Somebody tried to kill Chang-Lin [Tien] and his wife. That's horrible. And then they attacked University House when Birgeneau was there. I think it's just outrageous, but I can't dwell on that.

Anyway, I tried to ride above all that and be serious and do great things for people.

Riess: Good.

Now let's talk about the May 9th benefit and celebration for you [Cal Performances Presents Robert Cole].

Cole: Yes, and two of the people that are so important to me, and have been, are Frederica von Stade, Flicka, as she's known to everyone, and Jake Heggie. They hosted this thing, which was really wonderful, because Jake played, Flicka sang, but they also talked, and they're so great. And Maris Meyerson and Petra Michel were the celebration co-chairs. They arranged to have a menu by Alice [Waters], and Stanlee Gatti, who's actually the greatest, did the decor, so it was fabulous.

Riess: And that was on the Zellerbach stage?

Cole: All on stage, yes. This was planned over a period of time, of course in the midst of millions of other things. I wanted to make it something mostly to thank people, the donors—there's a whole list of them someplace here, the people who came. I have it. Anyway, a lot of people, my great friends, came. In fact, the doctor who I told you loved *La Bayadère*, who said this is the most beautiful thing, it was Charles Linker, Dr. Charles Linker. He was at this event, of course. And Natasha [Makarova] was there, and so many people, Gordon Getty, Bill Zellerbach, and many others.

Of course, the party was a fundraiser. Everything is a fundraiser in this business! [laughter] Forget this idea of giving Robert Cole a send-off—it's a fundraiser!

Riess: It was the beginning of your Robert Cole Endowment? How does that work?

Cole: That was Budd Cheit's idea, I think, Budd Cheit and Kathy Henschel. Kathy was a board chair for many years and a wonderful person. I think that was their idea. I was the only one who was very much against it, because I was freaking out because the budget was going to hell because we couldn't raise money in that environment. I didn't want people giving money to an endowment when I needed it for the operations to make the budget balance in the recession.

Riess: But Budd would understand that.

Cole: He understood it—because actually, the fact that we ended up with a \$300,000 shortfall that year is nothing compared to having an endowment that goes on forever. So he was right, as always. But it's just that I was trying to do my job. And so—anyway, they did that and I very much appreciated it.

I organized the program. First of all I got Flicka, got Jake, and I thought all right, we want to have some music. There's going to be a lot of talking, speeches. And we also developed an honorary thing, which I don't know if it's still going on—I hope it's still going on. I wanted to have something where Cal Performances would honor

people. Like the university is always honoring people, but I wanted Cal Performances to honor people.

We created the Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts. The first person who got that was Cecilia Bartoli. I think it was Cecilia who got the first one. But the second person who got it was Bill Zellerbach, and at this occasion he was given this Cal Performances Award of Distinction. It was a thing that we had created, so there was a little tchotchke that went with it, a little something. Anyway, so the musical program I think is important, because I think Flicka and Jake did something together. I don't remember what it was, but it was great. And Susan agreed finally, after much cajoling, to play something. And that was nice. She played one of my favorite songs.

Riess: Which was?

Cole: I don't remember actually, but one of her many things that she plays. But the other thing—there was a dinner, and there were speeches, and there was music, a little bit.

But then what's the ending? [laughing] I do like to put things like this together. I decided, okay, we have Student Musical Activities, and they're part of Cal Performances. How can we make them part of this and make something really exciting at the end and beautiful? I asked the choral directors and the woman who directed the chorus at the Music Department to put this giant chorus together for this occasion, and to sing this wonderful piece by Mozart called *Ave verum corpus*, which is a motet he wrote the last year of his life in 1791. Actually, the autograph is June 17, 1791, and just by coincidence June 17 is Stravinsky's birth date. But anyway, it's Köchel 618, which is a very late work, one of the last works he completed—this short little piece, four minutes of perfection.

I asked the chorus could they do this, and of course they said great. But I had them in the balcony. They weren't in the theater at all. They stayed out in the balcony—none of the guests knew they were there. And the Cal Band was also out there, and nobody knew they were there, although it says something in here [press release], but people didn't read this stuff, this was just for the press. So the chorus was up there but hidden, and the band was back there in the lower level but hidden. And at the very end, after all the speeches, I said, "And so, we should end with some music." And then suddenly two hundred voices!

Do you know this piece at all? You can look it up on YouTube. There's a whole bunch of performances which—I listened to all of them when I did this, because I wanted just to see who's done what with that piece. It's a very famous piece and you can see it on YouTube. And the fact that they were way up there was really great, because it was mysterious, coming from above. You could see them, but just barely. I'm on the stage and they're way up there. Anyway, we did that. We'd rehearsed it two or three times, and it was so great.

