

PAULINE OLIVEROS INTERVIEWS STU DEMPSTER

NOVEMBER 11, 1978

PO: We've been hanging out together for about 20 years now...

SD: I first met you in 1952. That's not 20 years, that's a tad more...

PO: Well, in the neighborhood. I remember at the time you were kind of interested in new music, you were kind of hanging...

SD: '56 I should say, pardon me.

PO: Well, in any case you were hanging around and ...
?

SD: With Joe Ever mainly.

PO: Yeah, and so there was...

SD: Composer occasionally had come in.

PO: What I want to ask is about your attitude toward the work you do, what kind of personal attitude you have. At the time you seemed to be really interested in performance of new music and composing, so you were kind of on both sides.

SD; Yeah, I seem to have always been on both sides.

PO: So, what's your attitude concerning both, or one or the other?

Why do you do what you do?

SD: I almost don't know, it's sort of an intuitive thing. Like in the 50's when I was writing little brass pieces and things, I went and got my M.A. after that in the early 60's, did some more relatively traditional written-down notation type pieces both of which I didn't really care for except for, like the harp and voice piece I really like. And then I just quit writing until I--I was going to just not write until I felt I really had something to say, right? It was/8 years almost before I finally did anything else, that was at Ten Grand Hosery which I guess you at least heard of. They're so performance oriented that the idea of writing a piece that someone else would be interested in seems not too likely at this point. I made up a score for Ten Grand Hosery, because I kind of want to deal

with it in my book. And so I forced myself to write up a score so it could be done by somebody else, but I just--there might be a Peter Tormedo type that might actually want to do it, but other than that it doesn't seem very likely so it's really a very personal kind of thing. I suppose there would be many types of people who would deny it as composition because it is not nailed down, would call it improvisation which is some kind of no man's land. Maybe that's what it is, I don't know.

PO: Through the years you certainly have played a lot of other people's music.

SD: Yeah. And I got organized about it by playing some of my own pieces, by writing pieces that I'm supposed to play, way back when I was writing "real notated music". Also which has not seemed to interest too many other people either for reasons I don't know why. So I think these things that I'm doing now are still on a ^{pretty} personal level and it's not likely that someone else is going to want to--some other trombone player is not going to want to do some piece by Dempster particularly.

PO: I know we started out talking about a long time ago, but is your attitude, do you think your attitude toward your work is different now than it was then? Has there been any change or do you have some consistent attitude that seems to hold to this?

SD: I think I'm confusing attitude with critical judgment. I didn't like most of what I did in the early, more ^{era}, and I kept on fumbling away because I knew I was going to learn a lot more doing that than getting another trombone degree. I certainly think that was valid in ^{enough} retrospect, and valid/at the time and I think in retrospect it was still valid. One of the things that I should mention because, and that was really kind of the next step, was to commission pieces, such as yourself and Berio and Erickson and so on. And I realized that

because of the kind of input I had it was something like composing without responsibility (laughter). Because I could say with Berio, suggest all these certain kinds of things, like work and to do these, which would be notated very elegantly and nicely by him. And things I would do and they would think it's his composing, when actually a fair amount of it was mine. Ricercar certainly that way, as Erickson said, he felt that he could take much more risks with the kinds of things he would try do with Ricercar and General Speech because the performer could try just anything. It was classy to try, try and try, and you could work out something you could do in General Speech, which is not as recent as we like to think; it's already nine years old, the piece was done in '69. We sit there and do this piece, we take that McArthur phrase and then I'd play it, say "duty, honor", roll off this sentence (mumble) this is just one word like that. And then he'd say "no, this is not quite right; do something else" and I'd try something else, then "no, try this, do this". This would go on and on and I'd finally get something and he'd say "yeah, that's really it, do it again, again, yeah, that's right, that's really it. Now, Stu, what are you doing?" And I'd say "Oh, my god, I don't know". So then we'd have to do the whole thing in reverse. I'd have to play it and we'd have to try and pick it apart and figure out what it was I was doing and notate it. So there was this constant feedback; and it was really exhausting and it was really time-consuming. I estimate about 300 hours just on General Speech score--score renditioning. And yet it's a very simple, straightforward score to look at. It doesn't look like much of anything, just has little things, you know, wavy lines. It's a very limited pitch structure, maybe an octave, as voice--speaking voice--would normally be. It's relatively...

