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LEON RUSSIANOFF: CLARINET PEDAGOGUE

The University of Oklahoma D.M.A. 1983

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GRADUATE COLLEGE

LEON RUSSIANOFF: CLARINET PEDAGOGUE

A DOCUMENT

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

BY

STEPHEN LEE CLARK

Norman, Oklahoma

1983

LEON RUSSIANOFF: CLARINET PEDAGOGUE

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife and daughter, Janet and Julie.

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The author would like to express his sincere appreciation to Leon Russianoff. Without his willingness to donate his valuable time, this study would have been virtually impossible.

The author would also like to express gratitude to Penelope Russianoff, Sylvia Russianoff, Alan Balter, Louis Bartolone, Frank Cohen, Larry Combs, Naomi Drucker, Stanley Drucker, F. Gerard Errante, Michael Getzin, Stephen Girko, Charles Neidich, and Michele Zukovsky for donating their time to be interviewed.

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LEON RUSSIANOFF: CLARINET PEDAGOGUE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the best indicators of a teacher's effectiveness is the degree of professional success attained by his students. Using this criterion, Leon Russianoff has to be considered one of the most effective and successful clarinet teachers in the world. Some of his notable former students include the following: the entire clarinet section of the New York Philharmonic--Stanley Drucker, Peter Simenauer, Michael Burgio, and Steve Freeman; Larry Combs, principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony; Frank Cohen, principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra; Michele Zukovsky, principal clarinetist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Stephen Girko, principal clarinetist of the Dallas Symphony; Richard Pickar, principal clarinetist of the Houston Symphony; Alan Balter, former principal clarinetist of the Atlanta Symphony, and now associate conductor of the Baltimore Symphony; Phil Fath, former principal clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony; Martin Zwick, former principal clarinetist of the Utah Symphony; James Smith, former

principal clarinetist of the Miami Symphony; Naomi Drucker, former principal clarinetist of the North Carolina Symphony; Edward Palanker, bass clarinetist of the Baltimore Symphony; Fred Hedling, bass clarinetist of the Minneapolis Symphony; Michael Borschel, bass clarinetist of the Vancouver Symphony; Charles Neidich, former Fullbright scholar at the Moscow State Conservatory in Russia and second prize winner of the 1982 Munich Clarinet Competition; Michael Getzin, clarinetist in the United States Army Band at Fort Meyer, Virginia and founder of Klar-Fest '81 at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.; Bob Wilber, famous jazz clarinetist; Jerome Bunke, producer, musical and educational director of Music Minus One; F. Gerard Errante, renowned avant-garde clarinetist; and Louis Bartolone, former principal clarinetist of the Milwaukee Symphony and solo clarinetist of the United States Military Academy Band at West Point, New York.

Russianoff's phenomenal success as a clarinet teacher warrants this detailed study of his life and work. It is believed that Russianoff's unique approach, which is designed to instill self-confidence and encourage individuality in his students, can benefit not only other clarinet teachers, but all teachers in general.

The primary research for this document is comprised of personal interviews with: Russianoff, his wife and daughter (who are also his former clarinet students), and eleven

of his notable former clarinet students. The invaluable information obtained from these interviews provides an insightful tracing of Russianoff's philosophical and methodological evolution, which spans nearly five decades of teaching.

The interviews also reveal paradoxical facts about Russianoff's life. For instance: (1) Russianoff attended the City College of New York in Manhattan--not one of the other more prestigiously renowned schools in the New York City area. (2) He majored in English and Sociology, and has never taken any college music courses. (3) Russianoff did not pursue any formal academic study beyond his Bachelor's degree. (4) And finally, Russianoff has never held a major or near major performing job on the clarinet.

Ironically, despite his lack of prestigious academic and performing credentials, Russianoff now teaches the clarinet (not English or Sociology) at a number of highly renowned schools and universities (including the Juilliard, and Manhattan Schools of Music), and is one of the most respected pedagogues in the clarinet world.

Procedures

The bulk of source material used for this study comes from primary sources. Undoubtedly, the most valuable and authoritative primary source for this study is Russianoff himself. The author conducted approximately twenty hours of

personal interviews with Russianoff at his week-end home in Sherman, Connecticut, at his clarinet studio in Manhattan, and at the author's home in Moore, Oklahoma. The latter interview was conducted during Russianoff's engagement as a clinician at the 1982 University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium. There were also several hours of interviews and follow-up questions conducted over long distance telephone.

Probably the second most valuable primary source for this study comes from the author's personal interview with Russianoff's wife, Penelope. Her interview was conducted at their home in Sherman, Connecticut.

The author's personal interview with Russianoff's daughter, Sylvia, was conducted at the Russianoff Wind Instruments Company in Manhattan. This interview, as in the case of all of the personal interviews conducted for the study, was done in complete privacy.

The eleven notable former Russianoff students interviewed for this study were: Alan Balter, Louis Bartolone, Frank Cohen, Larry Combs, Naomi Drucker (Mrs. Stanley Drucker), Stanley Drucker, F. Gerard Errante, Michael Getzin, Stephen Girko, Charles Neidich, and Michele Zukovsky.

Eight of the personal interviews of Russianoff's notable former students were conducted at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., during Clar-Fest '82. The remaining three interviews were conducted in locales

other than Washington, D.C. The personal interview with Stephen Girko was conducted at the author's home in Moore, Oklahoma, during Girko's engagement as a recitalist/clinician at the 1982 University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium. The personal interview with Frank Cohen took place in his hotel room in Oklahoma City, during his tour as principal clarinetist with the Cleveland Orchestra. And the personal interview with Louis Bartolone was conducted at his home in Cornwall-on-the Hudson, New York. (A list of the interview questions is contained in the appendix.)

Chapter II

THE BIOGRAPHY OF LEON RUSSIANOFF

His Early Years

Family Background

Leon Russianoff was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 19, 1916, the son of Jewish immigrants Sarah Ellman Russianoff and Isadore Russianoff. His father was born in Minsk, Russia, around 1885, the second eldest of five brothers. Around 1900, Isadore and his brothers fled the anti-semitic oppression of Russia to start new lives in the United States. After settling in a Jewish ghetto near Hester Street on the lower east side of Manhattan, Isadore finished high school and then completed a three-year course to become a licensed dentist.

> My father [and his brothers] followed the procedure of many of the Russian [Jewish] emigrants--they weren't emigrants, in a sense--they were refugees fleeing oppression. So they didn't emigrate; you sneaked out; you bought your way out; you bought your way out of the country. . . . He came over to this country like many of the Jews, penniless, having trudged through Europe and having crawled through border fortifications and barbed wire.[1]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

Russianoff remembers his father as a gentle, loving man who never struck him. He was never aggressive and was always the quiet one in the group. "My father never ever cursed, even so far as to say lousy . . . or stinks--he wouldn't say those [words]. He felt those were curse words."[1]

Russianoff's mother was born about 1888 in the village of Trembloa in the region of Galicia, which was then a part of Austria-Hungary. In an attempt to escape anti-semitic oppression, the Ellman family immigrated to New York City, much in the same fashion as Isadore Russianoff and his brothers.[2]

According to Leon Russianoff, his mother was a Victorian woman, who did not take to the disgraceful flapper craze of the 1920's.

> Lipstick was almost the mark of a harlot to my mother. Smoking, my God, anybody who smoked was a bum! Drinking [for] a woman--never heard of it! My mother was a puritan. . . . [She] spent her whole life being shocked at something or other.[3]

Russianoff described his mother's family characteristics as just the opposite of his father's family. The Ellmans were high strung, had high blood pressures, but were wonderful orators.

> My mother was a very strong, dominant, loving woman who did not have the gentleness of speech, or the gentleness of behavior. She was volatile, excitable, irascible, and unbelievably generous. . . . She had no feeling that life was important for her. The only thing that counted was her immediate family--husband, children, and the collateral [extended] family.[4]

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid.

Sarah had a habit of taking in relatives, "greenhorns" (newly-arrived Jewish immigrants), and other unfortunates. Leon's maternal grandfather, Phillip Ellman ("an orthodox Jew fanatic"), lived with them until his death; and his mother's younger sister, Rose Ellman, was raised and married in the Russianoff home. "Our house was always populated with somebody, always, that was not a member of the blood family." Sarah governed the whole extended family; she was the central-focus; and when she died, Russianoff's extended family "almost totally disentegrated."[1]

This strong, vocal, puritanical, loving and caring woman was finally consumed by her own generous nature. As Russianoff put it: ". . . doing for others, maybe that was the biggest self-gratification she got. But it was destructive, because the moment the people that needed her help either died or didn't need her help, she lost her grip on her mind."[2]

Childhood and Youth

At the age of five, Russianoff met with tragedy. While playing in the backyard with his older brother, George, young Leon was blinded in his left eye by a shot from his brother's BB gun. George had put a tin can on top of young Leon's head and had attempted, unsuccessfully, to shoot it off.[3] Ironically, Russianoff never seemed to feel that his

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid.

blindness was a handicap. Perhaps it was partially due to the fact that his younger brother, Richard, had suffered for several years with a bone disease called osteomyelitis, which confined him to bed for several years, unable to walk. In comparison to his younger brother's plight, Leon felt fortunate.[1]

As compensation for being Jewish, for having immigrants for parents, and for being blind in one eye, Russianoff tried to be the most daring, reckless kid on the block. One of the results of his over-exuberance was his propensity for breaking arms and legs while playing baseball, stickball, and football. Russianoff felt that he had to try harder to prove to the others that he was just as capable and acceptable as they were. "I was the smallest guy on my block's football team. As a result, I was the most reckless and wild, naturally--I had to make my mark."[2]

The 1930's

Early Musical Training

Russianoff's musical career began in a rather incongruous manner. In a 1978 magazine article he gives credit to his mother for being responsible for launching his musical career.

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

> Mom was the culture nut of all time. She knew for sure that a white shirt and a blue tie, a clean handkerchief, shined shoes, and impeccable fingernails, plus a fiddle would assure you of a successful life in America. And so she started a career of experiments to unearth my particular talent which she felt was waiting for her discovery. You cannot imagine the culture-dosages I received. Would you believe classical ballet? I danced the lead in 'To A Wild Rose' by McDowell. Elocution lessons? Of course. Then came the inevitable violin lessons which I detested. We went through piano, drums, xylophone, and finally [at the age of fourteen] the clarinet.[1]

In the same article Russianoff recounts about his first clarinet teacher, Dominic Tramontano.

> My first teacher was a wonderful, but elusive moving picture, vaudeville, and fiesta musician of Italian descent. He came to my house to give me lessons. I said he was elusive because very often he just didn't show up and it was always because he had a 'flat tire'. He must have blown twenty tires a year.
>
> He played [the] Albert system clarinet and used five reeds per annum. He scraped them with a dull razor blade and miraculously they always played for him. He was responsible for my first playing and drinking experience. He took me with him on his 'Italian-feast' jobs--three bucks for the day plus all the spaghetti you could down and all the vino you could swallow.[2]

The musical high-point of the fiesta was the evening concert where the band would inevitably play Italian opera overtures. "My greatest achievement was to play the cadenzas in 'Morning, Noon, and Night in Vienna', and 'The Poet and the Peasant'."[3]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days", The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 10.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

Not only did teacher and student play the Italian fiestas together, but Tramontano also got his prize student various other playing jobs--barmitzvahs, weddings, and dances, et cetera. "He thought I was a genius and I was really going to make it."[1]

This close relationship between student and teacher undoubtedly had a beneficial effect in Russianoff's maturation as a musician. Because of Tramontano, Russianoff gained invaluable performing experience that is very seldom available to fifteen and sixteen year old musicians. Perhaps the performance opportunities that Tramontano afforded Russianoff were his greatest contributions to Russianoff's musical growth.

In a 1974 article, Russianoff remembered Tramontano this way:

> . . . Basic, uncomplicated, open, direct, and simple. From him I learned how to play without too much in the way of complicated, theoretic, mystical detail. You stuck your horn in your mouth and blew. . . . I remember little of the specifics of his instruction except for his remarkable use of the razor blade. Without any apparent thought or even any aim he would scrape, SCRAPE, SCRAPE! and lo and behold; a perfectly balanced and playable reed; as if he had used all of our sophisticated devices . . . I did get from this lovely man a sense of music, of gaiety, warmth, love and enthusiasm.[2]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Leon Russianoff, "Confessions Of A Clarinet Teacher", The Clarinet, August, 1974, p. 7.

Study with Simeon Bellison

Around 1933, while Russianoff was in his senior year of high school, he won a scholarship from the Philharmonic Scholarship Fund. These scholarships enabled the recipients to study, for free, with the first chair players of the New York Philharmonic. Not only did this scholarship give Russianoff the opportunity to study with the world renowned clarinetist, Simeon Bellison, but it also provided him with free tickets to concerts at Carnegie Hall.

> Through the Philharmonic Scholarship Organization that we had, we got free tickets for the Sunday afternoon concerts at Carnegie Hall and the Philharmonic. I began to get a little more appreciative of a higher level music, symphonic music, and once in a while a recital.[1]

Bellison soon became Russianoff's idol.

> Bellison was our idol. It was inspiring just to be in his presence, the solo clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic. . . . He was a great man, a person of enormous personal dignity and charm, an unparalleled artist, interested, fair, and non-judgmental. Indeed, when you were with him you felt that you were in the presence of a great man.[2]

Russianoff remembers his lessons as an extremely nerve-racking experience. He never felt that he played well at any of his lessons.[3] Unfortunately, this negative feeling never left Russianoff, and eventually it led to his decision (about 1950) to end his professional playing career.

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days", The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 10.

[3]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

Undeniably, there was a marked contrast in the teaching style and ambience between Tramontano and Bellison. While studying with Tramontano, there was considerably less pressure. Russianoff took his lessons in his own home, and was, unquestionably, Tramontano's star pupil.

In contrast, study with Bellison was a serious, competitive undertaking. Russianoff was now a scholarship winner who had to maintain his reputation. He was just one talented student out of a large number of talented students--all competing for Bellison's attention and praise. Russianoff was now faced with the formidable task of pleasing, not the fiesta musician, but one of the world's greatest clarinetists.

> Bellison was like God. . . . He was always neat and clean and well-groomed. He was the epitome of respectable, kind of a refined sort of man. . . . He gave his lessons in a red satin robe. . . . He carried himself like he respected himself. He knew his own importance. And he spoke very carefully and very appropriately under all circumstances. . . . He was always quiet, reserved.[1]

It is quite easy to imagine how this imposing, God-like figure could intimidate as well as impress the young Russianoff.

Russianoff describes Bellison's teaching approach this way:

> . . . His special quality as a teacher was his ability to transmit to you his respect for the music. The emphasis was always on character, style, and phrasing. He left little to your imagination, however. Every nuance, every contrast, ritard, and accent was carefully marked in the part. . . . this approach did not particularly engender individuality and personality. . . .[2]

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

At times Bellison's regimented approach threatened Russianoff's individualistic personality. Bellison's programmed manner and style was in direct conflict to the free and reckless nature of Russianoff. While Russianoff respected Bellison immensely, he was never totally comfortable with Bellison's teaching approach. "His method of teaching interpretation, his first concern, was, I think now, arbitrary and rigid, although always in perfect taste."[1]

College Years

Upon graduation from high school in 1933, Russianoff enrolled at the City College of New York, located on the fringe of Harlem in Manhattan on 137th Street. At C.C.N.Y. he was able to pursue his college education at a minimal cost. The tuition was free for every student. In 1938, Russianoff graduated from C.C.N.Y. with a Bachelor's degree in English and Sociology.

During his course of study at C.C.N.Y., Russianoff did not take any music courses. Interestingly, to this date, he has not taken any music courses. "Basically my musical background is in playing and anything that I know about theory and harmony I've picked up on my own."[2]

Even though Russianoff did not pursue a music degree (or any music courses) at C.C.N.Y., he did continue his

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "Confessions Of A Clarinet Teacher", The Clarinet, August, 1974, p. 7.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

private clarinet studies with Bellison during this period. It was also at this time that Russianoff auditioned for and was accepted as a clarinetist with the National Orchestral Association directed by Leon Barzin. The National Orchestral Association was formed to give talented young musicians a chance to gain orchestral performing experience. ". . . Auditions were very difficult then. You did not have the advantage of the Xerox machine and your earliest auditions were almost completely sight reading. . . . "[1]

Early Clarinet Teaching Career

It was some time during Russianoff's college years (1933-38) that his clarinet teaching career began. Simeon Bellison initiated Russianoff's long and productive teaching career by referring two of his students, Jack Kreiselman and Martin Zwick, to Russianoff. Kreiselman later became the principal clarinetist of the Little Orchestra Society of New York and Zwick became the principal clarinetist of Utah Symphony Orchestra. It is quite evident, judging by Martin Zwick's comments, that Russianoff had a profound impact even as a beginning teacher:

> Like many others who have had the good fortune to be associated with you and Mr. Bellison, I have thought of you often and with gratitude for the generous help you provided with your teaching and friendship. It has not been possible to repay you directly, but since I

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days", The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 9.

> myself have been in a position now for a number of years to help aspiring musicians, I have tried to be as kind and helpful to the people who have come to me and in this way even the balance.[1]

Two more of Russianoff's earliest students should be mentioned here--Phil Fath and Stanley Drucker. Fath later became the principal clarinetist of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra and Drucker became the principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic.

Drucker began his clarinet studies with Russianoff in 1939 at the age of ten. He remembered the twenty-three year old Russianoff this way:

> . . . I think the most important thing that he bestowed was freedom and love; and the ability to stay out of the way in a certain way; to give you a head like you would give a wild horse when you're trying to ride him. He didn't lock you into a corner and insist that you only do things one way . . . [2]

Drucker's comments seem to suggest that Russianoff, as early as 1939, had not adopted the programmed, regimented approach of his mentor, Bellison. Even in his early twenties, Russianoff was already exercising his natural and philosophic muscles--encouraging freedom, individuality, creativity, and spontaneity. Russianoff allowed his teaching approach to be consistent with his nature, not as a Bellison facsimile, but as a Russianoff original.

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[1]Martin Zwick to Leon Russianoff, April 12, 1970, Personal Files of Leon Russianoff, New York City, New York.

[2]Stanley Drucker, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

The 1940's

The decade of the 1940's was a profound one in the life and career of Russianoff. It was in this decade that he married his first wife; performed the major part of his professional clarinet-playing career; and lost his father to a sudden heart attack.

First Marriage

Russianoff married his first wife, Alice Kahn, on August 14, 1940. At the time of their marriage, Alice had a job with a stock brokerage firm on Wall Street which paid fifteen dollars a week. Russianoff only had about five clarinet students at a fee of three dollars per lesson. So, out of financial necessity and a new marital responsibility, Russianoff actively increased the size of his teaching studio. His new marriage obligations also forced him to cease his clarinet studies with Bellison. However, they still remained friends, and periodically Russianoff would go back to Bellison for a lesson.

Russianoff's first affiliation with a school as a clarinet teacher was with the Third Street Settlement in Manhattan. Shortly afterward, he was hired to teach at The Contemporary Music School directed by Stephan Wolpe, a Schoenberg disciple. Distinguished graduates of the school include Gunther Schuller and Ralph Shapey. Russianoff's teaching career was gaining momentum.

In 1945, Russianoff's prestige and reputation as a clarinet teacher grew immensely. In this year his child prodigy, Stanley Drucker, became the principal clarinetist of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra at the age of sixteen. Drucker's astonishing feats were instrumental in exposing the twenty-nine year old Russianoff's teaching talent to public recognition. "I think that a lot of the confidence that people had in me as a teacher, or a desire to come to me [to study], was because they heard that Stanley studied with me. . . ."[1] Just three years later, at the age of nineteen, Drucker was to become the assistant principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic. He was the youngest person ever to become a member of that highly prestigious organization.

Russianoff still retained an interest in pursuing a career as a performing clarinetist. This interest led him to audition for the principal clarinet position of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, which he won.

Russianoff's Ballet Russe job was the hallmark of his clarinet playing career. He toured extensively throughout Europe for two years (1945-1946) with this orchestra. All the other playing experience he had had was of a part-time, free-lance nature.

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

During those two years with the ballet orchestra, Russianoff experienced an aggravating performance anxiety night after night. He never really could enjoy performing. "Everytime I got into the pit it was tense. . . . I didn't like it."[1]

In 1947, Russianoff returned to New York to resume his career as a full-time clarinet teacher and part-time, free-lancing musician. It was at this time that Russianoff rented his present studio located in the Times Square area of Manhattan.

Broadway Shows

It was in the years 1947-1950 that Russianoff pursued his playing career in Broadway Shows. "I have the record of eleven flop shows in a row on Broadway. Absolutely, when I went into a show [as a clarinetist] they closed it in three days. Eleven shows in six months is a lot. . . ."[2] Some of the shows that Russianoff recalls playing for were: Polanaise", "Rhapsody", "Seven Lively Arts", and "The Song of Norway". The latter constituted the only successful Broadway Show that Russianoff ever played for.[3]

In reminiscing about his career playing in Broadway Shows, Russianoff's recurring theme (a lack of self-confidence)

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[1]Ibid.

[2]WQXR-FM, "Great Teachers," September 6, 1981.

[3]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

emerged once more. "I would always run to grab the second chair, because there was less responsibility."[1] ". . . I played a lot, but that feeling of getting up and being totally transported and unaware of the audience never came to me easily."[2]

In addition to playing Broadway Shows, Russianoff's other noteworthy free-lancing experience consisted of performing for the famous modern dancers Fe Alf and Martha Graham. Russianoff performed "Duet for Clarinet and Dancer" by David Diamond with Fe Alf. He described it as "a very high-class thing", which required the clarinetist to stand on the outside wing of the stage as the dancer danced to his music.[3]

Russianoff's experience with Martha Graham was a very catastrophic event in his playing career. "Martha Graham is considered the greatest dancer, probably, that ever lived. She was the one who carried on the modern tradition of dancing, as distinguished from strict ballet. . . ."[4] Russianoff had a difficult time dealing with the asymmetrical meters in Graham's avant-garde music. "There wasn't one piece in 4/4 time, not one piece in 6/8 time. . . . I had no idea how to play 7/8. I had no training

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[1]Ibid.

[2]WQXR-FM, "Great Teachers," September 6, 1982.

[3]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

[4]Ibid.

at all. And that was one of the big nightmares of my life. . . . I really almost gave up playing from that point on [around 1950]."[1]

The 1950's

The decade of the 1950's was marked with numerous events which had profound effect on Russianoff's life and career. Russianoff adopted both of his children; Charles in 1950, and Sylvia in 1956. In 1952, his mother, Sarah, was committed to a mental hospital suffering from severe depression; she died three years later. In 1950, Russianoff studied with and shared his studio with the famous clarinetist and teacher Daniel Bonade. 1950 also marked Russianoff's decision to end his career as a performing clarinetist--devoting the rest of his life solely to clarinet teaching.

Decision To End His Playing Career

Russianoff's decision to end his clarinet playing career was not influenced by any singular event. His decision was a result of an evolution of events which began in his high school days when Russianoff noticed his lack of self-confidence in his clarinet playing during his lessons with Bellison. From that point on, Russianoff was never comfortable with the role of a clarinet performer.

Perhaps the most direct catalyst to Russianoff's decision to end his playing career was his catastrophic

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[1]Ibid.

experience with Martha Graham. However, there are other noteworthy reasons that did contribute to his decision. In 1950, the Russianoffs adopted their infant son, Charles. Shortly thereafter, the Russianoffs moved to the suburbs in Valley Stream, Long Island to pursue the great middle-class American dream.

Living in Valley Stream meant a much longer commuter train ride for Russianoff to and from his Manhattan studio. Since he had his new home and an infant son, his late night free-lancing activities had to be eliminated. Also, by increasing his teaching load, he could meet his increased financial obligations. Simple logistics dictated Russianoff's decision to end his clarinet playing career at this time.

Study with Daniel Bonade

The year 1950 also marked the last year of regular formal clarinet study for Russianoff. This study was with the famous Daniel Bonade, formerly the principal clarinetist with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Russianoff's clarinet study with Bonade was his final attempt at salvaging his clarinet performing career. Unfortunately, the thirty-four year old Russianoff and Bonade, who was in his fifties, were philosophically incompatible. "I had certain differences with him on politics. . . . I think he represented right and I represented left."[1]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

Russianoff described his own political philosophy this way:

> If I have to classify my thinking, I'm a left-wing humanist; with a lot of Marxist thinking going along and a lot of disillusionment as well, with what has happened to Marxism in the world. And as a result, I no longer see Russia as the hope of mankind, which I did when I was a young boy. But a lot of the Marxist thinking about what determines the action of nations stayed with me. I guess a lot of that comes from the fact that my parents--my father particularly, was a mild kind of a socialist. And his brothers were mild in everything that they did, so they were mild socialists.[1]

On the other hand, Bonade had been a "collaborationist" in France during the Nazi occupation of World War II.[2] He had collaborated with the same Nazis that had exterminated over six million Jews just a few years earlier. One can readily understand why this situation could be an uncomfortable one for a self-conscious, philosophically-minded Jew.

