

The Funniest People in Music,
Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

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Dedicated with Love to

Dad, Martha, Rosa, and Carla

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All anecdotes have been retold in my own words
to avoid plagiarism.

Note: Most of the anecdotes in this collection are funny,
although some are thought provoking rather than funny.

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Chapter 1: From Acting to Comedians

Acting

- Songwriter Steve Earle also occasionally acts. To prepare for a role as a recovering junkie in the HBO TV series *The Wire*, he allowed his hair to grow long and he didn't shave. The preparation worked well. Although he was staying at a swanky hotel in London when *The Times*' Stephen Dalton interviewed him in August of 2007, he looked very much like a homeless person. In fact, he said, "The other day I noticed the homeless guys that pick up the tin cans on my street, before the recycling people come, they started protecting their cans as I walked past. They thought I was competition."¹

- Jazz musician Branford Marsalis is multi-talented. As an occasional actor, he was once offered the lead role in a television situation comedy! However, his manager, Anne Marie Wilkins, thought that he should turn down the role and concentrate on music, so she asked him, "Branford, what do you want to be?" He replied, "I want to do one thing well." She asked, "And what thing is that?" Mr. Marsalis replied, "Everything."²

- Jimmy Stewart was a big fan of Duke Ellington and his music, and the two even appeared briefly together in the Otto Preminger movie *Anatomy of a Murder*. Mr. Stewart even started staying up late to listen to Mr. Ellington play the hotel

¹ Source: Stephen Dalton, "'I would never survive 26 divorces.' Is Steve Earle, the much-married former junkie, convict and political activist, America's greatest living songwriter?" *The Times*. 24 August 2007

<http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/music/cd_reviews/article2315064.ece>.

² Source: Bob Bernotas, *Branford Marsalis: Jazz Musician*, pp. 95-96.

piano — something that adversely affected his early-morning wake-up call to get ready to act. Mr. Preminger was finally forced to forbid Mr. Stewart to stay up late listening to the music.³

- Musical composer Jerome Kern once worked with an actress who had the annoying habit of rolling her r's. She asked, "You want me to *crrrr*ross the stage. How can I get *acr*rrross?" Mr. Kern replied, "Why don't you roll on your r's?"⁴

Activism

- The Rascals, who were sometimes known as the Young Rascals, took a stand for civil rights in the 1960s. After the Rascals had played at a concert with some black musicians in a Rhythm and Blues group called the Young-Holt Trio, creators of the instrumental hit "Soulful Strut," one of the black musicians thanked the Rascals, saying that usually the Young-Holt Trio didn't "get a chance to play for white people." This made Felix Cavaliere and the other members of the Rascals think, "Why not really try and contribute to this civil rights situation by having a white and black act wherever we go?" Therefore, they insisted that black groups be hired to perform at their concerts. Such an action is consistent with the message of "People Got to Be Free," a big Rascals hit in 1968: "Shout it from the mountains on down to the sea / people everywhere just got to be free."⁵

³ Source: Peter Bogdanovich, *Peter Bogdanovich's Movie of the Week*, p. 30.

⁴ Source: Lore and Maurice Cowan, *The Wit of the Jews*, p. 92.

⁵ Source: Tony Sclafani, "The Cost of Freedom: The Rascals' Struggle for Change." 21 November 2007
<<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/features/article/50168/the-cost-of-freedom-the-rascals-struggle-for-change/>>.

- Can music be political? Yes. Dmitri Shostakovich used his music to protest the oppressive Soviet society in which he lived and worked. In the dark days of Soviet Communism, everyone had to appear to be cheerful, no matter how they really felt. (Sadness was taken as a criticism of the Communist state.) In his Fifth Symphony, Mr. Shostakovich wrote passages of great sadness, and audience members cried when they heard them. The symphony was so popular that Josef Stalin — murderer that he was — would not attack the composer.⁶

- Even as an 11-year-old girl growing up in the South during the Jim Crow era, African-American singer Nina Simone, née Eunice Waymon, was an activist. She was supposed to play piano at the Town Hall in Tryon, North Carolina, but she noticed that her parents, who were seated in the front row, were being asked to give up their seats to a white couple. She declined to play unless her parents were seated in the front row.⁷

- Novelist and stand-up comedian A.L. Kennedy once witnessed a very good example of how to use comedy to defuse a tense situation. At a demonstration at which it seemed a riot could break out, the demonstrating college students made many people laugh by sitting down and singing a song to the tune of the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine": "We all live in a terrorist regime."⁸

⁶ Source: Marc Aronson, *Art Attack: A Short Cultural History of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 90-91.

