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Berkeley, California

Sándor Salgo

TEACHING MUSIC AT STANFORD, 1949-1974; DIRECTING THE CARMEL BACH
FESTIVAL AND THE MARIN SYMPHONY, 1956-1991

With an Introduction by
Robert P. Commanday

Interviews Conducted by
Caroline C. Crawford
in 1994-1996

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Conductor and Professor

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Family history, early musical education, violin, in Hungary; studies in Berlin with Carl Flesch and Fritz Busch in Berlin; playing at Bayreuth with Toscanini and Furtwangler, 1930, and in the U.S. with the Roth Quartet, 1937; from 1939-1949 teaching, performing at Westminster Choir College and Princeton University, studying with George Szell, marriage to Priscilla Patterson, Army service; music faculty at Stanford University, 1949-1974; Music in the Vineyards and other conducting assignments; directing Marin, San Jose and Modesto Symphony orchestras; Carmel Bach Festival, 1956-1991. Includes conversations with PRISCILLA SALGO on her early life and career in church music on the Peninsula, and the Carmel Bach Festival.

Introduction by Robert Commanday, former senior music critic of the San Francisco Chronicle and editor of The San Francisco Classical Voice.

Interviewed 1994-1996 by Caroline Crawford, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Drs. Knox and Carlotta Mellon
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*Photographs provided by Maestro and Mrs. Salgo
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INTRODUCTION by Robert P. Commanday

History has a strange way of bringing the right person to a time, place and situation at key moments. During the musical life of the San Francisco Bay Area, it has happened several times, crucially. Gaetano Merola and Kurt Herbert Adler were striking cases, also Gastone Usigli, Sándor Salgo's predecessor at the San Jose and Marin Symphonies and the Carmel Bach Festival, and definitely Sándor Salgo.

Sándor Salgo was perfectly suited in musical gifts, training and experience for the role he was to play. Although this was paramount, another key factor was his temperament and style or, to sum it up, his personality. The contrast with Usigli was striking. For one thing, Usigli, who had shaped the San Jose Symphony from a casual community into a more disciplined and serious orchestra, founded the Marin Symphony, and set the concept and began the tradition at the Carmel Bach Festival, was a strict, emotional and temperamental maestro of the old school. He was demanding but not always easy.

Salgo, on the other hand, brought all of the musicianly qualities to the table without that emotional baggage. This is evident in the style of his recollections in this oral history. Notably absent are recriminations or criticisms of persons, institutions and situations, although if the reader is familiar with this history, it would take little imagining to project the disappointment, anger or frustration Salgo must have felt at one point or another in his illustrious career. No conductor's career, regardless of its success and flourish, can possibly escape such experiences. A conductor, after all, is continually dealing with musicians of all types, stripes, tempers and abilities, with board members and wealthy patrons of limited musical awareness and still narrower vision, with faculty colleagues and superiors of varying degrees of sympathy and understanding, each with a separate agenda in the political arena of academia. All those whom the conductor must deal with and be dependent upon present him with separate egos that need to be recognized if not satisfied.

Salgo had his way of variously persuading and at the least coexisting with those personalities or, all else failing, simply turning away and going on his own way, with or without them. The fact is that the two institutions nearest and dearest to him, the Carmel Bach Festival and the Marin Symphony, were happy institutions that prospered and developed accordingly. The participating musicians got along with each other and relished the repertory, performance level, style and manner of Sándor's leadership. They enjoyed the cordial and appreciative response of the community and patrons, especially in Carmel where they were actually living with or close to the patrons. It was a

family, and the spirit generated had everything to do with the way Sándor went about things.

The evolution of a community orchestra that was 90 percent amateur in 1964 to the predominantly professional Marin Symphony (60 percent union players in 1991) was conducted with a care that respected the feelings of the amateur and professional musicians alike. Not easy to "graduate" community members out of the ranks after some years of dedicated involvement. The history of this orchestra, from rehearsing in the Tamalpais High School Band Room and playing in the Marin Catholic High School Gymnasium to a proper venue in the Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium, and the growth of its following, is barely grazed in these memoirs but some of the personal reasons for the evolution can be found here.

One other thing, equally characteristic of his work at Modesto, San Jose and Carmel, the repertory he presented was always at an irreproachably high level, always varied and interesting and at times provocative. When he picked a contemporary work, as happened more often proportionately than on many major symphony's full seasons, it was always a choice selection of a work with some enduring qualities, and never a token and certainly not an experimental offering. He conducted only what he truly believed in.

And he conducted from belief, notably the sacred works that were the pillars of the Carmel Bach Festival seasons. He himself admits repeatedly that performing music of the Baroque era, he pursued the middle road between the modern and romantic sensibility and the viewpoint of the early music revivalists. One might say that Salgo "erred" on the side of the former, particularly when it was a question of making the expressive or spiritual message utterly clear and involving. Accordingly, his performances of Bach's Passions and B minor Mass in particular, conveyed the inspiration of Bach's pietism in an extraordinary way. And, with no prejudice against the values of the Early Music reconstructive approach, who is to say that Salgo's recapturing the spirit of the original was any the less authentic because the playing style and the instruments were modern?

He believed that the spirit of the Bach Festival was also stimulated by the inclusion of music by Bach's musical descendants as far down the line as Stravinsky. If there was originally some resistance or criticism to this from the Festival's early and loyal patrons, as I had always heard, Salgo coasted over this then as he doesn't dwell on it in the oral history. He counted on the effect of the Haydn, Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven, whatever to bring the "purists" on board. Of the works included by this policy, the opera productions were the most elaborate efforts and their success reflected well on the Festival. His recollections here indicate how much they meant to him.

The opera productions he conducted at Stanford generated a similar gratification, and with cause. Salgo's Falstaff and The Rake's Progress, which come always to my mind, were high points in the story of university musical performance on the West Coast and certainly in the history of Stanford. The university's decision to discontinue these productions unquestionably was hard for Salgo to accept, and yet there is no acknowledgment of that in this oral history. He has been content to recall the happy and positive side of his productive, fulfilling career.

First and last, Sándor's recollections bring even those of us who have known him long and well closer to the personal experiences of his upbringing, immigration, resettling and marriage than we have ever been. It was only this year, 1999, that his age was revealed, when he celebrated his 90th birthday on March 10. He always wished to leave his life in Hungary behind him, rejecting a homeland he had no wish to revisit and which he, in fact, never has. The explanation, recollected in tranquility, makes all that clear. So too the details of his growing up, family life, education and unusual circumstances that led to his becoming an American are consistent with the personality that has been so well known to hundreds upon hundreds of students, musicians, colleagues and patrons, and countless thousands of audience members. The description of his experiences with Bartók and Kodály, his study under the great Carl Flesch, Fritz Busch and George Szell, his playing under Toscanini and Furtwängler enrich our understanding of the musical viewpoint, style and integrity of the speaker.

Finally we share the Salgo family life, how he and Priscilla met, married, lived and worked together, and how essential to him and his music their partnership has been. Priscilla is very much a part of this oral history as she should be, making a valuable contribution to the memories, as she has right along been crucial to the creation of them. For all who have admired him and the many who will read this as history, these recollections constitute a true self-portrait of the man and his music.

Robert P. Commanday
Former Senior Music Critic, San Francisco Chronicle, and Editor,
The San Francisco Classical Voice

April 1999
San Francisco

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Sándor Salgo

Sándor Salgo's story is one of a young violinist's journey from Nazi-era Hungary to the East Coast of the United States, a four-decades long career that began with chamber music at Westminster Choir College and Princeton and flowered at Stanford University with opera, symphony and chamber music programs and a legendary Beethoven course. It is also a story of the developing Carmel Bach Festival, the Marin Symphony, extraordinary lifelong mentors and a singular musical partnership with Priscilla Salgo.

It was Knox Mellon, a board member of the Carmel Bach Festival, who suggested that our office undertake Maestro Salgo's oral history, and Festival president Davis Factor who agreed to raise the requisite funding. The taping sessions took place in the Salgo's home on a rural lane on the Stanford campus, where the Salgos have lived since the 1950s and raised their daughter Debbie. Their lifelong dedication to music is reflected in this house, which they designed for themselves: an elegant living room where chamber music has been practiced and performed for countless hours and the sunny study above, home to a large library of books and scores and framed music memorabilia.

Maestro Salgo's speech and courtly manners are reflective of his native Hungary; there were plentiful cups of fragrant dark coffee during our taping sessions, as well as recollections of a number of famous conductors such as Fürtwangler, Toscanini, and Szell with whom Maestro Salgo played or studied.

Priscilla Salgo joined us for several hours of conversation, making a substantial and charming contribution to the oral history as it stands. Married to Sándor Salgo for fifty-five years and with an independent professional life of her own as a choral director, she has been an invaluable part of every aspect of his life and work.

In reviewing the oral history transcript, the Salgos decided to elaborate on many sections and make a good number of editorial changes; to that end they asked Dr. Rowena Morrison, a close friend and publications editor for the NASA Aviation Safety Reporting System, to help them with the process. We are very grateful to Dr. Morrison for her long hours of fine work on the book. Mrs. Salgo was a punctilious editor, and Maestro Salgo graciously did his part as well, even though he was engaged in research on Thomas Jefferson's musical life in response to the request of Stanford President Casper. This task took him to the University of Virginia and the Library of Congress in 1998; his writings on the subject have now been presented to the Library at Monticello for possible publication.

Our thanks to Robert Commanday for his insightful introduction to the volume; as former senior music critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle* he was the ideal person to write about the Salgos' life and work. Our thanks to Davis Factor, Jr., and the other donors who have made the completion of the project possible and to Mark Volkert and Charles Meacham for their willingness to talk to me about the Salgo years in Marin and Carmel.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, Division Head, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Caroline Crawford
Editor/Interviewer

July 1999
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

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I EARLY YEARS, EDUCATION AND LIFE IN HUNGARY: 1909-1939

[Interview 1: November 18, 1994. Present: Sándor and Priscilla Salgo, Caroline Crawford] ##¹

Parents and Family

Crawford: Let's start with your very beginnings in Hungary, your early years and your family.

Salgo: All right, if we must, but as Thomas Jefferson once said, "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past." [to John Adams, August 1, 1816]

Crawford: We will want to talk about Jefferson, your lifelong interest in the man and the research you are currently doing, but for the purposes of the history we should devote some time to your parents and their lives.

Salgo: My father was an orphan who knew very little love in his childhood, and therefore became a stern man. He was a printer who also tried his hand at publishing poetry, and was never very successful financially. I inherited from him some musicality-- he had a splendid musical ear and had taught himself to play piano presentably. He saw to it that I got good musical training, but as far as my education went, I was on my own.

My mother was musical too. While she didn't play an instrument, she had a nice voice. Coming from the northern part of Hungary, which is very rich in folklore, she often sang Hungarian folk songs for me, and I still remember some of them. Perhaps because of my stern father, I was more closely attached to my mother. In that respect, my psychoanalyst friends would probably frown disapprovingly. I don't care. I think it was

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

wonderful that I had her. Many years later I had the good fortune to be able to get her out of Hungary, twenty-two years after I last saw her in 1939. She came to me here at Stanford and then later went to my brother in Buenos Aires.

Crawford: You must have pleased your parents a great deal.

Salgo: Yes, I think that's true. Though, Caroline, my father was always criticizing me. The European idea of bringing up children is that you never should praise them. How terrible! So I decided that if one day I had a child of my own, I would not follow my father's example; I would not be a stern father. No one was ever killed by too much love. I think events bore me out: my daughter turned out to be a wonderful person.

I had one brother, Otto. Our relationship was anything but peaceful. We were as different as night and day. Part of our conflict probably arose because I was not only successful musically, but loved and did well in school. Though he had a good mind, he was not a very good student because he simply didn't work at it. He was an avid sportsman. I was a good soccer player and runner.

Crawford: An older brother?

Salgo: A younger brother, very tall, very handsome, and no matter how much I excelled, I always envied him because of his looks and his easygoing success with, well, mainly girls, but also with people in general. He went into business and became quite successful.

It was a difficult life for him. While I came to America, which I had dreamt of doing since early youth, he stayed in Budapest. He was a staunch Hungarian, which I was not, and he wanted to stay there. So what happened, of course, was that he later was taken to Auschwitz. He was one of only twenty-six who survived there. With incredible energy, he built up a business in Budapest. It was flourishing, but then the communists came and took his factory. With only the suit he was wearing, he fled to Vienna. He was very able and resourceful, and ultimately he went to Argentina and built up a good business there.

Crawford: When did he leave Hungary?

Salgo: Oh, this was maybe in the early fifties.

Crawford: Your parents' names--I don't think you gave me their full names.

Salgo: Salgo is a Hungarian name; it's from the northern part of Hungary. So that's where the name comes from. Morris was my father's name, and Rose Neumann was my mother's name.

My family was very mixed in terms of religious background: some were Jewish, some Catholics, and many were Protestants.

Crawford: Was there religion in the home?

Salgo: Yes, my mother was religious. She was Jewish.

Crawford: So you were more or less brought up in the Jewish faith.

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: And what about aunts and uncles? Were they very present in your life?

Salgo: Caroline, I'm afraid I'm going to present myself in a bad light, but I didn't care for my relatives except for one uncle and one cousin. The uncle was very nice and knew how to talk with children and with young people, and he was interested in what I was doing, but he died rather young. The cousin, on my father's side, was half Viennese and half Hungarian--Max--we called him Mishi. He was older and musical; he came down from Vienna often, and we always had a very good time. These two are the relatives I cared for. I also had an aunt with three children, but the less said of her the better! I think it is significant that my paternal grandfather was a wine merchant.

Crawford: Were there musicians in the family?

Salgo: No, no. Not professional musicians, but my father, as I said before, was very musical.

Crawford: And what about grandparents?

Salgo: I knew only my maternal grandmother. She died when I was rather young, and so I haven't many memories of her.

Remembering Music in Vienna

Crawford: Did you go to Vienna? Did you visit your relatives?

Salgo: I went to Vienna quite often, yes, because of my cousin Mishi. I stayed with him, and he always took me to the Staatsoper. It was truly wonderful.

Crawford: What are your earliest memories?

Salgo: Oh, I will never forget a marvelous *Meistersinger* with Elizabeth Schumann as Eva, and Clemens Krauss conducting. The Vienna Philharmonic was in the pit--the opera orchestra, of course--and who was the tenor? He was a very important tenor, and later sang at the Budapest Opera. I forget his name, but that performance I will never forget.

And then if you are in Vienna you are bound to get to a *Fidelio*, and that was also marvelous. That was the first time I heard it the way Mahler was supposed to have done it--in other words, with the third *Leonora* Overture inserted before the second finale. To sit in the dark theater listening to and reliving the whole drama as it is expressed in purely musical terms--things which you do not find on the stage at all, was profoundly moving. There is an imaginary scene in the Overture representing Leonora's pleading with Pizarro for Florestan's life, which does not occur on stage. In the Staatsoper the trumpet call announcing Don Fernando's arrival seemed to come straight from Seville.

P. Salgo: Was Mahler the first to do that?

Salgo: Yes, it was his idea.

Crawford: He had been director at the Staatsoper, hadn't he?

Salgo: Yes, for ten years, the golden years of the Staatsoper. As a young man of twenty-eight, he was general music director of the Budapest Opera, and he must have been a fanatic. Many years later I played a *Don Giovanni* at the Opera House and I noticed that the orchestra parts of *Don Giovanni* were marked--every single one of them--by Mahler himself. That means all the string parts had been marked in his own handwriting. At the top of each part it was written, "bowed by G.M." [Gustav Mahler].

Crawford: Every part?

Salgo: Every part.

P. Salgo: Isn't that something? I mean, when you think that he didn't trust the first violinist--

- Salgo: Yes, and we just don't know why Mahler didn't trust him! But apparently that was the case.
- P. Salgo: No matter which stand you sat at, you were looking at [Mahler's notations]--that's rather exciting, I think.
- Crawford: I do too. Don't you wish you had that score? Maybe you do.
- Salgo: No, that one I don't. It belonged to the opera.
- Crawford: So you were exposed to wonderful conducting early on. Did you think that that might be something you would want to do?
- Salgo: At that time I was very much a solo violinist, but it was always in the back of my mind that I wanted to conduct. And sitting in the opera orchestra with that parade of illustrious guest conductors--Richard Strauss, Knappertsbusch, Zemlinsky, Bruno Walter, Fritz Busch, Erich Kleiber--was an invaluable education.
- Crawford: Let's talk about when you began lessons and what you were getting in the way of music at school.
- Salgo: I started the violin when I was about seven with a man named Herrnfeld. Unfortunately, he felt that the best way to teach a child was by shouting and intimidation, and that didn't work with me. I still hate it when somebody shouts at me. Then another teacher at the Academy that I was assigned to was a man named Rezső Kemény, and the less I say about him, the better. In desperation I went privately to another teacher--I had had some trouble with my bow arm--and his name was Rados. He didn't help me much, but I was good enough to get into the master class of the famous violinist Jenő Hubay. I'm telling you this because it will underline why I got so absolutely disgusted with Europe and wanted to get to America to start a new life.

Life in Hungary: Forbidden Things

- Crawford: That came through clearly when we talked before. You found it oppressive.
- Salgo: I found it very oppressive. It was bad enough that it was oppressive politically in Hungary, and I realized that very early on, but Austria wasn't much better. Certainly, Hungary was worse.

Crawford: Talk about that a little bit, what your early impressions were of that situation.

Salgo: Life was full of forbidden things. You couldn't say anything about the government, certainly you couldn't criticize the government--and particularly the regent, Admiral Horthy--because you would be reported to the police as soon as you did. You always felt somebody was listening to you, somebody was watching you or even following you.

When I was sixteen, I read about America and dreamt of going. I discovered Thomas Jefferson and I read the Declaration of Independence, and it was a tremendous experience for me, even though I read it in a very poor Hungarian translation. I was able to check it out of the library only with great difficulty. I remember that I had to give my address twice in different departments before I could leave.

I had a friend at the opera, a brilliant musician and composer, and I remember asking me to meet me in a café one day, because I wanted him to write something for me. When we sat down, he said: "You have to be careful. You see, I had a run-in with the police because of something I said, and I was taken to the police station and badly beaten. Ever since then, I've been aware of being followed, and whenever I speak with someone, I hear that that person is also followed."

Crawford: Was that because he was an artist or was it because he had been critical?

Salgo: Because he had criticized the government.

Crawford: This would have been in the twenties.

Salgo: Yes, in the twenties. We finished our conversation, and I remember I boarded a streetcar, and I noticed that sitting behind me was someone that I recognized from the café. So I went home and rang the bell at the front door--in European apartment houses then, the concierge came and opened the door or the gate after ten o'clock.

As the door opened, the man walked by; he had obviously followed me and noted the address. The concierge was sort of a friend of the family--we always gave him money--and later on he told me that the man rang the bell after I had gone upstairs and said he was from the police and asked for information about me.

So these kinds of things were typical, and there were many many stories of people who got arrested and beaten up. Later on

I had some trouble at the opera house because I was seen reading a newspaper that was considered to be a liberal newspaper. It wasn't really leftist, but I was denounced all the same. Fortunately, the opera company needed a good violinist, the conductors spoke out for me, and so I got off with just a reprimand. But all this just for reading a newspaper--these things were simply unbearable.

Early Schooling and the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, 1925-1928

Crawford: What about your early schooling?

Salgo: I remember that in my childhood I was already reading avidly when I was five. My father was very strict and he insisted on that. And then after elementary school I went to the so-called *Gymnasium*, the high school-college where you got a classical education, including Latin, Greek, German, and some French, although not English.

Crawford: What languages did you learn?

Salgo: German was required--was absolutely compulsory--and then one could choose French or Italian. French was considered the language of culture, and so the government reluctantly let it stand, but Italian was encouraged, because of the political orientation toward Mussolini.

So I had German and some French, but it was poorly taught, and I didn't come out speaking French well, unfortunately. I'm struggling with it now! [laughter]

P. Salgo: You have a good sound, a good accent.

Salgo: No, no.

Crawford: Did you have language instruction at home?

Salgo: My family occasionally spoke German, and I had an aunt, Aunt Berta, my father's sister, who was from Vienna, and she spoke German around the house.

Crawford: With culture being so important in Hungary, wouldn't you always have had a kind of elevated status because you were a professional musician?

Salgo: Yes, that's true. Culture was very much respected, and I think that was generally because it was a small country, much like Switzerland. Cultural things are emphasized because that is the only way a small country can achieve some status in the world.

After four years of elementary school, I went to the *Gymnasium*, and then at fourteen I was admitted to the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. Academy is really *Hochschule*--which is much more elevated than it seems to be in the English translation.

Crawford: It's not high school.

Salgo: It's not high school.

It was the only place for me to get an intensive musical education, and I must admit that my father saw to it that I got tutoring at home, privately, so that my general school education would be completed, and at the end of each school year I had to take an examination.

Crawford: So you actually dropped out of the *Gymnasium*.

Salgo: That's right, so that I could get a more intensive and well-rounded music education at Franz Liszt.

Crawford: What was the entrance procedure?

Salgo: At the Academy?

Crawford: Yes.

Salgo: You had to play a great many exercises and a concerto from memory. The Academy was a somewhat mixed experience for me because the regular teachers to whom I was assigned were not very good; the exceptions were Léo Weiner and Anton Molnar. When I graduated, I went to Jenő Hubay's master class. He was an old man by this time, elegant, tall, world-renowned, an excellent violinist, and although he wasn't interested in teaching at that point, he had a certain aura and there was a competitiveness in the class that was good for everyone.

Studying with Imre Waldbauer, Léo Weiner, and Zoltán Kodály

P. Salgo: Didn't you say that he never played violin in class?

Salgo: He himself did not play or illustrate anything in class, which I thought was rather strange. I was dissatisfied with him too, and then finally I found the teacher I wanted, Imre Waldbauer. He was not a member of the Academy staff because he supposedly had leftist leanings, and so was denied a staff position, but he was the leader of the well-known Waldbauer String Quartet and was first violinist of the Hungarian String Quartet. He cured my right arm very simply and gave me not only violin lessons, but lessons in how to make music. I learned a lot from him, and also from the teacher at the Academy who was a great figure in chamber music, Léo Weiner, the composer; I studied chamber music with him.

P. Salgo: Wasn't the Hungarian String Quartet that Waldbauer played in the one to which Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály dedicated some of their quartets?

Salgo: Yes, it was a famous quartet. Waldbauer in his early youth studied in Paris with Lucien Capet, the famous French violinist who wrote a book on the bow arm, so no wonder Waldbauer was able to correct some of the deficiencies of my right arm.

The Capet Quartet was legendary. It was probably one of the very greatest quartets in the history of chamber music. The Quartet, interestingly enough, didn't play anything in public but the Beethoven cycle--all the Beethoven quartets. They came to Paris every fall and they played the entire Beethoven cycle, and the concerts were sold out as soon as they were scheduled, a year before they arrived. According to Imre Waldbauer, Mr. Capet and the quartet sat on the podium for the duration--there was no getting up and leaving--they played the quartets one after the other with the highest professionalism and seriousness, and according to Waldbauer, Parisians went to the Capet Quartet concerts as if to church. I still remember his words.

I can say only the warmest and most deeply touching words about my teacher in chamber music, Léo Weiner. It sounds obvious, but he taught me the whole world of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven quartets. Even though he was a pianist, he knew more about the string quartet than anybody else I've ever known, and I think I ultimately got a very good sort of musical education.

Crawford: He formed a string quartet for you, didn't he?

Salgo: Yes, and I have felt so guilty that as long as I have been in America I have never had any of my orchestras play his compositions.

P. Salgo: Were they good?

Salgo: Yes. Perhaps not great, dear, but I had to put Hungary behind me, and when I played new music in my new country, it was American music--that was the case at Stanford and in Marin.

P. Salgo: Do you mean orchestral works?

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: Did he win the Coolidge Prize for a quartet?

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: He wrote in the Romantic style?

Salgo: Yes, it was the Romantic style, but a restrained romanticism; never too chromatic. The man wrote with a marvelous feeling for sonority.

##

Crawford: What degree did you get after studying in Hungary?

Salgo: It's called matriculation.

Crawford: And that is twelve years of study, isn't it?

Salgo: Yes. When I went to Columbia University to Dr. Hertzman's courses, I had to show that I had a degree, and it was agreed that it was perfectly right to call it a college degree.

Crawford: The degree from the *Gymnasium*.

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: You might want to talk a bit more about other professors with whom you studied.

Salgo: I also studied--very shortly because my main interest wasn't composition--with Zoltán Kodály, who, fine composer though he was, wasn't too interested in his students and was a bit forbidding because of the very private person he was.

Crawford: Oh, talk about Kodály.

Béla Bartók and a Repressive Hungarian Government

Salgo: First of all, his music was perhaps less radical and less revolutionary than Bartók's. Kodály and Bartók, we talk about the two of them together, because both of them were interested in and researched the Hungarian and East European folklore. Romania gave Bartók a very important decoration which he accepted; the Hungarian government wanted to give him a medal, and Bartók refused to accept it because of the repressive political atmosphere.

Salgo: Bartók's wonderful opera, *Bluebeard's Castle*...

P. Salgo: That was a one-act opera, wasn't it?

Salgo: It is a one-act opera, yes. It was scheduled to be performed by the Budapest Opera, and I remember rehearsing it with the orchestra and receiving an order from the top that it had to be taken off the program because the librettist, I think his name was Balazs, a very well-known Hungarian poet, had leftist leanings. Bartók was furious, and this explains his negative feeling about the government. They tried to keep him in Hungary, and then later on, when the Hungarian Nazis went to the top and took over the government, his life was in danger. Friends whisked him away at first to Switzerland and then to America, where Columbia University offered him a position and a grant for research into Serbo-Croatian folk music.

Kodály was his best friend. Kodály stayed in Hungary and didn't run into too much trouble because he was not an outspoken man, but he was a courageous man too. The music was probably not--in hindsight now--not as great as Bartók's, but still it took a new path in terms of Western music by exploring Hungarian and Eastern European folk music and incorporating it into his work.

While the single symphony he wrote did not quote specific Hungarian themes, the atmosphere and tone of it was definitely in that style.

As a teacher he didn't seem to care about his students at all. He looked out the window when he was talking to us; he was a painfully shy man with some psychological problems. He looked like Christ himself, exactly the same face. [laughter]

He knew from memory all of Johann Sebastian Bach's works, and once when he made a reference to an obscure little Bach cantata in the class, no one could identify it. He was

appalled--there was absolute silence in the class. On the spur of the moment one can't remember each movement of every Bach cantata; there are 250 or so! Anyway, he went to the piano and started to play the cantata--he had that kind of a fantastic mind. He spoke perfect English, which was very rare even among Hungarians who spoke several languages. He once came to Stanford for a summer.

Crawford: I didn't know that.

Salgo: He spoke English, and beautiful Italian was well--I heard him talking to the first conductor of the opera house, an Italian named Sergio Failoni. In his spare time, he was busy starting to learn Sanskrit [laughter]. He was an unforgettable character. For a young man, he was really in a way a role model because he showed how much one has to work to be something and to learn. I learned all of the various elements of composition from him, and graduated from the Academy with what would be comparable to a master's degree here. There it is on the wall in a frame--you see it? [points]

P. Salgo: I thought it looked very handsome so I had it framed. It more or less says that he did it. Since my Hungarian is not very advanced--

Salgo: But the colors are in Hungarian [laughter].

Performing with the String Quartet; Playing for Bartók

Crawford: Let's talk about your musical activities with the quartet. I don't know if the Bartók story that I know fits in here, but apparently you performed his music and he came to the concert.

Salgo: Yes, as a student I was in a string quartet which Weiner founded, and after I graduated we continued performing. Then there was a society for new music of which I was one of the founding members, and among other works we played Bartók's Second Quartet. It had been performed in Brussels and in Paris, and the Waldbauer Quartet performed it in Budapest.

But this was the first performance at our level. Bartók did not come to concerts in Budapest, but he did come to our dress rehearsal with his pocket metronome--those things that you hold up and then start this way [gestures]. Usually in Bartók's music, there is a certain timing of each segment indicated--this is one minute and six seconds and so forth.

Well, we all four of us tried to follow those instructions, but in the heat of playing, Caroline, one just cannot be absolutely like a metronome. This was the age of Stravinsky, Bartók, and the new objectivity versus nineteenth-century emotionalism. It didn't sit too well with me, but anyway we finished the first movement, then Bartók, out of the depth of the hall, came forward looking stern and said, "Salgo, have you checked the timing?" I said, "Yes, professor, I thought--." "Well, you better check again. It's fifteen seconds too slow."