PO: It's interesting what you said. I mean, an attitude has come out which is the, say, composing dog responsibility. And also that you have done a lot of collaboration.

I know that's true with me because the piece that I did for you is really an arrangement of yourself. And it was more like I was an arranger, in a sense, than a composer.

SD: Yeah, it's an interesting part of you.

PO: I speak of it that way very often, I arranged Stu Dempster.

SD: Well, I need some arranging from time to time. That's why I wanted to commission, because I really didn't think I could handle composition myself at that point, and I don't think I could.

PO: I know we've been talking about attitude, but do you have a conscious philosophical position? Or does that come to the surface?

SD: I think I'm developing it, probably more, but I did Tingra and Rosary and I thought, I may not do much of anything for 10 years, but when I do something like Tingra and Rosary, which was with the scoped orchestra and all this other stuff, it was a full evening. Like it was the equivalent of somebody's major offering, just like 10 years worth of work, like something's going on all this time and it finally gets spit out in this thing which seems relatively frivolous just to read through. Because nothing happened after that. I was really looking for something; I didn't know what I was looking for. And it found itself quite by accident with the experience, which in turn led to the computer thing, because it was so special I wanted to really, you know, if there was any way of finding it again, and we're on our way to doing that now. So I think I've probably found my niche now in residence--if that's a philosophical thing. It doesn't really sound terribly philosophical to me, but I suppose...

PO: What do you mean, "in residence"?

SD: In delay time, reverb. And that's always been of interest to me. Well, it's an extension of Ten Grand Hosery, too, which was also a residence piece, which was

an extension of--I don't know, when did I first play Garden Hose on the piano?
Was that your suggestion or was that mine?

PO: I don't know for sure.

SD: I don't remember either. I just remember doing it but I don't have any reason why.
You made use of it but I don't remember how.

PO: I was certainly using the piano as a resonator for a long time but...

SD: Well, it seems to me I had, too. It just sort of came...

PO: I think that's something in the air.

SD: But that really stuck with me because that experience really is a direct link
to Ten Grand Rosary, was your piece.

PO: Maybe we could sort of shift a little bit and talk about some basic skills. This
could have to do with performance or this could have to do with composing. Very
often when I'm talking to people some of the things I ask about seem so trivial
and so automatic that they get passed over quickly. But when I was talking with
Loren we finally got to something very interesting. We were talking about pitch
sense and people have different ways with their pitch sense.

SD: You mean, like how they tune? Whether they feel the resonance of a note...

PO: Right. All of these different things. Maybe you could talk about this as a
basic skill, I mean, which of course is central in a composer's work or in a
performer's work.

SD: Well, in my own case I've got the hazard of perfect pitch. I call it a hazard
because there are several hazards. I don't imagine I fully appreciate the
benefits because I don't think I even fully know them, because I probably just
take it for granted. But the--I remember the hazard of discovering, I think in
mid-college, that I really was playing terribly out of tune most of the time.
Because intonation ear is not the same thing as perfect pitch ear. And I
finally got that developed by a more critical microtonal listening, I guess, is

what you do, really, to get an intonation ear. Then perfect pitch in the way I was using it sort of got me into the area of some half step or other--oh yeah, that's an A. But I wasn't going to pin down whether that was an A a few cents here or there from some other kind of A. And I think that of demand--intonation demand--has to be developed no matter how your ear is, so-called, that you're born with. So that was one thing that I found. I think I and other perfect-pitchers have a terrible time in theory and theoretical concepts because you kind of cheat. Instead of writing down a triad you write down C-E-G, say. And you never really understand the function of chords. I know that was one thing--I never understood why I was having such trouble with theory. I could never figure it out. And I could always cough up the right answers without ever doing the information. And that really--you know, it's been a real trouble all my life. Loren--was one thing very helpful, he said really early, I remember in the late 50's when we were in school, he says, "well, the best reason for studying theory is you might have to teach it some day". And that always stuck with me, and I just struggled through and learned theory, forgetting it of course. And there I was, teaching theory later on. I stumbled along okay, but I never would be really all that great a theory teacher.

PO: Back to the intonation ear, which seemed to be a skill that you had to acquire. How do you think you acquired that skill?