> I had that knack of avoiding confrontation. Very shy, very embarassed, very afraid of a scene, very afraid to communicate with anybody who I thought was at all more important than me, like a doctor or teacher or anything like that. A very scared person--all my life. The genesis of that, I think, comes from the 'Jewdom', the 'Jewness'. The idea that as a Jew I didn't want to make any waves. I would not create a scene, because I knew that it would not be safe. He's a terrible human being, or he's a terrible person, but he's a terrible, lousy Jew! . . . It was an attempt to really hide. . . . I was basically ashamed of everything. . . . It's interesting how much of this talk comes down to Jew stuff.[3]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 30, 1982.

[3]Ibid.

Obviously, Russianoff has had very strong feelings about his Jewishness all of his life, but especially at this time--just five years after the holocaust. Russianoff, realizing his potential lack of objectivity concerning Bonade, made this qualifying disclaimer:

> He was very nice to me. . . . Part of my judgement may be clouded by the fact that, politically, I thought he was really not on my side or the side of justice and right, you know, as I see it--that's very important to me.[1]

Ironically, Russianoff not only studied with Bonade for almost a year, but he also sublet his Times Square studio to Bonade for a couple of days a week during this same period.

In a 1974 magazine article, Russianoff described Bonade's approach this way:

> . . . [I] began to unlearn all the sacred and dearly held ideas I had so whole-heartedly and sometimes painfully absorbed from Mr. Bellison. . . . Fingers now were feather light--floating high up and gently down--weightless and noiseless. To 'pop' became the ubiquitous clarinetistic abomination to be avoided at all cost--no 'note' at all was better than one that 'popped' out. Clarinets came down dangerously close to the belly button, reeds got softer and meticulously balanced, Dutch rush became the most sought after plant in the whole botanical world. Ligatures were bent according to rule; Rose 40 Etudes became the clarinetists' Holy Bible, Rose 32 Etudes: the ultimate in study books. French Solo de Concours replaced Beethoven, Schubert, and Mozart--and France itself became the clarinet player's Mecca--a visit to the Buffet Factory was like a trip to Lourdes. . . .[2]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Leon Russianoff, "Confessions Of A Clarinet Teacher", The Clarinet, August, 1974, p. 7.

Unfortunately, there were too many insurmountable obstacles between Russianoff and Bonade for a healthy, successful student-teacher relationship. Russianoff perceived Bonade as a threat--a threat to his Jewishness and a threat to his highly held left-wing ideals. Perhaps the perceived threat that Bonade presented contributed the final telling blow to the already damaged and fragile self-image that Russianoff had for his own clarinet playing abilities. Russianoff's decision to end his playing career was inevitable. The sequence of events culminating in 1950 leaves little doubt to what Russianoff's conclusive decision would be: long-term lack of self-confidence as a performer; his disastrous performance of Martha Graham's avant-garde music; newly acquired financial and personal responsibilities with the adoption of his son and the purchase of his house; and finally, the uncomfortable student-teacher relationship with Bonade. It was a very painful decision that Russianoff regrets to this day:

> I don't tell this story to everybody, because to me it's painful to tell it. I have to say that I doubt myself, and that I'm not that good--I don't want anybody to know that.[1]
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> I've always had those feelings of insecurity. . . . I never felt that I had God-given talent; innate talent inside here that I think you should have enough of that to warrant being in music [performance].[2]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

> . . . I was always consumed with fear . . . I was always afraid of playing, afraid of making mistakes. I always felt that I was really not good enough--and so I was always afraid. I felt that to be a really great player, you ought to have an absolutely very strong talent. I didn't feel I had it. I still don't feel I have it. . . . I have average musical equipment.[1]
>
> . . . I thought I might make it on a modest level as a player. I would not be as comfortable and as happy and as natural doing it. I didn't want to spend my life under tension. . . . I've avoided failure by not trying.[2]

Ironically, this inferiority complex, which destroyed Russianoff's playing career, did not negatively effect his teaching career. Quite the contrary, it may have enhanced it. Naomi (Lewis) Drucker, one of his outstanding students during this period (1952-1957) recalls ". . . Russianoff helped me to build good confidence in my own abilities. That is still one of his outstanding contributions to his students."[3]

Influence of Simon Kovar

Simon Kovar was the second bassoonist of the New York Philharmonic for many years. He had a studio just across the hall from Russianoff's studio in Manhattan. Russianoff recalls that "every once in a while" he would go across the hall and take a lesson with Kovar. "He would give a lesson at the drop of a hat. If he saw a student anywhere within thirty feet, he would give them a lesson.

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

[3]Naomi Drucker, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

He taught everybody--anybody, any instrument; and many professional players came to him."[1]

Even though Russianoff never studied on a regular, prolonged basis with Simon Kovar, Kovar left an indelible impression on Russianoff. Many of Russianoff's teaching methods were originated by Kovar and later reshaped and adapted for the clarinet by Russianoff. "Not only was he [Kovar] the greatest bassoon teacher I have known, but he taught artist-players on all instruments. He helped me enormously and I have incorporated many of his ideas into my teaching philosophy."[2] Ironically, Russianoff gives more credit to Kovar (a bassoon teacher) for influencing his teaching philosophy and methodology than he does to his two prominent clarinet teachers, Bellison and Bonade.

The 1960's

The decade of the 1960's was an extremely tragic one for Russianoff. In 1963, his first wife, Alice, committed suicide after a guilt-ridden love affair with Russianoff's best friend and business partner. Alice's suicide left Russianoff in sole responsibility of his two adopted children, Charles age thirteen, and Sylvia age seven.

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days," The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 10.

Russianoff's extra burden of responsibility, plus his bouts with depression and anger over Alice's marital infidelity and subsequent suicide, did not effect his teaching success. Interestingly, this decade was perhaps the most productive portion of his teaching career. Some of his notable students of the sixties include: Larry Combs (1962-65), presently the principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony; Frank Cohen (1962-64), presently the principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra; Michele (Bloch) Zukovsky (1961-62), presently the principal clarinetist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Stephen Girko (1959-61 and 1965-67), presently the principal clarinetist with the Dallas Symphony; Alan Balter (1964), formerly the principal clarinetist of the Atlanta Symphony and presently the associate conductor of the Baltimore Symphony; F. Gerard Errante (1964-67), renowned avant-garde clarinetist; and Arlene (Weiss) Alda (mid-1960's), formerly the bass clarinetist of the Houston Symphony and presently the wife of Alan Alda--the famous star of television and movies.

Second Marriage

On November 2, 1966, Russianoff married his second wife, Penelope (Pearl) Polatschek. She grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, the daughter of Dr. Raymond Pearl, a famous biologist and geneticist at Johns Hopkins University. The famous newspaper man, H. L. Mencken (1880-1956) was one

of Pearl's best friends, and when Mencken's newspaper got involved in the famous Scope's "Monkey" Trial, Pearl was called in to testify as an expert witness. Another famous friend of Raymond Pearl's was the author Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951). Penelope remembers Lewis as their house guest on several occasions. Lewis even makes mention of Dr. Pearl in his book Arrowsmith.[1] Russianoff commented on the stark contrast of their family backgrounds this way:

> My ancestry, my traceable ancestry doesn't go back very far. Penelope, my wife, has an ancestry that probably goes back to Charlemagne. She traces her last American relative to about 1709 . . . She has a formidable geneology and it's recorded because [of] her father . . . His papers are now in the American Philosophical Association. . . . I would say Penny is the way she is because of her environment and the people that she met, the people that she lived with made her what she is--which is a very regal, confident person . . .[2]

Not only was Penelope a rich, regal, confident, influential socialite, but she was also a very well-educated one. Dr. Penelope Russianoff is now one of the nation's leading psychologists. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Michigan and her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Northwestern University

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[1]Penelope Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

in Chicago.[1]

Penelope Russianoff cites a definite connection between Russianoff's family background and his feelings of inferiority:

> I think he was brought up in an environment in which there was a lot of inferiority feelings--for being Jewish and for being short [5'7" according to People Magazine[2]] . . . he was from immigrant parents. They really didn't belong in this country--from their viewpoint--the sense of not belonging, except in his own household. . . . I think he always felt inferior when he wasn't in his own familial and familiar Jewish community--especially if he was with successful people who had more degrees and prestige, he felt inferior--he felt inferior a lot.[3]

Despite their enormously different backgrounds, their marriage has become a tremendously successful one. Russianoff writes in the Acknowledgments of his book: "Penny started it all. First my student, then my wife. She helped me to learn to like myself, so that I could love others. She opened my eyes to my own value and validity, and gave me the

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[1]Her recent book, Why Do I Think I Am Nothing Without A Man?, is currently a best seller. She has been interviewed about her book on "The Phil Donahue Show", "The Today Show", "The Merv Griffin Show", and "The Last Word". In 1978, Dr. Russianoff portrayed the role of Jill Clayburgh's psychologist in the movie "An Unmarried Woman"--the movie was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture.

[2]Michael Small, "What Does A Woman Need? Not To Depend Upon A Man, Says Penelope Russianoff." People, September 13, 1982, p. 75.

[3]Penelope Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

insight to find my tools for life and teaching: love, honesty, trust, and understanding."[1]

In like manner, Penelope credits Russianoff in her book:

> This book is dedicated to my husband, LEON RUSSIANOFF, who puts up with my insecurities and doubts, who discourages desperate dependency, and who lovingly supports my undependence, curiosity, exploration, and the risk-taking paths that my career of clinical psychology has continuously set before me.[2]

Another example of Russianoff's acknowledgment of Penny's enormous influence on his career is found in a 1978 magazine article:

> Since I married Penny there has been a profound change in my learning and teaching style as well as in my behavior as a social person. As you know, she is a great psychologist and she taught me to feel good about myself, and to feel worthwhile, and to be proud of being a clarinet teacher. Through her inspiration I went, in five years, from feeling like Casper Milquetoast to Napoleon. The learning and the teaching process starts from and grows with affection. Now I'm more into loving my students. We must enjoy our lessons . . . teaching must be a labor of love . . . The putdown must be replaced by the 'BRAVO'.[3]

Penelope stresses that her profound influence on Russianoff was not one-sided; they had a reciprocal influence on each other's psychology, resulting in the betterment of both of their careers:

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[1]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 1:ix.

[2]Penelope Russianoff, Ph.D., Why Do I Think I Am Nothing Without A Man? (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1982).

[3]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days," The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 10.

> He never recognized that his personality was one of the major teaching tools that he had; he never saw that. It was I who pointed that out to him . . . but he used to say . . . 'What am I going to tell people--I'm just a clarinet teacher!' He viewed that as inferior life work, and I was trying to tell him that that was an important life work. The most important thing was that whoever, who has ever known him and has been through a course of study with him, ends up with a lot more self-confidence in themselves as a person than they started out with. And that, you extrapolate to anything. I became much more confident [as his student and wife] and that extended to my life as a psychologist, and to my life as a therapist, and to my life as a social being. Once one gets the hang of that, it's easy to escalate it. I would say that one of the things that I've done in reciprocal influence of him is to get him to have more confidence in himself and his chosen professional role. He has much more come to realize the value of teaching than he ever did before. He also respects himself more, I think.[1]

Penelope Russianoff gives very convincing testimony, from the student's point of view, as to why Russianoff is such an extremely effective teacher:

> I felt almost immediately, shortly after I started studying with him, that there was something very unique and special about him, and extremely therapeutic . . . When Leon is with you as a teacher, nothing else is in his mind, absolutely nothing. He's totally concentrated on the student. He's enormously interested in, let's say, the curve of a person's little finger. . . . He makes each student think--that in Leon's eyes, 'I'm important!' He conveys that subliminally, and to a much less degree, verbally. But in his attitude, he conveys that. And I think all of his students . . . really felt this kind of feeling that there was something that he translated to them . . . That he really believed in them, that he had faith in their star, that he really felt that they were worth working with and he really seemed interested in making them play . . . He was an inspiration. I would go home and work like mad. I couldn't wait to go to the lessons. Why? Because

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[1]Penelope Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

> the intensity of his involvement with his students was more intense than anything I had ever experienced. He seemed so consumed with teaching me the clarinet![1]

Penelope further testifies:

> I think he has a special quality of loving that I've never seen in anybody else . . . He is certainly an extraordinary loving person . . . and an understanding person, and compassionate person--he is with everybody. . . . I just believe that if anybody's a natural born teacher--he is![2]

Perhaps Larry Combs (principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony) said it best:

> I think he [Russianoff] had a lot of these [psychological] qualities before. I'm glad he attributes it [positive reinforcement] to his wife, and think that is wonderful, but I think he had a lot of these qualities going for him before Penny. . . . Penny gave him a 'handle' to put on it.[3]

Other notable Russianoff students of the early sixties seem to offer similar observations. Michele Zukovsky (1961-62), presently principal clarinetist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, stated:

> He knows just what to tell each student. Every student he treats differently. He is an amazing psychiatrist and psychologist and an inspiration. . . . it's all so psychological, playing anyway. . . . He gave me courage, absolute courage, to do what I want to do. . . . With all due respect to Penny, I actually met [and studied with] Leon before he married Penny. . . . But it [his current approach] is all exactly what I went through. . . . Positive Reinforcement . . . [4]

Another Russianoff student, Frank Cohen (1962-64),

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

[3]Larry Combs, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[4]Michele Zukovsky, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1982.

presently principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra, recalled:

> He was sort of inspirational . . . He reinforced my already set life of music. . . . He built some sort of ego as a player. [He] made me feel like I could play. . . . I think his way with people is really critical. He makes you feel like you can be open with him, and he's your friend. You don't come out of there [the lesson] quaking in your boots--worried, upset. He was always positive--even in a critical way, he would sort of leave a positive taste. . . . I think he's just naturally good. . . . [He's] definitely not calculating. If he did study this aspect [psychology] of teaching, it's certainly well assimilated and it's not obvious. . . . [1]

One slightly differing opinion as to the degree of influence Penelope had on Russianoff's teaching approach was expressed by F. Gerard Errante, the renowned avant-garde clarinetist. Errante studied with Russianoff from 1964-67; this incompasses a period of time both before and after Russianoff's marriage to Penelope in 1966. Errante declared:

> I studied with him in the mid-sixties--what he does now is quite different. . . . I think it will be very apparent [in this study] that there's a very strong influence. And that this whole 'head' aspect to teaching is, in a large measure, Penny Russianoff's influence. . . . [2]

The 1970's

It was in the decade of the 1970's that Russianoff

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[1]Frank Cohen, personal interview, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, October 26, 1982.

[2]F. Gerard Errante, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 21, 1982.

learned to appreciate himself. This new self-esteem was brought about with great help from his second wife. He learned, to his great surprise, that he had a real talent for spontaneous public speaking--especially in a master class or lecture setting. He became an instant success as a guest lecturer at clarinet: clinics, conventions, workshops, and festivals.

Russianoff began his "rapid-fire energetic monologues"[1] at the 1972 International Clarinet Clinic at the University of Denver. His initial performance as a lecturer was such an overwhelming success that he was asked to be a guest lecturer-clinician at the 1973 I.C.C. the following year. As a matter of fact, the popular Russianoff was asked (and accepted) to lecture at every I.C.C. held at the University of Denver for the rest of the decade (1972-77 and 1979).

Evidence of Russianoff's increasing stature and prominence in the clarinet world during the 1970's is found in Mary Jungerman's article, "The International Clarinet Clinic":

> On Monday afternoon the convention was enlightened and entertained by Mr. Leon Russianoff in the first of his series of four 'Russianoff Hours'. In his inimitable style Mr. Russianoff alternately cajoled, scolded, praised, and threatened his listeners with his theories of teaching and playing.[2]

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[1]Marvin Livingood, "The 1977 International Clarinet Clinic," The Clarinet, Fall, 1977, p. 12.

[2]Mary Jungerman, "The International Clarinet Clinic," The Clarinet, December, 1974, p. 13.

Further evidence of Russianoff's success as a public speaker/clarinet celebrity is contained in a May, 1975 The Clarinet article: "Everyone has enjoyed the wit and fast-paced instruction at 'The Russianoff Hour' at the I.C.C. each summer.[1]

On the subject of Russianoff's speaking talent, Larry Combs commented:

> I think he has a very fine way of verbalizing what it is he thinks you ought to be doing. I was just amazed. We [Combs, Russianoff, Stanley Drucker, and Charles Neidich] were over today to P.B.S. [Public Broadcasting Service radio] for a series of interviews for a program that they are going to put together on the Clar-Fest ['82]. Leon was the first to be interviewed, and he was spectacular! I mean . . . it was almost as if he were reading from a script. Everything was so well thought out, and the sequence of what he said made so much sense, and was perfectly at ease--like he was interviewed every day on national radio. So, he is an impressive guy in that respect. He is a good talker. He has a 'gift for gab'.[2]

Perhaps one of the most significant of Russianoff's contributions to the clarinet world was his leadership in founding the International Clarinet Society in 1973:

> A brief history of the society was given and officers Leon Russianoff and Robert Schott were thanked for their contributions to the foundings of the Society.[3]

Not only was Russianoff instrumental in forming the

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[1]Dr. Lee Gibson (editor), "International Clarinet Clinic, August 11-15, 1975," The Clarinet, May, 1975, p. 22.

[2]Larry Combs, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[3]Alan E. Stanek, "Minutes of the 1978 Meeting of the International Clarinet Society," The Clarinet, Fall, 1978, p. 30.

new International Clarinet Society with Robert Schott, Ramon Kireilis, Lee Gibson, and others, but he was elected the Society's first Vice President in 1973; a post he held through 1976.

The 1980's

The new decade of the 1980's finds Russianoff more energetic and innovative than ever. Along with Michael Getzin, David Hite, Allen Sigel, and others, Russianoff helped found ClariNetwork International, Inc., which sponsored Clar-Fest '82, an international clarinet festival which was held at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., June 20-24, 1982.

At Clar-Fest '82 Russianoff's effervescent and entertaining speaking talent was again utilized and appreciated by the clarinet world. His self-effacing humor is always present in his public speaking and writing. For example, in his short biography written for an advertisement publicizing the faculty for Clar-Fest '82, he writes:

> Leon Russianoff, a New Yorker and student of Simeon Bellison and Daniel Bonade, has played ballet tours and Broadway shows. (In the "pit" orchestra field, he claims to hold the record for consecutive flops in one season.) Having given up playing for teaching, Leon is on the faculty of the Manhattan School, Juilliard, Brooklyn College, Queens College, and Catholic University. Among his former students are many clarinetists in orchestras around the world. (Other former Russianoff students include fifty assorted "doctor" clarinetists, twenty veterinarians, two movie stars and eight plumbers.)

> Clar-Fest '82 will present Leon in several of his inimitable masterclass performances.[1]

Russianoff's usage of humor is not confined just to his public speaking engagements and his writings. According to his wife, Penelope:

> . . . He's a comedian, a natural born comedian. One of the things that I love about my marriage is that there's never a day that goes by but that I'm not having my sides split with laughter at something that he's said, or some bit of behavior. He puts on a little show for me everyday, without trying, that's absolutely hilarious. . . .[2]

When asked to explain his success as a clarinet teacher, Russianoff modestly answered:

> Luck. I started to be a clarinet teacher. I was lucky to teach Stanley Drucker. I stuck to it. Luck governs life, anyhow, and I was lucky. . . . I don't think I would have been as happy as a performer as I am as a teacher. There's a satisfaction that I get because I'm with humanity . . . Penny says to me that I'm really practicing therapy. . . . I'm involved with my students; I love them. There are very few students in my whole career that I have not loved. . . . A teacher, really sometimes, has a great privilege of being able to affect a person's whole life, sometimes even change their life and lead a person from a life of total boredom and unpleasantness to a life of fulfillment. . . . But I'd still like to be a great player.[3]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "The Clar-Fest '82 Faculty--Leon Russianoff," ClariNetwork, April/May, 1982, p. 7.

[2]Penelope Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

[3]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

CHAPTER III

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND RELATED METHODOLOGY

General Philosophy

The fundamental thrust of Russianoff's philosophy of life is one of respect and encouragement for individuality (or one's freedom to express individuality); i.e., while exercising one's freedom of individuality, one should never be afraid to question or challenge tradition, legend, or the status quo. Moreover, one should consider challenging the status quo as one's duty and responsibility (especially as a creative performing artist). Numerous examples of this basic iconoclastic concept can be found in Russianoff's writings and lectures, for instance:

> I happen to be a total revolutionary. I try to be as revolutionary as I can. I try to see everything that exists, that's passed down by previous generations as probably false and harmful . . . I start from that premise. Every once in a while I come up with something that has validity. I find that one or two things my mother said to me had validity--not more . . . I really don't trust legends . . .[1]

Russianoff's statement regarding trust in tradition or legends is a very crucial part of his general philosophy

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[1]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium, Norman, Oklahoma, July 25, 1982.

and teaching philosophy. He believes that, historically, tradition and legends have been responsible for stifling the qualities of individuality and creativity that he cherishes so highly. Russianoff believes that the individual should be free to be himself, instead of spending his lifetime trying to uncomfortably conform to the pre-conceived mold that society and tradition have established for him.

In his Clarinet Method Russianoff wrote:

> Inflexible as it may appear to be on the surface, we must be rather self-directed, ignoring dogma, questioning editorial opinion, challenging the results of historical research, eyeing all printed musical directions with a healthy degree of skepticism. Despite popular opinion, the printed page is not 'the last word'; it is, in fact, often vague, misleading, and open to serious question and evaluation through personal analysis.[1]

In a similar vein, during a "Russianoff Hour" lecture session at the 1975 International Clarinet Clinic at the University of Denver, Russianoff issued this warning to teachers:

> Unless we realize, as teachers, modestly, what our limitations are--how gently we have to handle it [teaching responsibility], and how we have to question what we were taught, because I'm telling you we were taught a lot of nonsense. Because our teachers were taught a lot of nonsense and their teachers were taught a lot of nonsense and Moses was taught a lot of nonsense--go back as far as you want. If the man's got authority you believe him . . . Above all, don't trust any teacher who does not warn you not to trust him.[2]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 2:197.

[2]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, International Clarinet Clinic, Denver, Colorado, August 13, 1975.

A Guide To Rational Living

The above cited philosophy did not fully evolve in Russianoff's thinking and teaching until the midpoint of his teaching career in the mid-1960's. At this time, after his first wife's death and during his growing relationship and courtship with his second wife (Penelope), Russianoff began to reevaluate his whole approach to life and to his teaching. In his August, 1974 article, "Confessions of a Clarinet Teacher", Russianoff admits to a turning point in his thinking:

> At a sadly late stage of my professional life, I began to feel unhappy with myself; my self-esteem was very low--I think deservedly so--and I decided to re-examine every single thing I had been taught--to test them, to put everything I had so naively accepted as gospel to the one acid test. . . . I've been a very happy teacher since I found out I could change my directions. That I could question, that I could be inconsistent. After all, is not consistency in many instances a stubborn process of hanging on to notions and ideas whose worth either were never valid or did not at all meet the needs of new generations of clarinetists? I discovered that I could even come up with some exciting new possibilities. . . . That you the teacher genuinely 'respect' and 'trust' the student. That you the teacher must learn from your students, from your mutual struggle to overcome obstacles: technical, psychological, interpretational.[1]

Later, in the same article, Russianoff challenges the reader to "risk change": "My Exhortation: Exorcise the devils of Blind Faith and Unchallenged Tradition! Repent! Grow! Question and above all else, 'Risk Change!'"[2]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "Confessions of a Clarinet Teacher," The Clarinet, August, 1974, p. 8.

[2]Ibid.

Russianoff's re-examination and consequent metamorphosis mentioned above reflects the tremendous influence that A Guide To Rational Living had on him.

> If you would control your emotions and keep yourself from leading a self-downing, neurotic existence, you'd better discard the major irrational ideas that you (and millions of your fellow members of this society) developed early in life. These ideas, which once might have seemed appropriate (in view of your helpless state as an infant and child) mainly resulted from . . . the superstitions and prejudices inculcated in you by your parents; and the indoctrinations by the mass media of your culture.
>
> Although, as you grew older, you probably challenged and disputed your irrational premises to some extent, you also held on tenaciously and defensively to many of them, and have kept reindoctrinating yourself until the present. This repropagandizing--which unconsciously but forcefully goes on day after day--mainly serves to keep your original irrationalities alive, in spite of the devastating results which they continue to have. But by closely observing your beliefs and by making yourself fully aware of your reindoctrinating processes, you can learn to dispute and counter-attack the irrational ideas you now perpetuate.[1]

While discussing Albert Ellis, Ph.D. (Psychotherapy), one of the authors of A Guide To Rational Living, Russianoff commented:

> He's probably the most important psychological [literary] influence in my life. At this time of his life he's rated as--among the psychologists there's a poll taken of who are greatest psychologists of all time--he ranks third above Freud. And he's a very close friend of mine--as close as he can be to anybody. The only friend he really has is his work. . . . He never goes out--he does nothing but write and work, that's all he does. . . . He's a big influence.[2]

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[1]Albert Ellis, Ph.D., Robert A. Harper, Ph.D., A New Guide To Rational Living, (Hollywood, California: Wilshire Book Company, 1975), pp. 197-198.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, March 23, 1983.

