

FRED Well, welcome once again to our series for the Berklee Library Archives, interviewing prominent members of the
BOUCHARD: Boston music community who've had some connections with Berklee over the years. Last week we started our series with Al Vega, and now we're continuing our series with Maggie Scott. Maggie Scott, I didn't know that Al Vega was Armenian [Maggie laughs], but I knew you were. In a town like Boston, either of you could pass for Italian. What is it with the Armenian jazz community? Is there a little core network of people who get together and, you know, jam at weddings?

MAGGIE SCOTT: Well, I don't know about together at weddings, but it's just there are a few of us around--John Baboian, for example, who teaches at Berklee. And we had David Azarian, who unfortunately--

FRED Dear David...

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: There are a few of us around, maybe not as many as some of the other musicians, other nationalities, but there are a few of us around and everybody seems surprised that we do this also. [Laughs]

FRED Well, I was pleasantly surprised that there was an Armenian jazz festival a couple weeks ago.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, which I was at, as was Al. And it was very nice, the crowd seems to support it, you know. We had a good time playing. And some of the Armenian musicians who play the dumbeg and the oud and all that, they were there. They sat in, which gave it kind of an ethnic kind of sound, as well as what we were playing. It's nice to see, we hope that we can maybe do more of that kind of thing.

FRED I remember that there were some Middle Eastern places that fostered a jazz policy. There was a Greek

BOUCHARD: restaurant, for example, up in Porter Square, ten, twelve years ago?

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yes. I know it begins with an A, but I can't remember the name.

FRED Greg Hopkins' big band used to play there on a regular basis.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Greg used to play there.

FRED And Charley Dermenjian?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: He was there a couple weeks ago, he was one of the musicians.

FRED He would play in a bouzouki band and he would also play in another kind of combo.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, Artie Barsamian's band. I can't remember the name.

FRED The Acropolis?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No, something like that. Yeah, we did a gig there. There's a place in West Newton, Karoun, and they feature belly dancing also on the weekends as well as the Armenian music. It's different kinds of music, but it's Middle Eastern music, you might say.

FRED I remember the food being very good there.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yes, oh yes. Yes.

FRED So we have these little threads running through our culture here.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Our communities.

FRED That's nice.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yeah, we do.

FRED Speaking of communities, the Berklee community is a really large one that has been going for a long time and

BOUCHARD: has spread out all over the world.

MAGGIE SCOTT:Well, I remember when it was on Newbury Street and it was called Schillinger House then. And I mean, since those days, it's tremendous the way it's grown. It's just unbelievable, really.

FRED Were you involved as a student?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No, I did not attend Berklee. I studied privately a lot. And I also studied with John Mehegan at Juilliard. I have to say that playing out, working at night, was really the best teacher I could have had. Just the experience of playing four hours a night, or five hours a night, or working solo, learning repertoire. Nothing can replace that. And I think for the students today, the experience they can get playing out, you can't learn that in school. They can only tell you about it, but to actually do the performing is the only thing that's really gonna make you a first-class musician. 'Cause the experience of being out there, nothing can replace that. And that's why I feel kind of bad because there aren't really many places for everybody to play. This is unfortunately the way it is today. There are not places that you can work six nights a week in the same place for a month or two months or even for a year. Those places are just gone, and that's where I got most of my experience. Night after night after night, and year after year.

FRED Yeah, there was a great proliferation of piano bars in the fifties through seventies.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Late fifties, sixties, yes.

FRED I guess it was a post-war syndrome and TV wasn't really that great yet.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Not yet.

FRED Movies weren't as huge as they were earlier or got to be again later. And Boston was jumping with clubs.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:We had a lot of clubs all around the Park Square and Copley Square area.

FRED I did a piece for the [Boston] Herald in 1979 just to mention the rooms. The Copley Plaza, the Plaza Bar,

BOUCHARD: Somerville Holiday Inn, Gallagher's Restaurant.

MAGGIE SCOTT:Gallagher'sWe had the Darbury Room

FRED Yeah, that was even before this time. At this time you were playing at the Hyatt Lounge and across the river,

BOUCHARD: downtown at Scotch and Sirloin, and not long after that you were at Zachary's [Lounge]

MAGGIE SCOTT:The Colonnade [Hotel], yes.

FRED Ray Santisi was at Lulu White's, you know, the list goes on.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:We were all busy and it was great to see that everybody had a chance to go out and play and play music, and be accepted for it--and get paid for it--and that was a great time. We would, if I got through early, I would go hear someone else and vice versa. There was a camaraderie, basically, going on, "Oh, let's go catch this one or let's go catch that one."

FRED Right, it was 52nd Street spread out.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:It was! It was because we had The Stables, we also had Paul's Mall, the Jazz Workshop, places like that. We were going full swing and you just don't see that today.

FRED It was the tail end of the Mass Ave. scene with Wally's and Hi-Hat and Izzy Ort's and all that other section.

BOUCHARD: Nowadays they've gone indoors to the concert halls.

MAGGIE SCOTT:The venue's different. The music has changed, unfortunately--well, I shouldn't say that. You know, disco, rock, and the very contemporary sounds today have taken over. As far as where can you go to hear jazz, there are not that many places now in this city. We have two main venues really, Scullers and Regattabar. But you know there were so many more little clubs that you could go to and hear jazz. And it's changed. It has changed. People still ask me, "Where can we go to have dinner and dance?" And I have no way to tell them where to go, where they can have dinner and also dance after dinner. Like the Colonnade, we used to play in.