⁷ Source: Kerry Acker, *Nina Simone*, pp. 30-31.

⁸ Source: A.L. Kennedy, "Comedy is my self-defence." *The Guardian*. 7 August 2006
<<http://arts.guardian.co.uk/features/story/0,,1838624,00.html>>.

Alcohol

- Marshall Grant was a member of the group Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two (later, Tennessee Three). Although Mr. Cash abused drugs and alcohol, Mr. Grant never did. In his closet is a suit that he has owned for over 50 years. It was a present from his mother, who said, “Every one of my boys who can make it to 21 without a taste of alcohol, I’ll get them a suit of clothes.” Mr. Grant made it to 21 without tasting alcohol, and beyond. In 2006, he pointed out, “I’m 78 years old and strong as a bull. I don’t know the taste of beer, wine, or whiskey. I’ve never taken an illegal pill, never smoked a cigarette, and as of this past November [2006], I’ve been married for 60 years. That’s not too bad.”⁹

- Dee Dee Ramone could be pretty crazy. When the Ramones first played in London, their record company gave them unlimited room service, and Dee Dee acted the way that he thought a rock star should act and ordered so many bottles of Scotch that in two days his room service bill was \$700. The record company representatives were surprised by the size of the bill, and they told Dee Dee, “We just thought you were going to order some cheese sandwiches and Coca-Cola.”¹⁰

Animals

- In 1979, the Italian conductor Claudio Abbado was appointed the principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. Quickly, musicians learned that Maestro Abbado has exacting standards, and during one rehearsal a musician

⁹ Source: Chris Davis, “Man in Black.” *Memphis Flyer*. 21 December 2006
<<http://www.memphisflyer.com/memphis/Content?oid=oid%3A23008>>.

¹⁰ Source: Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me*, p. 230.

told him that the London Symphony Orchestra did not always play at its best during rehearsals, but rather played only at 50 percent because the musicians reserved the other 50 percent for performances. Maestro Abbado replied, “Ah, but I need to get you up to the 50 percent in the first place!” By the way, Maestro Abbado is a committed environmentalist. Around his house in Sardinia, he has had planted 9,000 trees, which has led to a remarkable result: “And now the animals — rabbits, hares, deer, wild boar — have come back, spontaneously.”¹¹

- Early in the 20th century, the Belgian violinist Cesar Thomson played a concert at Oberlin College near Cleveland, Ohio. After the concert, the Oberlin accompanist, W.K. Breckenridge, accompanied him in a two-horse wagon to the train station. The wagon passed by a lonely scene — snow on the ground, a few trees, and a stream — and suddenly Mr. Thomson grabbed Mr. Breckenridge’s arm and asked, seriously, “Are there any wolves?” Mr. Breckenridge assured him that there were not.¹²

Art

- In New York City, punk singer Patti Smith and artist Robert Mapplethorpe lived together with very little money. Ms. Smith remembers, “We had no money to get anything to eat, no money for art supplies — we were considerably down.” However, the two ran across an abandoned pair of very expensive alligator-skin shoes in the street; these shoes were worth \$300 or \$400. Ms. Smith looked at Mr. Mapplethorpe and asked, “Clothes or art?” Mr.

¹¹ Source: Tom Service, “The maestro.” *The Guardian*. 22 August 2007 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2153553,00.html>>. Additional interviews by ChaiHong Lim.

¹² Source: W.K. Breckenridge, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, p. 16.