Marxist Influence

Much of Russianoff's philosophy can be attributed to his insatiable interest in reading--especially literature dealing with philosophy, politics, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. His strong appetite for reading began in the late 1930's. It was during those years that Russianoff developed his extremely liberal, Marxist-Socialist political views. He was influenced a great deal by various writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

> I was always interested in reading. And I was always interested in political activity and in human beings, and in life and society, and organization of cities. . . . I think the reading I did made me a better human being, a more affectionate human being. . . .[1]
>
> Communism is an ideal; it's absolutely a great ideal for any humanistic person. Communism in working practice, in Russia, is a betrayal of the ideal, totally. And that was a hard thing for my generation to take. . . . the communists, and I affiliated myself on that side, that was a worker's fatherland that was going to be the hope of humanity. Music would be free. Art would be free. Women would be free. People would be free. That was a very, very, idealistic hope. And you hung on to that through all the indications that it wasn't working. . . .[2]

Lewis S. Feuer, in his introduction to the book Basic Writings On Politics and Philosophy Karl Marx and Friedrick Engels, wrote:

> The revolutionary intellectual of the thirties has been replaced by the managerial intellectual of the

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 29, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

> fifties, and with this change in social temper the philosophy of Karl Marx would by many persons be consigned to the museum of their youthful indiscretions. . . . Few will now deny that the communist movement, which invokes the name of Marx, has tarnished the ideal which inspired his work.[1]

When asked if the quotation by Feuer described him, Russianoff answered:

> . . . This is very true. . . . I've given up my feeling that there was a worker's paradise--I gave that up when Khrushchev was around. And so, we have no place that we can point to as saying this is what we're talking about. There's tremendous disillusionment, you know, but other people have given it up because they have become wealthy and life is very good for them and they've lost sight of the fact that part of being a human being, I think, is to be concerned with people that are less fortunate. . . . [Marx] was wrong, actually, you see, you must understand that Karl Marx made one prediction. His main prediction was that the plight of the working class would deteriorate--so much that by now the working class would be absolutely impoverished and revolutionary in spirit. Well, exactly the opposite really has happened--especially in the Western countries. Some of his predictions turned out to be wrong even though he claimed to have a history of or a science of society. If you have a science your predictions have to come true in order to validate your science.[2]

Erich Fromm

Perhaps one of the most significant literary influences on Russianoff's philosophy comes from Erich Fromm's Escape from Freedom. In his book, Fromm deals with the conflicting duality problem that exists in human nature--the longing for submission and the lust for power.

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[1]Lewis S. Feuer, ed., Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1959), p. ix.

[2]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, March 23, 1983.

> These are the outstanding questions that arise when we look at the human aspect of freedom, the longing for submission and the lust for power . . . Can freedom become a burden, too heavy for man to bear, something he tries to escape from? Why then is it that freedom is for many a cherished goal and for others a threat?
>
> Is there not also, perhaps, besides an innate desire for freedom, an instinctive wish for submission? If there is not, how can we account for the attraction which submission to a leader has for so many today? Is submission always to an overt authority, or is there also submission to internalized authorities, such as duty or conscience, to inner compulsions or to anonymous authorities like public opinion? Is there a hidden satisfaction in submitting, and what is its essence?[1]

Later in his book, Fromm defined positive freedom this way:

> . . . Positive freedom as the realization of the self implies the full affirmation of the uniqueness of the individual. . . .[2]
>
> Positive freedom also implies the principle that there is no higher power than this unique individual self, that man is the center and purpose of his life; that the growth and realization of man's individuality is an end that can never be subordinated to purposes which are supposed to have greater dignity. . . .[3]
>
> Positive freedom on the other hand is identical with the full realization of the individual's potentialities, together with his ability to live actively and spontaneously. . . .[4]

Russianoff strongly reflects Fromm's "positive freedom" concept with this frank statement:

> I don't believe that any one man, any one man ever, has all the knowledge in the world. That's why I don't believe in gurus; that's also why I don't believe in God or gods, or mentors, or I don't have a leader, I don't have a cult that I follow. You see, I'm handling it the tough way. The tough way is to handle freedom.

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[1] Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1941), p. 6.

[2] Ibid., p. 263. [3] Ibid., p. 265. [4] Ibid., p. 270.

> Freedom is hard to handle, because it's scary. A lot of guys who stay in the Army can't handle freedom . . . Given choices makes you make choices that are hard to make. And many people would rather have other people make the choices for them. Erich Fromm wrote that famous book called Escape From Freedom, and that deals with that particular topic. Freedom is tough to handle! That's why people want, the right-wing in this country, want to put themselves in strait jackets--that's easy, they're in strait jackets all the time, but they'd like to put the rest of us in the same strait jacket.[1]

The Student-Teacher Relationship

Perhaps the single most fundamental and valuable aspect of Russianoff's teaching is his ability to instill self-confidence in his students through his use of positive reinforcement. The use of positive reinforcement has always been a pervasive priority in his philosophy of teaching.

> I have a vendetta against any teacher who uses his authority to beat a student down. And I want to tell you that it's not uncommon . . . If I leave one person a little happier, more involved with music and don't make him neurotic, and unhappy, and unsure of himself--and incapacitate him from doing anything else in his life . . . [then I have succeeded] I don't want to have good clarinet players and sick people. I'd rather have healthy people and sick clarinet players.[2]

The renowned avant-garde clarinetist, F. Gerard Errante, added credence to Russianoff's positive reinforcement philosophy with this statement:

> The very positive thing about Leon's teaching is that he really is a dedicated individual and really cares

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[1]Leon Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, June 27, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, International Clarinet Clinic, Denver, Colorado, August 13, 1975.

> about his students--not so much only as clarinet players, but as people. . . . And once they feel comfortable with themselves as people, then they start growing. . . . It was always a feeling that this was someone who cared about me and this was someone who, even after a lesson, would think about what we did.[1]

Michele Zukovsky (principal clarinetist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic) gave a very convincing endorsement of Russianoff's ability to build his students' self-confidence through the use of positive reinforcement:

> I feel that he is my inspiration . . . he is the one who gives me faith in myself. He inspires me to play and inspires me to play a certain successful way. It's unbelievable! Really, the guy is incredible! . . . I have faith in only him to tell me . . . He knows just what to tell each student. Every student he treats differently. He is an amazing psychiatrist and psychologist and an inspiration.[2]

Larry Combs (principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony) offered another impressive testimonial to Russianoff's confidence building abilities:

> Leon is a very inspiring teacher and he has a knack for instilling confidence in players. I think he has a way of bringing out the best in a player. His methods are not one of a martinet. He is not tough on his students. He is always agreeable . . . The personality part of it is very important. Plus the fact that he genuinely cares about the outcome of each student. . . . he really becomes involved personally with each and every student that comes into his studio. I can tell from my own experience teaching that this is a hard thing to do, especially when you teach as much as he does. . . . Like I said, he is a very inspiring teacher. He really gets you to feel that you can do

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[1]F. Gerard Errante, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 21, 1982.

[2]Michele Zukovsky, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1982.

> something special! . . . I have great appreciation for what he did for me, at a period that I needed some inspiration and some impetus to keep going in the direction I was going. I think that that was very nicely provided by him.[1]

Another notable former Russianoff student, Frank Cohen (principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra), provided a humorously illustrative story which underscored Russianoff's commitment to his positive-reinforcement philosophy.

> I recall one instance where my mother used to drive me down--we lived outside of New York [Westchester County]. . . she'd drive to Leon's studio and come up with me and sit in the room there. And I remember playing something for Leon--I think it was the Nielsen Concerto. And he said 'EXCELLENT, terrific, terrific!' My mother said 'don't tell him it's good, he won't practice at all!' So, Leon says, 'Well, that's why I'm telling him it's good, I know no one's telling him that at home!'[2]

Cohen further elaborated:

> He influenced me more at that time [1962-64] as a human being, as a fine person one could emulate, desire to be like. . . . I think he's the greatest genius teaching today, or for that matter, for all time.[3]

Another former notable student, Naomi Drucker, contributed these comments on the subject:

> [He] helped me to build good confidence in my own abilities. That is still one of his outstanding contributions to his students. . . . [He is] a very special human being. He has great love for his students, for mankind in general. He is a humanitarian. He

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[1]Larry Combs, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[2]Frank Cohen, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[3]Ibid.

> possesses enormous knowledge of how to play the clarinet, and he gives of this information selflessly. . . . He teaches with good humor. . . . He is a non-hostile person and therefore achieves great results.[1]

Drucker dispells any notion that Russianoff utilizes some sort of cold, calculated, psychological mind-manipulation with this statement: "Any psychological aspects are really just a byproduct of his own personality. As a teacher of the clarinet, he really has the methods that are required to solve problems."[2]

Larry Combs' comments seem to reinforce Drucker's observation:

> . . . I think he has interest in the psychological part of teaching. His wife is a psychologist. I'm sure that he has given this a great deal of thought. . . I wouldn't be at all surprised if he were aware of these things. On the other hand, I think everything that he does is natural. It's not contrived, necessarily. He doesn't put on a show for you just to get certain results. His reactions are spontaneous and genuine.[3]

In a 1978 article Russianoff expounds upon the student-teacher relationship:

> The learning and the teaching process starts from and grows with affection. Now I'm more into loving my students. We must enjoy our lessons. When a student calls to cancel his lesson because he's not prepared, I tell him to come anyhow. These are often the very best lessons. Too many lessons, in my view, are prepared performances at which the teacher functions

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[1]Naomi Drucker, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Larry Combs, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

> as audience and general critic. An unprepared lesson gives you the time to attack some hidden problems. If I may sum up, teaching must be a 'labor of love'. . . . If you have contempt for your student--if you feel superior to him or her--if you are competitive with him--if you lay all the blame on him or her--if you encourage their natural impulse to accept guilt--you will probably exert a very negative and unhappy influence. I cannot deny that there are a few teachers that I know, who never encourage, never praise, never enthuse.[1]

Russianoff's philosophy about a lesson not being a prepared performance was echoed by several of his notable former students. For instance, Michael Getzin (founder of Klar-Fest '81 in Washington, D.C.) noted:

> He'd [Russianoff] put you through the paces, but he would not have a knife waiting if you made a mistake. His concept was that a lesson is to learn, a performance is to perform. . . . He doesn't look upon a lesson as a performance. If you're not prepared there's a reason for it. Either you didn't practice, or there was something hanging you up. And if there was a hang-up, he'd try to fix it.[2]

Naomi Drucker also echoed Russianoff's philosophy about a lesson not being a prepared performance:

> I always looked forward to lessons with Leon. It was the highlight of the week. Prepared or unprepared, I knew that he would understand what the situation was. He is a very flexible, understanding person who knows that life from week to week changes. I knew that he believed in my sincerity and in what I wanted to accomplish. If I hadn't been able to practice one week, it certainly was not because I just did not practice; it was because I could not practice. The lesson experience was a cooperative, you see, and in my teaching--I'm very successful as a teacher--I've picked up a lot of things of course from Leon's attitude. One of the

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days," The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 10.

[2]Michael Getzin, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1982.

> things I tell my students is that a lesson is not a performance. A lesson is where you learn; it is where you experiment and try things. And it is a cooperation between the teacher and the student . . . [1]

"The Inner Game" (Intellectual vs. Instinctual)

A direct statement made by Russianoff during a lecture at the 1975 International Clarinet Clinic leaves little doubt about the tremendous influence that W. Timothy Gallwey's book, The Inner Game of Tennis, had on him: "The Inner Game of Tennis crystalized what I have been thinking about for clarinet for a long time."[2]

In the introduction to his book Gallwey explains "the inner game".

> This is the game that takes place in the mind of the player, and it is played against such obstacles as lapses in concentration, nervousness, self-doubt, and self-condemnation. . . . The player of the inner game comes to value the art of relaxed concentration above all other skills; he discovers a true basis for self-confidence; and he learns that the secret to winning any game lies in not trying too hard. . . . It uses the so-called unconscious mind more than the deliberate 'self-conscious' mind . . . All that is needed is to unlearn those habits which interfere with it and then to just let it happen. . . . To explore the limitless potential with the human body is the quest of the Inner Game . . . [3]

This quotation from the preface of Russianoff's Clarinet Method strongly indicates his adoption of the inner

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[1]Naomi Drucker, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[2]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, International Clarinet Clinic, Denver, Colorado, August 13, 1975.

[3]W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Tennis (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1979), Introduction.

game concept:

> My intention is to help you travel from the 'thought-full' to the 'thought-less', from the self-conscious to the unconscious, from worrisome to carefree, from planned to spontaneous. . . . the mind (the 'thinking person' in us) thinks and reasons itself into total disaster. Instead, we must learn to trust our instincts and have faith in the human body to perform miracles of activities--intuitively, automatically, and wonderfully. . . . When you hold the belief that the reed, mouthpiece, and a perfect embouchure govern your development, then you hide the truth: the foundational importance of a positive self-image, trust in your instinctive responses, belief in your competency and perception, and pleasure in the learning process itself.[1]

In the Inner Game of Tennis, Gallwey refers to the mind as consisting of two selves--the self-conscious mind (Intellectual) and the unconscious mind (Instinctual).

> . . . within each player there are two 'selves'. One, the 'I', seems to give instructions; the other, 'myself', seems to perform the action. Then 'I' returns with an evaluation of the action. For clarity let's call the 'teller' Self 1 and the 'doer' Self 2. . . . the key to better tennis--or better anything--lies in improving the relationship between the conscious teller, Self 1, and the unconscious, automatic doer, Self 2.[2]

Russianoff undeniably adopts Gallwey's jargon and premise in his Clarinet Method:

> . . . the concept of working on your inner 'self' may appear to have nothing whatsoever to do with your goal of becoming a fine player. I cannot begin to tell you how very, very important that connection is. . . . This basic idea: that each of us is composed of two distinct 'selves'. The first I call 'I'--the director and programmer of our behavior and actions. The second

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[1]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 1:ix.

[2]W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Tennis, (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1979), p. 13.

> I call 'myself'--that part of us that does things, carries out orders. . . . This 'I--myself' duality is the basis for every command, directive, and ingraining technique in this book. The 'I' (programmer) issues that single, clear command--LISTEN TO THE INTONATION or WATCH YOUR FINGERS--and the 'myself' (your diaphragm, air, tongue, fingers, and so on) does the job quickly and efficiently.[1]

Specifically Related Methodology

Individuality

Russianoff's strongly held philosophical views on individuality are definitely represented in specifically related methodology described in his Clarinet Method:

> On your first reading of a new work, ignore all signs and symbols except for the notes themselves; if necessary, blank them out with 'white-out,' removable tape, or paper strips. From the notes alone, play the music as you sense it and feel it; rely on your musical instincts.
>
> For later readings, remove the tape or strips; accept and perform the music as written, carefully considering the validity of each interpretive sign and symbol. Compare your response to your first reading. Tentatively cross out marks that seem inappropriate; modify others; add reminders you may need. Then repeatedly practice each phrase until you ingrain the musical sense of its melody, rhythm, and harmony. Make your own editorial judgments as you go, feeling free to back away from any premature decisions and to reevaluate this spot and that.[2]

One of the most vivid manifestations of Russianoff honoring his students' individuality is his liberal attitude towards embouchures, and mouthpieces.

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[1]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 1:209.

[2]Ibid., p. 197-198.

> There is more than one way to skin a cat . . . There is no such thing as 'a right way'--double-lip embouchure isn't right, single-lip embouchure isn't right, the Kaspar mouthpiece isn't right. There's 'a way' that suits you and expresses you--subjecting yourself to some guidance that you respect and it respects you. . . . I think that when you give a student credit you say to him 'you too are a worthwhile human being, you have valid opinions, you are not just somebody here sitting here to take orders from me [the teacher]'. . . . You can get results without changing mouthpieces. You can get results without playing double-lip. You can get results if you let your body feel what you're going to do.[1]

Former Russianoff student Charles Neidich (former Fullbright scholar at the Moscow State Conservatory) supported Russianoff's remarks.

> He would never foist a pattern on someone. And that's why all of his students sound differently, they don't sound all the same. . . . Yet they all have a security about their playing, which may be unusual of other players. . . . I think he tries to get people more uninhibited. . . . my playing was different than a lot of other people's playing, but he always supported me in those terms [individuality]. . . . He was more interested in developing each student's musical awareness--so that the student would develop his own sound and his own approach to different pieces.[2]

Similar statements came from a multitude of notable former Russianoff students. For instance, Alan Balter (former principal clarinetist of the Atlanta Symphony) remarked:

> His approach is one of loosening up his students to allow them to feel freer to state their musical ideas--whatever they might be. He encourages people out of themselves--and that was my benefit too. . . . He's not trying to make students in his image. He's

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[1]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, International Clarinet Clinic, Denver, Colorado, August 13, 1975.

[2]Charles Neidich, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 24, 1982.

> not trying to mold musical personalities--he's trying to grow them. And I think, perhaps, that's his strongest point.[1]

Michael Getzin reflected Russianoff's philosophy and methodology concerning individuality with this declaration:

> I hear about all of these 'xerox copies' [students] that come from other teachers. There's only one way to play. There's some sort of absolute 'angelic concept' that must be strictly adhered to, which totally ruins any kind of individuality in somebody's playing. And I think that is a sin against the student, who I feel should be himself.[2]

During a master class session at Clar-Fest '82, Russianoff left no doubt about his philosophy-methodology concerning student individuality:

> I try to encourage uniqueness and individuality in the student. I don't feel I'm a good enough model to have everybody play just like me. I don't think that would be a good idea even if I were a good model--a great model . . . there are many different ways to slice the musical pie. . . . One of the things that I really try to do is to encourage each person to express himself as a unique individual in his music.[3]

Instinct or Sensory--"Imprinting"

In a 1976 article Russianoff wrote:

> When you learn to play anything, especially at the beginning of the process, you should do it by a series of specialized, simple, almost one-area commands. . . .

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[1]Alan Balter, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 23, 1982.

[2]Michael Getzin, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1982.

[3]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, Clar-Fest '82, Washington, D.C., June 23, 1982.

> I want you to be aware that you learn by being instinctive and by imitating.[1]

The learning techniques primarily utilized in Russianoff's Clarinet Method deal with an instinctual or sensory imprinting process ("The Inner Game") dealing mostly with Self 2--the unconscious, automatic doer.

> The heart of this book is its use of the learning technique--a specific action ('saying', 'singing', 'looking', 'thinking') which usually precedes actual playing.[2]
>
> In my experience the sensory approach (feeling, seeing, touching) is the most efficient way to master a basic skill. . . . [the] imprinting process--looking, listening, doing, repeating, touching, and so on--will affect all aspects of your playing. It is during the time before you play that you deal with thinking, analyzing, reading, concentrating, and understanding. But then, by the time you perform, the messages evoked by these preplaying activities must be fully absorbed into your subconscious.
>
> The act of playing involves total immersion in the music: doing, seeing, reacting, feeling. Once you are performing, it is too late for thinking. Indeed, thinking while playing generally takes the form of concern for past mistakes or of anticipation of future disasters. Avoid this distraction. Keep yourself in the here-and-now.[3]

Russianoff's remarks about the distractions of thinking about past mistakes or anticipating future disasters again indicates Russianoff's close allegiance to Gallwey's Inner Game concept:

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "I Want You To Play Music And Not To Read it," The Clarinet, III, No. 3 (May, 1976), pp. 10-11.

[2]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 1:xiii.

[3]Ibid., p. 5.

> [Self 1] He's supposed to be the teller, not the doer, but it seems he doesn't really trust [Self] 2 to do the job or else he wouldn't have to do all the work himself. This is the nub of the problem: Self 1 does not trust Self 2, even though the unconscious, automatic self is extremely competent. . . . By thinking too much and trying too hard, Self 1 has produced tension and muscle conflict in the body. He is responsible for the error, but he heaps the blame on Self 2 and then, by condemning it further, undermines his own confidence in Self 2.[1]

"Imprinting" Learning Techniques

The following examples from Russianoff's Clarinet Method are learning techniques that were specifically created by him, primarily utilizing the instinctual or sensory imprinting process ("The Inner Game"). These techniques strive to bolster the functions of Self 2, and at the same time block-out the meddlesome, self-conscious, worrisome nature of Self 1.

Count Aloud

According to Russianoff's Clarinet Method, "Count Aloud" is: "A directive that means 'count the passage in full voice, and in perfect time with a metronome.' This is the most helpful practicing device for building solid technique, secure rhythm, and a fine staccato."[2]

In another passage from his Clarinet Method, Russianoff explains the "counting aloud" learning technique which

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[1]W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Tennis (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1979), pp. 14-15.

[2]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 1:xvi.

reinforces Self 2--the intuitive, instinctive "doer":

> To build the skill of playing evenly, we will use the learning technique of counting aloud. As you move through the exercises that follow, remember that this book will not work for you, and that your progress will be slow, if you do not do the counting aloud meticulously, consistently, and in full voice. (Please do not delude yourself into thinking that this technique is elementary, useless, or somehow demeaning. You have total control to gain, and nothing to lose but an imaginary loss of dignity!) You will discover that the fluency, evenness, and sureness of your playing will vary in direct proportion to the fluency and accuracy with which you apply this learning technique at all your practice sessions. If you falter, hesitate, or stop to think or judge while counting, you most certainly will falter at exactly those places where the counting was unsure.
>
> In the pages to follow, we will test these assertions in the hope that the evidence of your own experience will convince you of their truth and value.
>
> Counting aloud is done just before you play and, if necessary, during the course of your playing practice. If you hear any unevenness while practicing, or stumble over a rhythm, stop and count the passage aloud. Remember that 'aloud' means aloud--not restrained, silently, and politely, but loud enough for a passerby to hear your clear voice on the other side of the studio door![1]

Example 1.

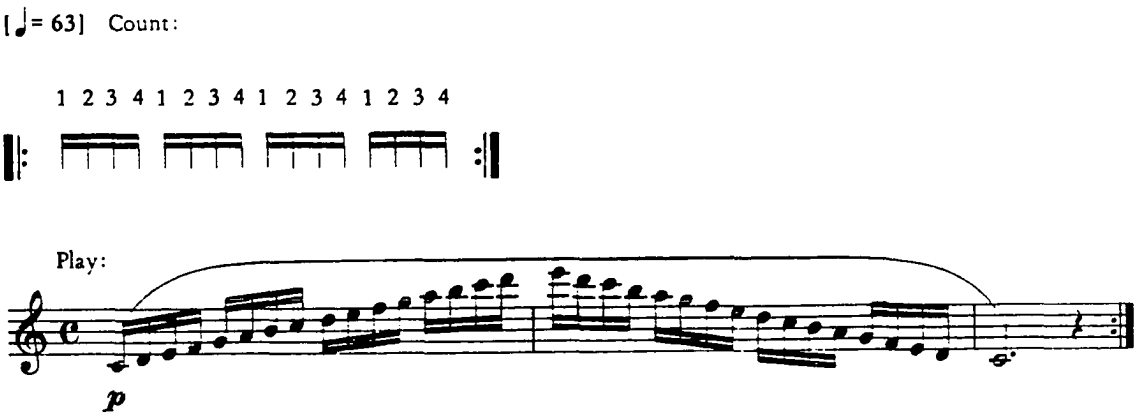
To prepare for the next example, pick up the clarinet.

finger the first note 

and practice counting with the instrument in your mouth so that you can start playing on time.

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[1]Ibid., pp. 55-56.



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"Sing 'Da'"

Another learning technique developed by Russianoff that is specifically related to the Inner Game concept is called "Sing 'Da'".

> The best way to learn to play notes with the musically appropriate length and strength is to sing them aloud before you play. Use your musical insight and interpretive sense: sing them as short or long, loud or soft, accented or restrained as you feel the music demands.
>
> By using the syllable da (a as in father) to sing articulated notes and figures, you will immediately accomplish two things: you will automatically set your entire tonguing apparatus into action, and exactly mimic the actions and motions that occur in your mouth when you play. . . . Singing 'da' shows your tongue exactly what it should do.
>
> As you practice these exercises, do not inhibit the action of your tongue [Self 2] by thinking about or consciously judging what it is doing. The simple act of singing da, setting up a responsive motion and placement of the tongue, will allow it to do its job efficiently and comfortably.[1]

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[1]Ibid., p. 24.

Example 2.

Sing "da" This tells you to sing the passage using the syllable *da* (*a* as in *father*). Unless otherwise specified, sing *da* at an ***mf*** level.

- The syllable *da* is sung as a "long" attack—that is, as long as is appropriate to the music's context and style.
- The *da̤* (note the dot over the *a*) is sung as a short staccato: sometimes extremely short, and clipped with the tongue; sometimes only relatively short, and not cut with the tongue.
- The long *da͡a*, *da͡a͡a*, *da͡a͡a͡a*, etc. (note the arch), represent two or more different, connected (slurred) notes. The syllable is sung smoothly, without any emphasis or accent. Maintain an absolutely steady flow of air for the duration of the sound.



The next four exercises, using "long" tonguing, contain varying sound-silence combinations. The tempo is ♩= 100.

Step 1: Breathe deeply. Feel your abdomen pushing forward and outward on the intake of air.

Step 2: Sing *da* for the full duration of the note value. To end the note, just stop blowing—let go of the sound. Do *not* cut off a note with your tongue.

Step 3: When you reach a rest (in all but the first exercise), rest and relax for the duration of the silence. Then repeat the exercise.



