

Vivian Fine: American Music Series Interviews

Courtesy of [Oral History, American Music](#), Yale University, Interviewer: Frances Harmeyer

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H. [I am talking with] Vivian Fine at her home in Bennington, Vermont. I'd like to start with background questions, like, you were born in Chicago?

F. Right.

H. And started piano when you were really quite young.

F. Five.

H. Five, right. Did your parents decide that that was a good thing for you to do, or, was that, I don't know how much you can decide when you're five.

F. Actually, it was I who insisted that I have piano lessons. My older sister, who's three years older than I am, was having violin lessons, and I had had contact with a piano at an aunt's house, and I remember being fascinated with the sound of the piano. And, I, one day, burst into tears and had a fit, and told my mother I had to have piano lessons. She, having no idea of this intense feeling on my part, was quite surprised, and, of course, gave me lessons. She taught me first. My mother knew a little bit about playing the piano, and is actually a musical person. So she taught me for a little while and then she got a neighborhood teacher for me, and then very shortly after that, I got a scholarship at the Chicago Musical College. This was still before I was six.

H. Oh, my goodness. How long were you at the Chicago school?

F. I think I stayed for three years. It was shortly before I was six when I got it, and I left there before I was nine. I stayed there and then I studied with a series of private teachers in Chicago. The most important of these teachers was a woman by the name of Djane Lavoie-Herz, who was, I think, I believe she's still alive now, who had been in contact with Scriabin, had studied with him, or at least had been in his circle, and from her I got to know Scriabin's music. I worked with her on some of the works, and actually, at that time, I started to work with her when I was eleven, began playing the late works of Scriabin, in, say, 1928. I have a piece, the opus 74, Preludes, which was his last opus. I had the notation there, that I played them in 1928. Looking back on that, I realize that those were written in 1914. That was just fourteen years before 1928. To me, at that time, they belonged to the past, music of the past. I was very excited about them and very interested in them, but I realize now that fourteen years wasn't such a very, very long time. So I was really, in a sense, playing new music, quite new music at that time.

H. Oh, right.

F. And I was very fortunate to be able to work with her on these pieces which she had heard Scriabin play. She was also the piano teacher for Ruth Crawford, who later became Ruth Crawford Seeger. And it was through her that I met Ruth Crawford, and through Djane Herz that I also began to study with Ruth Crawford. Madame Herz, as we called her, she was Canadian, French--Canadian background, she wanted me to have harmony lessons, so it started out with my studying harmony with Ruth Crawford. I must have been a little under twelve then, and one day she asked me to write a piece; I had been studying a little bit of theory, actually, no harmony, but just theory. I still have those old notebooks with the modes and writing notes on enharmonic change. She asked me to write a piece, and I wrote a piece, I still have that piece, too. And I could see that she listened to it with great attention, and ever since, after that, I composed constantly. I never stopped composing. But it really grew out of her asking me to write a piece. I don't know what would have happened if she hadn't asked me to write a piece, and also her reaction to it. Perhaps nothing more would have happened if she'd have asked me, but her reaction, and her also being a composer. And through her I met, and through Madame Herz, I also met Henry Cowell and Dane Rudhyar. This was when I was still in my early teens, fourteen or fifteen years old. And these and Ruth Crawford, herself, became very important influences in my life.

H. Did Ruth Crawford--you studied with her when you were in your teens?

F. Yes, that's right, from about the time I was about twelve through until I was seventeen. A long time, and we became good friends.

H. Did you want to be a composer--did you tell Ruth Crawford that you wanted to be a composer, or was it something you did outside of your playing the piano? What kind of professional aspirations did you have when you were in your teens?

F. Well, that's an interesting question, because I never wanted to be a composer. I was a composer. I never thought about that. I never wanted to be a composer, in that sense. I didn't think "well, you know, it's something I'd like to do." I began to compose and actually never thought of myself as a composer. I was, soon after that, say, when I was about fourteen, composing became my main activity. I quit high school, I couldn't stand it. I told my mother I didn't want to go to high school, and that was alright with her.

