

Today's Music Tomorrow

Frank J. Oteri visits the home of Ingram Marshall in New Hamden, CT

Tuesday, July 17, 2001, 1:00 PM

Interview Videotaped and Transcribed by Amanda MacBlane

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1. Tape Music vs. Score-Based Music

FRANK J. OTERI: More than most composers I can think of, your music raises some interesting issues about archiving and preservation since a great deal of the music you have done involves electronic manipulations even though these works are not necessarily fixed pieces of tape music in the classical sense. For example, the first piece of yours I ever heard, *Gradual Requiem*, is not a reproducible piece in the traditional sense. And I wonder what that means in terms of legacy and how this music will be acknowledged hundreds of years into the future.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, let's just worry about 10 years or 20, but obviously when I created *Gradual Requiem* and an earlier piece called *The Fragility Cycles*, which are both kind of hybrid works that have what you might call live electronic, actual performed stuff that is being processed electronically, so it combines that sort of thing with some stuff that is on tape. Either a tape piece or a piece that's on tape that I do something on top of. So those kind of hybrid pieces; almost, I would say are almost impossible for someone else to perform 'cuz I never bothered with any real notation. The only notation I have are strictly notes to myself; in case I forget what the chord progression was that I played; you know that kind of thing... I never thought of them as being reproducible for other people to play, any more than I suppose a jazz musician in the '30s or '40s doing stuff would've thought about someone who maybe one day might listen to it and transcribe it all. You know? Maybe they did; I don't know but I was thinking of myself as a creative musician who performs... who brings his work into life through performance and that's their character... And then of course I moved on to other things where I do try to reproduce a score of some sort. Even if I do have some live electronics, it's intended for other people to realize them.

FRANK J. OTERI: So the document, say of a work like *Gradual Requiem*, the text, if you would, really is the recording.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Mm-hmm.

FRANK J. OTERI: That is the text. And that is how the work will be known. Just like now we look back at Louis Armstrong's *West End Blues*, and, you know, someone can transcribe it, but the document, the piece of history, is the original recording he made.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah, but I have a myriad of recordings of *Gradual Requiem*, for example, 'cuz every time I performed it, it would get recorded because my technique in those days was to have a live tape delay thing going on, and with a live tape delay it was also, it would record everything too. So the second tape recorder, which is picking up what's been recorded and played back on the first, it also kind of collects all the sound you hear. So, yeah, my archives are open to anyone who wants to go through them and listen to different versions of *Gradual Requiem* or the *Fragility Cycles* and they can see how it was performed differently at different times.

FRANK J. OTERI: So, if someone really wants to know *Gradual Requiem*, just hearing the recording that got released commercially really isn't enough.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, I was pretty happy with the recording. And it was actually a studio recording. It wasn't a conflation of live performances. The recording of *The Fragility Cycles*, on the other hand, was a conflation of three or four live performances. So, I don't know. I feel that *Gradual Requiem* as it exists on that recording is pretty much what the piece is. Although it's certainly interesting to listen to other versions of it ...

FRANK J. OTERI: How different are they?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, you know, those pieces never went off perfectly. There's always some glitch somewhere and there are always some sounds that would get in the tape delay. So, it's often just a question of finding a performance that was relatively unblemished. But I have some favorites. I remember I did a version of *The Fragility Cycles* in Oslo, in the Sonia Henie Museum around 1979, and I've often thought that that was the perfect performance. But that's not what's on the record. The recording of *The Fragility Cycles* was created from two live performances. They were both in Charlemagne Palestine's loft on North Moore Street in New York in '78, I believe. I don't know if you know that piece?

FRANK J. OTERI: I have that LP. And a lot of the material resurfaces on the CD on New World...

INGRAM MARSHALL: That's right. I kind of harvested some material from it.

FRANK J. OTERI: But into separate movements. Since we're talking about that period, which is the earliest period of your work that's documented commercially, works like *Weather Report* or *Sibelius in His Radio Corner*. How much notation exists for those, if any?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Hmm. Very little. In fact, for *Sibelius in His Radio Corner* there's nothing at all really written down. It was just an idea; it was a concept. I may have some sketches from when I made the tape part, 'cuz I made it from loops from this old recording of the Sibelius Sixth Symphony. Schneevoigt, I think, was the conductor; made in the '20s. But I may have some notes about how I created the tape part that in real time it actually feeds from the tape delay system. I think it's the second movement. It's a very kind of static thing. But, no, I don't think it's a real readable notation for that.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, it's interesting to go back and read what people like Edgard Varèse were saying about electronic music in the early days before it got launched, wanting to create music that avoided the pitfalls of bad performance so that you could have something that really was the composer's vision; and the early pieces of *musique concrète* or pure electronic music that were preserved on reel-to-reel tapes were in fact the final compositions and there were no possibilities for future performances of them; there didn't need to be. Your earliest music is like that, but the more recent work incorporates more and more live performance. What brought you to create music like that initially?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, take a tape piece such as *Cortez*, which I wrote in 1972. It's a tape piece, it's meant to be heard as a tape piece; it's not a live performed piece and that's the final definitive performance of it. And I didn't create works like that because of the philosophy

that, as you mentioned, "Oh, musicians couldn't possibly realize my work, so therefore, I am going to go into the studio." You know, that was more of a Milton Babbitt line.

FRANK J. OTERI: Right.