I said that of course I was sorry: "Professor, the feeling somehow carried me away. I felt that this phrase should have a little time--." He looked at me. "Never mind the feeling, Salgo; just play the notes in time." [laughter]

Crawford: How did you respond?

Salgo: No response [laughter]. No response. You don't talk back. Later on, however, Waldbauer, my violin teacher and a close friend of Bartók, worked with me on the Second Violin Sonata.

Bartók wanted to hear it and I received a call: "Professor Waldbauer says that you are playing the Second Sonata. Would you come to my home on such-and-such a day?" So I did. I played it for him, the entire sonata. He seemed to be pleased and said, "It's all right," which was really high praise from him. I still have the score with the revision of the sonata ending.

Crawford: Did you have other encounters with him?

Salgo: Yes, once in New York through his student and assistant, the composer Tibor Serly, who finished the orchestration of the Viola Concerto from Bartók's sketch and helped with all kinds of administrative things after Bartók's arrival in New York. Serly asked me to come see him one afternoon when Bartók was to come by. Bartók had nearly finished the Viola Concerto at that point; he was already seriously ill with leukemia.

Bartók arrived, very exhilarated and excited. He had just been discharged from the Doctor's Hospital in New York and said, "I had a visit from [Serge] Koussevitzky, and he said to me, 'Bartók, here is a thousand dollars. You write a piece for the Boston Symphony, whatever you want, and we shall play it.'" Bartók said of course he was very happy, and Serly asked him if he had decided what it would be and he said: "Of course. It will be a Concerto for the Boston Symphony."

Fritz Reiner made the first recording of this Concerto, and the story is that Bartók was very pleased with that. It could be, because it was a wonderful recording which I think has never been surpassed. Reiner was one of the best conductors I ever heard.

Crawford: I want to get into that with you eventually, the whole school of thought about Hungarian conducting, how you describe it and what it meant.

Well, you played in the string quartets--and then what happened when you finished with the Academy? I know you eventually studied with Carl Flesch and Fritz Busch. Did you go to Dresden at that time?

Studying with Carl Flesch and Fritz Busch, 1928-1929

Salgo: I received a scholarship to study with Carl Flesch in the eminent violin pedagogue's master class. However, there was already a conflict within me whether to focus on conducting or violin: I wanted to be a conductor. So it was arranged from Budapest--again through Waldbauer--who wrote a letter to Fritz Busch in Dresden saying that I was to travel there on the train to have lessons. Later on in New York we continued, but that was only for a short time because he died soon after I came to this country.

Crawford: Did he introduce you to Bach?

Salgo: Oh, I'm so glad you mentioned that; he felt so deeply about Bach. At our first lesson, I noticed that he had the score of the Mass in B minor on the piano, and I remember the first thing he showed me was the miraculous modulation in the last measure of the "Crucifixus" that expresses a spiritual transformation.

The "Crucifixus" is in E minor, and at the very end, the entombment, in the last two measures, it changes into G major, which is an unheard of modulation; one that signifies a new beginning. There is a very tender parting chord, and it seems as if he is hesitant to leave the body or lay the body down. It is an incredibly emotional thing, those last two measures.

But with Busch it was mainly Strauss, Wagner, and Reger. And Hindemith, who was a friend of his. As a member of the Philharmonic Society of Budapest, Fritz Busch came as a guest conductor and conducted the *Variations on a Theme of Mozart* by

Max Reger, of whose music he was very fond. I felt, and I still feel rather slow to be enthusiastic about Reger's music, but that piece and a few others moved me very much, and I feel sorry that his music never caught on in America. I should have programmed his work with my orchestras. Again, I am at fault in that. Perhaps the reason he didn't have great success here is that his music is very contrapuntal. He was very much a man who really studied and admired Bach, though without Bach's genius. But still, there was this kind of German predilection for the polyphonic style that makes him even now very popular in Germany.

Busch was especially helpful in giving me a grounding in baton technique. He was most kind and generous with his time. I learned to love the man!

P. Salgo: You didn't talk about the Mozart operas at all?

Salgo: Oh yes, indeed. In Glyndebourne he had done all the important Mozart operas, and what I remember especially was his great emphasis on the projection of the text. He reminded me that Mozart had very much to do with the text of his libretti.

Crawford: He founded Glyndebourne, didn't he?

Salgo: Yes, with Carl Ebert. If he hadn't died that summer, I would have gone with him to Glyndebourne. What a pity; I often think of it. I admired him deeply.

The conductor to whom I perhaps owe the most is George Szell, truly a great teacher. His teaching encompassed every area of the conductor's art--baton technique, analysis, musical style. I can't say too many good things about him. His tremendous knowledge was legendary, and while I've heard some criticism of his remoteness as a person, toward me he was kind, interested, and helpful.

P. Salgo: Caroline mentioned Bach.

Assistant Concertmaster with a Budapest Oratorio Society, 1935

Salgo: Yes. There was in Budapest an oratorio society of which I was a member when I was sixteen or seventeen years old. This was an amateur association, a huge chorus and an orchestra in which people paid for membership, and it included some students from the Academy and one or two professional woodwind players who

were engaged for the concerts. The conductor was a man who was very hard of hearing, limped very badly and had a horrible high voice, but I have never seen a man more dedicated and passionate about music. Though as a conductor he had his limitations, he was such a cultivated musician and had such wide intellectual breadth that I loved being in the ensemble. He was the one who introduced me to the Mass in B minor, the *Passions* and the cantatas, and to Handel oratorios--nobody else played those works in Budapest at that time.

His name was Emil Lichtenberg. He was a well-to-do man, and he himself sustained the society financially and artistically because of his deep love of music. He invited some great oratorio singers to Budapest, such as the Finnish bass-baritone Helge Lindberg.

P. Salgo: Didn't you also do lots of Bach cantatas?

Salgo: Lots of Bach cantatas as well as Handel oratorios. I especially remember Handel's *Saul* and *Samson* with Helge Lindberg as Samson --this ten-feet tall, blonde, Scandinavian. He was a handsome man with a gorgeous voice, and not only the voice but the musicianship was extraordinary. It helped that he spoke impeccable German, too.

Crawford: What a marvelous thing. Do we have the counterpart of that oratorio society?

Salgo: Oh yes, there is one in New York.

Crawford: So there you were exposed to a lot of high quality performances.

Salgo: Yes, I was assistant concertmaster there. A friend of mine was concertmaster: an older colleague of mine, a Waldbauer student who invited me to join him.

P. Salgo: All this great literature at a young, impressionable age!

Salgo: It was helpful many years later when I became the director of the Bach festival.

More about Fritz Busch, Berlin and Dresden, 1928-1929

Crawford: You didn't work much on Bach with Busch.

Salgo: I didn't have the chance with him, though he did give me a pocket score of the *St. Matthew Passion* in Spanish because he had just conducted it in Buenos Aires. He conducted Mozart on the original 78 [rpm] recordings for the Glyndebourne festivals; I still have them. Marvelous.

Crawford: Have they been reissued?

Salgo: They were reissued on CDs. I find them wonderful, but for our time a bit slow.

Crawford: So you still listen to those?

Salgo: Haven't listened to them for a long time now. But yes, the last time I did a Mozart opera in Carmel I did.

Crawford: Busch conducted some Strauss premieres, didn't he?

Salgo: He may have. Though he was music director of the opera at Dresden, he was also very much sought after as a symphony conductor. He was for a while, when he came to America, considered for the post at the New York Philharmonic, but the Metropolitan Opera engaged him.

Crawford: You traveled to Dresden. What was the timing of that?

Salgo: About two hours on the train. These were fast trains from Berlin, the D train. It was seven or eight months that I saw him while I was in Berlin.

P. Salgo: Was it a weekly journey?

Salgo: Once a week and sometimes twice a week. From Berlin. Occasionally I stayed over for a performance; he always gave me tickets. And the performances were wonderful. He conducted *Arabella* and some of the other Strauss operas. I will never forget his *Rosenkavalier*.

Crawford: Do you remember the singers in that *Rosenkavalier*?

Salgo: The *Rosenkavalier*, yes. Baron Ochs was, I think, Friedrich Schorr, the great Wagnerian basso. He was Ochs. But I don't remember--maybe Margerita Angerer was the Octavian. I'm not quite sure about that.

Crawford: What do you remember of Berlin and Dresden in those times?

P. Salgo: I guess you were so busy [laughter].

Salgo: I had to practice so much. There was a coffeehouse in the western section of Berlin called Romanischer Café, and they had concerts there. On my second day in Berlin, a friend of mine took me there, and a violinist who was sitting next to the piano stood up and played the Mendelssohn Concerto. And Caroline, I couldn't believe this was happening in a coffeehouse--a violinist like that. It was a young girl; she was terrific.

Crawford: You always hear about the great musical climate in Berlin.

Salgo: Yes. I heard some wonderful Bach performances, cantata performances, at the academy where Flesch taught. Bach with eighty or a hundred people in the chorus--at that time that was the way to do it. I still remember I was very much taken by it, how clearly I heard every musical line. The mass of people in the chorus did not obliterate the clarity of the parts.

There were other exciting experiences there, and one stands out in my mind. Since I also played viola, and Flesch knew that, one Friday night he took me to play chamber music with Artur Schnabel. We played piano quartets; Flesch played violin, and I played viola, and I think Herrmann was the name of the cellist--he was a friend of Hindemith. I keenly remember I lost my place once, and I was so scared, and Schnabel snorted, "Humph! We'll have to go back. Two measures before letter C. And everybody count!"

Crawford: You didn't do that again. [laughter]

Salgo: No!

Crawford: When was it that you were in Berlin? What years?

Salgo: I graduated in 1928, so I think, my dear, it was the winter of '28 and '29. I was at the King's Theater from '28-'30, and in the Budapest Opera House orchestra from '31-'39, except for the summer of 1930 when I played at Bayreuth. As I told you, when the world collapsed economically in '29, my father went bankrupt and he had to sell his printer's shop. I had accepted a concertmaster position at King's Theater. In Hungarian it's just *Királysínház*, but it sounds great in English, even though it was just an operetta theater.

Serving as Concertmaster at the King's Theater, 1928-1930, and
Touring with a Gypsy Orchestra ##

Crawford: Could you talk about the King's Theater a little bit?

Salgo: Yes, I mentioned that fortunately I was with the theater in the days when one could get a good salary for being a concertmaster, and occasionally I had the opportunity to conduct--the conductor liked me--so I had my first conducting experiences in that theater. It was good training because there was dancing on stage and dancers are very particular--you better look at the feet and know your score!

There were some challenging things about the operetta position, and I have happy memories of that time. In the classical operetta, so to speak, such as *The Countess Maritza* or some of the Léhar operettas, there is generally some entr'acte music between the first and second movements which usually calls for a violin solo. Sometimes it was a long solo, and I certainly had to practice, and I had lots of fun. In this operetta theater we had as a guest Imre Kálmán--the famous Hungarian composer--conducting *Die Gräfin Maritza*, or *The Countess Maritza*, as it's called.

My brother had a business of his own at the time, and so together we were able to straighten out the family finances and support our parents. I may have mentioned that my father had retired early, and I resented that very much and still resent it.

Crawford: You felt he was too young.

Salgo: He was too young, yes. But going back to the operetta theater, in retrospect I would say that it was interesting and occasionally fun.

At the end of my season with the King's Theater, there was a Hungarian composer who lived in Paris, Berényi was his name, and he came to Budapest. He had a financial interest in the Parisian music publishing house, Salabert.

He came to Budapest to organize an orchestra that was to be called for publicity purposes a "gypsy orchestra," because that would seem exotic to audiences, and he attended a performance at the King's Theater one night when I had one of these big solos in one of the Kálmán operettas. As I mentioned, these operettas usually had a brilliant violin solo between the first and second acts.

The next day, through a messenger, I was asked to meet him. He said there would be a summer tour to Scandinavia, and he was getting together an orchestra; would I like to come as its leader? The pay wasn't bad, and I always had been eager to go to Scandinavia--anything that would take me out of Hungary.

So we went, and Caroline, it was the first time I had experienced real freedom and democracy. It pervaded the air. The people were beautifully dressed, and everybody spoke two or three languages--I'm talking mainly about Sweden. I was so young, and I looked at these gorgeous Swedish women and had never seen saw anything like them. I was too inexperienced and too timid to dare to talk to them [laughter]. I told Priscilla about my predilection for these so-called Scandinavian beauties when we went to Scandinavia--

Crawford: I was going to say that Mrs. Salgo could very easily be a Scandinavian. I don't know if Scandinavia is in your background or not.

P. Salgo: English and French.

Salgo: She probably has some Scandinavian in her background. Of course, America has the most beautiful women! But a young man's feelings and impressions, straight out of Central Europe, were of a free country. Sensitivity to the arts and the theater and at the same time a highly advanced technology--I was very, very much taken.

Crawford: This orchestra was something of a pickup orchestra, then?

Salgo: It was a pickup orchestra, and there was a gypsy band within the orchestra. They couldn't really read, but one third of the concert was always turned over to them. Of course they brought down the house, most importantly, with the cimbalom--a type of rectangular table with strings that is struck with soft mallets. There was a very handsome leader, too, a violinist with fiery manners. No wonder it was so successful.

Crawford: I imagine you made a big impression. Did you play some Scandinavian works?

Salgo: No. We played Viennese operettas and Hungarian gypsy music and occasionally some French operettas which Mr. Berényi wanted to promote.

Crawford: I read somewhere that you played a Sibelius work, and Sibelius was there. Was that a different time?

Salgo: Yes, that was at a different time.

Playing with the Budapest Opera Orchestra, 1931-1939

Salgo: After that summer I returned to Budapest, and when I returned, I got a call from Waldbauer that he would like me to play for Dohnányi--Ernst von Dohnányi, who was the director of the Philharmonic Society and just as in Vienna, the Philharmonic was also the orchestra for the opera house. There was one opening for which thirty other people tried out, and I must have done well, since I was accepted.

I was a member of the orchestra from 1931 to 1939, but in 1937 there was a momentous interruption when I had an exciting tour as violist with the Roth Quartet in America. I will get to that.

The Budapest Opera wasn't as great as the Wiener Staatsoper, but it was considered one of the better houses of Europe. All the great singers, even from America, and all the famous conductors came as guests every year--Richard Strauss was among them--the Budapest Opera performed the second or third performances of all Strauss's new works.

Crawford: What were your impressions of those conductors?

Salgo: I learned a tremendous amount and my horizons widened, not only in terms of the violin and virtuoso ideas, but also in terms of music literature. I was impressed by the art of the conductor, which is not only manual technique, but also the handling of people, in other words, the making of music through people. Again, let me say that the players who are moved by a conductor become the instruments of the conductor.

Three Weeks at Bayreuth with Furtwängler and Toscanini, 1930

Salgo: But I left out one important thing in this narrative: before I came back from Carl Flesch's master class, through Fritz Busch I got an audition for the Bayreuth Orchestra. So as a young violinist of eighteen I had an unforgettable three weeks in Bayreuth. Last stand of second violin.

P. Salgo: This is while you were a student of Flesch and Busch?

Salgo: Yes. I had just finished with Flesch and with Busch. This is one of the most important things in all my musical life, my dear.

P. Salgo: Who conducted it then?

Salgo: I'll get to that. With me in the orchestra, also scholarship winners, were a French boy and a Dutch boy. The three of us were all together, and we were all ears. [Wilhelm] Furtwängler was the chief conductor, and we played some of the *Ring* and *Tristan* and *Meistersinger* with him.

And then in the last week a new Italian conductor appeared. His name: Arturo Toscanini. Monday morning, ten o'clock music rehearsal: *Parsifal*. Caroline, music rehearsal means no stage; just the music. Well, the orchestra had just finished with Furtwängler, and you should have heard the murmuring and grumbling. Here we are, and this Italian wants to teach us.

At ten o'clock a little man with a black shirt and a long stick comes in. This, dear, I never told you: on the conductor's stand was a score, but it wasn't *Parsifal*. Some not very kind person had put *Lohengrin* there instead. Toscanini didn't say a word. Only "Signori, buon giorno." He took the score, put it aside, and conducted from memory--he not only conducted from memory, Caroline, but remembered all the rehearsal numbers and letters. Everything! He had a photographic mind. Just everything.

P. Salgo: How old was Toscanini?

Salgo: He was probably in his sixties, maybe not quite. The one thing which I'm so anxious to tell you is that this was the greatest conducting lesson in my life, my dear. He raised his baton. We knew that he didn't speak German except something like "Wagnerian German." But he said: "Overture, signori, prego," and there was on that face something of such electrifying, magnetic spirituality that that tired, beaten-up German orchestra played a chord like I had never heard in my life. This is what intensity of feeling and communication can do.

Crawford: It was that recognizable.

P. Salgo: And it didn't matter which orchestra, whether it was the New York Philharmonic or what.

Salgo: It was always so.

Crawford: And so they responded to him.

Salgo: They had to. How can you play any other way when you see a face like that?

Crawford: You said you had a scholarship?

Salgo: There were three scholarship chairs funded by the German government for talented foreign students, you see.

P. Salgo: This was when he was at the *Hochschule*.

Crawford: So that was not meant to be a permanent post.

Salgo: Oh, no! One had to have recommendations, just as I had from Fritz Busch. It was marvelous! Furtwängler had a "bad hand," as they called it. The beat was like this [demonstrates], but he was a very great artist. Needed endless rehearsal time and not because of his beat--the orchestra was accustomed to it--he just had a great deal of insight into the score and had a lot to say.

Crawford: What was his greatness?

Salgo: It was in his music, in phrasing and explanation, and in certain philosophical connections and musical remarks about the structure. In a Wagnerian opera, he explained how the motifs develop--"remember, we had this in the first act. When it returns it has to be emphasized so that there is a special meaning." With Toscanini, it wasn't he didn't have to speak, but as he made music, the feeling was self-evident.

Crawford: What was Toscanini's conducting style? Economy?

P. Salgo: There was the circular motion that many people didn't understand. It was often sweeping, yet at vital moments it was very precise.

Salgo: That's right. It was very individual. As you recall, his "six" was not what you call the "German six" [demonstrates]. After the downbeat, one beat to the right, another beat to the right which was always very dramatic and very Italian, and the third one...

P. Salgo: What are we in? 6/8 time?

Salgo: Yes [demonstrates again]. So downbeat, second beat to the left, third beat to the right--one, two, three--the fourth beat a big sweep back again to the left a little bit upward, and the five across again upward to the right, and then finishing with the six. So this is what it was [demonstrates the complete

Toscanini six]. It was unmistakable and unconventional, and of course, it was called after him, the Toscanini or Italian, six. But the singers loved it because it was so clear that he could guide them when they were on the stage. This is probably why he invented the six, if one can say he invented it, but the first time I saw it was when he was conducting.

More about the Budapest Opera Orchestra and a Summer with Richard Strauss in the 1930s

P. Salgo: Furtwängler sounds as though he was like Bruno Walter: had to have a lot of explanation, a lot of talk.

Salgo: Yes. Bruno Walter came to conduct in Budapest very often. He was a very kind and warm person and people in the orchestra loved him. He needed time to explain what he wanted because his manual technique wasn't so great. But again, the artistry and the musicianship and the poetry he created was beautiful, however things were a little bit slow. Slow tempi.

There was an old standmate of mine at the Budapest Opera named Steiner. We called him "Papa Steiner" because in his young days he played under Mahler, and when Bruno Walter came, Steiner told me in German, "Wunderschön, aber nicht zusammen"-- "it's beautiful, but never together." [laughter]

But I learned from Walter for the first time how to approach Mahler; he was a student of Mahler's, and I played under him the First, the Fourth, and the Ninth Symphonies, and *Das Lied von der Erde* at a time when Mahler wasn't as much "in" as he is now.

Then there were some others, many others, as I have mentioned to you before. There was of course the Hungarian staff conductor--he had a fantastic memory--doing *The Ring* and *Tristan* from memory. There was Knappertsbusch, who did a great deal of Mozart, very precise yet still musical, and who managed to give the singers leeway yet kept the tempo; Fritz Busch; Strauss, of course; and Erich Kleiber. We loved him because there were so many wonderful things he said during rehearsals, not anecdotes, but insights into the music and libretto. His rehearsals were better for the orchestra than the performances because his words gave us so much inspiration.

I remember *Carmen*, how Kleiber conducted it and how wonderful I felt. It was the first time that I heard the

greatness of the opera. And how he actually stage-directed the Danish tenor Helge Roswaenge as Don Jose at the final rehearsal; you might remember him. But the role of Carmen itself is so difficult, and I don't think I've ever seen a completely satisfying one. It's an impossible role--she has to sing high and low, she has to dance, and has to be beautiful, have a fiery temperament, and be a fine musician.

I did it once later on in San Jose with a young singer who performed it in Los Angeles, but as my teacher said--"the trouble with Carmen is that you go onstage, and at that point half of the audience is against you--the women" [laughter].

Crawford: You studied with Strauss during those years?

Salgo: Yes, there was a summer course for young conductors which Strauss held in the little Swiss town of Winterthur, where there was a lovely opera house that was practically Strauss's own.

There were six of us and I don't remember which summer it was, but I was still at the Budapest Opera House, and it was a summer when I could go. I remember the very first lesson he came in with a rucksack, dressed for the mountains, and said, "Boys, I don't know what to say about conducting. I'm going to the mountains, and I have six tickets and you will sit behind me tonight. It's *Don Giovanni* and I'm conducting."

Well, there we were. He came, and the orchestra was a sleepy little Swiss orchestra and not very good, but they knew what he wanted. In Germany the tradition is that the conductor sits, and the orchestra is so well rehearsed he doesn't have to do much, just lead the performance from a sitting position. But at the end of *Don Giovanni*, when the Commendatore knocks on the door and takes Don Juan to hell, Strauss rose to his full six-foot-plus height and the orchestra went into the tremendous crescendo--you should have seen that little Swiss orchestra! You felt that the roof would come down. It was hair-raising; I still have the shivers when I think of it. Suddenly at that moment, the B minor chord and the trombones--it's a marvelous, dramatic page.

Another Strauss story: there was an old doorkeeper at the Budapest Opera house who was chief guardian for the artists, and he knew all the artists--they called him Uncle Cseppke, a very old Hungarian name. He was small and very, very fat, with a jovial face, and when Mr. Cseppke rose from the chair, it was hard for him because he was so overweight. The story is that when Strauss came, Mr. Cseppke rose--he didn't speak a word of

German--and he said, "Mr. *Stross* (not *Strauss*), you have a letter." [laughter]

Crawford: How many weeks in Bayreuth?

Salgo: About three.

Crawford: And how many Toscanini performances?

Salgo: *Parsifal*, *Die Meistersinger*--

P. Salgo: *Tannhäuser*?

Salgo: No, none of the earlier ones, dear. I don't think any of the *Ring*--if there was one, it would be *Die Walküre*. That sort of stands out in my memory.

Crawford: There was not a lot of verbal communication?

Salgo: No.

Crawford: Was there any temperament? You always hear about that.

Salgo: Not there. A few impatient remarks about the singers, but not with the orchestra.

P. Salgo: We got the temperament when we were with him in New York.

Salgo: In New York [laughter]. Priscilla and I were in the chorus, you see, when we were teaching at Westminster Choir College. He came to conduct Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*--Beethoven became Toscanini's idol in his later years when he conducted rehearsals at the Westminster Choir College. I remember it was important to him how Latin words should be pronounced--for example, "de-scen-det." For Toscanini the *Missa* was a statement, a supra-ecclesiastical experience, a musical experience as well as a religious experience. You see this very seldom. It is a symphonic Mass, but he made high drama out of it.

At the Budapest Opera there was an impressive list of guest singers: Laura Volpi, Gina Cigna, Friedrich Schorr, Marcel Journet--who came and sang *Boris Godunov* in French. Having come from the Paris opera he sang these in French while all the rest of the cast sang Hungarian [laughter].

I wanted to tell you one more I learned from these great guest conductors in Budapest. The standards of performance were always higher than what I had from the local conductors, the staff conductors. When these guests came, it was an eye-opener

how much more they demanded from the orchestra in terms of precision and dramatic expression.

They emphasized one thing particularly, and that was especially wonderful about Strauss--the orchestra never should cover the singers. Very few conductors observe this--orchestras are usually much too loud in opera, even in San Francisco--and when they are you cannot understand the words. However, in Bayreuth, according to Wagner's plan, which has the orchestra totally under the stage, it can play with a full sound without overwhelming the singers.

Crawford: How large was the opera house in Budapest and when was it built?

Salgo: The opera house was built in about 1900, and it is a good size.

Crawford: What's the shape of the house?

P. Salgo: Lots of balconies. Horseshoe-shaped?

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: So good sound.

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: What was the name of the theater?

Salgo: It was still the Hapsburg empire so it was called the Royal Hungarian Opera.

We learned about performance standards and how to handle large crowds, huge orchestras and huge choruses, to have a sense of humor, not to waste time, to get to the point, and to speak briefly and very clearly so everybody could understand what you wanted. We learned that when something is wrong, it is best not to correct it right away but continue on for a bit, make the correction, and then start the music well before the correction. These lessons were for me an eye-opener, and I followed them all my life.

Crawford: Was everything in the original language in Budapest?

Salgo: No, my dear. It was always in Hungarian because of this stupid nationalistism, which dominated all the smaller nations. However, when Marcel Journet came and sang *Boris*, he sang it in Russian. And when he was the Hans Sachs in *Meistersinger* he sang it in French, and the rest of the ensemble sang it in Hungarian. It was strange, but singing in the original language

was frowned upon; it was always in Hungarian, and of course the Hungarian language is a musical language but it certainly doesn't fit the music as well as the original language would.

P. Salgo: Did they do many French operas?

Salgo: Not too many, because France and Hungary were not on very good terms. However, the intelligentsia in Hungary, the younger writers, were great Francophiles with great admiration for French culture, but while many people spoke French and read French, almost everybody knew German, because of politics for the most part.

Playing with the Roth Quartet in the U.S., 1937 ##

Salgo: The Roth Quartet came in about 1937. The cellist of the Roth Quartet, János Scholz, was a classmate of mine in the Weiner chamber music course, and he introduced me to Mr. Roth, who asked me to come to his hotel to play for him. I did, and I told him that I was equally schooled on the viola, and he said, "It was very nice to see you," but that was all.

Then the Roth Quartet came to America, and I heard that there had been an auto accident in San Francisco, and that the violist, Ferenc Molnar, was hurt. The quartet felt that they didn't want to engage somebody with a different style, so they must have a thought of me and they wired me: "Would you come for about two weeks to America and join the quartet?"

I wired back that I would love to, and I asked for a leave from the Budapest Opera. I got my leave and came, and that was a great experience. I arrived in New York, and the manager, Mr. Copley, a great, old-style manager--they don't make them that way anymore--took me through immigration. Since I had a visitor's visa, it was easy, and he put me on a train, and I joined the quartet at Stanford. Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge gave the Roth Quartet five concerts: one at Stanford, the others all over California--and finally one in New York.

So that was my first visit to Stanford. This was the year '37, in the spring.

I played only two of the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge concerts, and one was at Memorial Church, upstairs, for a little audience. It was really the first string quartet concerts in

the area; there were not many quartets at that time. I don't remember where the other one was.

Crawford: Do you want to talk about Mr. Roth and who the other members were?

Salgo: Yes. Antal was the second violinist. I took Mr. Molnar's place, and Scholz was the cellist. But the interesting thing was that the concert in New York was at the International Musicological Congress, and there was a new work by Roy Harris to be introduced; a Piano Quintet with Joanna Harris, his wife, playing the piano.

Mr. Roth and I took the old Challenger train from San Francisco, I remember, to New York, stopping in Chicago. A steak was one dollar fifty. It was a wonderful experience to look at the country, and when we arrived in the East, I was the houseguest of Mr. Roy Harris. He had rented a house in Princeton and was teaching at Westminster Choir College at that time--so I was his houseguest for about a week.

We rehearsed in New York; the concert was a great success, and the Roy Harris Piano Quintet, as I said, was the first performance, and Mrs. Harris was a very fine pianist.

Quartet Performances for Mrs. Montgomery at the U.S. Embassy Residence, 1937-1939; Obtaining a U.S. Visa

Salgo: I then came back to Hungary, I resuscitated my quartet there with some changes of personnel, and I had a lovely offer which changed my life: to perform with my quartet every month once or twice in the afternoon at the bedside of the American ambassador's wife, Mrs. Montgomery. She had had undulant fever; she went out only for official functions in her wheelchair.

She was an excellent musician, and I didn't speak English yet, but she spoke beautiful German, so we could communicate. She always planned the program and the late Beethoven quartets were her favorites; she had excellent musical taste. This went on from about '37 to '39, before the political situation darkened. Hitler was in Vienna by that time.

