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### Interview Transcript Title Page

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<b>Interviewee Surname:</b>	Pauk
<b>Forename:</b>	Gyorgy
<b>Interviewee Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Interviewee DOB:</b>	26 October 1936
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<b>Name of Interviewer:</b>	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
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## REFUGEE VOICES

**Interview No.** RV236  
**NAME:** György Pauk  
**DATE:** 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019  
**LOCATION:** Arkley, UK  
**INTERVIEWER:** Dr. Bea Lewkowicz

### [Part One]

[0:00:00]

*Today is the 11<sup>th</sup> of June of March 2019 and we are conducting an interview with Mr. György Pauk. And my name is Bea Lewkowicz, and we are in Arkley.*

*What is your name, please?*

György Pauk.

And how do you spell that, please?

It's G Y Ö R G Y P A U K.

*Thank you. And where were you born?*

I was born in Budapest, Hungary. On-

*And when?*

The 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 1936.

*Thank you, György. We are very grateful that you agreed to be interviewed for Refugee Voices. Thank you.*

With pleasure.

*Tell us please a little bit about your family background.*

Yeah. So, I am coming from musician background - musician. My mother was a pianist. She studied at- at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, the same place where I studied many, many years later. She studied together with- a name very well-known name, whom you will know – Annie Fischer. A very- world-famous pianist. They studied together with the same teacher. And why it's- it's interesting and important to tell you, is that the two girls were taken to the lessons either their- her mother or- or my, my grandmother, who- who was my mother's mother, taken to the lessons together. So, Annie Fischer knew me, as she used to say later, before I was born. Because we later became very, very good friends. And every time she visited London, you know, we, we met and- and went to her concerts. And it was actually her who persuaded me for the first time that I should go back to Hungary after seventeen years of being away. So, my background is, is that my mother was a pianist. My father was a businessman, who worked for a- for a- a company with- for business transactions and, and, and property. So, but so that's- that's was the background.

*And were they both from Budapest? Where were their families from?*

**[0:02:40]**

My father was born in a- in a countryside in- not very far from Lake Bara- Balaton, which is a- a- it's a village. It's called Kéthely, which means translated “two places” - Kéthely. As many of Hungarian Jews, they were not able to- to have a real profession. He was a- he had a pub. So, my father was born in- in this little place. It's not very far from- from Lake Balaton. And I visited my grandparents a few- few times as a- as a little boy, because- also because it was near the- the Balaton. But my father moved to Budapest at a very young, young age. Unfortunately, my grandparents were- in 1944 they were taken away. And of course, I never saw them again. And I hardly remember them, because they- I- I met them very few times.

So that was my father's side of the family. And they met, I suppose, in Budapest with my mother. I don't know very much about the- the circumstances, how they met. And they got married in 1934, two years before I was born. And they lived very happily together, until the- the Jewish laws, the- the- came into force in- in Hungary. And all the young men, like my father was that time, was taken away to a labour camp, which was in 1942.

Unfortunately, I never saw him again, during all the two years when I grew up. And these are very, very important years for me because I already started in my violin studies. But I never saw my father again and he was killed in 1944.

*Did you know it, at that time, that he was killed?*

Yes.

*You knew.*

Yes. I knew that- that I remember. I remember- very clear, my mother was still, we were living together. And one day the postman came. And I remember that postman brought a- a- a, a wallet. Just a wallet. And that I remember, that my mother when she saw the wallet, she knew that her husband was- was killed. And, and I remember the scene, you know, she started to cry, and it was a very sad scene. That- that's when- when we heard that my father was killed. But only many, many years later, I knew, you know, what- how and where he was killed. But that- then I realised that I- I- I don't have a father. Which even then- until then I didn't, because I didn't see him. So-

*Do you have any memories? Do you remember your father?*

**[0:06:00]**

If I look at the pictures, I do. But I don't remember, you know, which is, is- is very painful for me today, I don't remember his personal touches and all that. I'm sure he- my parents loved me and I was a nice little boy. And later, much later, I was- I was told with- by my grandmother, that once they, the- my parents took me on- on- walking and, and then I was apparently singing the Mendelssohn Concerto, Violin Concerto. And some people asked them- my parents, "Do you know what your child is singing?" "Yes, yes. The Mendelssohn

Violin Concerto.” Which I- I must have - I know - must have heard, but with my mother, who was playing quite a lot of- of chamber music with violinists. So, I must have heard the tune of the famous violin concert. And I was singing it. So- but the passers-by just realised it and - what is this little boy singing? So, this kind of memories, it, it stays with me. But... I don't remember, you know, which is, as I said very painful - personal touches. You know, that's- that's the way they'd kissed me, or told me off or told me good things. But they must have been you know, very, very loving parents, and realised that they had a- had a young child who was- who also was very talented, musically.

*So, you were exposed to music early on through your mother?*

**[0:07:42]**

Yeah, I was. And apparently, I was a naughty boy, because while my mother was teaching and playing with violinists in- in the other room, I was sort of shouting, “Out of tune!” And apparently the- who- who was playing out of tune was not very happy about that. But so, I grew up in- in- with music and all- all that. And, on top of it, which was very, very lucky, in the same house where we lived, Sziget utca, there was a- the- perhaps the most well-known violin teacher in Budapest for young children - especially for young children. So, when my parents realised that I've got talent, then they took me to this Olga Néni, to the lady. And she started to- to teach me how to play the violin. So, it was at very short distance from the third floor to the second floor or vice versa - I don't know - they took me to violin lessons. So that's how I started. I was perhaps five- five, five and a half, 1941, '42 when I started to play the violin.

*And why the violin? Because she was in the house or why- why did you start?*

Well, I heard- I heard violins a lot and perhaps I- I wanted- I wanted to show it that I'm not playing out of tune. I don't know this is just a- just a funny thought. But I loved the sound. I loved the sound of the instrument and perhaps, together with the cello, is the most ‘singing’ instrument. And this- that's- I always tell my students nowadays, you know, that you have to play the instrument like a good singer. So, that's how I started to play violin and as I said, were very lucky to do- these years you know, when you start to play an instrument, absolutely vital for your future. How- the basic technical know-how. How to hold the violin,

how to pull the bow, how to coord- coordinate the two together. So, I had the best teacher available.

*What was her name?*

Olga Néni Neumann. Mrs. Neumann.

*Olga?*

Olga - Olga Neumann. And apparently many, many young, talented violinists started the violin with her, who later became quite well-known players. So, I spent the first, I don't know, six, eight, nine years to studying with her. She was very interesting and because she taught without an instrument, which I find it nowadays quite difficult. Because it needs to, you know, I need to- you can, of course, you have to explain things, but it's so much in a way easier to show.

*Yeah.*

**[0:10:40]**

To show. But she was able to explain to a little child, which is- you know, how to play the violin. Violin, by the way, is a difficult instrument. The- the biggest compliment I received later- in later years when somebody told me, "Oh, Mr. Pauk, we didn't know violin playing is so easy!" This means that I'm playing the- the instrument the most natural way. I'm playing the instrument a natural way, and- and not- an unnatural instrument a natural way. So, but it's thanks to Olga Néni - to Mrs. Neumann - that I had a technique, which- which, which has to be the- the right way and shows that violin playing is easy.

*So, did you start that- when? Before you started going to school?*

About the same time. About- as, as I was born in October, I really lost a year in Hungary that I- that children had to go to school at age six. But because I was born in October, I lost a year. So, this means that I started to play the violin before I went to the school. But that

makes no difference. And, and- that's- I would think nowadays, that's the best time to start. Five, six and - lucky.

*And then you went to school? You went to your...?*

**[0:12:11]**

I went to the local primary school, which was in the same street, just five minutes walking. And that's up till- when the- the war broke out and then- and we had the- the year 1944 when- when we didn't go to school for about a year- less than a year, eight months, ten months. So that's when I- I- my basic education started until- and Hungary was the first eight years of- of primary school and four years of- of gymnasium. Just the opposite here, in England. It's- it's- you have got, you know, the children go to school till eleven and then they have got only the four years. So just- but perhaps that- that better- it's better. Because that's- it's the first eight years of your- you, you study the basic set - most important things. Anyway, so but the interruption of the, the- the war years. And then I continued after the- the- Budapest was- was liberated.

*So, tell us, before '44-*

Yes.

*So, when you're in the 40s. What- what was it like?*

Relatively calm. At least as a child I don't remember that I had problems, you know, with being Jewish. Though I know that there were a lot of- a lot of Hungarian- was always anti-Semitic. Was, is and will be. But somehow, that neighbourhood of Budapest there were a lot of Jews living. So, I was surrounded by similar people like- like us. And so, we- I didn't feel. But, you know, by that time my father was- was- was taken away. So, I knew that as a Jew, he was kind of punished and- and taken to a labour camp. But we were all of course always hoping that it's sort of temporary. And I suppose he kept writing letters, which I don't remember reading and- and- and seeing. But we were hoping till September '94 ['44] came and- and when we heard that he was killed, or he died.



[0:14:33]

*And, again, just to- a little bit before-*

Yes.

*How did they- your parents define themselves- in terms of the Jewish identity? How did they...?*

Well, they were not religious.

*Right.*

As a- I don't remember that they had a religious upbringing, but they knew exactly, of course, where- where they belonged to. And which I kept, of course, all my life. But we didn't feel you know, the- the- the disadvantage, being Jewish. I mean, we didn't- we only, of course, in 1944 when the Germans occupied Hungary, but not before. I don't remember you know, that I was- I was told, you know, "dirty Jew" or, or- but later, yes.

*So, your memories- of that time is to do with-*

Yes.

*Learning the violin.*

Learning violin and- and playing with the toys. I mean it- I had comparatively a happy childhood. So- but of course, I- I suppose I was missing my father.

*Yes.*

Which I realised many- many years later, you know, that- that I grew up without a father. Up- *until* I became a father. That's when I realised that you can't look for your father anymore. Because you became a father. But I was- as I remember, you know, always I was looking for the father figure. And the father figure was my teacher, mainly my- my later- my violin

teacher. Not Olga Néni because she was a lady, but when I got to the [Liszt] Music Academy, then I met, you know, the- the greatest Hungarian violin teacher and professor. And I looked up to him, like, like a father figure.

*Who was that?*

**[0:16:31]**

Zathureczky, Professor Ede Zathureczky. He was my teacher, and he was really the, the, the- One of the greatest representatives of the once famous Hungarian violin school. He was a student of, of Hubay, Jenő Hubay, who was the founder of the Hungarian violin school. So, he was continuing and hopefully you know, I'm doing, now, many, many years later, the same.

*You see yourself in that- that tradition?*

Yes, absolutely. Yes. Unfortunately, now it's- it's very different nowadays, and that- that kind of old Hungarian violin school is not continued. And therefore, you know, there are not many great Hungarian violinists. So, I'm trying to represent this- this side of- and- and I think I've be quite successful not just in this country, but all over the world. I- I brought up young violinists' generation on this Hungarian violin school tradition.

*Okay. We'll talk about it a bit later-*

Yes, of course.

*About what's different about it.*

Okay.

