

Sophia Rosoff

An interview by Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt

Sophia Rosoff is a long-time student of Charlotte Selver. A [piano teacher](#) in New York City, she met Charlotte as early as 1948. This interview with Sophia was conducted on June 15, 2008 at her home. The interview is in its raw form, with only a few basic edits. It is not meant for general distribution but is, in this form, only for members of the SALG. Enjoy listening to her account of meeting and studying with Charlotte and hear her remarks on ‘teaching’. The web-links in the transcript will take you to sites with information about people who Sophia mentioned in our conversation.

Sophia Rosoff: The first time I went to Charlotte I went because I had had a piano teacher who was a great pianist. She got me to New York because she heard me play. And I was about nineteen years old then. But she didn’t really know how to teach; she knew how to play. But I was her only student and I lived with her. And she was just so – everything was so tight, and my joints got so tight, and I just couldn’t get free. And then one day I was accompanying [Artie Shaw](#) – I don’t know if you know who he is.

Stefan Laeng-Gilliatt: Oh yes.

SR: He was doing classic music, and he was a friend, and I was accompanying him. And we were doing Schubert. And I said afterwards, “Artie, you know, my playing feels terrible.” And he said, “It sounds all right, but what’s the trouble?” I said, “My joints are all locked.” So he said, “I’m going to see [Morton Gould](#) for dinner tonight, and I hear he’s got a genius of a teacher. So if you promise you’ll call tomorrow, I’ll get the number for you.” So that was [Abby Whiteside](#), and he got the number for me, and I called her the next day. And I got my playing back, and the skies opened up, but she said, “You know, you’re right. Your joints are tight. You should see someone.” And [Miriam Gideon](#) was going to Charlotte. She’s a composer. Charlotte loved her. She was great. She died a few years ago. But so she said, “Come with me to see Charlotte Selver.” And I went. And Charlotte was saying, “How do you feel insidely?” and how is this, and the answers sounded so funny. I thought “Everybody’s crazy!” (Both laugh) And I didn’t really know what they were talking about. But something caught my attention, and I went back, and pretty soon I got it. And the world opened up for me. Everything changed. I was married at the time. I had a child. My husband was a great man. My child was wonderful, and nothing wrong with him. But my piano had been stuck, and I just couldn’t play the way I used to. And I kept thinking to myself, “I can’t stand this anymore. Is this the way it’s gotta be forever?” And then when Charlotte took hold, all the magic came in. And I would hear music; I would hear particularly the low sounds I would hear as I’d never heard them before, and I’d listen to Toscanini and it was a miracle. And I was terribly shy, and I found myself standing behind a man in a drugstore and he was paying his bill, and I was right behind him. And they said the bill is 3 – oh, whatever it was – \$3.04, and he started fussing around in his pocket. And I heard myself – I didn’t know him – I heard myself saying, “I’ve got four cents.” And everything changed. So that was the beginning – that was 1968 [sic: 1948] I think. And I’ve been with her ever since. And then when she went to California I was terribly upset, but I went to Carola Speads.

SLG: Oh you did.

SR: I did. Go to Carola. Because I’d miss the work. And Carola was very different.

SLG: Yes.

SR: But she was – uh, you know, she was a physical therapist and it was more – it was wonderful work. It wasn't the magic work. It wasn't just finding out what was it your own self wanted to do. That was new to me. And that really is the basis – well, [Abby Whiteside](#), who was my genius of a piano teacher is the basis, but Charlotte is there all the time. The way she experienced things is how I experience them at the piano since working with her. And that's how I work with my students.

SLG: Oh, wonderful.

SR: I just – I don't really teach them. I sit there and I clear the – help them clear the tracks, so that what they feel and what they personally have to say about the music can come through.

SLG: How do you do that? Clear the tracks. How do you . . .

SR: Just get rid of the things that are taught at the conservatories. Exercises – I don't do exercises. I don't do anything mechanical. It's all connected with music. And for me it's very important that they find their emotional connection, which gives them the rhythm with which to move. How they're feeling. But this all comes out of Charlotte's work. It's been one of the most important things in my whole life. The piano has been there all them time, and it's terribly important. So it really translates itself into the way I work at the piano. But that was Charlotte.

And oh God, she was so funny. Because we had another one of those small classes, and when we were coming to standing, she said, "Who felt they could come up easily?" And my hand shot up. So later she said, "Sophia, you weren't really telling the truth." (Both laugh) And I said – I thought for a minute and I said, "Well maybe you're right, Charlotte, but it certainly felt better than it's felt before." But I'll tell you the thing that she really taught me was really don't make talk. Just say what you honestly experience. And that's helped me in my teaching too. And knowing what my students honestly experience. That's a very important part of my work. Then Charlotte and I did a workshop at NYU, Charlotte did the sensing and I did the music. And I was scared to death. There were 250 strangers. I didn't know what I was going to say. I just was terrified. And Charlotte looked at me and she said, "Sophia," there was a terrace there, and she said, "come outside with me." She said, "What a beautiful day. Just be yourself." So she did her part and I did my part, and afterwards we had a meeting and, I'll never forget this, she said, "Sophia, I wish my students would learn to talk in their own voice." And I use that, and I thought immediately, "I want people to play music in their own connection with it." Not in anybody else's. Not to superimpose what even the editor has written on the page. How do they feel about it. That's clearing the tracks too so they can get to it. But that's – that's Charlotte's work.

SLG: Oh, I wish I could take piano lessons with you!

SR: Yeah, I wish you could!

SLG: I've always wanted to play the piano. Somehow it never . . .

SR: It never happened. But it's never too late, Stefan.

SLG: But I'd be too far away from you (laughing).

SR: And I don't have anybody in New Mexico. I have students who teach very well, but not in New Mexico. I don't know anybody in New Mexico. But no, she, I can't tell you, there isn't any part of my life that isn't changed by Charlotte. It just – the quality is so different. Now the honesty is so different. I once – about a year ago, I had an experiment with my chiropractor. We thought we would find out, take a week and find out how often do we answer the phone and say what we really think and how often do we make talk. And much to my surprise, I mostly did not make talk. I said what I really felt. Maybe because I knew the experiment was going on. But I really learned that from Charlotte – really saying what I mean and what I want to say. And if I have nothing to say, I don't say it.

SLG: Yeah. That's great.

SR: I just can't tell you what she meant to me. It's just too much really. And I have a wonderful doctor who takes piano lessons with me too. I guess I talk a lot about my piano lessons . . .

SLG: Yes, please. I'm very fascinated.