Mapplethorpe replied, “Both,” and then he put on the shoes, using newspaper to make a good fit. A little later, he went home and put the expensive shoes in an art installation he was making. Ms. Smith remembers, “Everything was always Life or Art. It was magical when something could cross over and be both.”¹³

- Famed photographer Yousuf Karsh took cellist Pablo Casals’ portrait from the back, something he rarely did. Of course, Mr. Casals was playing the cello in the portrait. The portrait was once on exhibit at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, and an elderly man came into the museum and stood in front of the portrait for a long time each day. Curious, the curator of the exhibit asked the old man, “Sir, why do you come here day after day and stand in front of this portrait?” The old man replied, “Hush, young man, hush. Can’t you see? I am listening to the music.”¹⁴

Audiences

- Riccardo Martin was hailed as a “second Caruso,” but he adored Enrico Caruso so much that he disliked the comparison. One night at the Metropolitan Opera, Mr. Martin was ill and could not sing, so Mr. Caruso took his place. Of course, the audience was delighted with their good luck in being able to hear the great tenor — all except one person, who demanded his money back because the singer who was scheduled to sing was not able to sing that night. When the ticket agent pointed out that he was able to hear the great Caruso instead, he insisted, “I paid my money to hear what you people said I was going to hear, and if I can’t hear what I paid for, I want my money back!” Mr. Caruso

¹³ Source: Victor Bockris and Roberta Bayley, *Patti Smith: An Unauthorized Biography*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁴ Source: Yousuf Karsh, *Karsh: A Sixty-Year Retrospective*, p. 163.

took great delight in telling the story of the man who wanted his money back because he was going to sing.¹⁵

- Frances Langford sang with a big-band style, and she was popular on the radio, in movies, and on USO tours with Bob Hope. While performing with Mr. Hope in Salerno, Italy, Ms. Langford found the accommodations very primitive indeed. For example, her dressing room was constructed out in the open. A fence enclosed the dressing area, although it lacked a roof. However, while Ms. Langford was in the dressing room, she happened to look up, and she saw a hill on which were some trees; in every tree were guys. Ms. Langford says, “I think that was the biggest audience I ever had.”¹⁶

- In 2009, the band known as the xx released their first album, a self-titled album that quickly became critically acclaimed. The xx’s early days were rough. They played gigs during which the audience talked all through their songs, which were mostly quiet. Madley Croft remembers, “If there were three people in the front row who were into it, that was a success.”¹⁷

- As a young student in Italy, soprano Joan Hammond ran into a problem while attending operas. She could not afford the better seats, so she sat in the gallery. Often, while sitting there, she would feel a pinch from a man behind her. A reprimand worked, but only for a while, then she would feel

¹⁵ Source: Rose Heylbut and Aimé Gerber, *Backstage at the Opera*, pp. 169-170.

¹⁶ Source: Richard Grudens, *The Spirit of Bob Hope; One Hundred Years, One Million Laughs*, p. 116.

¹⁷ Source: Alexis Petridis, “The xx: ‘We’re very keen not to be... flash.’” *The Guardian*. 10 April 2010
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2010/apr/10/the-xx-interview>>.

another pinch. Moving didn't help, either, for a different man would pinch her.¹⁸

- Felix Mendelssohn wrote interesting letters as well as interesting music. He once wrote about an audience filled with ladies wearing brightly colored hats: While he played during the concert, he watched the audience and saw that the hat-wearing ladies were bobbing their heads in time with the music so that the scene looked like wind blowing over a bed of tulips.¹⁹

Auditions

- Soul singer James Brown got his big break after he and his band, the Flames, took the stage without authorization during an intermission in a Little Richard concert in Macon, Georgia, in 1955. They wowed the crowd, and they wowed Little Richard's road manager, who gave them the telephone number of the man who managed most Mason-based R&B acts: Clint Brantley. Sure enough, they showed up to audition for Mr. Brantley that Saturday. Unfortunately, Mr. Brantley was hung over and at first requested that they leave, but he relented enough to let them sing one song. They sang "Looking for My Mother," and Mr. Brantley recalled, "Godd*mn, man, them sons-of-b*tches, they looked for her, too. All under the tables, all under the d*mned seats. Everywhere. When they got through, I said, 'Boys, y'all can sing!'" And, of course, he signed the group.²⁰

¹⁸ Source: Joan Hammond, *A Voice, A Life*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁹ Source: Gloria Kamen, *Hidden Music: The Life of Fanny Mendelssohn*, p. 38.