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"Look at your Fingers"

Regarding the importance of the function of the fingers in clarinet playing Russianoff writes:

> . . . the proper performance of music--creation of a clean, accurate, musical statement of the composer's notation--requires both an intelligent use of the fingers and an understanding of the importance of the fingers to all aspects of performing. Keep in mind that the rhythmically correct execution of the right notes is a function of the fingers; that intonation is a function of the fingers; the tone quality and timbral relationships are functions of the fingers; and that character, mood, and style are functions of the fingers.
>
> Consequently, one of our main goals is to discover the most efficient shape, position, energy, and motion of the fingers, and then to imprint these elements on our subconscious [Self 2], bypassing the 'thinking' process [Self 1].[1]
>
> . . . By holding, feeling, touching, and looking, allow your subconscious [Self 2] to imprint the total sensory picture:[2] finger energy, finger pressure, finger position.

To properly accomplish the imprinting of the subconscious [Self 2], Russianoff developed several exercises with these instructions:

> Before you play the next exercises, look at your fingers. 'LOOK' DOES NOT MEAN 'PLAY'! Watch your fingers move as you count aloud; insist that your fingers lift exactly on the proper count. Watch to see that

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[1]Ibid., p. 4. [2]Ibid., p. 6.

your fingers lift to about a half-inch above their respective tone holes, and remain curved and poised directly above those holes. When you go from the G^1 to any other pitch, be sure to keep the 1st finger of your right hand off the ring rod. Be sure that your fingers have a relaxed feeling, neither too heavy nor too light.[1]

Example 3.

The tempo is ♩=84. Move your fingers precisely on the count of 1.



*Numbers refer to this pitch order:



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[1]Ibid., p. 7.

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After playing the exercises Russianoff asks:

> Were your fingers rounded? Did you move exactly on the count? Did your knuckles collapse when your fingers dropped from C^1 to G^1? Did you lift too high? Too slowly? (Remember to lift exactly on the count, and allow the springs to lift the keys. Do not inhibit the springs by lifting your fingers too slowly.) Keep your fingers curved as you lift them. Do not lose the curve by flexing the first and/or second knuckle joint.[1]

"Tongue Cue"

This is the tongue cue:

> Using the top quarter-inch of the tip of your tongue, touch the reed about a half-inch from from its tip. Touching and tasting in this way, let your tongue linger on this spot for a few seconds. Repeat this action, touching lightly and feeling the reed's texture. By doing this, you are delivering an effective sensory message to the tongue: the intuitive feeling of where to go and what to do. Then, when you start to play, allow the tongue to find its spot by its own instinct, suggestion, and approximation. Rely fully on your preparatory, sensory, nonverbal 'message' (the da sound) to cause the tongue to function properly. (Thinking and conscious checking up on the tongue only complicate this very simple process.)[2]

While demonstrating the tongue cue technique with a student during a master class session at the 1982 University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium, Russianoff consistently reiterated the same Inner Game philosophy:

> I believe that you can learn by sensual or sensory feelings rather than by analytical detail. . . . Don't think of what you're doing; just trust your tongue. . . Your body can do a million great things if only you

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[1] Ibid., p. 8. [2] Ibid., p. 25.

> don't let your mind get in the way. The moment you start to think about what you're doing, how you're moving, you get all mixed up . . . While you're playing, just let it happen.[1]

"Blowing Without Playing"

Once again Russianoff utilizes the imprinting process as the basis for the learning technique "Blowing Without Playing".

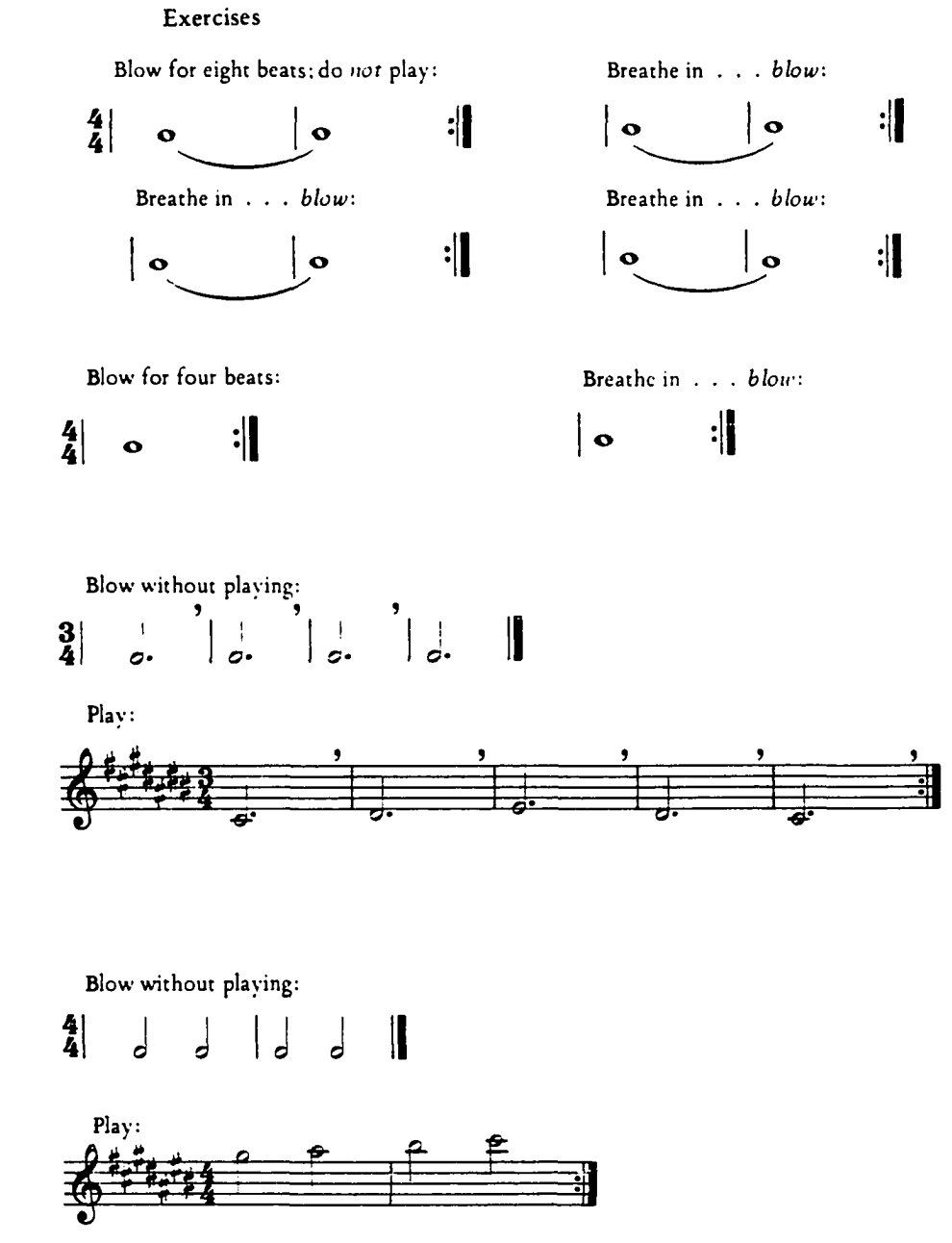
> Blowing on a woodwind is to that instrument what bowing is to a stringed instrument: the primary factor in tone production, articulation, control of dynamics, and overall playing style. Mastery of the clarinet requires mastery of the use of your airstream. You must know what your airstream is doing (observe it, feel it, and 'see' it)--but that can't be done while you play. This is the reason for the learning technique called 'blowing without playing.'
>
> This technique is an excellent way to improve every aspect of your tone production. Use it whenever you feel dissatisfied with your tone quality, troubled attack, plagued by careless articulation, and so on.
>
> Hold the palm of your hand three or four inches in front of your mouth. Breathe in deeply. Aim a steady, relaxed stream of air against an imaginary target in the center of your palm. Keep the air flowing. Support it. Feel its steadiness; don't let it falter or shift direction as you blow.
>
> Next, with your fingers, hold a three-inch square of paper against a wall, about four inches in front of your mouth. Now pin the paper to the wall by the steady pressure of your airstream, aimed at the center of the paper target. Remove your fingers. If your airstream is correctly aimed and supported, the paper will stick to the wall. But if the air shifts direction or somehow falters, the paper will fall to the floor.
>
> In both experiments, your success depends on strong diaphragm support. Use that same degree of support in the following 'blowing-without-playing' exercises.[2]

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[1]Leon Russianoff, taped lecture, University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium, Norman, Oklahoma, July 25, 1982.

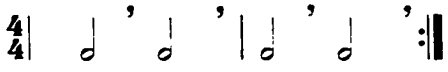
[2]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 1:38.

Example 4.


Exercises
Blow for eight beats; do *not* play:
Breathe in . . . *blow*:
Breathe in . . . *blow*:
Breathe in . . . *blow*:
Blow for four beats:
Breathe in . . . *blow*:
Blow without playing:
Play:
Blow without playing:
Play:

When there are several notes under one slur, maintain a steady airstream for the entire slurred group. Get the feeling that you are blowing a single, long note. Do not allow the airstream to pulsate or in any way indicate that notes are changing under the slur.

Blow without playing:



Play:



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Another example of the "Blowing Without Playing" learning technique is described by Russianoff:

> The capacity-expanding breathing exercise should be done before your practice session, and as often as possible during your normal, daily activities of walking, climbing stairs, daydreaming, reading, waiting for a train, riding a bus, and so on.
>
> Do this first breathing exercise in a time ratio of 1:1:1 for its three separate actions: an intake of air for four even counts . . . a 'hold' (pause without breathing) for four even counts . . . and a release of air for four even counts.
>
> Breathe in 2 3 4 . . . Hold 2 3 4 . . . Out 2 3 4
> Breathe in 2 3 4 . . . Hold 2 3 4 . . . Out 2 3 4
> Breathe in 2 3 4 . . . Hold 2 3 4 . . . Out 2 3 4
> Breathe in 2 3 4 . . . Hold 2 3 4 . . . Out 2 3 4
> Breathe in 2 3 4 . . . Hold 2 3 4 . . . Out 2 3 4
>
> As you breathe deeply, without raising your chest or shoulders, feel your lungs and abdomen expand. For maximum benefit, do this exercise five times each day.[1]

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[1] Ibid., p. 41

"Forget Everything You've Just Learned. Just Play."

"This means that you must stop thinking, forget all commands, forget this book [block-out Self 1]. What will replace all of that?: your direct experience as a performer [Self 2]."[1]

Remaining absolutely consistent with the Inner Game concept, Russianoff warns the performer against evaluating or judging (utilizing Self 1) during the performance.

> When you are on stage, don't evaluate or judge your playing. This is just as devastating to musical performance as taking your eye off the ball is to your golf or tennis game. Save your judgments for the practice room where they will do the most good. When you are on stage, forget all the problems you met and solved in your practicing and rehearsal sessions. Forget all the danger spots, all the difficult passages, all the technical pitfalls. Keep your eyes and ears on the very passage you are playing at that moment. Exist musically for that moment. Don't dwell on the past. Nothing counts but the essence of the phrase you are reading, the quality of the music you are making.
>
> At all times, play with energy, conviction, and with total attention. Avoid shyness or timidity; choose directness and strength over defensiveness. If you must, come in too strongly rather than too weakly or not at all. If you are going to make a mistake, let it be made with conviction. And be immune to the countless aural and visual distractions that would take you from your path. You must figuratively 'close your eyes' as you absorb yourself in the music of the moment.[2]

Russianoff's instructions to the performer can be directly correlated to this Gallwey quotation about "trusting thyself" (Self 2):

> There will be little hope of getting Self 1 and Self 2 together without developing trust between them. As

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[1]Ibid., pp. 78-79. [2]Ibid., 2:198-199.

> long as Self 1 is ignorant of the true capabilities of Self 2, he is likely to mistrust it. It is the mistrust of Self 2 which causes both the interference called 'trying too hard' and that of too much self-instruction. The first results in using too many muscles, the second in mental distraction and lack of concentration. Clearly, the new relationship to be established with ourselves must be based on the maxim 'Trust thyself.'
>
> What does 'Trust thyself' mean on the tennis court? It doesn't mean positive thinking--for example, expecting that you are going to hit an ace on every serve. Trusting your body in tennis means letting your body hit the ball. The key word is let. You trust in the competence of your body and its brain, and you let it swing the racket. Self 1 stays out of it. But though this is very simple, it does not mean that it is easy.
>
> In some ways the relationship between Self 1 and Self 2 is analogous to the relationship between parent and child. Some parents have a hard time letting their children do something when they believe that they themselves know better how it should be done. But the trusting and loving parent lets the child perform his own actions, even to the extent of making mistakes, because he trusts the child to learn from them.
>
> Letting it happen is not making it happen. It is not trying hard. It is not controlling your shots. These are all the actions of Self 1, who takes things into his own hands because he mistrusts Self 2.[1]

"Playing Without Stopping" is a specific exercise devised by Russianoff to help prepare the performer to successfully accomplish the "Forget Everything You've Just Learned. Just Play." directive. Russianoff explains:

> Playing without stopping is one of the more difficult habits to develop, especially in light of conventional training, which says, 'Never let a mistake go by uncorrected,' 'Be sure you play perfectly,' and 'Think hard, and try even harder.' In performance, however, you can never correct a mistake. Once it happens, it is there and no amount of second-guessing, regret, moaning (or whatever) will retrieve it at that performance. Practice sessions are for deep analysis, but concerts are for playing.

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[1]W. Timothy Gallwey, The Inner Game of Tennis (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1979), pp. 48-49.

> Although this is so obvious as to be a truism, few practice sessions include the most obvious preparation for the 'real' thing--a resolutely driven, no-holds-barred, beginning-to-end, nonstop performance.
>
> In this lesson, you will be given the tools to dissect, analyze, and correct potentially troublesome passages of the Rose study. But after you have gone through these analytical exercises, it is essential to issue a final command:
>
> I WILL PLAY THIS STUDY FROM BEGINNING TO END WITHOUT STOPPING, EXCEPT TO TAKE A BREATH, NO MATTER WHAT.
>
> 'No matter what' means that you will not stop for any correction, for squeaks, for poor articulation, for lost pitches--not even for smoke pouring in under your studio door! If you have to 'fake' so as not to lose a beat, then do just that. You must get to each new beat on time, missing as few notes as possible. If the piece lasts three minutes and thirty seconds in its correct performance tempo, then a supposedly nonstop performance of three minutes and thirty-five seconds must be considered unsuccessful. Once you're underway, don't stop to think, plan, wonder, check, worry, groan, or apologize to yourself. Do this at least once every day--no matter what! As extreme as this may sound, it is a direct route to your comfortable and rapid growth as a mature performing artist.[1]

Miscellaneous Techniques and Exercises

The following techniques and exercises from Russianoff's Clarinet Method are not necessarily linked, specifically, to the Inner Game approach. However, they are thought to be a valuable and significant part of Russianoff's teaching methodology.

The Backswing

This Russianoff technique was developed to improve legato finger movement.

The backswing in golf, tennis, and baseball is a

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[1]Leon Russianoff, Clarinet Method, 2 vols., (New York, N.Y.: Schirmer Books, 1982), 2:158.

graceful movement of the implement used away from the ball just preceding the forward stroke and its follow-through. We will do the same with our fingers: a graceful backswing rhythmically before putting a finger down. This motion will help your timing and relieve the tension that builds up while waiting to change notes.

The backswing must be practiced often so that it may soon become an unconscious habit. Above all, it must be done at the logical moment in order to be graceful and smooth.[1]

Example 5.

To illustrate this, slur from 

As you play, gently (but firmly and precisely) lift or backswing the left-hand B^2 finger on the "and" count of "2," and lower it exactly on the count of "3." The backswing symbol ↷ represents the trajectory of your graceful finger movement:



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"Beat-To-Beat"

The "beat-to-beat" technique helps to develop "the sound of smooth, flowing legato playing"--by "breaking down a long passage into connected groupings: beat one into beat two; beat two into beat three; and so on."[2]

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[1]Ibid., 1:79. [2]Ibid., p. 128.

Example 6.

In legato passages, the conventional notation for a passage of consecutive 16ths

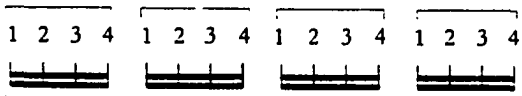


suggests that we play in separate groups of four 16ths. But had it been written

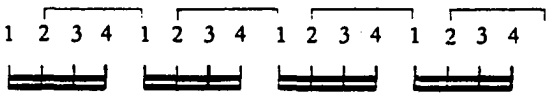


we would have a far clearer, more appropriate, and more musical "picture" of the sound of smooth, flowing legato playing.

Since the engraver's notation is not about to change to suit our needs, we can improve the idea and execution of legato playing *by aiming the flow of the first group* not to its last note



but *to the first 16th of the next group:*



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The Pyramid Study

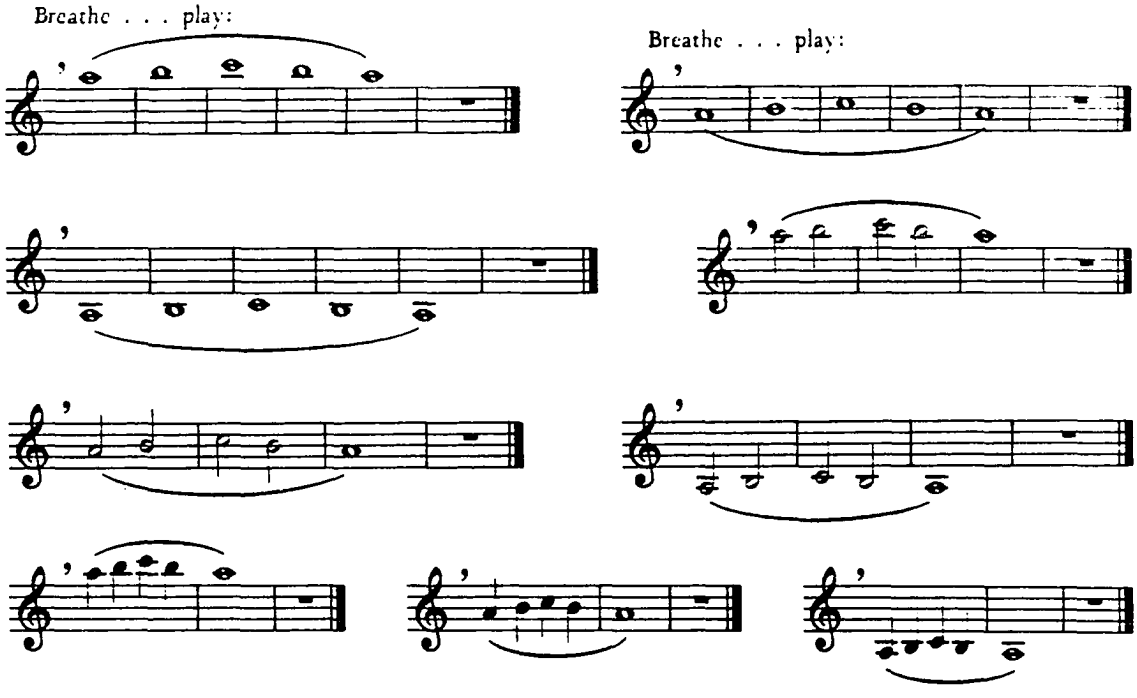
Russianoff recommends his Pyramid Study for daily practice as a means of tone development.

> The Pyramid Study is a tone study consisting of a three-note series played ascending and descending. The three notes follow a given interval sequence, such as 'starting note . . . half-step . . . half-step,' or, as in this first study, 'starting note . . . whole-step . . . half-step.' As usual, pay attention to your

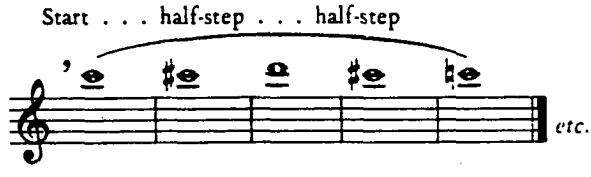
breathing before playing each exercise.

The Tone or Pyramid Study should be incorporated into your daily practice sessions, fully related to your breathing exercises as a standard practice discipline.[1]

Example 7.

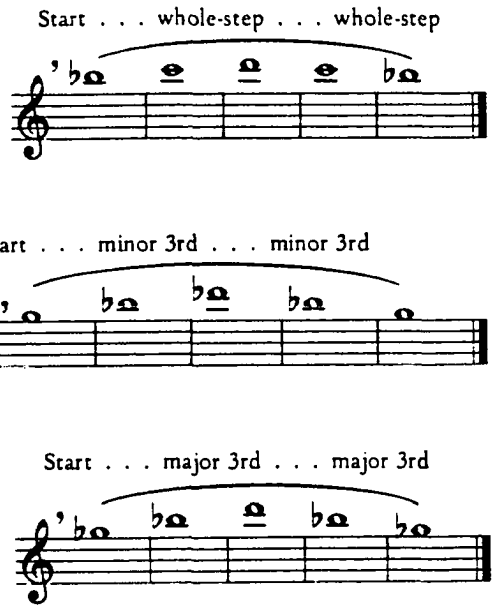


Other Interval Sequences



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[1]Ibid., p. 41.



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"Add-A-Note"

The "Add-A-Note" technique, as Russianoff explains, "is extremely helpful in learning a new fingering, improving an old one, working on staccato, ingraining a fixed-interval sequence (all minor thirds, for instance), and for 'grooving in' any difficult passage from the literature."[1]

> The 'add-a-note' drill is exactly what its name implies:
>
> 1. Select a sequence of intervals (scale, chord, etc.). Play the first two notes forwards and backwards.

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[1]Ibid., p. 157.

2. Add the next note of the sequence. Play these three notes forwards and backwards.

3. Continue adding notes until the sequence is completed.[1]

Example 8.



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Handling Wide Skips

With this technique the problem of the proper

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[1]Ibid.

execution of wide intervallic skips is alleviated by stretching and sustaining both notes of the wide skip.

> The possible difficulty here comes from a feeling of anxiety about making the high note of the interval. Because of this nervous feeling, we tend to rush for and, hence, spoil the connection.
>
> This tendency can be overcome by oversustaining the lower note of the wide interval. As you hold this note, aurally imagine (prehear) the upper note, then make the skip.[1]

Example 9.



Now hold D♯[2] for less time:



Play the whole phrase in tempo, stretching and sustaining both notes of the long skip.



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[1]Ibid., 2:124.

Picture Patterns of Scales and Chords

This technique is intended to improve sight-reading ability by developing one's visual perception and finger instinct.

> . . . it is essential to perceive a specific interval sequence as a unique visual unit or picture pattern. The recognition of and response to this pattern bypasses the slower and less efficient approach to music reading as a note-to-note process.[1]

Example 10.

THE CHROMATIC SCALE PICTURE

Repeat the passage below until you can play it by finger instinct, immediately induced by the sight and recognition of its particular picture pattern.

Breathe in . . . play:



The next exercise omits some of the notes in the chromatic passage. Allow your fingers to play the chromatic picture by an instinctive response to the slanted line which directs the fingers to continue the chromatic scale pattern.

[1]Ibid., p. 148

Breathe in . . . play:



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CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was initiated for the purpose of investigating and documenting the life and work of one of the world's most successful clarinet pedagogues. Many factors that contributed to Russianoff's success were carefully examined. Perhaps the most pertinent question asked in this study was "What do you think is the major reason for Russianoff's success? . . ." Several interview quotations provide some insight into Russianoff's special qualities and abilities.

Penelope Russianoff declared: "He's really an amateur psychologist. . . . one thing you can be sure [of] is that he is intensely interested in his students as people and as players."[1]

Former Russianoff student, Stephen Girko (principal clarinetist of the Dallas Symphony), lent his view of the Russianoff phenomenon with this observation concerning Russianoff's diagnostic and communicative skills: ". . . this man has the ability to somehow identify little things in

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[1]Penelope Russianoff, personal interview, Sherman, Connecticut, July 2, 1982.

different people, and communicate with them and get the most out of these people--regardless of who they are. That to me is a major gift--a major gift!"[1]

Russianoff's daughter, Sylvia (also his former clarinet student), pinpointed three very important reasons for her father's teaching success:

> One of his definite strong points is being able to [1] bolster a person's confidence and to kind of [2] diagnose what a person's problem is and be able to work on that problem . . . Instead of one set approach that he deals with for everybody, he kind of [3] individualizes. . . . he really thinks about every person and what that person needs . . . he encourages everybody to be who they are.[2]

When asked about Russianoff's normal weekly lesson regimen, Michael Getzin gave this picture of Russianoff's flexible, open-minded, experimental nature:

> He played everything by ear. He coped with every situation as it came in the door. Sometimes he would have an idea that he used one particular day and he tried it on everybody . . . He seems to be, sometimes, an experimenter. Like he'll experiment with a [new] concept that he has and everybody is doomed to try it when they come in the door. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, but it was tried.[3]

One striking similarity of opinions emerged from several different sources during the course of this study. Quoting Stanley Drucker:

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[1]Stephen Girko, personal interview, Moore, Oklahoma, July 23, 1982.

[2]Sylvia Russianoff, personal interview, New York City, New York, June 30, 1982.

[3]Michael Getzin, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 25, 1982.