Then I said, "And of course, nothing is complete without the Cal Band." So the Cal Band comes in. Because I thought otherwise it's boring. It's just a dinner and people come and make speeches and blah, blah, blah.

Riess: It was a party for you but *you* ran the party.

Cole: Yes, well I put on a show. It's kind of like the show that we did for the 2006 thing that we talked about. It was a show that was completely unique to us. Nobody else could do this because nobody else had the Cal Band and all these singers. And it was the same thing when we did the Mark Morris piece that we had premiered, and the John Adams piece, and then Michael Tilson Thomas played my favorite song, Cole Porter's *So in Love*. And the finale was this big thing we did with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus, because remember it was about the symphony, the opera. That also was a show we put together, so that people don't just come to something and it's a fundraiser. These are all fundraisers, but I wanted to make it interesting for people too, so they had a little fun rather than just go and have dinner and go home.

That was a nice way to end, to finish with the Cal Band. Because even though I didn't direct the Cal Band, I had been a band director when I was young. In fact, my goal was to get out of being a band director! [laughter] But it's such a huge thing on the campus, and rightly so, because it's a great organization, the way they run their own deal.

I just want to mention a few people, because you asked about the board. I can't mention them all, but Carol Upshaw was the first person who was, as I said before, a civilian on what was then a faculty committee, originally. Then of course Budd Cheit was the chair of that faculty committee and became chair of the board when it was formed in 1996. He has been so instrumental in everything that happened there, and helpful to me, and a great friend. Budd and June, we see them fairly often still. And then Kathy Henschel was the chair of the board for a number of years and a very good chair, and so supportive. Joe Neil also.

Among the donors that were very special and friends were Liz and Greg Lutz, and Annette Campbell-White and her husband Rudi [Naumann-Etienne]. Of course Bill Zellerbach can not be replaced. There's no one like him. And my good friend and very generous supporter Louise Gund, who's a real music lover. She just doesn't go for the social stuff. In fact, she doesn't go for the social stuff *at all!* [laughter] She just goes for the music. And she got first of all into ballet, and she loved the ballet that I brought. And then she and I went to the opera, and she realized that she loved opera, and so now she's very much an opera buff, which is wonderful.

Riess: Did you educate your Board of Trustees musically, consciously?

Cole: Well, I think they did that in the performances. They all went to performances. One of the committees we had was called the Artistic Advisory Committee, and it was a leftover from the original faculty committee. But this committee was open to

everyone who was on the board. We had a designated number of people who wanted to be part of that, because they liked to banter with me about things and hear about my crazy ideas. But anyone could come. We made it totally open to any board member who wanted to come and chat about things like that. We met before each board meeting, and we had four or five board meetings a year.

Before each board meeting, of course, every committee would have to meet and then report, so we didn't waste time in board meetings. It was very highly organized and well structured. Both Budd and I were very much into process and structure and organization. I think it was good in that respect, especially considering it was totally new. We had to make it up. But he had done that before, and I had done it before, and so it wasn't new to us. It was just new here.

I think probably the most important achievement that I was able to do here was to create a real board of directors that has been supportive of my successor, and will be in the future. Otherwise I just think it would have been a disaster before I had left, and there wouldn't have been any Cal Performances I don't think. That was really key. Fortunately, they brought someone along who has a very strong musical education.

Riess: Have you kept your hand in at Berkeley?

Cole: I go to occasional performances. But frankly, I've been so busy with other things, a lot of that being the Jazzschool and a lot of it being the Green Music Center and other projects that I'm involved in, on the board of Early Music America. I'm planning the Berkeley Festival for 2014. I've ended up being the chair of the committee to plan it, which means I'm doing it! So I'm very involved with the Early Music Festival and San Francisco Early Music Society.

As we are at the end here, I want to say that I will always be grateful for the opportunity I had to be here at UC Berkeley for twenty-three years. It was really the best place for me, and a great pleasure in so many ways. I cannot think of anything more interesting and more satisfying, as it gave me the chance to be involved in so many aspects of the performing arts and to integrate that world into the fabric of a great university. It was both an endless challenge as well as the greatest pleasure of my professional life. And coming to Berkeley also included the gift of meeting my wonderful wife, Susan Muscarella, the most gifted, kindest, and truly generous person I have ever known. How could I be so lucky!

And here I also want to include a postscript regarding the Green Music Center, to say that after my retirement from UC Berkeley in September of 2009 I was asked in the fall of 2010 to serve as a consultant to plan for the opening of the Green Music Center at Sonoma State University. The opening took place on September 29, 2012. In the three years I was working there I planned and participated in season 2012-13, summer of 2013, and season 2013-14, until I resigned on November 30, 2013. Before I resigned I had planned most of season 2014-15 as well. [End of interview]