FRED Not too many.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:People fifty years and older, let's say, who might want to go out on the weekend and spend a night like that, where are they gonna go? I don't know of too many places that they have to choose from.

FRED Well let's talk about some rosier times.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Okay. [Laughs]

FRED Let's back up and give people a little bit of a snapshot of your long and illustrious career. You blew me away the other day when you told me you had played the Gershwin Piano Concerto with Arthur Fiedler. '53.

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yes, '51. I'm sorry I said '53; it was '51. It was June 23, 1951. I'll never forget it.

FRED I should think not!

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I will never forget that.

FRED You were fresh out of school?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I was still playing my six nights a week, and I was doing some accompanying at the Phil Saltman School of Music for voice teachers. So that's what I was doing. And I was studying with Leo Litwin, who was basically a classical piano teacher, and for a few years I did study classical. Phil Saltman at that time had a very flourishing school for music, and he said, "We're gonna have a night at Pops." And he said, "How would you feel about playing?" And I thought playing with the Pops, Arthur Fiedler--this was a little scary. So I said, "Well, what would I play?" He said, "You can listen to some of these concertos and pick one and let's work on it." So of course I liked the Gershwin because to me it was more modern, you might say, than something more classically oriented.

So I started practicing that, and spent many many hours a day--when I told students I used to practice like eight hours a day, they looked at me like, "No." I said, "Yes." And after a year of learning twenty-seven pages, memorizing twenty-seven pages, of that, I auditioned for Arthur Fiedler. And when I got through, he looked at me and said, "You're not ready." And loh. And he said, "Go home and practice another year." And I said "Thank you," and I left with Leo Litwin who I was studying with, who was helping me with it. I said, "Another year? I've been playing eight hours a day learning this!" So, it was a question of do I do this or do I just say, "Forget it?"

FRED What was Leo's remark?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:He was a little disappointed but he encouraged me to try it. I said, "All right," so I did. Another year. I went back and auditioned for him again. And he said, "Now you're ready." And I thought, "Well boy, that was worth it!" That was worth it. And it was unbelievable. I had never-- to hear forty, fifty musicians behind you with this tremendous sound and a nine-foot piano to play on. The strings--I looked out at the keyboard and the strings seemed endless. Symphony Hall, it seemed so huge! And all those people out there. It was really kind of scary. But it was a tremendous experience for me and I'll never forget that.

I was quite nervous, naturally. My knee, I can't tell you, was moving up and down so fast underneath that piano. And you know there were people sitting on the floor at tables and all I could think of was, "They can see my knee moving up and down!" And after a while I settled down, and it was fine. I had a wonderful experience doing that and I'll never forget it. And they asked me, "Do you want to do this kind of thing as a career?" You know, be a piano soloist with different pops groups or symphonies. You would have to learn the repertoire of six or seven concertos and just travel the country doing this, and this would be wonderful. But, my reaction was, "Now, wait a minute, I have to play what's written, I cannot do any kind of improvising if I felt like it. You have to play what's written. And I decided that I'm going to stay with what I'm doing. And I haven't been sorry. But it was a tremendous experience.

FRED Wow, that's great.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah...

FRED Did you know some of the other musicians in Pops?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: No.

FRED Did you know some of the other people from Saltman who were on the program too?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I didn't know anyone in the orchestra then. I mean, now I know quite a few of the players, but then I had no contact with the musicians who were playing at the time and it was a tremendous experience for me and one I will never forget. It proves that if you want to do something badly enough and you want to put the time into practice and so forth, you can do it. I'm not saying it's easy. It wasn't, for the amount of hours I put into it and memorizing all those twenty-seven pages. But I did it and I'm glad I did.

FRED Who were some of the other musicians around town that you were playing with at that time?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I was doing solo work.

FRED Oh, you were.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I was doing an awful lot of piano solo work when I first started out. And I think probably today that's why I'm not too fond of solo work. [Laughs] I mean, I do it, but I much prefer the trio or duo or quartet, that sort of thing. But I was doing a lot of piano solo work. I was playing at--Huntington Ave. had the little Show Bar, which was a little club. You know the beginning of Huntington Ave., where the Westin is right now? There were a couple of clubs right there, and Show Bar had a show room and they had an outside lounge and that's where I was playing. And it was strictly solo. And I did that for quite some time until I went to the Darbury Room. I did solo work there, but I also did duo work there.

FRED Duo with a bassist?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:With my husband, yeah.

FRED Oh, your husband, tell us about him.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Well, he was a bass player and he also sang. And we worked the Chez Freddie [Lounge] together. He passed away in '74, but we had worked together up until that time. And after that I did some more solo work, but then I got into the trio thing also. When I went to the Colonnade it was the trio.

FRED Did you sing?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:We did some Jackie [Cain] & Roy [Kral] things, yes.

FRED I was just gonna ask.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:We were doing things like that.

FRED Oh well that's clever.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:It was fun, it was fun, yeah. So, it's been a long number of years that I've been playing and singing. It's over fifty years.

FRED How did the Darbury Room come about?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I auditioned there. They were looking for duo, solo piano, but I wanted to do the duo thing. And we both sang, so it was fine. He hired us. Don Alessi played there, the Lou Carter Trio played there, many wonderful musicians played that room. It was one of the best rooms in Boston at the time.