INGRAM MARSHALL: You know, he was talking about that in the '60s. I suppose Varèse might have said something about it, too, but... No, it's not so much because I didn't feel that I could write pieces that musicians could realize. I actually developed as a composer in the milieu of electronics, when that was first possible in the mid to late '60s. Where my first real mature pieces were electronic music pieces. I wrote things before that. There are some old string quartets and stuff and piano music, but it's juvenilia; and you know, it doesn't count. So I really began my compositional career doing electronic music. It seems very natural. But I didn't have that Varèse/Babbitt philosophy.

FRANK J. OTERI: It's interesting to me that you said "I wrote *Cortez* in 1972." We still think of music as the work that's written down, a visual thing, even when it only exists as pure sound.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, songwriters who don't even know how to write music will use the same expression. "I wrote that song." Which means they sat with a guitar and figured out the chords and the words and the tune; that's writing a song. But you know, when it comes to creating a tape piece, the process of composing is not so different from writing a work for string quartet. It's just that you're not writing traditional music notation. You might be. *Cortez*, for example, does have a real plan. I've got it tucked away somewhere, you know. If someone wanted to see it, they could see how the work is, kind of, layered with different loops and different speeds and durations. So there's a kind of a score for it, actually.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, I think part of the problem is with a lot of these kinds of sounds that became possible with the advent of manipulating tape recorders and synthesizers is they're impossible to notate with the currently accepted symbols. How do you even create a language? There certainly is no agreement on this stuff. I've tried to write music out for synthesizer and I gave up. I've talked about this with a lot of composers and they say, you know, there really is no good way to notate for this and if you notate for an instrument and you're expecting a performance in the future, the technology keeps changing. So you're almost at cross-purposes if you try to have a visual notation for this stuff.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, there were a lot of pieces, actually, in the '60s that were done, that were strictly tape pieces that composers arduously, meticulously notated. One of my teachers at Columbia, Bulent Arel, he was into that. He spent hours writing his scores out showing every blip and bloop and bleep in his piece in real time. And he would tell us that the only reason he did it was so he could copyright it.

FRANK J. OTERI: The Copyright Office originally didn't accept recordings.

INGRAM MARSHALL: I think there was more to it. And there's, some of the Polish composers were into that, too. You can find scores of tape pieces.

FRANK J. OTERI: There's a score of Ligeti's *Artikulation* that's in color with all these bubbles. It looks nothing like what the tape sounds like.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah.

FRANK J. OTERI: But I love looking at it. Or the Stockhausen score of *Telemusik*, which is beautiful, but...

INGRAM MARSHALL: I used to enjoy looking at Xenakis scores because they were so graphic, you know. But I never got into doing anything like that...

FRANK J. OTERI: So, how is this period going to be remembered and studied? I mean, right now, even these early pieces are history to some extent, but what about a hundred years from now? What about two hundred years from now when none of us are around and the only artifacts that survive are the recordings and hopefully all of your notes about them somewhere and if someone were to experience your music then, how should they proceed?

INGRAM MARSHALL: I think they just take it for what it is, for face value and it'll be like any other recording. By then recorded music will be what music is. They won't talk about performance and recordings. I think it'll all be the same. I'm not saying live performance is gonna disappear, but I think there'll be so much recorded music, that listening to a Beethoven symphony on a recording to an average listener wouldn't be any different from listening to a tape piece of mine on a recording; that they both somehow are stored electronically. Traditional music, classical music, Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner, what have you, will always be studied in its notational form, obviously. And the kind of electronic music that people like me have done would probably not be studied in notational form, it'll be studied the way people study jazz. They listen to recordings and they talk about it...

FRANK J. OTERI: Although there's a whole movement to transcribe all of these old big band and swing recordings and play them back and come up with charts and...

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, fine. I don't see that happening though with electronic music. I don't see people trying to recreate it. Why would someone try to recreate a Jackson Pollock painting? You know like, someone's going to say "You know, I could figure out how to do that painting if I like really analyzed it." Knowing his style and technique I could probably, you know, eventually someone could get it. It's a kind of transcription. I think tape music is very much like visual art in a way. It's a one-of-a-kind thing.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, something that I thought was really fascinating; I don't know if you went to any of the concerts or heard the recording that the Bang On A Can composers did of Brian Eno's *Music For Airports*.

INGRAM MARSHALL: I heard part of the recording.

FRANK J. OTERI: What did you think?

INGRAM MARSHALL: It was nice. I preferred the original. [laughs]

FRANK J. OTERI: I didn't really see the need for the recording but I loved it live. Performing it live gives it a new context, whereas making another recording of it, well fine, it's a recording just like the other. The original was a recording. You know, why have the second recording except to hear slightly different timbres here and there? But live it was really exciting. Now for your work, a work like *Gradual Requiem* to get back or *The Fragility Cycles*, I mean, these were works that you yourself did live. So the live life of these pieces ends with you.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah. Pretty much. I mean, who would, there's my gambuh up there. I've got three of them, you know, Balinese flutes. You know, who's going to figure out exactly what I did with those. Or even get a hold of one. It's not like a shakuhachi, or a well-known Asian instrument; it's a real folk instrument. And very few people play it and the way I use it is very eccentric, really. It was very. It was Ingram Marshall's special way of playing it.

FRANK J. OTERI: Was it largely improvised, the things you were doing on it?