> . . . As a teacher, he's definitely a star. Yes, he could teach anything, if he were trained to teach it and had the talent to teach it. No question about that. He knows how to teach. He knows how to listen. He's not a closed person when it comes to his students. . . . As a teacher . . . he's a professional teacher--not a player that's using teaching as an adjunct to make a few extra dollars. Most players grow up with the idea, 'Well, I play in a band or orchestra, and I'll give lessons'--without giving more thought to it than that. . . . He is to teaching what a great artist is to performing.[1]

Drucker's remarks about the advantages of Russianoff's non-player/professional teacher posture were also similarly expressed by others. Frank Cohen commented:

> Another reason why he's a great teacher is because he's not a player. He doesn't have his own ego to deal with in playing. He doesn't care if a student comes in and plays the . . . [heck] out of something that he can't play. But to a performer [performer/teacher] . . . it can be devastating to the ego . . . You know, you have a student that's been working on something five hours a day and in fact you've been doing your job and not paying any attention to what you've assigned them. They come in and play it and you want to be able to play just as well. Well, that's a real problem and you have to get around that if you want to be a really good teacher--not to be in competition with your students. And that, as far as Leon is concerned, is a prime attribute, because since he's not performing, he's not in competition with anybody. He's able to give of himself completely, never withholding any information for fear that somebody will surpass. I'm not saying that I do [withhold information], but I'm saying that that's happened with teachers and performers. I think this is the reason his mind is clear of all the crap that bogs students and teachers down.[2]

Alan Balter also made very similar remarks to this

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[1]Stanley Drucker, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 22, 1982.

[2]Frank Cohen, personal interview, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, October 26, 1982.

point:

> . . . [As a teacher] that kind of [performer's] feeling of self-importance is not necessary. In fact, maybe it gets in the way--maybe that's why many of the great players are not good teachers. I think they're two quite separate spheres and you do best what you love the most. And he might be able, in fact, to tell himself how to become 'the great player', but he just doesn't want it as much--I'm guessing. He doesn't devote that kind of energy to the actual mechanics of playing the clarinet--actually playing the thing. He would rather devote his knowledge, and his information, and his attitudes, and his personality, and his soul to teaching.[1]

F. Gerard Errante echoed these sentiments on the subject:

> Many teachers gain a clientele, so to speak, by the fact that they're fine artist-performers. They're the principal of such and such orchestra, or . . . Leon has not done that and I don't know how he really feels about never having 'made it' . . . as a performer. But some of the performer/teachers with whom I've studied or with whom I've had contact were not the finest teachers. And I guess that's for two reasons. One, that often what they do, they do intuitively and they haven't taken the time and the trouble to examine as thoroughly as Leon has done. And secondly, they're often more worried about their reed and their performance that they've got to do that night. . . . [teaching] is their way of making a little extra money.[2]

What is Russianoff regarded as by his students? As a surrogate father? A psychiatrist? A big brother? A best friend? A personal cheerleader? A philosophical leader? A spiritual leader? The following quotations are from the enormous bulk of letters and memorabilia obtained by the

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[1]Alan Balter, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 23, 1982.

[2]F. Gerard Errante, personal interview, Washington, D.C., June 21, 1982.

author from Russianoff's personal files. The quotations chosen here are highly representative of all the quotations from the hundreds of letters tediously perused by the author. They provide further documentation of Russianoff's special qualities and abilities as a teacher.

Former student Barbara Koostra wrote:

> I'm writing you to say simply--THANK YOU!!!! I learned so much from you at Aspen and Denver this summer and I want you to know how much I appreciate it. . . . You are genuinely interested in students and so positive in your approach to teaching them. . . . Since I've returned home from Colorado I've felt really positive about myself. . . . Thanks again for making my summer one I'll never forget.

A letter written by Sonia Higbee uses terms such as "enlightened" and "overwhelmed" to describe her study with Russianoff.

> . . . I feel very fortunate to be able to study with you. I've learned so much from you and I feel like I can still learn a great deal more. You are such a gifted teacher--you immediately spotted the things I needed help with and gave such helpful suggestions. I always feel so enlightened when I finish a lesson with you. I'm sure you're the one person in the world who can make a real professional clarinet player out of me. I'm still overwhelmed by the way you give so much of yourself so unselfishly to all of your students--no wonder they're all so crazy about you. I'm sure that those special qualities you possess will rub off on your students and, in turn, be passed on to others. You're a very special person and I'm very much looking forward to seeing and working with you again.[2]

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[1]Barbara Koostra to Leon Russianoff, October 5, 1975, Personal Files of Leon Russianoff, New York City, New York.

[2]Sonia Higbee to Leon Russianoff, October 3, 1976, Personal Files of Leon Russianoff, New York City, New York.

Former student Kathy Jones (principal clarinetist of the Puerto Rico Symphony) mentions Russianoff's ability to nurture individuality:

> . . . The confidence you gave me and general shove into the mainstream of clarinetistry were very important to me. I learned a tremendous amount and was terrifically inspired by your teaching. . . . You are really gifted with the ability to nurture each individual as a unique artist. In that you really are the greatest clarinet teacher in the world.[1]

In a letter to Russianoff, Michele Bloch (Zukovsky) impressively wrote:

> I will never be able to pay you for the wonderful things you have done for me.
>
> You are not only the best teacher that I ever ever had, but the most wonderful, great human being there is (and ever was).
>
> I love you for your ability to extend yourself and give to other beings. You make them feel great and play great. This is one of your secrets for being the most famous teacher in the country.[2]

Whether you call it paternal instinct or humanitarian gesture, one cannot deny Russianoff's caring and concern for his fellow man--not only in a philosophical sense, but in an activist sense.

One particular letter from Joseph W. Polisi (Dean of Faculty of the Manhattan School of Music) revealed more of the humanitarian and idealistic side of Russianoff.[3] "I

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[1]Kathy Jones to Leon Russianoff, September 27, 1981, Personal Files of Leon Russianoff, New York City, New York.

[2]Michele Bloch to Leon Russianoff, around 1964, Personal Files of Leon Russianoff, New York City, New York.

[3]Joseph W. Polisi to Leon Russianoff, May 12, 1981, Personal Files of Leon Russianoff, New York City, New York.

wanted to sincerely thank you for your generous support of the Andrew Goodman Prize. It is particularly important to commemorate the dedication and bravery of individuals who have lost their lives for a special cause."[1]

This study has unveiled an abundance of information about a remarkable man. Russianoff had to overcome a number of formidable obstacles on his way to success. Perhaps the most difficult was a pervasive, ego-sapping inferiority complex. Russianoff never believed that he had the innate talent required to be a first-rate performer. And this severe lack of self-confidence seriously impaired his willingness to risk the potential embarrassment of dealing with the high pressure of auditioning. Ironically, the single most fundamental and valuable aspect of Russianoff's teaching is his ability to instill self-confidence in his students through his use of positive reinforcement.

The 1963 suicide of his first wife appears to be a major turning point in Russianoff's battle with his feelings of inferiority. This traumatic event presented the jolting

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[1]The Andrew Goodman Prize that Polisi referred to was established by Russianoff in commemoration of his former clarinet student, Andrew Goodman. It is an annual $200 clarinet scholarship donated by Russianoff. Andrew Goodman had become involved in the civil rights movement and had gone to Philadelphia, Mississippi, with a fellow white New Yorker and a black civil rights worker from nearby Meridian, Mississippi. On the night of June 21, 1964, all three of them were murdered and buried inside an earthen dam by members of the Ku Klux Klan. It took the Federal Bureau of Investigation more than six weeks to find the bodies. In 1975, this horrible incident was made into a television docu-drama entitled, "Attack on Terror: The F.B.I. vs. the Ku Klux Klan."

catalyst for a reexamination and consequent metamorphosis in Russianoff's life. The undeniable importance of Penelope Russianoff's role in Leon's victory over his feelings of inferiority have been well-documented in this study and cannot be overstressed. She helped Russianoff to learn to love, respect, and appreciate himself. Gradually, he overcame all of the negative attitudes that had contributed to his perceived inferiority problem, i.e., being Jewish, being short, being blind in one eye, and having inferior academic credentials compared to his colleagues. All of these underlying feelings had fueled Russianoff's negative assessment about his abilities, importance, and career. " . . . she [Penelope] taught me to feel good about myself, to feel worthwhile, and to be proud of being a clarinet teacher."[1]

Several conclusions can be drawn and several lessons can be learned from the findings of this study. As an example, no matter how successful an individual appears to the general public, that individual may be severly suffering, inwardly, from feelings of inferiority. In Russianoff's case, there is no indication that his inferiority complex problem ever adversely affected his teaching. On the contrary, the antithesis may be true. From the evidence gathered from this study one could reasonably assume that Russianoff's lack of self-confidence made him more acutely aware of the

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[1]Leon Russianoff, "The Good Old Days," The Clarinet, Spring, 1978, p. 10.

enormous importance of positive reinforcement and building confidence in the student-teacher relationship. Russianoff's love, respect, enthusiasm, and endless energy was not wasted, but was totally directed towards his precious students.

It could be theorized that Russianoff subconsciously and vicariously views his students as his children. Russianoff and his first wife were unable to have children. This prompted the subsequent adoption of his son, Charles, and of his daughter, Sylvia. Furthermore, Russianoff has contributed monthly to the Foster Parents Plan for over thirty years. This may be an indication that Russianoff has substantial paternal instincts and a very strong sense of parental obligation and responsibility.

Russianoff has exercised profound influence over a significant number of outstanding musicians of this generation. He is admired and respected by his students for his intelligence, his honesty, his commitment, his idealism, his open-mindedness, and for his refreshingly witty and eccentric personality.

One cannot simplistically attribute Russianoff's astounding success as a clarinet teacher merely to his superior musical talent or to his teaching methods. Russianoff is an extremely complex and unique individual. The teaching materials that he incorporates are not extraordinary or unique--as a matter of fact, one might even call them

conventional. It is his unconventional application of his knowledge that is the true source of his greatness as a teacher.

Russianoff's insatiable appetite for fine and meaningful literature has greatly expanded his understanding of himself and his fellow human beings. It is his philosophy of life--his reverence for the sanctity of individuality--that warrants his students' admiration and unfailing allegiance to their mentor.

The evidence examined by this study leads one to the inevitable conclusion: that Russianoff is an extremely dedicated person with strongly held convictions. He has dedicated his life to making this world a better place--not only for his students, but for everyone.

Russianoff's Clarinet Method, which could be more appropriately entitled, "The Inner Game of Clarinet Playing" or "The Inner Game of Tennis Applied To The Clarinet", is a very significant accomplishment. However, his most important and lasting contribution (his legacy) will be the substantial number of former clarinet students that he has enlightened over his nearly five decades of teaching. Hopefully, Russianoff's students will be able to transmit his unique ideas to future generations of clarinetists, teachers, and fellow human beings.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Notable Former Russianoff Students

Interview Questions

1. What years did you study with Leon Russianoff?

2. How old were you? Were you in secondary school, college, or graduate school?

3. Who were your prominent clarinet teachers before Russianoff; after Russianoff?

4. What led you to seek Russianoff as your clarinet teacher?

5. Did you have any preconceived ideas about his teaching style before you studied with him?

6. After having studied with Russianoff, can you determine whether or not your preconceived ideas about him were correct?

7. In your opinion, what were your most positive gains from studying with Russianoff?

8. Were these gains a product of Russianoff's teaching strong points, or were they a result of your need and desire to improve those specific areas of your clarinet playing?

9. What special qualities does Russianoff have to offer as a teacher? What do you think is the major reason for Russianoff's success? Does he possess superior: personality, musical talent, technical methodology, command of verbal and nonverbal behavior, or a combination of all these factors?

10. Did Russianoff have a profound influence on your musicianship, your psychological approach to performing, or to your overall philosophy of life?

11. Was Russianoff dictatorial? In other words, was he ever insistent about you having to use his preferred "setup"--mouthpiece, reed, ligature, barrel, or clarinet? Was he insistent about you conforming to any preconceived "molds" of any kind--embouchure, hand position, tongue position, tonal concept, interpretation, etc.?

12. Did Russianoff realize and appreciate your individuality?

13. Can you recall Russianoff's normal weekly regimen--warm ups, scales and arpeggios, method books, orchestral excerpts, solo literature, chamber music literature, etc.?

14. In your estimation, did most of your lesson time consist of playing or talking? What percentage? Teacher percentage? Student percentage?

15. In a post-doctoral study in 1974 by Carlesta Henderson entitled, "Musical Accountability: The Measurement of Music Teacher Behaviors. Accentuating the Positive", Henderson found that "Teachers are usually aware of their verbal behavior, however, they may be grossly unaware of the enormous power of many nonverbal clues they express through gesture, facial expression, posture, vocal tone, outward demeanor, or more importantly, the inconsistencies between their paired verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal expressions convey attitudes and impressions which may affect the teaching-learning process . . ." Do you think Russianoff is aware of and in control of his nonverbal behavior? If so, would you consider this one of his attributes as a teacher?

16. Gordon Mehling did his dissertation in 1972 at Michigan State University entitled, "An Analysis of College Undergraduates and Music Teachers in Relation to Student Attitudes Toward Music." Mr. Mehling says: "College music teachers perceive the musical attitudes and needs of college undergraduates to be less positive than they actually are." Did you see any evidence of this attitude in Russianoff?

17. In another dissertation by Warren Lutz at the University of Illinois in 1963 entitled, "The Personality Characteristics and Experimental Backgrounds of Successful High School Instrumental Music Teachers", Mr. Lutz concludes that compared to unsuccessful teachers, successful teachers: " . . . were more capable of deep emotional response; . . . had a higher degree of emotional morale; worked harder for social approval; were less hostile; were more flexible; worried less; had broader interests; were happier and more self-satisfied; were more people-oriented; and were more self-confident with regard to their professional and personal lives." Could you equate any or all of these definitive descriptions of successful teachers to Russianoff?

18. Have you incorporated any of Russianoff's teaching traits into your own teaching methodology? If so, was it a conscious, deliberate decision to do so?

19. Earlier this year, WQXR-FM radio in New York broadcasted a show entitled, "Great Teachers" in which Robert Sherman asked Russianoff, "What makes a great teacher?" Leon answered this way. "As far as I really am concerned . . . I have to go with the field of psychology. The first thing you have to do is sort of love people and especially love your students and feel that they have something special to offer the musical world and special to offer you as a teacher which you can sort of throw back at them sometime later." Did Leon reflect this philosophy during your study with him?

20. Leon further states in the WQXR interview: "I'm not in the mainstream of so-called 'Great Teachers'. . . I know I'm not in the mainstream of the tradition of 'Great Teachers'. . . The biographies of the great artists, they will always evaluate their greatest teachers as the most punitive teachers; the ones who harassed them the most; the ones who scolded them the most; the ones who berated and insulted them the most. Well, that's just the opposite of where I'm at. I've been affected a lot by the work of my great wife. She's a movie star and a great writer. She has really influenced me in thinking about what they call positive reinforcement." Was Leon ever punitive or harassing to you?

21. Describe the feeling that you had traveling to your lesson. Were you ever fearful when you were not prepared?

22. How did Leon react to your non-preparedness?

23. Leon further states that, ". . . since I am not a great player--Stanley (Drucker) says I am the best eight-bar player he knows, but beyond that I get a little mixed up." How would you describe Leon's clarinet playing abilities?

24. The next question by Robert Sherman was: "So many great teachers are major performers, and you say that you are not a great player. If you are not a great player, why can't you adapt all of what you are teaching and tell yourself that you are going to give something to the world and be a great player?" Leon's response was: "Well, when I say I am not a great

player, it doesn't mean I am totally incompetent. I am a very, very good player. To be a really great player requires other things beyond the skills of playing, techniques of playing, even the feeling for music. To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina; requires a tremendous amount of confidence, which I am better able to give than to achieve. It requires even more than that. It requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather unpleasant abuse; to go through all these things with good cheer. And then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual." Do you agree with Leon's definition of a great player?

25. Does this (Leon's definition of a great player) describe you?

26. During the WQXR interview, Leon mentions that Stanley (Drucker) started studying with him at the age of ten or eleven. He said Stanley would go through "a method book a week" and that after every lesson, Leon would reward Stanley with a bottle of orange pop. Did Leon ever reward you with a bottle of orange pop?

27. In reference to a question about Simeon Bellison, who was one of Russianoff's teachers, Leon states that Bellison was a man of great dignity. He also said that "Bellison was into music, not the technique of music." Would you say that this statement appropriately describes Russianoff's teaching approach?

28. When people come up to me questioning me about my study, they will ask "Leon Russianoff? What's he like?" The quickest way I could describe Leon is to say that "He's sort of like a mature, sixty-five year old Woody Allen." Could you give me a concise one-liner description of Leon?

29. Do you have any final comments?

APPENDIX B

SELECTED INTERVIEWS

LARRY COMBS, NAOMI DRUCKER, STANLEY DRUCKER, AND MICHELE ZUKOVSKY

LARRY COMBS

Stephen Clark: Larry, what years did you study with Leon Russianoff?

Larry Combs: Well, it was during the time I was in the army, stationed at West Point in the U.S. Military Academy Band, which would have been 1962-65.

SC: How old were you?

LC: I was twenty-two when I arrived there, and twenty-five when I left.

SC: So you were in graduate school?

LC: Well, I have never attended a graduate school of any sort. The only degree I have is a Bachelor of Music Education (Eastman School of Music).

SC: Who were your prominent clarinet teachers before Russianoff?

LC: My only other teacher was Stan Hasty, and before that I had some instruction by my high school band director, and a fellow by the name of John Crawford who taught at Morris Harvey College in Charleston, West Virginia. But it was just for a short time. So really, Hasty is my major influence, I would say, teaching-wise.

SC: How about your teachers after Russianoff?

LC: I really didn't do any studying with anyone after that. I felt I learned a lot from playing with Harold Wright at the Marlboro Festival. I also feel I have gotten a lot out of my association that I had for a number of years at Northwestern with Bob Marcellus.

SC: How many years was that situation?

LC: About five years.

SC: What led you to seek Russianoff as your clarinet teacher?

LC: When I got to West Point I was very eager to keep my playing in good shape and to progress. I envisioned spending my tour of duty in the army preparing for doing something professionally when I got out. He was recommended to me by many people. He actually had quite a number of students from the West Point Band at that time.

SC: Was Louis Bartolone (Command Sergeant Major Retired; solo clarinetist of the USMA Band from 1950-1976) studying with him at that time?

LC: I think this was after Louis had worked with him. But out of a section of roughly--we must have had about sixteen clarinet players--about half of them were studying with Leon.

SC: Can you remember any names?

LC: That's rough; that's tough. Fred Hedling, who is now the bass clarinet player in the Minnesota Orchestra. Ron Dennis, who played for a while as the principal of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and is now a teacher of the Alexander method in New York. Charlie Boito, who is a very fine clarinetist who I have lost track of. Bob Wingert, who is a Marcellus pupil, and some of these I just don't know where they are. There are a number of guys.

SC: Was Richard Pickar (principal clarinetist of the Houston Symphony) in the USMA Band when you were?

LC: I think that's quite a bit before I was. I think he was already in Houston before I got there (West Point).

SC: Did you have any preconceived ideas about Russianoff's teaching style before you studied with him?

LC: Not at all. I had no idea of what to expect. I had not really discussed it with anyone. I had just gotten some very strong recommendations from some of my colleagues in the band.

SC: In your opinion, what were your most positive gains from studying with Russianoff?

LC: There are a number of things that I benefitted from in the experience. Leon is a very inspiring teacher and he has a knack for instilling confidence in players. I think he has a way of bringing out the best in a player. His methods are not one of a martinet. He is not tough on his students. He is always agreeable, and I think this is the approach that was good for me at the time. I very much wanted to work on

orchestral material, but he refused to do that on the basis that he had not that much experience as an orchestral player himself, which was a wise thing. And I had the opportunity to go through a lot of the etude material that I hadn't known with Hasty. Of course, with Hasty I covered lots of things, almost the whole standard etude literature. But Leon dug up other things I hadn't worked on and we did that and a lot of the solo literature. I think one thing that he gave me was a certain flare that I, perhaps, was a little bit weak on before that.

SC: Is that a psychological flare?

LC: No. It is actual, practical things that he had me work on that improved basic techniques. We worked a lot on legato, connections. At that time, I don't think he does this now, but he had a whole series of exercises that he would have everyone do. He would copy them out in a spiral manuscript book. The last time I talked to him about teaching he said he had abandoned all that, but I found some of those things really very valuable.

SC: So, basically, your most positive gains were kind of a Gestalt. Your gain was as a "whole clarinet player" and not any one specific thing, except what you described as "technical flare".

LC: Steve, he's a very musical guy, you know. He wouldn't allow one just to sit there and play the notes without having some life and some music-making going on too. On the other hand, there were things that I was guilty of doing, technically, under the guise of artistic freedom, that he managed to instill a little more discipline. So, it's a pretty wide-ranging approach as far as I was concerned. He suggested that I work with Stan Drucker on the orchestral repertoire, and I, of course, wanted to do this, but we never could seem to get together. Of course at that time he was extremely busy, well, I can certainly understand it, knowing my situation (Chicago Symphony) now.

SC: At this point in your career, when you first started studying with Russianoff, did you have an idea that you were going to make it to the top of the orchestral (clarinet) world?

LC: Well, this is what I definitely wanted to do. But I never had a great deal of confidence that this was going to happen. Really, what I was thinking of in those days was achieving some sort of playing job that I could manage to make a living even if I had to do quite a bit of teaching on

the side. But to have had my idea that I was going to end up as the principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony, no I wasn't thinking in those terms. I was just as pleased as could be to get the job in New Orleans when I got out of the Army. I thought that was really the ultimate in what I was going to be able to do. Things just progressed, and I happened to be at the right place at the right time a few times. . . .

SC: . . . Were these gains a product of Russianoff's teaching strong points, or were they a result of your need and desire to improve those specific areas of your clarinet playing?

LC: I think a little bit of both. I had a lot of desire to improve and I had the time to spend on it when I was in the Army. I was able to practice quite a bit, and I think Leon appreciated the fact that I was making progress and he was very helpful and took an interest in what I was doing. He was very encouraging and very stimulating, so . . . It was a whole lot of him and a little bit of me--and it just got rolling very nicely. You know the situation at West Point at that time was pretty good, musically. I don't know what it was like when you were there, but we had a chamber music series, and the band was good. There were lots of good players there. One really learned a lot just from sitting there and playing all those transcriptions. That does wonders for your technique. To sit there and play La Gazza Ladra and William Tell Overture . . .

SC: And fiddle parts.

LC: Yes. . . . you know, I am sure we complained about it at the time, but it was fairly decent being there. If you had to be in the Army, it was a pretty good place to have been.

SC: What special qualities does Russianoff have to offer as a teacher? What do you think is the major reason for Russianoff's success? Does he possess superior: personality, musical talent, technical methodology, command of verbal and nonverbal behavior, or a combination of all these factors?

LC: The personality part of it I think is important. Plus the fact that he genuinely cares about the outcome of each student. He is in it for the money--he makes his living doing that, but on top of that, he really becomes involved personally with each and every student that comes into his studio. I can tell from my own experience teaching that this is a hard thing to do, especially when you teach as

much as he does. I think that that's partly the key to his success. I think he has a very fine way of verbalizing what it is he thinks you ought to be doing. I was just amazed. We (Combs, Russianoff, Stanley Drucker, and Charles Neidich) were over today to P.B.S. (radio) for a series of interviews for a program that they are going to put together on the Clar-Fest '82. Leon was the first to be interviewed, and he was spectacular! I mean, it was almost as if he were reading from a script. Everything was so well thought out, and the sequence of what he said made so much sense, and was perfectly at ease--like he was interviewed every day on national radio. So, he is an impressive guy in that respect. He is a good talker. He has a "gift for gab". Like I said, he is a very inspiring teacher. He really gets you to feel that you can do something special!

SC: Did you have that feeling before?

LC: Well, Hasty wasn't so bad in that respect either. . . .

SC: . . . Did Russianoff have a profound influence on your musicianship, your psychological approach to performing, or to your overall philosophy of life?

LC: I think a lot of that was already . . . you know, I came to him late; I was twenty-two or twenty-three years old. I think part of that was pretty well set and formed. I think that what he tended to do, and I said this before, he tended to bring out the best and to encourage what was already going pretty well to be better. I think that is a lot of his approach; it's on the positive side. He would rarely say "you are doing and should not be doing it." He would say, "you are doing this well, just keep at it and do it better." I don't recall that I had the feeling that the work I did with him changed anything. And you know this is important because some teachers, some really good teachers have a habit, in some cases a bad habit, of whatever kind of student comes into their studio--they change everything! They change the embouchure; they change the equipment simply because that is what they are accustomed to. Leon is not like that. If you are playing on a crystal mouthpiece and La Voz reeds, and you are making it go, he is not going to fool around with you (your clarinet equipment).

SC: You're sort of anticipating my next question in a logical sequence. Was Russianoff dictatorial? In other words, was he ever insistent about you having to use his preferred "setup": mouthpiece, reed, ligature, barrel, or clarinet? Was he insistent about you conforming to any preconceived "molds" of any kind: embouchure, hand position, tongue position, tonal concept, interpretation, etc.?

LC: No. No. Well, like I say, I was pretty well on the way to doing things the way I am going to be doing them. I'm not saying he never does this. I'm sure he does this in a remedial way, if it's necessary. But I didn't get the feeling that we had to do a lot of remedial work. It's hard to remember. It's been a long time. . . .