FRED You said there were two lounges going on simultaneously?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:There was the outside lounge in the front, and then there was a very good restaurant in the back, and they also had a trio playing in there. The food was excellent and it was just a very high class club. One of the few

FRED Between Newbury and Dartmouth.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:This was between--it was on Dartmouth Street in between Newbury Street and Boylston. There's an Italian restaurant there now. But the Darbury Room was--people would come in like Oscar Peterson for dinner--because he was at the Jazz Workshop-- people like that would come in. When they were playing in town they would come in for dinner.

FRED The Jazz Workshop was right around the corner.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Right around the corner, yeah.

FRED And this is in the sixties?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:In the sixties, yes yes, yeah.

FRED You said Lou Carter's trio consisted of?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Lou Carter's trio contained Herbie Ellis, guitarist, and Johnny Frigo.

FRED Who was playing bass then?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Who was playing bass then.

FRED And there were all graduates of which orchestra?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:They all were in the Jimmy Dorsey band. And after Johnny Frigo there was Bonnie Lou Wetzel who was married to Ray Wetzel. I don't know--am I going back too far here? [Laughs]

FRED Not Kenny [Wenzel]'s parents? [Laughs] That's Wenzel, sorry.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No. But Bonnie was the bass player and she was a really good bass player. Unfortunately she passed away. I've lost a lot of good buddies I have to... I've lost a lot of good people in this town. Those were the days, when everybody was really happy because they were working and they could play their music. It was a nice time.

FRED So your trio evolved out of that gig?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yes.

FRED And then you were always with bass and drums after that.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Always, yeah. I started the Colonnade with Reid Jorgensen and Terry Keefe and after a while John Neves, Lou Magnano. You know, I had some wonderful times. Really, I was very fortunate that I played with some of these people. Really! And the other concert type things that we did with Alan Dawson, Dick Johnson, people like that. Also recording with Greg Hopkins' big band, meeting the players that he used, it was just a wonderful experience for me. When I say an ear opener, it really expanded the kind of sounds that I was hearing. His arrangements were out of this world. He's a genius, that's all I can see. He's unbelievable, very creative. And I was very fortunate. I still consider myself very fortunate.

FRED The trio played at various rooms around town, and you were working six nights a week all the time.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. At the Colonnade, we were there for eleven years; that was the trio. Scotch and Sirloin, I was there for about three years. That's when I had the trio plus I had a horn section on the weekends. I would have people like John LaPorta, Phil Wilson, Greg, Dick Johnson, all the well-known horn players that would come up and play.

FRED I saw you there many a time. Harry Johnson was running the room. That was a regular dating spot for me.
BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: [Laughs] That was a nice room. That was a good room.

FRED Sure was. And sometimes they'd bring out of town guests like Joe Venuti and the Drootin Brothers.
BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, they were there for a while.

FRED They would tag-team with you for a while. Did you get to play with some of the out of town--would you
BOUCHARD: sometimes, you know, have a single come in and work with them?

MAGGIE SCOTT: Not so much that. No, no.

FRED But there was enough of a rotation of good horn players from in town here.
BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Oh, yes, every weekend. I'd rotate certain people, have them come up once a month at least. It was great, it was great. I really wish we had some place like that today. [Laugh] Wouldn't it be nice? You know, the out of town singers that I used to play for when I was doing the Good [Day!] show on Channel 5.

FRED That was a little later, in the seventies?
BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That was a little later, the late seventies, yeah. That was a tremendous experience as well.

FRED How did that come about? How did you get caught up in the TV thing?
BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Somebody from the station I think heard me at the Colonnade. When they had singers coming through, they needed somebody to play for them, and that was how I got started. They said, "Bring the trio," and I did that for at least two or three years. At that time a lot of the summer theaters were featuring people like John Raitt and Steve [Lawrence] & Eydie [Gormé] and people like that. Tommy Tune came through and I got a chance to play with all those people with the trio, and that was a great experience as well.

FRED The morning show was on what channel?
BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Channel 5 with Janet Langhart and John Willis. I was at the Colonnade, I remember because I would get home about two, two-thirty in the morning and had to be at the station at eight. [Laughs] I'd do that a couple of times a week. [Laughs] It was fun!

FRED Yeah, but you wouldn't want to do that five times a week.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No, no, not at all. It was kind of tough getting up in the morning sometimes.

FRED I bet. Well, at some point you were sort of back and forth with singing and not singing, right?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:When I first started I was strictly a piano soloist. I didn't sing at all. I think it was when I was at the Darbury Room that people said "Well, can you sing? Don't you sing anything?" And I would say, "No, just play." And after a while it was a little embarrassing. And I thought, "Well, maybe I'll try learning a couple of songs and sing and see what happens with it." So I did. And I thought, "Well, they seem to enjoy it. They didn't say, 'Don't sing anymore' or anything like that." And I discovered after a while that they were not interested in any nice piano solos; they were interested in hearing lyrics. I just learned song after song after song, and it got to the point where I almost sang more than I actually did piano solo work.