INGRAM MARSHALL: No, no, no, no! I knew pretty much what I was trying to do. It would often come out different. It's a very hard instrument to actually articulate and get specific notes on sometimes, but I knew my way around it. So that's another thing that would be hard for someone to figure out.

2. Musical Boundaries

FRANK J. OTERI: We've sort of been talking about jazz indirectly in all of this. In your early experience as a composer did you interface with jazz musicians, did you play jazz?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Not really very much. I never played jazz except when I was in, you know, junior high school. I guess I played in a so-called jazz band; I played trumpet, but it wasn't real. You know how those things are. I loved jazz when I was in college, I used to go with friends. I went to college near Chicago and we used to go down to Sutherland Lounge and the Blue... What was it called? Something Blue. Then in New York in the '60s when I was in graduate school we used to go down to The Five Spot, places like that to hear Mingus or Monk, people like that. So I certainly was exposed to it but I definitely was not participating in it and I was the audience. It didn't affect my music very much; not anymore than rock did.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, to get to rock, an interesting thought, because the whole notion of a recording as text, that's not really improvised music that's worked out; you may be doing it live in concert in a bunch of different versions but the version that becomes a part of history is the recording and I'm thinking of rock groups in the '60s that were really trying to make albums that were texts. You grew up at a time when rock suddenly became serious.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah. And there were some good albums that you'd want to listen to as albums. *The White Album* or what was that Stones album where they were like... I can't remember the name.

FRANK J. OTERI: *Their Satanic Majesties Request, Beggar's Banquet?*

INGRAM MARSHALL: I mean, sure. I remember listening to these things with friends. There was this great Dylan album that came out with Johnny Cash. We used to listen to it over and over again.

FRANK J. OTERI: ...*Nashville Skyline*...

INGRAM MARSHALL: You know, it was like going to a movie.

FRANK J. OTERI: Is that different for you than so-called composed classical music? Is there still a wall?

INGRAM MARSHALL: I think it is different. I think the intentions of the creation are different. It's not a question of high art/low art, like we were talking about earlier, you know, one is elevated and more important to our culture and the other one is more of a vernacular. It's not about that so much. It's more about the traditions and where they come from and, you know, the seriousness, I guess, of what it is you're trying to say. This can lead into dangerous waters.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, it's eventually going to lead to *Dark Waters*...

INGRAM MARSHALL: [laughs] ... But some composers are very comfortable being kind of in between. I mean, I think of Philip Glass as being very much that way. I mean, I admire him a lot. The other night, in fact, I ran into you at *White Raven*, and I had a really good feeling after that was over. To me, it was like coming out of a really good musical. And that everyone was happy and satisfied. It was just well done and it was a wonderful dramatic...

FRANK J. OTERI: It was beautiful.

INGRAM MARSHALL: You know, a music theater experience. I didn't worry about whether it was the equal of *Tosca* or *Wozzeck*.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, *Tosca* was entertainment at the turn-of-the-century, a hundred years ago. I mean, it's wonderful, but it's a soap opera.

INGRAM MARSHALL: I think it's true. We sometimes elevate opera beyond its original...

FRANK J. OTERI: Verdi was practically the Richard Rodgers of his day. He was writing shows and they were getting produced and I guess we don't really have that anymore. Broadway has become so corporation driven...there isn't as much a sense of a creator, a creative voice from show to show anymore. Someone like Sondheim is a tolerated renegade elder statesman at this point...

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, believe it or not, I think some of Glass' stuff is the equivalent because the audience for that is not looking for a serious, heavy, kind of profound musical experience. They're going there to enjoy themselves. They may think that they are going to an avant-garde thing, but you know it's pretty accessible stuff. But it's well done; it's fun when he really hits it like he did with *White Raven*. It works on a lot of different levels.

FRANK J. OTERI: But in terms of all the subcategories of music, certainly in rock music at this point with alternative rock and a lot of the electronica and the dance music, a lot of that stuff is really heady and not necessarily enjoyable. Some of it gets really out there and at the same time a lot of the concert music that's being composed whether it's the latest commissioned work for one of the big American orchestras is very accessible at this point and I don't really know if those walls are there anymore. I don't know. I mean, for me as a listener growing up, coming up as the next generation, the walls don't make sense to me, not even in terms of what the purpose is or whether one is good or one is bad. I just really don't understand them.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, that's funny, I never really thought of them as walls. I thought of them more as boundaries. Walls are a much more serious matter. You're not supposed to be able to get through, while boundaries at least you can crossover and I think the whole crossover thing is basically what the history of music in the second part of this century is about. It's about crossing over these boundaries. I'm not just thinking about quote-unquote "crossover" music which could be the Three Tenors or something like that. I'm talking about real genre mix-ups.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, certainly, you know, in talking about your music, you were talking about tradition and your music does come out of European tradition. The fact that you reference

Sibelius and there are, to me there are elements to your work that recall Bruckner and Mahler and other late Romantics, but it's also coming out of Indonesian traditions and it's coming out of, if we dare call it, the tradition of electronic music as it evolved in the 1950s with the establishment of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center and then all of the stuff that was going on in California at Mills. But someone coming to hear your music and maybe hearing *Cortez* as the first thing and connecting that to Haydn? I think *Cortez* might have more in common with Radiohead, you know?