SC: . . . Did Russianoff realize and appreciate your individuality?

LC: I think so. I think so. (pause) He would get after me to do this and to do that. I am not saying he would just "laissez-faire" that whatever I wanted to do was okay. But my memories of the lessons that I had were all very positive. I think this is what Leon wants to do. He used to kind of ride me about certain things, because I was very wrapped up into sound. I was really trying to make a specific sound. He used to call me the "Sound Man". (laughs) I was also kooky about intonation. I would spend hours putting tape in this hole, tape in that hole. He would also call me the "Tape Man". (laughs) . . .

SC: . . . Can you recall Russianoff's normal weekly regimen--warmups, scales and arpeggios, method books, orchestral excerpts, solo literature, chamber music literature, etc.?

LC: We did the Baermann Scales (Book III). We did his little warm-up exercises--the exercises which he claims he doesn't use any more. We did his version of scales in various rhythms. I did things with him like the (Frederick) Thurston Studies, Cavallini Caprices, things like that that I just hadn't gotten around to doing before. He was interested in recital and concerto repertoire.

SC: But not many orchestral excerpts?

LC: For some reason, he wasn't interested in doing that. He would always say, "We'll prepare a couple", and we never seemed to get to them.

SC: It seems a little bit strange, or inconsistent, that a man who has a lot of ex-students out in symphony orchestras in this country (and all over the world) did not spend very much time on orchestral excerpts.

LC: Am I the only person that has said that?

SC: Well, you are the only one that has come out and been that adamant, that specific.

LC: I just recall him once saying that he didn't want to teach that, because he didn't feel strong in that department at that time.

SC: Okay. In your estimation, did most of your lesson time consist of playing or talking?

LC: Playing. Playing and Playing and Playing, until I thought my lip was going to fall off.

SC: Could you give me a percentage?

LC: (laughs) Percentage? I bet I was playing sixty percent of the time. That's a lot. You know, out of an hour, you are playing forty minutes--something like that.

SC: And when there was talking, what percentage of talking was done by the teacher and what percentage was done by the student?

LC: Leon likes to talk and he talks a lot. But he is not the kind of teacher that prevents his student responding, and there are teachers like that. So, if something occurred to me, or if I wanted to ask something or offer an opinion, then it certainly would have been okay, as I recall.

SC: In a post-doctoral study in 1974 by Carlesta Henderson entitled, "Musical Accountability: The Measurement of Music Teacher Behaviors. Accentuating the Positive", Henderson found that "Teachers are usually aware of their verbal behavior, however, they may be grossly unaware of the enormous power of many nonverbal clues they express through gesture, facial expression, posture, vocal tone, outward demeanor, or more importantly, the inconsistencies between their paired verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal expressions convey attitudes and impressions which may affect the teaching-learning process . . ." Do you think Russianoff is aware of and in control of his nonverbal behavior? If so, would you consider this one of his attributes as a teacher?

LC: Well, you know, I think he has interest in the psychological part of teaching. His wife is a psychologist (Ph.D.). I'm sure that he has given this a great deal of thought. I'm not sure, but I suspect that he has given this a great deal of thought. I wouldn't be at all surprised if he were aware of these things. On the other hand, I think everything that he does is natural. It's not contrived, necessarily. He doesn't put on a show for you just to get certain results. His reactions are spontaneous and genuine.

SC: Gordon Mehling did his dissertation in 1972 at Michigan State University entitled, "An Analysis of College Undergraduates and Music Teachers in Relation to Student Attitudes Toward Music." Mr. Mehling says: "College music teachers perceive the musical attitudes and needs of college undergraduates to be less positive than they actually are." Did you see any evidence of this attitude in Russianoff?

LC: I just don't think I understand the premise (of the question).

SC: Did Russianoff ever feel that your attitude was more negative, about your own playing or your goals, than you actually felt?

LC: No. I don't think that would have applied to me. When it comes to the clarinet, I have never had a negative attitude. I have always thought I was pretty good and had something to offer. I have always been real gung-ho and worked hard. No, I just don't think it's applicable in my case.

SC: Did you ever think that Leon thought that maybe your attitude was negative towards him as a teacher?

LC: No.

SC: I think that's what the Mehling study reflects--some insecurity on the part of college teachers. They may feel that their students aren't as happy with them.

LC: Perhaps, but this just doesn't have anything to do with the situation between Leon and me. . . .

SC: . . . In another dissertation, by Warren Lutz at the University of Illinois in 1963 entitled, "The Personality Characteristics and Experimental Backgrounds of Successful High School Instrumental Music Teachers", Mr. Lutz concludes that compared to unsuccessful teachers, successful teachers: ". . . were more capable of deep emotional response; . . . had a higher degree of emotional morale; worked harder for social approval; were less hostile; were more flexible; worried less; had broader interests; were happier and more self-satisfied; were more people-oriented; and were more self-confident with regard to their professional and personal lives." Could you equate any or all of these definitive descriptions of successful teachers to Russianoff?

LC: It seems to really correlate to him, I'm sure. All that stuff applies to him.

SC: Earlier this year, WQXR-FM radio in New York broadcasted a show entitled, "Great Teachers" in which Robert Sherman asked Russianoff, "What makes a great teacher?" Leon answered this way: "As far as I really am concerned . . . I have to go with the field of psychology. The first thing you have to do is sort of love people and especially love your students and feel that they have something special to offer the musical world and special to offer you as a teacher which you can sort of throw back at them sometime later." Did Leon reflect this philosophy during your study with him?

LC: Not specifically, but I think one got feelings like that. Sure, there's no doubt about it.

SC: Leon further states in the WQXR interview: "I'm not in the mainstream of so-called 'Great Teachers' . . . I know I'm not in the mainstream of the tradition of 'Great Teachers' . . . The biographies of the great artists, they will always evaluate their greatest teachers as the most punitive teachers, the ones who harassed them the most, the ones who scolded them the most, the ones who berated and insulted them the most. Well, that's just the opposite of where I'm at. I've been affected a lot by the work of my great wife. She's a movie star and a great writer. She has really influenced me in thinking about what they call positive reinforcement." Was Leon ever punitive or harassing to you?

LC: No. But I studied with Leon before Penny (his second wife; psychologist).

SC: Right. I'm glad you brought that out, because he married in about 1966, I think.

LC: I think he had a lot of these (psychological) qualities before. I'm glad he attributes it (positive reinforcement) to his wife, and think that is wonderful, but I think he had a lot of these qualities going for him before Penny.

SC: So, "positive reinforcement" was actually a natural part of his personality and the knowledge he received from Penny just helped him to polish and improve those skills.

LC: Penny gave him a "handle" to put on it.

SC: Great! Very good! Describe the feeling that you had traveling to your lesson. Were you ever fearful when you were not prepared?

LC: No. Because I was always prepared and I always looked forward to it.

SC: Well, my next question was going to be, how did Leon react to your non-preparedness. But that is not apropos here.

LC: No. It didn't happen. I was spending the princely total of ten dollars for this lesson and I was damn well going to get my money's worth.

SC: Oh. Well, he has gone up (in his lesson price) since then.

LC: I think so. (laughs)

SC: And rightly so. Leon further states that, ". . . since I am not a great player--Stanley (Drucker) says I am the best eight-bar player he knows, but beyond that I get a little mixed up." How would you describe Leon's clarinet playing abilities?

LC: Well, the two or three times he ever picked up a clarinet in my lesson, it sounded like here was a guy who had all the fundamentals at his command, but just a little bit rusty. That's all.

SC: Were you a little bit disappointed that he didn't play more?

LC: Not at all.

SC: Would you like to hear him play?

LC: Not particularly. I mean, if he wanted to play for me, I would be glad to listen. . . . For the way Leon teaches it is not a necessity. I think that's one way to teach, and I think it's quite valuable. . . . To say that the teacher has to perform for the student, to play in the lesson--well, that's what I do, and it's a good way. But it's not the only way, obviously, because Leon has such a great success.

SC: The next question (WQXR interview) by Robert Sherman was, "So many great teachers are major performers, and you say that you are not a great player. If you are not a great player, why can't you adapt all of what you are teaching and tell yourself that you are going to give something to the world and be a great player?" Leon's response was: "Well, when I say I am not a great player, it doesn't mean I am totally incompetent. I am a very, very good player. To be a great player requires other things beyond the skills of playing, techniques of playing, even the feeling for music. To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina;

requires a tremendous amount of confidence, which I am better able to give than to achieve. It requires even more than that. It requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather unpleasant abuse. To go through all these things with good cheer. And then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual." Do you agree with Leon's definition of a great player?

LC: Yes, sure.

SC: Does Leon's definition of a great player describe you?

LC: I can't recall when I have ever had to take a lot of abuse.

SC: Auditions? Conductors? Marching parades?

LC: Well, (laughs), I guess we suffered. (more laughter)

SC: Let's go through Leon's definition point by point. "To be a great player requires other things beyond the skills of playing, techniques of playing, even the feeling for music." I think you kind of alluded to that before in one of your answers--about being "lucky". "To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina."

LC: That's for sure. That's something I constantly have to work on and think about. If I could say that I have any problems, one of them is that occasionally I can be derailed simply by getting tired in a performance, not holding up muscularly. It is usually a function of tension rather than actual fatigue.

SC: How about all the travel when you are on tour?

LC: You learn to deal with that, but that's a factor too.

SC: Probably this week (during Clar-Fest '82) is a pretty good example of stamina requirements, because it's just not playing, it's . . . (performing, rehearsing, lecturing, master classes, attending other performances, and interviews, etc.)

LC: Yes. For me, when I get to a certain point, I just rebel against it. Like I will cancel lessons. I always go to rehearsal and concert, but . . . I don't have a great deal of stamina compared to some of my colleagues in the orchestra. They teach all the time and play all the time and never seem to get tired. I do. When I do, I simply close down.

SC: Next. "Requires a tremendous amount of confidence."

LC: I've got a lot of confidence.

SC: Has it always been there, or does it grow with all your accomplishments?

LC: No. No. It grows. But everytime you go to a new job, for instance, you feel you must prove yourself all over again. It takes awhile for the confidence to come, but I don't think that any of us are free of that. Oh, there are some people that nothing seems to ruffle.

SC: You just mentioned that every time you go to a new job you feel like you have to prove yourself again. Couldn't that be put into the category of "it requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather unpleasant abuse?"

LC: I suppose. Yeah.

SC: Maybe some of that ("unpleasant abuse") is self-inflicted?

LC: Sure. You worry. You become self-centered, as a performer and you worry what X person or Y person is thinking of your efforts. And, you know, even performing in a situation like "Clar-Fest", it's a very serious thought that you are playing for one-hundred-fifty clarinet players. When you get out there to play a piece, it takes some psychological "slight-of hand" to talk yourself out of worrying about Larry Combs and to talk yourself into worrying about making a decent performance of the "Reicha Quintet". You have to really reason with yourself, or at least I do. I think a lot of what we undergo as tension or as stage fright or whatever you want to call it, is simply a matter of being a little too self-centered--a little bit too much concerned about what somebody will think of you, rather than what somebody is going to think about the musical performance that is being presented.

SC: Do you think there is sort of a "gun fighter" mentality that exists--like, you are only as good as your last performance? Is that kind of pressure back somewhere in the recesses of your mind?

LC: It used to be. The more I play, the more I realize that it sort of averages out. When I first started playing in orchestras, if I had a bad night and screwed something up, it would really depress me, and I would worry about it for days after. But now, I know there is another performance tomorrow night and maybe I will be better, you know, and usually is. . . .

SC: . . . Okay. "And then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual."

LC: That's a hard one to answer because if I give a positive answer, then I will sound like a jerk. (laughs) But sure, I feel like there is a certain destiny that made me choose to do what I'm doing. I feel that maybe there is some sort of special talent that allows me to do it reasonably well. There is no question about it. . . .

SC: . . . During the WQXR interview, Leon mentions that Stanley (Drucker) started studying with him at the age of ten or eleven. He said Stanley would go through "a method book a week" and that after every lesson, Leon would reward Stanley with a bottle of orange pop. Did Leon ever reward you with a bottle of orange pop?

LC: I think, maybe once, he gave me a shot of scotch (laughs), which might have been the same thing. (more laughter)

SC: In reference to a question about Simeon Bellison, who was one of Russianoff's teachers, Leon states that Bellison was a man of great dignity. He also said that "Bellison was into music, not the technique of music." Would you say that this statement appropriately describes Russianoff's teaching approach?

LC: The first part of that, I don't think that you could characterize Leon as being a "dignified" person in the strictest sense of that word. Leon has his own dignity, but he's not stuffy, or pompous, or correct, or . . . That's what I think about when I think of dignified. Maybe I am thinking the wrong sense of the word. But the second part of it is absolutely true. (". . . into music, not the technique of music")

SC: When people come up to me questioning me about my study, they will ask "Leon Russianoff? What's he like?" The quickest way I could describe Leon is to say that "He's sort of like a mature, sixty-five year old Woody Allen." Could you give me a concise one-liner description of Leon?

LC: (long pause) Well, he's a very "wise kook".

SC: (laughs)

LC: A very wise kook. I think the emphasis is on the "wise" and not the "kook". . . .

SC: . . . Okay. I will give you one last chance, for the record. Are there any other statements that you would like to make about Leon?

LC: No. I think we have covered it. I have a great appreciation for what he did for me, at a period that I needed some inspiration and some impetus to keep going in the direction I was going. I think that that was very nicely provided by him.

SC: Thanks a lot, Larry. I appreciate your time and your sincerity.

LC: Sure. A pleasure. I want to see a copy of your dissertation when it's completed.

SC: You've got it!

NAOMI DRUCKER

Stephen Clark: What years did you study with Leon Russianoff?

Naomi Drucker: I studied with Leon Russianoff from 1952 until about 1957.

SC: How old were you? Were you in secondary school, or college, or graduate school?

ND: I was nineteen when I started studying with him, and I was an undergraduate at Hofstra University.

SC: That is where you teach now, right?

ND: Yes.

SC: Who were your prominent clarinet teachers before Russianoff?

ND: I had studied with Gustave Langenus for one year, with Clark Brodie for one year. He was with the Chicago Symphony. At that time he was with the CBS Orchestra. I studied one summer with Jan Williams. And my main teacher in my formative years was James DeJesu.

SC: Now you mentioned Jan Williams. Is there any background that we would be interested in there, as far as some university or high school?

ND: Well, Jan williams was a famous clarinetist of his day. He was very old when I studied with him. He had been, I believe, with the NBC Symphony . . . and he taught at his brother's music camp. His brother was a very famous trumpeter whose name was Ernst Williams. Anybody who is in the trumpet business knows that name. . . .

SC: How about your prominent teachers after Russianoff?

ND: I never studied with anyone after Russianoff.

SC: Can you give me some rationale why? There was just nothing better after Russianoff?

ND: Well, I honestly felt after studying with Leon Russianoff that the time had come to develop my own point of view and my own personality in my playing. I did not choose to study with anybody else.

SC: Did he encourage that thought?

ND: I never asked him about it. I have always been a fairly independent thinker in regard to my own career. I did not feel dependent upon a teacher.

SC: What led you to seek Russianoff as your clarinet teacher?

ND: Well, he was recommended from many directions. I thought that I had gone as far as I could with the teacher that I had at that time, and was searching about for a fine teacher.

SC: Who was your immediate teacher before Russianoff?

ND: It was James DeJesu. No, actually it was James DeJesu, Clark Brodie, and Gustave Langenus. And then I was looking for someone to really settle in with again. Russianoff was recommended to me by one of the owners of the company of Penzel-Muller clarinets. It was Walter Muller who recommended Leon Russianoff. . . .

SC: . . . Langenus . . . was he with the New York Philharmonic at the time you studied with him?

ND: He was with the New York Philharmonic at the time that it merged. The New York Symphony and some other orchestra--Stanley would be able to tell you--merged to form the New York Philharmonic. It was a long time ago. When I studied with him, he was about seventy-eight years old.

SC: So he played in the Philharmonic with Simeon Bellison?

ND: No, before that.

SC: Before Bellison? That is a long time ago. Did you have any preconceived ideas about Russianoff's teaching style before you studied with him?

ND: No, I didn't know anything about him. You are talking about 1952.

SC: Yes. Well, he was a young man then. I think he told me he started teaching right around World War II. So he hadn't been teaching very long.

ND: That's right. He was about thirty-six years old then. . . .

SC: . . . In your opinion, what were your most positive gains from studying with Russianoff?

ND: I came to Russianoff with a very good technique already. He certainly helped to solidify that technique, but I had a good technique. He expanded my playing repertoire and also helped me to build good confidence in my own abilities. That is still one of his outstanding contributions to his students.

SC: Do you think his personality has changed very much since those days, in your estimation?

ND: Not really. Maybe he is a little wilder now.

SC: Did you notice any immediate change right after he married Penelope?

ND: He was happier. He had been through an unhappy period. His wife had died. So his remarriage was an act of faith and love, and it was a very positive thing.

SC: How long was he single before he found Penny? Do you know?

ND: It must have been three years, but I'm not sure.

SC: Was his first wife a professional woman?

ND: No. Well, she had been a dancer, but she essentially was at home and took care of the family. . . .

SC: . . . Were these gains a product of Russianoff's teaching strong points, or were they a result of your need and desire to improve those specific areas of your clarinet playing?

ND: All gains are directly related to his teaching techniques, whether they be technical, interpretive, or psychological. . . .

SC: . . . What special qualities does Russianoff have to offer as a teacher? What do you think is the major reason for Russianoff's success? Does he possess superior personality, musical talent, technical methodology, command of verbal and nonverbal behavior or a combination of all of these factors?

ND: Well, it is a combination of all those factors, but he

is really a skilled teacher. He has a fine technique of teaching. He has a real understanding of what is required of a person from a technical point of view in order to be able to play well. He can pinpoint a student's problems, and he has a technique for solving whatever the problem is--from the problem of the movement of one finger which is a troublesome finger, to the improvement of the use of the tongue against the reed. He has great knowledge about how to play the clarinet. There is nothing phony about him. His teaching is not just some psychological mumbo-jumbo. Any psychological aspects are really just a byproduct of his own personality. As a teacher of the clarinet, he really has the methods that are required to solve problems.

SC: Excellent! Excellent! Did Russianoff have a profound influence on your musicianship, your psychological approach to performing, or your overall philosophy of life?

ND: Yes to all three. Leon and I became close friends. We shared the same philosophy and exchanged many ideas. Leon is, of course, my husband's teacher and I met my husband in Leon's studio. Our lives were connected in many ways. I mean, we've been close friends, both Stanley and I and Leon and his family, for all of our lives. So there has been an ongoing exchange--a lifetime exchange--not just those years as a student.

SC: Would you consider Leon a father figure or a big brother figure?

ND: No. I consider him a colleague. I guess probably that has changed over these thirty years that I have known him. First he was certainly my teacher, at the beginning. Then he was a very dear friend, which he still is. . . .

SC: . . . Was Russianoff dictatorial? In other words was he ever insistent about you having to use his preferred setup: mouthpiece, reed, ligature, barrel, or clarinet?

ND: Leon has always been open to the idea of using what is best for each individual. He certainly made recommendations. He certainly tried to help a person find the right thing, the right mouthpiece for that person; but, he never had one thing which he said you must use. That would be completely against his philosophy of teaching.

SC: Was he insistent about you conforming to any preconceived molds of any kind, i.e.: embouchure, hand position, tongue position, tonal concept, interpretation, etc.?

ND: He certainly had ideas about how you hold the clarinet; how your fingers move; how to tongue; how to blow. Yes, he is strong in this way. I mean he certainly does not let a student just wander about. There would be no purpose to that. I mean he knows what works and certainly tries to help a student achieve that which he knows works in these areas.

SC: How about tonal concept? I guess what I am getting at is, did he realize and appreciate your individuality? Do you feel like he did?

ND: Yes. I think he did for me, and I think he does for every student. I certainly think he has his ideas about what a good clarinet tone is, and that he tries to help a student achieve this. Few students come in playing with good tones. A lot of professionals do not have a good tone. I mean, you know, the striving for a beautiful tone is a lifetime striving and is a very individual thing. But he certainly has a standard to which he tries to have the student achieve.

SC: Can you recall Russianoff's normal weekly regimen, i.e.: warmups, method books, scales, arpeggios, orchestral excerpts, solo literature, chamber music literature, etc.?

ND: Well, it is a long time ago. But we went through the material of the Baermann Book III Method, went through Rose Studies . . .

SC: Forty and Thirty-Two?

ND: Yes. Yes. And the Baermann (etude books) IV and V. Oh, there must have been a lot of other things. I know his handwriting is scrawled all over my etude books, but we worked on a great deal of literature also, and/or orchestral excerpts. It was the gamut. It was the whole picture of clarinet playing that he worked on with me. I was an advanced player when I went to him. . . .

SC: . . . Do you think that Leon was "liberated" at that time?

ND: Yes. I think so. He certainly encouraged the women students that he had. One of those students was Arlene Weiss, who is Arlene Alda--the wife of Alan Alda.

SC: Really?! Thanks for that information. In your estimation, did most of your lesson time consist of playing or talking?

ND: Playing.

SC: What percentage?

ND: Ninety-five percent.

SC: When there was talking, what percentage was done by the teacher?

ND: He did the talking, and it was to explain, to show something, to demonstrate something. There was always a great deal of playing. I happen to believe that is a very important part of teaching--that the student should do a lot of playing. I think, just as an aside, that where you have lesson situations where the teacher does most of the talking and there is little playing going on, there is very little learning going on too.

SC: All right. I am reading from Carlesta Henderson's post-doctoral study done in 1974 entitled, "Musical Accountability: A Measurement of Music Teacher Behaviors Accentuating the Positive". In her study of music teacher behavior, Henderson found that, "teachers are usually aware of their verbal behavior; however, they may be grossly unaware of the enormous power of many nonverbal clues they express through gesture, facial expression, posture, vocal tone, outward demeanor, or more importantly the inconsistencies between their paired verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal expressions convey attitudes and impressions which may affect the teaching--learning process." Do you think Russianoff is aware of and in control of his nonverbal behavior? If so, would you consider this one of his attributes as a teacher?

ND: I think he is very aware of his nonverbal behavior, and I think it is one of his attributes.

SC: Gordon Mehling did his dissertation in 1972 at Michigan State University entitled, "An Analysis of College Undergraduates and Music Teachers in Relation to Student Attitudes Towards Music." Mr. Mehling says, "College music teachers perceive the musical attitudes and needs of college undergraduates to be less positive than they actually are." Did you see any evidence of this attitude in Russianoff? . . .

ND: No. I didn't see any of that in Leon Russianoff; nor do I believe it. . . .

SC: In another dissertation by Warren Lutz at the University of Illinois in 1963 entitled, "The Personality Characteristics and Experimental Backgrounds of Successful High School

Instrumental Music Teachers," Mr. Lutz concludes that, "compared to unsuccessful teachers, successful teachers: " . . . were more capable of deep emotional response; . . . had a higher degree of emotional morale; worked harder for social approval; were less hostile; were more flexible; worried less; had broader interests; were happier and more self-satisfied; and were more people-oriented; and were more self-confident with regard to their professional and personal lives." Could you equate any or all of these definitive descriptions of successful teachers with Russianoff?

ND: Yes. All of it.

SC: Now, concerning the radio program on WQXR-FM radio, "Great Teachers", I believe it was Robert Sherman who was the interviewer. His question was, "What makes a great teacher?" And Leon answered this way: "As far as I really am concerned, I have to go with the field of psychology. The first thing you have to do is sort of love people and especially love your students and feel that they have something special to offer the musical world and special to offer you as a teacher which you can sort of throw back at them sometime later." Did Leon reflect this philosophy during your study with him?

ND: Yes, he did.

SC: Later on in the interview, Leon states, "I'm not in the mainstream of so-called great teachers. I know I'm not in the mainstream of the traditional great teachers. The biographies of the great artists will always evaluate their great teachers as their most punitive teachers, the ones who harassed them the most, the ones that scolded them the most, the ones that berated and insulted them the most. Well, that's just the opposite of where I'm at. I've been affected a lot by the work of my great wife. She's a movie star and a great writer. She has really influenced me in thinking about what they call positive reinforcement." Was Leon ever punitive or harassing to you?

ND: Never.

SC: Could you describe the feeling that you had traveling to your lesson? Were you ever fearful when you were not prepared?

ND: I always looked forward to lessons with Leon. It was the highlight of the week. Prepared or unprepared, I knew that he would understand what the situation was. He is a very flexible, understanding person who knows that life from

week to week changes. I knew that he believed in my sincerity and in what I wanted to accomplish. If I hadn't been able to practice one week, it certainly was not because I just did not practice; it was because I could not practice. The lesson experience was a cooperative you see, and in my teaching--I'm very successful as a teacher--I've picked up a lot of things of course from Leon's attitude. One of the things I tell my students is that a lesson is not a performance. A lesson is where you learn; it is where you experiment and try things. And it is a cooperation between the teacher and the student . . .

SC: . . . Leon further states in the WQXR interview, "The other thing is that since I am not a great player--Stanley says I am the best eight-bar player he knows, but beyond that I get a little mixed up . . ." How would you describe Leon's clarinet playing abilities?