FRED I think music is too complicated for some people; they just want a story.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:They do. They can relate to a certain song they've heard. You know during the war, World War II, like "As Time Goes By," people have so many memories of that song during the war. And "I'll Be Seeing You"--songs like that just brought back memories for them. This is what they wanted to hear. So what I did was just, you know, learn the repertoire of all the standards, basically all the standards. I would take the Gershwin tunes and learn so many of the Gershwin tunes; take the Cole Porter tunes and learn so many of the Cole Porter tunes. And I did that with all the American composers so that my repertoire was all standards. And you know, I would play in between, but mostly they really wanted to hear lyrics. It's a story for them; it's a memory for them. And I certainly understand that. And this is what I try to tell students: tell a story. When you sing--it's not having the greatest voice in the world, it's how you interpret the lyrics and your phrasing and the emotion that you can send out there that people are gonna feel. That to me is the important thing. I don't consider myself to have a great voice, but if I can sing in tune and if I can interpret the lyrics as I feel them, then I'm doing what I feel I can do. So for students being able to interpret lyrics--it's like acting, but you're singing.

FRED How does an eighteen-year-old get some emotional message behind a deep love song?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I think that's kinda tough unless they're a good actor. I mean an eighteen-year-old is not gonna have life's experiences, I don't think, up until that point. And to me it's, yeah, you take an eighteen-year-old who wants to sing "Lover Man" or a blues tune, something like that. Well, they haven't really--when I say "suffered enough," I don't meanbut deep pain, or you know--they have to mature more than that and experience a little bit of life's experiences to be able to relate to the lyric and not have to think about acting so much. And you know, they say a singer never becomes a good singer until they hit thirty because you've gone through school and you've had certain experiences and this does make a difference on the interpretation of the lyric. There's no other way.

FRED How much of that message can be taught?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Well, I think--I mean, I will certainly say this. I have quite a few jazz vocal labs and they will hear me say that: you're eighteen, nineteen, possibly twenty; when you mature more, you will understand the lyrics better. And you have to be patient. You have to be patient with this learning process, you might say, and realize there's a difference from when you sing "Lover Man" at eighteen and you sing "Lover Man," say, at age thirty or twenty-five. Maybe you've had a romance that didn't work out, so this is gonna be a new experience for you and you can interpret that in your singing. Or a song like "The Man I Love"--you know, any of your really nice ballads. A song like "Lush Life."

FRED Oh wow, that's a tough one, yeah.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That is a very tough one. I asked students, "What does the word 'lush' mean?" And they said, "Well, you know, green grass, beautiful trees, this is very lush." And I said, "No." I mean, that might be one version of what lush means, but then I explained what this song was all about. I mean, those lyrics are heavy.

FRED It's hard to imagine that Strayhorn wrote it when he was barely twenty.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I know. Pretty sad.

FRED I guess he did a lot of early growing up.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I think so. He had to have, in order to write lyrics like that. Plus, I mean, that is such a great piece of music and the lyrics are excellent, but it's a depressing song. It's a wonderful song, but it can be very depressing if you know what it's all about.

FRED How much can students expect to just dazzle people with their chops if they have them? Will that get you by?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I think maybe temporarily it might. People are impressed when they hear someone the first time, the second time maybe. But to me, how are you gonna sound in five years? Are you gonna last? Are you just a shot in the dark? You do a couple of things but that's what people remember you for, but in five years where are you? Are you singing just as well or not? There's too many who have made it and don't really get another--they don't last. I think to last is to keep studying and to keep working at it, and to keep learning your repertoire. I stress repertoire. Because there's so much good music out there.

FRED And finding out what songs work for you...

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That's right.

FRED ...that are not just necessarily mainstream.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No. It's knowing your vocal range. It's knowing what you can do vocally and what you cannot do. I think that's the realization that students have to come to. Not everybody can sing high or is going to sound good singing high. I think realizing what your capabilities are and being okay with that. I know what my capabilities are and I'm fine with it. It's like if I wanted to become an opera singer, no way. So, I can do so much and I can find the songs that I can sing, and I feel I can do them fairly well and I'm happy with that. But some students tend to... they want to reach more. I mean, that's okay, but at some point you have to realize your limitations, too. Not everybody's gonna be Mariah Carey or Whitney Houston or Stevie Wonder or whoever. And I think that's tough for eighteen-year-old people, nineteen-year-old people to kinda come to grips with. They have to keep trying, naturally, but there's got to come a time where it's gonna let's be realistic here and say, "Okay, I've tried and this is basically what I do best, where I sound best, singing." And I think for people to tape themselves when they sing is a good way to hear what they sound like. Not only because I say, "Don't do this, don't do that." Tape yourself. You will hear it.

FRED BOUCHARD: You've always pretty much been your own boss. You've always led your own bands. Were you at a position at times of having to sing and someone else was playing the piano?

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yeah, I have done that and I'm usually careful. This may sound kinda funny, but I did a gig up at Angelica's. And they have a house trio there and a horn player, and the pianist is very good. Now I just sing when I do that. I don't play. Although, I did the last time I was there.

FRED BOUCHARD: Who is the pianist?

MAGGIE SCOTT:His name is Steve Hershman.

FRED BOUCHARD: Oh, I know Steve.

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yeah, you know Steve. And he's an excellent pianist. He doesn't read. I was amazed. The first time I was there, I had lead sheets with me. He said, "Keep them. I don't read." I mean, he's got great ears. So I said, "Okay, fine." He knows every tune you would possibly want to sing. And I enjoy singing without playing. That's fun for me. As long as...

FRED BOUCHARD: It's like a [inaudible], your hands are free to...