When I was in Princeton, I made the acquaintance of President and Mrs. Williamson of Westminster Choir College, and I corresponded with them after I returned. In one letter to the

Williamsons I wrote saying that things were very difficult, and that I would love to come to America if they could find a position for me.

The response came immediately: "We would love to have you. Come as soon as you can." Well, that wasn't so easy. I went with the letter to the consulate, not to the embassy, but to the American Consulate, and talked to a Mr. Cunningham there, and he looked at me sternly and said, "This is all very nice, Mr. Salgo, but the quota for Hungarians is filled until 1984."

That was it. All right. I didn't know what to do; I was just heartbroken. This was on a Friday morning. That Sunday afternoon, I played at the bedside of Mrs. Montgomery; it was a late Beethoven Quartet--I still remember it was the A minor. She was interested in that one--the A minor Quartet is a work of thanksgiving for somebody who is convalescent. Opus 132 in A minor. I think she was crying a little bit, and after I finished and was packing up my violin in the next room, the butler came and said, "Madame would like to see you." I went back in, and she said, "*Sie sind so Traurig?* (Please, Mr. Salgo, is something wrong? Has something happened?)

I told her that I had always dreamt about going to America, and that now that I had the opportunity, I had been denied a visa, and it seemed I would probably wind up in a concentration camp. She said, "Oh, Mr. Salgo, you probably won't understand that although I would love to help you, and my husband is the ambassador, he has nothing to do with consulate affairs; he is not allowed to." Then she said, "But let me see what I can do."

I got the usual little envelope with her writing on Wednesday inviting the quartet to perform on the following Sunday; she asked for an all-Mozart program. She wrote: "We haven't had Mozart for a long time. And would you stay for dinner?" At dinner, she was there in her wheelchair. I was on her left, and on the right was Consul Cunningham.

P. Salgo: The one who had refused you.

Salgo: Yes. She didn't talk to me too much, but gave a great deal of attention to the consul, and at the very end of the dinner, the consul got up and said, "Mr. Salgo, I have discovered that since you are such an important musician in this country, you can get a visa under Quota 4-D, which is a provision for people who may be culturally or in any other way useful to the U.S. You can have a visa."

Crawford: Everything worked for you.

P. Salgo: Wasn't he lucky?

Salgo: So I met with him, and in two weeks I was on the high seas.

Crawford: Were you in danger in Hungary? You mentioned that your brother was--

Salgo: Not yet, but I would have been eventually.

One more little story. When I arrived in the U.S., Mrs. Williamson was waiting for me there. I knew I had to present my credentials on debarkation, and that the immigration officer could refuse to accept me even if everything else was in order. So I was concerned.

By that time I knew a little bit of English but my English teacher in Budapest had not prepared me for a Brooklyn accent, which the immigration officer had. He looked at the visa and said, "You have forty dollars on you?" "Yes, that's exactly what I was allowed to take out. Yes, sir." "May I see it?" And then, "Under what name do you want to live in the United States?"

I said, "Excuse me, officer, I don't understand." There was a law--I don't know whether there is still--but there was a law stating that one could choose a new name when entering this country. "You can choose the name Roosevelt if you want to," he told me. "Officer," I said meekly. "Could I keep my old name?" "Of course you can--now move on, fellow! Don't you see the line behind you?"

Crawford: That's a wonderful way to end the session.

II A NEW LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES: 1939-1949

[Interview 2: February 3, 1995] ##

Teaching and Performing at Westminster Choir College and Princeton

Crawford: At the end of the last session, you had just arrived in the United States. Let's begin there and talk about first impressions.

P. Salgo: He must have told you about learning English via the *New York Times*! [laughter]

Salgo: Yes, well, when I arrived in my new country I found real happiness for the first time in my life. The wife of the president of Westminster Choir College, Mrs. John Finley Williamson, was waiting for me at New York Harbor, and I remember we had a little lunch at a small restaurant there, and I was introduced to sandwiches, something you didn't find in Europe for lunch. So the new experiences had already started.

I settled in Princeton and I lived with the Williamsons for quite a while and taught at the Choir College and at the university. I was responsible for coordinating all the chamber music activities at Princeton, which meant putting on performances by student composers. It wasn't easy because I had to find most of the players in New York. It was an important experience, because through the chamber music program I could do first performances of some of the Princeton composers who became very well known later on, such as Roger Sessions and Milton Babbitt, who taught there. One of the works we performed was a very fine piano trio by Andrew Imbrie.

Crawford: I was going to ask you if Mr. Imbrie was there.

Salgo: He was a graduate student at Princeton and had already won several prizes. I played the violin in the trio, and it was a

great success. The *New York Times* sent a critic to the performance, and I'm sorry I don't have the review of it. Milton Babbitt came as well.

Crawford: He was on the faculty there?

Salgo: He was on the faculty, and at the time, he was considered *l'enfant terrible* of music; he wrote not only twelve-tone works but all kinds of difficult experimental music.

Crawford: What were your impressions of some of the faculty at Princeton?

Salgo: I thought Princeton had a very fine faculty. Randall Thompson was there as well, and we became friends, and then later on when we came out to California I continued to perform his larger choral and orchestral works. He was teaching composition at that time at Princeton, and I arranged a number of chamber music performances of his works for the students. Ed Cone was there as well.

P. Salgo: He was studying at the time, wasn't he?

Salgo: Yes. He was a very brilliant young man, mostly involved in music theory, but he was also a composer and a very erudite musician with whom I worked rather closely there.

I was given some classes to teach at the Choir College, and so had my first experience as a teacher. I took teaching very seriously, and I discovered that I had a modest talent as a commentator on music once I could handle the language adequately. I enjoyed it very much, and it was a good preparation for my years at Stanford, when I had to speak to large audiences.

I talked about music then, and I'm still doing it now! [laughter] Of course I created an orchestra in Princeton; made up not only of Westminster Choir College students--there were some talented ones--but also of musicians in New York City, whom I met on my frequent trips there. In those days, professional musicians were much more apt to support student activities than they are today.

When I performed the *Eroica* Symphony in Princeton, Wendell Wilbur joined the orchestra. Remember him, dear? He was a wonderful horn player who was a freelancer, but he was so good that the New York Philharmonic occasionally asked him to come and play, and when we performed the *Eroica* I asked him to play first horn.

Crawford: So your musical resources were substantial.

Salgo: Yes. Stuart Canin was another musician who became a friend of mine in New York. He had recently graduated from Juilliard, and he came down to Princeton and played with the orchestra.

So there was a nucleus of a fine orchestra, and there were some outstanding soloists who agreed to perform with us. One was Bronislaw Huberman, who had been in a plane crash somewhere in Asia, and he and his violin had survived and were all right, but he was somewhat nervous about a New York recital that had been scheduled--he wasn't sure how well he would perform.

A composer friend of his named Mme. Selden-Goth, who was also a friend of the Choir College, asked me if he could perform the Mozart D Major Concerto with us, and I told her I would be honored, so he came and played, and it was a wonderful, insightful, beautiful performance.

I don't think the New York recital went well; he was praised but not as much as he had hoped for. I sensed that he wasn't going to be entirely successful, but his performance with us was one of the most interesting ones I remember, and he was very much taken by the little orchestra and full of compliments. It was a pleasure to accompany him because he was a splendid musician.

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Salgo: In the audience at that performance was an elderly, very illustrious gentleman who was a friend of Huberman by the name of Albert Einstein. He came to the concert, and following the performance I asked him to write a letter about his impressions of the concert. He wrote the letter and I still have it.

Crawford: Would you read the letter?

Salgo: Yes, it says: "To whom it may concern. Mr. Sandor Salgo is a musician of high standing. The concert he gave together with the famous violinist Bronislaw Huberman has made a deep impression upon me. April 6, 1942. Professor Albert Einstein."

Crawford: Nice memory.

Salgo: He invited me to play duets with him, so I went to his home and we played some Vivaldi duets together. He wasn't very good and I remember he apologized and told me he was so busy at the time that he couldn't practice enough! [laughter]. But he was very musical and we hit it off well. His home was very near the

Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. These were very turbulent days in wartime--it was at the time when the Manhattan Project had just gotten underway.

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Salgo: Bronislaw Huberman was the founder of the Israeli Philharmonic, And shortly after our concert in Princeton he asked me, at the Nassau Tavern in the presence of Paul Nettle, the musicologist, if I would come and be the conductor of the Israeli Philharmonic. I thanked him for the wonderful offer and told him that I probably would regret not taking it, but I felt that I wanted this to be my country. Mr. and Mrs. Williamson of the Westminster Choir College had brought me from Hungary, I had already taken out citizenship papers; I had made a firm commitment. There were lots of wonderful conductors at the time, and I knew that Israel would find the right one. Do you know whom they asked? Giulini, [laughter] and later Mehta. But I'm not in their class anyway, and I probably wouldn't have lasted too long there.

Crawford: I think that you're too modest. Have you regretted it?

Salgo: No.

Crawford: Because you've done a good amount of guest conducting.

Salgo: Yes, but this was my life, my country, and I don't think that I would have been happy anywhere else. As a matter of fact, I did not visit Israel until very recently, and I think it is wonderful what the people of Israel have done. Jerusalem is poetry; it's just wonderful. Nevertheless, I am glad that I'm an American!

Crawford: What kinds of audiences did you have in Princeton for those concerts?

Salgo: It was a high-quality audience with a lot academic people and professionals.

P. Salgo: All of the musical people attended.

Salgo: Yes, there were lots of professional people who lived in Princeton and worked in New York and enjoyed performing chamber music. Priscilla played music with Peter Koerber, who was an illustrious chemist. Who was the literary man--Stevens?

P. Salgo: Yes. He was the vice president of Lippincott Publishing, and played the cello, at about my speed of violist. A physics

department man who later became president of Swarthmore, I believe, was first violinist.

Crawford: So you had your ensemble.

Salgo: Yes. An interesting but small ensemble.

P. Salgo: And then there was the group that sang Bach cantatas once a month on a Sunday afternoons, so it was a musical audience. It was very good.

Salgo: We had a very interesting life. There were many things I had to learn, such as English, since I really spoke the language haltingly. As Priscilla said, I read the *New York Times* from cover to cover every day. And Mrs. Williamson, who was the dean of Westminster Choir College, was also an English teacher and I read some of the poets with her that I had read only in translation in Hungary, particularly Shakespeare, who was never easy for a beginner, but I was determined. It was a pleasure sitting up nights and reading and studying--but those were different days.

Lessons with George Szell

Crawford: Do you want to talk about your lessons with George Szell?

Salgo: Yes. When I came to the United States, I knew that Fritz Busch was at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and I tried to contact him. I found it difficult to reach him and it took me a year to do so, but finally I found him. He remembered me and invited me out to his house in Riverdale, where I saw him almost every month.

He was a very good teacher, even if I didn't realize at the time how much I was learning from him. It was after Busch died that I began working with Szell. I felt that I needed instruction in conducting technique and analysis and so on, and I can't remember how I got to Szell; I think it was through the chief editor at Schirmer's, whom I met at some of the Princeton string quartet's performances. I can't remember his name--but I know that he was of German extraction, and it was he who introduced me to Szell. This was--was I married to you at that time, dear?

P. Salgo: I'm not sure.

Salgo: Then I will talk about my lessons with Szell here.

Caroline, he was certainly one of the greatest musical influences on my life. He was outwardly very formal, with very high standards, and he was very strict. He was reticent in expressing his feelings, but there was a warmth and helpfulness towards me for which I was very grateful. He often quoted literature and sometimes science, theories of light and so forth, and was fluent in five languages. He was Hungarian-born but with an Austrian upbringing, and he spent the early part of his career in Prague. In Prague, they said of him, "God knows everything, but Szell knows more." [laughter]

P. Salgo: Was it in Switzerland once we heard him?

Salgo: Yes.

P. Salgo: I think it was in Lausanne, and we were just stunned because it was shortly after the war, and the Czech Philharmonic was in semi-shambles. It played with a sloppiness that Szell never would have tolerated anywhere else, but it showed a human and caring side which few people ever had a chance to see.

Salgo: His wife was Czech and she was there, teary-eyed. Some of the musicians didn't even have strings when they arrived in Lausanne from Prague.

There was something else I forgot to mention. The Roth Quartet asked me to rejoin their string quartet after I arrived here, and I was able to take a leave from my work in Princeton and join them in Utah. They were performing a Beethoven cycle, and when I told Szell that I was going, he said: "How are you going?" I told him I had just come from the Triple A, and showed him the itinerary. He looked at it, told me not to go that way, and suggested another route. So I did it his way and it saved me half a day! When I took the routing he suggested, it was so untraveled that the localites stared at us from their front porches. It was our New Jersey licenses--it was just uncanny.

Crawford: What were you studying with him at that point?

Salgo: My programs at the Choir College. Some Haydn symphonies. Dr. Williamson had wanted to do the Verdi *Requiem* and when there was an occasion to do it and the concert was announced, he asked me if I could do it. I said: "Of course," though I had never done it, but I told myself I could do it, and I called Szell and asked if I could come, and that it was an emergency.

He said, "All right, Salgo. I will see you in the morning at eight o'clock." He lived in an apartment on Park Avenue at the time. This was before he went to Cleveland--he was with the Metropolitan at that time. So I was there at eight, when the lessons were always scheduled, and he played from the score and I conducted. It was absolutely obligatory that I learn all the scores from memory--he would take me only on that condition.

He was a famous pianist and was famous for playing scores from memory, and he had done a recording with the Budapest Quartet playing the Brahms Quintet.

Crawford: So when he played the scores he reduced them and played only the most important parts?

Salgo: Yes. I have never seen anybody like him. When I studied with Busch, Busch did the same thing.

P. Salgo: Bernstein did too.

Salgo: But of Szell they said he could play more of a score than anybody else because he was such a virtuoso pianist.

P. Salgo: Bernstein was not bad.

Salgo: Yes, Bernstein could probably do it as well.

Crawford: Did he always conduct from memory?

Salgo: He always did. When he played for me he invariably sneaked in a wrong note here and there, and I had to stop immediately and tell him what the wrong note was and what instrument played it, so I was expecting that. I crammed all night--studying the *Requiem* score, which has four bassoons--right at the beginning there is a passage where the four bassoons play.

So the next day when he asked me where the wrong note occurred, I said: "Bassoon." He replied: "Of course, bassoon! Which one?" I knew that it was either the second or the third one, and I said it was the third. It was the second. He said: "All right, Salgo." He closed the book, handed it to me and said, "You are a busy man. I am a busy man. Call me when you know it." [laughter]

Crawford: Wonderful story.

Salgo: I was there fifteen minutes, that's all.

Crawford: He had no time for someone who didn't know the score perfectly. Was it like that the entire year?

Salgo: Yes. I had a lesson every week, and we became almost friends.

P. Salgo: There was a very interesting article in the *New Yorker* magazine years ago about George Szell, pointing out his difficult side. At one point, he called Sándor to ask him to write a letter saying that he wasn't such an ogre.

Salgo: He asked me to write a letter on his behalf.

Crawford: What did you say?

Salgo: I said that from my experience, he was a caring--I didn't say warm, but caring--and thoughtful person, and I mentioned all the best things I could sincerely say about the greatness of the man. I sent him a copy.

Crawford: Was it his abruptness that bothered people?

P. Salgo: He was extremely sarcastic if you made a mistake. He had no tolerance for a musical mistake, absolutely none. Toscanini usually did not, either, although there was a wonderful instance when we sang the Verdi *Requiem* with Toscanini, and a soprano standing next to me came in on a rest, on a high A. She quickly stopped singing, but here was this high A, and Toscanini didn't bat an eye. He went right on conducting as if nothing had happened, and the next day there was a note at the Choir College saying, "I forgive the soprano." Well, after all, he knew we were students, but if one of the orchestra or the soloists had done that, he would have broken the baton on their heads. I never forgot that.

Salgo: Yes, and people did not resent Toscanini. Szell did educate the orchestra, so that they all the musicians thought the same way.

P. Salgo: A common viewpoint?

Salgo: Yes, he talked about music and they had a common viewpoint. When Pierre Boulez was invited to guest-conduct the Cleveland Symphony, the press asked him after the rehearsal how things went, and he said, "It's hard enough to try to fill Mr. Szell's shoes when in Cleveland, let alone the hundred little Szells you are confronted with."

Crawford: They always talk about the Cleveland sound, the Philadelphia sound.

Salgo: Yes. The Cleveland sound was something.

Crawford: Did you keep in touch with him?

Salgo: Yes, I kept in touch.

Crawford: What was Szell's forte? And what was Toscanini's--in your opinion?

Salgo: The two men were very, very different, but as far as the repertoire goes, I think Szell's main strength was the German Romantic School, though of course he had great success at the Metropolitan Opera conducting *Meistersinger* and even contemporary music. I will never forget hearing him conduct Brahms in Cleveland; his Brahms recordings won prizes. His players felt, and I think from recordings we may ascertain, that Schumann was very likely his first love. As a matter of fact, Schumann was criticized for awkward orchestration at times, and so Szell changed the orchestration of the Fourth Symphony slightly, and I'm happy to say that I have a copy of his score of the Fourth Symphony, which I have conducted, and it was very successful.

Toscanini is very hard to categorize. It can't be said that there is any particular school to which he belongs, although he certainly came out of the Italian tradition and it is very likely that opera was his greatest contribution. Of course his interest in Beethoven and his study of Beethovenian scores made him a great Beethoven conductor, even if he is criticized today for being a little bit too fast. But tempi can be very changeable, and Virgil Thomson quipped that Toscanini's fast tempi may be explained in terms of the fact that he knew the scores so well. But there is always drama in Toscanini, and he always found the inner voices of an orchestra.

Meeting Priscilla Salgo, Marriage and Military Service: 1943-1946

Crawford: Shall we talk here about your meeting Mrs. Salgo? Did you marry before the army?

P. Salgo: We got married while he was in the army.

Salgo: Of course we did!

P. Salgo: You remember?

Salgo: Yes. I do remember. [laughter] Better than she does. I first met Priscilla at a student and faculty gathering at Westminster Choir College in 1939. She was a freshman, and when I met her I already knew her name, so I called her by her name and she was surprised. We didn't start to go together right away.

P. Salgo: Things were so much more formal in those days, and he addressed me as Miss Patterson instead of by my first name. He didn't realize, I guess, that it was perfectly all right for a faculty member to address one of his students by the first name. [laughter]

Salgo: I called her Miss Patterson, it is true.

Crawford: Let us go back to your New England beginnings and talk about your early years.

P. Salgo: My life was music from the ground up, because my mother was widowed very early, and so in an effort to keep the family going, she started a music school. I had piano lessons, violin lessons, theory lessons--

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P. Salgo: I had always had great trouble with my eyes. I had to go to the local college--Colby College--in the town in Maine where I lived because my family had to read my lessons to me, if you can imagine that. My sister read me the science texts because she was a scientist, and my great-aunt read history and English to me.

Crawford: A companionable way to learn though, really.

P. Salgo: Well, there was not much time for fun because I was busy trying to get these things one-two-three in my mind, which is difficult when things are read to you. We're not accustomed to learning, I think, without seeing. When someone reads something aloud, if people have the text, they always follow it with their eyes--just to check up, I guess. But anyway, that was good auditory discipline; it was hard.

After two years at Colby, I went to Westminster Choir College, got my undergraduate degree and a master's degree and then started to teach theory at Westminster.

Salgo: By that time, we were going out together.

P. Salgo: We were engaged, yes.

Crawford: Could you correct your eyes?

P. Salgo: No, my eyes are still very weak and I have difficulties. I can do only limited reading.

Crawford: You must have had to read an immense amount of music.

P. Salgo: It's interesting, but music is not nearly as hard on the eyes as reading words. So that worked for me. A great part of music training is practicing and that sort of thing, whereas had I concentrated on English, it would have meant reading, reading, reading, all the time.

I didn't play very well, but I played well enough to play in my husband's orchestra. I guess that's the story of my life.

Crawford: What was your impression of Maestro Salgo right at first?

P. Salgo: I thought he was very glamorous. Everybody did because of his heavy accent.

Salgo: I don't see that. [laughter]

P. Salgo: We probably shouldn't put this in the history--he had not been able to bring money out of Hungary, but he brought all these wonderful suits. Oh! He was the best-dressed man I had ever seen. So between the accent and his violin playing, which of course I was extremely impressed with--oh, I was impressed, yes.

Crawford: How long after you met did you begin to see each other?

P. Salgo: I'm not quite sure about the length of time, but I do remember it was very impressive when he proposed because--I don't know, I guess being European meant that this was very formally done. He made a trip in the summer to New England where I was living, and arrived on the train [laughter] with one of those funny straw hats.

Salgo: I didn't think it was so funny, but she thought it was.

P. Salgo: He stayed at the hotel and so forth, and then on our first evening engagement, he asked me to marry him--in actual words. Very often, I guess, proposals are subtly advanced, but this was very specific. I said yes, arrived home that night quite late, and we had lots of lights from the garage to the house--I left every light on the house, and the next morning my mother asked

me what had happened last night. I had left all of the lights burning all night! That was the proposal.

Then he was inducted into the army in 1943, I taught for a year, and in the spring of the first year of teaching, we were married.

Salgo: I was transferred--and since I was to be trained in MacArthur's army, which meant jungle fighting, I was practically on the boat when orders from NBC caught up with me. NBC wanted to create an orchestra in order to make some tapes or recordings for the Defense Department, and I was fortunate enough to be selected.

P. Salgo: Was it to be background music for films, some of it?

Salgo: Yes, and in the orchestra there was a conductor from New York, Major Harry Salter, who was also passionate about string quartet playing, and a Major Bronson, who was the producer. He knew that I was with the Roth Quartet, so he reached into the crowd and picked me to go to New York and play with him every Saturday afternoon.

P. Salgo: My husband was stationed on an island--Fort Slocum was on an island off New Rochelle in Long Island Sound.

Crawford: I think you mentioned that, yes. And so that's where you stayed. What did you do when you weren't playing background music?

Salgo: In the army I was put in the band. I was assigned to play cymbals [laughter].

Crawford: You played cymbals!

Salgo: Yes, I played cymbals in the band, and the most interesting part of being a member of the outfit was that we had to play for the embarkation of the soldiers who went overseas during the height of the war. There were many large troop ships, one of which, I'm sure, was the Queen Mary, and we played down in N.Y. Harbor in the pitch dark, with no lights, so we played from memory. There was always an aura of secrecy--we never knew at the time and I still don't know from which pier the ships left. But the band played while an endless line of soldiers embarked. It was usually about twelve or one o'clock in the middle of the night, and we had strict orders for absolute secrecy. We did not even know where we were.

I was in the army for quite a long time--two and a half years--almost three. But I could go back to see Priscilla in Princeton from Fort Slocum.

Crawford: Were there professional musicians in your orchestra?

Salgo: Oh, yes. Let me see, Philip Frank from the NBC orchestra--Toscanini's orchestra.

P. Salgo: Stuart Canin was not in it?

Salgo: No.

P. Salgo: Oh, the wonderful bassoonist! Schoenbach from the Philadelphia Symphony.

Salgo: Yes, he was a legendary bassoonist.

Crawford: Was your assignment a good one for you?

Salgo: Yes--I wasn't a citizen yet, so I couldn't be an officer, but at the very end of my army career, my citizenship came through. I was already on my way out by then, but I could have stayed in the army and become an officer.

When I went back to my old job, I was restless. I wanted something else, although I didn't know what. In long talks with Priscilla, we had discussed my becoming a conductor, and I had met some impresarios and some New York agents who tried to persuade me to become a professional conductor. At first it looked very tempting, but I guess I wanted a different kind of life, not one of kowtowing to important people and raising money and making speeches and a sort of peripatetic existence, not to mention worrying about a contract every three years (which one does unless one is famous, which I wasn't).

So I was searching for a position such as you find in academic life, and I knew that I wanted to continue my life as a professional musician as well. I asked the department head at Princeton, Dr. Welch, about doing contemporary opera there with a big symphony orchestra, and he turned me down. He as much as said: "We are an Ivy League college and don't believe performance has any academic value--musicology or theory is the only thing." That is the German academic model. I felt that I wanted to make music as well as to teach and to communicate its meaning to others. That is my life.

I had a wonderful friend, Dr. Carl Parrish, who later went to head the music department at Vassar College. He encouraged

me to look for something else, and he told me that Stanford was searching for a conductor and a professor of music.

Crawford: How fortunate! Well, what about your wedding in 1944?

Salgo: It turned out to be a military wedding and a great deal more. We got married on a lovely spring day in April, a Monday afternoon.

P. Salgo: I was nervous in the morning and wanted to keep myself occupied, so I went into Trenton to buy a hat. I intended to teach my afternoon theory classes at one and two o'clock, and get married at four. But when I arrived for my one o'clock class, no one was there. The Dean had dismissed my classes.

The wedding was a most wonderful experience. The setting was really lovely. The wedding took place in the Chapel of Westminster Choir College, and of course all the students and faculty were there. Before the wedding started, there was a most marvelous music program. Then I saw my two students, the candlelighters, walk down the aisle at the beginning of the procession, and then six of Sandor's army friends marched down the aisle in front of me. But Switten [the organist] had arranged it so that the moment I stepped forward--of course, that's the way it's supposed to be--my students knew when the bride was supposed to come down the aisle. There's a very climactic moment in the music where then the bride enters, and I was just swept off my feet with the sound the organ made.

And then, of course--this is fun, and we don't have to put it in here--but my husband, who has a memory *extraordinaire*, when it came to saying our vows, I just meekly repeated after the minister. We had not rehearsed that part at all, in wartime things were so hit and miss, and we found ourselves with the old Episcopalian service. I had to say that I would "honor and obey" my husband--I was surprised at that--but I meekly said yes, I will. And then came the part where Sandor was supposed to say his vow, and he had said loftily before that, "I'll say mine by memory," and he forgot, he opened his mouth...

Salgo: Just a moment... [laughter]

P. Salgo: And we waited, and waited, and then the minister was all ready to prompt him, and finally it came back to his mind what he was supposed to say. Oh my, that was really wonderful.

Salgo: Grooms are usually very nervous at weddings. It's always true. [laughter]

P. Salgo: It was a wonderful experience.

Salgo: One of the candlelighters was Julia Perry.

P. Salgo: She was a composer later, yes. Julia Perry.

Salgo: She was one of the first black women composers.

P. Salgo: You may not have heard of her; she died quite young but some of her works have been published.

I should mention that one of the students happened to be a wedding manager on the side, and she arranged that my husband's friends were to precede me down the aisle. When I realized that there were three pairs of soldiers marching--it was a dreadful feeling, actually. But before that we had lovely music.

Salgo: It was a concert really, before the wedding.

P. Salgo: Yes.

Salgo: I asked a pianist friend of mine, Miklos Schwalb, whom I knew from Budapest, to play. He was Hungarian--a very fine pianist--and he played some Bach, the *Chromatic Fantasy*, and another friend of mine, a violist, played the Fauré *Reverie*, and your friend Harriet sang from Schumann.

P. Salgo: She sang from Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*.

And then not only that, but we had a marvelous French organist who played superbly. It was just the ordinary wedding march, but you would have felt you had never heard it before; it was great. And then the whole Westminster Choir sang the benediction at the end.

Salgo: I still remember the benediction.

P. Salgo: They also sang from the *Wedding Cantata*. This was great music.

Salgo: I think you wanted that, didn't you?

P. Salgo: I'm sure I would have. So that was wonderful.

Salgo: Then we went on a honeymoon to New York City [laughter]. I told Priscilla that I read somewhere--I think it was Virginia Woolf who said that if you want to be alone, get into a big crowd.

Crawford: So you went to New York City.

- P. Salgo: It was marvelous!
- Salgo: We had a wonderful time.
- Crawford: What did you do?
- Salgo: Concerts.
- P. Salgo: He had tickets for every afternoon and evening. We covered the town. We heard Horowitz--
- Salgo: *Arsenic and Old Lace* was just opening--and *A Doctor's Dilemma* with Katherine Cornell.
- P. Salgo: And then that wonderful film--
- Salgo: Max Reinhardt's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- Crawford: And did you tell me that you had a second honeymoon in 1994 just like the first?
- P. Salgo: Yes, yes, last year--we went to New York.
- Salgo: Except most of the restaurants were not there. But we went to some marvelous ones.
- Crawford: It was the golden anniversary?
- Salgo: Yes. La Fourchette, that still exists. A la Pomme Soufflée. That was one we liked, but it doesn't exist anymore.
- P. Salgo: And on Fifth Avenue, what was the tea shop we always went to? Rosemarie de Paris.
- Salgo: It doesn't exist anymore, but--
- Crawford: Just something special. That's a lovely history to remember. So that was 1944, and you were teaching what?