INGRAM MARSHALL: I would agree with you, it has more in common with Radiohead than with Haydn, O.K.? But Bruckner, I would say is closer. You know, everyone loves to say how they love Haydn. You know, "Haydn's a great composer, he's much better than Mozart." I never liked Haydn. There must be something wrong with me. You know, except for a few things here and there, I'm not a big fan of Haydn, so sure. No one would ever think of Haydn when it came to *Cortez*.

FRANK J. OTERI: To get into the notion...

INGRAM MARSHALL: All I can think about Haydn is how lousy a marriage he had, you know. I mean he's a very interesting person, but his music never really spoke to me.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, some of the Sturm und Drang, minor key stuff...

INGRAM MARSHALL: Let's not get into it.

FRANK J. OTERI: O.K. We won't go there.

INGRAM MARSHALL: We'll talk about Bruckner, O.K.

3. From Fog Tropes to Hymnodic Delays

FRANK J. OTERI: To return to live performance, going back to what is the beginning in terms of what's on record, let's talk about *Fog Tropes*. Here's a piece that involves a live brass ensemble and has gotten played quite a bit and I imagine is still getting played.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah, it's by far my most played piece. So you want to hear the story of *Fog Tropes*?

FRANK J. OTERI: Yeah, I do.

INGRAM MARSHALL: O.K. 1980. A friend of mine was a performance artist in San Francisco, that's where I was living at the time, asked me to put together what she called a sound score. Not really a piece of music, so much as a bunch of environmental sounds and some electronic music that she could use for a performance piece she was putting together, which had to do with the weather in San Francisco. So we went around—this is the summer time, when it is very foggy in San Francisco—we went around and recorded fog horns, I think in maybe four different places. And, I don't think I had a really high-end recording thing. I used to tell people that I recorded it on a Nagra, but I think I actually just used a Sony. I don't really remember, but the main thing is that it was not hi-tech. So I recorded all of these fog horns and went back to my studio and started making tape loops and basically created a kind of collage of different pitches of fog horns. And some other sounds got in there, you know some buoy ringing, some birds. Lots of birds. Wind sounds. And she did this performance and it was about an hour long and it had one section in the middle of it, about 10 minutes that, to my ear, was really good. So I said, this is too good to just let kind of disappear into the fog, so to speak, so I kind of work on it a little more and just created a tape piece, a ten minute tape piece. And I used to, I played it as a prelude to the live electronic work I was doing then, *The Fragility Cycles*. And it was just a tape piece and I called it *Fog*. So the next year, 1981, my friend, John Adams, who had just become the composer-in-residence with the San Francisco Symphony, had a series of new music concerts that he was supposed to put on. And it was going to be very hip; it was going to be in the Galeria, which is kind of a downtown place for people to sit around and drink and eat and, you know, enjoy themselves. As it turned out, my concert was not there, it was in the Japan Center Theater, but what happened was he asked me to do my piece *Gradual Requiem*, which is the work I had composed with a mandolinist and myself, the mandolinist being Foster Reed, and he said, this is John's suggestion, why don't you take the piece *Fog*, which is a really wonderful piece, and kind of juice it up with some trombones and tubas. We can stick 'em up in the balcony and make a great effect. So that just got me going, so for about a week I just worried how I was going to do this using just a couple of low brass and suddenly it occurred to me one day that I could write it for high brass too. I could just write a brass quintet. Oh, it was actually a sextet, so I did that. I just simply wrote parts out for six brass instruments. And *Fog Tropes* was born. And it was played that first time by students from the San Francisco Conservatory. They did a pretty good job. It was pretty effective. And then not too long after that the San Francisco Symphony brass players played it on a symphony concert actually, one of their regular concerts. And then somebody else picked it up. I can't remember who it was. Pittsburgh? Or St. Louis? One of those orchestras... You know, this was the time that orchestras were just beginning to have those composer-in-residence things. And they were all doing new music concerts. John Harbison was

in Pittsburgh, I remember he did it there. Libby Larson was in Minneapolis. And Joan Tower, I guess, was in St. Louis. Or maybe it was Joe Schwantner? Joe Schwantner was still there. But *Fog Tropes* was being played at all these new music venues at these different orchestras. So that's how it got around.

FRANK J. OTERI: So you didn't necessarily work with the players for these performances, they just...?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Oh, yeah.

FRANK J. OTERI: You did.

INGRAM MARSHALL: I mean it was all written out in regular notation, but I kind of had to tell them what the idea was... For example, the French Horn parts are these interweaving lines that they actually have to phase, very much like in a Steve Reich piece where one of them gets faster and faster and kind of gets a beat ahead. You know, you really have to talk them through it and say this is the way it goes. And that's still true today when I get recordings of the piece...without my being there often they don't do it right.

FRANK J. OTERI: So, this question of legacy once again: two hundred years from now, you know when they decide they don't want to play the Beethoven symphony or the Haydn symphony for the three millionth time and they want to do *Fog Tropes*...?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, there have been a lot of strange performances of it that I had nothing to do with. I've heard recordings and they're just somewhere else, you know. Somebody once did it on a barge floating down a canal in Germany. When the brass players were on the barge and I guess the audience was on the bank. I don't know where the speakers were for the tape part. It's had an interesting history.