H. Wonderful!

F. Yes, it was marvelous. [laughter] What I did four or five hours a day was to compose, and I had many of these early compositions. They were pretty wild. I, early, became very much interested and drawn into the avant-garde contemporary idiom of the time through Ruth Crawford mainly, I suppose, and also through my contact with Madame Herz, with late Scriabin works. So I began to compose and I began to know composers at that time, some of the most interesting composers in the United States. But I never said, "Well, I'll become a composer." I just was composing and people were looking at my music and then when I was sixteen and a half, Henry Cowell had one of my works performed, a work for solo oboe, performed by the Pan-American Society for Contemporary Music. It was one of the important societies at the time, founded by himself and Varèse and Ives. So that I was a composer. In my piano playing, I

had had the kind of education that children who are early gifted in childhood, not the education so much, but I was given the aspirations to be, quote "a great pianist, to play the literature." But this never came about in my composing. I just composed, and I composed in the idiom of the people who were close to me were interested in--an avant-garde idiom. So that it never occurred to me "Well, I'm going to become a composer"--I composed. To me that would be a very, I think this is, would be an odd question for a person to ask themselves, though I suppose, it's possible to say, "Yes, I will be a painter," and decide to be a painter. I suppose this could come about. But, it was too early, I was too young. It began too early for me to formulate this in terms of a career, and the professionalism just happened. As I say, I had my first important performance, my first performance, with an important organization. Then I was published when I was nineteen. So things happened very quickly for me, and I had had other European performances.

H. What was your first published work?

F. The first published work was "The Four Songs" which were published in the New Music edition, and interestingly enough, there was just in the last issue of Perspectives of New Music--there is an analysis of one of these songs, by Steven Gilbert, who teaches out at the State University at Fresno. I don't know him, but he was looking at the works in the New Music Edition, and he liked this--these songs of mine very much and he gave it an extended analysis. An analysis that I found most interesting, but which as far as I can recall, had no part in my conscious thinking at the time. That's not to invalidate the analysis.

H. When you moved to New York, which was in 1931, did you know people in New York? Is that why you moved, or what?

F. Yes, I wanted, well, Henry Cowell was here, and there was no one left really for me to study with. Ruth had gone off, she'd gotten a Guggenheim. The previous year, in, I guess, 1930, she went to New York to study with Charles Seeger. She left. She actually had a scholarship with Adolph Weidig at the American Conservatory of Music. So I studied harmony and composition with him, much to the learned gentleman's bewilderment. He was a very fine person, a fine musician and has written a good harmony book. But I didn't do things the orthodox way and I was, I imagine, somewhat of a bewilderment to him. But, anyway, I did study with him then. And then when Ruth left, and I realized that I didn't want to go on studying with Professor Weidig--he was a scholar and composer of a very definite traditional school. So there was only one place for me to go and that was New York. I thought of going to study with Charles Seeger, who Ruth studied with and later married. I don't know why we didn't pursue that. I seem to remember one lesson, and I remember a lesson or two with Wallingford Riegger, but that wasn't pursued. In the end, it was a few years later, in 1934, I guess it was, I began to study with Roger Sessions, and by that time a whole new climate had set in, as far as the avant-garde. It was the end of the avant-garde really, the end of an era.

H. In New York?

F. All over the country.

H. Oh.

F. If you look at the music in the New Music Editions, you see it becoming more, less and less avant-garde. Why this happened, I think, is an involved question, having to do partly with the Depression, certainly. But it was a period, during which Varèse didn't write for ten, eleven, or twelve years. It was just not a propitious time for experimental music, and I stopped writing experimental music, and began to write much more conventional music. And only returned to, began to return slowly, to this earlier idiom around 1946.

H. There's an article by Wallingford Riegger in one of the American Composers Alliance Bulletins about your music. He divided your music, your composition, into three different periods which sound like what you just said. I was wondering if you agreed with that.