SR: Everybody wants to take piano lessons with me when they meet me (laughs). So he has piano lessons with me, and he hasn't got time to practice, so he comes twice a week. And I make an exception of him because I can't take people twice a week; I haven't got the time. But I make an exception because he's really saved my life. He's a great doctor. And whenever I am looking sad and disconnected, he'll say to me, "Think about Charlotte." You know, because he's seen her picture there . . .

SLG: I noticed it too.

SR: And I'm always quoting her to my students. I'm always talking about her. But no, she's still very alive to me. You know, I called her on her 82nd birthday, and I got her on the phone – I called her every year on her birthday – and she said, "Sophia, I think I've given everything I've got to give, and I don't think I'll be around long. I think I'm going away." And she did go away. And she kept wanting me to get out to California, but I had a husband who wasn't well at the time, and I had my students, and I just couldn't get there. And she, I think, felt I didn't try hard enough to get there. You know, she wanted me to go to the long classes.

SLG: I'm sure she did.

SR: And I wanted to go. I wished I could've gone. But I never made it. But I think it didn't matter. I just got so much from her.

SLG: It sounds like it.

SR: It became part of my life so quickly. And you know once, I have to tell you, my son, who was at Columbia college by then, when I first when to Charlotte, I used to bring him in a laundry basket to my sessions with Charlotte, and leave him in the second room. Anyway, he was at Columbia University, and his roommate was always having parties and they would smoke pot. And one day he decided he would try it. So he told me. And I said, "How did it feel, Bill?" And he said, "Well, you know how you sound after you've had a session with Charlotte Selver?" (Stefan laughs) "That's how it felt." He said – you know, he was very shy like me – and he said, "I walked through the park afterwards, and I said hello to everybody." And – I was really touched by that because I

realized he knew what Charlotte meant to me. My husband knew it too. Well, everybody knows it. Even now. I tell you, my doctor's always asking me, "What would Charlotte think," when I'm a little confused about something. "Just think for a minute, what would Charlotte think?" So it's very much part of my life. But are there any questions you want to ask?

SLG: Well I am so curious, because you are a pianist, and of course Charlotte had for I don't know how much of her life, but she loved playing the piano. I'm sure you know her stories of . . .

SR: I don't know many of the stories with the piano. No, she gave her wonderful Grotrian-Steinweg to her niece . . . Marcie. Did you see Marcie?

SLG: No, not this time. I talked to her a while ago.

SR: You have talked to her, yeah. So Marcie came to me for lessons, and we exchanged. When Charlotte was not here. I did some Feldenkrais with Marcie, and Marcie did piano with me. She's very musical.

SLG: Is she.

SR: And very good at what she does. But I could feel – even though she might not admit it – but I could feel a lot of Charlotte in her work – in her Feldenkrais work. Because the other Feldenkrais teachers that I had experienced occasionally were – didn't have what Marcie had. So she picked up a lot from Charlotte, I think.

SLG: 'Cause what I want to find out is when Charlotte stopped playing. Did she tell you the story? It had to do with Heinrich Jacoby.

SR: Oh, I know she went to Jacoby.

SLG: Yeah, yeah.

SR: But I didn't know she took lessons from him.

SLG: Well, Heinrich Jacoby always – music was always part of his work.

SR: Yes.

SLG: And there is this story which she often told – you know, she loved to play the piano as a young woman.

SR: I didn't know that. I knew she loved to dance.

SLG: Because there was this story when Jacoby asked the students to improvise on the piano – you've never heard this story?

SR: I don't think so.

SLG: He asked the students to improvise. And Charlotte – you know how she can tell these stories very dramatically. Everybody else was shy, and Charlotte's like, "Oh yeah, I can do it." She sat down and she played and improvised. And then it was over, and Jacoby looked at her, very friendly, and said, "So you call this improvisation? Try again, but listen." So Charlotte tried again and listened, and she said she heard Schubert, she heard Beethoven, she heard Mozart, and said she

didn't improvise. And she said she (laughs), you know, she jumped up from the piano and said, "But that's impossible." And she said she never touched a piano again. It was too much for her. It was such a shock that she – you may remember her telling when she first came to Gindler that Gindler didn't like her, and that Gindler felt that her movements weren't true – that it took so much for her to shed all that she had learned. And with the piano she just said she couldn't – she felt she couldn't do that again. It was too much for her.

SR: That's what I mean by clearing the tracks with the students. Exactly what I mean. That they have to get rid of – they have to clear the tracks. They have to get rid of everything that they thought before. It has to be fresh and now. And what comes from inside them, not on the page. They have to lift – they have to find the music, not the notes. They have to live the music. And what they have to do is really connect emotionally. Hear the sound of the music, the pattern of sound – not note, by note, by note, where there's no whole, it's just notes. But the patterns of sounds. And they move in a direction toward the end of the music. So physically, they have to move the way the music moves. And what they have to learn is that what moves horizontally – like the music is the upper arm, not the fingers. The fingers are carried by the upper arm, and react. This is the tail that wags the dog. But this is the dog. That *all* of you plays the piano. I have them doing all kinds of crazy things to get completely involved.

SLG: Tell me a bit about that. Like what?

SR: Well, for one thing I have them walk – you know who Groucho Marx is? And how he walks? I have them walk like Groucho Marx so they feel their center of gravity here. (Stefan laughs) I have them – when we do fugues, where, let's say, there are three voices. I put the cover down. I have the right hand tap the rhythm of the first voice, left hand tap the rhythm of the second voice, and both feet tap the rhythm of the third voice. So that not just their upper half is involved, but the whole of them is involved. Which is – it's amazing how those voices come in after you do it. You don't have to put them in; they float in. And rhythm came before sound. So I want that to get into their bloodstream before they even hear all the sounds. Then the sound comes in, and then we make sure that their movement is honestly the music moving them. Not them making the music do this and superimposing what they think. No. No. I shut off this side of the brain (laughs) and make them use this side, you know, so that they don't tell themselves what to do, but experience the music enough to just do it.

SLG: That sounds so great.

SR: Well, Charlotte sent me a student, Claudia Caviezel?

SLG: Yeah, from Switzerland.

SR: From Switzerland. And then she got a letter from Claudia telling her what our lessons were like. And I was thrilled because at one of our classes, she read the letter, and she was so pleased 'cause she could see that there was so much of her work in it.

SLG: Oh, how wonderful.

SR: Which Claudia recognized. And we had a good time. I liked working with her.

SLG: Oh, that's great.

SR: She was easier to work with because she had . . .

SLG: Yeah. I will see her in about a month or so.

SR: Oh, would you give her my love.

SLG: I certainly will.

SR: Is she all right, do you know?

SLG: Yeah, yeah, she is fine.