*Just to come back to-*

Yeah, this Zathureczky. He was, I looked up to him, you know, like my father. And he, he did have children. And he treated me almost like his- his- his son. So, it lasted till I- I- I-

studied with him and then he left Hungary in the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. And- but I kept in touch with him.

**[0:18:10]**

*Where did he go?*

He went to America. He became very famous professor at the Bloomington- in Indiana University in Bloomington, until his very early death in- he died in- he died in 1959 in- in Bloomington, Indiana. But I kept in touch with him throughout the- and for a while it- it looked like that when I left Hungary, that I'm going to- to- to visit him- I mean, study with him in Bloomington. But by that time, you know, the- the quota was- was the refugee quota in America was- was fulfilled and- and I wasn't able to. And then he died, unfortunately.

*So, tell me a little bit- Just to come back to the 40s, now.*

Yeah.

*When the Germans came-*

Yes.

*...do you have any memory of that?*

I do. I do. Well, March the twenty- 19<sup>th</sup> is a black day- the date remained all my life. I- what I remember about it is that, you know, the German tanks came and German soldiers- was full of- the city was full of them. And our life became much more difficult. Suddenly, there was a- there was a- a- regulation. You know- there were Jewish houses, there were Christian houses. And the house where we lived in- in Sziget utca became a Christian house, which meant that we were ordered to move. And as it happens, happened, the next house on Pozsonyi út became a Jewish house. So, we move to this- this apartment a three-room apartment. That was- that time with my mother, with my grandmother, my aunt and her daughter. So, we moved there, but many of the other Jews were also thrown out from their homes. This means that we were joined by, I don't know, thirty other- unknown to us,

unknown people. So, we lived in the three, three room flats, I don't know, about thirty-five, thirty-six people. But what I remember is that- or rather at that time it was the big- the- the- the Allies were bombing Budapest non-stop. So, most of the time what we spent in the cellar, in- in- the house had a big cellar. And just- the food started to be short and- and it was cold and we started to suffer quite considerable from- mainly which I remember- fear. Fear, because any moment you know, the bomb could fail or fell, no- fall on the- on the house. So, we were living in constant fear. And that's what- I remember two things from my childhood: fear, hunger and cold. As it happened, in 1944 was a very cold winter in Hungary. And of course, there were no - we couldn't heat. There was no heating in the house. And food started to be short. So, this is how I spent this- about six months of my very important years. Sitting in the- in the cellar waiting for the bomb to fall.

*And even- even not in the cellar, in the flat, how did-*

In the flat, yes.

*...how did you manage so many people in the flat? Were people sleeping on the floor?*

Yes, they were sleeping on the floor, under the piano, on the top of the piano - because my mother has a piano.

*She brought the piano? She could?*

**[0:22:05]**

Well, he had a piano. Yes. So, we had- we had it there. So, people- I- I don't know where I slept, but- with all these people, not- not easy. Not easy.

*And food? They managed to have some-?*

Food somehow, you know. They were- I-I remember I- I was sent to the local bakery in the early morning just to, to stand in the queue for- for bread. And somehow, I suppose, we managed. But I remember that I was hungry, especially later, when the situation became even worse – towards the end of 1944.

*So, what happened to your mother?*

Well, the mother, what I remember is one day there came the Hungarian ... Nyilas. Well, this was the- the- Arrow- Arrow Party. And I'm sure again, others speak- other people have told- told- told you about October the 15th. October the 15<sup>th</sup> was a- another even worse day in our lives, because the Arrow Party, which was a purely fascist party, took over from the government. So, October 15 is the worst day of- of my life because I remember that all these young Hungarian children, I must say, boys, sixteen, seventeen came, and you saw them on the street with guns. And there- then were looking for- only for Jews and for- for- to take them away. And one day, you know, they came to our flat and they took all the remaining young ladies away, because there were only children and old- old- old women and children. So, the remaining young women they took away. Also, which is a clear memory in- in my- in my- my- my memories that again, another day, young Hungarian boys, the fascist boys came and took- took us away, all- everybody from the house, and took us. And we lived very near to Danube, to the river - five minutes' walk to the river. And they took away all the Jews and many of them, they were shot into the Danube. Again, similar- similar story. Somehow, and that's one of the miracles of my life, my- my aunt, her daughter, my grandmother and me – somehow, we escaped. I remember my aunt was telling to one of these, these fascist boys, “Please let- let us go. Let us run away. Because this little boy is a talented violinist.” And- somehow, we were let- let off. The- all the rest of the people were shot into the Danube. And this place is- where is, was very near to where we lived. Every time you know, I go to Hungary, the memories come back. Somehow, we escaped, and we back went back to the flat where we lived. But there were not so many people anymore, because most of them were shot into the Danube. And then very shortly afterwards the- they discovered that we were there and then all these remaining Jews, children and old people were marched. We were marched into the ghetto, which-

*So where was the ghetto?*

**[0:25:51]**

Ghetto is the Jewish part, the- the religious part of- of Budapest. There is a part which is- became actually nowadays, very fashionable. But all the synagogues were there. It was

religious, not non-religious, all. And they, the, the Germans or the Hungarians they boarded it in to- it became the ghetto. And there we were taken to a house to a- to an apartment. Forty, fifty people together. And that was the worst part of- of my life because there was no more food. No more food, cold and fear. Well, somehow, you know, we survived. And it only took, what, about two weeks, less than three weeks till the- the- Budapest was liberated. And- But that was the worst part of my childhood. And very recently, I was in Budapest. And there's the famous synagogue Dohány, the big- one of- I think the biggest synagogue in, in Europe. And I- I visited. I went there- I was there many times. And they had an exhibition there- they have an exhibition now. A very moving, wonderful exhibition about these years - the ghetto years. And seeing, you know, many of the pictures, reading many of the articles there, and of course, all came back to me. And, and, you know, it's somehow, I- I feel very fortunate that somehow, I survived with my grandmother, with my aunt and with my cousin. The four of us. Yeah.

**[0:27:40]**

*And how old was your cousin?*

Same age.

*Right.*

Two weeks. She's still alive. She's in- lives in Hungary. Yeah.

*And you- so, the four of you-*

The four of us.

*-together. And you said you were walked away from that building towards The Danube and managed to-*

Yes, yeah- well, from- from our- our home what was, as I say, five minutes from- from this, the Margit híd you know it's the- the bridge, the Margaret Bridge. And there, now today, very near I mean, and you heard about it, there are the shoes.

*Yes, the monument.*

The monument with- they put out many of the shoes which the Jews wore. And it's very near the Parliament building. And now it's a- it's like a museum and- and most of the- the tourists who visit Budapest are taken there. And of course, I've been there many times. In fact, I- which I wanted to do very much, I took my grandchildren there to show them that this is where your grandfather was almost- was- was shot into the Danube - almost dead. So, of course that- that- that showed them life, you know, not just as a story. They- they appreciate it, and they saw with their own eyes what I went through as a child. Yeah.

*And did you- did they have any Schutzpässe or any documents? Do you know that your mother tried to get any - thing?*

I think we had but I think we had only- only the Swiss pass and it wasn't enough for her. But they were specially looking for- for young women, because there were no men. So, they were looking for a young woman and- and again, they took her away, and I never see her – again. And she was still- I understand she died still marching towards the- I don't know, Ukrainian border, Russian border. And somehow, still in Hungary, she died from hunger or whatever reason.

*When did- when did you find out what happened to her?*

**[0:30:00]**

Well, when- I was hoping you know that that she was coming back because there were some people- but then as the time passed, you know, January, February of 1944- '45, she didn't come back. So, I, of course I realised it. And of course, my grandmother immediately knew and- and was fear- was- fear that we will never see her again. And that's what happened. But I remember that my mother's last words before she was taken away, she said to my- to her mother to my grandmother, "Please take care of my, my child, my boy." And she certainly did. That was her life and that was- therefore, it was very difficult for me some- some years later to leave Hungary - to leave her. That was a big decision, which I- I did in 1958. But I had to do it. But luckily her- her other grandchild, and- and her son, my mother's brother,

came back from- from labour camp. So, she wasn't alone. She had her son there, her other grand- granddaughter, and- and wife.

*And they stayed in Budapest?*

They- they stayed in Budapest until they died. But- but, so, I knew that my- I didn't leave my grandmother alone. But still, it was a very difficult decision for me, because she brought me up.

*So, were you very close to her?*

Very close to her. Yes, and- and she was of course- the famous story is, you know, that she, as a little boy, little- all the time she said to me, "Practice, practice. You have to practice." And she locked me into the room and- and- and I wasn't allowed to- to go anywhere because violin is a difficult instrument and you had to practice. So, but she was a very strict but loving grandmother. So therefore, it was very difficult for me to leave her. But- but I had to do it, and I did it.

*And did she talk about your parents or did she- was it something you, kind of- [inaudible]?*

**[0:32:10]**

Many of the Jews, and including myself, you know, for a long, long time, you know, we don't- we didn't talk about things with- painful things what happened in our lives. And that's a way of trying to forget the hard times. And I- I- she was always very optimistic and, and, and for me what was- was most important is the violin, is the music, which I think because of that, I survived. And- and I had comparatively, in spite of then the communist times in Hungary, I had a comfortable life. And- and together with my grandmother, and because I was recognised as a highly talented young musician and I was helped by the- by the Communist state, given scholarships, and- and I was protected. But, well, I will talk to you about later, when, after my first visit to a western country, then I immediately realised that I cannot live in a prison. Because we were living in a prison. Hungary was a prison. And we were cut off from the Western world. Cut- not only- well, even any other country, we were cut off totally. And for a musician, or for every- everybody, for a musician it was very



painful. We didn't know how- what- which direction music was moving. I mean- we had no idea. We had never heard, you know, visiting artists from- from, from the West. And we all- always heard the propaganda of the, of the state- of the Communist state. It's the, the- the greatest country in the world and we- we had to love the Communist Party and- and the then Hungarian leaders and of course, Comrade Stalin. Every time Stalin's name- well, you are laughing at it now, but it wasn't funny. Stalin's name or the then Hungarian leader's name was mentioned, we had to stand up, and applaud and- and thanks them for- for our lives. That was the Communist regime which some today, they try to remember as a pleasant happening, but it was not. But as I said earlier, you know, I- I had a protected life because of my- my, my- my talent and- and as a young, promising violinist.

**[0:35:00]**

*So, when you were liberated-*

Yes.

*... you were still together with your grandmother, your aunt-*

Aunt and a cousin. And then my uncle came back from the labour camp. So, we lived to- the five of us live together for a- for a short while. But then they moved away. Actually, my, my, my... aunt and- she was a doctor and my... her- the father... what is it-

*Uncle?*

Uncle. he became, you know, all- many of the Jews who came back from- from- from the concentration camps, they thought communism is the future. So, he became a communist. But I don't know how deeply he felt it, but for a survivor, it was certainly very useful. But then they moved away so I stayed- I stayed with my grandmother in the same apartment, where we- we lived with forty people after- during the war. We stayed there, just the two of us.