SD: I just asked myself to acquire it. I just made myself--I said, I realize that things are just really funky and now you're going to have to figure it out. And I think because of--and there again the perfect pitch comes back to help, I mean when you realize there's a problem you really make excessive demands on your ear to work really well. So I can pretty much trust my ear in any situation, even when Erickson and I used to tune those damn marble slabs. He depended on me a lot: when he'd kind of freak out and go into overload he would depend on me for

pitch. When I'd go into overload I'd have to bale out. I mean, it's really one of the hardest experiences I've ever been through tuning those crazy things. It's really fine tuning. I don't know. I mean, obviously musicians without perfect pitch develop really fine ears--at least I think they do, I don't know.

PO: Now, I've given you an example of a skill. What do you think are the skills that are central to your work, other skills?

SD: Specific skills--just trombone skill of real tonal center and intonation are really critical because of reverb. I use it as a teaching device, for instance. I have people play in reverberant spaces to really center their tone. Because if you can't center them right you're going to hear all this pitch argument constantly. You don't get any clear reproduction of your sound. As you learn to play a really straight tone then you begin to play, to hear it back better. Then when you hear your tone really clear backward, then you can start playing in tune with really centered tones. You can't make yourself try to work on intonation and then you don't whether your intonation is at fault or whether your tone center is a problem. (mumble) And the room helps give you feedback on that, but you have to do one before the other.

PO: I'm not sure I understand what you mean by tone centers.

SD: Well, in brass, ^{tone} kind of just really playing right in the center of the resonance of the plaque, so you're not bending a tone one way or the other or not having it move, a fluctuation as you attack a tone, it's so easy to hit a little bit on the high side. I'm talking just a few cents high so it makes this little argument. And you don't normally hear that unless you stick in a resonant room, where you play a note and has a little kind of a "doingr" whine to it caused by the pitch change. And the other side of the coin, I make people practise in really dead closets, funky practise rooms, and make them sound resonant, playing in such a way that you just make them sound good. And that's ^{obviously} related to the fact

that I'm so interested in reverb and stuff, that these are really central to this whole thing with Ten Grand Hosery. I really like the idea of pitch that seems to be moving through--away from some instrument to--like the Ten Grand Hosery, the idea of getting a pitch to leave the piano. You know, you play the pitch, it gets into the piano and then it sort of comes out. But play another pitch with another garden hose to another piano and kind of pull that pitch away from where it was and draw it into the other piano so you begin to get things to move around. That kind of thing. Well, it takes a lot of really subtle breath control and estimates as to how long you should be to get the sound to move where you want it to move to. Because you never really know because you're never sitting in the right place to ever find out (laughter). And I'm going through that tonight, of course, with this concert, again where we're playing with standing waves with tape, and I can't be anyplace to ever find out what's really going on.

PO: That's a real dilemma.

SD: I just have to go by feedback from the audience and what people say about how it worked, what blended, what this, that, and the other thing. And that's why we're kind of curious to try this tonight, being outside the performance area altogether so the audience wouldn't have that confusion and not worry about whether I was using something or not. And see what kind of talk feedback I get after the concert, it's different if indeed there's...

PO: Well, it's interesting because it kind of brings me to the next question I want to ask because you're really trying to manipulate the tension of the audience by removing yourself, so that they're not paying attention to...

SD: I want them to listen to the piece, see if they can get rid of all this other garbage that gets in the way of trying to decipher how the piece is constructed, which--so many times people say, do want a score to listen to the piece, and I

always say no. And I begin to think of the things--people are always talking so intelligently about the piece, how it did this and did that. But I'm not sure they ever really listened to the piece.

PO: What do you mean by "really listening"?

SD: Getting other kinds of content that are not discernible from the score, by the order of events. The intuitive--I'm really into something like Erickson, just kind of the whole idea of "hunching along" as he uses, just hunch along. I don't know whether he still feels that way about his work or not, but he certainly felt that way in the 60's. It's a great quote: I love the word hunch anyway.

PO: Let me ask you this. Are you aware of your own attention processes in your work?