SR: Oh that's good. I liked her a lot. I liked John too. I don't know what happened. Something happened. You never know. But anyway, one day I invited Charlotte for tea – have you been to New York before?

SLG: I have, yes.

SR: Do you remember the old Éclair on 72nd Street?

SLG: Oh no.

SR: Well I took her to the Éclair, which was just around the corner from where her student was. And the place was empty. So we found a table in a corner, and we were talking and I was telling her about my Bell's Palsy, which makes this eye smaller than that one. Because I'd gone to – it was almost finished, the Bell's Palsy, and I went to a very nice acupuncturist who did a lot of musicians, and he put a needle in the wrong place, right here, where it caught the muscle that goes from the mouth to the eye. And so when I talk or when I eat or when I use my mouth, the eye gets caught. And I liked him so much I never told him, but I never went back. So I was telling Charlotte about it, and she was telling – we were talking about it, and a man walked in. And he looked like a bagman. He was carrying two shopping bags. The whole place was empty, but he decided he had to have the table next to ours. And while he was sitting there, she was telling me what to do about helping this and using my hand there. And then we were talking and she was telling me about when she came to New York. And she said she was staying with a cousin, and I said was it the Wittgenstein cousins, and she said no, it was the other side of the family. So the man leaned over and he said, "I almost worked with Wittgenstein, but I decided to work with [Bertrand Russell](#) instead." And we went oh (both laugh). And he said, "Bertrand Russell and I wrote a book." And Charlotte thought he was flirting with us. But Charlotte must have been ninety, which would have made me seventy, because I'm twenty years younger than Charlotte. But anyway, when I got home – I belong to the New York Society Library, so I ran over there to look up Bertrand Russell's books, and sure enough, I've forgotten his name now, they had written a book. And the book was "Why I Can't Believe in God." And he was real. I mean. (Stefan laughs) But that's the kind of thing that happens in New York. Anything can happen in New York. For me, it's a magic place. I love New York. I really do. But I think Charlotte did too. I think she missed it.

SLG: She spent so much time here. I've been thinking of it. When I see Charlotte in my mind's eye, I see her, you know, in California or other places. I was never here with her in New York. But I was roaming the streets, over the past few days, I thought, you know, Charlotte really lived here for a long time. It must have been her home. And for me it's just kind of hard to imagine, to place her here.

SR: No, I think she really did miss it. I mean she loved California and the people there, but New York was really her home. I did tell her that, uh (laughing) I don't know whether this should be on here or not, but I did tell her that when she first went to California and didn't come back for a while I worked with Carola Speads. And when she started coming back every year I stopped and went back and worked with Charlotte. And Charlotte said to me, "Are you still working with Carola?" And I said, "No, I'm not." And she said, "Well, you don't need to." (Both laugh)

SLG: That would be Charlotte!

SR: No, she was great. She could say anything to me, nice or not nice, or nasty or anything she wanted, and I still loved her. It didn't make any difference whatsoever. She was just a magic person. She was. There was nobody else like her. And what I think is not good is I think everybody should use Charlotte's work in what they do, but they should never ever try to be an imitation. It's not possible. And I'm afraid some people do try to imitate her, and it's not true. 'Cause you can't. And I never know when I'm using Charlotte's work, it's just there. You know. I know I'm using it all the time, but I'm not conscious of it as I'm teaching, or with my friends. It's just so much part of me. And I think that's the way it ought to be.

SLG: Yes. Absolutely. I agree. Like you said with playing the piano. We have to find our own voice and not imitate Charlotte.

SR: Yes. And my teaching is part of all the experience I've had. It's not part of all the experience Charlotte's had, 'cause I didn't have it. It's my experience, of which Charlotte was a great part. And it's always there. But I think it should be that way for whatever people are doing. It should part of their entire experience.

SLG: I agree. Charlotte once said to me, "Forget about sensory awareness. Just do what burns in you."

SR: Oh, that's good. That's good. She once said to me too, I can remember things that meant so much to me. One of the things she said was, "Sophia, life exercises you. You don't have to do anything special. Just be there with what you're doing, and you are exercised." And I remember that every time I try to do the bathtub or wash anything or do anything.

SLG: That's great.

SR: Even tasting. Anything. Everything, all of your six senses get used. And that's terribly important. She never talked about the six senses, but she was always using them.

SLG: What's the sixth sense?

SR: I mean the five senses. (both laugh) No, the sixth sense. No, I've always said you can't get a sixth sense. You know, people are always trying to get a sixth sense. And I tell them until you learn to use your five senses; there is no sixth sense.

SLG: Yah, that's how feel too, though, in the Buddhist understanding, this sixth sense is not some disembodied thing, but it's the mind.

SR: Yeah. But you have to fully use what was given.

SLG: I would think so too. Yeah.

SR: We were interviewed – a group of us – who was in the group? Gosh, I can't . . . what's her name – the psychoanalyst in New York? We were interviewed by [André Bernard](#), who was – did you know him?

SLG: I know that name, but . . .

SR: He was on WNYC. He ran the WNYC channel, and he wanted to interview us about Charlotte's work. And he loved what we said, and he started coming to the classes afterwards. And I think I – in that interview, talked about the use of the five senses, and the sixth sense not being available until you learn to use all of the five ones that were given, and he liked that. But he did come to class. He died fairly recently. But he did come. But she had a wild assortment of people at class.

SLG: She did. What are some of the people that you remember?

SR: Well, I remember Anne d'Harnoncourt [sic: [Sarah d'Harnoncourt](#)], whose husband was the head of the modern museum, and then she was part of it too. And recently I saw in the paper that her daughter died [[Anne d'Harnoncourt](#)], who was head of the Philadelphia Museum. She's very nice. And, uh, oh I became very close friends with a lot of the people in the class. Laura McDonald – have you interviewed her?

SLG: No. I have never heard that name.

SR: Well she was – I met her at Charlotte's class. She's in New York.

SLG: She's still alive?

SR: Yeah.

SLG: Laura McDonald.

SR: She works with – you know, I'm 87, so words disappear, but she works with children who are – what's the word I want? She works at a hospital with children who are – it starts with an "a." It means they can't connect.

SLG: Oh, autistic.

SR: Autistic, yeah. She works with autistic children. And she's now doing Feldenkrais work. But if you want her telephone number I can give it to you. Well, you won't have time now, will you?

SLG: I won't have time this time, but I will come back. There are many more people I want to talk to.

SR: Laura and my friend Nancy Cardozo. I got Nancy to Charlotte. Nancy knew Charles' family 'cause she has her house in the country is near where van Brooks was.

SLG: And is she still alive?