MAGGIE SCOTT:I can concentrate on the words. I can concentrate on phrasing more than if I were playing for myself. You know, it's funny, I read an article about Shirley Horn. She said she doesn't like anybody else playing for her. She knows what she's going to play. She knows what she's going to hear. And I feel the same way. Unless I know who that pianist is--and this might sound I hope I don't sound conceited or egotistical, I'm definitely not--but unless I know who the pianist is and I feel like he's on the same level more or less as myself, then I enjoy singing with him because I know I don't have to worry about someone playing wrong chords. [Both laugh] And same thing with guitar players. I've worked with John Wheatley and I've worked with Gray Sargent. You know I don't worry about them.

FRED Two of the best.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I don't worry about them. They know what they're doing. So great, just give 'em the key and give 'em the song title and we're all set.

FRED Yeah, they're terrific.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:But I do enjoy, I do enjoy. I have fun doing that. Yeah, that's fun for me.

FRED So how did you get involved in Berklee?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:How did I get involved in Berklee? Tony Teixeira.

FRED That's right, of the wonderful nonet.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I used to do commercials with Tony, we had a vocal group, and he was writing songs for children's albums. He called me and said, "How would you like to come in for an interview at Berklee? We need some voice teachers." He said, "Why don't you come in and see Dr. Bobbitt." I think that was his...

FRED Oh yeah, Dick Bobbitt.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yes. So I did, I said "All right," and I talked with him and told him pretty much what I would do for a lesson and I got hired. I think I started maybe just a couple of days a week. And that's how it all began. I've been here ever since. [Laughs]

FRED That was mid-seventies?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:That was like, late seventies. Yeah, late seventies. So, I've been here like twenty-six, twenty-seven years now. And I still enjoy it. I still enjoy working with the students. And I'm not tired of it...yet.

FRED Good.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yeah, I feel like as long as I still like it and still enjoy doing what I'm doing. I'll continue to do that.

FRED Do you find as I do that the kids teach you repertoire? They bring in some new songs that you hadn't heard

BOUCHARD: before and "ooh!"

MAGGIE SCOTT:Oh yeah. But the students who I have are all interested in the jazz repertoire. So I don't get too many who will usually bring in something that's contemporary because they know that's not my field. I mean, I don't discourage them from learning it, but that's not my field and they kinda know that. They call me "Jazz Police," you know.

FRED Oh really

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Because if the melody isn't right they will hear from me. If the lyrics aren't right they will hear from me. [Laughs]
Oh, dear!

FRED Well, someone's got to do it.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I just feel when you learn a song, learn it the way the composer wrote it, learn it the way the man wrote it first.

FRED Then break the rules

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Then if you fall onto improvising over it or change something, but give the man his due for what he wrote. I say, "If you wrote a song and someone changed it all around, you wouldn't like it. "

FRED Somebody just quoted Charlie Parker for the umpteenth time saying, "Learn all the rules and then just get up and

BOUCHARD: play." But get the rules down.

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yep. Exactly. You know unfortunately the way they learn their songs today are from the CDs, and that's how they learn it. They're not too interested in getting the music and seeing how the music is written. I can't tell you how many students sing "The Nearness of You" the way Norah Jones does.

FRED Oh dear. That's depressing. [Laughs]

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: And they think that's the way it goes. You know what that happens....

FRED They don't go back to the source. This is all third, fourth hand.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah that's right. And they say, "Well, that's the way she does it."

FRED Wake up!

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: And I'll say, "Go back and get the music and see how it was written first." Then you can appreciate what someone else might do with it.

FRED Don't mess with Hoagy [Carmichael].

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Oh my gosh. Yeah, it's interesting. It's amazing, that's what it is, [Laughs] "Why can't I sing it this way? She sings it this way, why can't I sing it this way?" and so and so and so and so.

FRED Have you had any exceptional students who got out in the world and did well for themselves?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. Layla Hathaway was one. Layla was terrific. You know, it was funny, because when I first had her as a student I loved her sound right away. And I said, "Do you scat?" And she said, "Well, I don't know if I do it right." So I said, "Let me hear you. I'll play a blues and let's hear what you're hearing. Sing some, let me see what you're hearing, let me hear what you're hearing." And she did. And I said, "There's nothing wrong with what you're hearing. Don't be afraid to do that." She had excellent ears. Excellent ears. She could scat over anything. I was really encouraging her because, you know, she's unusual. When you hear someone who can scat and scat well, and hears well, that's unusual. There are students who scat who want to scat, but they don't have the ears. And as a result they're singing all over the place; they really don't have the concept of what good scat singing is.

FRED Yeah, in other words, you've got to get the pitch right. You can't be in the cracks on all the notes.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: No, it's also the phrasing. It's spacing what you're singing. It's leaving room for you to let a few measures go by and then giving yourself a chance to hear what's coming up next. You've got to know the chord changes. You've got to hear the chord changes behind you. So that means really knowing your song very, very well, so you can anticipate the next change coming up, so I can hear what I want to sing over it. Layla just had that natural ability. I never worried about her scatting over a tune. I knew she was gonna sing right notes and she would space it. Space the phrasing, in other words. Not just singing eighty notes to the measure, like so many of them try to do. Lauren Kinhan was another student I had. She's with New York Voices. She was amazing and she's doing really well, you know--they are, the whole group is. I also had Antonia Bennett as a student. And Antonia's out there doing her thing.

FRED I haven't heard her lately, but she was fine when she was here.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. She's in New York. I think she goes out on the road. Sometimes she does concerts with her dad Tony. Tony Bennett.