ND: He is an excellent clarinetist. He certainly can pick up anybody's clarinet and play on any set-up to demonstrate and make the point he wishes to make. I have also heard him play in informal house concerts, and he plays beautifully. He is very modest about his abilities. . . .

SC: . . . Robert Sherman's next interview question was, "So many great teachers are major performers, and you say that you are not a great player. If you are not a great player, why can't you adapt all of what you are teaching and tell yourself that you are going to give something to the world and be a great player?" And Leon's response is, "Well, when I say that I am not a great player, that doesn't mean that I am totally incompetent. I am a very, very good player. To be a great player requires other things beyond the skills of playing, techniques of playing, even the feeling for music. To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina; requires a tremendous amount of confidence, which I'm better able to give than achieve. It requires even more than that. It requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather unpleasant abuse, to go through all these things with good cheer. And then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual." Do you agree with Leon's definition of a great player?

ND: Yes. I do. Yes, I think that is a very good definition. I think what Leon is trying to say is that performance requires a kind of totality. One must bring many things to a performance. Performing is not just playing the instrument. Performing is something that happens, and it is an exchange that happens between the performer and his audience. It starts with the first step across the stage. A performer

gives a message to his audience at the first moment. It starts with how he walks and how he looks. He can convey a message which in some instances the audience can't recover from if it is a really bad impression. It takes a lot of things to be a performer.

SC: Does Leon's definition of a great player describe you?

ND: I don't know. I don't think of myself as a great player. My experience is a narrow experience, so I really can't consider myself a great player. I have never played in a major symphony orchestra. I have not held down a major position. I think that I am a really fine chamber musician and solo performer of certain pieces of the literature, but there are certain things I don't go beyond. So I really could not call myself a great performer, honestly. I am very good in the area where I work. . . .

SC: . . . Also concerning the "Great Teachers" (WQXR interview) tape recording, he talks about Stanley as a young man of ten or eleven studying with him. And he would go through a method book a week. And he said he always gave Stanley orange pop. Has Stanley ever shared any of these experiences with you?

ND: I think that that is pretty . . . there is some truth in that. You ask him about it.

SC: Maybe that is the key to becoming a great clarinet virtuoso. Just go through a method book a week, and drink lots of orange pop.

ND: Well, you see that was part of the Leon Russianoff technic in dealing with Stanley, who was a very young child. It was a reward system, you know? Certainly, Stanley did not recognize it, but it was a part of Leon's warmth! At the end of a big lesson, share a bottle of pop. . . .

SC: . . . He (Russianoff) also mentions that he was the best man at your wedding, and Stanley was the best man at his wedding with Penny.

ND: Correct. Yes. It certainly is so. So you see, our lives are very interwoven. And our son, whose name is Leon Drucker, is named for Leon. . . .

SC: . . . Now, the next question is concerning Leon talking about Simeon Bellison. One word he uses to describe Mr. Bellison is dignity. He makes the statement: "He was into music, not the technique of music." My question is: would

this statement appropriately describe Russianoff's teaching approach?

ND: "He was into music, not the technique of music"? I am not sure I know what he means by that.

SC: Do you want me to repeat the question?

ND: No. I think that Russianoff is also into the music and not into any rigid concepts. He is not inflexible. . . .

SC: . . . When people come up to me questioning me about my study, they will ask "Leon Russianoff? What's he like?" The quickest way I could describe Leon is to say that "He's sort of like a mature, sixty-five year old Woody Allen." Could you give me a concise one-liner description of Leon?

ND: Leon is a very complicated . . . I don't know how I should describe him. Leon is a very complicated human being. What one sees on the outside is not what Leon is. He has humor; and he is flirtatious; and he is an enormous amount of fun. But what he really is is a very serious person, and a very dedicated and serious teacher who knows exactly what he is doing. A good deal of what Leon shows is theatre. It is play-acting. It is done to encourage other people to feel good and to feel happy. But as a teacher, when one goes in for a lesson to study with Leon, the theatre is gone. It is a workshop, and very, very hard work takes place both on his part and on the students' part. So when you liken him to Woody Allen, I would have to know what you thought of Woody Allen, how you conceived Woody Allen.

SC: He is the greatest!

ND: Are you speaking of his genius as a film maker and a writer?

SC: Right. And his spontaneity; and his humor; and his intellect.

ND: Leon has all those things, and if someone else saw Woody Allen in the same way that you do, that would be fine. But you would really need to have Woody Allen defined a little bit.

SC: But even physically, Woody Allen is kind of short and wears glasses.

ND: Well, yes, there certainly is the physical resemblance.

SC: . . . and has the New York mannerisms . . .

ND: I suppose if I were trying to describe Leon to someone who didn't know him and they said, "Who is this Leon Russianoff? Why is he called the great clarinet teacher?" I think I would say that Leon Russianoff is a very special human being. He has great love for his students, for mankind in general. He is a humanitarian. He possesses enormous knowledge of how to play the clarinet, and he gives of this information selflessly. What would I say about him? He teaches with good humor. He believes that one makes music in order to find a satisfaction, a kind of happiness, a self-expression, and in order to communicate with others through this medium of sound. That he is a non-hostile person, and therefore achieves great results.

SC: . . . Do you have any final comments?

ND: No. That is fine. . . .

SC: Thank you very much, Naomi. It has been a great interview.

STANLEY DRUCKER

Stephen Clark: Mr. Drucker, what years did you study with Leon Russianoff?

Stanley Drucker: Well, chronology might be a little difficult. . . . Leon Russianoff was my second teacher. I think I must have been about, almost eleven when I started studying with Leon Russianoff. I remember when I actually started studying the clarinet because I got a cheap clarinet as a birthday present on my tenth birthday. My parents . . . who were not musicians, sought out . . . a teacher who was recommended by somebody at the Musicians' Union . . . a man by the name of Arthur Small. But Mr. Small went on the road . . . with a dance orchestra. It was going to be a very extensive tour, out of the country and so forth, and I had to have lessons . . . At that time, I believe Leon Russianoff was still living at home, unmarried . . . It must have been about the end of '39 or the beginning of 1940 when I started studying with Leon Russianoff. Now I studied with him quite a long time, until I went away to school at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia at the age of fifteen, and from there [I went] on my first professional performing job, which was in the Indianapolis Symphony. . . . When I came back from Indianapolis, and was waiting to go on tour with Adolph Busch and Rudolf Serkin with their chamber orchestra, I studied again with Russianoff. . . . That must have been about 1947 . . . (That) was the last formal studying that I did with Leon Russianoff because in the . . . fall of '47, I went as principal to the Buffalo Philharmonic, where I played for a season and then auditioned and came into the New York Philharmonic the next season . . . But I always would come back to Russianoff for his advice, and guidance, and help--musically and otherwise.

SC: So how many years total would you say you studied with Leon?

SD: Well, let's add it up. Let's say '39 through '45 is what, six years? And then another year, seven years. I would say a combined total of about seven or eight years.

SC: In your opinion, what were your most positive gains from studying with Russianoff?

SD: My positive gains? Well, I think as . . . you mean looking in retrospect, or at the time?

SC: Well, either.

SD: Well, at the time one does something you are not really aware of much. It's like growth. You don't see yourself growing, physically, but others may see it. I think the most important thing that he bestowed was freedom and love; and the ability to stay out of the way in a certain way; to give you a head like you would give a wild horse when you're trying to ride him. He didn't lock you into a corner and insist that you only do things one way. . . .

SC: How old was Leon when you started studying with him?

SD: Well, I think there is a difference in age between Leon and me, would be--I would say fifteen years.

SC: So you were around ten, so he was about twenty-five.

SD: That's correct.

SC: Do you think that these gains were a product of Russianoff's teaching strong points, or were they a result of your need and desire to improve those specific areas of your clarinet playing?

SD: When you're studying as a child, I don't think you dwell on too many specifics. You're told to put it in your mouth and to go and that's what you do. An adult student would be a different situation; but I think that whether it's the student or the teacher, both have to grow. Now Russianoff, himself, grew over the years. He gained things along the way that he learned from others and from listening to others perform and so forth. . . .

SC: Did he have a large number of students when you first started studying, or was he just beginning himself and had a small clientele?

SD: I think he was just beginning himself at that time. It's very marvelous that he found what he excels in. He found his artistry like an Ivan Galamian did on violin, or Leopold Auer on violin, or some of the famous piano pedagogues of the past, who were noted for turning out brilliant virtuosos. You see, a lot of people think they have to

study with somebody because they play well. But I'm sure that Ivan Galamian never played on a concert stage in his life, and yet all the greatest violinists of the day studied with him. So these two things don't necessarily go together. I think it's where your talent is--if you're lucky enough to find that direction. And I think that Russianoff was lucky, and we were luckier that he did find it.

SC: What special qualities does Russianoff have to offer as a teacher? What do you think is the major reason for Russianoff's success? Does he possess superior: personality, musical talent, technical methodology, command of verbal and nonverbal behavior, or a combination of all these factors?

SD: Well, that's a tremendous generalization, that last sentence, but I would say that he is not dogmatic. He doesn't say this is the only way to do this, because to say it's the only way to do something is to lock yourself into a given position. It may work in brain surgery, but it doesn't work in music. There has to be a certain kind of a flexibility to express one's self. It's not mathematics where the column of figures has to come out the same everytime. Music, especially live performance, is different everytime. But we're talking about live music, and live music making.

SC: Did Russianoff have a profound influence on your musicianship, your psychological approach to performing, or to your overall philosophy of life?

SD: I think that I'm very happy that I know him and studied with him. I think that he's definitely a superior person in every way--great spirit and heart and humanity. He's a rare individual. I think it has to rub off.

SC: Was Russianoff dictatorial? In other words, was he ever insistent about you having to use his preferred "setup"--mouthpiece, reed, ligature, barrel, or clarinet? Was he insistent about you conforming to any preconceived "molds" of any kind--embouchure, hand position, tongue position, tonal concept, interpretation, etc.?

SD: No, not in the way you put it. He would be tough and strict at times when it came to practicing tedious exercises maybe, or something that required scrubbing clean, you know, where you had to do it. It was not his way to--in a dictatorial manner--(to) cover every facet. He was supportive, but you had to do things for him. You had to show that you could accomplish something. He actually, in essence--and probably this is the hardest thing for a teacher to do--is

sit hour after hour with a student over a period of many months or years, and listen to them practice, which in essence it is. A lot of the great teachers probably do this. The ones that are still striving to be great expect a finished performance at the lesson. They don't want to see the blood and gore, and the suffering that goes into making that perfect performance.

SC: So you think that Russianoff did realize and appreciate your individuality?

SD: I think it wasn't just a question of me. I think he probably treated everybody that way. . . .

SC: . . . Can you recall Russianoff's normal weekly regimen--warm ups, scales and arpeggios, method books, orchestral excerpts, solo literature, chamber music literature, etc.?

SD: He had a number of exercises that he would write out in pencil on your blank music paper which you brought. He had the whole battery of exercises that involved intervals, staccato exercises, chordal exercises, scale exercises, different types of long tone exercises that he, himself, devised. He would listen to those, and he expected you to play them regularly, in addition to normal books of studies--etudes and method books.

SC: Can you specifically remember some (method books)? I know in an interview tape, I heard Leon say that you went through a method book a week. Can you remember that?

SD: Well, in a certain sense, he's probably right. I was a kid that was sort of compulsive about many things. I'd sit down with a large book and just play it from cover to cover, probably twice as fast as it was supposed to be played, to get through it. That was the way I, in my own disciplined manner, practiced. Perhaps if I were older at the time, I would have worked in a more methodical way. I don't know if the results would've been any better. He went through a lot of material with me--an awful lot of books that were around at the time, and, of course, some of the literature and the performing literature in addition. Certainly the books that give you the background and the basics, we went through. We went through all of the famous names like Klose, Baermann, and Kroepsch, Rose, and the more modern ones that you know about today--Jean-Jean, Labanchi, and so forth. I'm just leaving out a lot of names--a tremendous amount. Once in a while he would play duets at the lesson with me. So I really got close attention from Leon Russianoff. . . .

SC: . . . In your estimation, did most of your lesson time consist of playing or talking? What percentage?

SD: A lot of playing. More playing than talking.

SC: When there was talking, what percentage was teacher-talk and student-talk?

SD: It was mostly teacher-talk.

SC: Could Leon talk as well then as he does now?

SD: Yes, definitely. That's a talent.

SC: In a post-doctoral study in 1974 by Carlesta Henderson entitled, "Musical Accountability: The Measurement of Music Teacher Behavior. Accentuating the Positive", Henderson found that "Teachers are usually aware of their verbal behavior, however, they may be grossly unaware of the enormous power of many nonverbal clues they express through gesture, facial expression, posture, vocal tone, outward demeanor, or more importantly, the inconsistencies between their paired verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal expressions convey attitudes and impressions which may affect the teaching-learning process . . ." Do you think Russianoff is aware of and in control of his nonverbal behavior? If so, would you consider this one of his attributes as a teacher?

SD: Nonverbal behavior is actually what a conductor does in a performance--not in a rehearsal, in a performance. He's conveying through gesture, look, attitude, mood, expression, facial expression what he wants to come out. Now to a lesser extent, in a studio one-to-one situation, one does not have to rely only on that. You speak. And certainly I have never met a university professor that was at a loss for words. The first thing one must learn, if he's going to be a professional university professor, is how to talk and how to fill up time talking. I'm not saying this in a manner to put it down. I'm praising it because it's professional in the real fine sense of professional. It's part of their bag of tools. You have to be able to do that. Now music, of course, is directed, not only spoken about. It's very difficult to speak totally when you want a certain musical effect. Sometimes it's done with a gesture, with a look, the way a conductor would do that. Russianoff is certainly an outgoing person who can express through gesture in addition to words. I think he's unlimited in the manner of conveying what he'd like to have a student do. That's what makes him a master teacher, I suppose--the fact that he can analyze. I think one of his great talents is the fact that he can take an

average student of the clarinet and get the most out of the average student. You know, almost anyone, if they leave the student alone, can teach a genius, because that kind of ability, innate ability, floats to the top eventually. But you take someone that's just ordinary, and get the most and good things out of that person--that's where the real talent lies in the teacher, to be able to get that ability out.

SC: Gordon Mehling did his dissertation in 1972 at Michigan State University entitled, "An Analysis of College Undergraduates and Music Teachers in Relation to Student Attitudes Toward Music." Mr. Mehling says, "College music teachers perceive the musical attitudes and needs of college undergraduates to be less positive than they actually are." Did you see any evidence of this attitude in Russianoff?

SD: No, because you're dealing with a very precise, specific subject. You're not dealing with a Liberal Arts Education of an undergraduate. You can't compare it. You can compare it to somebody learning a great skill, whether it be musical instrument making--I'm not talking about repairing, I'm talking about making, like making a violin from scratch. It would rank with that kind of a learning, but not a general education.

SC: In another dissertation by Warren Lutz at the University of Illinois in 1963 entitled, "The Personality Characteristics and Experimental Backgrounds of Successful High School Instrumental Music Teachers", Mr. Lutz concludes that compared to unsuccessful teachers, successful teachers: ". . . . were more capable of deep emotional response; . . . had a higher degree of emotional morale; worked harder for social approval; were less hostile; were more flexible; worried less; had broader interests; were happier and more self-satisfied; were more people-oriented; and were more self-confident with regard to their professional and personal lives." Could you equate any or all of these definitive descriptions of successful teachers to Russianoff?

SD: Well, some of them, of course. But I have to disagree with some of that, because some great people--you're dealing with the arts, not with a science or a mechanic. In art, a person may be a great artist as a teacher or performer, but be a frustrated individual in many aspects of his life; may be greatly frustrated, may be deeply neurotic, may be troubled greatly. But talent, and drive, and ambition coupled together overcome these in the given field. Now, as far as the popularity of a given instructor, in a general sense--not in a one-to-one sense, but a general sense, as say a band director or a college orchestra director, choral

director--there's more to it than the musical aspect here. You're dealing with a type of a person that large numbers might relate to or look upon as a father figure or some kind of other stabilizing force. Now I'm sure that the students of Russianoff look upon him as more than a clarinet teacher, and probably seek advice and rely on his judgment. But I would say that he is a complex individual. He's lived a lot. He's seen a lot--things that have happened to him in his life and to others in his life. So I think the fact that whether he personally is happy twenty-four-hours-a-day is irrelevant when you consider the trinity of: talent, drive, and ambition. I'm not speaking about drive and ambition in a clawing tenacious way, like somebody trying to reach the top in a business. I'm using it in a sense that those three things are needed. Because without drive and ambition, talent doesn't succeed. There has to be great desire to do it, especially in the performing arts. So he's got this as a teacher.

SC: Let's be specific. You said some of these apply to him. I'm kind of interested to know what your opinion is about which ones. We'll just check them off one at a time. "The study concludes that compared to unsuccessful teachers, successful teachers were more capable of deep emotional response."

SD: Oh, there's no question about it. Yes, he feels very deeply.

SC: "Had a higher degree of emotional morale?"

SD: Emotional morale . . . I would say he's very mature. He's a mature person. He's a real adult.

SC: "Worked harder for social approval?"

SD: Oh, definitely. That's definitely Russianoff.

SC: "Less hostile?"

SD: Oh, I would say he's not a hostile person at all.

SC: "More flexible?"

SD: Flexible? Well, he still likes a well-done hamburger and a Coca-Cola. I think that's not flexible enough.

SC: (laughs) "Worried less?"

SD: Worried less? I don't know. I think everybody has

periods of worry about this or about that. It's very difficult to get inside someone to know whether they worry and what they worry about. I know myself, I'm basically a secret optimist. I would say that I dwell on the unimportant. If I do worry, it's about unimportant things.

SC: "Had broader interests?"

SD: Oh, definitely. He knows a lot about other fields. He's well read. He takes an interest in other things. He attends many things.

SC: "Happier and more self-satisfied?"

SD: That "happier", that's a difficult--self-satisfied--I don't know. That may be a gray area.

SC: How about "appears to be--to his students?"

SD: Appears to be? I would say Leon Russianoff is a very complex individual. I haven't studied with him in many years, but I would imagine that there have been periods of time where he might have been depressed about things in his life--suffered depression maybe, or sadness.

SC: Your wife mentioned the death of his first wife.

SD: Well, I was thinking of that, but I was thinking of other things too. Life is made up of a lot of things. I would say that he would probably have had gone through sadness, and unhappy, depressed segments of time.

SC: . . . "Were more people-oriented?"

SD: Oh, he likes people. He knows how to talk to people.

SC: "Were more self-confident with regard to their professional and personal lives?"

SD: To his personal life?

SC: Personal and professional life.

SD: His?

SC: Yes.

SD: More confident? I would say he is a confident man. No question about that. Definitely.

SC: Have you incorporated any of Russianoff's teaching traits into your own teaching methodology? If so, was it a conscious, deliberate decision to do so?

SD: Of course. No two people are alike. I think he's certainly the best clarinet teacher I've ever known to this day. . . .

SC: . . . Do you think he would be a successful violin teacher or a successful English teacher with his ability?

SD: . . . As a teacher, he's definitely a star. Yes, he could teach anything, if he were trained to teach it and had the talent to teach it. No question about that. He knows how to teach. He knows how to listen. He's not a closed person when it comes to his students. . . . As a teacher, what I spoke about earlier, he's a professional teacher--not a player that's using teaching as an adjunct to make a few extra dollars. Most players grow up with the idea "Well, I play in a band or an orchestra, and I'll give lessons"--without giving more thought to it than that. Now they may be successful with it, but that's beside the point. He is to teaching what a great artist is to performing.

SC: WQXR (FM radio station in New York City) did a program called "Great Teachers." Your wife was on that program.

SD: Yes.

SC: Robert Sherman was the interviewer and his question to Leon was--"What makes a great teacher?" Leon answered this way: "As far as I really am concerned, I have to go with the field of psychology. The first thing you have to do is sort of love people and especially love your students and feel that they have something special to offer the musical world and special to offer you as a teacher which you can sort of throw back at them sometime later." Did Leon reflect this philosophy during your study with him?

SD: I think he is definitely for his students. Speaking primarily in a general way, this may be a marvelous trait and it may not be such a marvelous trait. It may be an area where I might disagree a little bit. Because to instill in every student the idea that they're going to become another Jascha Heifetz may be cruel, eventually, because not everybody is going to be Heifetz. But he gives this support and encouragement to his students--he always has. This is an ongoing feature. He attends everything his students do, every performance . . .

SC: He's kind of like a mother hen.

SD: Yes. He gives them the feeling that they are number one, which may be good from a growth standpoint. But in the realistic world, it may not be the way to go, totally.

SC: Do you feel that he is misleading them or . . .

SD: No. No.

SC: Does he approach it like everyone is a Jascha Heifetz?

SD: No. No.

SC: Or does he approach it like I'm going to make you the best you can be?

SD: No. No. He does not approach it that way. Through encouragement and praise, he in a way will overpraise his current group of students, every current group of students. For myself, on the other hand, I don't discourage anybody. But I feel that the student--unless they are totally under-developed as people--will know whether or not they're "number one". They'll know this. Even if they won't say it, they'll know it. Now a very young child won't know this, or an older student, who only lives to practice his instrument or her instrument, won't know that.

SC: When you were ten or eleven, did he make you feel like you were number one?

SD: No. I really didn't think about it. I was just a very ordinary, obnoxious kid. It was a chore to get me to sit down and play through the lesson. It was a chore for my parents, because I wanted to "goof-off". . . .

SC: . . . Did Leon have any studio recitals that you could attend to hear other clarinetists?

SD: Well, I remember one that took place in 1942 at the Steinway Building in New York.

SC: Right down from Carnegie Hall?

SD: Yes. They had a music room in that building called Steinway Hall. He gave a recital of his students. I opened the recital. I was the first one to play. I guess I was his youngest student at the time.

SC: About twelve or thirteen?

SD: Well, in '42. I was ten in '39, so . . .

SC: About twelve.

SD: About twelve.

SC: What did you play? Can you remember?

SD: Yes. I played two little pieces by Gregor Feedleberg that Bellison had arranged. One was called "To The Wedding" and the other was called "The Maypole" with piano accompaniment. I remember one of the other players on that recital was Jimmy Hamilton, who made a career with the Duke Ellington Orchestra for over thirty years--who is now retired and lives in St. Croix--who had a classical background studying the clarinet with Leon Russianoff. Probably one of the reasons he became such a great jazz clarinetist--(was) that he had the (classical) background. So I remember that recital. In fact, I still have the program at home.

SC: Great! I'd like to get a copy of that. Maybe Leon has it. . . . (Referring to WQXR interview) Leon goes on in the interview to say, "I'm not in the mainstream of so-called great teachers . . . I know I'm not in the mainstream of the tradition of great teachers . . . The biographies of the great artists, they will always evaluate their greatest teachers as the most punitive teachers; the ones who harassed them the most; the ones who scolded them the most. Well, that's just the opposite of where I'm at. I've been affected a lot by the work of my great wife. She's a movie star and a great writer. She has really influenced me in thinking about what they call positive reinforcement." Was Leon ever punitive or harassing to you?

SD: Well, I think Leon Russianoff is more involved in the psychological make-up of his students in the recent years, than in the days that I studied with him or that my wife studied with him. I think that's a recent development. When I say recent, I'm speaking of years, not months. So, I would disagree. He is in the mainstream of great teachers. What he probably means is that he, himself, did not have a performing career that he ended and became a teacher, like some people have done. I think of maybe some pianists or violinists who were great performers, but they felt that physically it became too much. Now they will impart everything they learned to their students. This is what I sense. If he speaks of himself as not in the mainstream, it's because of this. But I wouldn't agree with him on that. I think he doesn't have to have walked out on thousands of stages to applause or to booing to become a great teacher. So that's my evaluation of that comment.

SC: Describe the feeling that you had traveling to your lesson. Were you ever fearful when you were not prepared?

SD: At one period of time, he would write--he was a great writer of notes and things on your music. And he wrote "lousy" more than one time on mine. He would write fingerings and rhythms in. He would work things out with you very well. But the psychology part, I think that came later.

SC: Do you think that was mainly influenced by Penelope (Russianoff)?

SD: To an extent, I would say. In her teaching and work, in her success in helping people perhaps rubbed off--and he does help many people with this aspect (psychology). . . .

SC: . . . How did Leon react to you when you weren't prepared for your lesson?

SD: Like I said, he wrote "lousy" on my page more than once. He would scold and he would have me repeat things for several weeks and things like that.

SC: Do you think he would do that nowadays?

SD: Well, I don't know. Maybe others can give you that who study with him at present.

SC: Plus the fact that you were younger and maybe there needs to be a different approach there too.

SD: I don't know if he teaches anybody that young today. I kind of doubt it. I wonder what the age of his youngest student is now? I kind of doubt that he teaches anybody ten or eleven years old.

SC: Another question by (WQXR's) Robert Sherman was: "So many great teachers are major performers, and you say that you are not a great player. If you are not a great player, why can't you adapt all of what you are teaching and tell yourself that you are going to give something to the world and be a great player?" Leon's response was: "Well, when I say I am not a great player, it doesn't mean I am totally incompetent. I am a very, very good player. To be a great player requires other things beyond the skills of playing, techniques of playing, even the feeling for music. To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina; requires a tremendous amount of confidence, which I am better able to give than to achieve. It requires even more than that. It requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather

unpleasant abuse; to go through all these things with good cheer. And then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual." Do you agree with Leon's definition of a great player?