SR: Oh yes, she's still alive. She's even older than I am. She's a year and a half older.

SLG: (Laughs) Oh, that's wonderful. Yeah. Because most people I'm seeing met Charlotte in the late sixties or early seventies. And before that there aren't that many.

SR: Yeah, I started with Charlotte in 1948, and I never left her.

SLG: '48? Oh, well, that makes sense, but you said '68 before.

SR: Oh, I said '68? No, it was '48.

SLG: Oh, now I have a lot more questions!

SR: Yes, it was '48, when she was on 57th Street. I even met her father. Her father and his dog. I used to see him walking out of the apartment when I would come in.

SLG: Oh, I'm so glad we clarified that. I was surprised, because I thought you would have known her much earlier.

SR: Oh, I've known her since I was practically a child. I was 27, and now I'm 87. But it's so funny. I met a woman the other day, who was the granddaughter of [Sol Hurok](#). I don't know if you know who Sol Hurok is. He was the great impresario when I first came to New York. A great man. He was king of music. He represented Rubinstein. He represented Marion Anderson. He represented everybody. And dancers. And he brought them all over from Europe, and he was very important here. And I met his granddaughter the other day, and she told me she was born in '41. And I thought, she's twenty years younger than I am – twenty years younger, makes her 67. I'm older than 67? (Stefan laughs) I couldn't believe it! You know, my son is 62. It's so hard to believe it. 'Cause I don't feel any different. I don't. I feel just the same, except that physically things happen that didn't happen when you were 67.

SLG: Oh, Sophia, now I have many more questions. You have to stop me when it's (laughing) enough for you.

SR: What questions do you have?

SLG: Well, because you knew her – so that would have been only ten years after she came. You know, and she was just getting established.

SR: That's right. She was teaching at the New School.

SLG: Then? She was already then?

SR: Yes. And she shared the studio on 57th with Carola Speads.

SLG: At that time they still shared a studio?

SR: Yeah, at the time, Carola had this room and she had this room. On 73rd Street. Not where Marcie is living, but across the street.

SLG: So there was the 57th Street.

SR: There was 57th, and 73rd she was alone.

SLG: That was much later.

SR: Yeah, that was much later. No, I always went to 57th Street.

SLG: And there she shared the studio, but there were two different rooms?

SR: Two different rooms, yes.

SLG: But she also lived there.

SR: She also lived there.

SLG: Or not?

SR: Yeah, she and her – I can't remember now whether they had another apartment. Besides the two-room studio. They must have had.

SLG: As I understand, her father lived there, but not in the same apartment.

SR: Oh, I see, then he had a separate apartment and she lived in her part of the studio. Yeah, that was it. It was nice, though. It was a nice studio. And, she – oh, there were – let's see, who else came there? What's his name Watts?

SLG: Alan Watts.

SR: Alan Watts. And the wonderful psychiatrist.

SLG: Erich Fromm.

SR: Erich Fromm was there at that time.

SLG: Did you meet him?

SR: I met Watts, but I didn't meet Fromm. I wish I had. I read all of his books and I loved what he said. The famous weaver who died recently. She came.

SLG: Yes. [Lenore Tawney](#).

SR: She came then. Oh, there were a lot of interesting people at that time. . . . What's her name? Oh God. The wife of a famous psychiatrist who worked with Freud and then they split.

SLG: Reich? One of Reich's . . .

SR: No, it was Adler. Frieda Adler [?? Adler's wife was Raissa Timofeyewna Epstein]. She was in the class I was in. A lot of interesting people. And (laughs) I started at that time a men's class, 'cause I wanted my husband to get to know her work, because he was always teasing me about it, and he would say, "How do you feel insidely today?" (Stefan laughs) But he knew what a difference it made. When I would come home from a session, I remember, Billy would come home from school – he was little – and he would take one look at me, and he'd say, "You're feeling better!" You know, it made such a difference. But, let's see, what else can I tell you about that? It's such a long time ago.

SLG: It's a very long time ago. What do you remember of her father?

SR: I can almost see her father walking with his dog. He was sort of round, and I can remember his shape, but I never got to know him really, I just saw him there. I don't even remember when he died. But suddenly he wasn't there anymore. But what else do I remember about that place? It was the beginning of my learning, I know that. Do you have any specific questions you wanted to ask?

SLG: Do you remember when they left? I think that was pretty traumatic. They didn't really want to leave. It seems there are some stories with Charles, and they waited until the last minute.

SR: Oh, I don't know what happened then, but I know there was something came up between Charlotte and Carola. I don't know exactly what it was that came up. But she did finally go to visit Carola.

SLG: Oh she did.

SR: Yeah, she did. This was not so long ago because just before Carola died I think. But they hadn't – they hadn't been – they didn't approve of each other's work. I think that was it. Because Charlotte got involved with Buddhism and Zen, and Carola wasn't involved in any of that.

SLG: So you would have experienced the beginnings of that. Because in '48, Buddhism was probably not yet there.

SR: No, it wasn't yet there, but it slowly came in with – first some books were introduced, and then oh, there was a woman who was at the place in New Jersey where the zen, the local zen person was that was in our class. What was her name? Oh God. Her son went to school with my son, and she moved to Paris, but she always came back to work. . . .

I can't think of it.

SLG: Was that Peggy Crawford?

SR: It was Peggy Crawford.

SLG: Yeah, she lives in Santa Fe.

SR: She lives in Santa Fe?

SLG: Yeah, yeah. We're in touch.

SR: No longer in Paris?

SLG: She does. She divides her time between Paris and Santa Fe.

SR: 'Cause she has an apartment in that wonderful Isle St. Louis, near Notre Dame. Yeah. No, she was in the class I was in. Oh, say hello to her.

SLG: I will.

SR: I haven't seen her in such a long time. And she had two sons who went to City and Country School with Bill, with my son. It's a school that Charlotte would certainly have approved of 'cause they learned from experience. And they used their imagination too. The only thing they had to play with in that school was they had sets of blocks – just wooden blocks of all sizes. And they made things with those blocks. They didn't have things already made. One day (laughs) one of the faculty

at the school called me and said, “Mrs. Rosoff, would you come. We want you to see what your son has added to our community.” ‘Cause they all built something to make a community with these blocks. And we had taken him to Europe with us that summer. He was five. (Laughs) He made an indoor bar and an outdoor bar. And scotch was 5 cents and Coca Cola was 15 cents.

SLG: (Laughs) So the teachers were concerned?