F. Yes, absolutely. And what would have been, the twelve-tone composers like Milton Babbitt and some others, continued to write twelve-tone music during this period, when Schoenberg was in this country at this time. But the composers I'm talking about really weren't twelve-tone composers, they were experimental composers. And almost all of them stopped writing. Ruggles didn't write, or wrote almost nothing. Cowell's music changed entirely, and so there must have been some large forces at work to have caused us all to change.

H. Let me see--when you were in New York, you were always performing new music, and from what I've been able to gather from the literature that I've read, you were somewhat of a leader, a revolutionary, maybe, in that aspect. You formed the American Composers Alliance?

F. I was one of the founders of the Alliance. Actually, there was another organization that we had before, I forget the exact name of it, and the headquarters for it was my apartment on Bleeker Street. Wallingford Riegger was a part of that too. And this group was active in forming the American Composers Alliance. I was very active in performing new music in the '30s. I gave a number of first performances, some of the first performances of music by Ruth Crawford, Carlos Chavez, Ives, and other people. And I had spent a lot of time in Chicago when I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, playing a lot of this music, just on my own. I didn't study this with my teacher, and it stood me in good stead, when it came to perform, this was considered very difficult music, at that time.

H. What kind of opposition did you run across, from the traditional musical scene in New York, when you were in the avant-garde? Were there critical reviews of all this "new music?"

F. Well, at that time, when I first came to New York, that must have been in the winter of, couldn't have been 1931, must have been the winter of '32, or maybe the fall of '32. Copland formed, he didn't form really so much, but he attracted to himself, a group of young composers: Henry Brant was among them, and Elie Siegmeister, was Elie Siegmeister in the group, yes, I think he was. Well, anyway, we would meet fairly regularly, maybe once a week or once every two weeks at Copland's place, and play each other's music. I won't say there was a lot of brotherly and sisterly love, but we were a group interested in each other's music, and occasionally we'd have visitors. I remember George Antheil came to visit the group and see

what we were doing. We were really the young people. Some of them were under twenty like myself and Henry Brant. Most of us were--probably the oldest was twenty-five.

H. Oh, my goodness.

F. Really young composers. So there was a group of young people that made life easier for us. We just weren't completely isolated. And I remember Virgil Thomson was also a visitor. I remember him saying to me at that time, "You have a good name for a composer." And Aaron said to him, "You wouldn't like her music." [laughter] Subsequently, Virgil did like my music and was very helpful to me. Now, your question was the isolation, about the criticism. My answer is that there was a group, there was also the League of Composers there. They performed my Four Songs. Also, there was one other group or associated with the group, was Arthur Berger, who at that time was doing very little composing, but was a critic for the New York Daily Mirror. I think, yes, that was it. And he was a staunch advocate of new music and of my music so that there was at least one good review.

H. Wonderful. [laughter]

F. Reviews are strange things, you know, and one wonders about the role in one's life. This work that you mentioned hearing in New York this year, The Great Wall of China, which I wrote in 1947. When it was first performed at Columbia, Olin Downes gave it a crushing review, which crushed--which I wasn't very happy about. But this year it got favorable mention from the critic in the Times. Probably, one shouldn't be affected too much by these things. And I certainly am less affected by them than I was then. But for a young composer it's different. When you're twenty years old, what appears in the paper seems very important.

H. For sure. I was wondering if being a leader in the avant-garde in New York, if you had trouble being part of founding the American Composers Alliance, but I suppose that nucleus of composers around Aaron Copland kept everyone going.

F. Well, actually, it was really taken over at that point by Copland, William Schuman and a group of composers who were much more successful than I was.

H. How did you come in contact with Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham and--were you a dancer?

F. No, no, I wasn't. When I came to New York in 1931, during the depths of the depression, I didn't have any money. My parents had given me \$50, which was very kind of them, and my railroad fare. And there was no question in my mind that I would have to support myself. I was eighteen years old. The thing that occurred to me to do was to be a dance accompanist. And so I started in that field and was "successful." That is, I was busy as I could possibly, as I wanted to be. And very shortly I became the pianist for Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. I used to play their concerts and tour for them, tour with them, and then I began, they asked me to write music for them. And I wrote two large ballets for them: The Race of Life for Doris and Opus 51 for Charles and [indistinct]. The work with Martha Graham was much later. I stopped writing dance music about 1938. I realized that I was--it was taking up a lot of my time, and I felt I was

going too far into writing music for dance, so I stopped writing music for dance, but I didn't write anything more until 1960, when I wrote the *Alcestis* for Martha Graham. And then in 1964-65, I wrote a work for José Limon.