²⁰ Source: Scott Freeman, "James Brown, dead at 73." 27 December 2006
<<http://atlanta.creativeloafing.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A175149>>.

- Early in her operatic career, Grace Moore sang “*Depuis le jour*” from *Louise* at an audition in front of conductor Albert Wolff. After she had finished singing, Mr. Wolff told her, “My dear, you have a beautiful voice, but you don’t know what you are singing about. Go out and live and then come back and sing it for me, and I will tell you what career you shall have.” Years later, Ms. Moore again sang “*Depuis le jour*” for Mr. Wolff. This time, he told her, “I don’t know what you have done since I spoke to you last, but you have exceeded expectations.”²¹

Autographs

- Joe Moscheo, the pianist for the gospel group The Imperials, met Elvis Presley for the first time at a gospel-music gathering, and of course he asked Mr. Presley for his autograph — he lied and said that the autograph was for his mother, although he actually wanted it for himself. However, he was shocked when Mr. Presley knew who he was. Mr. Presley explained that he studied gospel music extensively and knew much more about gospel than most people thought he knew. Then he said about the autograph, “If you give me yours, I’ll give you mine.”²²

- Comedian Bill Hicks was backstage during the intermission of a concert by Ray Charles, where he witnessed a woman trying to get Mr. Charles’ autograph although members of Mr. Charles’ staff said that he did not sign autographs. Finally, a member of the staff said, “I sign autographs for Mr. Charles.” The woman said, “You do! Oh,

²¹ Source: Grace Moore, *You’re Only Human Once*, pp. 80-81.

²² Source: Interview with Joe Moscheo. 16 August 2007. *The Today Show*.

thank you!” Mr. Hicks said, “Hey, I can get you John Lennon’s autograph.”²³

Automobiles

- Rocker Neil Young loves his cars. In 1966, when he was 20 years old, he drove a Pontiac hearse to LA from Toronto, Canada — 2,000 miles. His choice of a hearse was fortuitous, as the roomy back served as his home for months as he sought to establish himself. He even made appointments with other people to meet him at his home — that is, his hearse. After he became a wealthy rocker, Mr. Young continued to buy and drive interesting cars, including a 1951 Chrysler and a 1956 Cadillac — and even a 1950 Buick Roadmaster hearse.²⁴

- Tenor Mario del Monaco liked fast cars, and unfortunately in 1963 he had a serious accident in one, smashing his leg, which ended up several inches shorter than his other leg. Before he allowed physicians to work on his leg, he sang a loud high C to make sure that his voice was undamaged.²⁵

- In 1981, a 1971 Detomaso Pantera that had been owned by the late Elvis Presley was sold. The automobile was not in brand-new condition because its dashboard was riddled with bullet holes. After the car had refused to start one day, Mr. Presley shot it several times.²⁶

²³ Source: Cynthia True, *American Scream: The Bill Hicks Story*, p. 94.

²⁴ Source: Burhan Wazir, ‘I head for the ditch.’ *The Guardian*. 4 October 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2182857,00.html>>.

²⁵ Source: Helena Matheopoulos, *The Great Tenors From Caruso to the Present*, p. 59.

²⁶ Source: Donald J. Sobol, *Encyclopedia Brown’s Book of Wacky Cars*, p. 34.