SR: No they weren’t concerned. They just thought it was funny. That was part of his summer experience. It was very funny ‘cause the others built fire stations and hospitals and all kinds of things. Well, he had two bars. Indoor and outdoor. So it tells you what we were doing that summer. (Both laugh) Yeah, that was very funny. And Margo Adler, the Adler daughter, Freda Adler’s – I don’t think – is Freda Adler alive?

SLG: I don’t know.

SR: I don’t think so, but she’d be good to interview. Freda Adler and I and oh, [Thelma Schnee](#). That’s where I met her. We became very close friends. And the three of us were called The Three Madwomen of Chaillot, ‘cause we were trying all kinds of experiments (laughs). But Thelma Schnee was an actress and a movie director – a brilliant one. She directed Marlon Brando and James Dean. She was at the Actors Studio. And she asked me to come and do rhythms there, but I was afraid I didn’t know enough at the time, because I was very young. But the last I heard of her she was in California teaching blind people how to read regular writing by touch, without brail. I’ve forgotten what they call that. There’s a name for it.

SLG: I don’t know. I’ve never heard of it.

SR: And she became famous for that. But I met her in Charlotte’s class. Yeah, she was another one. No, there were a lot of (laughs) very special people in the class. And [McCall’s Magazine](#) did an article about the class at the time. I think that’s one of the articles that they sell – that the Foundation sells. Where there’s – I’m in a picture there with oh, a dancer and somebody. And they have us crawling through those stools.

SLG: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SR: And I’m sitting and somebody’s holding my head. You’ve probably seen it.

SLG: Yes.

SR: But my husband didn’t know about the article, and we were up visiting my mother in Amsterdam, New York. That’s where I come from. And he was getting a haircut, and there was McCall’s magazine, so he was looking in it. And all of a sudden (both laugh) there I was! Wearing rompers! Oh, it was funny. It was very funny.

SLG: Oh, were you there when there was the man whose name I can’t recall right now – they filmed. They did some films. And we actually have the _____ like 8 mm or Super 8, [Schachtel](#)?

SR: I don’t remember.

SLG: You know, I actually have a copy on a DVD up where I’m staying.

SR: Really.

SLG: Do you have a computer?

SR: A DVD. Yeah I do.

SLG: 'Cause maybe I can send you a copy. You can look at it.

SR: Oh, I would love to see it.

SLG: 'Cause it's from around 1950. Early fifties.

SR: Oh, then I was there. 'Cause I was there every week. I never missed.

SLG: I'll send it to you.

SR: Oh, I would love that, Stefan. That would be great.

SLG: 'Cause you might also recognize other people. This is fascinating.

SR: I might even recognize myself! (both laugh) Maybe!

SLG: Yah, and Charlotte's in it too.

SR: Yeah, well I would love to see it. That would be great. You know, I sent one of my students to work with her in Maine. He's the one who was doing his PhD at Princeton. And he called me one day and he said, "I've had your name, your telephone number, in my pocket for two years, and I haven't wanted to be taught, so I haven't called you." And I said, "Well, you've called the right place. I don't teach." (Stefan laughs) So he came, and we've been together ever since, and we've had a wonderful time. So I said to him I thought he should have an experience with Charlotte, and I sent him to Maine, and then I was thinking afterwards, what will he think? 'Cause he doesn't know anything special about her except what he's had with me. And I thought oh boy, that's really a problem. He may be very confused. Anyhow, he called me on his way home, when he was driving home, he called me on his way. And I said, "Jeff, how was it?" And he said, "That is the closest I will ever come to God!" I was so relieved. And we talk about his experience all the time. Because then he started coming to workshops when she came here.

SLG: Oh, Jeff?

SR: Jeff Farrington.

SLG: Oh yeah, I know him. I've met him.

SR: You know Jeff?

SLG: Yeah. I met him on Monhegan I think, just once, I mean I hardly know him.

SR: He's a very special guy. Maybe you'd want to interview him too?

SLG: Yeah.

SR: And I sent another student of mine – well I sent everybody to her classes that would go. And some people got it, and some didn't. They probably didn't get me either. Yeah. But, no, it was a wonderful time. But she hasn't really left, you know. She hasn't. She's around. (Stefan laughs) She and my husband are around. Oh, I started to tell you about the class for men that I started on

57th Street. And I got my husband there and [Harry N. Abrams](#), the art book publisher? Harry Abrams art books are these beautiful, beautiful art books. And she asked me if I would assist because there were just going to be these – oh and Noah’s French partner, my husband’s French partner. My husband was a lawyer. And, uh, they loved the class. I didn’t know how it was gonna go. But they had a great time.

SLG: So she was teaching, and you were assisting.

SR: And I was there just idle – I don’t think I assisted much, but she – I can’t even remember what I did (laughs) but I enjoyed it whatever it was. And then the class got opened to some people from the New School, whom we didn’t know, and they were females. And sometimes Harry Abrams, who was a hard worker but retired and he’d fall asleep. And the women who came from – one of them, objected strenuously. And, you know, Harry was so impressed with Charlotte. He wanted to do a book about her – an art book with her work. And he would have done a beautiful one too. But this woman worried about the fact that he would fall asleep. So Charlotte spoke to Harry, which she shouldn’t have done. And Harry was so upset. He said, “I thought you wanted us to relax here.” And the class disbanded, and I felt so bad. Because it was such a good chance to have a beautiful book about her work. But anyway, there was something else I just thought of that I wanted to tell you and now it’s slipped my mind. And it came from that – now what was it? . . . Something she said to me. It was important, ‘cause I use it all the time. You should have seen me before I turned 87; I wasn’t forgetting so much (both laugh). It comes back, but it comes back later. My teaching, by the way, is better than it’s ever been. Because I don’t plan. I just sit – I have to sit there now ‘cause I _____. But it’s good because I can see the whole of them, rather than being so close. I can’t see how they’re moving. But it is – I don’t plan anything, I just sit there and pretty soon I notice – I have them play something for me, improvise or whatever they want to do to start. And then something comes in which I notice, and we start to work from there. But that’s how it works. It’s not planned. And I don’t drag any dead material from lesson to lesson. I just see how it is right then. And I think that’s what I must have learned from Charlotte. But there’s something else that I use all the time from Charlotte that I wanted to tell you, and I just – it’s slipped my mind. Oh dear.

SLG: Maybe it’ll come back later.

SR: It will come back later, yeah. But, would you give me your – oh, you won’t be in Santa Fe. I was gonna say give me your telephone number and if some important things come in, I’ll call you and tell you.

SLG: Yeah, of course.

SR: ‘Cause there’s so much.

SLG: You can also leave messages. You can call every day (laughs) and leave a new message.

SR: Do you have an email?

SLG: Yeah, of course.