SD: To the extent that I find my attention wandering from time to time. I sometimes feel that I'm--like last night, I was thinking. The piece is 18'20" and at Oberlin and Cleveland Institute I really like came out within 20 seconds of the length of the piece. I didn't have a stopwatch or anything, I was just sort of going, just a couple places I would sort of lapse but I knew there was still more tape to go; I was sure that there was. Last night I got into a much longer sense of time and I was just really finally getting to burning and the tape was over. I thought it was a different tape, I thought maybe there was one less cycle, and I looked at my watch and I saw, no, it was the full time.

PO: So something happened.

SD: So there was a really different time sense. I got out to lunch somewhere along the line and into something. And maybe I hadn't really been out to lunch but I felt like--that at one point I'd lost it, early on, like 10 minutes. And I felt like I was - out - somplace, out of whack with the time span. So there's no flux (flex?) time in that piece.

PO: What do you mean by that, flux time?

SD: Well, it's a fixed length, and I don't think there's any other way I can--it's possible maybe to start it--I couldn't end it arbitrarily, but it's possible that I could start somewhere differently, change the length depending on the length of the whole, and the vibes of the audience and that kind of thing. But that's there, making an estimate before you do something rather than after you're into it.

PO: What do you think happened to you last night with this time sense change like a...

SD: I'm not sure. I may have just been into a more intensive and possibly deeper meaning piece. It was very mellow in some ways. That was Loren's word but I think it's a good one. And it was moving into--I never really got the intensity, but I was just starting to get into the real driving intensity thing when the piece shut off. I actually really felt something was wrong, that was my first reaction. I hadn't realized I was out there that long. It's almost like the first time you did Teach Yourself to Fly. Those original recording versions, I mean it was about 20 minutes and I came out every time the same length whatever it was, I don't remember the length anymore, but it was always the same length. And this 18'20" is incidentally almost about that same length as Teach Yourself to Fly, and I approached playing that--I realize now--somewhat the same way. But this was a radically different way of playing that piece, I got into last night. But I didn't play it long enough to find out what the difference was because the piece ended (laughter).

PO: That's ^{the} frustrating thing about a tape. I understand flex time very well now.

SD: Whereas if I really get what we really want out of the computer which is to recreate the space of the cathedral and to be a variable dimension of cathedral where I operate the/thing in real time without ever using tape. And really construct the piece out of the reverb, live, without any other assistance then you have the reaction reverb itself.

PO: Then you won't have that problem.

SD: Then there's no problem. This is just a process--this wasn't even supposed to be a piece. It was just a dumb little drone I coughed up for Gareth Loy, the guy who was helping me out so much, so we could see if we could just get the reverb to work and behave at all. We ended up with this thing and then we tried different reverb times and things, and we had all this stuff presumably it was kind of something we could use and it was getting close to the next day and then, alright, now we've got a piece--it just sort of happened. I'm not sure it's my best artistic effort at this point but it's a nice prototype and something to think about and work with and travel around with, find out these kinds of problems. It's at least that. There's enough music there, I think, for people to hang onto, at least for the time being.

PO: I'm going to pull you back a little bit, back to the attention element, explicate a little bit about what I'm interested in which is there's a kind of attention which is very focussed, like a lens where everything's sharp and clear. And there's another state which is more open where sort of equal attention goes to all the input and it's expansive and less detailed than when you focus in. I wonder if you're aware of that kind of expansion and contraction.

SD: Yeah, well that happens like last night and probably tonight, too. It seems to me when I really get--it's like the first minute or two when the piece is just moving from the more open thing to the more compacted, focussed kind of activity. And in that is like Teach Yourself to Fly, I mean, just allow yourself a room to kind of warm up and get going and dig into to something, and when you arrive at that point it's suddenly sort of over with no predictability as to when or what brings about that openness, shall we say. And I find that really true in an awful lot of things I play, things of my own doing anyway. I don't find it in General Speech or say Berio's Sequenza. I found bits of it in the old theater

piece, the old, the 66 piece, and of course Teach Yourself to Fly. But most regular noted-type-pieces pieces don't seem to have this kind of thing, at least in the way I'm thinking about it. That's the way it kind of looks for me, is the Teach Yourself to Fly type, which I think is very common to anybody who's done that, I would think.

PO: So you're kind of distinguishing some difference in one kind of style that you're interested in.