H. What are your favorite genres? Do you have one, or, I read an article that named you as one of the great American songwriters, and talked about--

F. Where did you read that? I haven't read it.

H. Let me see, I can't remember who wrote it or where-- it's in my notes, I can show you.
[laughter]

F. Fine, it's just the same. Well you mean, genre in the sense of do I like to write chamber music or orchestra music? Is that what you mean? Not idiom?

H. I probably meant idiom.

F. No, no, do you mean idiom, or do you mean the type of music? Do you mean style? Are you talking about what people call style? Do I write tonal music or whether I prefer to write chamber music or orchestra music?

H. I'd like to know about both of those things. Start with idiom.

F. Let's just call it types of music, whether I like to write chamber music, orchestra music or choral music. It really doesn't matter at all to me. It doesn't make any difference at all. Lately, I've been working a lot with words. I've written a big piece, twenty-four-five minute piece for eight singers, and string quartet. I'd originally thought of having it done with a small chorus, but I think the chances of it being done with a small chorus are not too great. It's not an easy piece, but it will be fine with eight singers. And I've loved working with that, and now I'm writing a big piece for orchestra and chorus and soloists. Now, I'm looking forward to the time I can write a piano concerto, that's probably, after I write a chamber opera, which I'm obligated to do and I want to do, I'll write a piano concerto. It really doesn't matter at all to me. I've written a great deal of chamber music, just because it's been next to impossible for me to have any orchestral performances. So that, it doesn't make much sense to write music, a piece of music which you're not going to hear. I love to write for orchestra, and will try to find opportunities in the future to have works performed. So as far as that goes, it doesn't make any difference to me. I can get very interested in writing a piece for solo flute, which I wrote recently.

H. Oh boy!

F. That's for you, Frances. And--I just get interested in the work I'm writing. As far as idiom goes, it's perfectly true my idiom has changed over the years, in various ways, but, I suppose-- let's put it this way, composing is composing and I certainly have been affected by some of the ideas that came into being in the late fifties and the sixties of, how shall I say, music that was less sequential in the old-fashioned sense, that followed a certain kind of syntax or sequence, which

developed from the past. But I don't--the pieces of mine in the past that I consider valid, musically, are just that to me. So that I just write in the idiom I'm writing at that time.

H. One of the major considerations of what you write is the possibility of it being performed?

F. It's getting to be more and more that. Often I would write a work, just because I wanted to write it and would just hope to get it performed. But I do less and less of that now, just because it just becomes terribly difficult to do that. In the last two or three years, I've had quite a few one-woman shows, that is, concerts just of my music. And I found that a very gratifying format. And for such a concert I would write, for instance--one concert in New York I produced myself. I got very wonderful colleagues, my colleagues at Bennington, and Jan DeGaetani, singer, to perform. I asked them to perform, and they were glad to. So, I mean, I produced it in that sense. And the songs, there were some songs that I had especially written for Jan. But now, I either would like to have a commissioned work or at the very least a performance possibility.

H. Where was this concert of all your music?

F. That was in 1973 and we did it at Finch College Concert Hall in New York, and this was--I felt so good doing that, that subsequently, I think I've given about seven or eight, but most of the rest of them have been at various colleges, at Mills College, Berkeley, and Hayward in California. I gave one at SUNY in New York, in New York State and so on. So, it isn't that I just perform myself, it's just all my own music and other people help me perform it. I find it a very favorable way for me to present my music, because it isn't just one piece that people hear in isolation.

H. That's wonderful. Is it important for you to conduct your own works, the works that need a conductor? Do you prefer to do that?