SR: I could write it on an email. I have email too. Because maybe some of the most important things will come in. Because, you know, it’s – it’s really, really important. But, and you know when

I feel terrible about these legs now because they're really hurting because of the nerve? The hips aren't hurting anymore, but that nerve goes down them, and I say to myself, "Think of what Charlotte went through, and how she handled it." The class before the last one that she did was one of the best – she was 101 – a hundred anyway.

SLG: Here in New York. Yeah, she was a hundred probably.

SR: . . . was one of the best ones she ever did. It was just magic. And she would have us all stop, you know, we would be hands and knees crawling around on the floor, and it was hard, but she didn't give in. And – 'cause the floors were hard – and then she had somebody just fall on the floor and everybody fall on top. (Stefan laughs) And she didn't like the way we were doing it. So she got up, and she came down on the floor and had everybody fall on top of her.

SLG: I think somebody else told me that.

SR: This was when she was a hundred. It was amazing. It was just amazing. There are many more things, Stefan, but I just can't think of them.

SLG: That's OK. I'm not worried.

SR: You know, I use them all the time.

SLG: Yeah, yeah. Of course.

SR: But I use them while I'm working, they come in.

SLG: But I'm also curious, 'cause if you met her in '48, in about '50 or '51 she went back to Germany for the first time to go work.....

SR: I remember that.

SLG: You remember that?

SR: I think she didn't have an easy time then. I think that – Gindler was still alive, right?

SLG: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. She went back year after year, actually.

SR: And Gindler didn't like her connection with the Buddhists.

SLG: Tell me what you remember.

SR: That's all. She didn't talk about it much, but I knew that she was upset because they hadn't gotten on well one year. I think it got all right after a while, but I'm not sure. But I knew there was something – and that's when Carola and she had a – and I think it was over that. They felt it wasn't part of the work. Well it is very much a part of the work. They just didn't understand it. Very much a part of the work. No, Charlotte brought a lot of things into my life, including the Buddhist and Zen Buddhist things.

SLG: Well what then they broke up over, and I think it was in '57, is when – and you may know some about that – is when there was an attempt at a first Foundation to support her work and document. Do you remember that?

RS: Yeah.

SLG: It was in the fifties. I think it was called the CharSel Foundation.

SR: I think it was called – yes, it was called the CharSel. But she didn't ever really like that.

SLG: And then it never really took off because . . .

SR: Some of the – the name of the people I'm trying to remember is Vice (??) something or other. Have you met anybody like that? There were three of them. There was a sister and a psychiatrist, and the other one who's name started with a "Z" who was an artist. But they haven't come in (???).

SLG: Well, I probably have these names somewhere in the archives.

SR: They're still listed as teachers I think. I could find it on the teachers' list.

SLG: Oh Weitzman. Efrem and Bernard . . .

SR: Bernard was the head of the Foundation.

SLG: But that was – was that the Foundation in the early seventies – the one that we still have.

SR: Was it?

SLG: Yah, I think it would have been that one. But in the fifties there was a first attempt.

SR: There was a first where we called it the Charlotte Selver Foundation.

SLG: Well actually . . .

SR: CharSel.

SLG: . . . the Charlotte Selver Foundation was, for some years, the name of the Sensory Awareness Foundation.

SR: Oh well, then that's the one. I don't remember CharSel. But Gindler and Carola objected to the fact that she was getting some publicity.

SLG: Yes.

SR: I think that's it. Well, why not? You want people to come. I don't understand that. I don't understand it. 'Cause, you know, I read the Gindler material, and I think that Charlotte went past. For me she got deeper.

SLG: Can you talk about that?

SR: Well it's just – she was more accepting of experience. I think she – well, it would have to be that way because Gindler started the work, and she was finding a path to the work. Charlotte got from Gindler what Gindler had; but Charlotte was very inventive and imaginative, and I don't know if Gindler had the magic that Charlotte has. There was something about Charlotte that could just turn something on and everything changed. Just two words, and everything changed. I didn't get the feeling that Gindler was like that. She may have been more like Carola, I'm not sure.

SLG: Yeah. When I spoke with Johanna Kulbach, she said – who studied with Gindler too – that Gindler was more methodical. And Charlotte was more intuitive.

SR: That's exactly it.

SLG: And I still hope I can find out more from Johanna, I'm just curious to understand how Gindler – how they might have differed in their way of teaching.

SR: And I think what's his name, the music one, oh, Jacoby, he was more methodical too.

SLG: Yeah, probably.

SR: Yeah. It's the intuitive that I liked. But that's what gets into me is the intuitive. I've always said, you know, people want me to do master classes, and I've done a few, but I don't really like them. But I think now I might go back to it. I tried some. And I was too – I was too shy and too worried it wasn't good enough and all that. It was quite a while ago. But I've always said to myself, if I could sit in front of a class the way Charlotte did – and not an imitation of Charlotte, but just be there the way Charlotte was, without any set thing in my mind and just get a feeling of the whole group and then start – and wherever it went, it went – then I would do master classes. If I could do that. And I think now I might be able to be ready to do it in music, which would include Charlotte's work of course, because I – having turned, got past 80, where this brain just can't be bothered anymore (Stefan laughs) and it doesn't interfere – it doesn't criticize, it doesn't dictate – it just leaves me alone to intuit and imagine, but do you know, have you ever seen [Mark Morris](#), the choreographer? Dance choreographer?

SLG: No.

SR: Well if you ever get a chance, see them. They are wonderful. And he was in – and this I believe wholeheartedly, so would Charlotte. He was working with young performers at Tanglewood – that's our big music center – summer music festival – and he was interviewed for the Arts & Leisure section of the New York Times, which is a big music section, and he got half a page, front page. And he said – this is how he started the interview – “I am an enemy of the conservatories. They rob young performers of their imagination, and they teach notes and not music.” And I couldn't agree more. Absolutely.

SLG: And that's still so today?

SR: Yeah. They teach mechanical exercises. They – experience of music has to be a musical one, not a mechanical one of lifting the fingers. That's why so many adults now say they wish they had stayed with the piano and continued so they could play, but they got bored, because that's not music. Every lesson has to be a musical experience. And they don't do that. That's what killed me with this famous teacher who got me to New York, who was great. She was a wonderful human being, but she didn't know how to teach. And if they don't know how, they shouldn't. Not teach. 'Cause what they do is disrupt, disrupt their own cuckoo clock.

SLG: But first they need to know that they don't know how! (laughs)

SR: Yeah, that they don't know how. Because they just do it. They don't know what they do. And I think it's bad for them to even try to teach. I don't think they should. They haven't got this

feeling that Charlotte had, an explorer's feel. That she could explore things to know what really happened. And they just couldn't do that, because they didn't know. They didn't know.