Life and Work in Princeton: Teaching, Conducting, and Chamber Music

- P. Salgo: Theory. And I must admit, I did teach some English also there. I was offered the opportunity to continue teaching English and drama as well as the theory, but I chose just the music. And the students were keen. All levels--in the theory, many a voice

student doesn't arrive at knowing that they want to be a musician until rather late--I mean, at age sixteen or seventeen they may discover or be told, "Oh, you've got a beautiful voice."

Salgo: You might be cynical, dear, and say that some of the voice students remained vocalists and not musicians.

P. Salgo: It's a very real problem whereas an instrumentalist, a violinist, a pianist, has been drawn to music, been educated in music from a very early age. Very often, singers have not had much musical exposure.

Salgo: Of course there are wonderful exceptions.

P. Salgo: Granted.

Crawford: I remember Jess Thomas saying that he was a graduate student at Stanford before he was discovered--I believe by you!

Salgo: I mentioned that I gave him his first role--

P. Salgo: Purcell.

Salgo: *Dido and Aeneas*, and then with the Marin Symphony, with Debussy, not the *Blessed Demoiselle*, but the *L'Enfant Prodigue*. The Prodigal Son. It was just before he went to Germany, and he told me, "I auditioned for Mr. Adler, but he didn't think so much of my voice." I said, "Jess, go to Germany." There is a need for heldentenors there; they would love to have you. Many years later he came to dinner and said: "Remember when I complained about Mr. Adler? Now he has to pay me ten thousand dollars for a performance!" [laughter]

Crawford: Well, we're just about at the point when you left for California, in 1949?

Salgo: That was in '49, yes.

Crawford: So you had been married about five years.

Salgo: Yes, and of course, I went back to the Roth Quartet and continued to perform with them during that time.

P. Salgo: He toured with the Quartet as well.

Salgo: I got leave from Westminster and from the university to do that. But as I told you I felt that I really wanted to be a conductor.

P. Salgo: He was always pulled three ways, between teaching, conducting, and chamber music. It was always a little bit of a tear trying to keep them all going at once.

Salgo: Yes, but I felt that all three were possible.

P. Salgo: You kept all three going.

Salgo: Yes. Looking back at my life, my love of teaching and communicating about music to students and to the general public, which I did here at Stanford, was always there.

P. Salgo: Did you enjoy coaching the chamber groups?

Salgo: Yes. I have to confess I didn't like teaching violin, because the violin repertoire seems so limited compared with the general literature that a conductor is dealing with. So I was not interested in teaching violin technique, but I liked to teach chamber music and to coach a good string quartet, which I had the opportunity to do at Stanford.

Crawford: How did you balance your time at Princeton and Westminster?

Salgo: My time was mainly spent at Westminster, you see, because the university did not give me specific duties. There was a lot of organization and then playing, and I kept on practicing too and rehearsing. Sometimes my duties at the university were quite heavy. But the general day-to-day schedule--wouldn't you say, dear, that Westminster took a great deal more time?

P. Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: So as you look back, you would say that you balanced the three in a reasonable way?

P. Salgo: He was never willing to give up any part of it, I must say.

Salgo: That's true.

Crawford: You had mentioned Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge before, and she's a character who interests me very much. Did she go on sponsoring any of your performances?

Salgo: She didn't sponsor any of the programs in Princeton. But when the Roth Quartet played here at Stanford in Memorial Church, she did.

P. Salgo: You played with her in Boston, didn't you?

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: Do you have impressions of her?

Salgo: Yes, this was a wonderful lady. She was a sergeant, really [laughter]. But there was a twinkling in her eye, and she was very tall, very aristocratic-looking, and very imperious.

P. Salgo: How could she play chamber music with--

Salgo: Two hearing aids? I don't know--you practically had to shout because she wore two hearing aids. But the minute she started to play, she was with you all the time.

P. Salgo: People with disabilities like hers can hear music.

Salgo: They are hearing it differently, yes.

Crawford: So she was elderly in the forties when she was doing all these sponsorships, and didn't she sponsor Bartók in the United States?

Salgo: I don't know, Caroline. Bartók came to the United States for Columbia University, to research folk music. He had written an article in Hungary on the subject and wrote that the purest folk songs weren't to be found in England but in the Kentucky Mountains of America! I think Columbia picked this up and on that basis arranged a grant for him.

Crawford: Isn't that something similar to Dvořák, because he loved African American music so much?

Salgo: Yes, I believe so.

Crawford: Well, let's take you to California if there's nothing else about the East Coast that you want to remember.

Salgo: I think perhaps I should mention--remember I talked about my great mentor and sponsor and friend, Mrs. Montgomery?

Crawford: Yes.

Salgo: Well, while I was in the army, I wondered what had happened to them. I was sure that they had come back to America, but where they were, I didn't know. I wrote the State Department but I never got an answer.

Then one weekend I was on a furlough, and I went with Priscilla to hear the Budapest Quartet play in Alexander Hall,

which is at Princeton University. Alexander Hall is an old, old building, and on the fifth floor is a large concert hall, all of wood, and the sound is wonderful there. That's where the Budapest Quartet played.

After the concert, we left the hall and started down the five flights of stairs. I noticed that the crowd was moving very slowly, and for some reason I got very nervous, and I said to Priscilla I would make my way down and find out what was holding us up. Well, it was a wheelchair, and I knew immediately that it must be Mrs. Montgomery. It was, and when I spoke to her she began to cry and asked how I was. I said: "I've news for you, Mrs. Montgomery--I'm married now." She said she wanted to meet Priscilla and asked her husband to give me their unlisted number and full address on Fifth Avenue in New York, and she promised to invite us to come some Saturday afternoon. I think she thought it was some kind of wartime marriage.

So we agreed on a date, and Priscilla and I went to see them in New York. Mrs. Montgomery was very cordial and kind and said to her husband, "John, why don't you go and show Mr. Salgo around a little bit and let me talk with Mrs. Salgo."

So we had a tour and when we came back she was all smiles. "I think you've made a wonderful choice, and you must come to see us next summer at our Vermont home in Manchester." She gave Priscilla some lovely Hungarian jewelry, and what else?

P. Salgo: Oh, linens and everything. Lots of nice things. It was very sweet. We did visit them that summer in the country in Manchester.

This is just a little story; it's not of vast importance. Before we came out to California, we wanted to visit the Montgomerys in Vermont, and since it was summer and in the country, we thought nothing about it; we just packed casual clothes.

We arrived at their place in Vermont--very elegant, country elegance, with a butler--and then Sándor began to be nervous because he knew he didn't have a tuxedo for dinner. So he tried to be casual about it, and when Mr. Montgomery saw us to our room, Sándor said, "Oh, I didn't happen to bring my tuxedo with me." And I have never forgotten the look of helplessness on Mr. Montgomery's face. It was just as though you couldn't possibly eat if you were not in a tuxedo. He was a very tall, large man. He said, meekly, "I'm afraid mine would not fit you."

Crawford: So what happened? Did they feed you?

Salgo: Oh, yes! [laughter]

P. Salgo: But he had to go down in his dark suit and feel however he felt. Fortunately, I had a dress that was sort of on the long side; I was all right.

Salgo: That was the last time we saw Mrs. Montgomery.

P. Salgo: She had been ill for some time, and died the following year.

Crawford: About that time the invitation from Stanford must have come. How did that come about?

P. Salgo: That was largely Randall Thompson, wasn't it?

Salgo: Yes, it was Randall Thompson and Roger Sessions who recommended me for the vacancy on the faculty here at Stanford.

III THE CALIFORNIA YEARS: STANFORD UNIVERSITY: 1949-1974

[Interview 3: October 12, 1995] ##

Wallace Sterling and the Musical Climate

Crawford: So you came to Stanford then, in 1949. What do you remember of Dr. Sterling?

Salgo: He was a very tall, handsome man who had coached football in his youth. He was a trained historian, a gifted administrator, a wonderful speaker, and a warm and great human being, with a deep feeling for music, art, and drama. He spoke beautiful English--he was a Canadian but he had graduated from Oxford. I thought he was one of the greatest men I had ever met.

Within a week after our arrival we had a dinner invitation from the Sterlings. I was flattered that he called me by my first name, until I discovered that there were 700 people on the faculty and he knew all their first names! He was an artist in terms of human relations.

He immediately established a common ground by making some references to music, and mentioned that he also played the piano--Gilbert and Sullivan--which is by the way not too easy. I heard him play later on at parties.

Crawford: In tempo?

Salgo: Oh, yes. [laughter] That's right, in tempo and very well. In any case, he was largely responsible for my happiness and my well-being at Stanford. There were many other people, of course--Putnam Aldrich, my late friend from the music department, an original mind who questioned everything and sort of helped one to rethink certain values which one thought were sacrosanct. He was a renowned Baroque scholar, and with him I played many Baroque sonatas.

My goal at Stanford was to unite scholarship and high performance standards, and this was also the philosophy of my head of department, William Crosten. I'm also a theater man --coming from opera and chamber music as well as symphonic conducting--and I believe every performance should contain an element of drama. Putnam Aldrich agreed with me that the Baroque age was an age of dramatic expression.

Crawford: Was the thinking here in keeping with that philosophy?

P. Salgo: No. Just the opposite. At the time he came and for quite a long time thereafter, it was unusual to have fine performances combined with historical knowledge.

Salgo: Certainly in Princeton it was just the opposite. "This is an Ivy League college," said Professor Welch. "If you want performances you have to go to New York."

Crawford: I would like to read something that Virgil Thomson wrote about you because it's related. It says [reads], "Opera production, long a custom at Stanford, is nowhere in our colleges more carefully done. Many a larger institution has less fine choral and orchestra resources," and so on. "Stanford has been fortunate in its conductors: Jan Popper and now Sándor Salgo have given to the orchestral execution a remarkably high finish and to the whole pacing of performances the animation that makes opera come to life. We are little accustomed in the East to this kind of college production."

Salgo: Yes. I think he wrote that after he attended a performance of *Falstaff* here.

Crawford: So there you have accolades from a composer and a writer.

Salgo: Yes--the concept was something new, you see, and Crosten espoused it, and President Sterling supported it.

Colleagues and Students

Crawford: We might want to talk about some of your colleagues; fellow faculty with whom you were involved. Harold Schmidt was, I think, very active then.

Salgo: Yes. I happily remember my association with some of my colleagues, among them Leonard Ratner, with whom I had many fruitful conversations on Mozart and Beethoven. George Houle and John Chowning were both friends and associates who helped me throughout the years a great deal. Leland Smith, John Planting, and Ed Colby were also very supportive colleagues.

And as I mentioned William Crosston was the head of the department when I came.

Crawford: Who was he?

Salgo: He was a pianist and musicologist and he built up the music department from practically nothing. He started programming departmental recitals which were very successful.

In those days there were not many recitals in the area, and I remember that Mrs. Sterling usually came to my concerts, and she related with glee that at one of these recitals there was an overflow audience and people were turned away. Priscilla came late, and when she saw people coming out, she said to Mrs. Sterling, "It couldn't have been *that* bad." [laughter] Mrs. Sterling thought that was funny.

Crawford: Good story.

Salgo: Chamber music was one of the things I concentrated on; not only because of my experience with the Roth and Lehner Quartets, but I knew I would have a fine orchestra if I had good chamber music players in the ranks--witness the Chicago Symphony. They can play Mozart operas just like chamber music. I had fine players: Chalmers Smith was one of my violists--he just retired as a lawyer and is still delighting in playing chamber music. Turner Bledsoe was one of my fine oboists--he's a doctor now, but still plays a great deal, and I could name many others. I got a lot of pleasure out of teaching chamber music.

These were the great rewards at Stanford; the work was appreciated. And then I was in charge of working with student conductors, and some of my students, such as Denis de Coteau, went on to the San Francisco Ballet; Isiah Jackson is now

conductor of the Rochester Symphony, and there were several others--

Crawford: Oh, so Denis trained with you at Stanford?

Salgo: He received his doctorate here. There was another whose name I cannot recall at this moment, a very, very talented young man who conducted at the Vancouver Opera and then I think in Toronto at the Canadian Ballet.

Something else that I deeply enjoyed were my large courses for the general student body, all intelligent and eager and lovers of music. Some of them couldn't read music so my assistant helped them in the Beethoven course and the symphony and concerto courses.

Occasionally we are at a restaurant or out of town somewhere, and I hear: "You don't remember me, Professor Salgo, but I was in your course, and I still listen to music and it helps me." That's a great reward for any teacher, and for that reason I've always felt rewarded for coming to Stanford. Of course Stanford students have very high IQs, and there was intellectual curiosity among my students.

P. Salgo: They don't let you sleep, right? You can't have an idle mental moment.

Crawford: Were they demanding in terms of time?

Salgo: Yes, but I was fortunate to have good assistants when the courses got so big--like the Beethoven course with 300 or more students.

P. Salgo: Well, you had Kip Cranna, didn't you? He was a help.

Salgo: Kip Cranna and Bruce Lamott were my last two assistants, and I took them to Carmel with me. And even before that I had some very, very helpful assistants.

P. Salgo: Who worked hard.

Crawford: Who were they and how did they help you?

Salgo: They were graduate students in music, and they helped me read student papers and gave individual attention to those who required it.

The Opera Program at Stanford

Crawford: What had been done in the department in the area of opera before you came?

Salgo: I had an illustrious predecessor in Jan Popper, who was an excellent opera man. Since he wasn't an orchestra person, however, he had to go out and hire people to play. The first thing I was told was that there was no budget for that, that I would have to find my players from inside the department or the university or the community, but that there would be no pay. Within two years, with a bit of hard work, the orchestra was performing well--as you know the area is full of talent.

I'd like to mention just a very few of the orchestra players--Dr. Sidney Drell, who recently retired as the head of SLAC [Stanford Linear Accelerator] and is now at the Hoover Institute; Chalmers Smith; Philip Carter, a law student; Gloria Vial; and Craig Vitteto, a public school teacher. They heard about the orchestra and contacted me.

P. Salgo: And they heard about the conductor, frankly. He was a real pro, and it was a chance to be in a really professionally run orchestra.

Salgo: There were roughly thirty opera productions during my tenure of twenty-four years--more than that, possibly. Most of them were with full orchestra, fully staged, and with some professional singers in the casts. Young professional singers came from San Francisco, and there were Stanford vocal students and of course the Stanford chorus too.

Crawford: Was there a focus on doing new works generally?

Salgo: Yes, as well as those more rarely performed from the Classical literature.

Crawford: Where did that come from?

Salgo: It was a department policy. And also because of the press, which was important--they wouldn't come for *Traviata*. But they always came to our performances, and some of my greatest writeups were for the opera productions. Virgil Thompson came from New York for some lectures as well as for the *Falstaff* performance. He was writing for the *New York Herald Tribune* at that time.

Salgo: Mr. Thomson came as a guest of the Music Department and we performed some of his works, string quartets, brass ensembles, and other pieces. I remember an interesting incident which throws a little light on the nature of this formidable critic, who by the way could be a kind and charming man if he wanted to be.

One day my student quartet was rehearsing his string quartet in my living room, and as usual, he was a holy terror at the rehearsal--he thought that intimidation was the best way to work. In any case, we started at ten o'clock and were still going strong at one o'clock. Priscilla came into the room at one o'clock and said, very softly, "Mr. Thomson, our students have classes, but would you like to stay for lunch?" Well, Thomson was a famous gourmand, and eating was a tremendously serious business. He looked at Priscilla long and very seriously and then asked her, "What will you have?"

P. Salgo: She answered casually--

Salgo: It just happened that the night before, Momo Aldrich, the French wife of Professor Aldrich and fabulous cook--came around and brought us some Crab Mornay. So Priscilla said casually, "I have Crab Mornay." Thomson said, "I'll stay." He stayed and ate everything, drank a bottle of fine French wine, and then he rose and with a curt good-bye, left.

The next morning, the doorbell rang at eight. I ran downstairs, opened the door, and there was Virgil, fully dressed with a hat on. He just brushed me aside, walked to the stairway, and called up to Priscilla, "Darling, I came for breakfast." [laughter] Virgil wrote a great review for the *Tribune*.

I should mention a few of our opera titles--we were proud of our West Coast premiere of Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress*. Stravinsky said of the opera, "I had always wanted to do an opera like Mozart, and I think I did it." Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, Gluck's *Iphigenie*, Rossini's *Count Ory*, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* are among the most important ones we did. I remember with special fondness, Dallapiccola's *Night Flight*. American works, of course, were always a favorite--Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe* and *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, and Lukas Foss's *Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*. There was also Verdi's *Falstaff*, Poulenc's *Dialogue of the Carmelites*, Dvorak's *Rusalka*, and the West Coast premiere of Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges*. And then, when we did *Dido and Aeneas*, a graduate student who was a tenor made his first stage appearance, as I've said. His name was Jess Thomas.

Crawford: Oh, I was going to ask you about Jess Thomas. We mentioned him before briefly.

Salgo: Yes, I told you that I urged him to audition for Mr. Adler, and he did. Adler said he had a nice voice and offered him something very, very small. So then I advised him to go to Germany, and within two years he was singing Siegfried at Bayreuth.

Crawford: A great career.

Salgo: Yes. The color of his voice was a little lighter than we usually associate with the German Wagnerian tenors, nevertheless he sang all the great roles beautifully. Of course he was a handsome man and an excellent actor, intelligent, a very good musician--very good--which cannot be said of most Wagnerian tenors. So of course he was in great demand.

Crawford: Why is that said that tenors are not intelligent?

Salgo: Shall I quote Anna Russell that they "have resonance where their brains ought to be?" [laughter]

Crawford: What did Jess Thomas sing for you?

Salgo: He sang Doctor Caius in the *Falstaff* performance. Small role. And I took him to Marin for my first concert with the Marin Symphony, and he sang the son in *L'Enfant Prodigue* of Debussy.

Crawford: Did Mr. Adler come to productions at Stanford?

Salgo: Oh, he came to several, yes. I had a tenor, I think Howard Sutherland was his name, who appeared in *Count Ory*, and Adler was very interested in him, although I don't know whether or not he engaged him later.

Crawford: You were extremely ambitious.

Salgo: Oh, yes, yes. If you have an orchestra you can find singers and play those works. Let me see, there were other operas-- Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, which was a "scandal" on the campus because the French director wanted to have the girls appear topless. And he did.

Crawford: Oh, I think Mark Volkert told me about that. He said you were rather shocked, but you said all right.

Salgo: I didn't have much to say about it! [laughter]

P. Salgo: When my husband got close to the final rehearsals of the opera, and the cast was supposedly in costume, he noticed at one point that practically his entire orchestra was far more absorbed in the stage than in their music. They were not following the conductor, they were not playing the notes. In exasperation, when he asked the concertmaster why people were not paying attention, the concertmaster meekly said, "Well, Maestro, would you look at the stage?" At that point Sandor looked up and saw an entire topless cast of dancers, so he thoroughly understood the preoccupation of his orchestra with things unmusical.
[laughter]

Crawford: Was this in the 1960s? Do you recall?

Salgo: Yes, it was. I remember that because I smelled a strange fragrance in the hall at the performance, and somebody told me it was marijuana.

P. Salgo: Oh no, darling!

Salgo: Yes it was.

P. Salgo: Oh! You didn't tell me that. [laughter]

Crawford: Who staged *Orpheus*?

Salgo: Langinieux. A young, very imaginative Frenchman. He was a visiting professor in the drama department, and ever since, it's been a joke among my family and friends. It so happens that that is a very complicated scene, and I was so occupied with the orchestra and I didn't notice what was going on onstage. That could happen only in the sixties, I guess.

Crawford: I'm sure that was a first at Stanford.

Salgo: Oh, yes!

Crawford: Did you hear from Dr. Sterling about it?

Salgo: No! Then my last opera at Stanford was *Don Giovanni*. I have some reviews that you might want to glance at. That was in 1974.

Crawford: Who sang the Donna Anna?

Salgo: I had two singers for the two performances. Marie Gibson, who taught here too appeared in one, and Sue Hinshaw, who was in our Carmel cast, in the other. Her name is mentioned in the review of the performance.

Then we did Virgil Thomson's *Mother of Us All*--not the whole opera. In Marin I conducted the entire work in Marin with the symphony. Wonderful piece.

Opera here at Stanford was very important at that time. There were few opera performances after I left in 1974--it took a great deal of time on the students' part and probably strained departmental resources.

Crawford: You always did full stage and costume?

Salgo: Oh, yes. Mr. F. Cowles Strickland from the drama department directed; he did *Falstaff*, and he was very proud of that. I remember Wendell Cole's imaginative and colorful stage settings, and the drama department had an excellent costume department. Mrs. Opsvig created beautiful costumes, particularly for Gluck's *Iphigenie*, one of the historical operas that are rarely done.

Crawford: Let us talk a bit about the critics. I'm looking at a review by Arthur Bloomfield in which he said that Sándor Salgo is "a genuinely fine Mozart conductor, a Mozartian who would be an asset at the Metropolitan or Covent Garden, no less than he is down on the Farm."

Were you conducting at big houses at that time?

Salgo: At that time, yes. I had already appeared with the BBC, recording Humphrey Searle's Fifth Symphony.

The recording for the BBC was done in out in Wimbledon--

P. Salgo: Which one associates with tennis--

Salgo: Which one associates with the World Cup in tennis. There is a big concert hall, very beautiful and very acoustically correct. Come to think of it, the hall was so large that it easily could have accommodated two tennis court seatings!

Conducting the San Francisco Symphony

Crawford: You also conducted for the San Francisco Symphony during this period?

Salgo: Yes. Early after my arrival at Stanford, Mrs. Lucy Stern called me and asked whether I would like to conduct the San

Francisco Symphony at Stern Grove. That was my first introduction to the symphony.

Crawford: And did you conduct in the hall with them as well? In the opera house?

Salgo: Yes, in the 1955-56 season. [Reading from a program]: "There will be three conductors besides Enrique Jorda this season"--he was the regular conductor then. "Three guest conductors: Von Beinum, Sándor Salgo, Bruno Walter." So I think it was good company.

Crawford: What did you conduct that year?

Salgo: I did a Handel *Concerto Grosso*, Boris Blacher's *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Hindemith's *Variations on the Weberian Theme*, I think, and the Beethoven Seventh.

It was an important concert for me--not only conducting the San Francisco Symphony, but two days later the phone rang, and a lady's voice on the phone said, "My name is Dene Denny, and I am the director of the Carmel Bach Festival, the founder of the Carmel Bach Festival. I was at your concert the other night, and I liked it very much. Would you be interested in taking over the Bach Festival? Could you come down to Carmel?" I think it was March fifteenth when I went down to confer with her. That was a felicitous Ides of March.

Crawford: Howard Skinner invited you to conduct the symphony, probably. You remember him?

Salgo: Yes, he was very helpful and very nice. I had heard mixed reports about him, about how strict he could be, but I can't complain--when he saw my rehearsal schedule, he said: "This is no way to treat you. You need more rehearsals. If we have to spend more money, we will." That was very nice. He gave me nine hours, and I truly appreciated that because some of the works were new to the symphony at that time.

Crawford: What was the level of the audience as compared with the German symphony orchestra at that time?

Salgo: I think about the same. Knowledgeable. The German audience is a little more reserved in the appreciation of contemporary music than the San Francisco audience was.

Crawford: What was your opinion of Jorda?

Salgo: He was kind and nice, but I didn't feel that he had enough rapport with the orchestra. Part of it was communication. I didn't think that he was well understood. He was well-meaning, and he was very kind to me, and I was sorry to see that he got a little bit of a rough deal, but one has to take that in the profession.

Crawford: Why did you not conduct more with the San Francisco Symphony?

Salgo: I don't know. I really never knew. Many people spoke up on my behalf, but there was a feeling that I had had enough local exposure.

A Famous Beethoven Course: Music 300

Crawford: I wanted to ask you about your Beethoven course at Stanford in particular because it was well loved, I understand. Could you tell me what your approach to the course was?

Salgo: Stanford students are intelligent, and I started the course with the premise that there was no need to pamper anybody; everyone had to study the music scores. If we were talking about *Eroica* or the late A Minor String Quartet, the students had to follow the score, and if they didn't know how to read music, my two assistants helped them. We talked about form, sonata form, and orchestration, and I tried to show how Beethoven used these musical forms to express feeling and drama.

I have a story to tell--well, two stories. One quarter I noticed that in the class were two ten-foot tall football players. I thought that the coach had said, "Take some ice cream course--some music courses you'll be sure to pass." Of course, they didn't come with any scores or even notebooks--they didn't take notes, just eyed me coldly.

After the third class, my office door opened, and there they were, towering. They said, "Sir, we don't know what you are talking about, but we sure dig this music." I said, "Gentlemen, this is music to my ears. Meet my two assistants." They were two pretty girls; the boys liked that, and they set out to learn to read music.

Well, they became so interested in the class that I think they finished with a B, and at the very end of the course, they came in again and said, "Sir, we don't know whether you are interested in football but we have a difficult game against

Seattle, and would you care to come? You might bring us luck." So I went and helped to cheer them on. I'm still a fairly passionate 49er fan.

The other story is also about the Beethoven course--Music 300. One day my assistant rushed into my office and told me that President Sterling was on the phone." So I picked up the phone and he said: "Sándor, I hear that enrollment in Music 300 is the second largest in the university. Congratulations! But so that you won't get too swell-headed, and I hate to tell you this, Dr. Kachadurian's course on sexual behavior drew 1,500." [laughter]

Crawford: How long did you give the Beethoven course?

Salgo: I'm not sure, perhaps ten years. Much to my joy, my daughter Debbie took the course in 1974, during my last year of teaching.

Crawford: Nice memory for you both. You taught it only ten years?

Salgo: Yes. I didn't start with it right away when I came to Stanford. I had some courses in symphonic literature and the concerto. Only later on. I still give lectures at Stanford, four or five of them every year to the Music Guild and the Alumni Association.

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Crawford: You won a very prestigious faculty award at Stanford.

Salgo: Yes, the Lloyd Dinkelspiel award, and I think it was an outgrowth of the Beethoven course. There's the picture there of President Lyman as he handed the award to me at commencement.

P. Salgo: It was a very proud moment that the same year Sándor got the Dinkelspiel award, our daughter Debbie received her undergraduate degree from Stanford.

Crawford: Was that at the time of your retirement?

Salgo: Yes, in 1974. It's a very beautiful dedication.

Crawford: I'll read it. Richard Lyman, president at the time, wrote: "For his mastery as guide to the enthralling world of music, not least for those who are visiting it for the first time. For his old-world charm, his new-world enthusiasm, and best of all his humor and affection for both his subject and his students; for the energy, gallantry and éclat of his work as director of the Stanford Symphony and Opera Workshop; and for conveying with

equal power the agony and passion of Beethoven's growing deafness and Bach's contrapuntal severity and human tenderness. Sándor Salgo is hereby designated 1974 recipient of the Dinkelspiel Award for outstanding service to undergraduate education."

Stanford Campus Homes and Raising Debbie Salgo

Crawford: That's quite a tribute. I did want to ask you more about your home here at Stanford on the campus.

Salgo: At first we lived in an old building that I believe withstood the 1906 earthquake. It was demolished after that so that Dinkelspiel Auditorium could be built in its place. It was a three-story building, and we lived in the upper two stories. The third-floor attic was a big wood-paneled room with a fireplace going up the center of the room. The house was cozy and fun. In spite of its disadvantages we were fond of it. It had a bohemian atmosphere. But then the university decided to build Dinkelspiel where my bedroom was [laughter].

We have so many fond memories of our time in the old house. Our daughter Debbie was born there on the 30th of March, 1954. I was a very worried father.

P. Salgo: And the minister of my church was so great. He knew my husband must be starving, because I went in at noontime, and of course it takes a long time for the first baby. So about midnight or something, Reverend Poston brought a thermos jug and a dinner basket.

Salgo: I sat in a cubicle with five other expectant husbands.

P. Salgo: Expectant fathers, dear. [laughter] You know, things like that when you're in need, you appreciate so much--my minister knew just how hungry that man was.

Salgo: Now we live on Gerona Road, the old part of the campus. Our lot was the last available spot at the time we built.

P. Salgo: Dear, tell the story of Debbie and W.H. Auden.

Salgo: Oh, yes. This also happened when we were in our old house, where Dinkelspiel now is. We were performing *The Rake's Progress*, and at the time W.H. Auden, the librettist for *The Rake's Progress*, happened to be the guest of the English

Department. Somehow, the English Department and Auden didn't get along very well--and they must have wanted to dispose of him on my doorstep, because Auden appeared and said he had heard we were doing *The Rake's Progress* at Stanford and wanted to meet the conductor.