Awards

- Ellen Zwilich is the first woman ever to win the Pulitzer Prize in music; in 1983, she won for her composition *Symphony No. 1: Three Movements for Orchestra*. Afterward, she was surprised by the number of people who asked her, “How does it feel to be the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in music?” Her usual reply was, “I hope it’s the last time gender is more important than creativity.”²⁷
- Harlan Howard, Roger Miller, and Willie Nelson had a wonderful time one year at the BMI Awards dinner in Nashville. Each and every time a winner was announced, the trio would jump up and run to accept the award, causing mass amounts of confusion until the real winner appeared on stage.²⁸

Bathrooms

- The pediatrician of opera critic Patrick J. Smith was very good at giving his own criticisms of bad productions at the New York Metropolitan Opera. He once stated about a certain production, “It needs a collective glycerine suppository up the rear.”²⁹
- Louis Armstrong had cards made up with his picture on them — the picture showed him sitting on the toilet. Celebrity interviewer Joe Franklin says, “He was the only guy I knew who gave out cards like that.”³⁰

²⁷ Source: Carmen Bredeson and Ralph Thibodeau, *Ten Great American Composers*, p. 89.

²⁸ Source: Willie Nelson, *The Facts of Life and Other Dirty Jokes*, p. 84.

²⁹ Source: Patrick J. Smith, *A Year at the Met*, p. 207.

³⁰ Source: Joe Franklin, *Up Late with Joe Franklin*, p. 63.

Big Breaks

- How did one get to be a member of the Beatles, perhaps the most famous and influential band in rock-and-roll history? John Lennon became a member simply by starting his own musical group as a teenager. He started a group called the Blackjacks, which became the Quarry Men, and through a series of personnel changes eventually became the Beatles. John invited Paul McCartney to join the Quarry Men because of his superior musicianship — Paul could tune his guitar, which is something none of the Quarry Men could do. George Harrison idolized John, but was invited to join the Quarry Men mainly because his mother was willing to let the Quarry Men practice at her house. Ringo Starr joined the Beatles after Pete Best was forced out of the group, allegedly for either sub-standard drumming or for being the best-looking Beatle. According to speculation, aka vicious gossip, Paul wanted to be the heartthrob of the group, and he felt threatened by Pete's good looks. If that is true, Ringo may have been asked to join the Beatles just before they became rich and famous simply because he could drum and had a big nose. Of course, the group became very big very quickly. When they landed at JFK Airport on February 7, 1964, for their first visit to the United States, their fans made so much commotion that the Beatles thought that either Elvis Presley or the President of the United States was landing at the same time.³¹

- B.B. King got a lucky break early in his career in Memphis. Bluesman and radio host Sonny Boy Williamson made a mistake and agreed to sing at two different clubs at the same time, an obvious impossibility. Therefore, he decided to let B.B. sing at one of the clubs — the one that paid less.

³¹ Source: Bruce Glassman, *John Lennon and Paul McCartney*, pp. 19-20, 32-34, 42, 60, 70.

However, he knew that the owner of that club, Miss Annie, was tough and would not let B.B. play at her club unless he could bring in some customers. No problem. Sonny Boy knew how to make B.B. a celebrity in a hurry — he simply put B.B. on his radio show and had him play some music. Miss Annie and lots of potential customers were listening, and B.B. brought in a bunch of customers when he played at Miss Annie’s club. Another early job that B.B. had at about the same time was selling a popular all-purpose tonic called Pepticon. He played his guitar and sang and then sold Pepticon. For a long time, he wondered why Pepticon was so popular, then he discovered that it was 12 percent alcohol.³²

- Bill Wyman, bass player for the Rolling Stones, grew up poor. His family owned only one toothbrush, which they shared, and food was often lacking. Later, when the Rolling Stones were just getting started, he was able to join the band despite a lack of enthusiasm from the other members because he enjoyed a little material prosperity. He explains, “They didn’t like me, but I had a good amplifier, and they were badly in need of amplifiers at that time. So they kept me on.”³³

Children

- Bobbie Lee Nelson is Willie Nelson’s sister — he calls her “Sister Bobbie.” For decades, she has toured with her famous younger brother. At age 77, she recorded her first solo album, although she didn’t know that she was doing that. Willie asked her one day, “Well, Sister Bobbie, why don’t you just go over there and warm up that piano?” And

³² Source: David Shirley, *Every Day I Sing the Blues: The Story of B.B. King*, pp. 41-45.

