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Oral History of American Music

MAJOR FIGURES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

Chester Biscardi

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with Maura Valenti
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Born in Kenosha, Wisconsin – relationship to father – started French horn in grade school, switched to violin – started writing music at nine – had piano lessons with his cousins – participating in musicals – *The King and I*, wrote *Wisconsin: 1848, A People's Mass* – went to a private high school with a good music program – Gary Snyder – Margaret Schmitt – was sponsored by an anonymous donor for piano lessons – went to University of Wisconsin-Madison to study law – Paul Badura-Skoda – studied Italian and went to Bologna, Italy – Laura Nyro – wrote a musical called *Freddie* – did his senior thesis in Italy on Cesare Pavese – attended the composition program at the GB Martini Conservatory in Bologna – Maria Fulgeri Bianchi – offered a fellowship for a masters in Italian literature and then pursued his PhD – wrote *Lemmings* for harpsichord, flute, violin – Les Thimmig, Bruce Benward, Bunita Marcus, Morton Feldman, Roger Bourland, Mel Powell, David Olan, Burt Levy – added a masters in composition – *Coraggio 4*, *Tartini*, *Indovinello* – Penderecki, Sappho, Tom Moore – *Tartini's Devil's Trill Sonata*, Schoenberg's *Phantasy*, Wuorinen's *Duo*, Lois Drapin – influence of literature and literary ideas on works – *Chartres* – *Chartres and Mont-San Michele* by Henry Adams – interest in architecture and philosophy – relationship with Russell Merritt – went to Yale for the MMA degree to study composition – Phyllis Curtin – Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* – love for George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, musicals – Schumann, Bach, Rachmaninoff, Schoenberg – collaborated with Henry Butler on *Tight-Rope* – Bernstein's *On the Town*, Comden and Green, John Reardon – Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Stephen Sondheim – *Sailors & Dreamers* with Shirley Kaplan – experiencing seeing the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan* – Laura Nyro and Joni Mitchell.

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piano and orchestra, performed by Yuji Takahashi, *Masque* – influence of Japanese culture – lived in Tokyo for a year with a grant from the Japan Foundation – Donald Richie – Samuel Beckett – did master classes at the Shanghai Conservatory – studying with and relationship with Takemitsu – *Mestiere*, influence of Takemitsu – influence of Feldman – thoughts on the difference between influence and resonance in music – Schumann's *Piano Quartet in E-flat Major* – *In Time's Unfolding*, *Carnaval*, *The Viola Had Suddenly Became a Voice*, *Piano Concerto* – Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Copland's *Violin Sonata* – thoughts on quotation of other composers and of himself – went to the McDowell Colony, got the Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters – on winning the Rome Prize – on the board of directors for the Bogliasco Foundation – Petr Micka's production of *The Duchess of Malfi* written by John Webster – Anne Nelson, Robert Beaser.

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