So there he was on our doorstep, and he was charming. One of the first things he said was that there was a mistake in the score, in the Second Act, the second bassoon--had I seen it? I said, "No, I don't recall it," and I brought the score, and sure enough, he showed it to me. He knew his way around and pointed out that there really should be something else than what was printed here.

I was very much impressed, and he said some interesting things about the opera. He told me he had traveled by train to Los Angeles and "Igor"--meaning Igor Stravinsky, of course, was waiting for him, and that they had hit it off wonderfully, right away. He said, "By the time we arrived at his house in Hollywood, both of us knew what kind of opera we wanted to write."

Priscilla had asked him whether he would like some coffee when he arrived, and he had asked for whiskey. So Priscilla brought up a tray with whiskey and a glass.

P. Salgo: And a bottle--

Salgo: He disregarded the glass and started to drink from the bottle, and by the end of his visit--he came at ten o'clock and he was supposed to make a two o'clock train--the bottle was empty. But the more he drank, the more sense he made, and the more beautifully he talked.

P. Salgo: Didn't he play the piano while he was there? He said, "You remember this," and he went to the piano and played some part, not from *The Rake's Progress*, but from a Verdi opera.

Salgo: Yes, from a Verdi opera! As we came down from the attic, he heard Debbie, who was in her room, and I think she was sleeping but was whimpering a little, and Auden stopped, listened, and asked if we had a baby in the house. We told him we did, and he pushed us aside, marched right in and looked at Debbie, who slept there like an angel.

P. Salgo: It was as though he was hypnotized.

Salgo: He stared at her for the longest time--I have never seen anything like it. Then he left us, because the time for his train was approaching. It was a visit which we still cherish.

Crawford: Did you purchase the land for the Gerona Road house?

Salgo: On-campus land can't be purchased, but we rented it for ninety-nine years from the university. So the land is not ours, but the house is, and Victor Thomson from the architecture department at Stanford designed the house for us.

Crawford: And it has special musical fixtures, doesn't it?

Salgo: Yes. Downstairs in the living room the lights are fixed in the ceiling so that if you're playing string quartets your head doesn't throw a shadow on your music.

Crawford: Have you had lots of chamber music here?

Salgo: Yes. Is it all right to tell you a story?

Crawford: Please do.

Salgo: One Saturday afternoon, one of my student string quartets was rehearsing the First *Razumovsky* Quartet of Beethoven for the next day's Sunday afternoon concerts. It poured like cats and dogs; it was just terrible, and Priscilla came in and said, "Sorry to disturb you, but seemingly the plumbing is out--and the lights--because of the storm, and we have company coming for dinner. Would you call a plumber?"

So I did. The quartet was playing, the doorbell rings, I open the door, and there's a tall, elegant gentleman who says with an impeccable Oxford accent, "I'm the plumber." When I tried to show him where the trouble was, he just brushed me aside, walked into the living room, listened to the quartet for a moment, then he looked at me and said, "First *Razumovsky*. Not bad." He was an architect who moonlighted as a plumber on weekends. [laughter]

Crawford: What was it like for your daughter, growing up around so much music?

Salgo: There's a saying that there's nothing like having a little daughter around the house. Debbie was the sweetest child I can imagine, singing a great deal; of course she was exposed to music when I was practicing or singers came for coachings. Priscilla taught singers, too, so she was constantly exposed to artists, and when she grew a little older, she came to all my

opera performances and concerts she listened absolutely attentively. She really followed the music with the greatest attention.

I knew that she had a very good ear, but now, as a grownup, it surprises me how acute her observation of musical performances is. She studied violin and then piano, and continued when she got married and moved to Chicago. She found a very good teacher there, and is still is studying and practicing. So I can say that I have a very, very musical daughter.

I would ask her whether she liked a performance, and what she liked, and her observation was very penetrating, really very professional. She especially liked Mozart and the piano composers, such as Schumann. I think she just liked music.

The Stanford Composers Series

Crawford: We haven't talked about the composers series at Stanford.

Salgo: I believe Virgil Thomson was the first; he inaugurated the program whereby important composers of this century came to Stanford to lecture and work with students. Virgil Thomson, Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions, French composer Marius Constant, and Aaron Copland come to mind; it an illustrious roll call of important composers.

Crawford: These were master classes?

Salgo: No. We would put on concerts of their music for the general public, and they give public lectures, comment on student compositions, and visit classes.

Crawford: When was this?

Salgo: From the mid-fifties on. I'm not sure, Caroline, but I think it was before the campus unrest in the mid-sixties.

Crawford: Were you responsible for the programs?

Salgo: I prepared the instrumental part--the chamber music, the orchestra. There were some smaller choral works which my colleague Harold Schmidt did, too, but mainly, the orchestra played their compositions. The English composer Humphrey Searle also visited us and taught here for a whole quarter.

Crawford: Did Darius Milhaud ever come?

Salgo: I'm glad you mentioned him, because he was probably the greatest influence here. He became a personal friend of ours--as you can see, I have his picture there with me.

At one point Milhaud was commissioned by one of my oboists, Dr. Donald Leake, to write a Stanford serenade dedicated to me, a delightful work which I've played several times. I would really like to show you the score too.

Crawford: Is there anything comparable in the music department today? To have all of these great composers--

Salgo: Not that I am aware of. However, one of our own departmental composers, John Chowning, has become world famous for his work in computer music.

Crawford: Yes, that's right. Well, could you describe what you refer to as student unrest at Stanford in the 1960s? How did it affect you and your work and were music students involved to any great extent?

Salgo: Yes, they were. One night the magnificent tall windows at the entrance side of Dinkelspiel were all smashed, so we had to cancel the opening night of our *Magic Flute* performances. With President Lyman's decisive support, we were able to do the other performances. As it turned out, my first bassoonist was one of the leaders of the uprising. [laughter]

P. Salgo: Who was that, dear?

Salgo: I don't want to say, but he eventually talked to the other leaders and they avoided Dinkelspiel after that.

Crawford: What was the standing of the music department in the fifties and sixties?

Salgo: I felt that it was high. At least Milhaud said that it was.

Crawford: When did Milhaud come and what did he do?

Salgo: I think, Caroline, he came early on in my tenure, starting from the mid-fifties. I prepared programs of his music; he was an excellent conductor, and he liked to conduct. He was heavily crippled, and it was just heartbreaking to see him try to get to the podium. Following a performance he couldn't turn around to bow--instead he turned his head and smiled. He conducted with

small, incisive beats and gave very precise instructions to the orchestra, though. It sounded just wonderful.

He conducted *The Ladder of Jacob*, among other works--I have all the programs from his visits.

Crawford: Was that when he was at Mills College?

Salgo: Yes, while he was at Mills he came often. I commissioned a suite from him for the Marin Symphony, and I also conducted one of his symphonies here, but most of his orchestra works he conducted. We performed his chamber music, too, and when he conducted I played in the viola section most of the time because it needed a little bolstering, and I think he was pleased about that.

Crawford: Did you perform any of his operas?

Salgo: No. He suggested one but for some reason, the department would not go along with it. We visited him in Paris and had lunch at his home on Boulevard Clichy, number ten. Mme. Milhaud cooked a beautiful meal, and we were touched that after lunch, when he went into the next room to lie down that he invited Priscilla to "please come and sit next to me there and just talk to me. I might close my eyes but I hear you very well." So she did, and that was the last time we saw him.

Crawford: You had many of the great American composers at Stanford. Was the response quite good?

Salgo: I think it was very good.

Crawford: What else would you like to mention about the Stanford orchestra?

Salgo: I always felt the Stanford Orchestra was very special. It was made up of players who were studying to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and other professionals. Music was an important personal expression for all of them, so it was greatly satisfying to me to work with them. I still remember how eagerly they went on stage before a concert.

P. Salgo: We often thought about the contrast between the way students rushed onstage to perform and the more deliberate approach of professional musicians, who were far more aware that everything had to be right, of the importance of the moment. But the students wanted to get right to the music--it was a little bit rash, in a way. My husband would look at them in amazement as they tore past!

Salgo: Perhaps I should mention a few interesting works the orchestra performed, such as the Bartok *Concerto for Orchestra* and the Kodály *Concerto for Orchestra*; my colleague Leonard Ratner's Overture; my late friend Charles Cushing's baritone solo with orchestra in 1958. He was from the University of California. Aaron Copland's *Music for the Theatre*--that was performed when he visited--the *Lincoln Portrait* and *Appalachian Spring*. But these are well-known things; nothing new. There was Dutilleux's Symphony. Takemitsu. Roger Sessions's fiendishly difficult *Symphony No. 1*. Elliott Carter's *Pocahontas Overture*, and Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* and *Concerto for Violin and Piano*.

Crawford: Did you perform one of Carter's quartets?

Salgo: Yes. Not very well, because it was much too difficult, but he was pleased; we worked very, very hard on it. There was also a woodwind quartet of his that he had never heard performed before. He was surprised and he seemed to be especially pleased.

Crawford: You were very versatile, certainly, as a conductor. How do you explain that? All the way from the Baroque through the twentieth century.

Salgo: At a university one has to perform everything; you teach everything. And I got interested in the music--that didn't mean that my love for Mozart or Beethoven diminished.

Crawford: I remember a critic once said of you that you don't carry around a lot of preconceptions; you're able to approach music freshly.

Salgo: That was nice [laughter].

Music Directorship at Paul Masson Vineyards, 1954, and Other Conducting Assignments

Crawford: We should talk about your directorship at the Paul Masson Vineyards. Maybe you'll say how it came about that you began working with Norman Fromm and started your directorship there in 1954.

Salgo: Caroline, I don't remember where I met him exactly, maybe through pianist Jane Galante. I think that's how it happened, and we became fast friends immediately. There was a concert at the Pacific Musical Society with a few members of the San Francisco Symphony, and I conducted the Mozart *Serenata Notturna*

which is a fun piece. Norman was there, and afterwards he said, "I would love it if you would repeat this at the Vineyards." I think this was how it all started.

I became music director there in 1954--a very happy association which lasted many years.

Crawford: What sort of a time commitment was that?

Salgo: I think there were three events during the summer--three programs. In those days there was not much chamber music in the Bay Area in summer, so it was always sold out. Norman was very knowledgeable and very sophisticated musically, and when I requested special soloists, he found money for whatever was needed. I engaged San Francisco Symphony people for the most part, and though I was in charge of the programs, of course, as music director--I could talk over every detail with Norman, which he appreciated, and sometimes he had very good suggestions for programming.

Crawford: He fostered a lot of contemporary composers, didn't he?

Salgo: Yes, but that was more his brother's concern, the brother in Chicago. I brought some interesting things to Paul Masson--like the *Magic Flute* from Carmel with Ted Uppman as Papageno. Otto Meyer was a good friend who took over after Norman's passing. He was especially interested in young San Francisco Opera singers, whom I featured as much as possible.

One thing I like to remember is that I brought the Tokyo Quartet to the Vineyards for their first appearance in the United States. Nobody knew of them; I had heard their recording of a Haydn Quartet and I thought was fabulous. They came to the Vineyards and were a stunning success, and then of course they became one of the leading quartets in the world.

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Salgo: The Lehner Quartet. You are too young to know them.

Crawford: No, I think you toured with them, didn't you?

Salgo: No, but when Mr. Lehner, the first violinist, died, I took his place in Mexico City for five performances of the late Beethoven Quartets at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Then the violist died, Sándor Roth, and so that was the end of it. But I mentioned the Lehner Quartet because it was one of the first real string quartets in the concert world, you see.

Crawford: Is that Jenö Lehner?

Salgo: Yes. In Aldous Huxley's novel, *Point Counterpoint*, there is a scene in which a late Beethoven quartet--Opus 132, the great A minor quartet--is played by a Hungarian quartet. Huxley, who was a good musician, goes deeply into what is in the slow movement. Incidentally, there is a murder going on in another room during the music.

But this was the first string quartet on the world scene; there was no other touring quartet except the Flonzaley, which was an English Quartet. There were one or two others, but the Lehner was perhaps the best known, and they made some recordings.

Crawford: Jenö Lehner had played with the Kolisch Quartet?

Salgo: Jenö Lehner the violist played with the Kolisch Quartet, of which Mr. Kolisch was the first violinist. It is confusing because there were two Hungarian musicians with the same name, Jenö Lehner. One was the first violinist in the Lehner Quartet; he performed here in the U.S. with the Quartet. The other Jenö Lehner, the violist, played viola in the Kolisch Quartet, which originated in Vienna.

P. Salgo: And Jenö Lehner of the Kolisch Quartet later went to the Boston Symphony?

Salgo: Yes. After the Kolisch Quartet disbanded. It was Jenö Lehner, the violinist, whose place I took in the Lehner Quartet.

Later on in 1951 I conducted the National Orchestra of Mexico, which wasn't a lot of fun; it was not a good orchestra. But it was something that came to pass because of my Lehner Quartet engagement. It's supposedly a good orchestra now, but at that time it wasn't.

I mentioned that I conducted the BBC Orchestra. That was an engagement that came about through the composer Humphrey Searle's recommendation; I had conducted his Fifth Symphony, which was written in memory of his teacher, Anton von Webern. With the BBC I conducted that symphony and then a Haydn symphony, which was very nice. It was no. 93, and at the end of the concert the manager came to see me with the president of the Royal Philharmonic, which was the old orchestra of Sir Thomas Beecham.

The president showed me a little parchment and told me that it was the program from the first performance of the Haydn no.

93 with His Majesty's Orchestra at the Haymarket Theater in 1796. Haydn was in London at the time. He made two trips there: once after Mozart's death in 1791 then in 1795-96, I think.

Crawford: It's amazing how those eighteenth-century composers got around.

Salgo: He became a wealthy man, did you know that?

Crawford: No, I didn't. From Count Eszterházy?

Salgo: No. He conducted works on the Continent and in London, and he was well paid. As a matter of fact, this is one of myths about Mozart, that he was a poor man. He wasn't.

Crawford: He spent it all?

Salgo: He spent everything. There's a wonderful new book about him by Professor Solomon, who wrote on Beethoven also. He's a professor at Columbia University, and it's incredible what he found from Mozart's accounts books.

Beethoven professed poverty too, but he was quite well off. Mozart was ill-equipped for this world, you see. And unfortunately, Constanza was a very poor housekeeper, and they both spent, spent, spent. Did you know that he was the best billiard player of the time? [laughter]

Crawford: I heard about that in Prague. There is a tavern where they claim he gambled while he wrote *Don Giovanni*.

Salgo: Yes, that's right. He was the best dancer in all of Vienna, too--an excellent dancer, which few composers are! Wonderful man, but he was ill-equipped for this life. He was exploited and it is important to know that the great Leopold, his father, was the most guilty of exploiting him.

Crawford: Did he ever write anything about that? About the fact that his father--

Salgo: No, but when Leopold opposed Mozart's marriage to Constanza, Mozart felt that the break had to be made. He broke with his father and it almost killed him; it was very, very hard. Professor Solomon and others who have written about his life think that the sudden anxiety, the dark clouds in the middle of the usual wonderful serenity of his music was very likely caused by something that deeply troubled him about his relationship with his father.

Crawford: A sadness there.

Special Friendships at Stanford

Crawford: Well, tell me what were the benefits of living in a university community?

Salgo: Oh, I'm so glad you asked that question. The benefits were largely the interactions with special people we might not ordinarily have encountered--I'm thinking of two great friends whom we met immediately after we arrived at Stanford. We had letters to one of them, Dr. Richard Foster Jones.

Jones was the head of the English department, an illustrious seventeenth-century scholar who came here from Washington University, St. Louis, where he was dean of the faculty. He didn't know a great deal about music, but we had letters to him from a friend of Priscilla's, and so we met.

P. Salgo: We made that connection through an amateur chamber music organization that prints a catalog of chamber music players everywhere in the country. For example, I would list myself as a violist, and then rate myself as quality A, B, C, or one who barely gets along.

We were in Maine vacationing and wanted to play chamber music, and we found a cellist who was listed on an island in Maine, got in contact with him and played chamber music together. He was on the faculty at George Washington University, and when he found out that we were going to Stanford for the first time in the fall, he said, "Oh, you must meet Richard Foster Jones." So he wrote the Joneses about us.

Salgo: Mrs. Jones promptly called on us even before our furniture had arrived from Princeton, brought us an overwhelmingly large florist box full of roses from her garden, and stayed exactly twenty minutes after inviting us for dinner.

There we met our great friends Wallace and Mary Stegner and others from the English department. It meant not only reading their books, but going to their lectures and their parties when the visiting writers came, writers such as Elizabeth Bowen and Robert Frost. I remember when he read his poetry; there was a little party for him at the Stegners' house. Wally Stegner was just killed in an auto accident a few years ago. How we miss

him. Mary, who played violin in my orchestra, remains our dear friend.

Crawford: He lived close by?

Salgo: Right up in Los Altos Hills. Not ten minutes from here.

Conducting the San Jose Symphony and the Modesto Symphony
Orchestras, 1951-1970

Crawford: Well, perhaps we should move along to your assignment with the San Jose orchestra. That was 1951?

Salgo: Yes. What happened was that two people from the symphony board heard me here with the Stanford Symphony. Mr. Gastone Usigli, my predecessor in Carmel, had died, and he was also the conductor of the San Jose Symphony.

Crawford: And also Marin?

Salgo: And also Marin.

Crawford: Could you talk about Mr. Usigli?

Salgo: I did not know him, really. I only met him once, but I have great respect for him because he was very dedicated, very Italian, very operatic minded, and at the same time deeply interested in Bach and in the symphony orchestra. He was a man of broad interests and a good musician, and I understand that he tended to be a bit temperamental as well.

His shortcoming, I understand, was that he was an old-fashioned conductor who was a bit of a Caesar--breaking batons and shouting at people. This kind of thing doesn't really work in America--it doesn't work anywhere. You can't get people to work for you joyfully or teach them anything if you treat them this way. But it's an old Italian tradition--Toscanini did it, and everybody imitated Toscanini on this score.

But with Toscanini it never was personal. I played under him and sang with his chorus at Westminster Choir College--and when he corrected something, I admit he might have been shouting, but you always felt that he was right, and he illustrated what he thought was the right way, so you never felt insulted. He was a great man.

Crawford: Did the "conductor temperament" begin with Toscanini?

Salgo: I don't know, my dear. Probably not; it was probably an old Italian tradition. However, from what we know of Verdi as a conductor, he did not carry on when he conducted.

Crawford: Well, what did you inherit in San Jose?

Salgo: I inherited a mediocre orchestra. At times I wanted to quit, but I was told that if I was patient people would come, and that when the players out in the community who didn't want to perform with the orchestra because it was so bad saw a new leadership and the right approach, they would come. They were right; things evolved slowly and it became a better orchestra.

Crawford: It grew from within the community.

Salgo: Yes, and also from Stanford, and I think some players came from San Jose State College.

I stayed for--and I don't know why--nineteen years, until 1970. By that time I had taken on Marin, too, and the Carmel Bach Festival.

At first, the San Jose concerts were free. The board put up the money for them because as a public gesture, and people came--there was a big audience. The moment they started to charge for the performances, it was a challenge to keep a big audience, but overall we were able to make it grow through the years. I always felt that it would improve and be better in twenty years and it is now very good.

Crawford: What were you able to program?

Salgo: My credo was always "do what you believe in." It always has been. I did the Ninth Symphony and the Verdi Requiem with the San Jose State College Chorus under the excellent direction of William Erlandsen, and those performances were great successes.

I programmed Italian operatic excerpts--and that always brought in different audiences. There wasn't much Mozart; but there was a lot of Tchaikovsky, and that was very successful. Tchaikovsky is not easy for an orchestra, and they liked performing his works.

Crawford: Perhaps we should talk about Modesto here, before we move on to Marin. You had said that the Modesto Symphony was the third orchestra you were called upon to save.

P. Salgo: You really put Modesto on the map, though, and that was a very good thing to have done. It was all because of George Fehér.

Salgo: I had a Hungarian doctor friend on the orchestra board there, and it was he who asked me to take over the conducting. He told me the orchestra was poor and asked me to come, so I went [laughter], and I told him that I didn't think I would probably stay long.

Crawford: Tell me what you found.

Salgo: I found an orchestra made up of local players, very, very few of whom should have been in a symphony orchestra. There were young boys who, with some instruction, might have developed in a few years into fine players, but they couldn't read music well. It just wasn't an orchestra as we know it. The local music teachers, with a few outstanding exceptions, were not quite at a professional level, I would say, so that it just wasn't possible to perform the literature I wanted to play. But that didn't mean that with hard work and cooperation we couldn't create an orchestra.

I remember that the local critic practically fainted when it came out that I would have to bring in players from outside.

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Salgo: The publisher of the local newspaper, the *Modesto Bee*, and his wife came to my rescue. He was a very cultivated man and smoothed the way for me and the orchestra.

P. Salgo: Who was that? Do you remember?

Salgo: I can't remember just now; it will come to me.

In any case, I brought Mark Jordan in from San Francisco and my clarinetist Arthur Austin from Marin. I tried to fill in the gaps in the most important places, and then suddenly the orchestra started to sound good and before I knew it, instead of an empty house, the house was full.

Crawford: How wonderful.

P. Salgo: And also, you see, having a core of good players--then the really good players who were left in the community suddenly wanted to join the orchestra.

- Salgo: There were some players who wouldn't join the orchestra as it was. But as it improved, they came, and it became a creditable orchestra.
- Crawford: Modesto is a bit far away. How did you operate?
- Salgo: Well, it was difficult, but my second bassoonist was a Stanford man--a Classics major and a wonderful bassoonist, David Sullivan--and he drove me. There were others, even some Marin violinists who wanted to perform with us and earn a little extra money, so I always had somebody to drive me.
- P. Salgo: But you know, you tried many systems. You used to try flying, but that didn't work because in the winter--
- Salgo: Modesto is very foggy; it's in the Central Valley. So that didn't work out.
- P. Salgo: That was also a problem if he tried to drive there. Which nights did you go there? You went on Wednesday? Anyway, there was always the worry that if the weather was bad he wouldn't be able to get back.
- Salgo: Yes, Wednesday. Tuesday was Marin. I came home late. It was difficult, but then it was fun to see the orchestra grow.
- P. Salgo: There was a wonderful couple, Warren and Barbara Powers, with whom my husband would stay over when the weather was bad. They made him feel so at home and comfortable.
- Salgo: Warren and Barbara Powers I will never forget. Barbara did everything to make me comfortable--she was a great cook and put wonderful dishes on the table, and Warren, a highly placed food executive in Modesto, was a cultivated, wonderful person who became my friend and still is. If I think back on my Modesto years, perhaps this couple stands out as my most cherished memory.
- P. Salgo: You also enjoyed the Fehérs. They had a wonderful art collection and fed him Hungarian cooking.
- Salgo: He was a great art connoisseur, and he was quite wealthy. Let me say he had five original Chagalls. And some Dutch paintings --maybe not a Rembrandt, but some very good masters. Let me mention just one story--I'm sort of killing time here--
- Crawford: No, these are good stories.

Salgo: He bought a Dutch painting in Paris, thinking that it was by an original master. It was a Dutch landscape: a little canal, Dutch houses, a little bridge, and a dog.

He took a picture and sent it to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam asking them to evaluate it, and they sent him back a photograph of the original, telling him to compare his copy with the original. The letter said, "If you compare the two, you might discover that on the copy, the shadow of the dog is missing." [laughter]

Crawford: Good story. So you went to Modesto on Wednesday nights for the rehearsal. And then when was the performance?

Salgo: The performances were on weekends. Friday and Saturday. Five sets of concerts each year. Dress rehearsals were on Thursday nights. The Marin dress rehearsals were Saturday and Sunday mornings.

Crawford: That was a rather full schedule.

Salgo: It was the strenuous, hard life of a musician.

Crawford: True. What was the hall like?

Salgo: When I first went to Modesto, performances were at the high school in the school auditorium; later on they were in the college auditorium. That wasn't bad; however, the stage was very small. If you tried to put a Mahlerian orchestra onstage, it was just very, very difficult--there was no place for the violins. But we managed somehow.

Crawford: Have they built a hall since you were there?

Salgo: I think they are considering it or perhaps working on it. The Gallo family has been very supportive of the orchestra.

Crawford: So there are resources here.

Salgo: Oh, yes.

P. Salgo: There were resources; they just had to be sort of directed. Don't you think?

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: And is the level of the orchestra as you left it?

P. Salgo: Candidly, we haven't been able to hear it since.

Salgo: Yes, I can't really tell you what the level is now, but I enjoyed my assignment and I enjoyed watching the orchestra improve, as it did.

IV DIRECTING THE MARIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: 1956-1989

Interview with Caroline Livermore

Crawford: You started in Marin in 1956, and I read somewhere that you dealt with Caroline Livermore, didn't you?

Salgo: Yes. After Usigli's death in 1956, some friends of mine mentioned my name to two ladies who were the pillars of the community--Caroline Livermore and Corona Anderson.

I got a phone call from Caroline Livermore asking me to meet with the two of them and talk about the Marin Symphony. I arrived, Priscilla was with me, and we were greeted by Mrs. Livermore, a rather imperious woman, very tall and with a regal bearing, who lived in a home with a lovely garden in Ross. It is now a public garden, which you see as you come into Ross--there is a little bridge, and on the other side there is a wall, and that is where the Livermore house was.

So Mrs. Livermore greeted us and said, "Mr. Salgo, Corona Anderson and I have decided that you will be the next conductor of the Marin Symphony." She didn't ask whether I wanted to or whether I could, or if I had the time! That was it. I told her I would be interested, and asked her to tell me some more about the orchestra. She told me that Gastone Usigli had founded it, and that there were a lot of potential players in the community. She said I would be able to bring in professional musicians from outside, and then mentioned a budget figure that seemed to me to be ridiculous [laughter].

Crawford: Very low?

Salgo: Very low, very low. But after that she asked me about my background and when I told her I came from Hungary, she wanted to know if Priscilla was Hungarian too. When she learned that Priscilla came from New England, she said, "New England? Well,

that's all right." I answered, "I know she's all right."
 "Well, where is she?" "She's walking around the garden." "Call her in, for heaven's sake; let's have tea."

So that is how it all got started.

I can still remember some of the concerts in the gymnasium of the Marin Catholic High School. Sometimes when I arrived at rehearsals, the boys had just finished physical education without airing out the place. It was just terrible! Some of the orchestra players objected, and we had some trying times. Then we moved into a larger room, and finally of course we found a home in the new Frank Lloyd Wright auditorium.

Makeup of the Orchestra and Programming

Crawford: Who was in the orchestra?

Salgo: The orchestra always had quite a few fine community players. The numbers eventually diminished because as the quality of the orchestra grew, they found it was a little bit too difficult for them. But some of them stayed and did marvelously. Wonderful people. We became friends with almost everyone in the orchestra.

Crawford: Were the musicians unionized?

Salgo: Yes, except for some of the community players.

The orchestra was open to everyone in the community, and we held auditions every fall before an orchestra committee. We tried to keep the profile of the orchestra a community orchestra, with a few professional players of very high quality. Many of the San Francisco Symphony players lived in Marin County and felt it was their community duty and responsibility to play in the local orchestra.

P. Salgo: And so a community player could attend the audition in the fall and if approved, that person could be considered a professional and join the union?

Salgo: Yes. They could join the union if they wished to, but they didn't have to.

P. Salgo: But everybody had to be auditioned?

Salgo: Yes.

Crawford: You moved out there for a time, didn't you?

Salgo: Yes. Just after I retired from Stanford, I thought that we should move to Marin. First we lived in San Francisco in Mrs. Louise Davies's lovely firehouse for six months, and then moved to Marin and rented there for six months. Our Stanford house was rented to the composer Leon Kirchner at the time, but it just wasn't feasible to stay in Marin, because we had this house, which had been designed for musicians, and it was easy to get to Carmel from here, since we are between Carmel and Marin. And then Debbie was in school here, she wanted to go to Stanford.

So it was just one summer and one fall that we were in San Rafael. But I can say that the Marin Symphony was and is and remains very, very close to my heart. I lavished a great deal of attention on it, and the programs, my dear, I am very proud of.

Crawford: I noticed that you did a lot of Mahler.

Salgo: A lot of Mahler, yes.

Crawford: Very challenging and interesting programs. How many programs were there each year?

Salgo: We started with three a year, then it became five, and then I think we finished with about seven or eight.

P. Salgo: My husband performed some interesting "firsts" with the Marin Symphony. He did the first local performance of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, which he then took to Grace Cathedral in San Francisco.