FRANK J. OTERI: I guess when we look at the music, when we look at your music now and hear the performances and think of projecting it into the future, it really in some ways calls into question how valid the performances now are of the music of the past, since all we really have are imprecise scores. We can't really know a lot of the inner workings of a lot of these pieces and certainly the older the music you get the less precise the notation is and certainly for a lot of the music being created today, having very precise notation is, you know, unless it's sort of very academic serial music where everything is really well worked out, a lot of the aesthetic of this music is for it not to be worked out and for it to just happen.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, the mid-century modernist take on all of this is that the score is the text and the text must be adhered to; this is the composer's wish. This is Stravinsky, you know, this is Boulez. The whole early music movement grew out of this, where they were trying to recreate the sounds of the Baroque period and the Renaissance period, but there's so little in the text giving the information. They had to go back and read treatises and stuff, and even then, as Richard Taruskin points out, they ended up creating a kind of modern music based on old music notation. And it's wonderful! I love working with old music people. You know, I've worked with Paul Hillier and his Theatre of Voices and they all have this early music sound and

whether they're doing twelfth century stuff, Perotin or Ingram Marshall, you know, I love that sound, that's a modern sound.

FRANK J. OTERI: Yeah, there are all, there is so much music being created, in fact we're going to dedicate a whole issue of *NewMusicBox*, the one after this one to the whole notion of composers writing music for early music ensembles and early music ensembles doing it. There's a Bay Area-based early music group, American Baroque, which was even one of the winners of the Chamber Music America/ASCAP Adventurous Programming awards this year. And, you know, you never think period instrument group = new music, but the connection really is there. Certainly in your music, in works like *Hymnotic Delays* which is essentially written for an early music group... What was the experience of working with them like?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, first of all, with *Hymnodic Delays*, the four pieces are based on early American psalms, three of them by composers that were active in the early 1700s. One from New Haven: Daniel Read. Then one from Vermont; two of them actually from Vermont: Ingalls and Morgan. So, in those piece the four singers actually do sing the originals in one form or another and they just sing it so great, but what I do with it after that, they take off on, but I'm using that sound that they have. And I was inspired to do that by hearing a recording that Paul had done some of that material actually a few years earlier. I think it was His Majesties Clerkes, which is a Chicago early music vocal ensemble. And now I'm in the midst of writing a piece that's a Mass, it's a setting of a mass text for a chamber choir that Paul Hillier is conducting. It's not the Theater of Voices, but it's a chamber choir from Denmark that specializes in early music. Well, early music and John Cage.

FRANK J. OTERI: Oh, is this the group Ars Nova?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah.

FRANK J. OTERI: Yeah, they did that disc on Mode of the choral music of John Cage.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah.

FRANK J. OTERI: Yeah, they're great.

INGRAM MARSHALL: And so I've got all those voices in my mind now that I'm working on this electronically processed version of the Mass, so...

4. Working with Other Musicians

FRANK J. OTERI: Now to take this now into to performers and performance, I know that when the *Evensongs* disc came out with Entrada, which I adore, and *In My Beginning Is My End* for piano quartet. All of a sudden there's this essentially acoustic music, music for other players and it came out and everyone thought it was a real departure for you. But in your notes you say that you've written music like this all your life. This music is certainly notation-based, and score-based and performance-based in the old pre-20th century European sense. So with these pieces, are the scores the texts?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, certainly much more so than other pieces of mine. But again I feel very comfortable when I can work with a group that's playing it rather than just having them learn it from the score. Because there are still things I do that are kind of eccentric, you know, that are different that you can't really notate. A certain sound or a certain feeling. And there's just so much you can write down. Some composers write lots of expression marks. You know, Crumb's always writing lugubrious and dark, mysterious and foggy, but I don't know. I'd rather just tell them how I think it should go. So I'm not a firm, a great believer in simply notation as the real carrier of the text.

FRANK J. OTERI: So I guess, what do you do? What happens if, say, there's a performance in Albuquerque tomorrow and...

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, they. There's the recordings to go by. They can hear what's been done and get some ideas. They ask me questions too. I wrote two pieces for a wonderful oboe player here in New Haven, Libby van Cleve, one for English horn and one for oboe d'amore and they're both electronic, have tape parts or there's electronic processing. You know, she and I collaborated, I mean, you know, she played stuff, I recorded it, she would try different things out. So she learned the piece literally as I was composing it. Now other performers of that won't know from George what's going on if they haven't heard the recording. 'Cuz the notated text, so to speak, is very spare. You know, if you just look at it you can't really know what's going on in here. So I have to be part of the process. It's unfortunate, but it's true.

FRANK J. OTERI: But you won't always be able to be part of the process.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, maybe it'll keep me going longer that way!

FRANK J. OTERI: To look at the pieces that Libby did for that new New Albion disc that just came out about a month ago. I was thinking about those pieces because you know those pieces are so all about her. Could someone else play them?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Oh, absolutely, yeah. In fact, someone is going to play *Dark Waters* next year in Philadelphia. The group *Relâche*. I can't remember his name...he's a very fine oboe player. But you know he and I will work on it somewhat together. So those pieces are meant to be performed by other people. It's not just for Libby. But they are very much her works...