*For how long? Then- until you left?*

Until I left. Yes. No. Well, it's- it's quite a long- ten years or more than ten years. Well, I became you know, I was a student at the Liszt Academy.

*Yeah.*

And I went to the- the high school and the then, which is- I think is a wonderful idea for musicians, is a special school where the tuition is from eight to twelve. So, four hours' tuition, long- short, shorter lessons, but we learned everything what was necessary and- and the rest of the time we could practice. So, this- this actually it's a Russian- Russian development- discovery.

*A model?*

Model, yes for young with- and- and we, in- in this country, we have just a few private schools like the Menuhin School, the Cheetham School in Manchester and the Purcell School in London. These are the music schools where children are- are studying, and they are able to practice and learned the instrument what they- whatever they play. So that's where I- I went to.

**[0:37:15]**

*You went- So, just come back now, so I [inaud]- liberation.*

Okay, please do.

*Do you have memories of that?*

Yes, well, ...Russian soldiers appeared in- in the ghetto. And the first thing of course, I remember that the- bread - "*chleba*". We were hungry and they knew it. And of course, all the- but, important to know, you know, that this- they liberated us, yes, Russians. But their aim was not this- this was not their- their main aim, liberating the Jews. They were liberating Hungary out from the fascism. But- of course, we, our lives we- we have to thank, and even today, because of the Russians. But that's what I remember. Russians soldiers came and- and

we were able to- we were allowed to move back to our- our- our- our past, the house where we used in Pozsonyi út.

*And when did you start going back to school?*

Shortly, I suppose afterwards in the 19th, I suppose, of September 1944- [correcting himself] '45. So, I continued where I- where I stopped; perhaps was eight, ten months. And also, of course, immediately I- I continued my violin playing. Because during the- the- the worst- those months, I wasn't able to play. But I immediately- and my teacher also survived. And so, I was able to continue with the violin.

*But did you have your violin at that time? Did you-physically have it [inaudible]?*

I suppose so. I don't remember - I suppose. Yes. Well, it was not a great instrument, but I suppose I had it. Yeah. But I didn't have my parents. But my grandmother was standing by and- and looking after me 200%.

*So how old were you then, at the end of the war?*

Well, I was- I was eight, nine- 1944 was eight, and then in '45, nine. Difficult years. Difficult. But as I said, what- what, what- I was survived and- and for me it was music. And I could forget, I suppose, about all the- the- the problems, and- and losing the parents, and- and not enough food. Music. That's what kept me.

**[0:39:55]**

*And what about other children, then, in your age?*

There were other children. I didn't have brothers or sisters, because I was born in the years when the war broke out and- and parents didn't want to have any more children. But I had very similar- and in the same neighbourhood, where I had friends who, perhaps not- not the same instrument, but musicians, who realised, you know- we played at- we played football. That was that was how children meet- met and- and- and then realised that, "Oh, you're playing the violin?" "You're playing the piano?" Well, why not that- come together, and- and

play something together? So, one thing followed the other. And some of them are even today, you know, after all these years, we still live together. We happen to live in London, and live in the same city and you know are not- I'm not performing anymore, but keeping the friendship and- and all the old memories of- of the difficult childhood.

*From that time?*

From that time, yes. Yeah.

*But then I suppose- well, it was really the music-*

The music. Yes.

*That you were devoted to.*

**[0:41:15]**

Yes. Yes. And, and- I as an- as a- as an exceptional talent you know, I was- I was the age of thirteen I was accepted in the music academy, which is like, you know, university. And one of the most famous teachers, Zathureczky, who heard me playing, and he accepted me in his class, which was unheard of. I mean, all my colleagues were over eighteen, twen- nineteen, twenty. So, I was a little- little child with short trousers. I remember they were short, of course. And- but some of them, you know, colleagues and especially the teacher treated me like a colleague, like a- but I had a very big complex of- of- of- of knowing, you know, that I was a little boy. An inferiority complex. But my teacher, Zathureczky, of course, though he didn't have children, but he realised this. And he was compensating me for everything what I was missing. In fact, very soon, perhaps in two or three -years' -time, I became his favourite. And some of coll- colleagues became quite jealous of this. And so, I became sort of the... same- like I would be the same age musician. I had a very interesting and busy childhood, because the violin and also because of Hungary was that time totally isolated from- from the West. There were some outstanding teachers at the music academy. And I had the fortune, you know to- to study with them. I mean, like Kodály, Zoltán Kodály, and Zathureczky and- and the- the chamber music teacher, who was one of the greatest musicians, you know, Leó Weiner- was composer himself, but he was- he was teaching chamber music. I studied-

*What was his name?*

**[0:43:27]**

Leó Weiner.

*Weiner.*

You must have heard the name. Leó Weiner. So, I had the best education, you know, the- the music academy in the 50s was as, as top- absolutely top teachers, who were also not allowed to travel, of course. But-

*Yeah. So, everyone was there.*

Everyone was there. And, I must say that the- the education then was much, on a much higher standard than it is now.

*When did you first know that you wanted to be a violinist, or...?*

Oh, I immediately knew. I immediately- no, there was a short period when I was thinking, “Why not piano?” But then, you know, we were still able to- on the radio for instance you- I could hear old recordings of all the great violinists, [Yehudi] Menuhin, and [Jascha] Heifetz and- and [Fritz] Kreisler. And that- that was- that was possible. But I didn't know who were the new names. And- and- and in this totally so- isolation- we were- we were kept in the darkness. Both politically and both - music. But we had the opportunity to grow and- and- and learn a lot about music and- and mainly for me, to learn with the best teacher on the- on the violin.

*So, when you were already- still in school, when you were accepted to the Liszt Academy, you knew this- this was your path?*

**[0:45:11]**

Of course, yes, yes. Not only that, but Zathureczky was a soloist, and I knew that my path- I- I- it was a solo violin. It was a totally different way of- of- of course I know it now, as a- as a teacher and professor, that it's total different way of playing the instrument when you want to become a soloist, or a chamber musician, or an orchestra player. But especially at this age, you know, when you're fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, everybody should be- try- trying to- to be brought up as a soloist player. Because afterwards you can still change. But the more- the- the difficulties of the instrument- you have to learn the way of, of how to play the instrument- you have to learn in that age. And Zathureczky knew exactly. And of course, he discovered in my- my personality and my talent that I am- I am geared for that. And from very early age, for fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, I was able - an oddity - to play with orchestras. Playing as a soloist.

*Yes, and what is it? What is it, that quality to solo?*

Well, the... What is it? It's the comb- it's the personality, it's the- it's the- it's the presence of- of- of- of a person on the stage, which is very difficult to- to say what it is, but it's- immediately can feel and- and who is- is- is, is giving you something personal. You go to a concert and then you listen to somebody, and let's say about five minutes you- you start to think, "What did I have for breakfast?" Or, "what- what was- what did I today? What did I do today?" And then you go to hear somebody else and then you forget about it and you only think "My God, it's- he wants to say- to tell me something." Music, of course. And so, it's- it's a very mysterious thing, you know, the charisma. You know, who- you stand on the stage, how you come up- already starting how you come on a stage, how you bow. And of course, this can be learned. It can be learned and this can be taught, which- which is- but the real- the real one is for a- for a person who is- also already has it. Somehow, has a feeling. And it seems that I had that. And it was discovered, you know, very early. And I was pushed at this- at that direction by my professor and also by the school. So, I was given a lot of opportunities to exercise this. And I was- I played- I was given concerts and, and-

*Yes, so when was your- debut?*

**[0:48:07]**

And even- even I was- I was sent to some international competitions - eastern Europe, of course. There was the- in those years the- in Communist countries the Youth Festival each- each year in a different eastern European capital. So, for instance, at the age of sixteen, seventeen, I was sent to Bucharest, to a violin competition. As a sixteen-year -old, I was sent to Bucharest and I won a prize! I won a third prize. Then two years later, I was sent to Warsaw, to the same- to this international meeting. But this was at the beginning my only experience going abroad. Of course, we were not- you know, at that time in Hungary, people were not even allowed to go to the- near the Austrian border. You needed a special permit to go to - within Hungary - towards the Hungarian border. But we were - few! - even not many people, we were allowed to go to communist- communist- communist countries' capitals, and so I visited Bucharest and Warsaw; these were the two.

*So, was there a sort of debut concert you had, or was it...?*

**[0:49:36]**

Well, school concerts, yes. Yes. I was pushed and- I mean, by my teacher, and, and, and very early age, for the age of fourteen, I was already given an opportunity to play with the orchestra. And then quite a few times with orchestra with, with the, with the Academy- the- the school orchestra. So, I played quite a few times. And I was discovered, you know, that I was a- I am a promising young soloist. Then came, you know, the age- the years of 1955 – '55, '56. A little bit easier. After Stalin's death in 1953, the political situation became a little easier. But still, you know, we were living in a prison. My first opportunity to- to go to the West- and that was a big eye-opener. At that time, I was- had a string quartet - with Léo Weiner. It was a- was a- we had to- everybody at the Academy had to play chamber music, string quartet. I had young, you know, colleagues together, and we were sent to a competition, a quartet competition, in Liège, in Belgium. So that was the first time I was allowed to go to the West. And the main reason we were allowed to go, because my colleagues, the other- especially two of my colleagues, they had already families, they had wives. So, they were not a- they were not afraid- the authorities they were not afraid to send them- them to- to the West, because- because they knew that they are coming back. For- in my case, I was a little boy. So, they were not afraid that I'm- I'm staying in the West. But this was the first opportunity and person, that I was in the West. And suddenly, you know, in my- my eyes opened, and, my God, people are living like this. I mean, it's a different world. So,

from then on, you know, my only aim was, how one day, you know, I am able to come to the West and make my life here.

*So where- where did you go first?*

**[0:51:59]**

This was- this was in Belgium, Liège.

*Liege.*

And went back and continue- and continued my studies, of course, on the violin. Then came another very big opportunity. And that was before the Hungarian Revolution. It was in October 1956. I was chosen among perhaps twenty young violinists to represent Hungary, in Genova in Italy, in the Paganini Competition, which was a very, very- it's one of the big violin competitions. ...Paganini was born in Genova, and they had- this was the third time they organised the Paganini Competition – 1956. And I was chosen, among perhaps twenty other violinists from the Academy with a competition - and in- inside competition. I was chosen to go to Genova. Zathureczky, my teacher, wanted to accompany me very much. He wasn't allowed. By the Hungarian authorities he wasn't allowed because he wasn't- he didn't have a wife. And they were afraid, you know, that once he goes abroad- and that he had - well, later I- I heard about it - a lot of invitations to play concerts in the West, to teach, to give master classes. He was never allowed to. And he was not allowed to accompany me to- to Genova. So, I was nineteen years old. I went to Genova by myself. Again, an- an experience will- which I never forgot. And, as it happened, I won the competition. It was a very, very big honour and- and the- why I said before, it was the third time they organised the competition, but it was the first time that they gave first prize. But, as- I was still a Hungarian citizen. A few days after winning the competition, I was offered many concerts, which I was not allowed to accept. I was immediately ordered to go back to Hungary. But within- in this few days, I was able to see the sea in Genova- the Adriatic Sea, and to- to see how the West is- is, is working. How- how life in the West is. But I was ordered back to Hungary, but I knew that moment and somehow, I had the- the- I mean, thought about it and I had the- I was, I won quite a lot of money, perhaps \$3,000. And in 1956, that was a lot of money.