FRED So I've heard.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I mean it's nice to see that some of them are really out there. I'm sure there are other students who are earning a living doing it. But you don't come across too many all at once. It's sporadic.

FRED Did coming aboard the Berklee faculty help or hinder your gigging life?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Not really.

FRED Were there people on the faculty that you would work with?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Well, of course, I worked with Keith Copland. Keith was my drummer at the Scotch and Sirloin. I was just happy to be here because I admired some of the teachers that were here.

FRED Like whom?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Like [Ray] Santisi and Herb Pomeroy and John Repucci and John LaPorta. People like that I admired. I used to look up to them--well, I still do, as far as that goes. And I thought, "This is nice, I can see these people every day and get to know them." So, it's been a great twenty-six, twenty-seven years. I've enjoyed it. I really have. I've enjoyed the people that I work with, playing with some of the guys who I've done concerts with. The guitar teachers have been great. You know I've done things with the Be Bop Guitars and there's seven guitar teachers all playing in the rhythm section. How can you not like it?

FRED Sure, what a blast!

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: So that's where I just sing. And just stand up and sing and they have the tryouts for me. It's really been a great experience.

FRED You've done work with Greg Hopkins, for example, even before you were on board because he was one of your

BOUCHARD: horn players.

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, he used to go up to the Scotch and Sirloin when I had the horn players on the weekends. And we did weddings together, things like that.

FRED Sure. That's another whole bag. The wedding book.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. [Laughs] That's another whole story. Weddings. Now the DJs have taken over. That's a sad part of the business, too. The general business casual dates are few and far between because all the kids getting married today want DJs. You know, they don't...

FRED It's like having a tin ear. There's no interrelation.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: No. They hear the same songs on the radio and that's what they want to hear at their wedding.

FRED Note for note.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, the same thing, you know.

FRED There's no question of interpretation.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. It's hurt the business, the music business. I see it--you know, I'm on the board of the Boston Musician's Association--and I see the casual dates are less and less. The classical players in this town are doing quite well. That seems to be the field that is more prevalent as far as the classical players, the theater musicians, the BSO. But the casual dates have been taken over by the DJs. It's kinda sad.

FRED Does casual dates equate with general business?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yes. Every wedding I've seen in the hotels, all the music is blaring, and it's all the DJs. That's what

FRED Are these guys licensed? Are they in the union?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No, no.

FRED They don't have to be.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:No. You can't stop someone from earning a living. And people--the young people today in their twenties, the music they listen to is what's on the radio. And what's on the radio? That's what they want at their wedding. I mean, there are exceptions, but that's what they want to hear. And it's all loud.

FRED Yes, it's pretty..

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:[Laughs] It's very loud.

FRED So, are there anyWhat are the best gigs you've had? What are your most significant memories in working on the

BOUCHARD: Boston scene?

MAGGIE SCOTT:Well, the Boston Pops--that has got to be one of the highlights. I think playing at the Colonnade was really--I met so many nice people playing there. That was a dream gig! Six nights a week. I had the trio and I could play what I wanted, sing what I wanted, people were dancing, it was danceable. I remember Woody Herman stayed there. He did a concert I'm not sure where, but he stayed at the Colonnade at the time and he came into the lounge after and he said, "You know, you play danceable jazz." And I thought "Well, yeah okay, that was all right." People could dance to what I was doing and it was still jazz.

FRED The management was very, very pleasant. The staff was terrific. I remember what a delight it was going in there.

BOUCHARD: The service was great. The drinks weren't expensive. Little bowls of peanuts on the table. [Maggie laughs] You know it was really a...

MAGGIE SCOTT:It was a classy place.

FRED Very welcoming.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Tommy Flanagan stayed there and I got to know him there. Count Basie came in, you know. And Ella Fitzgerald also. The Colonnade was situated near Symphony Hall, where some came and did their concerts, so they would stay at the Colonnade. And that was great, meeting those people. I mean, I enjoyed the Scotch and Sirloin--I have to say I enjoyed pretty much all the places I played. I enjoyed working with Greg's band doing the concerts we did together doing the recording we did.

FRED Oh yeah, you recorded an album--I was involved with that one, I did the liner notes--called Together. Some great

BOUCHARD: charts on there. "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'," "Yesterday, I Heard The Rain"--great trombone, and oh, just wonderful stuff. You also did a bunch of specialty concerts here at Berklee subsequent to that. You mentioned Stan Kenton.

MAGGIE SCOTT:I did the Kenton; all the music was music that Kenton had recorded, had done, and I did a lot of the June Christy tunes. And then we brought in the Latin Pete Rugolo charts and it was exciting.

FRED With Craig Candido, Ray Barretto, and all those old charts. So there was the Johnny Richards book, maybe some
BOUCHARD: of that, too.

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. Greg had all those charts. That was wonderful. And I recently just did the Cole Porter.

FRED That was just this year.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That was this year, this April. That was a lot of fun.

FRED Everybody raved about it that went. I'm sorry I missed it.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: It was an excellent concert, all Cole Porter music. The band sounded wonderful. Mostly--there were quite a few teachers in the orchestra, but there were also some students playing. That was a wonderful night. I really enjoyed that. I do my own Jazz Vocal series during fall and spring semesters where I have a concert at the David Friend [Recital Hall]; I audition students for that, I choose about nine students who do the jazz standards, and I have a trio and have them perform. That's always been something I enjoy doing.