5. The Orchestra

FRANK J. OTERI: Now to enter some potentially really dark waters, let's talk about the American orchestra and institutional structures that pose difficult obstacles to the kind of collaboration that you need to make your music come across, that so many composers need to make their music come across. You know, you send a score and if you're one of the lucky people who gets his or her music played you get two or three rehearsals, boom, boom, boom, and your piece gets played at the beginning of a concert followed by a Brahms concerto, a Tchaikovsky symphony, and you're out and that's it. How can you work within that? You just did this amazing piece for orchestra that Nonesuch just put out. Of course, you were working with the American Composers Orchestra, whose reason for being is to work with American composers, so it's not typical. But what has been your experience working with other orchestras?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, very little. I wrote a piece for the Oakland Symphony once in the early '80s. I wrote a piece for the St. Louis Symphony. I wrote a piece for the L.A. Philharmonic, actually it was a chamber orchestra and then this work for the American Composers Orchestra, so only four pieces. And with the ACO, they expect something new and different. In my case, it was a piece for tape and orchestra and they wanted that and they really asked me specifically to write something with a tape part. So my strategy was to try to notate as much information as I could, using traditional notation. Not leave too much up to chance, although there were places in the score where it was kind of ambiguous on purpose, which drives some conductors crazy. You know, where I've a whole note with a fermata over it and it's sort of a five to ten seconds, whatever the conductor has written in five beats, you know, they want to beat time. But that's fine. And it worked in fact. I had several sessions with Paul Dunkel, who was the conductor and I played him the tape part and he literally rehearsed conducting the orchestra stuff over the tape part. You know, the tape part is a given, so everything has to connect to it. So in a way, once the conductor figures it all out, it's not too hard to pull it off and it's been performed by some other orchestras, too. So, it's actually, I think, a pretty easy piece to play.

FRANK J. OTERI: Now did you work closely with those other orchestras that played it also?

INGRAM MARSHALL: The most recent one was in Holland, it was the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Hilversum and in that case I didn't work too closely with the conductor. I sort of got there for the last rehearsal and it was O.K. But I would've preferred to have an extra session.

FRANK J. OTERI: So could this piece exist in the world without you?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Oh, yeah. Sure and when it comes to writing an orchestra piece, that's what it's all about. You really have to write something that can be understood and reinterpreted by other people.

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, it's interesting. Going back 20 years again to *Gradual Requiem*, that's orchestral music, too! I mean, it's not being played by an "orchestra" but it sounds orchestral. And it feels like it was conceived orchestrally.

INGRAM MARSHALL: I never thought of that. I understand what you're saying, some of the sonorities are kind of orchestral.

FRANK J. OTERI: The sonorities, the architecture, the vastness of it... These are qualities you hardly ever get in music with anything but an orchestra.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, when I write for the orchestra, I write for big masses of sound too. You know, there aren't a lot of detailed solos happening and I'm really dealing with timbre and sonority and the next piece I'm going to write is also for tape and orchestra and boys choir. Again, I know, I'm thinking in you know, in terms of large blocks of sound. So, maybe I'm thinking electronically when I write for orchestra.

6. Recordings

FRANK J. OTERI: So in terms of people coming to your music and discovering your music, I discovered your music on recordings. There are all these recordings on New Albion, two albums on Nonesuch, and an album on New World. There's actually quite a lot of your music out there in the world. But not really that many opportunities to hear it live... So most people who learn about you are hearing you in their homes.

INGRAM MARSHALL: It's true.

FRANK J. OTERI: Is that ideal?

INGRAM MARSHALL: It's just reality right now. I'm very proud of my recordings. I think they represent my work; they're not just incidental kind of documents. If you want to know my music you should listen to the recordings. Maybe some of them aren't perfect, but I think what I've done in the realm of making recordings represents my music, my art. I would love to have more live performances of things, of course, who wouldn't? But I think so far you know I've been able to put myself out into the musical world pretty effectively with recordings. By effective, I mean, aesthetically successful. There could be more. There are only six or seven. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, oh there's one missing, 7. And they're all in print.

FRANK J. OTERI: It's amazing!

INGRAM MARSHALL: But I have to confess, I'm not prolific. I don't write a lot of music and it takes me a long time to finish things and it used to worry me. I used to think "Oh, God, my career, it's not gonna go anywhere unless I have 4 or 5 symphonies, you know, and more of this and more of that. But I always think of poets who maybe every five years publish a very slim volume of poetry. I was looking for a book of poems by J.D. McClatchey the other day. I was looking for him at the local bookstores and I found one but not the other. And I was thinking, "You know, this guy hasn't published anything for five years. It had been five years between books and then he came out with two and then they're thin and you look through them and see maybe 20 or 25 poems, but they're really good. You know, this is stuff you can go back to again and again and I think of my work as a little like that, you know there's a certain essence, there's a certain concentrated quality to my work and that well, it's the old thing quality versus quantity. I just try to focus on doing what I do well. It's not a lot, but you get a lot more out of what I've done hopefully.

FRANK J. OTERI: Getting back to this notion of career, because you brought up the dreaded word "career." I can think of very few composers out there who have two recordings coming out in such close proximity like this, you know, two recordings dedicated to your music. *Dark Waters* on New Albion and now *Kingdom Come* on Nonesuch, one month after the other. That's unheard of. You know, not even John Adams or Steve Reich or Philip Glass can say this...

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah, but they've put out quite a bit...

FRANK J. OTERI: Oh, it's true.

INGRAM MARSHALL: The New Albion record could've come out a year ago. For that matter, so could've the Nonesuch; it's just a question of time. But you know, there's another recording that's just coming out, a guitar piece I wrote for a wonderful guitarist named Ben Verdery.

FRANK J. OTERI: Oh yeah, he's great!