SD: Well, it's like ^{sp?} digeradoo. It's when I first studied d when I found the circular breathing was really therapeutic and I felt better as I played the instrument. I didn't get tired in the same kind of--or at all, actually, I mean I felt better. It would make me less tire to play than to not play at all. That's not true of trombone playing. It's truly terrible after a concert, except to the extent that you really find music to perform more closely to d music. In a sense I've done that, more breathing oriented, I've made pieces that come to that, where it really feels good to play.

PO: Do you think, then, that there's a different kind of attention required for those different kinds of music?

SD: Well, it's more meditative, and that seems to be pretty--I mean, that's the way I really like to play things, this meditative approach, and I really find myself not doing, wanting to do these other pieces anymore. I really am avoiding playing other people's pieces right at the moment. I just play the ones I sort of, by request. And am really more into my own compositional things. It's a quite limited range of pitches that I'm using usually, what the d 's limited range, too, it's very similar. The parallel's really amazing. But like when I say,/I started teaching d I thought, oh this is wonderful, I'm going to be able to learn to teach trombone in such a way and learn to play trombone

better, and I'll maybe actually begin to feel better. And I finally realized it wasn't true at all. I think it's just when you find out what you are doing you have to back pressure. You're playing with the fundamental and maybe one overtone, and the one overtone not very much. And if you try to play the second or third overtone, third and fourth partials, they're really hard, they're really irritating, and they really set up a back pressure that's really a bummer and very much trombone-like. We really put ourselves through a lot of stress to play these damn western instruments. I mean, that's a godawful way to live.

PO: That's true.

SD: And it just really pisses me off that we should gull ourselves into this idiotic state of euphoria; just drive you up the wall. And further, make myself teach this stuff which I don't really believe in anymore; it really, really hurts.

PO: There's really been a change. You're coming into the attitude question again.

SD: Yeah, maybe so.

PO: So it sounds to me like there really has been a change in attitude from the time we first met earlier in your career.

SD: Yeah, in that sense, sure. I still like the idea of playing other people's pieces but these other people's pieces better not make me feel like homemade shit. It's something like you said, you felt many years ago, you said you like to play music that makes you feel good. And why not? Why this dumb other puritan music begins to hurt a little or a whole lot?

PO: What all do you think that is, that it hurts?

SD: I think it's physical pain. I mean, if you're playing all these overtones and not too much fundamental on the trombone, you're in a painful orientation for the instrument just by the very nature of how we approach the thing and the musical demands that are made on it. It's just pure physical pain. We're so

in any other part of your life?

SD: Certainly not directly. It should, because it's really rough at home now with two little kids--well, one's not so little. But they're always fighting and everything, and it's just somehow if I could just get some more easiness in with the life, life style. And maybe I should start playing d more at home again like I used to do when they were littler. They'd sit on my lap and stuff. It's a good point. There's been a lot more increased stress that maybe I could really control more. We're both working now instead of one of us; it's just constant hysteria, which is sort of new for me. I mean, I can do enough hysteria all by myself; I've always been a kind of hysterical type and I don't need any help as you are probably the first to admit. And now I've got all the help.

PO: You're amplified.

SD: I'm amplified and I don't like it. I really don't like it; it's really ugly. So maybe I should take some steps to probably get it under control, or I'm going to have some weird kids, maybe, I don't know. That's one thought, anyway. So I'm really not doing anything with it. I think I really could make a lot more use of it in my everyday life, give myself half a chance.

PO: You might as well spread a good thing around.

SD: Well that's it; it comes back to--I think we do a lot, these thoughts go in my mind, why, do things that feel good. Don't torture yourself all the time. It's just a dumb way to live.

PO: When I asked you the question about attention, I want to ask it to you again in another way. Are you aware of your attention processes during your musical activities whether it's composition or performance, as distinguished from the content of what you are doing?

SD: Yeah, because I sometimes will discover situations when I'm playing something that's probably musically pretty reasonable but I don't really feel like I'm

getting it on. I feel like my attention just isn't hanging in there. And other times I can look back at a period of 2 or 3 minutes and realize that my attention was really hanging in there and I'm almost not even sure what I played, but I know it was pretty exciting, and I can remember it. And then even while I'm still playing and moving on to something else, which means of course I've destroyed it, but...

PO: Destroyed your attention?