F. Well, in the past this wasn't so. I have two recordings, both made in Japan, so I didn't supervise the rehearsals, or anything about it. The conductor just had the score. And I find them very satisfying and gratifying to do. One is a piece for orchestra, and another piece is for, well, both are orchestra pieces. So that was just fine. It worked out beautifully. When it's been necessary for me to conduct, I'm glad to do it, but I'm glad to have a competent conductor who is interested in presenting my music, conduct it.

H. Have you ever had any difficulty, like when you were a young struggling composer in New York, did you have any difficulty being taken seriously as a composer, since composition is traditionally a male dominated field?

F. Well, in this composers' group, for instance, I was the only woman. I was the person who was exceptional, like the exceptional surgeon, or the exceptional engineer, the person who was the exception, and so that particular problem I never ran up against with my colleagues. Sometimes, people say strange things to me. At a performance of one of my ballets which had been orchestrated, a composer said to me, a mature, good composer, "I like the orchestration very much, did you do it yourself?" [laughter] And I said, "Well, don't you do yours?" [laughter] And so there are these lingering doubts. How can a woman orchestrate with authority

or imagination? But I was really taken very seriously from the beginning by Henry Cowell and the other people that I mentioned.

H. I would imagine that that had a lot to do with your taking yourself seriously. It seems that you never had any doubt about what you were doing. You simply composed because you composed.

F. Yes, yes, I suppose that was it.

H. What about being published, or being performed? Any problem like that?

F. You mean, about, because I'm a woman? Well, I began to be conscious of this aspect of composing, not of composing, but of a composer's career, because I don't think it affected my composing, but my career.

H. Right.

F. I began to be aware of this, in the last ten, or twelve maybe fifteen years. And now I do think that it's, it must play a role, as it plays a role in the rest of society--can't separate a composing career from other kinds of careers. Of course, more women are, there are more women, now, composing. There's often a kind of tokenism associated with what they do for women. There'll be a series of concerts; there'll be one woman composer on it or maybe two. Composing is a highly competitive field, that is, getting performances is highly competitive business. As long as you have men running things, the likelihood of there being a complete equality there is not entirely assured. So I would say that this is a social problem. Right now, because it's Women's International Year, I get a lot of requests for my music and for performances, almost all from women, though, almost entirely from women. There are some requests from "male institutions," but the surge of interest is from women. And I'm very pleased about that. I have my doubts about separate organizations for women. I haven't resolved this in my mind.

H. What do you mean separate organizations?

F. Well, someone I know, a composer, that I know personally, I got a letter asking me to join a league of women composers.

H. Oh, right.

F. Do you know about that?

H. I know of that, yes.

F. My reaction was, not so much negative towards the organization, but I didn't feel inclined to join it myself. And perhaps it's just that I'm not joining at this point, that I'm making my statement as a composer and, because I happen to be a woman, as a woman, as an individual now. I was active in organizations like the Alliance for a long time. Perhaps that's it. But, there certainly is a need for bringing these problems to the surface. I was told that the Whitney

Museum in New York, which runs an annual American show, raised its percentage of works by women from 6% to 23% because of pressure by a feminist group of women artists. Now, that kind of thing I think is very good. Just, somehow I'm not into doing that myself or joining with things of this kind.

H. But you support that?

F. Oh yes, I certainly do. I certainly do. It's recognized that this is an area that needs attention--when they begin to change the juries a little bit, now, to include women; juries having to do with awards or grants. And, but this is part of a whole social climate that affects men and women alike, affects all of us. The ideal of equality of persons, is still something we are going to have to work at.

H. Ah, that seems to be hard.

F. Yes! [laughter]

H. Let me see, did you know Claire Reis?

F. Yes..

H. Miriam Gideon?

F. Oh yes, Miriam is a very old and good friend of mine.

H. Oh, wonderful.

F. Yes, we've been friends for a long, long time. She was also a Sessions pupil. Our thirty year friendship--a long time. And Claire Reis, was the, as you know, President of the League of Composers. That's Claire Reis you're talking about?