FRED When you were working six nights a week, did you ever have piano showcases like Al Vega does now? Where

BOUCHARD: they had open mics or selected people to do numbers?

MAGGIE SCOTT: No, no. I never encouraged that, and I'll tell you why. I had one bad experience. I was playing at the Sonesta at the time and someone said, "Oh, this girl has a wonderful voice; can she please get up and sing? She's related to the manager or someone" I said, "Okay." Well, it was the worst mistake I could have made. She was awful. And I said, "That's the first and last time I do that."

I've had people when I was at the Colonnade say, "Can so-and-so get up and sing? He's a well-known singer, he's got a good voice, can he sing with you?" I think it got to the point where if I said, "No, I'm sorry," people thought maybe I didn't want someone else to sing because I was singing. And it wasn't that at all. It was just a bad experience and I thought, "I'm not gonna do this again, because if this person is not good then I'm gonna hear about it." So I said the management doesn't allow it. That was the best thing I could have said. The management does not allow it, and I still feel that way!

FRED And then you got the management to back you up?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Well, yeah. Well, the thing is too, if I have people coming in, say, "Well, why don't you get up and sing, why don't you get up and sing?" They have hired me to do all that! And they may feel, "She's not even working. She has other people doing her job for her." And that didn't sit well with me at all. I mean, if Tommy Flanagan wanted to come up and play then fine, come up and play, you know. But I remember Herb Pomeroy's wife Betty was a singer, and she happened to come in one night with another friend of hers and she wanted to get up and sing. And as much as I hated to say, "We don't allow it." I had to tell her. I felt bad about it, but again, I feel--then you have people who come in to hear you, who want to hear you sing for some memorable occasion or whatever it might be. And I thought, well, you know, I just made it a policy. I don't have a tip jar, never wanted to do that kind of thing, either. And I just said, "No sitting in." Unless I know who it is that I know can sing, or a pianist or whatever, but it eliminates a lot of problems. So-and-so wants to sing and then it just goes through the whole audience. "I want to get up and sing, too." And before you know it...

FRED It's karaoke night. Bad enough that you have to put up with rudeness and insensitivity.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, that's right.

FRED [Laughs] When I quoted you in this article, you said one of the funniest things I've ever heard.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: What did I say? [Laughs]

FRED The Bandstand. You said it's an occupational hazard at lounges to encounter brassy, half-loaded patrons who
BOUCHARD: insist on chiming in. Pianist Maggie Scott says: "I've actually had people try to talk to me while I'm singing. They must think I have two heads."

MAGGIE SCOTT: It's true. At the Colonnade, I'd be singing and somebody would be right in my ear asking for something. I mean, wait 'til I get through singing before you want to talk to me. They're just insensitive to it, to what you're doing there.

FRED It's really a question of people thinking they're watching something on television, I think. You know, they don't
BOUCHARD: understand that this is a two-handed, two-fisted, full-mentality job. It's impossible to sing and talk at the same time.

MAGGIE SCOTT: To have a conversation with someone! [Both laugh] I think sometimes, I think your audience--I shouldn't say they're ignorant, but in a way they are because they just assume that you can talk and sing at the same time, or whatever it is. It's unbelievable how they can just assume that you can carry on a conversation with them and--let me do my job, please, and then I'll talk to you! You know.

FRED I think there's also a paucity of music education in this country that people don't understand what it means to be
BOUCHARD: a creative, hard working musician. They assume it's just tinkling at the piano.

MAGGIE SCOTT: We do it for fun. And why should we get paid? I played a wedding, and at the end of the wedding a woman came up to me and said "Do you do this for a living?"

FRED How naive.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:What do they think I'm doing there for four hours, that I had nothing else to do? It doesn't make sense that someone would say, "Do you do this for a living?" Well, of course I do. It's just it's amazing how stupid people can be. [Laughs]

FRED Well, again I think it stems from the lack of education at a young age. The school systems don't have the music
BOUCHARD: systems they used to have, in many cases. But, some systems have wonderful music education.

MAGGIE SCOTT:Yeah, people think that because you're a musician and you love what you do and you love to play, you love the music, so for some reason and especially the respect for the jazz musicians. They do not have the same respect for the jazz musicians as they do the classical musicians.

FRED Or even the rock players.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:Even that, yeah.

FRED They figure, well, hell, the superstars are millionaires. Who are these jazz people?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:You know that irritates me. It just irritates me. "What do you mean you want to get paid for this?" The clubs today and the hotels today, they'll offer someone a meal instead of paying them. They'll give them twenty-five dollars for the night plus dinner.

FRED They do that with writers, too. There's a couple of magazines starting up and there are a whole bunch of online
BOUCHARD: jazz publications. They're innumerable and they don't pay their writers a dime. And I said, "See you later." I've got better things to do.

MAGGIE SCOTT:Exactly, exactly. And some of the rooms today, I know some of the rock groups if they want to play that room, they have to pay to play there. This is insane! And the clubs offer them free publicity, yeah. Or "Agents are gonna come and hear you, so you should pay me a hundred dollars an hour to play so you'll get this exposure."

FRED Oh, my Lord.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:It's all this "exposure." And it's ridiculous. It's not fair.

FRED This does not help budding musicians select a career.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:This is not good, no.

FRED What do you tell your students?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT:I tell them not to do that. [Laughs] That this is insane--they want you to do your own publicity, hand out your own fliers, do the radio stations, and if you don't guarantee a hundred people coming into the room to see you, then you don't play that room again!