**[0:55:14]**

And the people who I stayed with, you know, who- who kept- who- who had put me up in their house, they told me, “Don't take the money back to Hungary.” I kept it- I- somehow, I kept it in a bank there, which was of course not allowed. I went back to Hungary two days before the Hungarian Revolution broke out. So somehow, this whole money- money question didn't come up. But I went back to Hungary two days before the Revolution and of course I- I suffered through another- another bit of being in the cellar of the same house where, I, I survived in 19- in '44. But I knew that I have to - escape. I have to leave this country. And what was a big help, you know, in my mind, I knew that I have some money. I kept some money in Italy, which was a big- it's a good- good feeling. And, and, and I knew that when I'm going to start a new life, I have got some security.

*And what did your grandmother think about it, at that time?*

Well, I didn't talk about it.

*You didn't.*

I was afraid to talk about it because I knew- even I- I- I thought, that perhaps she could- she would tell the authorities that, “My grandson wants to leave the country.” And- my- my aunt-uncle, who was a Communist-

*Right.*

I didn't say anything. I had one more opportunity, you know, to go to the West. I was studying, I was doing my- my final years as a student. I was doing my- my- my master's degree.

*At the Liszt Academy?*

**[0:57:06]**

At the Liszt Academy, but not with Zathureczky, because Zathureczky left by that time. But he had an assistant, a very - again, a - great pedagogue, a great, a great violin Professor Béla Katona, his name was.

*So, he left in '56?*

Zathureczky left and went to America, as I told you, but his assistant stayed in Hungary and with him, under his tuition, I finished my studies. What is important for later years, again. But I had one opportunity- one more opportunity to go to the West with my childhood friend Peter Frankl. We have participated in the- the- in Munich and the Sonata Competition, which you saw the- the diploma; we won the first prize. And both of us knew- at that time I was of course talking to him, that very soon, the next opportunity, we are going to have the opportunity to- go to the West, we are not going to return to Hungary. But we still, after winning the competition, returned to Budapest.

*What did you play?*

Oh, a lot of- a lot of repertoire.

*[inaudible]*

Of course, and a lot of Mozart, Schubert... and the usual repertoire which you have to play at a competition. And so, we won. And we were offered, got just a few concerts which we did that time in Munich, but we- we returned to Hungary. And we both finished our studies. So, I was looking for the next opportunity. When I had a- I had an invitation to visit a Western country. And that came not very shortly after winning the competition. Because of the prize, and because of my winning the Paganini Competition I had- I was invited to Paris - to give concerts in Paris. And that was in the spring of 1958. And, I knew. And when I said goodbye to my grandmother, but I still didn't tell her that this will be my last visit, I mean, last trip. And I'm not going to return to- to Hungary. And that's how it was. So, Peter, had some- also some concerts in Paris. I had some concerts in Paris. We had some concerts together in Paris. But we knew that this would be the last trip. And then both of us decided that we are going to ask for political asylum in Paris. And that's what happened. And that was the best and the cleverest thing I did- ever did in my life. Even to-

*No regrets?*

No, not to regret- but that was the best- and even today, you know, I never did such a clever thing. So, I escaped, and I was- for many years we were both not forgiven for this- for many, many years. In fact, my grandmother, of course, she learned about it, and her telephone was taken away. I wasn't able to write letters to her address, because it was censored. Like Peter, he wasn't able to telephone his mother, nor letters to his mother. So- but of course, there- there were other- other methods, you know, of- of being in touch so I of course I learned. But that's how it started- started, our life in the West.

**[1:01:04]**

*Did you manage to- what did you take? Did you take anything?*

Well, I had the most necessary things which I- I needed. You know, a suitcase of- of- and my violin, which was-

*The violin?*

Of course. Well, I had the concerts. Which- the violin, which was nothing, nothing special. It was a- just an ordinary German violin, which is you know, I started my career. But for the competition which I won, the Paganini Competition, I was given a- *lent* a- a- a violin by- by the- by the music academy in, in- in Budapest. The most well-known sort of- they call Nemessányi the most- they called him "the Hungarian Stradivarius" It was a good- Master Nemessányi he did- he did some beautiful violins. And I won the competition on that violin. But as soon as we returned, I had- had to give it back of course. But my own violin was just an ordinary German make and- but that's- that's what I had!

*So, to Paris, you took [inaudible]*

To Paris I took it, and- and- and that's what I- I started my li- my career on that violin. Although then later, of course, things happened- the- the right way and the- and a very happy way.

*But you knew that you had to leave-*

Yes.

*Yourself.*

**[1:02:24]**

So- and that's- I started my- my- my life in Paris, which was very pleasant. But I knew that the music life is- in- in France, in Paris, was not really promising, you know, for a- for a young artist. I didn't speak very well French. And- and that was before I had a little more-connections to- to France. Because that's a- a year later- later, or- or yeah, exactly a year later, I won a very big competition in Paris. By that time, I was living in Holland. So, I thought I wasn't very happy in- in- in Paris, and I knew that I have to go somewhere else. First, I wanted to go to, to follow my teacher, Zathureczky, in America. By that time in 1958, I think I mentioned, the- the quota for refugees were fulfilled. And I wasn't allowed to- to go to America. So, I had to do something. And as it happened, one of my colleagues, you know, from a quartet, which I mentioned earlier, was living in Holland. He left Hungary in 1956. He became a refugee and went to live in Holland. He married, he had a wife, he took his wife with him, and he lived in Holland. So, I kept in touch with him. And when in Paris you know, he's- he told me and- and he said, "Come to Holland. Holland is a wonderful country. And I've got a good job here. I've got, I've got, I've got a- a- I'm a first viola player of one of the best provincial orchestras in Holland, Brabant[s] Orchestra. And just now they are looking for a concert master." This was in May, June 1958. "They are looking for a concert master." Well, I had no plans to- to become a concert master. But I thought, why not? I try. So, I went over to Holland, and stayed with him. And I liked the country immediately. Holland is a wonderful country and it's- it's- later, you know, it's like, like became like a second home to me. So, I moved from Holland- from- from Paris to Holland. I played I mean, I, I ... applied for this job, concert master. It was a wonderful job as a kind of second first concert master in an orchestra, sort of a half job. I applied for the job. And I got it. I was not yet twenty-eight, twenty-two, and practically had no orchestral experience. But I thought- and again, later became a very clever thing to do, that I- they would give me a lot of opportunities to play as a soloist with the orchestra. But most importantly gave me a- a job and, and an income, a

steady income. So, as it happened, you know, I- I- I moved over to Holland in- in the September 1958.

*And where? Where to?*

**[1:06:12]**

The co- the- the town called 's-Hertogenbosch is the capital- the capital of Brabant. 'S-Hertogenbosch. It's a rather lovely provincial city, perhaps hundred thousand people live there, but the- this orchestra was based in there. So, I moved over there, and through that- my friend, Ervin Schiffer, who was the- he used to be the viola player of my quartet- through him- and it's, you know, one of those wonder stories which happen rarely in the life. He visited- was visiting once in- in Amsterdam. He was walking on the street and heard from a cafe, some Hungarian voices. And he went to- stopped, and he went to talk to them. And apparently, he introduced himself who he was. He was a musician. He was- once he was a member of a- a young quartet called "Pauk- *Quartett*". And there was this elderly couple with a young daughter. And, as it happened, this young daughter, she was at that time eight- nine- nineteen years old, suddenly heard the name, my name, "Pauk", which was familiar to her, because as a- as a child, she was studying at the Jewish Gymnasium. And he- she heard the name "Pauk" because in, in the school where she, she studied they had some concerts. And me, as a young student - Music Academy - I came to play charity concerts. And in fact, she heard my name. And once, after the- one of these concerts, she took me there- to- to- to the waiting taxi. She took me, because I went to another place to- to play. So, the- the name was familiar. Also, as she will perhaps tell you herself, that time I won the prize, and this competition in Bucharest, and there was a photo, big photo shop in the middle of- of Budapest, where they had some pictures of all young musicians who won prizes at competitions. And she remembered my face from that photo. And she thought, "Oh my God, this looks quite a nice boy. Nice- a lot of hair, black lovely hair." And look, remembered her- my name. So, there was this Schiffer, talking about a- a- a violinist called Pauk, whom he used to play in his quartet and said, "Oh, Pauk! He's coming very soon to- to play and audition in my orchestra. Would you like to come and meet him?" And this young girl Susie, you know, she was planning to study chemistry, and she was living with her parents in Amsterdam. And she thought and said, "Why not?" And quite a few weeks later, she came to 's-Hertogenbosch. And that's when I- we met. And the rest is history. So, well, I- I- I liked

her very much. And then I- and I got the job in 's-Hertogenbosch and I visited- I- I- I visited Amsterdam very often afterwards. And very soon, you know, a year later, I became engaged. And in the summer of '59, which was exactly sixty years ago, we got married. And ever since we have been together.

[1:10:26]

*In Amsterdam? You got married in Amsterdam?*

We got married in Amsterdam, we lived in 's-Hertogenbosch. And three years later, I left the orchestra. And that's a- that's another big- big story. I came to live in- we came to live in England, in London.

*So, at your wedding, was- there was no other family. Was there any family there?*

Well, the parents- of course her parents were there. And- and Peter [Frankl] was – by that time- he was still living in Holland- in- in- in Paris. Yeah. A few friends - very few, but they were at the wedding. We had a wedding in a- in the syna- in the synagogue in Jacob Obrechtstraat, which is behind the Concertgebouw. And that's how we started on our- our life together - 1958. In '59 we got married. Two weeks after, I won a big international competition in Paris, The Jacques Thibaud Competition. We spent our honeymoon playing concerts together. Because I was offered immediately winning the competition, I was offered some concerts. So, poor girl had to come and spend her- her- her honeymoon playing- I'm playing a concert. But we had the opportunity to have some fun as well together. So that's how- how life started together. In Holland. So, I stayed in the job for three years. I- I signed a contract for three years. And I must say, as promised, you know, I was given a lot of opportunities to play concertos, which I always wanted to become from, from student days to become a soloist. But this was a wonderful opportunity, you know, to have a job with a good-good salary. Also, I liked, I like music. So, I- I- I played in the orchestra, played a lot of symphonies, orchestra solos. And as soon as the contract expired after three years, I had the opportunity by that time- and then that's again a long story- long story, goes back to Hungary in 1956. Before winning the Paganini Competition my teacher knew Menuhin, Yehudi Menuhin, great- one of the greatest musicians of, of the 20th century. And he had oppor- I had the opportunity to play for Menuhin - as a student. So, this connection, you know, it was

very important later- later in my life, because every time Menuhin came to visit Holland, Amsterdam, I went to see him. I went to, to the artists room after his concerts and somehow - very interesting - he recognised me.