H. Yes.

F. Well, yes, I would meet her in New York. Works of mine were played by the League.

H. What about the Yaddo Festivals? What are those?

F. Well, I don't know how long they continued. I took part, I think, it was the first Yaddo Festival. It was Copland, was really instrumental in organizing. And I played some pieces of mine, Four Polyphonic Piano Pieces. And I look back on them, they're horrendously difficult. I don't know how I played them. They continued, I think, for a while, maybe into the '40s, to the early 40s. But I didn't have anything to do with them after that first festival.

H. Oh, I see. In Massachusetts?

F. No, no. That was in Saratoga Springs at Yaddo.

H. Oh, I had that all wrong. Let's see, do you have a lot of women students? Here at Bennington?

F. Well, when I first came here, it was entirely female. That was in 1964. And now, well, it varies. The first year--I'm on sabbatic leave now, so I have to think back to last fall. My first year class consisted of, I think, fourteen or fifteen women and one man. Other classes, I can have more men in them, sometimes even a preponderance of men. And I hear, in the electronic music studio, most of the students are men that sign up for these courses, which says something. But we have talented women at Bennington and I hope that the feeling of composing is a natural thing for a woman to do, will continue here. I think that was one of the reasons they wanted to have a woman composer on the staff. They'd never had one here before, and I certainly think that this is very important anywhere, to have a woman. Looking back, I realize that it was of incalculable importance that I had Ruth Crawford as a teacher and as a model in my life. This is why it feels natural to me to be a composer, totally natural. And without that, I might have felt a little bit like a fish out of water.

H. Did Ruth Crawford give you any words of wisdom when you stopped studying with her, or when you moved to New York, about holding your own, apart from your art, just as a woman?

F. No, no. It was, she actually stopped, well, she stopped composing entirely; I continued to write. She went into, she married Charles Seeger, as you know, and raised a family. She had four children, and she got very involved in folk music in Washington. She stopped writing the other kind of music. And I also got married. I didn't have children until 1942. But it was a period of, really quiescence about the woman question, or whatever you want to--I'm doing a piece now for orchestra and chorus which revolves around the fourteenth amendment, which is very interesting. Do you know about the fourteenth amendment?

H. Does that have to do with the ERA?

F. No, no, no, that's way back--this is the time of the Civil War. At the time of the Civil War, the, I just came upon this reading casually, came upon this fact which is known to any historian. After the Civil War there was a split among the Abolitionists. They wanted, the men wanted to give the black man the vote, the freed black man the Vote, but they refused to give it to the women. And the women Abolitionists, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, all of them were outraged, that after their work to free the Black man, they were to be denied the vote, both black and white women. This was an intensely passionate struggle. And really a great moment of, in the period of, in the period of suffrage--this was really a heroic period. And I'm not a student of the suffrage movement. But, certainly, in the time when, we're talking about, the '30s and '40s, this was what was happening with women, was not separated out, or people were not aware of the subjection of women. They were very much involved in some ways, in some ways that are similar to the third world countries, with economic problems. In the depression it would have seemed comparatively unimportant, as I look back on it. "Well, how are women being treated?" when "How will I live, how will I work, what to do about economic and social inequities." The black man's situation was much more in the forefront then. There's the lynching and terrible things that were happening in the South. And in the '40s and '50s, after

the war, certainly there was a, very sort of blah period about this. So, Ruth and I never spoke about ourselves as women composers. I never thought of myself as a woman composer and I wasn't referred to as a woman composer until fairly recently, which certainly I don't like. It is because you don't say men composers. I'm a composer who happens to be a woman, and some people think, in particular in England and other countries, I think, I'm a man because I spell my name with an ending in "a-n." So they think I'm a man. So I don't like this designation of woman composer, at all.

H. It seems to me that there's a line drawn, or a line that gets confused between women, in the business of the arts and women and their creation of it.

F. Right, exactly.

H. It's just a terrible line to be confused, because it misses the point of a lot of things.

F. Yes, yes.

H. To get back to your music, in particular, "A Guide to the Life Expectancy of a Rose." That sounds wonderful. When did you write that? Was that one of your early works?