FRED What's the prognosis for young people coming up in the profession?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: This is tough, this is tough. I really don't know what to tell 'em. I can't say that it's great out there, you know, that there's fifty rooms you can possibly play in and get paid and get treated well and you'll be respected. I can't say that. It's all who you know, today. Do you know someone who knows someone at the recording companies? That's the way that works, unfortunately. They don't listen to every demo being sent to them. Someone has to say something to the A&R person: "This is the person that you should go hear."

FRED Publishers do that with manuscripts too. They have to come in with an agent attached before they'll even look at it.

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah, it's really, it's very difficult. I keep saying, "If you're gonna go to New York, learn to do something, get a day gig. So you can pay your rent and feed yourself. And then go audition." But to go down just hoping, with no day job in mind, no second career, you might say, to feed yourself and pay your rent with--I think that's a necessity today. How else are you gonna sustain yourself?

FRED Well, I mean, you grew up in an era when you support yourself as a performing musician.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That's right.

FRED Maybe the answer for some of these people today is to make a ninety-degree move, where they are using their music in education, in therapy, or in some other areas of entertainment.

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah. If the performance is not there, they can teach, they can get into the therapy. But to have something else that they can do, even if you learn how to work the computers or do something else, possibly.

FRED Make a good drink behind a bar. That's an endlessly creative outlet

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Something else to sustain you while you seek out a career. Otherwise, I think it's awfully hard. I know so many students, they all want to move to New York and do whatever. And, boy, I say, "That's fine, go do it, but can you do something during the day that you can earn a few bucks at?" I'm trying to tell them to be realistic about this wonderful music world. If you make something happen musically, great, but in the meantime you don't have to struggle with eating and living in a decent place. I mean, that's the quickest way to get depressed, is not to be able to pay rent or buy food. That's not good. Fine, do something else if you can in the meantime while you're out looking for playing gigs. Even in New York, the playing gigs don't pay that much. It's as bad as it is here.

FRED No. A lot of clubs but a lot more players.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Oh, yeah. I don't know how it's all going to evolve, whether the days when I was playing back then will ever come back again. I really don't know. And that was a great era--the forties, the big band era, there were so many big bands out there. And singers had a chance to travel with the bands, that's how they got their experience. Harry James, Dorsey, Miller, Kenton.

FRED Did you say you backed Helen O'Connell one day?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: On the TV show, yes. Yes, she sang "Green Eyes." What I would do is, when I found out who was gonna be appearing, I would get in touch with them to find out what they were gonna sing so that I would have an idea of what I'm in for. John Raitt was a great example. I didn't get in touch with him, and he came on the show that morning. He was appearing in Carousel and he was going to sing "If I Loved You." And that morning when he came in to rehearse, he said, "My throat's a little scratchy. Can you play this in the key of B?"

FRED B!

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: [Laughs] Well, you know.

FRED Five sharps, thank you very much.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That's right, that's right! And I said, "Mmmm, okay." You know, that was a surprise. I could have killed him.
[Laughs]

FRED What is that, down a third from the usual D? What would he have normally sung it in?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: He would have sung it in C. I mean it was no big deal, but still, you know, if I said, "I can't do that," I would have looked terrible. That was one experience. Eartha Kitt was very nice. She was very complimentary. I played for Natalie Cole; she was appearing in here in town at the Copley Plaza.

FRED What did Eartha say?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: What did Eartha say? She liked the way I played. She was very complimentary. She liked the way the trio backed her on what she was singing.

FRED You had Reid [Jorgenson] and Terry [Keef] on that one?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yes. I had Tony Inzalaco at some point. We did a Christmas show with Dick Johnson and Greg Hopkins. That was funny because we went up to play "Winter Wonderland" and Greg started in the wrong key. [Laughs] I mean, he found his way naturally. I had great times on the TV show as well. I've had a great career, I can't complain.

FRED Was Alan Dawson your drummer at one point, or did he just sit in once in a while?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Alan would sit in once in a while. We did a couple of concert things together.

FRED 'Cause you were neighbors in Lexington, right down the street.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: That's right. We did a concert, one of the first concerts I did at the [Berklee] Performance Center. I had Alan on drums, I had Whit Brown on bass, and then some of Greg's players. And we did things like that, nothing on a steady basis, you might say, but he did sit in there with me and play with me a couple nights at the Colonnade. He was amazing, too. So many good people I've played with. So many excellent musicians.

FRED He was a knockout vibes player, too.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yes I did Scullers with him on vibes! He didn't play drums. And that was I have a tape of that.

FRED Was it a quartet?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I had a quartet and he was just being featured on vibes.

FRED Who did you have on bass and drums? The usual guys?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I had Dave Clark and I believe it was Jim Gwin. And that was an exciting night.

FRED He must have been a good neighbor and a nice person to know?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: He had a bike that sat two people, and he and his wife would come riding by. [Laughs] I'd see them out on the yard, and I'd wave to them as I was driving by.

FRED You still in touch with Flossie?

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: I see her 'cause she walks a lot. She'll come up to my end of the street and walk around. It's a big block. But we chat, we talk about some of the people here and talk about she's doing. She's doing well.

FRED She always looks beaming when I see her.

BOUCHARD:

MAGGIE SCOTT: Yeah she's terrific. She really, she's got a great attitude. She's just really really nice. Really nice.