**[1:13:26]**

And after several visits, you know, he asked me, “Why do you live in Holland? Why- what- what are you doing in Holland?” And I- I told- told him. And in fact, he came to play with the orchestra where I was concert master - one of his concerts. And he told me, “You know, a young musician, you have to come to live in England. London is the centre of music. Every young musician has to come and live in England.” So, I said that was wonderful if I could, but, you know, how? “I will help you.” Again that- at that time I had Dutch refugee papers. After Paris, I got refugee papers in Holland. I had a- a refugee passport, a- a Nansen refugee passport in Holland. So, the English- the British authorities had enough refugees by that time. So, they didn’t- I just wasn’t able to come, just over, permanently. But Menuhin gave me a letter of recommendation to the Home Office, stating that, something like, he looks after me as- like a student of his. And would the Home Office help, to- to- to stay for- for- for a shorter and a longer time to stay in London. And this is all how we came, first time, to live in London in 1961. September ‘61. So, we gave up everything what we had in Holland in September, and I had- by that time I had a small car, which we put everything in the car what we had - little things - and we moved to London. First, we were allowed, as Menuhin’s student, we were allowed to stay for three months. But, you know, the three months started to be ending, and then we applied for another three months, and another three months. And then it- it was in those- those years, it was easier than now. I must say that. And now- now, the- the authorities are much- much stricter. And- and then of course, there are many more refugees. By that time, though, I started to- my name sort of started to become a little bit well known in London. So, I wasn’t just an- any student. And with the help of Menuhin, one day I got a- a message from the Home Office, it said, “Now, what are- what do you want to do? What are- what are your plans? Are you going- you want to stay in England?” “Of course,” our- our answer was, “of course we would like to stay.” So that’s how I became a British resident – a permanent resident. Until- and that- that time again it was easier than now; five years, you could apply for citizenship. And the day after our arrival, five years, I applied for British citizenship, which are duly received six or seven months later. So again, that was the

second most important move of my life. One was leaving Hungary, and the second was coming to England.

**[1:16:54]**

*And was it important to receive that?*

Ab- well, of course, but up until then, until I received my British citizenship I was struggling with this Dutch passport, which I- at that time I needed a- visas everywhere. But it was- I received it without- without any problem. But slowly, slowly, with the help of Menuhin, I started to meet important- that was the very important thing in the 60s 70s and everybody - important living musicians - lived in Holl- in- in London. Conductors. ...managers - absolutely vital in those years. And your- your name started to be well known. I had my first recital, my first public concert in The Wigmore Hall. Again, you know, those years you played a concert in The Wigmore Hall. Next day, it was sure you're going- you received five reviews.

*Right.*

All the papers. Nowadays, nobody takes any notice. But in those years, 1961, '62, it was an important event. And by that time, I knew quite a lot of people. And it was a very successful debut. And suddenly, you know, I was- I was invited to give a lot of concerts. And *still* from the prizes which I- I- I- I got in Paris, and with- with the Sonata prize in, in- in Munich, with- together with Peter Frankl, all along, we were offered many engagements in France, in- in Italy, in Belgium, in Holland. So, that's how slowly, my started- my career started.

*Where did you live in London?*

Well, again, it's- it's- it's lucky, and then, you know, circumstances they are- but what is important you have to realise this. Not only that- that there are circumstances, but you have to realise that this is something important. And somehow my six- our sixth sense realised it - what was important. That time in London was a very famous piano teacher, Professor Ilona Kabos. Everybody, all the most talented young violinists from all over the world, studied with her. She's- lived in St. John's Wood. I met her- we met her and I was the only violinist.



There were eight or ten pianists all around, but I was one of her favourites, you know, and as it happened, she had an admirer, very well-known lawyer, English lawyer. I suppose he was in love with her. One very well-known businessman, who decided that he, he wanted to help Ilona's piano students. He bought a house in Finchley which he changed into a music hostel. There were eight rooms, I think. He bought eight grand pianos. He bought- he brought all the- the musicians, all the piano students, into that house. He hired a cook, who was cooking for all the- the- the- the players. And there was an attic in the house, which they could not bring a piano up, because the staircase they couldn't bring up. But there was a violinist - who Ilona knew. And this became our first home in London. So, we were able to- I was able to hear all the pianists practising there in the, in the, in the house. And we lived up in the attic, on our own, and we were able to, to eat with all the others if necessary, but by that time, my wife, you know, she was cooking. There was a little cook- cooker. And we stayed there.

**[1:21:28]**

This house, later, became very well-known, because it had a big room downstairs, that music room with a big grand piano. All- there were some concerts there. The first time I was able to meet Barenboim. He was an unknown pianist when he came to practice there, because of the piano and the big room. And the first time also I was able to hear Jacqueline du Pré. There, the two of them, they didn't know each other. Jacky came to practice with her mother, who was also a pianist. And that's- was the first time I heard, you know, these most talented musicians who lived in London. That house, when, quite a few years later was sold. And, again, I'm sure this name will mean a lot- lot to you, Emanuel Hurwitz. He bought the house. By that time, of course, we were- didn't live there- a long time ago. And become- became famous because of Emanuel Hurwitz. We only lived there for about eight or ten months. By that time, you know, I had enough concerts that we were able to rent a house, which we did, in West Hampstead. At that time, West Hampstead not- was not so famous and- and- and popular places it now. But it was a wonderful home and- and good location for- for underground and shops. So, we rented a house. By that time, we had a son - who was born in '62. So, his first years we spent in this little apartment in the- in the- in the house on Dollis Avenue. But then we moved to this house in- in West Hampstead. So, that's how we started out life alone in- in- in London.

**[1:23:53]**

*And where in Finchley? Where was this music house?*

The- Dollis Avenue, which is one of the nicest streets in- in, in Finchley. Unfortunately, just very recently, last year or a couple of years, the house was demolished. Because we passed by quite often because it's a shortcut coming home from my son. They demolished the house and I think there are four or six flats. But I know exactly, of course 25 Dollis Avenue. And every time we pass, you know the old, the old times come back and- and good remembers- remembers that we started our life in London in that house. So, we lived in- in West Hampstead, and by that time, as I said, I had quite a few concerts. We had a- we had a contract for three or four years. And I started to play quite a lot of concerts in London. And played in The Wigmore again. And as it happened, I played with a very well-known, famous Australian pianist - Geoffrey Parsons. I played my concert at The Wigmore. And without me knowing, he invited the then head of Australian Broadcasting Company in London – Mrs. Mason. She came to my concert. And after my- the next day, I received a telephone call from her to say that, I mean, “I liked to hear your concert very much, and I would like you to come to Australia.” And she invited me for three years ahead, to do a big concert tour. And really, that was my first-

*Break.*

**[1:25:44]**

...for- very big break. And just to let- just to say, you know, that in my first concert tour, four months, I gave over sixty concerts in Australia, New Zealand, some on the way to Australia. Why it's also, not just because of the, of, of musically it was important for me to play so many concerts, but money wise. I earned in that four months as- so much money. I was paid, by the way, every concert hundred pounds. And hundred pounds was quite a lot of money in 1965. Which was enough for us when I came, we came back from Australia to buy our first house. And that was in Mill Hill. So, Mill Hill became, after West Hampstead, Mill Hill became our lovely home. And we lived there for many years. In the meantime, our daughter was born, but the house became too small. So, we wanted to have a bigger house. And after five, six years, we bought a house in- a bigger, much bigger house in- in Golders Green

Armitage Grove- Road, Golders Green, which we lived for many, many years - for over thirty years. Golders Green was a wonderful house. I had a big music room.

**[1:27:18]**

We... there- there was a garage and I didn't need a garage and instead of garage, we built a beautiful music room where of course I was practising. And we had some musical evenings and, and music. So, that's how it started- was. And by that time, of course, I had a lot of concerts and tours. I had, because of this very successful concert in Wigmore Hall, I was taken by the then, most important music management, Ibbs and Tillett. She was called "Lady Wigmore", because her offices were in the Wigmore Street. So, I was taken by them, you know, the big management, and I had many concerts. And another organisation which- which did- made big, an important change or contribution to my life, was the BBC. From the very moment, you know, I arrived to London at that time you had to make an audition, you had to do an audition. But then I was immediately accepted. And the BBC has given me a lot of lot of opportunities to appear, both as a soloist with all the orchestras, or BBC orchestras, and also at that time, there were a lot of concerts in studios. So-

*Yeah.*

**[1:28:52]**

The BBC was one of the more- most important venues in my life, and I kept this connection till - until I left, I mean, I- I retired from- from concertising. So, BBC and- and by that time, the- all the London orchestras, the- all the provincial orchestras discovered me. And I was a very successful soloist.

*So, you were a soloist- a freelance?*

Yes. Okay.

*And not attached to-?*

Yes. There was a big opportunity, again, which, at that time, I took up for a very short time. I had no experience teaching- professor, but the Manchester College of Music, the Royal College of Music, was looking for a professor. Somehow, I was approached. I didn't know the people. I was approach would I be interested to have a class at the College Manchester? I thought is a nice opportunity and- and something new in my life and I thought, why not? And I was given- I was offered to teach one day a week in Manchester. I have I think six or seven students. And I tried it, and - I liked it very much. And I thought I, one day perhaps I could become a, a professor, a teacher. But by that time, you know, I started to have so many concerts that shortly afterwards I resigned, and just- I gave- my- my- my life became just giving concerts. And for the first Australian tour, immediately followed with the second Australian tour. Then through my- all my conductor friends and- and connections Georg Solti, who was that time the director of Covent Garden. It was- he was appointed- his first American appointment was in Chicago Symphony. And by that time, he engaged me here in London. I played with him. At that time, he was also chief conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. So, I- I played with him in the Festival Hall. And the first thing he offered me was, after his appointment in Chicago to play with his orchestra - Chicago Symphony.

*Right.*

**[1:31:47]**

So, this became my orchestra debut in Chicago. 1971. So, you know, I started in America with one of the most famous orchestras. And as it happened, it was a very successful debut. And I was taken on by a very big American management, the same management that Solti had, Colbert Management. And that's how it started my American career, which lasted for many, many years of regular- regular visits to all the great American orchestras. I went three, four times a year, visited America. Recording companies started to be very interested. I made many successful recordings with Decca, with Philips, with Deutsche Grammophon, with Naxos.