F. No, I wrote that in 1956 and that was a commission from the Bethsabée de Rothschild Foundation in New York.

H. What exactly is that?

F. Well, it's no longer an active foundation. Bethsabée was a friend of mine and, she's of the French Rothschilds, and I got to know her here. She now lives in Israel and supports many things in Israel. And she asked me to be the music director for her foundation here. We gave a series of very fine concerts in New York City. And the "Guide to the Life Expectancy of a Rose" is the exact name of an article that appeared in the New York Times Garden Section. And the work is scored for, I think, five instruments and a man and a woman singer. It tells about the growing of roses, what will live and what will die, and what has to be pruned away. And this became a dialogue about the relationship between this man and this woman, expressed through this language of the growing of roses.

H. Wonderful. That's great. What other works did you write for the concerts at the Rothschild Foundation.

F. I wrote only one other work, which was a work called "Valedictions" to texts--poems by John Donne. It's scored for I think--I forget--it's mixed chorus, two soloists and a small ensemble, about nine or ten instruments. And that work has not been subsequently performed again. It was performed in New York.

H. You must have been reading the New York Times and came across that article about the rose. Did it strike you just then as an idea, or how did you get an inspiration to write such a song?

F. Well, I just loved the title; I just saw it. I remember clipping it out. It seemed to me so beautiful. "A Guide to the Life Expectancy of a Rose"; it's just sheer poetry. And, of course, for something to strike you, there has to be something cooking inside yourself. And sometimes you're not aware of what's cooking.

[End of Side a]

[Beginning of Side b]

H. Okay, as you were saying.

F. Yes. When I'm made aware that something is taking place inside by the response to something that one comes across on the outside--

H. When you get ideas from external sources, do they sort of lie around and germinate for a while, or when you see something, do you know exactly that "Ah yes, that's--I'm going to write a piece."

F. Well, it depends. Very often they will stay around for a while and germinate or they will become entirely transformed. This last piece that I've written, just finished, the vocal and string quartet piece that I told you about--well, I knew, it was going to have to do with something about time. I came across the title of Anthony [indistinct], the English novelist--a title for a series of books of his, *Dance to the Music of Time*. I loved that. Then, I got interested in time and I began reading some things of Einstein that I could understand and it was interesting-- I knew it was about time, but still I hadn't found anything. Then I read, began to find, I know I'd looked into Blake, just looked into Blake, maybe there was a volume of Blake around. And finally, I was just going to, I had to write this work. It was written under a grant from the National Endowment and this work had to get going! I knew I was ready to write it, but I couldn't find a text. One day I opened a book of Zen Buddhist, on Zen Buddhism, and there I found what I wanted. These are what are called taisho or sermons, delivered by the master to the disciples. And I have set six of these taisho and they are really concerned with time and the timeless, the relation of time to the timeless. So I found what I wanted. Again, I had the sensation of what I wanted, but it became crystallized when I found--but it takes active, for me, it takes active looking sometimes, and other times, I just find something. I found poems of Neruda and I began to set them the very day I found them. One just lays one's hands, sometimes, on just what you want, it depends.

H. You seem not to like labels, and I don't suppose anyone should, but you say that you're getting into words now, a lot. Do you consider yourself an instrumental composer or a vocal composer? Or have you ever thought that way at all?

F. I wouldn't like to. Well, I suppose I shouldn't be afraid of it. After all, Hugo Wolf was a vocal composer, and Chopin was a piano composer, and they're great enough for anyone. Actually, I've written a variety. I've written a lot of music for theatre and dance, which doesn't use voice, and I've written a Concertante for piano and orchestra. And again, that's an instrument, and I've written a lot of chamber music, that doesn't need voice. So I really

couldn't, I wouldn't say that I've written too much piano music lately. I used to write a lot of piano music. But I wrote a piece last year and I'll probably write more music for piano.

H. When do you expect to finish the work for string quartet and eight voices?

F. That's finished.

H. Oh, there should be a performance of that?

F. I hope so, in New York next year and I hope at Bennington. I'll let you know.

H. O.K., that would be wonderful. Let's see, well, thanks very much for your time.

F. It's been a pleasure, Frances.

[End of Side b]