INGRAM MARSHALL: And it's called "Sopa," which is a Tibetan word. It means, patience. And it's a pretty major work. It's like 18 almost 20 minutes long. There are other pieces, of course, on his album. A wonderful piece by my friend Jack Vees. Something by Dan Asia and a bunch of things by Ben. So it's not just all my music, but that's coming out very soon too.

FRANK J. OTERI: But it's a wonderful cluster because you know you get yourself out here in this world and, you know, it seems like now in the days of self-publishing and self-recording, everyone can have a disc out. But the mainstream media has no time for it. There are over 500 other CDs on their tables already. But here you have two albums on very high profile labels that get paid attention to because they're both boutique labels. They don't put out a lot of stuff and everything they put out is quality. And there's been this accidental synchronicity and boom, they're both out at the same time. And now you're telling me there's a third. I think the moment is right for you to become a household word!

INGRAM MARSHALL: There's actually a fourth. This is a real oddball thing; I don't know if you've heard about it. It's already out. It's not a CD, it's a DVD. It's called *Immersion*.

FRANK J. OTERI: Oh, yes! That's right. We did a news story on that in *NewMusicBox*.

INGRAM MARSHALL: So, it's a piece I wrote for Surround Sound. And that's a real anthology of a lot of different composers.

FRANK J. OTERI: That's a really exciting project.

INGRAM MARSHALL: So that's out. That's a nice piece. I've forgotten what I called it now, but anyhow, that doesn't matter. But that's out there too. And *Icon* that was only about a year ago or so that it came out. I've really enjoyed this sudden renaissance of getting my work out after almost four years, I think. It seems like a long time.

FRANK J. OTERI: But when *Evensongs* came out in 1997, I thought, "This is going to be a breakthrough album." I know that Bradley Bambarger was raving about it in *Billboard*. And we were all hoping that your five-minute string quartet piece would be played all over the radio. We thought it would break you into the mass market. I don't even know if that's something you want.

INGRAM MARSHALL: I'm working on a piece for the mass market. I told you about before...It's a mass!

7. Promotion and Documentation

FRANK J. OTERI: Tell me about this notion about how you get your stuff out there because we've sort of been gearing this to how your work will be perceived in the future, but I guess what you do now ultimately affects how the future perceives you. You don't seem to do a lot to push your own music out there in the world. You don't have a Web site, you're a self-published composer but you don't really send stuff around. I get the sense that it's out there and it's great music, but it could be much more widely known, I think.

INGRAM MARSHALL: You're saying such nice things about me. I just haven't found the right agent. No, I've never had an agent or a person working for me in that sense and I think the reason is not so much I wouldn't have it, I don't, as I was saying before, I'm a slow writer, I don't put a lot out and in order to have that kind of hyped-up career, where someone's out there trying to get you gigs and commissions and stuff, you have to be able to produce. And I guess I've always felt a little behind the curve on that. Maybe I subconsciously was afraid I wouldn't be able to be that composer. Then I'd be having to do three or four new works a year and if I do one I'm lucky. So, I don't know. I'm certain any composer would love more recognition and more CDs out there and more performances, but I've never made it the number one thing in my career. It's been number two. I've tried.

FRANK J. OTERI: You have a surprising number of CDs out there and, you know, and everyone is wonderful, there isn't a dud in the lot and there aren't a lot of people you can say that about.

INGRAM MARSHALL: No duds at all? Wow!

FRANK J. OTERI: And, you know, each one rewards with multiple listenings. But I want to take this a hundred, maybe not 180 but 145 degrees off on a tangent into another realm 'cuz you know, here we are in this lovely studio in Connecticut talking about music for something we're gonna put up on the Web that people are going to read, you know, this is another way, this conversation, this very moment in time now becomes part of your legacy, your history...

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, can I retract things...[laughter] You are going to edit this, I hope.

FRANK J. OTERI: Oh, yeah. But this is something you do also in addition to composing. You engage people in interviews for the Oral History Project at Yale for Vivian Perlis and now you're doing an oral history for the American Composers Orchestra. What do you think are the lasting values of this kind of documentation?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, I don't know if anyone's going to get a better understanding of my music from this kind of thing. If they're already interested in it, it might give them some more insights or offer some clues into who I am, because my music's very personal; it has a lot to do with me. You know, there's no denying that. But at the same time, it's my intention to write music that's universal, you know, that really does seek an audience. So it's hard to say how I think it all connects. I'd like to think that the music I've composed so far doesn't really need too much explanation. I mean, I think music has meaning. I think there's a hermeneutic side to it. It's

very important. Music doesn't just exist on it's own. There are always explanations and there's always some hidden meanings and there are some legitimate things that you can say about music that are extra-musical. But what does that mean anyhow? Extra-musical. I hate that word! If it's about the music, it's about the music. So, I just really know what interviewing people and talking to them about their work fits into the big picture and I've been doing it myself as you said. But I've always been very interested in what's going on in the new music world. Way back in the '70s, when I used to live in the Bay Area, I used to write stuff for the *Bay Guardian* and then later on for, what was that other magazine... the *Berkeley Bard*, I think... *New West* magazine. And I used to do radio shows in Berkeley and I've written program notes for orchestras. A few years back I was writing stuff for Carnegie Hall, I was writing about Brahms and Schubert. So I've always felt like actively involved in knowing what's going on in the new music world. So when the opportunity came to start working with Vivian and doing interviews for oral history, it seemed like fun. And she asked me to do some interviews with people I knew and liked, so that was easy. But then eventually she started asking me to interview people like George Crumb and Rochberg and Milton Babbitt, you know, composers that I admired, but had never really been close to, had never really known personally. And that got really interesting because I did in fact enjoy getting to know some people better. So that. The other thing, just from a practical career point of view, is that I've always, like many composers, I've had to have gigs on the side. I've never held a long-term university position. For four years, out in Washington State, I taught out at Evergreen College, but even that really wasn't really full time. And I've done some teaching on occasion at Hartt up in Hartford, Yale one year, Brooklyn College one year. So I've had these occasional forays into teaching. And then writing articles and program notes occasionally helps out, so interviews kind of fit into that category. You know, it's like a little bit of money-making, side career that's gonna give to my real work.