SD: I would agree with a lot of that. But I would disagree with the premise expounded by Sherman that one must be a great player to be a great teacher. I'll just cite the example of Leopold Auer, who was the teacher of Heifetz and Milstein; or in more recent days the late Ivan Galamian who was the teacher of Pearlman and Zuckerman; or Dorothy Delay, who teaches the current crop of great violin virtuosi, or someone like a Rosina Levine, who was a great piano pedagogue. There are others. They, themselves, in the case of the violin teachers, the famous ones, the three I mentioned, they were just, perhaps, nothing more than adequate players at best--certainly no one that ever played major recitals on major stages. Yet these great budding virtuosi all flock to these teachers. What is the answer? It's a contradiction. Why on one instrument must the teacher be a great player, and on another instrument, he's allowed not to be? Is the clarinet that much harder to teach than violin?

SC: Does Leon's definition describe you? "To be a really great player requires other things beyond the skills of playing techniques?"

SD: I agree with that totally. It requires a totality. There's such a thing as a total performance. Playing an instrument well is only one part of it. There has to be a certain kind of trait that can reach an audience, because we are in a performing medium. We don't just sit in a small room and play for ourselves. The real performer doesn't play for himself--they play for people. The essence of a great performance is one that's remembered by people for many years. Now, to get back to what is a great performance, the thing is, there is no right and wrong. It's what moves an audience--what amuses it, moves it, makes it cry, makes it laugh--that's what makes a performance. There may be regimented types of performances where things have to be just one way. But I'm speaking more in the sense of the solo performer in a recital situation. You may hear the same sonata played by six different players on an instrument--same piece--and you'll go away with a different impression of the work as presented by that performer. Now which is right? Which performance is correct? Some people prefer a bright sound; some people prefer a dull sound; some people like a certain section louder than softer; some people like notes longer or shorter. You're not dealing with an exact

thing in performing. It's probably the same in painting, or acting, or anything else, but because this is the arts, not the sciences. Russianoff, I would say, draws the most he can get out of a given student. One has to have this combination of abilities, not just talent alone. It's not enough. . . .

SC: . . . I'm still asking you if this (Leon's definition) describes you. Does this describe you? "To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina."

SD: Yes. It definitely requires stamina. When you figure in the major posts, orchestrally around the world, they play about two hundred concerts a year and the rehearsals that are required to put on those two hundred concerts. In addition, a lot of my colleagues carry a heavy load of teaching, which I don't. I'm on the Juilliard faculty, but I take very few students because of the time factor, and because I personally don't want to teach too many. Physically, it's very taxing. . .

SC: "Requires a tremendous amount of confidence?"

SD: There's no question about that.

SC: . . . "It requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather unpleasant abuse." . . .

SD: I would say that it depends on the individual. . . .

SC: . . . "then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual." Would you agree with that?

SD: Well, everyone is unusual in different ways. I know I'm talented. And I know I have drive and ambition. Still, I still like to play. And that's what it takes--to play.

SC: How old were you when you realized that you had something special that most people don't have?

SD: Well, I don't know if you realize it all at once. You don't realize it all at once.

SC: Certainly before you went to Indianapolis.

SD: At that age, you're very cocky and you're single-minded. You just go. It's not easy to pinpoint an exact time in my life.

SC: Leon mentioned something about his playing for eleven straight Broadway "flops". Did you ever go to hear your teacher play?

SD: No. No. That's when I was a child. But he did do some commercial playing, and he also played a couple of ballet tours with the Ballet Rousse de Monte Carlo.

SC: How would you describe Leon's clarinet playing abilities? . . .

SD: . . . He always had a very good embouchure, which he has to this day, which enables him to play anybody's mouthpiece and reed.

SC: Everyone says that. Everyone!

SD: He has what I would call a classic embouchure from appearance, which allows him to do that.

SC: Would you describe that?

SD: It just looks right. I don't know how you would describe it, but it looks right. I would say he has a concept. I'm sure he doesn't do any practicing, except a little bit of playing with his students. . . . probably the thing that would hold him back is probably his own personality--fear of perhaps not doing the best possible.

SC: He's a perfectionist? Is that what you're trying to say?

SD: No, I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't label anyone that way. . . . I would say that he knows his performing limitations. I think it's a question of nerves with Leon Russian-off as far as getting out in front of a large group of people on a stage, not to play or to demonstrate something, but to play a whole concert. I'm not speaking orchestrally; I'm speaking of as a soloist.

SC: So, you would agree when Leon said that "to be a great player requires a tremendous amount of confidence, which I'm better able to give than to achieve."

SD: I agree with him. He can analyze himself very well.

SC: Leon, in the same interview, mentions that he used to give you bottles of orange pop after the lessons. Do you remember that?

SD: Yes. I used to be a big pop drinker in those days. Flavored sodas were my beverage. . . .

SC: . . . That was a regular occurrence? You expected your bottle of pop after a lesson?

SD: Well, I don't know if it was regular, but that was my drink--flavored sodas. . . .

SC: . . . He mentions that he certainly realizes that your relationship has grown and prospered since you were his student. He mentioned that you were his best man at his wedding with Penelope Russianoff, and that he was your best man at your wedding with Naomi.

SD: Yes, that's correct. And our son is named for him. . . .

SC: . . . Okay. Leon also says that Stanley Drucker is the best clarinet player that has ever lived.

SD: Oh, there's no such thing. There's no such thing as the best anything. Maybe the best automobile, and I even doubt that. It's only the best of who thinks it's the best. It's a matter of choice--what somebody hears. If somebody hears something that they can hear and like, it's the best to them. It depends on what it is. You may be moved by one performance, and not moved by another. You're dealing with something that once the note is played, it's gone forever. It's what your memory tells you. Whether somebody uses one fingering as opposed to another doesn't make one a better player. There's no measurement. You can have six players playing the same piece, you'll have six different opinions as to which is the best, if there's such a thing as "the best".

SC: Do you think that it's unreasonable for Leon to make a statement like that?

SD: Well, we need labels in this country. Everything has to be labeled "the best" or "the worst". Probably other countries do too. . . .

SC: . . . Referring to Simeon Bellison, Leon describes him by saying, "He was into music, not the technique of music."

SD: I didn't know Simeon Bellison. I never really could answer any questions about Bellison.

SC: Well, my question is, would this statement appropriately describe Russianoff's teaching approach. "He was into music,

not the technique of music?"

SD: No, I wouldn't say so. He is into the technique of music. He teaches all the facets of performing music. . . .

SC: . . . When people come up to me questioning me about my study, they will ask, "Leon Russianoff? What's he like?" The quickest way I could describe Leon is to say that "He's sort of like a mature, sixty-five year old Woody Allen." Could you give me a concise one-liner description of Leon?

SD: Well, that's the physical description maybe. He looks a little bit like Woody Allen.

SC: Well, he's got great humor.

SD: He's exuberant. He's humorous.

SC: Spontaneous . . .

SD: Right. I would say he's a complex, very complicated man who has a lot to give and who people relate to easily and are drawn to. I think he's got a tremendous amount to give. He's giving it.

SC: Is there anything else that you would like to say for the record before we conclude this interview?

SD: No, I think you've covered him very well. . . . I wish you great success with this.

SC: Thanks.

SD: I hope you achieve your goals.

SC: I hope so too. And I really appreciate this. This has been a great interview, Stanley. Thank you very much.

SD: Okay. Good luck in every way.

SC: Thank you.

MICHELE ZUKOVSKY

Stephen Clark: What years did you study with Leon Russianoff?

Michele Zukovsky: I studied with him in the years of 1961-62.

SC: How old were you?

MZ: I was nineteen.

SC: And so you were a sophomore in college?

MZ: Actually, I was in the orchestra (Los Angeles Philharmonic) already. I figured I'd better get a viewpoint from another teacher other than my father, so I thought I'd take some lessons with him.

SC: Had you started your study at Southern California University?

MZ: No. Actually, the only teacher I ever had and owe most everything to was my father. So after that, I just took some lessons with Leon for further enrichment.

SC: Were you commuting back and forth from Los Angeles?

MZ: No. I stayed in New York. That was the time when there was a lot of time off with the orchestra, and they gave me time off.

SC: Who were your prominent clarinet teachers before Russianoff?

MZ: Just my father (Kalman Bloch).

SC: Can you elaborate on your father some?

MZ: Well, my father taught me when I was seven all the way up until the time I was fifteen or sixteen, and every once in a while he'd hear me after that. He gave me the basics of musicianship, putting a piece across, and all the

musicianship parts of clarinet playing--and technical as well.

SC: What was his background?

MZ: He studied with Simeon Bellison from the New York Philharmonic. So it's sort of the Russian school, you know, of just straightforward artistic playing.

SC: And he is a contemporary of Leon, right?

MZ: Yes.

SC: Did they both study with Bellison at the same time?

MZ: Yes.

SC: Interesting.

MZ: Yes. . . .

SC: . . . What led you to seek Russianoff as your clarinet teacher?

MZ: My father recommended him.

SC: And did he give any sort of specific recommendation as to what you would hope to gain from Russianoff?

MZ: You know, I don't know. I was so young. I didn't know what was happening. I just sort of went there. . . .

SC: . . . Did you have any preconceived ideas about Leon's teaching style before you studied with him?

MZ: No. I had no idea. . . .

SC: In your opinion, what were your most positive gains from studying with Russianoff?

MZ: He was incredibly sensitive to what every player, every student felt. He knows what you are thinking when you are playing. He knows what you are going through. He knows just exactly how the piece is coming through, you know, as an audience. He knows just what to tell each student. Every student he treats differently. He is an amazing psychiatrist and psychologist and an inspiration. I actually can not live without him. He stops teaching--I stop playing.

SC: Very good. Were these gains a product of Russianoff's strong points, or were they a result of your need and desire to improve specific areas in your clarinet playing?

MZ: I don't know. I don't know. I just think it is his teaching. He left me alone. He says I do everything wrong and just left me alone, except he made my playing a little more even. And he told me what my strong points were, which is very important for a teacher. I mean teachers will pick on sometimes the weak points and then the young person will come up sort of a defeated player with a few strong points added to his playing, which is just not the way to do it. It's all--it's all so psychological, playing anyway.

SC: What special qualities does Russianoff have to offer as a teacher? What do you think is the major reason for Russianoff's success? Does he possess superior personality, musical talent, technical methodology, command of verbal and nonverbal behavior, or maybe a combination of all these qualities?

MZ: You said it. That covers it (combination).

SC: Did Russianoff have a profound influence on your musicianship, your psychological approach to performing, or to your overall philosophy of life?

MZ: Yes. He gave me courage, absolute courage, to do what I want to do. Every once in a while I play for him, every couple of years, and he says "just do it--do what you are."

SC: Yes.

MZ: You know, it's amazing. So many people thwart themselves. He will not let that happen in each student. Some students are not very good, but they have something in them and he will bring it out. . . .

SC: . . . Was Russianoff dictatorial? In other words, was he ever insistent about you having to use his preferred set-up: mouthpiece, reeds, ligature, barrel, clarinet?

MZ: No. No.

SC: Was he insistent about your conforming to any preconceived molds of any kind?

MZ: No. None.

SC: So what you are actually saying is that he did realize and appreciate your individuality?

MZ: Yes.

SC: Can you recall Russianoff's normal weekly regimen--warmups, scales and arpeggios, method books, orchestral excerpts, etc.?

MZ: He had finger drills, and then we would do a study. I mean it was very basic, you know, and then we would just do a piece and that was it. Mostly it was just studies and pieces--just ordinary stuff really.

SC: Do any specific pieces come to mind?

MZ: I remember him showing me the Polatschek Studies and the Hindemith Concerto, Brahms Sonata--your basic ABC in clarinet playing.

SC: In your estimation, did most of your lesson time consist of playing or talking?

MZ: Fifty/fifty.

SC: Great! That was my next question. What was the percentage? And of the fifty percent that was talking, how many percent did the teacher do, as far as the talking?

MZ: You know Leon! (laughs)

SC: So the majority of the talking was done by him?

MZ: Yes.

SC: . . . In a post-doctoral study in 1974 by Carlesta Henderson entitled "Musical Accountability: A Measurement of Music Teacher Behaviors. Accentuating the Positive", Henderson found that "teachers are usually aware of their verbal behavior; however, they may be grossly unaware of the enormous power of many nonverbal clues they express through gesture, facial expression, posture, vocal tone, outward demeanor, or more importantly, the inconsistencies between their paired verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Nonverbal expressions convey attitudes and impressions which may affect the teaching-learning process." Do you think Russianoff is aware of and in control of his nonverbal behavior? If so, would you consider this one of his attributes as a teacher?

MZ: He seems to have two postures. He slumps sort of and he sounds terrible, or he is all excited and phonetic when it sounds great. So it is an obvious thing to read.

SC: In a study by Gordon Mehling in 1972, at Michigan State University entitled "An Analysis of College Undergraduates

and Music Teachers in Relation to Student Attitudes Towards Music", he says "College music teachers perceive the musical attitudes and needs of undergraduates to be less positive than they actually are." Did you see any evidence of this attitude in Russianoff?

MZ: No. Do you mean that he wasn't so positive?

SC: Did he underestimate your attitude or your drive or ambition?

MZ: No. He knew. He knows.

SC: Of course you had a pretty good job when you studied with him.

MZ: Yes. He knew right away with me, I have to admit. I mean, I could have had a job and still have had a crummy attitude.

SC: . . . In a study by Warren Lutz at the University of Illinois in 1963 entitled, "The Personality Characteristics and Experimental Backgrounds of Successful High School Instrumental Music Teachers", Mr. Lutz concludes that "Compared to unsuccessful teachers, successful teachers: ". . . were more capable of deep emotional response; . . . had a higher degree of emotional morale; worked harder for social approval; were less hostile; were more flexible; worried less; had broader interests; were happier and more self-satisfied; were more people-oriented; and more self-confident with regard to their professional and personal lives." Could you equate any or all of these definitive descriptions of successful teachers with Russianoff?

MZ: He is gregarious and follows all that and he's sensitive too. One wouldn't call him neurotic. He is just sort of sensitive. There is a vulnerability about him which is important too. He wasn't just a hard, cold brick. . . .

SC: . . . Have you incorporated any of Russianoff's teaching traits into your own teaching methodology? If so, was it a conscious, deliberate decision to do so?

MZ: I think I inherited it subconsciously because it has such good results. What can I do but include it.

SC: WQXR-FM Radio in New York had a broadcast entitled "Great Teachers" in which Robert Sherman asked Russianoff, "What makes a great teacher?" Leon answered this way: "As far as I really am concerned, I have to go with the field of psychology. The first thing you have to do is sort

of love people and especially love your students and feel that they have something special to offer the musical world and special to offer you as a teacher which you can sort of throw back at them sometime later." Did Leon reflect this philosophy during your study with him?

MZ: Absolutely!

SC: Leon further states in this interview: "I'm not in the mainstream of so-called great teachers. I know I'm not in the mainstream of the tradition of great teachers. The biographies of great artists will always evaluate their great teachers as their most punitive teachers, the ones who harassed them the most, the ones that scolded them the most, the ones that berated and insulted them the most. Well, that's just the opposite of where I'm at. I've been affected a lot by the work of my great wife. She's a movie star and a great writer. She has really influenced me in thinking about what they call positive reinforcement." Was Leon ever punitive or harassing to you?

MZ: No. With all due respect to Penny, I actually met Leon before he married Penny. But he was going with her at the time, so he probably was very strongly influenced because he had just met her. But it is all exactly what I went through (before Penny's influence).

SC: Positive reinforcement?

MZ: Yes. Positive reinforcement. But he never lies. He will always tell you exactly the truth. . . .

SC: So what you are saying is, Leon sort of alludes to the fact that Penny helped him develop the psychological approach--positive reinforcement. But are you trying to tell me that Leon had a natural inclination to this positive reinforcement before?

MZ: Yes. He was opened to it.

SC: He sort of put a "handle" on it? (Positive reinforcement)

MZ: Yes.

SC: I think Larry Combs used that terminology.

MZ: Yes. He put a "handle" on it. Exactly.

SC: Okay. Describe the feeling that you had traveling to your lesson. Were you ever fearful when you weren't prepared?

MZ: No. Never. I don't know because I didn't have the ordinary sort of lessons. I didn't have to prepare that much.

SC: How did Leon react to your non-preparedness?

MZ: I think he thought I was a little crazy at the time, so he just sort of went along with it.

SC: Okay. Leon further states that, ". . . since I am not a great player--Stanley says I am the best eight-bar player he knows, but beyond that I get a little mixed up. . . ." How would you describe Leon's clarinet playing abilities?

MZ: . . . I heard him and I played duets with him and Stanley and Naomi (Drucker) when I was at that tender age. We went over to Stanley's house. Leon played more than eight bars. I think clarinet duets have more than eight bars in them. It was a real sweet tone and very pretty playing and a real nice, neat little technique and very delicate musicianship.

SC: How long ago was this?

MZ: A billion years ago.

SC: Was it 1961?

MZ: Yes. . . .

SC: . . . The next question by Robert Sherman was: "So many great teachers are major performers, and you say that you are not a great player. If you are not a great player, why can't you adapt all of what you are teaching and tell yourself that you're going to give something to the world and be a great player?" And Leon's response was: "Well, when I say that I am not a great player, that doesn't mean that I'm incompetent. I'm a very, very good player. To be a great player really requires other things beyond the skills of playing, techniques of playing, even the feeling for music. To be a great first clarinet player requires stamina; requires a tremendous amount of confidence, which I'm better able to give than achieve. It requires the ability to suffer and sustain some rather unpleasant abuse. To go through all these things with good cheer. And then above all, it takes a feeling that you have inside that genetically, somehow or other, you have a certain something that is very unusual." Do you agree with Leon's definition of a great player?

MZ: That's part of it.

SC: Would you like to expand on that?

MZ: Yes. I think a great player is able to transcend and communicate the music to an audience. A great player is--I don't even like that word--I like great communicator. Clarinet playing is not within my realm. You have to perfect the clarinet and you have to master the instrument. Then one must not be aware of great playing, but rather a great musician. That's what I feel. That's where Leon and I might differ a little bit. . . .

SC: . . . Does Leon's definition of a great player describe you?

MZ: Only partially. I can't stand abuse. I can't stand playing in an orchestra mostly. It bores the hell out of me.

SC: But you have been able to weather this.

MZ: I can barely weather it, frankly. . . .

SC: . . . In the same interview (WQXR), Leon talks about Stanley Drucker. Stanley studied with him ever since he was ten years old. So his approach with Stanley may have been a little different. He says that Stanley went through a method book every week, and that at the end of his lesson, Leon always gave him a bottle of orange pop.

MZ: Oh, really! . . . A method book each week?

SC: Right!

MZ: Gosh! I mean how many method books are there? He must have finished his studies in two years. . . . Wow!

SC: Can you remember anything like that? Did Leon give you orange pop?

MZ: Oh, no. I graduated to lemonade by the time I was nineteen. No, and I certainly didn't go through (a method book a week) . . . God! (laughs)

SC: Talking about Simeon Bellison, your father's teacher and Leon's teacher, Leon uses the word "dignity" to describe Bellison. He goes on further and states, "He was into music, not the technique of music." Would this statement appropriately describe Russianoff's teaching approach?

MZ: No. Russianoff changed. He is a totally different

person. No. He is into the technical end of it and mastering it. . . . That is why he is such a great teacher. Because he does not let the "technique" get in the way. Look at all these players like Charlie Neidich and all these incredible students of Leon's.

SC: When friends of mine that may be non-musicians or certainly non-clarinetists ask me to describe Leon Russianoff, the quickest one-liner description I can give of Leon is that he is sort of a mature, sixty-five year old Woody Allen. Now, could you give me some concise one-liner description of Leon?

MZ: He looks like Woody Allen, but . . . I know he looks like him.

SC: And he is very spontaneous with his humor.

MZ: What did Larry Combs (principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony) say?

SC: Larry Combs said he is a "wise kook".

MZ: Oh. (long pause) An extremely serious, dedicated, loving teacher!

SC: Okay.

MZ: That's it. I don't see him that other way at all. I mean that's all so . . .

SC: You mean the "wise kook"?

MZ: I see all of that just as his personality, I mean his outward personality. But that's not his inward personality. . . . He's incredibly complex!

SC: But he does a good job with masking that complexity.

MZ: Absolutely! Great man!

SC: Just for the record, Michele, is there anything else you would like to say on the subject of Leon Russianoff before we conclude this interview?

MZ: If he stops teaching--I stop playing. I can't live without him. Yet, I could live without him, but I feel that he is my inspiration. He and my father, both.

SC: You are almost talking like he is your guru.

MZ: No. No. Just that he is the one who gives me faith in myself. He inspires me to play and inspires me to play a certain successful way. It's unbelievable! Really, the guy is incredible! . . . I have faith in myself, but I need sometimes--I need him and only him to tell me. . . .

SC: . . . Thanks a lot Michele. I appreciate your time.

MZ: Sure, my pleasure.

APPENDIX C

A LIST OF LITERATURE THAT HAS INFLUENCED LEON RUSSIANOFF'S PHILOSOPHY

A LIST OF LITERATURE THAT HAS INFLUENCED
LEON RUSSIANOFF'S PHILOSOPHY
(Compiled by Russianoff on February 3, 1983)

*Aeschylus -- Agamemnon

Baldwin, James -- The Fire Next Time

*Briffault, Robert -- The Mothers--3 volumes, Reasons for Anger, Europa, Europa in Limbo

Chekhov, Anton -- The Three Sisters

*Clarke, John -- Malcolm X

Cleaver, Eldridge -- Soul on Ice

Dostoevski, Fydor -- The Idiot, Brothers Karamazov, Crime and Punishment

Durant, Will and Ariel -- The Story of Civilization--8 volumes

***Ellis, Albert, and Harper, Robert A. -- A Guide For Rational Living

*Engels, Friedrich -- various works

Epictetus -- various works

Fast, Howard -- Citizen Tom Paine

Faulkner, William -- various works

Frazier, Sir James George -- The New Golden Bough

*Fromm, Erich -- Escape From Freedom

*Gallwey, W. Timothy -- The Inner Game of Tennis

Gibbon, Edward -- The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

Gogol, Nikolai -- Dead Souls

Hesse, Hermann -- Demian

Homer -- Iliad and Odyssey

Horney, Karen -- Collective Writings

*Ibsen, Henrik -- The Wild Duck, An Enemy of the People

James, Henry -- Daily Miller

*Joyce, James -- Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Lawrence, D.H. -- Sons and Lovers

Lewis, Sinclair -- Babbitt

*Marx, Karl -- various works

Mead, Margaret -- Male and Female

Melville, Hermann -- Billy Budd, Moby-Dick

Miller, Arthur -- Death of a Salesman

*Montagu, Ashley -- various works

*Odets, Clifford -- Waiting For Lefty

O'Neill, Eugene -- The Iceman Cometh

*Orwell, George -- 1984

Plato -- Dialogues

Russell, Bertrand -- Conquest of Happiness

Shakespeare, William -- Falstaff, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet

Sartre, Jean-Paul -- Nausea, The World

Shaw, George B. -- Man and Superman

Shirer, William -- The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

*Sophocles -- Antigone, Oedipus Rex

Tolstoy, Count Leo -- Death of Ivan Ilyich

Wright, Richard -- Native Son

*represents most important influences

LEON RUSSIANOFF: CLARINET PEDAGOGUE

BY: STEPHEN LEE CLARK

MAJOR PROFESSOR: DAVID E. ETHERIDGE, D.M.A.

One of the best indicators of a teacher's effectiveness is the degree of professional success attained by his students. Using this criterion, Leon Russianoff has to be considered one of the most effective and successful clarinet teachers in the world. His former students include some of the world's most outstanding clarinetists.

The primary research for this study is comprised of personal interviews with Russianoff, his wife and daughter, and eleven of his notable former clarinet students. The information obtained from these interviews provides an in-depth tracing of Russianoff's philosophical and methodological evolution which spans nearly five decades of teaching.

This study reveals that Russianoff did not arrive at his phenomenal success in the presupposed fashion. For instance, Russianoff attended the City College of New York in Manhattan--not one of the other more prestigiously renowned schools in the New York City area. He majored in English and Sociology, and has never taken any college music courses. Russianoff did not pursue any formal academic study beyond

his Bachelor's degree. And finally, Russianoff has never held a major or near major performing job on the clarinet.

Despite his lack of impressive academic and performing credentials, Russianoff now teaches the clarinet at a number of highly renowned schools and universities including the Juilliard and Manhattan Schools of Music.

Perhaps the most difficult obstacle that Russianoff had to overcome on his way to success was his pervasive inferiority complex. Russianoff never believed that he had the innate talent required to be a first-rate performer. This severe lack of self-confidence seriously impaired his willingness to risk the potential embarrassment of dealing with the high pressure of auditioning. Ironically, the single most fundamental and valuable aspect of Russianoff's teaching is his ability to instill self-confidence in his students through his use of positive reinforcement.

It is believed that Russianoff's unique teaching approach, which is designed to instill self-confidence and encourage individuality in his students, can benefit not only other clarinet teachers, but all teachers in general.