Salgo: Yes. And *Beatrice and Benedict*, the Berlioz opera, I took to Zellerbach Auditorium in Berkeley. In Marin I also did Honneger's *Jeanne d'Arc*. The Speaker was a dancer, Vera Zorina, a woman who had been wonderful as Ariel in Shakespeare's *Tempest* on Broadway.

Crawford: I think you mentioned doing two repeat performances. If you did the Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony was also performing Beethoven's Ninth, did you notice that the audience dwindled or was it a separate audience?

Salgo: We had a very loyal following. I'm sure that even if people went to the San Francisco performances they came to our performances, also.

[Interview 4: October 25, 1995] ##

Crawford: Could you talk about the performance spaces?

Salgo: The first year we performed in the Marin Catholic High School gymnasium. Acoustically the reverberation was awful, but enthusiasm ran high, and the orchestra really shaped up very quickly, and some of the players stayed with me all thirty-three years I was in Marin--Charles Meacham, the concertmaster, and Jean Stevens, the oboist, Virginia Ojeda, bassoon, Donna Salarpi, violin.

Crawford: I spoke with Mr. Meacham; he said wonderful things about you.

Salgo: Did he? Jeannie Chandler, the flutist, was a superb orchestra manager who was thinking of the orchestra's interests all the time, had very high artistic standards and was very loyal to me and what I stood for. There were several others, too, some of whom worked with me in Carmel.

Well, Marin was a love affair; I loved the community and loved the orchestra, which really became a very fine orchestra in time. The newspapers always reviewed the concerts; Bob Commanday and others. I was expected to bring something new and unusual and something different from the San Francisco Symphony's programs, so what we did was almost a complement to the San Francisco season.

Crawford: What did the audience want in Marin?

Salgo: The audience was a little bit on the conservative side. They wanted the classics, of course, a great deal of Mozart and Beethoven and Brahms--Brahms was a favorite. French music, for which I have a particular predilection, was received very warmly, too, and there were a great number of French programs, for which I was recognized by the government of France. The French consul general came to one of the concerts and named me a Chevalier des Arts et Lettres--it was something like being knighted by the French government. I told my wife to address me, please, as "Sir," and she said, "Don't be ridiculous! Now take out the garbage." [laughter]

P. Salgo: Perhaps we shouldn't put that in, dear.

Salgo: Then we performed contemporary works, some Dutilleux and works by a Japanese composer, Takemitsu--music from all over the contemporary scene. Of course, there was Stravinsky and Bartók, too, and their music complemented a healthy diet of standards and the orchestra of course loved it because it was an education for them.

We engaged very well-known soloists, although the budget was limited, because sometimes they knew about the Marin Symphony, and they wanted to be perform with us. So we got a few important young French pianists over the years.

Crawford: Mr. Meacham said that you always took time to talk to the audiences about the music.

Salgo: Yes, at the suggestion of my late friend Gordon Sherman, on Tuesday nights I talked to the audience and explained the music to be played to them. Sunday nights were somewhat more formal, but on Tuesday nights I took the opportunity to discuss the structure of the music with the audience. I tried not to be too professorial, but rather to spice up my explanations with a little sense of humor, and those sessions were always well received.

Crawford: Tell me more about the makeup of the orchestra.

Salgo: It was interesting. The first orchestra was probably the most colorful of all: I had two doctors--I always had doctors--and besides the doctors I had one lawyer, and a bartender was my first violin! One day I was on Fisherman's Wharf with my wife, and we dropped in for lunch at a restaurant there, and there he was. He was very happy to see me, and I got what was probably the most generous martini in my life--he doubled it immediately in spite of my protests! [laughter]

The orchestra members came from every walk of life. As I mentioned the professional players from the San Francisco Symphony people who joined us lived in Marin, and they felt it was their community duty to support the symphony by playing, and they were very helpful. That is how Mr. Meacham joined the orchestra, incidentally

I told you that more and more professionals joined us and that eventually come of the community players felt that the music got a little bit beyond them and decided to leave the orchestra. I hated to see them go, but this was the way things developed.

Still, during all the years I was in Marin we always had good representation from the community. These players practiced hard, they they were perfectly prepared, and we had an orchestra which not only Marin was proud of, but one or two critics mentioned that it was probably one of the best community orchestras in the entire country.

I made some marvelous friends in the community, and I would like to give special mention to my late friends, Mr. and Mrs. Boland. He was the president and first violinist for a while, and Mrs. Boland was the orchestra manager and a cellist. I have special warm feelings and give thanks too to Dr. Beth Seaman, who was both on the board and at the same time played in the double-bass section of the orchestra--she was extremely supportive. My last president, Alfred Heller, was also supportive and encouraging always, an exemplary president--a conductor has so many headaches. But whenever there were problems, he was there with a helpful hand.

Many of the board members, too--Kay Collette is one you know, and Audrey Jarach. These people were so important in shaping the orchestra's future, and I don't mean just in terms of financial backing--of course that was important, too.

P. Salgo: Ann Stevens.

Salgo: Ann Stevens, yes. She was a wonderful help, a fine president. And several others--let me see, I have made a few notes about them.

Crawford: I don't imagine you had many troubles with finances?

Salgo: I don't think so. Later on, we had some administrative troubles, and my board thought I shouldn't be bothered about them [laughter]. But I know there was a deficit at the end, and I think they almost paid it off eventually.

Crawford: What made you decide to leave?

Salgo: I was there for thirty-three years, and though I was well and healthy, my eyesight had deteriorated.

P. Salgo: And the journey to Marin was difficult.

Salgo: And the journey. For many years it was fine, but then it became very, very tiring, especially after a deer ran in front of my car late one rehearsal night.

Crawford: What did you do for rehearsals?

Salgo: Some members of the orchestra lived close by, and they came and picked me up, drove me in my car, and brought me back so that I wouldn't get too tired driving. But it wasn't only the rehearsals, Caroline, there were so many times where there was a board meeting or some function where the association expected me to speak for inspiration or fundraising, areas in which a conductor in an indirect way has to take part.

Crawford: What sort of rehearsal schedule could you have?

Salgo: We had weekly Tuesday night rehearsals, which for the learning process was very good. It gave time for the players to practice and absorb. The week of the concert, there was Tuesday, then Saturday morning and Sunday morning rehearsals. The last two were dress rehearsals with the soloists, and so we had, generally speaking, six rehearsals, which is very good. Priscilla always came to the final rehearsals with a score and handed me some notes afterwards, which were most helpful. Sometimes a conductor may hope that certain things won't be noticed--but she noticed!

P. Salgo: Needless to say, he did the same thing for my rehearsals.

Salgo: Of course it showed in the performances. We had to have adequate rehearsal, because the competition was keen. After all, we were compared with the San Francisco Symphony.

Crawford: How did you find the new hall?

Salgo: Well, Caroline, the hall was nice, after the College of Marin gymnasium, but it had some acoustical problems. The brass projected too vividly, and the strings in the front had no real backdrop, so to speak, which would have enhance the sound. So it was always a bit of a struggle. I understand they are trying to do something about it now; maybe they already have done something to improve it.

So it was not the best, but I experimented and learned to put the brass on the floor facing into the curtain--this absorbed much of the volume--and to bring the strings out as close to the audience as possible and elevate the woodwinds. On the whole it was quite a satisfactory balance.

Crawford: Before you was Maestro Usigli.

Salgo: Maestro Usigli was my predecessor; he really founded the orchestra and headed it for two years or three years, I'm not quite sure. It was a very short time. I followed him there and in Carmel. He was in Carmel for nineteen years.

- Crawford: Marin was apparently an assignment that you really loved. Did you do choral work there?
- Salgo: Yes, and Winifred Baker and her chorale collaborated with me for many of the chorale works which we did in Marin. Generally we finished the end of the season with a large choral work--the Mozart Requiem, the Berlioz Requiem, and the Verdi Requiem. We also did Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Winifred was on the faculty of the Dominican College in Marin and also had a chorus in San Francisco, and so the combined choruses constituted the Winifred Baker Chorale--there were eighty to one hundred members of the combined choruses.
- P. Salgo: I also prepared Christmas concerts at St. Vincent's at Christmastime. We had a small professional group that sang for those programs.
- Salgo: That was a great success when we introduced it. Was it the St. Vincent Church in San Rafael? It's a little bit north of San Rafael. Lovely church. Very beautiful, and we always had candlelight at Christmas. It's a small church, and very nice for performances--
- P. Salgo: There were two or three performances.
- Salgo: Yes, and they were always sold out. Those came rather late in my tenure in Marin, and when we first gave those programs, we had a marvelous response. The audience loved it, and Priscilla prepared the chorus for that and did some interesting things.
- Crawford: Where did you find your chorus?
- P. Salgo: I auditioned them. They were from the county or from San Francisco. There were other things we did on the stage as well.
- Salgo: Yes, and when the Marin Symphony did *Fidelio*, we also prepared the chorus for those performances.
- P. Salgo: In concert form.
- Salgo: In concert form, and I have some nice reviews of those performances.
- Crawford: How much opera were you able to you do?
- Salgo: The *Beatrice and Benedict* of Berlioz I mentioned--it was great fun and also in concert form. Then we had a fully staged version of Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All*, a piece about Susan B. Anthony, with Margery Tede in the lead. Thomson came

out from New York, and he thought that it was very good. Later on I repeated parts of it, just scenes, with the Stanford Orchestra.

The thirty-three years went by very quickly and we forged a wonderful bond with the community and with the orchestra. A friendship. I didn't know how much I would miss the people. They were very close to my heart.

Crawford: You must have missed it.

Salgo: Yes, as I mentioned, we lived there for just a short time, about a summer, before we returned to Stanford, where Priscilla had her church position in Sunnyvale--it would have been very difficult to live in Marin and go to Carmel from there, and it is a big trip even to Sunnyvale, where Priscilla would have had to go twice a week. But we managed it; whenever I was needed in Marin, I was able to be there.

Crawford: Was Sunnyvale your first post when you came from the East?

P. Salgo: No, I had a small church in Palo Alto: The First Christian Church. Then I became a mother, and I couldn't manage both. Then they asked me to Sunnyvale, a very nice, large-ish church with a musical tradition, and they really wanted good music. I was there twenty-four years.

Crawford: Wonderful career. Well, is there more to say about the time at Stanford?

Salgo: Yes, our life still goes on at Stanford, but I would like to reiterate that coming to Stanford meant happiness in our lives in every way, professionally and intellectually. It meant teaching very high quality young people, highly intelligent students, from whom I still occasionally receive letters after all these years. We began lifelong friendships there, and those continue, and being at Stanford also meant that we could build our house there, and my daughter was born at Stanford, which brought sunshine into my life. Priscilla was happy in her church position, and coming to Stanford meant that we were able to leave the somewhat tense atmosphere in Princeton. So in every way, it was a new chapter and a happy one.

Conducting the Berlin State Opera, 1978

Crawford: Before we move to Carmel, could you talk about your conducting the Berlin Staatsoper--how that came about, what conditions you found, what works you conducted?

Salgo: Yes, it was in 1978 that I conducted the Berlin Staatsoper in East Germany, the same house where Fürtwangler and Kleiber had conducted. I was the first American conductor they had. You see, it was arranged by Professor Hans Pischner, president of the International Bach Society. When he came to the United States to perform at Princeton and other places, I got in touch with him and asked him whether he could come to the Bach Festival--he was a fine harpsichordist--and perform there. He came and admired the Festival, and we became friends.

At that point, I discovered that he wasn't only the president of the Bach Society, but he was the director of the Staatsoper, and before I knew it, he had written to invite me to conduct in East Berlin.

Crawford: How did Dr. Pischner manage to travel here from East Berlin at that time?

Salgo: Dr. Pischner was an official of the DDR, and it was difficult for him to get permission to come to the Bach Festival, but his position was so solid that he was able to come and bring not only his wife, but also his daughter and grandson.

Crawford: And you went to the Staatsoper twice?

Salgo: I went twice, for two sets of performances. I conducted *Figaro*, *Magic Flute*, and *Fidelio*.

Crawford: The first time was '78?

Salgo: Yes, '78. On my way out of East Germany, I conducted at the Free Radio of Berlin, Radio Frei Sender, a very good orchestra--even though not as friendly as the East German one was.
[laughter]

Crawford: What was your experience at the Staatsoper?

Salgo: The orchestra was very good, and so was the chorus. The singers were as well, although I did not get the top ones because they were on tour in the United States. The government sent them because they needed dollars, but I still had some very fine singers.

Two touching things happened there which I will never forget--I will have haunting memories of them for the rest of my life.

At the end of *Figaro*, after curtain calls, my Susanna ran after me and stopped me and said, "Maestro, couldn't you take me with you to San Francisco?" It was a very moving moment.

The other thing that happened underlined the differences between our two worlds in even a more important way, perhaps. During a performance of *Fidelio*--you will recall the prisoners' chorus, it's a big men's chorus--well, in East Germany there were 150 men who came up from the darkness and the depths to perform onstage, and when they sang the prisoners' chorus, raising their hands and singing about freedom, "Freiheit, Freiheit," it was overwhelming.

P. Salgo: [echoes] "Freiheit, Freiheit."

Salgo: I did *Fidelio* that summer in Carmel, and when I rehearsed the prisoners' chorus, I didn't have 150 men, I had twenty-five fresh young American voices. When we came to "Freiheit, Freiheit, Freiheit," there was just effect, so I stopped them and told them what the word really means. There was silence. And then they did it again and and it was right. So that is a moment that I obviously cherish.

P. Salgo: The second time we went to Berlin, the head of the opera, Dr. Pischner, seemed very nervous and concerned--there was a flurry because of a Russian conductor?

Salgo: Yes, a Russian director came to East Berlin to stage *Prince Igor*, and the whole house was in turmoil because he brought some people with him who talked to the German personnel very roughly and treated them very badly. The word came back to me that oh yes, the Americans, how kind and how courteous we were!

Anyway, Dr. Pischner tried to keep the Russians away from the Americans so that we wouldn't meet, and it happened that the Russian director, before he came to Berlin, had been in San Francisco. He was staging something, I have forgotten what, and before long we were bumping into each other and saying, "Oh, you were in San Francisco, I just came from there." [laughs] We were very friendly, and when Dr. Pischner realized it, he just couldn't get over it.

P. Salgo: Music brings people together, let's say.

Crawford: Was the Staatsoper a very grand house?

- Salgo: It was. There were French armchairs in the first floor orchestra seats, for example.
- P. Salgo: In the hotel where we stayed, we felt we really had to take care of ourselves, but when we went to the Opera House, everything was taken care of for--the conductor there has a special valet for his needs.
- Salgo: When I entered my room, the conductor's dressing room, the first thing I saw on the wall there were pictures of Furtwängler, Van Cliburn, Toscani, all the great conductors--they had all used the dressing room. The Berlin Staatsoper was the great house of Europe and East Berlin, and it was a run-down building at that time, but they tried to keep it up as much as they could.
- P. Salgo: They did, and it was interesting that they put their money there. Scusi, darling, could I make one more comment? You not only had your own valet, but the moment we entered, the valet wanted to know whether he would like--was it "Twinings" tea?--and that stumped my husband right away, but he finally got that figured out. [laughter]

With the Weimar Chamber Orchestra in Leipzig and Chancellor Schmidt in Carmel

- Salgo: On my second trip to East Berlin, Dr. Pischner recommended me for this small chamber orchestra in Weimar, an old musical city associated with Bach, Schiller, Goethe, and Liszt. It was just wonderful and a great deal of fun there--and then the Weimar Chamber Orchestra had a concert in Leipzig. As a small-town orchestra, they had never been invited to Leipzig, but as a result of their having a conductor from the U.S., that gained them an entry. So we went to Leipzig on a bus--about two hours away--and everybody was very nervous; this was for them the big city.

I had three rehearsals in the Gewandhaus of Leipzig, where the concerts were held, and I think there were about twenty players, or twenty-four. They weren't very good technically and they didn't have the best instruments, but they were very intense and they knew their parts.

It was a great experience, especially because I was the first conductor to perform there from America since the inception of Communist rule. The audience stood when I entered,

and I was very much taken by that; it was a nice tribute to America.

P. Salgo: Let me interject at this point that I didn't realize the custom that they have of this long silence at the end of a work--when you're supposed to be mulling over the performance. The work finished [snaps fingers], and I raised my hands to applaud but there wasn't a single sound from anyone else. I was terrified! Because here people rush to applaud--but after a while, there was wild applause. It's just that the waiting was a terrible, terrible moment [laughter].

Crawford: [to Salgo] You knew?

Salgo: No, I didn't. After a performance I usually bow to the audience right away to thank them for the concert. By that time there was probably applause.

Crawford: I think that's a very nice tradition. Respectful.

Salgo: One of the Weimar Orchestra members, Herr Fischer, the orchestra manager, later sent me twenty batons.

P. Salgo: He likes lightweight, very thin batons.

Salgo: And in Carmel, someone took all of them--except for one.

P. Salgo: Don't forget to talk about the dressing room in Leipzig.

Salgo: There was no dressing room for the conductor because it was in the old *Gewandhaus*--which Mendelssohn had founded. When Mr. Mazur came to Leipzig with his orchestra, it was called the *Gewandhaus* Orchestra--it's a very, very old, wonderful orchestra. So there was no place for the conductor to dress except the Council's chamber, and so I had to change there.

Priscilla got my full dress coat ready, but there was no place to hang it except an old music stand, and she started to hang it there. Then she stopped suddenly and she said, "Look!" There was a little plaque saying, "From this music stand the following people have conducted: W.A. Mozart, Richard Wagner, Johannes Brahms, Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann." I asked if there was a chair. "Please don't hang it on the music stand." [laughter]

It was a very nice experience. Mr. Pischner was my soloist, and Professor Schmall, a violinist, was also the Director of the Mendelssohn Conservatory in Leipzig.

- P. Salgo: That had to be the year that Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany--West Germany at that time--came to the Carmel Bach Festival.
- Salgo: Yes. Maybe we can talk about that here, instead of when we are talking about Carmel. Helmut Schmidt was an avid sailor and as the guest of Secretary of State Schultz, went sailing in Monterey. I don't remember who told me this, but as they were sailing he asked his host, "Don't you have a Bach music festival here?" Somebody aboard knew about the Carmel Bach Festival, told him about it, and the Chancellor said, "I'd like to go."
- P. Salgo: It was much more dramatic than his simply going, because he was going with all his entourage of bodyguards. From a sold-out house they had to clear out thirty seats.
- Salgo: The board gave up all their seats and phoned some of the old subscribers who had good seats, and the subscribers were up in arms--they didn't care about Helmut Schmidt; they wanted their seats.
- P. Salgo: It wasn't an easy affair.
- Salgo: Then there was this little scene Priscilla remembers with one of the bodyguards--
- P. Salgo: Oh, yes! There were bodyguards at every exit.
- Salgo: One bodyguard was at the exit, which is raised a little bit, so he was in perfect view of everyone. He was just in the line of my sight when I gave entrances, and there he stood, listening instead of watching Mr. Schmidt. He obviously loved music--
- P. Salgo: He was just so wrapped up--
- Salgo: He listened to the orchestra with a great smile and then suddenly he would catch himself and look where he should have been looking.
- P. Salgo: I forgot to listen to the music myself, I was so interested in watching him. [laughter]

V THE CARMEL BACH FESTIVAL: 1935-1991

Founders Dene Denny, Hazel Watrous, Ralph Linsley, and First Seasons ##

Crawford: Shall we go to Carmel?

Salgo: Yes. The Festival was founded in 1935 by two ladies, Dene Denny and Hazel Watrous. They had a management firm in San Francisco and a gallery in Carmel, where Dene Denny, who had been a piano teacher in San Francisco and Berkeley, was noted for introducing avant-garde music in the 1920s.

P. Salgo: What would have been avant-garde? I'm curious.

Salgo: Avant-garde music in the 1920s was probably Bartók, Hindemith, Scriabin, and early Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Certainly Schoenberg was avant-garde, and she was fond of his works.

The ladies moved to Carmel, and founded this gallery, and a friend of theirs, a cellist from the San Francisco Symphony with the name of Michael Peña, suggested that they have public rehearsals with local players at the gallery. They started doing that, and there were townspeople from every walk of life who came. They were very popular--people lined up at the gallery and sat on the floor.

This was in 1932; it wasn't a festival until 1935 when Ernst Bacon was the conductor and there were three concerts.

P. Salgo: Was the orchestra made up of local people?

Salgo: Yes, and Dene Denny organized a chorus of about fifty singers--whom she conducted. This chorus of local singers performed at the first Festival.

Crawford: What was Ernst Bacon's role there?

Salgo: He was the conductor there in the early years. He was a composer, and I had great respect for him. He never claimed to be a conductor, but he was a musician of excellent taste, and the first Festival probably started off quite well. It created an enthusiastic following. Peña would have conducted the gallery rehearsals.

This was 1935, and in 1936, Ralph Linsley, a pianist and harpsichordist from Los Angeles, joined Mr. Peña to form a piano quartet. Ralph Linsley joined the Festival at that point, and he became the general coordinator and organizer of the Festival. I have to add in the warmest possible terms that he was my right hand during my years in Carmel, and tireless in helping out wherever he was needed, whether it was smoothing the ruffled feathers of the players or poring over the program proofs late at night. Whatever needed to be done, he was there to do it, even coaching singers and playing for rehearsals. Some people called him Mr. Bach Festival.

He came only for the summer, because his main activity was as an accompanist for singers in the Los Angeles area.

Gastone Usigli, 1938-1956

Salgo: As the Festival grew, the decision was made to invite Italian conductor Gastone Usigli to come to Carmel from the Bay Area. He took over the Festival in 1938 and started to bring in a few professional musicians for the orchestra. I never heard any of their performances, but Ralph Linsley told me that they were quite good. There was no honorarium for them; nobody got paid.

Gastone Usigli managed to keep as high standards as his forces allowed, and I think he deserves a great deal of credit for that. His tenure was from 1938 until 1956. A heart attack in early March of 1956 put an end to his life. He was generally honored as a man who had made an important contribution to the the San Francisco musical scene.

As I mentioned to you before, in March, 1956, two days after I had been a guest conductor at the San Francisco Symphony, I received a phone call from Dene Denny, who had been present at one of my performances. I had been warned that she would be calling by a friend of mine, Jimmy Schwabacher, the tenor who later became one of the indispensable soloists at the Carmel Bach Festival, an unforgettable Evangelist in the performances of the *Bach Passions*.

In my first year, the Festival lasted one week, opening on Monday and ending on Sunday, with no performance on Wednesday. Wednesday night there was always a dress rehearsal for the Sunday afternoon program. That was the general schedule.

Then because of the demand for tickets in 1961, the Festival went to ten days. In 1973, to two weeks.

The Salgo Years, 1956-1991; New Directions for the Festival ##

Crawford: I'm interested in your philosophy as you began to develop the Festival.

Salgo: Dene was a truly remarkable woman. As I think I mentioned to you, she was one of the four remarkable women in my life: Mrs. Montgomery and Mrs. Williamson, who brought me to America, Miss Denny, and Priscilla. There is another one--my daughter Debbie, who was born in 1954.

I talked with Dene about the direction of the Festival, and what the Festival's aims were, and we agreed that it should be devoted to the performance of Johann Sebastian's music. But in a larger sense, I wanted to explore his roots, and that meant, of course, the Italians--mainly Vivaldi and Albinoni, his favorite Italians--and German Baroque composers such as Buxtehude, who was his teacher, and Schütz, and others.

Bach was a good Frenchman--he knew the French harpsichordists very well, and he played Couperin particularly, and Rameau. We know that in his library he had music by the English composer Purcell and a treasure trove of music written by other Baroque composers.

About his library--the roads were very, very bad in Bach's time, and in the winter they were almost impassable, so guests usually stayed a long time. Musicians from all over the continent came to see Bach, who was famous as an organist.

His house was large and comfortable and warm, and the music the musicians brought with them was miraculously copied by members of the Bach household by the time spring thaws came and the visitors left. We know from the lovely handwriting of Anna Magdalena that she copied the music of Vivaldi as well as many other of the works in the library.

First she put everybody to bed--all those children. And then in the stillness of the night she would go and copy the music and possibly late at night she would even rehearse the pieces which she would then sing in church.

Crawford: I wonder if anyone has written her story.

P. Salgo: Well, she deserves it.

Salgo: Unfortunately, after her husband died, her stepsons neglected her. They didn't help her whatsoever financially, and so at the time of her death she was practically penniless. It is a sad story.

I wanted to return to your question about my philosophy for developing the Festival. It was my aim to explore the roots of Bach's music and then try to show the tremendous influence Bach had and continues to have on our age. That meant looking at the latter eighteenth century and even at the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Mozart's great C Minor Mass wouldn't exist without Bach. Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* wouldn't either--nor would many other masterpieces. It was Mendelssohn who put Bach on the map with his landmark performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*, exactly one hundred years after its creation. And of course Brahms, who was one of the subscribers of the Bach Gesellschaft, the Bach Society, when the new volumes of Bach's works published by the Society appeared, he closeted himself to study them; he wasn't home for anybody. There is hardly a composer who has not been touched by the Leipzig Cantor.

Crawford: Do we have a good idea about what was in Bach's library?

Salgo: We have a fair idea, yes.

According to Spitta and Cristof Wolff, he had had an excellent education in Lüneburg. In the *Gymnasium*--the German name for the early college years, you remember--there were copies of pieces by Schütz, William Byrd, and many other composers whom he copied and studied. He had gone to Lübeck to hear and study with Buxtehude and later on he played on the organ there.

By the way, there is a story about Bach's studies with Buxtehude--they had a premature and hasty end, because Buxtehude wanted Bach to marry his daughter, but when Bach saw her, he packed up and immediately left town. [laughter]

But I discussed my programming approach with Dene, and she gave me her blessing. She said, "These are new ideas, but I think they are interesting, so go ahead with them." She saw that there had to be progress and encouraged me. I also had great support from Alfred Frankenstein, the critic from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He always came to the performances and applauded the novelties, and he encouraged me to maintain an experimental approach.

Crawford: Did you perform Mozart more than had been done previously?

Salgo: Yes, I believe so. From early on, there was a great deal of Mozart, and not only because Mozart was Bach's immediate successor in the second half of the eighteenth century--Bach died in 1750, Mozart was born in 1756--but also because there was a direct line of influence.

Performing the *Passions* and Masses; Thoughts about Performance Practice

Crawford: When did you start doing the larger-scale works?

Salgo: Right away. Dene didn't want me to go too fast with those, and she asked for the *St. Matthew Passion* to begin with, in the cut English version, and the Mass with the cuts which Maestro Usigli had introduced. So I did that for one year and then I rebelled--it is such a musical mutilation! I thought we could do them uncut and in the original language, without losing the audience. And we did.

For the Sunday programs we developed a three-year cycle: The Mass in B Minor and the *Passions According to St. Matthew* or *Saint John* uncut and in the original language.

Then we did the cantatas in German, and we always provided the audience with an English translation. The cantatas were a modest success, and I had warned Dene that a cantata is not a concert piece. So the cantatas were always problematic, with a few exceptions, because Bach, unlike Handel, never had a good librettist except, briefly, when he engaged Salomo Franck. The cantatas didn't have texts of great piety, and yet the music was miraculous in spite of textual limitations.

What I tried to do--and the Bach Festival was my life's work, Caroline--was to focus on the spiritual message of the music. The spirituality with which these great works were

written expressed the essence of Bach's art--the aura of reverence and the profundity of feeling they expressed was what I tried to communicate.

People flocked to hear them, and I think the audience got the message because the attendance was very high. And although the *Saint Matthew Passion* is very long, we did not cut one note. I felt strongly that the Carmel Bach Festival should perform the works as the master wrote them, and Dene agreed with this.

Crawford: So right away the audience responded to the changes.

Salgo: Yes, it responded increasingly and affirmatively.

Crawford: What are your ideas about performance practice?

Salgo: Concerning performance practice, I took the middle road. I didn't have enough musicians who knew about early music practices, and I still feel Bach wasn't entirely an early music man. He was the last of an era and the beginning of another--I always call him Johann Sebastian Bach, a fulfillment and a beginning. It was already a new era: the Rococo and the new style were more homophonic, tending more toward melody and accompaniment rather than polyphonic style.

P. Salgo: Some of his sonatas have a distinctly Rococo style.

Salgo: The suites and, oh, isolated pieces we find in the sonatas. Bach went to Dresden with his son to listen to some of the new operas and enjoyed them, and wrote some movements in the secular cantatas in the Rococo style. I cannot say he was homophonic--of course that was the new style, the new era--because he just did not like the homophonic. His mind worked in polyphony, so even when he set out to write dances...