*And were you known for a specific repertoire, or...?*

Well-

*[inaud] ask – your favourite...?*

Well, it's- it's not a good question because, you know, they always ask me, "What is your favourite?" There is no such favourite. But I came- I became very directly connected of course with Béla Bartók, music of Béla Bartók. Zathureczky, my teacher in Hungary, played with Bartók. He used to perform with Bartók. I didn't know Bartók, because Bartók left Hungary in 1942, so I didn't know him personally. But through Zathureczky, I became very familiar with Bartók's music. So, at the age of sixteen, seventeen, eighteen I started to play his most difficult piece. And Zathureczky allowed me to play it- it's the Solo Sonata which, which is one of his last compositions. So, my life became connected with- closely connected with, with Bartók. But I don't tell- don't say that he was my favourite composer-

*Right.*

**[1:33:50]**

... because I equally love Mozart and Beethoven and- and- and- and Bach. In fact, you know, at one time in London, they called me "The London Mozart Player". Because there was the famous orchestra in London, The London Mozart Players. And as it happened, Harry Black was the, the conductor of The London Mozart Players. And he heard me in 1961; I played for him. And he immediately engaged him - engaged me - with the orchestra. So, I became the London Mozart *Player*. So, every second year or so I was appearing in the Festival Hall, playing a Mozart concerto. So, and of course, Mozart not only because through his, his violin music, but I happened to - from the early age, I happened to - love opera. I grew up- during my student days I, I- through Annie Fischer, whose husband at that time was the Director of the Hungarian State Opera. So, he invited me, and actually Peter as well- Peter Frankl- to attend any performance, anytime I wished to go to- and I took advantage of that. And I sat in the opera four, five times a week. So, opera became, you know, very close to my heart and- till today. And I think the violin and the opera and- and singing are very closely connected. So, opera stayed with me all my- my life. And- and anytime, every time I have the opportunity to go hear a, a performance at the Met [New York Metropolitan Opera] or the Covent Garden, and it's very closely connected with- with the violin.

**[1:35:38]**

*And in that time, were you in touch at all with your grandmother, with the early time, or how...?*

Well, I was constantly in touch. Later, you know, it became a little bit easier. The political situation became easier. In fact, we invited her to come to London, and she came to London. That's when she- she met my wife. And she met her great-grandson. Our son at that time he was- he was two, three years old. But of course, we kept in touch until her death, which was in 1965.

*In Budapest?*

In Budapest. But the rest of my family stayed alive and I still have my- my cousin who lives in Hungary and who is the same age as I am.

*How could you- you said you couldn't write letters to her. How could you communicate with her?*

Well, well, through friends and- and throughout the telephone call, and I wrote the letters to some other address. But slowly, you know, the- the situation became easier. And- and my uncle and my- my aunt and my cousin came to England. They visited. They were allowed to visit so I- I- I saw them. It was a - very close family.

*And did you have any touch with the Hungarian State, I mean, after your [inaudible]?*

**[1:36:58]**

I didn't dare to. I didn't dare. So, I, for many years, I didn't- well, every Hungarian or- or refugee you talk to has the same feeling that you left a country illegally, then you were afraid to go back again. And we had all night- dreams about it- nights that we dreamed about it. We- we went back to our- our home country, and we're not allowed to leave again. And that stayed with me and with- with- with many of us, for many years. But then- and by that time, of course, I became a British citizen, a very well-known person in the country. And I was

invited. Well, I was invited to go to Hungary and some consideration and especially Annie Fischer, my mentor, and- and my mother's colleague, persuaded me. Now, you have to show what- by that time, I had- I- I made a big career. I was very well-known in- in- in the world. So, yes, you should- you should go, and show them how, how- what a career you made.

*And when was that?*

Nineteen seventy-three. 1973. So, from '58 to 1973, I- but I- might I tell you, I had never- I was never homesick. I never missed my- my- because what- what I went through in that country. So, this came the opportunity in 1973 and that was the first time I went to play, of course, in Hungary.

*And what was it like to come back?*

Very strange - very strange. Fearful. First, fearful for my life, which was un- unnecessary. But, you know, you had to show- show them what I have achieved, I mean, musically. And I will never forget, you know, my first rehearsal at the Music Academy, where I used to be a student. I had my first orchestral concert playing the Brahms Violin Concerto with the State Orchestra. And I had my first rehearsal in the hall, and it was full. [laughs] Because everybody knew- everybody knew- knew my name and they were just - curious. "Now, show us what you have done in all these years." And it was not easy. And I suppose [laughing] I succeeded. I had- I remember a few concerts or three or four concerts you know, playing with the orchestra and had a recital. It was- it was a big- question, who I should- play the piano- who should play. And I was afraid you know, I didn't want to play any of the pianists who lived in Hungary so I took a pianist from here, from London, who was an American pianist, by the way, who was a pupil- used to be a pupil of Ilona Kabos, Michael Isador. So, I played by first concerts with him, and was a very- very good choice. So, we came back, and as it happened, and it was very strange. My children at that time were five, six, seven years old, eight years old, they wanted to go to Hungary. So soon after my first visit, our first visit in 1973, we went back to Hungary in- for Christmas, just to visit. Because the children wanted to go. So, after seventeen years or so many years, we found ourselves back in Budapest again for Christmas 1973. But then, you know, the visits became very frequent because I was invited actually many more times than I accepted.

[1:41:06]

*Right.*

Because I thought that it's- it's knowing Hungarians, knowing, you know, Hungarians are usually very jealous people. And I didn't want to, to show my face too often. So, half of the time, I- I- I just didn't accept the invitations. But- but still, many occasions that I played other times.

*So, you still were a bit cautious?*

Yes, I was very cautious - but that time. But later, you know, that- there was no- no reason you know, to be afraid of- and of course, I felt like visiting almost any other country, but- except I understood the language.

*Right.*

Yeah.

*Yes.*

Yeah.

*And did you ever have any bad experiences? Did anyone ever tell you, you shouldn't have defected or did- did that come up at all, or-in your family, as well?*

No, no, no. No, I- and I must say that treated me very soon, you know, Hungarian authorities. I mean, I received one of the highest Hungarian civil rewards, what a, a, a citizen, not a Hungarian can- received from the President of Hungary, which is a- a- a- Cross of the Hungarian State or- or Republic. So, I received the Bartók Prize, the- which is- what meant a lot to me. So, I was- I was really treated like a famous ex-Hungarian. And even today. But I never- I mean, I never- I became of course a British citizen, but I never asked to take to- to take- took away my Hungarian citizenship. I didn't have to be. I didn't have to. So, in- in- in-



According, you know to law, to even the British law, I am also double citizen of Hungary.  
But I- I- don't consider myself. So-

[1:43:13]

*What do you consider yourself?*

Well, I always was- was- was- was considered and- and- and spoken of as “Hungarian-born British violinist”. And for me, especially the British part of it is very important. But I never, you know, from my name and also from- I’m speaking English, I never could forget it you know, that's where I was born. And I never forget it, but I'm a very proud Britisher. And unfortunately, looking around today I'm very worried what's going to happen to this country. Because I stayed a European and I consider myself a European and I'm very worried what's going to happen. But, you know, unfortunately, there's no more opportunities to look for another country. So, in my age, you know, I think I'm going to stay and, and live for the rest of my life. But even my- my grandchildren, perhaps thinking about where to go next, because of the political situation which is very sad.

*Yeah.*

But perhaps you don't want to hear about it. Yeah.

[1:44:28]

*It comes up now, with this-*

Yeah, yeah,

*A problem for many people.*

Yeah. Sure, but I have had a wonderful time, and- and I was- I was treated in this country also with the highest degrees. All universities I was given the- from the Royal Academy where I've been professor for many years, a Fellow of Royal Academy, Fellow for the Guildhall School of School- of- of Music. And finally, which was one of the proudest

moments of my life, an Honorary Doctorate by the University of London on my eightieth birthday. Yeah.

*That's nice. Was that- was that important?*

**[1:45:17]**

Well, it was very important because it was given- the President of the Royal Academy is the Princess of Gloucester. Before that, I was given the Royal- Royal Academy, Member of the Royal Academy by Princess Di- Diana, who was that time of- the President of the Academy. So, I have had some- and I met the Queen on several occasions. I was invited to Buckingham Palace. Not bad for a little Hungarian Jewish boy. [laughing]

*You never had any bad experience here, or- in England?*

No. No, I had only the- the best and- and most privileged experience. And I consider myself a happy British subject.

*And in terms of your Jewish identity, do you find it changed throughout your life or...?*

Well, it's- it's- I- or- no, my Jewish identity was absolutely vital for me. Always. I mean, proudly I- I kept, and I was not- not a religious Jewish identity, but absolutely no other way. And I kept many of my Jewish friends. So- I visited Israel countless of times and- and played and- and- and give master classes in Israel. So that's never- came into consideration. I mean, that's, that's how it is.

*And what sort of identity did you want to give to your children?*

The same- same. Though my son, he- well, he had two- two marriages, but both his wives were half -Jews. But they were both brought up as Jews. One, my son is- is- he's- identifies himself more with Jewish faith than my daughter, who is an atheist, but also married a half-her husband is- is half Jewish, and not the mother side on the father's side, but it doesn't come into. Cause, I mean, we are like a Jewish family. I brought them- not a religious way, but they

know exactly where they belong and even the grandchildren. Again, they are not religious. They don't have a religious education, but they know all- where they belong to.

*What about the music? Could you pass on the music, or how...?*

**[1:47:48]**

Well, this is interesting. I mean, in my case, you know it went from mother to son. But in- in- my- in my children and my grandchildren, there's no such- I mean they are- love music, they all love music, but then they don't have that kind of talent which I would consider, you know, follow as- as musicians. Which I- I am not sorry at all.

*Why?*

No, I'm not sorry at all. It's a very wonderful profession of course being a musician but very difficult, hard-working, all your life. You leave- need a lot of practising and- and luck. Well, in every profession. And, at the end, you know, you- it gives you a comfortable life if you are successful. But if you are not, it can be very hard. And I didn't wish them, so, I'm very happy that they are going- they're choosing some normal, they are normal professions. Like law and this kind of-

*And when did you retire from playing?*

I decided that- I planned it when I became seventy, seventy-one. And I- I thought that after really a successful past, I thought that I had enough of travelling, you know that- because I spent really my life travelling, staying in hotels, airports, concert halls. I decided that is enough. So, I planned it. I went to give my last concert, which was in Budapest with the orchestra- with one of the orchestras I've spent a lot of time- you know, I love the Budapest Festival Orchestra. And I thought that it will be with them that I'm giving my last concert which was now almost twelve years ago. I was seventy-one, playing Bartók Violin Concerto. My last appearance and I never regretted it. And I decided that I'll never play a concert again. You know, giving concerts needs practising. And I spent my life practising five, six hours and again that was a point where I didn't want to carry on. So, but as I say, never- never regretted it. But ever since, you know, I- I've- I took teaching very seriously and I'm

spending my- all my time teaching at the highest level. At Royal Academy, where I've got a performance class with a very limited number of students from all over the world. And that's how I'm- I'm staying in music, and also staying with young people. And I suppose that's- keeps me young. So, again, it's very lucky that I keep my, my, my health. It stays as it is, and I'm very careful and- and looking after myself with sports and- and going to the gym and swimming and walking. But still, it's a- it's a question of luck. And so far, I- I've had no major problems with my health.