FRANK J. OTERI: Right.

INGRAM MARSHALL: So the project I'm working on now, it's a rather big one. It's the American Composers Orchestra Oral History. And they've commissioned me, and it is a commission, like writing a piece of music, to interview about thirty-five people and compile an oral history of the orchestra. So that's what I'm in the middle of doing right now.

FRANK J. OTERI: So in terms of doing something like that, are you thinking in terms of people will have this document in the future to understand what the ACO was at this point in time or is it for people now, what's...?

INGRAM MARSHALL: I think it will be a really interesting historical archive because it's a unique orchestra and it's, there's nothing like it in this country: how it evolved, how it was started, what made it so successful and it is successful are things I think historians and lovers of music and a general kind of interest person into such a thing would be interested in knowing about.

FRANK J. OTERI: You know, I conduct interviews like this and I'm a composer and I kind of feel that the two halves help each other. I feel like I'm able to have a better conversation with you because I'm also a composer and I also feel that I'm a better composer because I have conversations with people like you. And do you feel, in your life, in, say, talking to a George

Crumb or a Babbitt that you bring to it something special as being a practitioner yourself, but then does it come around and translate back to you when you're doing your own work.

INGRAM MARSHALL: To be honest with you, I don't think it has too much effect on how I do my own work. Because I'm kind of set in my ways now. But I think being a composer helps me a lot in conducting the interviews as to what kind of questions to ask, especially if I'm interviewing another composer. And you know, I really look at Crumb's work differently now after I interviewed him. The same with Milton Babbitt. It does help, I think, to get to know the person somewhat. It depends. Not all composers are like that. I did two interviews with Philip Glass, for example, 'cuz he's done so much you know. In the first one, we didn't even talk about the operas.

FRANK J. OTERI: Wow.

INGRAM MARSHALL: And it was a good interview. It was very forthcoming and I've known Philip Glass for quite a long time. You know, back in the '70s he was the famous cab driver. As much as I enjoyed doing the interview and thought it was a good one, I didn't feel like I had a great deal more insight about his music from talking to him. Probably because I had known and liked it and had kind of in a sense figured out what he was doing and got to the point where I could discern what it is in his work that I liked. But occasionally with some composers I hadn't reached that point so it would be interesting to...I conducted an interview with John Adams and he's someone I've known really well for God knows, since you know, 1973 I guess. And it was a great interview. I mean I loved doing it and he enjoyed it. Vivian Perlis said it was one of the best I'd ever done and I realized it was because it was like two friends talking. But it didn't help me to understand his music anymore. So it depends. I think the more interesting interviews are the ones with the people whose work I don't know very well. Sometimes they're not even composers. You know, for the ACO interviews, you know, I'm interviewing conductors and people on the board and musicians. So it's a different thing really.

FRANK J. OTERI: Everybody's gotten to this point and were reading to this point and here they are at the end of this discussion: what do you want people to walk away with, thinking, after reading us talking here and hearing you talk?

INGRAM MARSHALL: Well, I'd like to think that they'd want to go out and listen to my music. But I don't know. I have a feeling that the interview is not going to make people do that. I think if they know my music they'll be very interested in this, but it's so hard to talk about your work and make it sound interesting. The worst thing in the world for me is for someone sincerely to ask me: "What is your music like?" Where they really expect a real answer. And it's the most difficult thing in the world to talk about. If it's a superficial thing it's not a problem, yeah, it's...kind of serious it's classical, it's not twelve-tone, you'd like it, it's got tunes. I mean there's all kinds of quick things you can say, but if someone seriously wants to know what your work is like and they've never heard of it, what do you do, where do you start?

FRANK J. OTERI: Well, that's what's great about the Web. They're gonna be able to hear samples of your music and they're gonna be able to click through to Amazon and buy a copy.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah, it's gonna sound like crap on the Web...

FRANK J. OTERI: Yeah, it's not gonna sound like a CD, but radio sounds pretty bad most of the time too if you've got bad reception.

INGRAM MARSHALL: It seems to be that a lot of Web sites that sell CDs let you listen to tracks now.

FRANK J. OTERI: Yeah, parts of tracks. Excerpts.

INGRAM MARSHALL: Yeah, I think it's really interesting. I've done that a few times.

FRANK J. OTERI: It's a great entry point in I think. Because you know here we are talking about music, we got into some details about a lot of these pieces. Wouldn't it be great to get a little snippet? I mean, it's not going to be the same thing of course, but if somebody likes the snippet, they could just order it and it arrives on the doorstep, ideally the next day. And there they'll have it.