P. Salgo: Were they Rococo?

Salgo: Some were, yes.

P. Salgo: Were they polyphonic as well?

Salgo: Yes, some of the dances were polyphonic. But I felt that there was no need to perform on early music instruments when Bach himself had a violin made by Hofmeister, a German maker who had as his model the Stradivari violins.

I made some concessions--there had to be a harpsichord or Baroque organ for the continuo instead of a piano. I also had a gamba playing for the continuo. There were recorders when specified. So this was my approach until the very end of my tenure.

Crawford: Do you feel the emphasis on period instrumentation is a little exaggerated?

Salgo: To some extent. I was told by some scholars that that was all started by the recording industry to promote a new market for Baroque music. But I do think the question is debatable. Certainly in a Renaissance program early instruments are absolutely necessary; that's the way it should be. But in the eighteenth century the Stradivari violins and Mozart's piano were already in use--the type of piano Mozart played. I believe my stylistic approach was in the Baroque spirit, in that I was always emphasizing the ornamentation and the dance rhythms so much of the music was based on.

The Festival Choruses and Musicians

Salgo: As we progressed and reached higher performance standards, we required a more professional organization and fortunately, my presidents and board members recognized this need and we started to pay the artists. Of course the beauty of the music, combined with the beauty of Carmel, was a powerful inducement for fine artists to come and to perform with the Bach Festival!

As I told you, the chorus was started by Dene. It was a very enthusiastic and hard-working community group, but for some important pieces I had to import at least twenty or twenty-five professional singers and I needed someone to prepare them. So after two years, in 1958, I asked Priscilla to train the chorale.

The Carmel chorus was prepared by local music teachers Angie Machado and finally Ken Ahrens, who was also a fine organist and our librarian. I went down periodically during the winter, from February on, to take some of the chorus rehearsals, because the *B Minor Mass*, for instance, requires a long preparation period.

We formed lasting friendships with the players. Rosemary Waller and Mark Volkert were my concertmasters and have

remained dear friends. There were splendid players from the San Francisco Symphony too--David Krehbiel, horn; Ray Dusté, oboe; and Eddie Haug, trumpet; and they contributed a great deal to the Festival. And our friends Don Leake, oboe; Richard Colburn and Tom Hall, viola; Dick Andrews, double-bass; those are some others, to name just a few.

In later years I was fortunate to be able to engage Wolfgang Basch from Germany. The second *Brandenburg Concerto* with its dangerously high trumpet part was especially suited to Mr. Basch.

Crawford: What was the thinking about that your bringing in European artists? Was that well received?

Salgo: It was; the union understood it, and I was able to justify it by indicating that I had looked in this country, and that it was either too expensive to hire competent players or that they were not available. Wolfgang Basch is still with the Festival.

The orchestra and chorale came largely from the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas; the chorus from the Monterey Peninsula. All together we had about forty-five or fifty in the chorus, which would now be considered too large for Baroque performance.

But in Germany in Bach's time the size of the chorus differed. On a Sunday morning in the St. Thomaskirche there were three people to a part. The middle person held the music; there was only one copy per part. But at large festivals, people joined the chorus from other towns, like Dresden. My authority for this is Professor Christof Wolff of Harvard University, the great Bach scholar who came at one time to lecture at the Festival. By the way, the lecture series was one of my innovations. Important scholars were invited to lecture on the day of certain performances, and before the Mass and Passions on Saturday.

There was also chamber music scheduled. I did not institute that; Maestro Usigli had some programs in his time, but I had them every day during the Festival.

Crawford: And you brought soloists?

Salgo: Yes. Throughout the year I auditioned soloists and players here, in Los Angeles, and New York. I discovered one young lady whom I felt had a great future--she claims I started her on her career because I gave her the role of Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in Carmel. Her name is Carol Vaness.

Crawford: Was that before she did *Vitellia*?

Salgo: No, it was right after I conducted the Spring Opera performance of *La Clemenza di Tito* in which she sang. I asked her whether she would come to Carmel to sing *Donna Anna*. Her eyes shone-- "Donna Anna? I would love to!" she said.

P. Salgo: A wonderful *Donna Anna*.

Salgo: A wonderful *Donna Anna*. So I engaged at least three singers who went on to world fame for the Festival, two from San Francisco Opera--Carol Vaness and Ruth Anne Swenson--and the third one was Patricia Schuman, from New York. These three artists have gone on to the world stage.

Patricia Schuman was also the Countess in *Figaro*. And what a Countess she was! When she sang the premiere performance of *Figaro* in Carmel, in her first aria, where she laments the unfaithfulness of her husband Almaviva, she was so moved that tears came down her face. Fortunately it didn't hurt her singing, but the audience was so moved that they stopped the performance with their thunderous applause. Patricia sang a Handel opera there, also. From Carmel she went on to La Scala and the Vienna Staatsoper.

To mention just a few of the outstanding artists who have contributed to the Festival's success over the years--Sylvia McNair, Marie Gibson, Gregory Wait, David Gordon, Tom Paul, Douglas Lawrence, Christine Edinger, the Alma Trio, Carl Markus, Igor Kipnis, Janina Fialkowska.

My thinking early on, Caroline, was that a Baroque festival should encompass the entire age and should deal with all musical genres, including opera, which was invented by the Baroque. And while Bach wasn't an opera composer, he still enjoyed it and went to Dresden with his son Friedemann, to whom he said, "Come on, let's go and enjoy the pretty tunes and listen to some of the great singers."

##

Salgo: I was proud too of the New York Baroque Dance Company. I will show you a program.

Crawford: Perhaps you would talk about that.

Salgo: Members of the Company took part in the Festival the last three years I was there.

Crawford: What did they do?

Salgo: They performed in the Sunset Center. Catherine Turoczy demonstrated Baroque dance steps--Gavotte, Bourrée, Menuet, etc.--with superb grace and charming commentary for the audience. By the way, she transcribed the original ballet notation of Arbeau, who though an ecclesiastic provided the one and only description of dance steps in the sixteenth century. I'll have more to say about that later.

Concerts in Carmel Mission

Crawford: You said, "Remind me to tell you the story about the Mission concerts."

Salgo: In 1961, I began to think about the possibility of performances in the beautiful Carmel Mission Basilica. There is such gorgeous ecclesiastical Bach or pre-Bach literature appropriate to the space, and I was thinking especially of the works of Vivaldi, Gabrieli, Schütz and many others.

I knew that Maestro Usigli had had concerts there--as a matter of fact, he performed Bach's Mass in B Minor there--but because Father Junipero Serra was buried at the Mission, higher church authorities decreed that there should not be any public concerts there.

But I was young and eager, and did not take no for an answer. I went to see Bishop Clinch, who was newly appointed to the diocese, and I explained to him that in the most beautiful church in the world in my opinion--San Marco in Venice--there had always been public concerts. San Marco is built in the form of a Greek cross with equidistant naves, and in the sixteenth century, Andrea Bellini the uncle and Giovanni Bellini his nephew, experimented with brass instruments which they placed up in the galleries so that music sounded in all four corners.

The Doge of Venice had said, "When the galleys come back from the Far East, I don't want just a concert; I want the audience--it is an audience now and not a congregation--to be caught in a fire of sound." And there was a fire of sound, with the brass and the voices pouring from the galleries.

How did they accomplish this "sixteenth-century stereo?" The Gabrielis put mirrors up for Giovanni, Andrea, and their

two assistants, which allowed them to synchronize the sound coming from all four corners. When I told the bishop that this was what I wanted to do in Carmel, he said, "Don't say anything more, Sándor. I served my internship at that church and I know what you are talking about." He led me into the church and said, "It's all yours." So this is how the Mission concerts were revived, and ever since, the programs there have had a mystical quality which has attracted a special audience.

Crawford: Was it a good space for Bach, though?

Salgo: The acoustics were not favorable for Bach. For complicated polyphony, it was just too live; the clarity was lost. However, the sound in the Mission is truly ethereal or strikingly brilliant, and for a more homophonic texture, it is beautiful.

P. Salgo: We used the gallery as well.

Salgo: Yes, following the Gabrielis' example. Priscilla was stationed upstairs in the gallery, and both of us had a little television, so that she took my beat.

P. Salgo: I should interject that the televisions came a little later on. In earlier times, I had to operate by sight, which was very, very difficult--

Salgo: You are right, dear.

P. Salgo: Before the televisions, one had to anticipate the beat.

Salgo: It was very difficult for her because the trouble with the Carmel Mission is--of course it's a gorgeous church--but it's not shaped like a Greek cross as San Marco is; the Mission is a Roman cross--it's very long. So the sound was delayed.

P. Salgo: That was difficult, but once we had the television, it was great. It was really exciting. Sometimes we did things with four choirs, which involved having some voices in the two side chapels.

Salgo: There were many times when a work called for antiphonal choirs.

P. Salgo: And whom did they watch? They watched the gallery from there, and my husband placed two choirs in the front.

Crawford: Why did you expand the Festival from one week to three weeks?

Salgo: Because of the demand for tickets.

P. Salgo: Was it immediately sold out?

Salgo: No, but the audience grew rapidly.

Carmel's Musical Climate and Festival Support

[Interview 5: November 29, 1995] ##

Crawford: Let's talk about the musical climate in Carmel. I know that Miss Denny said that when she founded the Bach Festival in 1935, it was for the preservation of amateur performance.

Salgo: Oh yes, it started that way, but Carmel was always the strangest conglomeration of artists and painters and poets, many of whom contributed much to the Bach Festival. Both Ansel Adams and Cole Weston took splendid photos for our programs, and that brings to mind the exquisite picture of a rock Ansel took which just happened to have my face in front of it. [laughter] And sculptor Emile Norman, a truly passionate Bach fan, provided a striking cover for our 300th anniversary celebration of Bach's birth.

Gail Factor, a wondrously gifted artist, created the stage designs for the last three operas I performed: Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, and Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and *The Magic Flute*. Not to mention her scholarship and artistry in creating a series of intricate, colorful banners for the programs at the Mission. The procession of the banners added beauty and solemnity to the performances.

So there was an artistic climate in Carmel which is still there, in spite of Saks and Macy's. I'm not sure if there is a Macy's; maybe I'm exaggerating, but there is Saks.

P. Salgo: Is it all right for me to interject?

Crawford: Anytime, yes.

P. Salgo: I wanted to say that in a way Emile Norman represents a certain aspect of the Festival, because when it went to two weeks, he went to the entire two weeks of performances. And when it went to three weeks, he enthusiastically attended all of the concerts three times. There was that kind of enthusiasm.

Salgo: Every night, he went.

- P. Salgo: Emile was drawn to it; he didn't want to miss anything.
- Salgo: But he was an exception. I don't know of anybody else who went every night for three weeks.
- P. Salgo: I think some people want to hear some particular program a second or third time.
- Salgo: Yes, that's true.
- Crawford: So the enthusiasm for the Festival came from the community by and large?
- Salgo: To a certain extent.
- P. Salgo: It came partly from the community, but the people who came to the Festival from out of town were equally dedicated, often buying their tickets for the next season before they left.
- Salgo: Priscilla is right--the audience was made up of people one-third of whom were from Carmel and two-thirds of whom were from all over the country. But certainly a great many came from Stanford and Berkeley, the two university towns.
- P. Salgo: A lot from southern California.
- Salgo: And southern California a great deal, yes.
- Crawford: Would you like to talk about some of the particular people who were instrumental in keeping it going? Hazel Watrous, for instance.
- Salgo: We didn't know Hazel. She died in 1955, the year before I went to Carmel. She co-founded the Festival with Dene Denny, and it was Dene's money that supported the Festival. She founded the board of directors when she learned she was terminally ill.
- Crawford: What names come to you as major supporters?
- P. Salgo: Early on there was a group of Dene's friends who were very helpful, like Ted Durein, editor of the *Monterey Herald*, and Mast Wolfson, a local doctor, and the Lehmans.
- P. Salgo: And a shorter gentleman, rather rotund [chuckle].
- Salgo: You mean Peter Ferrante?
- P. Salgo: Peter Ferrante.

- Salgo: Who was a local attorney.
- P. Salgo: They were great friends of Dene and helped her a lot.
- Salgo: And a little later, there was Richard Colburn of Los Angeles, and Reverend Nicholas. He was an Episcopal minister but also a passionate violinist.
- P. Salgo: What was his prayer? Whenever we were there for dinner, he had this funny prayer beforehand, you know, blessing the food, and then--how did he end that?
- Salgo: "Go to it, kiddies." It was strange, but he loved the ritual of the Episcopalian service and the robes and so on--all of that attracted him. He was probably one of the most enigmatic and unusual and interesting persons I have ever met. I could see in his face--when he played the violin you could tell that he had wanted desperately to be a concert violinist. He was very hospitable, all these parties, and--oh, dear--wonderful parties.
- P. Salgo: He knew how to make a perfect "Rob Roy." [laughter]
- Salgo: The perfect Rob Roy. He decided that after the last performance I should have a perfect Rob Roy. A Rob Roy, Caroline, is part Scotch, part sweet vermouth, and bitters, I think--I don't know exactly the amounts--it is very strong, terribly strong.
- P. Salgo: You deserved that after all the work!
- Salgo: Yes, but it was terribly strong. I drank it, and he enjoyed seeing me drink it-- I must confess that it was very, very good!
- Crawford: It's a wonderful story. Are there others? Other traditional things beside the music?
- Salgo: Oh, yes. First of all, there was a bat which lived up in the ceiling of Sunset Auditorium. And bats of course love music; they are very sensitive to it. So when we began to schedule the evening rehearsals, the bat began to fly all around, and the girls were shrieking, worried about their hair and crouching under their music stands. The whole rehearsal was disrupted, of course. We called him Johann Sebastian Bat. [laughter]
- P. Salgo: You had bats at Woodpecker Lodge when you came to Stanford, too, do you remember?

- Salgo: Yes, at Woodpecker Lodge--an old wooden building where the orchestra first rehearsed--now torn down.
- Crawford: You bring out the bats [laughter]. How were the financial fortunes of the Festival?
- Salgo: In the early days, it was supported by donations from private donors--there was very little from the state or from foundations. More recently, the Packard Foundation, thanks largely to the work of Davis Factor, board member and past president, has supported the Festival, and some of the bigger foundations help as well. Most of the revenue came through ticket sales, which I believe covered about 60 percent of the budget. The house was sold out almost all the time.

About funny stories, there are always those--yes, I recall a good one.

It was a night when all the little leprechauns and hobgoblins descended on Sunset Auditorium. Jess Thomas was performing a Bach solo cantata, and the cantata called for a small ensemble with a solo oboe, so Ray Dusté, who was my oboist for many, many years and was from the San Francisco Symphony, was sitting near the edge of the stage, where Jess Thomas was standing.

There was a recitative during which Dusté reached into his pocket and drew out a handkerchief--and as he did so with a loud noise out fell his keys, followed by all his loose change, which rolled all over the stage floor. The audience loved it and responded with applause.

Then came the aria, which has a very high tessitura, and Jess was singing beautifully, but as he took a deep breath for a high note, he suddenly clutched at his waist, and as soon as he finished the aria he hurried from the stage, holding an arm tightly around his waist.

His wife, who was in the audience, rushed backstage, fearful that he had had a heart attack. Imagine our relief to discover that it was on only that his *kummerbund* had broken. We all had a great laugh about that.

- Crawford: You have to have a sense of humor, because there are always those little things, aren't there?
- Salgo: Yes, always those little things. Then there was Eva Heinitz, who was our solo gambist and a rather heavy-set German lady. When she came on stage with the gamba, she had to find

somewhere to place the pin of the instrument, and she just rammed it down--*fortissimo!*

P. Salgo: We thought she would go through the floor of the stage.

Salgo: That was Eva Heinitz. She usually played with Alice Ehlers; they were good friends and gave sonata recitals at the Festival. She was a fine artist, but she talked like a Prussian sergeant: very curtly, while giving the orchestra instructions. Everybody sort of laughed at her because there was something comical about her. When she came onstage, I did not even raise my baton because I knew that it would take at least five minutes for her to tune her instrument. At least five minutes, and I'm not exaggerating. It was just a show, and the audience always caught on and when she finished tuning, they would applaud.

P. Salgo: The attitude of the orchestra was rather like my husband's when she would come on because there was no thought of getting themselves ready for playing for a long time.

Salgo: They knew.

P. Salgo: They all leaned back in their chairs and waited.

The Festival Administration

Crawford: Regarding the administration of the Festival--I suppose it was very informal when you came.

Salgo: It was, since Dene was the administration; she did it all herself. She had a little bit of help from Ralph Linsley, but at that time the Festival was small, and the soloists and musicians were given very nice accommodations and travel expenses, but no honorarium, as I said. This was in the early days, of course.

P. Salgo: Didn't you say that they were so warmly welcomed, really, by the community that it was a pleasure for them to come? They looked upon it as a hard-working holiday.

Salgo: Yes. The Carmel people opened their homes, and they loved to have the musicians of the orchestra and chorale and particularly the soloists as their houseguests. They were especially proud to house a soloist. These were the early days, and then before long it became more professional, and

there were finally union negotiations with the orchestra and the chorale.

P. Salgo: The people in the community furnished a great deal of interest and excitement. Who was the gentleman who lived in Carmel Valley?

Salgo: Noel Sullivan. He was a friend of Dene's and I don't know for sure--but he probably underwrote some of the expenses in the early days of the Festival.

To return to your question about the administration--after Dene's passing, there were several Festival secretaries, all of whom contributed a great deal to the growth of the Festival. I am especially grateful to Val Miller, Liz Cope, Janet Eswein, and Nana Faradany.

The Festival Chorale and Chorus and the Sunset Center Hall

Crawford: Let's talk more about the chorale.

P. Salgo: When I took it over in about '58, there was a policy of adding one or two professional singers to each section as necessary. Then it developed, finally, that we were able to have the chorale be a totally professional group of singers. They came from a variety of places: the Los Angeles area and the Bay Area, and there were many outstanding singers who lived in Carmel. Since the Festival sent us to New York usually once a year for auditions, we brought singers from New York or from the Midwest--there were a few from Chicago. The geographical diversity made it especially stimulating for them when they all came together.

Part of the success, I think, of the chorale was our learning how to hold good auditions. Voice was not enough--even voice and musicianship were not enough--we were looking for a cooperative attitude and an excitement about the music as well as a willingness to put work and discipline into it.

Salgo: One other quality was important: the singers had to learn in a short time about thirty different pieces. So they had to be good musicians and good readers.

P. Salgo: Either good musicians and readers or very conscientious, so that they could make up anything they might lack in that aspect. There was always excitement in the chorale, and it

was a fun experience, our first rehearsal in Carmel when north, south, east, and west groups which I had rehearsed separately would get together.

Crawford: When you were selecting singers, how important was sight-reading, and how important the size of the voice?

P. Salgo: First, the singer needed to have a beautiful voice. After a singer had proven that he or she was a good sight-reader or especially conscientious about learning the notes on their own --I was interested in their tonal variety--could they sing a beautiful straight tone as well as beautiful full voice; were they capable of fine dynamic shading; how was their German?

Crawford: You said Ken Ahrens was your accompanist for the chorale--

P. Salgo: Ken Ahrens was extremely skilled. I was fortunate also in my accompanist in Los Angeles. To have a rehearsal accompanist who is willing to be totally focused on the musical rehearsal that's happening is a great boon and time saver.

Salgo: Ken Ahrens wore many hats: he was our operations manager, our librarian, and the organist with the orchestra, as I've said. He also gave organ recitals at the Festival.

Crawford: It says here that in your last year you left the Bach Festival thriving and secure. What a testimony to you.

P. Salgo: I don't know that this should be mentioned, but one thing to consider is that when my husband was planning the programs he was thinking of economics as well as the artistic goals. As with all boards of directors of an artistic organization, money-raising is one of the important tasks. We were fortunate to have able, hard-working, supportive boards and forward-looking presidents with whom I established lasting friendships. To name just a few: Ted Durien, Hugh Hannon, Ruth Fenton, Jo Barton, Ted Calhoun, Carlotta Mellon, Ann Scoville, Basil Allaire.

Crawford: Isn't there a big campaign for a new hall?

P. Salgo: There certainly should be one.

Salgo: It is absolutely necessary--the structure of the stage as well as the acoustics in the auditorium are at best unfortunate. Davis Factor has been tireless in his efforts to make the hall more useful and beautiful, and I hope the community and audience appreciate what he has done.

P. Salgo: We were just reading one of Bob Commanday's reviews of *The Magic Flute* in which he said that the size of the hall enhanced the performance, so I do think that my husband learned how to make the best of a difficult physical setup.

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Crawford: What were the different assignments for the chorale and the community chorus. Want to say anything more about that?

Salgo: Yes. For the large ensembles like the Mass or the *Passions*, both chorus and chorale participated. The chorale, because of the difficulties of the hall, were divided and placed forward on both sides of the stage, so they could project into the audience.

P. Salgo: The chorale did lots of things separately. They did the Mission concert--

Salgo: Yes. The Mission used only chorale singers. The Carmel choristers always participated on opening night, because we liked to present the whole company at the opening of the Festival. And for the large work on Sundays. I believe the feeling was excellent between the two choral organizations, and I always felt that it was important to have a musical contribution from the community.

Crawford: And is that still true?

Salgo: Yes.

P. Salgo: As you probably know, Bach didn't have a large chorus.

Crawford: You mentioned that in the *Passions* they were not large choruses.

P. Salgo: They may have been large, but they were not up to forty-five people.

Salgo: But as Professor Wolff says, "If Bach had had the singers-- would he have used them? Yes, very likely." [laughter] So there is a debate about that.

P. Salgo: And the other consideration is the acoustical environment, that's what I feel. If you're in St. Thomas, and you have twenty-four singers, it sounds like a much larger force because of its favorable acoustics.

- Salgo: And again, the gallery placement was such that it was ideal.
- P. Salgo: Here, in the Sunset Center, there are quite a number of dead spots.
- Crawford: What causes that?
- Salgo: One of the many troubles is that the opening of the stage is so small, so the sound goes behind the proscenium arch. It's built like a movie theater, you see, so if they remodel the hall or build a new one, and take care of all its difficulties, we shall all rejoice! Davis Factor is working hard on it.
- P. Salgo: You can't believe the amount of time my husband and the stage manager Michael Becker spent trying to plan an acoustically effective seating for orchestra, chorus, and soloists--the number of late night sessions in order to project the right balances into the hall. We sometimes worried about singers falling off the stage, they were so close to the edge. But it is wonderful to hear this music in this size hall. I do hope the new plans will rectify these deficiencies.
- Crawford: I know acoustics is an exact science, but it seems like the Romans understood it well enough!
- P. Salgo: Bach also understood it very well.
- Salgo: I read in a *Los Angeles Times* review about the Festival by Daniel Cariaga that the relationship between the chorale and the chorus here was a unique one.
- P. Salgo: You mean musically?
- Salgo: I don't really know what he meant except perhaps that they joined together happily and fruitfully, I think, in these larger works. And they would join socially, too.
- P. Salgo: I think that everybody profited from that association. The Carmel chorus felt that they learned a lot from the pros.
- Salgo: And the pros had a wonderful time because of the chorus's hospitality. Lovely people.
- P. Salgo: And the pros enjoyed a sort of handing on of information and expertise.
- Salgo: And the conviviality and the fun.

P. Salgo: Yes. Some of the chorus members even took lessons from members of the chorale.

Crawford: How many were there in the chorale?

P. Salgo: Well, it varied between twenty-five and thirty. If there were a lot of five-part or double-chorus works, the number could be more.

Crawford: Did you have a church position with Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church then?

Salgo: Yes, and she had a chorus of about eighty.

P. Salgo: Yes. Well, let's say seventy; it varied.

Salgo: What about some of the works you would do at the church with orchestra? Mozart *Requiem*, Brahms, Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*.

P. Salgo: And the usual: *Elijah*, as well as more contemporary works-- Poulenc's *Gloria*, Daniel Pinkham's *La Montaine*.

Crawford: Is that the position you still have?

P. Salgo: It's the one I retired from in 1995. They didn't want me to leave, I must admit. This was when I had an extended illness. They suggested I take a year off, and at the end of a year decide what I would do. I think it was wise to retire. I had had a wonderful twenty-four years with a very talented, lively, intelligent group with a number of outstanding voices. It was very hard to leave!

The Salgo Partnership and More about Festival Programs

Crawford: I've often thought what a strong partnership you two have had.

P. Salgo: The fun part of it was that I have always gone to his rehearsals. And quite without realizing it, it was like continuing my education, Caroline.

We made a point of talking--after the rehearsals--especially if we had a long drive home from Marin or Carmel. But then he would come to my rehearsals equally critically, so it was a good tradeoff.

Crawford: It was. Perhaps you can talk a little bit more about how the Festival developed--some of the special things and maybe some of the things that you were not able to do because of the scope of what could be offered.

P. Salgo: I don't know that that ever held my husband up [laughter]. He found a way to do what he wanted. He was very inventive.

Salgo: Probably some conductors wouldn't have dared to do *Fidelio* or the great Mozart operas, but I believe that if you find an imaginative stage director who can help to realize the spirit of the work, the audience will receive it enthusiastically. I found such directors in David Hammond and Albert Takazaukis.

There also was San Francisco Opera's Christopher Hahn, who did an excellent job in staging Monteverdi's *Orfeo*.

Crawford: The *Fidelio* stands out for you. What was your approach to it?

Salgo: I always felt--and this was not only with *Fidelio*, Caroline, but I felt that since I had a small hall where the audience is almost part of the stage, that it was a great opportunity to communicate music. With Bach, of course, the spiritual message is always equally important as the technical perfection and scholarly authenticity. With Bach the first consideration is the spiritual quality.

In staging opera, I also benefited from the small hall, even with its imperfections. Look at Mozart's operas. When Mozart first conducted *Don Giovanni*, he sat at the harpsichord with about twenty musicians around him. You might even have seen the royal patron, Joseph II, in his box near the stage, hovering over the proceedings. Musically, Caroline, that meant that you could achieve intimacy. In the large houses that would be much diminished--the echoes, the contrast between forte and piano, mezzo piano, and all the fine dynamic gradations. It was possible to be more subtle musically and dramatically in a small hall, and you could coach your singers to make every word clear and understandable.

Most of the operas we did in English because I felt that immediacy was so important, and in any case supertitles were not possible at that time. We sang *Fidelio* in German, with the dialogues in English, and it worked marvelously.

Crawford: Who were your soloists?

Salgo: I mentioned Jess Thomas as Florestan, and Klara Barlow from the Met as Leonora. She was a tremendous Leonora. I mentioned the

Don Giovanni, with Carol Vaness as Donna Anna, and Ruth Ann Swenson as Susannah and Patricia Schuman as the Countess in *Figaro*. I mentioned that her performance was unforgettable; the "Porgi Amor"--the first aria, in which she laments the infidelity of her husband Almaviva. There is a dialogue between two clarinets which you never can get clearly in a large house, but in this performance it came across tellingly.

Crawford: It's a luxury to have opera in a small house, even with all the problems, isn't it?

Salgo: Yes, and as I told you I did opera because, after all, the Baroque invented opera. The first opera ever performed was done in 1600 in Florence. It was *Daphne*, I think.

Crawford: Would you talk about your first impressions of Carol Vaness and about her subsequent career? I think you advised her against accepting the Glyndebourne Donna Anna?

Salgo: Not Glyndebourne, but I told her that the San Francisco Opera was not offering her opportunities in keeping with her talent. I think Carol Vaness has one of the great voices of recent times. Along with many admirable qualities, she is a splendid musician, a conscientious worker, an excellent actress, and a lovely person. She has a prodigious memory and is one of those rare singers who needs to be given a musical suggestion only once and then she never forgets it.

Crawford: Well, I think everyone was surprised when you retired from the Festival, which you did in 1991.

Salgo: I had to, my dear, because of my eyes. It just wouldn't have been honest to go on. I could memorize a great deal, but not that much, not everything.

Crawford: That was a fairly clear-cut decision, then.

Salgo: It had to be, yes. It was hard because I felt at the top of my power musically and I was healthy. Also, I feel that after all these years of study--I've told Priscilla this--that I'm almost on the verge of understanding Bach, Mozart, and the other great masters. [laughter]

But anyway, I felt this had to be done.

But to return to other concerns which I had for the Festival, for a long time I had wanted to introduce ballet in Carmel since ballet, like opera, was one of the genres of Baroque art.

Salgo: I searched to find someone who would give us the authentic period dances of the age, but the search at first was unsuccessful. I found only dancers who simply did free-style dancing to Baroque music, and then finally, as I mentioned, I was fortunate to find in Catherine Turoczy the dancer for whom I had been looking. She brought her New York Baroque Ballet Theater and it was beautiful.