**[1:51:35]**

*With the teaching, you said you enjoy it, and you see yourself as continuing this- the-*

Absolutely! Well-

*Hungarian-?*

Well, the Hungarian- the music school. And I'm in violin school- their violin school. But of course, it has changed – violin has changed a lot in the last twenty-five, thirty years. And- and today, we are play- playing music totally differently, how we used to. And I think I- I imagine- I improved and- and did, and changed with the time. And, and especially Baroque music gave me a lot of very important thoughts and- and changes. I realised it when I heard- I didn't like it. And- and even today I'm not very fond. But I realised it, that we cannot play the way we used to play and sort of more romantic and sweet way, playing the violin or- or any music. And it opened up my- my eyes and I started to think about it a lot. And- and discovered, you know, that today, we have to look to- to see music, to find a- a mid- so-called- I call it a middle way. When to play on- on a modern instrument, how to play, of how Bach or Mozart or Beethoven could have imagined to play on modern pianos, modern- modern instruments, and we have to find a- a middle way. Which I feel that I did find. And that's what I am teaching. And that's what I'm talking about. Not just on- with my students, but I'm for many years now, I'm giving a lot of master classes. All over the world. I used to go a lot to Japan, to China, to America. I've given all master classes with all the major universities. And also, in Europe, the summer classes. I've- I have given for many- a lot of master classes which I was given for twenty-five years, which unfortunately now it's finished.

So- and this gives me- gives satisfaction. Yet it gives me a lot of free time to look for my- after- after my family, for myself and enjoy life!

*Yes – ok. And do you find, in terms of your teaching, you have changed over the years or do you find your approach has changed?*

**[1:54:12]**

Totally. It has changed. As I said, you know, because of the Baroque way. And I think it's- it's much better than I used to. And, and it's things- things like tempos. Very important how- somehow - I don't know why, but - certain things in- in my student days or including my teacher, we didn't see exactly what it is printed in music. Tempos, how the- Bach, Mozart wanted to- to perform their music. And then the Baroque way, the- open my eyes that we used to play everything much slower. And that's... how I- I, I feel. And unfortunately, many people still think that the old ways that especially if I- I go to Hungary for instance, even in America or Japan, many people still think like we used to think thirty, forty years ago. So that's what I'm trying to change and open their eyes.

*And what advice do you give to your music- to your Berlin students, or...?*

Well, that- look at- at- try to think, you know, how the composers heard their music, in their times. The big difference is of course, is that music used to be played in small rooms. And now we are performing in- in halls 2,000, 3,000 or, you know, [Royal] Albert Hall - 6,000 people. So, the volume obviously has to be different. But there is a way. There is a way how to produce this bigger volume as of course, we have the instruments. Even so, the instruments are old. And I happen to own a very beautiful Stradivarius, which of course, we can talk about it, if you like. How I got it.

*Yes, please.*

**[1:56:14]**

And how- how I- I- I'm an owner of great instrument. But these instruments were built in the time when- when concerts were in small places. But since then, of course, it's become much

bigger. We are using totally different way of the setup of the instruments. The strings, for instance, are- are steel, they're based on steel, not- not gut. The old- old- in the old times they- they used to have gut strings. So, they are certainly good for- to performance and- and necessary to perform in big concert halls. But it's the way, how you treat the instrument. The way, it's a- the tech- the technique, the way how you play the instrument. That's what- what- you will immediately recognise it. It's a- it's a modern way of playing the inst- and valid for a string instrument or a piano. But a lot of people try now to go back- back, you know, the way- which I'm not terribly fond of.

*To do historical performance.*

Historical performance. But we have to learn from it.

*Right.*

We have to admit. So, let's talk about you know, instruments. Of course, the greatest instruments were- were built in the seventeenth- sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but all Italian masters. Amati, starting with Amati, and then followed by Guarneri, Stradivarius and many, many other violin- for a young player, of course, it's absolutely vital to have a good instrument. Right. I started as I said earlier, with a non-description of German violin. But again, through luck and- and- and looking through the world, before I won the big competition in Paris, for instance, and Jacques Thibaud, 1959, we were married in Amsterdam, as I told earlier.

**[1:58:34]**

I went very often to a violin shop in Amsterdam, very famous violin shop, Müller, it was called. And my wife, I don't know how, but that- she wasn't even my wife. We were just engaged. She- I asked her, "Please would you mind- buy some strings for me?" In that violin shop. Somehow, I don't know how, she had this idea - she went to this shop, and she asked the owner, Mr. Möller, very famous violin maker, "My fiancée is preparing for a big competition in Paris. Jacques Thibaud. Would it be possible to borrow an instrument that you could lend him an instrument?" And as it happened, in that- in the shop, there was a poster of this competition. And she showed it, you know, "This is the competition my fiancée, who is,

by the way, leader or concert master of the Brabant's Orchestra. He's preparing for this big comp- would you be able to lend him an instrument?" And he was. Shortly afterwards I- I got a telephone call that, "Would you please come and- and- to my shop, and I'm able to lend you a Guadagnini, a Giambattista Guadagnini 1735" - or something – "instrument. You can borrow it." So, this is how, this is was the instrument, I won the competition in Paris. And not only that, but I was able to keep for another two, three, four years. So, this was the instrument when I arrived to London. When I started my career in London, this Guadagnini. Until just two bef- weeks, before my first Wigmore recital, suddenly I received this news from Mr. Möller, that unfortunately the lady, who the instrument belonged to, died. And the, the- the relatives would like to sell it. So, two weeks before my first recital in the Wigmore Hall, I had to, I had to take back the instrument to Amsterdam. So here I was to- without any- the proper instrument. And again, you know, so very miraculous ways. As it happened, Emanuel Hurwitz, whose last- whose house- by that time he won the- he bought the house we lived. He had a beautiful Amati instrument which he lent it to me. And two weeks before recital, I received this instrument. That's how I made my debut. You know, this- these kinds of circumstances, they just happened. And this luck or whatever it is – God. So, this is how I made my- my- but again, you know, I had to give it back to him.

*Yes?*

**[2:01:56]**

And circumstances again happened in London, and- and through some rich friends and- and- and music lovers, they bought me another Guadagnini instrument. They bought me. So, I had and I was- I owned as it happened, a Guadagnini which I used. I started, you know, to give concerts all over the world for many, many years. I made my debut in Chicago, in America on- with this instrument. I played all my concerts in America with this, when suddenly a gentleman appeared in Chicago, who liked my playing. he was a violin collector. And he asked me, "Would you- would you like- I would like to show you some of my instruments. Would you like to come to my house? Or I could come to your hotel." I said, "Why not?" You know. It's- I knew that there are people who own beautiful instruments, but I knew that they are- they don't like to, to give them away. But as it happened, this gentleman Mr. Gottlieb, I met him. For hours and hours, I played on four, five of his instruments – Stradivarius, Guarnerus was one. And by that time, you know, I was bored and I had enough.

And then, just before I was, you know, I was just leaving, he said, “Now, which one? Which one do you prefer? Which- which would like- would you- you- you- you like best?” And I just pointed to one of the Stradivarius, which I- I felt at home, you know, most. And to my greatest amaze- amusement and I'm surprised, he said, “You can have it.” And my wife Susie was present. And he just had to call if- I almost fainted. I became white, and I almost fainted. But that was the beginning of the ownership of my beautiful Stradivarius. It used to belong to a very famous French [-Belgian] violinist whose name was Joseph Massart, who sold it in Paris in the- the- a very famous dealer sold it to Massart. Then he- the instrument had a long history, you know, who it went to and, and it ended up in Chicago. And another- this Mr. Gottlieb, he bought it from a dealer. It ended up with him. So, he gave it, this instrument, to me.

**[2:05:02]**

And from, from that point of view, from- from that time, I had- I used this beautiful Stradivarius. But it was not- it- for me, I had an uncomfortable feeling, you know, the ‘what if’ that happened- the same thing what happened to the Guadagnini, and he dies, and his- his relatives will ask it back. So, one day, after about five years, I suggested to him, “Howard, what about? Would you mind, or would you be able, to sell it to me?” Well, as it happened, you know, after a short, thinking a short while he thought, fine. He agreed. So, by that time, I was earning quite a lot of money. But he, as a gesture, or- or appreciation or- or whatever if you call, he sold it to me for - at that time, what I would- would say now – peanuts. This instrument, of course I- I bought it from him. And it's- I'm the proud owner of this, which I think, it's beau- you can see the- the- the photo of it behind you, if you like - because this instrument, of course I'm not using anymore because I retired from- from- from concertising - as it's in a safe. So, but it is my own, and I own it, and it will become my children's. I will leave it to my children.

*It's your legacy.*

But now the- my legacy. One of my legacies, yeah. So, but this instrument is of course worth millions of pounds. So-

*So, it was the- who was this Mr. Gottlieb, or...?*



He's- apparently- I think he's still alive. He's in mid- in his mid-nineties. And he is a violin collector. And- but he parted with one of his- his favourite, or one of his instruments. But- many- many- he owned many others. So, but it would give him a great pleasure I suppose to sell it to a- by that time, you know, famous violinist. And it's now called the ex-Massart Strad and perhaps one day it will be called the ex-Pauk Stradivarius. So that's the story of this, but in the meantime, I own, of course, other instruments and I bought many other instruments and- at present, which I play. And perfectly enough to- to teach is a famous French instrument, Vuillaume, was a great master, French master, who made many copies of Stradivarius. And this is a copy of- not my Stradivarius, another Stradivarius. But I- I have and- and which is also a very important part of the- of being a- a- a musician, bows - violin bows. This is better- it's not on the film, but there are- I've got many. And you will be very surprised to hear and- and perhaps the people who listen to this programme or- or will hear about it, violin bows are worth as much as- as violins were in the time when I bought my Stradivarius, which I'm talking about a hundred thousand dollars. Bows.

**[2:08:42]**

*Yes?*

Why? We would ask the question. Well, that piece of little wood, what it's made of, it's- again, it's 150 years old at least, the great one. But the masters who made these bows. The- the- the, the weight of the bow. The- how it is- the- the distribution of the- the- the power of the bow. That's what makes the bow so powerful. And I- again I had my good mind and at that time, not so much money, to buy quite a few. So, I have quite a nice collection - of beautiful bows.

*I was going to ask you- a few years ago you wrote your autobiography?*

Yes. I was asked for many years when- and I was always, you know, and why? I mean, I'm still around and I'm not dead yet. But finally, I- I thought it's time you know, that young people, younger generation should know my career, and also my very interesting private life. I've travelled the world then- when my children became older then my- together with my wife. And luckily, she remembers all the stories, all the private stories, all the meeting with

people. And so, in fact, you know, she wrote half of the book. I wrote the music part, and what, let's say the professional part of it, explaining about music, explaining about- about musicians I- I met, conductors, chamber music, violin, the Hungarian violin school. But she wrote the private part of it. So-

*And she travelled with you?*

**[2:10:39]**

She travelled with me. Well, it's- at the beginning of my career, and I will never forget it, you know, my longest time alone was ten weeks, in an Aus- on an Australian tour, because she couldn't come with me. But later, you know, the children became older, of course, and then she was. And so, she remembered all the stories and- and, and meeting with all the people so half of it, it's thanks to her. And the book was published on my eightieth birthday in Hungary in Hungarian. With lots of pictures of my past, and- but- it is translated into English at the moment only just pure- this one is not- not as a- not in a book form. But I asked somebody to translate it that- for my- for my children- my grandchildren, you know, should understand and- and they- they know what happened. But perhaps one day it will be properly translated and- and- and perhaps will be published in English.