One year when Charlotte came to do a workshop here – one of the big classes – oh, and now I remember the other thing too. It has to do with flowers. Please remind me.

SLG: (Laughs) OK.

SR: So I have this amazing jazz student – I have a lot of jazz students.

SLG: Oh, you do.

SR: Half the jazz students in New York, the famous ones, work with me. And I don't even know anything about jazz. But I know about the piano. And good jazz is like good classical. So I asked [Barry Harris](#), who is a famous bee-bop player – he's a love of a man. And I asked him to come to the class. And he came to the class, and he just loved it. And then afterwards we had a small class with Charlotte – we had a small meeting. And Charlotte said, "Who brought Barry Harris?" And I said Charlotte, I did. And she said: "I love Barry Harris". No, she said: "Barry Harris is my love." And I said: "No, Charlotte, he's my love." (Both laugh) But he loved the work. Just in that one session. He just – he always talked about her afterwards. He's a black musician.

SLG: Yeah. I've never heard that name.

SR: Yeah, oh he's a beautiful pianist. And he teaches. And he's still with me. He came in 1981. And – they never leave. They still come – (laughing) like with Charlotte.

SLG: Oh wonderful.

SR: Yeah. One of my students who wasn't studying with me at the time called Jeff Farrington in Princeton 'cause I told her he had a – she was looking for a Steinway piano, and he knew of one for sale. And she called, and (laughs) she said, "I'm a former student of Sophia Rosoff." And he said, "Nobody is a former of Sophia Rosoff!" (both laugh) And she told me that. I just loved it. But the other thing is: at one of the big classes, Charlotte walked over to a young man – there were all kinds of people there – old ones like me, and new ones who'd never met her before – and I saw her walk over to a young man lying on the floor, and she said something to him, but I didn't hear that. But he said, "I thought you wanted us to relax." And she said, "Would you go into a flower shop and ask for a dozen relaxed roses." (Stefan laughs) And I use that all the time . . .

SLG: You do?

SR: . . . because I don't allow my students to "relax." I say, "You're alive and alert; you're not relaxed." (Laughs) Anyway. Yeah. No, that I think is very important. I use it all the time. But there's lots of Charlotte I use. But not imitating her. Just talking about it as part of my experience.

SLG: I know you have to go. I'll have to come back.

SR: You'll have to come back.

SLG: (Laughs) This is wonderful. But let me ask you one more question, because you mentioned in the beginning, even before we recorded, that you played the piano in one of those small classes, so was that here in your place, or why was there a piano?

SR: Oh, it was Alice – Alice was using – what’s her last name?

SLG: Smith.

SR: Alice Smith, yeah. We were very close friends too. She was using the studio when Charlotte wasn’t here. And she had an old Steinway upright.

SLG: Oh, I see.

SR: . . . that she put in the apartment.

SLG: Yeah, OK.

SR: ‘Cause she used it all the time, and when Charlotte came, she went and let Charlotte use it.

SLG: Did Charlotte play on the . . .

SR: No, no. I mean let Charlotte use the studio. No, I don’t think she . . .

SLG: Isn’t that something. I mean, if, you know, in her younger years that was everything to her, the piano. Everything.

SR: Well Jacoby didn’t handle well. He didn’t handle it the way I would have handled it.

SLG: He broke her.

SR: Yeah. No, there’re a lot of things about him that I disagree with.

SLG: Yeah, yeah.

SR: Yeah, I do. Yeah. ‘Cause his teaching was more formal. Like, it had the addition of Gindler’s work, which was good. But he still believed in the formal learning of playing the piano.

SLG: How do you know that?

SR: From the books. You know, from the books that they did. That the Foundation . . .

SLG: Yeah, have you read them?

SR: What?

SLG: Oh, the bulletins.

SR: The bulletins. Yeah. Yeah. And, no, I would like to have had a chance to talk to him.

SLG: Yeah, I’m sure.

SR: Because, no, I’m afraid I’m a loner. Me and my students.

SLG: In the way you teach?

SR: And the way I teach. But I have them coming from all over the world.

SLG: Yeah.

SR: Yeah. They come, and they come back again. And, the New York Times – you know, I don't advertise or anything, it's just word of mouth – but two of my students – [Fred Hersh](#) is a famous jazz pianist, and he's been with me since 1982 I guess – and [Ethan Iverson](#), who is a famous jazz, a genius of a pianist, who plays all of Bach too – and his first classic lessons were with me. Well they did a concert together at the Jazz Standard, and I went to hear them. And Ethan started the improvisation by tapping on the wood of the piano, and so the critic who was there – oh, and then he said, after their first set, Ethan said, “If you want to know why I tapped on the piano, that was to welcome our beloved teacher, Sophia Rosoff.” So the critic knew I was there. And so in his article he gave them a rave review – it was a beautiful, beautiful concert – and in the article he said, “Sophia Rosoff, the renowned piano guru was in the audience, and she taught both of them.” (Laughs) That's the only time I've been mentioned that way, but, you know, I'm not famous, certainly not in the classic world. In the jazz world I'm more famous. I have . . .

SLG: That's interesting. Because you teach classic . . .

SR: I teach classics. But good classic music and good jazz music are, you know, they're music. And this is the instrument. And I use it.

SLG: You don't play jazz at all.

SR: I don't know it. Well, you know, Artie Shaw was here to see me. And he came at the end of Barry Harris's – the one I told you came to class – lesson. And Barry had just had a stroke. And he said to me, you know, my left arm has lost its rhythm. So I quickly thought of how I can get him, give that left arm a feel of the rhythm. So I thought of something that I did with him that worked so well for me and for the rest of all my classics students that I use it all the time, and it had to do with playing the piano this way – doing an arpeggio with your full arm – so that his right arm was part of the left arm. And it worked. And Artie came just at the end of that lesson, and he loved Barry, and he was impressed with what I did. So he said to me, after Barry left, he said, “Sophia, you know you don't know anything about jazz. I'm gonna send you a jazz book.” The jazz book is there. I've never opened it! (Stefan laughs) I've never read it. Yeah, I should, but I don't need to. I don't need to know anything more than . . .

SLG: And you do know about jazz. Otherwise these people wouldn't come back to you. You know . . .

SR: I know about making music, and I know about connecting with the instrument. I know about hugging the instrument instead of sitting back like this and playing in front of you. I know about playing inside yourself. I know about the whole person playing the piano. Yeah. No, anyway, it's my life. You know, when I was in the hospital with two hips, the first one didn't go well and they had to redo it, and I had to wait a week for them to see if I was infected or not before they could do it again, and I was in such pain, and nothing helped me. Not morphine. Not anything. And I thought to myself why don't you just let go. And then I thought oh no, you don't. Because I thought of all the work I wanted to do, and I didn't let go.