Crawford: What music did she do?

Salgo: She did Mozart's *Les Petits Rien*, a small ballet which Mozart wrote in Paris. And there were some French pieces which had also been done in the Paris Opera in about the 1750s, designed by Arbeau, who was the first choreographer to make notations in a choreographic language.

Miss Turoczy had gone to Paris, to the Bibliothèque Nationale, and reconstituted and restored the whole thing-- Arbeau's entire dance manual. She was a lovely young woman; unfortunately she had to wear a mask because that's how they danced in those days. I have to unearth one of the programs to show you. It was truly a revelation. We know that Bach knew the dances and was himself an excellent dancer. As a young man he went to the court at Celle where there was a French dancing master who became his friend.

P. Salgo: He had a French education, a fact which is not too well known.

Salgo: As they say, he was an excellent Frenchman and an equally good Italian.

Crawford: We've mentioned that he liked Couperin?

Salgo: Yes, Couperin was in his library, as were Rameau and many Italians--even the Englishman Purcell's *Fairie Queene*.

P. Salgo: Where I think my husband was so astute was to make use of a hall that was a bit strange, even in the way he would arrange the forces for compositions like the *Passion*. He moved the chorus out onto the forefront of the stage on the right or left, which made for very dramatic performances of the *Passion*. It was almost an advantage to have the orchestra not in a deep-down Bayreuth kind of pit, especially for the operas. Where did we see that performance of Monteverdi's *Poppea* conducted by Harnoncourt?

Salgo: We saw it in Berlin. He was practically on the stage.

P. Salgo: The orchestra was on a level only slightly lower than the stage and were watching the stage whenever they were not playing. It was just like Carmel.

Crawford: So this was a step toward authenticity, in a way, with the Baroque--

P. Salgo: Not necessarily deliberate, but actually it was a case where necessity fostered validity.

Salgo: I told you that there were also lectures and symposia. With great pleasure I recall that the lecture series had some very illustrious Bach and Baroque scholars, among them my late colleague Professor Putnam Aldrich, Professor Hans Pischner, Christoph Wolff, George Houle, Istvan Hajdu-Heyer, Bruce Lamott, Clifford Cranna, as well as noted critics Alfred Frankenstein, Robert Commanday, and Alexander Fried. Certain programs had titles to give focus, like "Paris in Bach's Time." It meant programming certain composers whose works Bach knew and had copied.

Crawford: Did you study other festivals? Did you attend other Bach festivals around Germany?

Salgo: In my student days, I did. And of course my correspondents--I had very good contacts everywhere, who sent me clippings. I was informed about what other festivals were doing. There was a particularly good one--close to Munich in Anspach--led by Carl Richter, who was at the time the number one Bach performer, organist, harpsichordist, and conductor. I invited him to perform at the Carmel Festival, but he wasn't able to come. Richter's programs were just models of their kind, not only of Bach's works but some of the earlier German composers whom Bach knew. I admired him very much.

Doing It "Bach's Way"

Crawford: Did you ever get negative criticism?

Salgo: Yes, of course, but never malicious criticism. Occasionally I was criticized somewhat because I was thought too traditional--I didn't make enough use of period instruments. But as I've explained to you I had a strong feeling about that and I always used a harpsichord and a Baroque organ. And when we did Monteverdi's *Orfeo* there were lutes and other period

instruments. They called me a "middle-of-the-roader," which is all right with me.

P. Salgo: You did use a gamba in the recitatives in the *Passions*.

Salgo: I used a gamba and not a cello.

Crawford: It was your thinking that you would probably be doing what the composers would have had they been able to take from all periods.

Salgo: Yes. That's right.

P. Salgo: And in the chorale singing, that was one thing that I was able eventually to get: people who could sing a good straight tone or a richer, rounded tone according to the demands of the music. They were able to control the quality and quantity of sound.

Salgo: I don't know why I am remembering this story about Wanda Landowska just now, but Yella Pessl, a harpsichordist, once criticized Wanda personally--to her face, really--saying to her that certain things she should do this way and so on, and Landowska said, "Yes, my dear, you do it your way, and I will do it Bach's way."

Crawford: [laughter] Would you develop that a little bit more: what are those special vocal sounds and how does one produce them?

P. Salgo: In the earlier music, especially when you're imitating what would have been a boys' choir, you want to have this straight-tone singing; it makes for clarity. Singing Mozart, you let the tone have a richer sound. As I said before, that was part of the audition, too: to find out if the singer had tonal control.

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Salgo: There is a new study which shows that the reason eighteen-year-old boys still sang soprano at St. Thomaskirche in Bach's time was that the voices at that time changed much later.

Crawford: Isn't that interesting?

Salgo: Much later.

P. Salgo: We know that at St. Thomaskirche, the records show that the oldest chorister was twenty-two before his voice changed.

Crawford: Do we know why?

Salgo: There are a number of theories.

P. Salgo: One reason is that there has been a change in the maturity of human bodies over a two-hundred-year period. Both boys and girls reach physical maturity earlier now, at younger ages.

Crawford: Interesting. Well, what were the major challenges you faced at the Festival?

P. Salgo: The restrictions on rehearsals at the Mission sometimes created problems. What could we have? Just one dress rehearsal at the Mission for the Mission concert.

Salgo: Only one dress rehearsal. Of course, the preparatory rehearsals were at Sunset.

P. Salgo: That was hard because it was the most difficult program we performed. We did a lot of it either with two choirs or even four choirs in one strenuous rehearsal. Perhaps the most demanding was a performance of a work of Thomas Tullis, in which forty different parts were divided into eight choruses. What a challenge that was in the antiphonal works!

Salgo: I mentioned to you that Priscilla was up in the gallery with part of the chorale, and the rest were at the altar with me downstairs, because of the spatial arrangement of certain seventeenth-century choral textures--they called it "*cori spezzati*," "spatially separated choruses." We had mostly double choruses, but sometimes three or four, with some singers in the little chapel down on the side. It sounded very good because the audience was totally enveloped in sound. The Mission concerts were very special.

One difficulty we haven't mentioned were the heavy Venetian velvet robes we wore, which were unbearably hot. Gorgeous but terrible! [laughter] They had ermine collars and were beautiful. They were made for the Festival.

P. Salgo: We learned early on, after the first concert in the Mission, that the chorale could not walk down the aisle in shoes. The processional was silent, but the shoes made a loud clunking sound in the silence of the Mission. It was because of the cobblestone floor of the chapel. So the chorus had to walk either in stocking feet or with socks over their shoes.

Salgo: And then there was candlelight, plenty of candles around, but the candlelight didn't light the music. Still, there was an

unforgettable atmosphere surrounding the whole Mission Program for the performers as well as the audience.

Once we had the Bishop of San Francisco and his entourage, who came at the invitation of the Mission clergy. They loved it and thought it was marvelous.

P. Salgo: It was really tricky because you never knew what you would meet when going into the sanctuary. The chorale had to enter a little side chapel which was dark, and I'll never forget trying to get into the tiny chapel; we could scarcely manage, the thirty-five of us with our candles. One year when we went in, there was a body in an open casket.

Salgo: The chapel had two very heavy, old, big doors leading into the sanctuary. And when in the silence it was opened before the chorale entered with their candles, the doors creaked.

P. Salgo: The most marvelous creak you could imagine--ooh [laughter]!

Salgo: You felt you had just returned to the Middle Ages. No artificial sound effects could have created such an anticipatory atmosphere. It created a wonderful spirit and mood.

Retiring from the Festival and Remembering the Highlights

Crawford: It's such a marvelous place. Well, what did it represent to you leaving the Festival? It must have been terribly difficult.

P. Salgo: Yes, it was, because the Festival--even when my husband had several other activities--was in his mind the entire year. He started thinking about the next Festival right after the last concert of the season; we always had a post- and pre-Festival breakfast the day afterward.

Crawford: With your Rob Roys?

P. Salgo: Not at breakfast. [laughter]

Salgo: We would discuss what went right with the just-finished Festival and what could we improve on the next year. That was the first step in our planning. It was a full year of concentration.

One thing we noticed was that we had always done almost all of our traveling with some kind of professional purpose in mind, so after leaving the Festival it was a novel experience to go on a true holiday.

We declared, "Let's see what the rest of the world is doing in July?" We hadn't been anywhere but Carmel for thirty-six years so we didn't know!

P. Salgo: Every July and August found us in Carmel. Of course, I was busy with the church, and the more time you have to give for a church position, the more it takes. So I was quite occupied, but still, we found ourselves reading books that we hadn't had time to read. Reading poetry.

We went to England to "help" Nancy Morrow, our banner designer and member of the board and friend, marry another music lover, William Burkett. The wedding was in Dedham, and then we met our friends the Doctors Leake and went on a Scandinavian cruise.

Salgo: And then we wanted to go to Paris.

P. Salgo: And we went down the river on a barge trip, which was a great deal of fun.

Salgo: In France, in Burgundy.

P. Salgo: Travel was the chief thing.

Crawford: What a bonus for lives as yours.

Did the board have any artistic input at these post-Festival breakfasts?

Salgo: The board felt that it never should interfere in programming or artistic decisions.

P. Salgo: The question after the Festivals was always: "How did the programs work out?" Then there would be feedback: "Oh, the Mission was great this year." But as far as talking about the future, we discussed certain organizational aspects.

Crawford: Then when a successor was chosen, did you have suggestions or were you part of the search effort?

Salgo: No, I felt I should not be.

P. Salgo: It wasn't a large search; I think that they narrowed it down to two people very quickly. It was Bob Commanday who thought it was a poor idea to spend two years trying out various conductors as some people had suggested.

Salgo: I think he suggested contacting Michael Steinberg, program annotator for the San Francisco Symphony and a fine scholar. It was he who made a few recommendations.

Crawford: Anything more about that that you would want to say before we move on to more general questions?

Salgo: I have this long list of interesting things--

P. Salgo: The parties that were given during the season were of all kinds--elegant, inventive (there were even cowboy parties). We were recuperating, to use Nana Faradany's word. They contributed a great deal to the feeling of specialness and excitement, and it was fun to go to them after the concerts.

However, in Carmel with no lights and no street numbers it was always a challenge to find the right house and the right party. We would see lots of cars parked, and think that must be our party, and then we would walk into a gathering of strangers who were so cordial that it took a bit of time to discover that the parties were not for us.

Salgo: They wanted us to stay, so--[laughter].

P. Salgo: It added a delightful element, I think.

Salgo: I would like to add perhaps that I always felt, Caroline, that for me this was not just another festival. Not only was it my life's work, but I believed that the Festival communicated a certain spiritual message to audiences. I felt that this was something that Bach expressed. I think of Bach as the last great religious artist.

I was also eager to include any work that expressed a longing for freedom, like *Fidelio*. I toyed with the idea of being able to produce *Antigone* the same year we did *Fidelio* in a little outdoor amphitheater near Carmel. *Antigone* is about freedom, too. I could never have done it, but I always wanted to, and there were local theater groups who were interested.

P. Salgo: Yes, that should go on the list of things that you wanted to do.

Salgo: That was the one dream I wanted to be able to realize. *Fidelio* and *Antigone* in the Forest Theater. The Theater is at the edge of town and is surrounded by trees, and they now have heaters there. The reason I couldn't do it then, though, was because of the string instruments in the evening air--I couldn't ask my players to ruin their instruments.

P. Salgo: The Festival was multifaceted--religious works, opera, ballet, symphonic works, lectures, chamber music. You could go from a deeply spiritual experience to an evening in Paris or to the *Brandenburgs*.

Salgo: I always loved everything that I was performing. I made up the programs and I never had any interference in that area from anyone. I have said that one that particularly stands out in my memory is the first *Fidelio* performance with Jess Thomas and Klara Barlow in the leads.

P. Salgo: Yes, that performance stands out for me, too. I found Heuwell Tircuit's 1977 review from the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "Rumors abounded all last week that the concert version of Beethoven's *Fidelio* at the Carmel Bach Festival was one of the great triumphs of the Festival's forty-year history. Those rumors proved well-founded Friday evening. Director Sandor Salgo rather stacked his deck with superb casting. Klara Barlow had to step into the title role at the eleventh hour, when soprano Marguerite Willauer of New York City Opera canceled. What an artist she is! The voice was velvet throughout the range. She never once gave way to tearing the passion to tatters, a thing common to the role. There was always something in reserve, enough to pass two sports cars and a truck on the way to high notes. So too, tenor Jess Thomas did an excellent job as Florestan. He managed a mellow darkness of tone as umber as autumn foliage."

Salgo: Then from Bach the *Passion* story according to St. Matthew; the Mass in B Minor; some of the very personal cantatas, "Ich habe genug" and "Gotteszeit"; and some of the others.

I have especially fond memories of *The Play of Daniel*, which was a medieval mystery play with a wonderful English stage director, Glenn Wickham, who was guest lecturer in the Stanford Drama Department. He was interested enough to come to Carmel, and he wrote about *The Play of Daniel* and also staged it in England, so he was just the right man for it.

One of the happy memories about performing *The Play of Daniel* was that my daughter Debbie, who was five at the time,

appeared in the role of an angel. She didn't have to say anything, didn't have to act, but a very tall actor took her hand and escorted her across the stage--that was her great role. I never will forget it.

Maybe I should also mention Telemann. Everybody in Bach's time thought that he was the greatest composer of the age. He was the top candidate for the post at St. Thomas in Leipzig, yet he declined. Telemann was the godfather of Bach's oldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, and he had a popular concert series in the Zimmerman Cafe in Leipzig. Coffeehouses had just sprung up in the early eighteenth century all over Europe, and these coffeehouses sponsored concerts. Telemann asked Bach to take over his place in the cafe, and Bach loved it. He wrote a number of concerti, in which he appeared as a soloist with the orchestra, and the university students made up the chorus. The students of course enjoyed it and the beer that came with it. One of our programs I remember with pleasure was entitled, "A Concert in the Zimmermann Café."

P. Salgo: What was on the program?

Salgo: Oh, the program was Bach and--

Crawford: The *Coffee Cantata* [laughter].

I wanted to read something Mark Volkert [assistant concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony] said when I spoke to him recently: "I've played many B Minor Masses, but no one captures the drama of the piece like Mr. Salgo. He's always scholarly, never mannered, and he captures the emotions just precisely. He found all of the emotional quality in the work; it was a romantic style, but beyond that there were the emotions that were lacking in what is called the authentic style."

Salgo: I think that's the best praise I can have.

P. Salgo: Oh, this is fun, Caroline--this is 1969, by Robert Commanday in the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "A coincidence timed with almost countdown accuracy brought the Carmel Bach Festival performers and audience to grips with the *St. Matthew Passion* on Sunday. At the moment of the moon landing, the musical religious experience that followed emphasized that no matter how far out into the universe man's scientific achievements may take him, the individual cannot escape the eternal spiritual questions. The degree of involvement was inspired by Sándor Salgo's approach, which regards the musical beauty and spiritual aspects as inseparable."

Salgo: That's good; all right.

P. Salgo: You have to understand that when we were in Carmel, it was our whole world--we lived and breathed music, and the outside world ceased to exist for us until after the Festival was over. How well I remember that experience of sitting in the audience during the *St. Matthew Passion* and wondering why so many in the audience were listening with earphones, and why they seemed to become excited at certain times.

I thought they were somehow augmenting the sound of the performance. Having worked so hard with the Festival, I really was not aware that the moon landing was taking place.
[laughter]

Oh, the review goes on; just a minute. "This then was a truly beautiful performance in particulars and in larger scope. Authenticity of style is observed in its important aspects, again noting that the most important authenticity is the recovery of the initiating spirit. Though scholarly considerations are explored and respected; these do not inhibit personal and emotional commitment by Salgo and his forces."

Crawford: Did other festivals take your ideas?

Salgo: Yes, indeed.

Crawford: Could you describe how?

Salgo: The use of *cori spezzati* and identifying the personnel of the *Passions* with different colored robes. We differentiated between the disciples, who wore blue robes, and the mob or *turba*, who were in red, with Judas changing from blue to red. The chorus representing the Christian community wore white as did the soloists. Jesus was garbed in a purple gown especially designed for him. The Evangelist who told the story was in evening clothes.

Crawford: What impact do you think the Festival has had on the West Coast cultural scene?

Salgo: I don't know the answer to this. I think the critics and the audience would have to answer it. There was not much interest in Baroque music in California in the 1950s, so perhaps the Festival might claim some credit for focusing on a previously neglected era in the literature of music.

Crawford: I wanted to ask you about something you said in an interview, Maestro: "Bruno Walter used to say that a conductor had to be a

first-class technician, a firm policeman, a father-confessor, a public relations man, a psychiatrist, a scholar, and a Don Juan." [laughter]

P. Salgo: Well, some of it's true.

Crawford: How about "a firm policeman?" As a conductor perhaps you can comment on this. You always hear that conductors have such fierce personalities. I know from Charles Meacham that he never saw you even begin to lose your temper.

Salgo: I don't believe in that. I just don't need it; it's not my nature.

P. Salgo: I think it's only when the musicians don't respect you that you have to do that.

Salgo: There is no need if you know your score, and they know you know it. Shouting doesn't give you any respect; you have to know your score and they respect what you are trying to achieve. You cannot fool an orchestra.

Crawford: Earlier today you said "I almost understand Bach and Mozart." What exactly do you mean by that?

Salgo: The two composers' profundity of feeling and technical perfection are unfathomable. It takes more than a lifetime of study, not only of the music, but of the inner life of the composer, to get close enough to unlock the secrets of their creative impulses. The great psychiatrist Jung said, and Stravinsky agreed with this, that great art is like a message from God Himself. In studying these masterpieces, one feels that one is in the presence of eternity.

Epilogue ##

Salgo: At first, I thought that retirement was a mixed blessing. But soon I discovered that the freedom from a set schedule gave me the time to do what I had secretly been looking forward to. I have always felt a strong missionary zeal to communicate my feelings and thoughts about music to people who like music, but are not trained musicians and cannot read music--in a way I feel that it's opening new vistas for them.

I was able to do these things through my Beethoven courses at Stanford, and I give lectures now for the Stanford Alumni Association and the Music Guild, which are separate organizations. It is fun for me, and the lectures have been so successful that I have had, as they would call it in show-biz, sold-out houses. Some of the lecture series titles are "Two Centuries of Musical Jewels," this series is ongoing; and "Music of the Romantic Century."

P. Salgo: There is also a series on Bach.

Salgo: And then I lecture on certain individual composers; my favorites are Beethoven, Bach, and Mozart. There are also separate little excursions into the operatic field, and these lectures have allowed me to bring in soloists to illustrate the subjects, and we sometimes have entire operatic scenes in the sessions. Audiences have enjoyed these lectures, and I am still doing them and enjoying them very much. My violin playing has had to be on the back burner, because I've had two falls, unfortunately, and injured my shoulder.

P. Salgo: And then you and Jefferson.

Salgo: Yes. My principal ambition has been to write about an old idol of mine whom I discovered in Hungary, Thomas Jefferson. At the time Jefferson meant everything that America meant later on to me. And to discover that this great man was a violinist!

I gave a lecture on Jefferson not too long ago for the Stanford Alumni Association, and the word got out, and I received a call from the President's Office at Stanford. President Casper wanted to have lunch with me, according to the secretary, and so we had lunch and had a very good time, and during lunch the President asked me some questions about Jefferson and music, and then he asked me to write something about Jefferson and music. He told me: "I'm a great Jeffersonian, also, and I think this is important, and I have the funds to support your research."

So I was able to go to Virginia, to the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, and then to the Library of Congress to work on the project, and fortunately, when I'm in a crisis like this, there are always friends who come to my aid, and this is what happened with my friend Bruce Wolfe, who not only came with me to Virginia, but drove me around, took pictures, and did all kinds of things to help. And then my friend Professor Alan Cohen, a psychologist who is a gifted writer, went through my manuscript and put it into what I think of as improved literary and expressive shape. And I should mention my friend Starrett Dalton, who helped with the footnotes.

My other project came simultaneously, and was either a blessing or not so much of a blessing, because of the time and hard work involved. But Caroline Crawford, a friend of long standing from the days when I worked for the San Francisco Opera--she was, I think, in charge of the press office then--is a highly intelligent, wonderful lady who surprisingly honored me by inviting me to document my life through oral history--to record my memoirs. This is a difficult thing to do because I have lived a long life, and I have a lot to say. It has been an eventful life, lived on two continents.

Support for the project came through the kind efforts of a friend of mine from Carmel, Davis Factor, whom I have mentioned in the oral history. For a long time, the project lay dormant. Priscilla was ill, and many other things happened during that period. Caroline was patient, and finally we were able to complete the oral history when a very dear friend of ours, Rowena Morrison--

P. Salgo: Spurred us on.

Salgo: Spurred us on and put the project into final form, ready for binding and distribution.

Let me say that Leslie Gassner was a tremendous help with the Stanford lectures and worked very hard to build a good relationship with the alumni audience and the general public--the lectures are open to the general public. Leslie is a talented and able young woman whom I'm very much indebted to. And I am indebted to Mrs. Catherine Manning, who is the head of the lecture series.

P. Salgo: And some of the artists, dear?

Salgo: Yes--a few of the singers I would like to mention are Karen Anderson, Ellen Kerrigan, Gregory Wait, William Ramsey, and

especially pianist Frederick Weldy and violinists Mark Volkert and Karen Bentley, and Jan Volkert, cellist.

P. Salgo: As for me, I had no idea until I no longer saw "my choir" two or three times a week how much a part of my life and concern they were. It was difficult but necessary to retire in 1994; however, the memory of their shining faces, humor, and incredible generosity, continues to resound through my life. I check up on them at every opportunity, through the church newsletter and through my spy system. I keep much better track of them than they realize--especially the second altos.

The Sunnyvale church recently commissioned a choral work in my honor. I was thrilled by every aspect of this anthem, "To Music," which the church and choir commissioned, and especially by the choice of subject--music's power to move and uplift the human spirit--as well as by the choice of composer. Kirke Mechem is notably skilled, especially in choral composition, and also incidentally was a former student in orchestration of my husband's here at Stanford, who has had an outstanding career in a very difficult field. Last but not least, I was so moved by the performance of the work that I would like to turn around the choir's dedication to me and thank them and Ken Ahrens for twenty-four years of joy, inspiration, and musical excellence. The words and music frequently sing through my mind: "Music is the speech of angels. When words leave off, music begins. Music gives wings to the mind, soul to the universe, flight to the imagination, charm to sadness, life to everything. Let us go to meet the Lord; let us greet Him with the sound of music."

Salgo: It's hard to put in words what my wife's contribution has been to my career because she was so intertwined with my life; two musicians, we always talked and thought of music. What was so wonderful was that I married an excellent musician, so that we looked at things from the same common viewpoint. What was particularly helpful was her presence at my rehearsals and of course my performances. She gave me constructive, very objective criticism, which helped me to grow artistically and in human terms.

In retrospect, I can say that if my long life had unity and coherence in spite of my different activities as violinist, conductor, teacher, and lecturer, it was she who helped me to have this unity and coherence. And I can't forget the light and warmth my daughter Debbie brought into my life.

P. Salgo: The oral history has been a marvelous opportunity, because as I said before about Sándor, he's not a backward-looking person at

all. He's always thinking of the next thing he's going to do, and this has literally forced him to relish many of the wonderful musical and human moments in his life. It's easy for me to look back. I have to try hard not to dwell on the past, but again this has been a required pleasure.

Salgo: In retrospect I have enjoyed working on the memoirs, because it seemed to me that it was not only an account of my life, but I came to relive perhaps the main landmarks and important events of my life--which have helped me to understand the unity and coherence which I mentioned.

P. Salgo: You know, dear, sometime, and we've never had a chance to do this, I really would long to ask you some of the high points in each area of your life. It must have been marvelous when Mrs. Montgomery--

Salgo: Yes. That of course was one of the greatest things, maybe the greatest thing, because without her facilitating my coming to America I probably wouldn't be alive; I probably would have perished in a concentration camp. Coming to America meant everything: I met Priscilla and had my career as a conductor as well as had everything I dreamt about in terms of my career and final independence.

P. Salgo: Even beyond Mrs. Williamson's letter inviting you to come to this country, because lots of people could have invited you--the quartets, and so forth--was the fact that you were able to fit into that artistic category of being an important person for America to have--that was really a big turning point. It was wonderful, wasn't it, that Mrs. Montgomery had the sensitivity to ask you that important question: "Mr. Salgo, you are so sad. What has happened?"

Salgo: Oh yes. She was a great, great, great person.

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Acknowledgements

by *Sándor Salgo*

In reviewing my life, there is a multitude of people who influenced it, shaped it, and without whom, it would not have achieved coherence. I owe much to my teachers, colleagues, associates and friends. But above all, and I touch on it in the biography, my gratitude goes to four women: Mrs. John Flourney Montgomery, without whom I probably would have perished in a concentration camp; Mrs. John Finley Williamson, who brought me to America; Miss Dene Denny, who by naming me Director of the Carmel Bach Festival opened up for me a rich field of creative activity; and last but not least, my wife Priscilla Patterson Salgo without whose partnership, help, encouragement, and love the struggles of life would have been well nigh impossible. I would like to add one more woman to the above list (as is evident I have no patience with "macho mentality"): Deborah Salgo Dranove, my daughter, who brought sunshine, laughter, and inspiration through the years. Moreover, she gave me a brilliant son-in-law, and two wonderful grandsons.

I owe immeasurable thanks to my principal teachers: Léo Weiner (chamber music), Imre Waldbauer (violin), Fritz Busch and George Szell (conducting). Composers with whom I worked closely: Darius Milhaud, Virgil Thomson, Randall Thompson, and Humphrey Searle.

I would like to express my gratitude to the personnel of the two organizations with which I was closely associated for more than thirty years, the Carmel Bach Festival and the Marin Symphony. Special thanks are also due to Rosemary Waller, Mark and Jan Volkert, the late Dr. Don Leake, Charles Meacham, Jeanie Chandler, and Jean Stevens. To the presidents of these organizations (because of lack of space I can mention only a few), my heartfelt thanks for their helpfulness and support: in Carmel, to Jo Barton, Davis Factor, Jr., Dr. Basil Allaire, the late Ted Durein and Ruth Fenton, Carlotta Mellon, Hugh Hannon, Ted Calhoun; and in Marin, Barry Boland, Ann Stephens, and Alfred Heller.

My late dear friend Norman Fromm invited me to lead the chamber music concert series at the Paul Masson vineyards in Saratoga. It was lots of fun; we had a good time. I cherish his memory.

I owe much to my critic friends, the late Alfred Frankenstein, Heuwell Tircuit and especially Robert Commanday, whose appreciative and constructive guidance was a source of inspiration over the years.

Surveying one's life work, one cannot help but be overcome by a sense of humility and agree with the sages, among them Plato, Cicero, Shakespeare and Schiller, that friendship is the most precious jewel in life. To name all those who gave me this gift throughout the many

decades of my life would be impossible. Some of them are not in this world anymore. I'd like to pay tribute to the memory of two dear friends from Budapest, György Farago, a young pianist, a genius of a musician, a victim of lung cancer at twenty-seven; and Eva Taub, a close friend, who was killed at the age of twenty by the Nazis. Friendship blossomed in America: Dr. Carl Parish and Dr. Charles R. Erdman of Princeton; Stuart Canin of New York; and in Carmel, Jephtha and Betty Wade, the late Ralph Linsley, James Schwabacher, Nancy and Bill Burkett, Leda Jelinek, Kenneth Ahrens, Winifred Chrisman, Robert and Betsy Sullivan, the late Dr. Mast Wolfson, Bruce Lamott, Kip Cranna, Christiane Edinger, Diane Thomas, Lee and Shirley Rosen, Emile Norman, James and Ann Paras, Ansel and Virginia Adams, Burt and Joan DeVisser, Seeley and Virginia Mudd, Dr. Arnold Manor, Bruce Dice, and Michael Becker.

As I mentioned in the biography, my Stanford years were an uninterrupted joy due to a great deal of sympathetic and kind attention from two Stanford presidents, E. Wallace Sterling and Richard Lyman. Fortunately, this trend continues even today because President Gerhard Casper is most responsive to artistic endeavors. Many members of the Stanford faculty and the community supported the orchestra, opera and the chamber music performances. In the course of events I made many lasting friendships, among them with the late Putnam Aldrich, the illustrious Baroque scholar to whom I am indebted for his guidance in Baroque style.

In closing, I would like to recall the words of that great musician, Franz Joseph Haydn, who at the end of his career collected his friends and the members of his household, and said to them: "Before God and man, I did my duty joyfully and cheerfully. May others do the same."

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