SD: Your attention, your musical function is still going. And I don't think that-- well maybe I shouldn't say destroyed, but reduced the intensive attention that is something maybe on a lower level--let's put it that way, it sounds too negative to say--I don't think it's negative thing when you've had a really intensive attention thing going and have a little breathing space. And they come in waves. The idea of waves seems to be central to what we've been doing, the title Standing Waves which comes up... And it's breathing oriented even though I don't imagine the attention is to breathing. It might be...

PO: Maybe you're thinking of attention waves.

SD: Yeah, I think it does seem to me there's a certain level and then it'll really get into something I'm almost not aware of on a conscious level. I almost fell over last night at one point, and I think it was because of...actually, I had to be careful to be sure I was not going to fall over several times last night. Maybe I shouldn't be standing for this piece, I don't know.

PO: Was that a new experience for you?

SD: For this piece it certainly was. Often at times I fell like I'm going to fall over, that's usually because I'm just tired and slightly hyper after a concert or something, or if it's a really rough concerto, or you're taking bows and you're just trying to stay upright, which ^{is} just a physical thing. But this is something a little different. This is just because I wasn't particularly interested in standing, it's just...

PO: \You're attention wasn't there?

SD: Not on standing; on other things. It's just I didn't want to be bothered with having to be occupied standing up (laughter). And that happened a lot last night. So I mean I think I was on to something kind of good and I really would have loved to have done a 40 minute piece last night, that was what I felt like I was ready for. So my attention--I'm interpreting it, I'm treating it as "oh, that's good attention" whereas the / maybe /shorter versions are bad attention which is probably a wrong way to go at it.

PO: Maybe it could be that...

SD: Because I really like that intensity, it's really special.

PO: There are different kinds of attention, and we could take it out of bad and good.

SD: Right. I'm tending to put them into positive and negative, which is...

PO: There is certainly poor attention, but there's also that dimension of different kinds of processing.

SD: Yeah, I really had to keep myself from getting too involved since the department
? fell over. And that was new, I never had that. I probably should sit down crosslegged for this thing.

PO: Your attention must really then be absorbed in the strategies of doing the piece.

SD: Well, I think no. That may be crucial in playing it, that I be seated, somewhat like I would for teaching or something. I mean, I wouldn't stand up for Teach Yourself to Fly. It would be outrageous. I see that I may just have to do this piece sitting down. Maybe I shouldn't ever really stand up; it's really dangerous. (laughter).

PO: Can you compare that with playing say Berio's Sequenza? Would that ever happen to you in playing that piece?

SD: If I get that way with pieces of that ilk, and I have--it's easy because I've gone to a funny, awkward breathing pattern or something, or I'm getting really--

yeah, just starting to huff and puff, not really breathing really completely. I get a little dizzy sometimes but it's not for the same reason; it's for a totally different reason. That's because, oh, I better be careful, I'm just not - a little dizzy. Whereas this thing is I'm not interested (laugh). It's just another dumb thing I better remember to do.

PO: You might as well just levitate.

SD: Yeah. I mean, I really would rather do something that would just make me float. But I hadn't really thought about that last night. That's really sort of what's happening. I don't think I've taken that in actually until just now. That's happened before but I didn't realize the reason was different. I've never meditated standing up, and I don't particularly recommend it either (laugh). Actually, I do it. I've done this standing--good grief--Di dervish, which you may never have seen, I don't know.

PO: No, I haven't seen that.

SD: You've never seen Ten Grand Hosery and all that stuff.

PO: No, I haven't.

SD: Well, D dervish is all the meditation stuff that goes with the d except that I'm spinning around at the same time. And that becomes--your eye gets focussed on the thing and I have a real trouble standing up. There's a real fear that I'll fall down. I'm not particularly well balanced. I have a tendency to get motion sickness and all this kind of stuff. Which is related, I think, to why I have a real hard time swinging my eyes in the bass exercises. I think it's tradectory--if I can solve one I can probably solve the other. I remember spinning around--it's really meditative to do that, it's really beautiful. I remember going around and I was really digging it. And I can get off into a fairly close idea of this meditation where I can really get pretty lost in it, and as long as I keep my eye focussed on the end of the plaque and don't look at anything

?
 Al
 else, I can get buried at certian speeds. I remember, this was with/the first
 time, it's going along and I was not interested in stopping, ever, I mean there
 was no particular reason. I said, "Al, how do I stop?" I says, "I'm not
 particularly interested in stopping but I'd like to know how to do it just in
 case I get interested. At this point I don't feel that I can". And he said,
 "oh, just stick your arm out a little bit". And he said, "you can rate change
 if you stick it out a little, or you can pull it in, you can let yourself go
 faster or slower. If you get yourself a little bit too fast, put your arm out
 a little bit and keep control. You can control there, so it won't get out of
 hand". And it really worked. You can fine tune your speed and change and stuff.