SLG: Uh.

SR: No. It's – and that was part of Charlotte speaking to me. You know, it's – I want to be like Charlotte.

SLG: (Laughs) Good!

SR: I won't ever be like Charlotte. Nobody every will be. But I want to represent her work that she did for me.

SLG: I know what you're . . . So you're still teaching full . . .

SR: More than ever. More than ever. And loving it.

SLG: That's so wonderful.

SR: It is wonderful.

SLG: It's so inspiring.

SR: It is amazing for me.

SLG: Yeah.

SR: It is.

SLG: And your students come here.

SR: The students come here, yes. But that base player who came, he's one of the most famous base players. His name is [Ben Street](#). He plays all over the world. Every jazz player loves to play with him. Every jazz pianist. And all my jazz pianists do play with him – one of them brought him here. And I don't know why he brought him, but he brought him, and I found out why (laughs). He played for me, and I noticed something, and I said – he's very musical . . .

SLG: He brought the bass?

SR: Yeah. He brought his bass, and he played. And I said, "Ben, how do your upper arms feel?" And he said, "They hurt! And they've always hurt!" So I said, "Well, you've got a lot of work to do; do you want to do it?" And he said yes. And – he's a sweet guy. And I had him doing everything to get freer, more flexible, to feel where the weight of gravity was, and I taught him how to connect with the instrument. His instrument was here and he was here, and I taught him how to hug the instrument. And he played again. It was beautiful. It was beautiful before, but this time it was really intimately beautiful. And he sat down on the couch and the look on his face (laughs), he said, "I've never felt this way in my whole life ever." And, you know, I'd been upset that day and thought, "Well, you've had it. Why don't you just give up." And I thought, "Oh no, you don't!" (Both laugh) I saw the look on his face. And then he went to return a tape he had of my jazz pianist Ethan Iverson, and Ethan wasn't there but his wife was there. And he said to Sara, "I've got to practice." And Sara said, "Where is your bass?" He said, "I don't need it. I have to practice hugging!" (Both laugh) But that was such a great experience for me. And now he's brought two other people. You know, that's how I get so – I'll never lack for work. And that's so, you know, it's good when you're 87 to know that you'll never lack for work.

SLG: It's so amazing, and, you know, you're saying, "Oh maybe I can do a master class now." That you're still full of these, "Oh yeah, I want to."

SR: Oh, there's a lot more. There's a lot more. There's one of my jazz students works up at Purchase College – University. And he said, you know, everybody's interested in the things I've learned from you. Would you do a master class _____ . I might. Oh, you know [Marian McPartland](#)?

SLG: No.

SR: The jazz – English jazz player? She's a very famous 90-year-old, and still playing beautifully. We became friends through Artie Shaw. He told her there was somebody in New York that she ought to meet, so she called me. And we're very good friends. But when I told that she's – she has the most famous radio, jazz radio show. And it's gone on for years. And everybody loves her.

SLG: Here in New York?

SR: Well, it's taped in New Jersey, but she lives here. And she has had – oh, she came here to see me, and I forgot Ethan Iverson, my student, was coming. So he came and Marian was here, and he knows Marian McPartland – all jazz people know her. And he said immediately, “Would you like to improve with me?” And, you know, they're so different in their improvisation. He's young. He's just had his thirtieth birthday. She's ninety. (Stefan laughs) So they sat down, and it was great, because she was so open to what he did, which was very different from what she did, but she managed to get with it, and she invited him to be on her radio show.

SLG: Oh wonderful.

SR: And, you know, she's just great. But when I told her that Pete and Ellen Urning (??) wanted me to do a master class at Purchase – she's had him on her show too – she said, “If you do a master class, let me know. I want to come.” Well, everybody there would be thrilled if she came, because she's very well known. She's a sweetheart. She's so open.

SLG: I have to find out about her.

SR: Yeah, yeah. She's got a lot of CDs, and they're beautiful. She's still playing. She plays at the New Jazz Center.

SLG: Oh she does.

SR: (Laughs) Yeah, I went to hear – she invited me to come to hear her at the New Jazz Center, and she is full of humor, she gets the audience connected immediately, and she said, “In spite of these hands,” ‘cause they're full of arthritis, “In spite of these hands, I can still play.” And she sat and she can still play. She uses all of herself. But I was telling – I was telling her about meeting [Brad Melda](#), who is the most famous young jazz player, and he's a friend of one of my students – my classics students – he plays both classic and jazz. And my student had a party to welcome a new Steinway he got, so everybody played. All my students played, and Brad sat down and played, and he's great, but, he was sitting like this! And before he played he showed me a picture of his little girl, whom he loves, and I couldn't help it, I said, “Brad, do you mind if I say something.” And he said, “Not at all.” He's very nice. And I said, “Would you hug your little girl like this? Or would you do it like this? So would you mind putting the seat a little closer, and would you mind coming in at the hip joint a little bit and play with your hands feeling as if your arms – feeling as if they were

hugging the piano? Bringing it to you?” And he said, “Oh, I’ll try it.” And he loved it. He just loved it. Well, everybody does when they feel it.

SLG: Yeah. It makes sense.

SR: It makes all the difference. It’s – you’re communicating with something, with somebody. But anyhow, I told, Marian McPartland called me that night, and I told her what I had done. I said – with Brad Melda – because she likes him a lot. And she said, “Sophia, you criticized him in front of all those people?” (Laughs) And I said, “Marion, I couldn’t help it. It hurt to see him play the way he did, ‘cause he’s so good. He could be a lot better.” And she laughed, and she said, “Would you do that to me?” (Both laugh) I said, “No I wouldn’t, ‘cause you don’t need it. You’re hugging the piano all the time. And one of the things that made you hug the piano is that you have arthritis in your hands.”

SLG: So she had to engage . . .

SR: She had to use her whole self. If she just did it with her fingers it wouldn’t work.

SLG: Interesting.

SR: Yeah, no, it’s good. It’s good. Stefan, it really is.

SLG: Oh, that’s so wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing all of this.

SR: Well, I knew I would like to share it because it had to do with Charlotte.

SLG: Yeah, yeah. So can I come back when I come back to New York?

SR: Oh please, yes.

SLG: Maybe in the fall, hopefully.

SR: Yeah. Good. No, I would love to see you.

SLG: This has been very helpful.

SR: And I haven’t even offered you a drink.

SLG: Oh that’s OK. You’ve offered me a lot more than a drink.