*But you wrote it in Hungarian?*

Wrote it in Hungarian. Yeah, but because the Hungarian had- they were interested to publish it in Hungary. It's one of the best -known Hungarian publishers who- and apparently, you know, I received already commissions on it. You know, the- it was sold in so many copies. So-

*And what is it called?*

I got royalties for it.

*Excellent.*

Yeah.

*What is the name of the book?*

It's called: "*Bending on- on Strings*"

"*Bending on- on Strings*", my eighty- first eighty years. "*Bending on Strings*" biography of György Pauk. György Pauk. So, everybody can read it who understands Hungarian. But I'll say it's, it's translated. I asked somebody to translate it in, in Hungary, but it is- it's just a rough- and- but it should be - properly.

**[2:12:41]**

*And so, looking back on your life, as you must have had when you wrote the book, how do you think your early experiences shaped your later life?*

It did. And very much so. And I of course, you never forget- never forgot what I went through as a child. And also, my- my early years in the- in the music business. That all- this- it's all part of my life and of course, I- I never forgot it and appreciate it. But I'm very, I must tell you, and that's well, we're very proud. Because it's through my own hard work and a lot of luck and- and realising where I was, whom- whom I met. And that's thank- and thanks to my family- for my- my wife that I- I was as successful as, as I was.

*To take the opportunity?*

To take- took the- and, you know, finally - luck. That- that everything, almost everything, turned out to be the way, how they did.

*Any regrets, you have?*

Regret. Not really. Not really. I- I mean, it's- I hope to continue for- for some.

*And you said before, that it was difficult for you to talk about your past. So that's what I wanted to know.*

Yes.

*Did you talk about your past- about your past to your children or to other people or-?*

**[2:14:19]**

I didn't. I- basically, you know, I- I was a very private person. Perhaps shyness or, or- but everything was in- of course, inside. And there came a period- there came a- a time, you know, when I felt, you know, I had to share it. I had to share it, and that's- I shared it with my family, well- my wife, of course knew it, but I shared it with my child- children. They were- they were, of course, old enough. And I must tell you, that from that point of view, even my playing became better. Somehow it freed me from... some, I don't know what- what is it called, that shy- shyness? Or- or I didn't have the- goal. My- my relationship with people- with people changed, I became much more outgoing and- and confident. This - *this* is the major for- most important thing in everybody's life – confidence. That if you find your own confidence you- you behave differently. It took me a long time. Took me a time. It goes- it went of course together with my career, my success, that I finally, you know, I convinced myself, “Now, you- you made a name yourself- for yourself and you made a good career. Now you can afford to be confident.” But this is the big- most important word: confidence. Sometimes you feel, younger people they have the confidence. But sometimes I- I- I wonder whether it's the real one. But I suppose you- one should go through these years that you learn from your own mistakes, and- and- and you discovered that- about what is good in life and- and that's what give you the – know-how.

**[2:16:28]**

*But how do you see confidence linked to your- to your past and to losing your parents so young?*

I suppose that's- that's the reason why I was- I was not so confident for my first thirty years or so. That I was looking, you know, for security, security. But then, I suppose my- my- my career and my- my music give me the security. And then I could sort of relax more and find myself how it is really something in the- in the background. And that's what I'm trying to give

now my- now- [half-laughing] my children are- are- so, they are middle aged. And for- that's what I'm trying to convey to students.

*Yeah. And do you think it affected how you- your parenting style, the fact that you lost your parents so young?*

Yes, yes, yes. Yes, that- it takes- it took time, you know, to find myself. And- and as I said, you know, success- and the real success, not just fake, fake news. But it took some time. The success the- the- the reply, you know, what I- I received from the public, from- from friends, from non-friends from students-

*But you also said that you find it painful that you can't quite remember your mother or your father.*

Yes.

**[2:18:11]**

*And is that something you can accept more - or less?*

I suppose I did. I did. Well, I have to - at least at my- at my age. What I'm very proud of, not just at what I achieved in my myself, my career, is that what I have changed the life of many young professionals, violinists all over the world through my concerts, and through my classes, master classes, through my teaching that I met hundreds of young, talented people in the world. And I changed their lives to the better. Through studying with me, and through my connections, I gave- I- I call it- I showed them- I- I got them jobs all, all around the world. Many of them are leading orchestra players, teaching in- at universities, being well-known in this country. Many of the young English violinists who are around, many of them have studied with me. So that's- that's a wonderful, good feeling. Yeah.

*So, in terms of your career, what is your personal highlight, apart from that- that...? Have you got one?*

Not one. Not- not one. But appearing, you know, with, with great conductors, great musicians' group. Appearing in the biggest concert halls in the world. That's, I suppose. And now, that the two days thinking about it now, how did I do that? How did I dare to- to stand in, in let's say in The Albert Hall, or in the- in the Carnegie Hall in New York, or anywhere - Los Angeles or Berlin or Amsterdam Con- which I- I did. And it was not easy! But somehow, you know, it was- all the difficulties. And then, you know, there is- I suppose there is a feeling when you get on the stage, and you are ready, you know, I mean, it's- physically ready and mentally ready, you start to play. And as a music- good musician, you forget about this. And you only play- try to communicate with that music, and then the success afterwards. And then one gives- brings the other one. And, and then finally you realise - yes - that I belong there. But it's a long- well, for- for me, it was a long, long journey.

*To belong to-*

Long- to realise, yes.

**[2:21:03]**

*So, you say, that's interesting, you say you belong to that- belong to-*

Yeah. To the unique- to the few-

*To the role.*

To the- to the few really successful people in the world. And- and now at my old age, and I realised that when I meet and they- they- I'm treated like that.

*And do you feel you belong to- where else do you belong? Do you feel you- where's your home?*

Oh, London, of course. London. And this is my- I mean, I- Yeah.

*And what do you think is for you the most important aspect, let's say, of your Hungarian Jewish background?*

Through the music, I suppose. I'm not so pride- proud to be Hungarian, because of the history. But you know, Hungary - Hungary is a talented- Hungarians are talented people. It's a talented nation. There are- there were and are a lot of talented musicians, writers, painters, for instance. Unfortunately, during all Hungary's history- history, that most talented people had to emigrate. And this is valid even today. They had to go away from this small country because the- the place is very limited, very limited. So, to be- to be successful, you have to live in the West. And luckily, you know, I realised that when I was twenty-two years old. But, you know, Hungarians, you know, many- I mean, the world is full on the film industry.

*Yeah.*

I'm sure you know. The music indus- in the music. All the most famous conductors, soloists, pianist, violinist- many- most of- many of them Hungarians, and many of them Jews. And because of the, the Hungarian- the political situation in Hungary, in the- dur- between the wars of many Jews felt they had to leave the country. And they became world famous. So that's what- and even today, I find it and when I'm visiting that- Hungary is a, as I say, small country and the opportunities are limited. So, to be able to be successful worldwide, you have to live in the West.

*And were you ever tempted- because you worked and played in America to move to the United States or...?*

Not only tempted, but I was offered innumerable jobs. Never. No, I am a European. A European visiting of course, I love and- and wonderful places to go to. But not to live. The way of life is- America is not New York and not San Francisco and not Chicago. Not for me. So, I'm absolutely full blooded European. And my home is here. So, it's- I was tempted but not interested.

**[2:24:39]**

*Okay, György, so this- is there anything else - I think we're coming to an end – you would like to add?*

Yeah. No, I don't think so.

*Which I haven't asked you?*

No, I don't think so. Unless-

*Of course, there are things we could discuss, but-*

No, I think that's, that's about it.

*So, then I'd like to ask you, do you have a message - this is not only musical message, any general message - for anyone who might watch this interview based on your life experiences?*

Yeah- try to learn from your own mistakes and admit it. It- it's not easy. Admit it and try to learn from it and try to be a better person. That's what I consider myself, you know, a helpful- a better person to share with your life with people who are not so fortunate as you are.

*Okay-*

I hope it makes sense.

*That makes a lot of sense. Thank you very, very much-*

Okay.

*For agreeing to be interviewed.*

Yeah! It's not bad.

*And I think we'll take a short break.*

Okay.

*And then maybe look at your photographs.*



Okay.

*And documents.*

Okay.

**[End of interview]**

**[2:26:00]**

**[2:26:22]**

**[Start of photographs and documents]**

Photo 1

This is my parents, my father Imre and my mother Magda. It's taken about- in 1934 in Budapest at the Margaret Bridge on the Bud- the Pest side.

Photo 2

It's myself with my mother around 1938 – [*And where was it taken?*] I suppose in Budapest.

Photo 3

Okay. This is me with a violin aged about seven. This is the photo which I show to my pupils to the students, how you should- one should hold the violin and the bow correctly.

*Yes, please.*

Photo 4

This is my grandmother, who brought me up until I left Hungary. I always called her Nagyi, which means Nana.

*And what was her name?*

Malvin. Malvina, like- like the islands, Malvina.

*Malvina?*

Malvina, Malvina

*And surname?*

Lusztig. Yeah.

Photo 5

Yeah. This is me around age seventeen. Showing off with my violin and a little bit official dress- dressed like before a concert. [*Where?*] Budapest. [with humour] Well, I wasn't travelling, so...

**[2:28:08]**

Photo 6

With my teacher, Ede Zathureczky. At a lesson, around 1955. I was about nineteen. [*And where was it?*] In- in, in Budapest in the Academy. He was teaching me. It's at his- in his- his room.

Photo 7

After winning the Jacques Thibaud Competition in 1959, with David Oistrakh being in the jury. He was my favourite violinist.

Document 1

This is my diploma after winning the Jacques Thibaud Competition in 1959 in Paris. Yeah.

Photo 8

This is with Princess Diana after receiving the Honorary Royal Academy of Music Award in 1990.

Photo 9

This is the- I- I was given the medal Cross of Hungarian Republic by the President of the country, Árpád Göncz. This was in 1998. Next to me is my wife Susanne. And next to her is my cousin Klara, with whom I have survived the war. The interesting thing is that for this

award to be given by the Hungarian government I- they needed permission from the Queen that I am- I was able to receive it and, and- and carry it. I mean, put it on me, the- this award. And Buckingham Palace has given this permission.

Photo 10

This is with the Empress of Japan, in Tokyo around 2002 when I was playing chamber music with her at a big reception in Tokyo.

Photo 11

This picture is after receiving the Honorary- the Doctorate from the University of London in 2016.

Photo 12

This is my family. My son, Thomas with his wife Rachel. And the two- his two children Gabriella and Joshua. And underneath my daughter, Catherine, and her husband, Michael, with their two children. Sasha on the left, up on the left and Alina next to her.

*[And when was it taken?]* Recently. A year ago. [2018] A year ago.

*So, this is her last photograph-*

Yeah, yeah. Because Gabriella, you know, she's in Australia.

*Okay.*

She- I don't know. We- we hope she's- not forever, but she lives in Australia now, in Melbourne.

*So György Pauk, thank you again for this interview.*

Yeah. Well, with pleasure.

*And you'll get to see the results soon.*

Yeah, okay.

**[2:31:34]**

**[End of photographs and documents]**