PO: And that's in turning with the trombone or with the d ?

SD: With the d It could just as well be with the trombone.
 The d is heavy. They're very, very heavy and the sewer pipe is
 light. I like the abstraction. I don't like to use the d
 personally, I like to use the abstraction of it. So it takes away, the whole
 notion just as I want to take away from the fact that I'm playing and the tape
 recorder's going tonight, I want to take away and let people listen more. If
 they see a d out there then they start thinking in a different
 kind of way than if you just see something up there that may or may not be a
 d . It's related to this in an odd way because I'm doing some-
 thing really bizarre which is a dervish is some kind of meditation apparently. But
 you do it standing up.

PO: The turn, yes, in dervishing.

SD: It's possible to meditate and apparently I seem to be able to find a balance yet
 not going too far or I'll fall down without disturbing the idea that it's meditation.
 Whereas last night I didn't feel I had that control to be able to stop. I had no
 arm to stick out so to speak to keep myself standing up. There was no third foot.

PO: Maybe we could fix you up with a tail. Maybe that's why you've always wanted to wear tails.

SD: Not unlikely. Maybe that's my third leg right there. Actually there's two. I love the formality of the tails; / ^{they're} so special, they really are. Everything is so special in tails. There again I'm manipulating the audience because, you know--I'll never forget when I went to Illinois. It was that time--you'd done that concert and then we had come in that week and we had the same apartment for only one night before you left or something. That was '67, March '67. Anyway, my concert was the next week. And I remember Jack Mackenzie to the last instant got out on stage. I was in tails, and Neeley Bruce was also in tails--I think he was, I'm pretty sure. And got out there in Barney Childs' piece, and he thought, "my god, this concert's a mistake. What are we going to do?" I got out there and I laid this big turd (buuaaaaaaaaaaaaa). He said from then on it was really okay, then he was all right. He said, "I've had more ties all week long, I've done this whole thing".

PO: You did a number on him.

SD: It was just--but I've always liked that idea that--it gives new music respectability. I mean when you go "Bwwwpppppppp" on the trombone that's something more respectable if you're wearing a tie. That whole notion is very appealing to me that you manipulate what people think about sounds by how you're dressed. And the theatrical thing of course is unquestionably very special if I'm rolling up my pant legs for Ben Johnson's finger cymbals, it's okay in jeans, but in tails it's really special. We're off the subject a little bit...

PO: No, I don't think so. Again, it's attention, a kind of attention.

SD: Yeah, I suppose my attention to detail of that kind is almost a neurosis. I'm really neurotic about details. I just like to have things really right.

PO: Before? Beforehand?

SD: Yeah, or during, whenever, things are going that way, things are getting set up. Partly the reason I feel I'm having a hard time negotiating each day of my life right now is I'm having a hard time getting the details right. I just don't have enough time to deal with it. I'm working two jobs at school is what it amounts to, the advising and...

PO: Oh, you're doing that?

SD: Yeah, and the--all the teaching I've done before, which is going to have to change. But anyway, that's a real stress, plus the fact that the kids are drawing a lot of time right now, which is fine.

PO: You're juggling your whole...

SD: And the fact that _____ is working full time means I want to spend even more time letting her, getting her some room. All the details are getting her. I'm doing less than my best right now. I think this piece tonight is an example of less than my best. It's an okay situation that's come about that I'm learning from, but I really don't--it's kind of like my underwear in London in public, I just, maybe a London deal (laughter). But that's okay. It isn't the first time I've done this kind of thing. Loren has really been encouraging me and pushing me. I never would have done it but for him. He's really been a solid brick.

PO: Well, let me ask you...

SD: Done enough of the dirty work for this thing.

PO: Let me ask you, just going back say to your teaching--your teaching students, we were talking about that earlier.

SD: About how it is we do was going to change the way I teach, that kind of thing?

PO: Yeah, during that part, I think. I just wondered if--how about the attention processes of your students, do you notice that when you're teaching or are you pretty much content oriented?

SD: Well, I'm probably more concerned with that as much as anything I do. I badger them about their own attention patterns and practise patterns.

PO: What do you badger them about? How do you call attention to their attention?

SD: Find out how they're not listening. If I just get them to listen, say--which means they have to pay attention--it sounds better. And then I tell them, "well now, my job is done. It's you now, you have to reiterate this stuff regularly so you can have a habit of paying attention to yourself". That's one basic-- I probably spend as much time moaning on that as anything. Other than that teaching can't go on. They have to teach themselves.

PO: Do you remember when you became aware of this in yourself?

SD: Teaching myself attention? It was probably after I'd taken the formal lessons because I couldn't seem to get anywhere at a certain point. Because trombone is so--it's such an elemental statement--but it's been so thoroughly developed. Not really much of what's available has really been asked for. I couldn't go somewhere to find out. I had to just find out myself, just teach myself practically everything I know about new music in the trombone. So I had to get my act together. But before that time I just would sort of--it seemed like osmosis, what I call osmosis learning. I'd take my lesson and I'd go home and practise, hack through all this stuff regularly and dumb luck, I guess, some of the time I would pay attention because it kept getting better more than not getting. But I never made a conscious effort to really--this is, I'm talking about mostly high school and even the first 3 years of college. I never made a real effort to really control my ability to practise efficiently and really to pay attention. That was something I developed relatively recently, as I've taught, actually. Out of my new music experience I've taught myself.

PO: Are there any particular periods of awakening, you think, in your career?

SD: Well, one was learning all those new sounds and getting organized to work with

composers. Another was when I get these pieces to learn--like when I first got Sequenza I just tried to practise it like an ordinary piece. You just kind of crank through it until it would somehow learn itself. And I realized that that was not going to work with this piece. I'd have to develop some humming, I'd have to learn how to play probably like a violinist has to play, and have to develop some really definite things to really do, and then go do them during the piece, rather than just trying to hack through it until it kind of accidentally found it's way. And it probably would have eventually, even with Sequenza. For that reason I still don't feel very comfortable playing that Sequenza, although it's actually a rather easy piece, as trombone pieces go. But I got off to a bad start with that because I was doing it in my old formats of learning. And the fact that I really wasn't going to play anymore at that point. I was going to quit playing again at that point. That was when I was about to go to Japan and never did. I was going to, really wasn't planning on doing that, so that, maybe that tour, all those tours, were sort of accidental that year, that '66-'67 year. It was something that came up rather suddenly. By the time I had my experience with Sequenza and I was able to put it away finally, it must have been later '67 or '68 maybe, when I came back to relearn it I had by this time gained some experience of how to learn pieces. Pieces of the more normal difficulty that other instruments take for granted. But I relearned it and it helped. And I've done that about twice more with that piece and I've got it down to where it's maybe--I'm beginning to play the piece.

PO: So you did come to something, which was how to learn.

SD: Yeah.

PO: And that basically is part of your attention processes.

SD: And I've refined it as I've taught and to try to use these things on students and then use them internally myself and I've discovered things that work.

PO: Have you been able to transfer that process to other parts of your life?

SD: Yeah. I think trying to learn the computer, which is something that was the last thought that I might ever be hassling with electronics after all the things I've said about electronics over the years, here I am in the thick of probably the most outrageously thing that fortunately--and I say fortunately, I don't understand any of it, which is beautiful because I don't have to go through all that stress that these other guys go through, because they know more about it. If it doesn't work I ask them to help, and I don't whether I'll ever get past that stage. I sort of hope not in a kind of way because it would probably bug me more. But learning, you know, I try to be very methodical about that which I was trying to learn about what's going on, mostly just the mechanics of just getting something actually done, work on the screen and not necessarily the mechanics of how some of these programs work, which are really complex. I'm asking for a lot more difficult things out of this system than anybody who knows much more has ever asked. So there's almost no hope that I could ever understand it, which is kind of nice. I'm just old enough that I may make it through my life and not ever realize....

(end of side of tape, end of interview?)