³³ Source: Stuart A. Kallen, *The Rolling Stones*, pp. 8, 19.

when she wasn't looking, he turned on the tape machine. Their entire family was musical. She remembers their grandparents studying music theory from books they had gotten by mail order. At age six, she got her first piano. Before age six, she made a play piano out of cardboard and pretended to play it. Bobbie Lee says, "We played like we were having a piano there and I would play and we'd sing. We had a great childhood." One of the things that made their childhood great was their sibling love for each other — they even ate dirt together. "We had this little toy stove and we made mud pies in the sun," Bobbie Lee says. "When they would get baked, he would say, 'Sister Bobbie, it's so good. Just take a bite.' And he had me eating dirt with him. That's how much I love Willie. I do anything he tells me to do."³⁴

- Singer Avril Lavigne was born and raised in Canada, and like most or all Canadians, she likes hockey. As a 10- and 11-year-old, she was the only girl on her hockey team, and she could take care of herself in a hockey fight. In fact, on occasion, she started fights. In one case, she started a fight with an opposing player who had insulted one of her teammates. In another fight, the goalie was someone who had picked on her at school, so she took the opportunity of the hockey game to fight him. Her father recorded this fight — in the background fans can be heard cheering her on in the fight: "Avril! Avril!" When Avril turned 18, her record company, Arista, gave her an ice hockey birthday party at an indoor skating rink. She played with enough passion that she knocked down an Arista executive.³⁵

³⁴ Source: Jay Root, "Willie Nelson's older sister steps out of his long shadow." McClatchy Newspapers. 19 February 2008
<<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/news/article/55210/willie-nelsons-older-sister-steps-out-of-his-long-shadow/>>.

³⁵ Source: Yvonne Ventresca, *Avril Lavigne*, pp. 9-11, 38-39.

- When Beverly Sells was a little girl, her mother recognized that she had talent because of the way young Beverly sang the arias that she heard on records. Therefore, she took Beverly to audition for the great singing teacher Estelle Liebling. At first, Ms. Liebling did not want to hear Beverly sing, saying, “I don’t teach little girls. I don’t even *know* any little girls.” However, she did listen to Beverly sing an aria, and she laughed because she recognized that Beverly was imitating an Amelita Galli-Curci record that she had heard played at home. Ms. Liebling had been the voice teacher who had taught Ms. Galli-Curci to sing the aria. Of course, Ms. Liebling recognized young Beverly’s talent and became her voice teacher.³⁶

- Country music singer Faith Hill got her start the way many singers do. When Faith was a child, her mother paid her a quarter to sing in front of guests. Sometimes, Faith would get fifty cents for singing a song such as “Jesus Loves Me” at a family reunion. Later, after Faith had decided to become a professional singer, her musical experiences were not so typical. For example, as a teenager she once sang on a stage in Raleigh, Mississippi, following a tobacco-spitting contest. The contestants took turns spitting tobacco juice the greatest distance they could. Before Faith could sing, the stage had to be wiped with towels.³⁷

- Sir Thomas Beecham, the world-class conductor of classical music, once was staying at a rented house when he was disturbed by the noise made by a local boys’ band. Sir Thomas suggested that the boys practice further away, and

³⁶ Source: Bridget Paolucci, *Beverly Sells*, pp. 27-28.

³⁷ Source: Bonnie Hinman, *Faith Hill*, pp. 16, 18.

one of the boys told him, “You don’t appreciate good music.”³⁸

- Music critic Warren Zanes’ son was greedy for mother’s milk after he was born; in fact, Mr. and Mrs. Zanes referred to him as “The Milk Pig.” They even speculated for a while that their son would devour his mother the same way that many people devour a chicken dinner — they start with the breast.³⁹

- Poly Styrene, the pseudonym of Marian Elliot-Said, was a well-known British female punk rocker who started writing protest songs when she was only five years old. She explains, “Our dinner lady used to make me eat meat and I didn’t want to so I wrote a song about it.”⁴⁰

Christmas

- Mark Evanier, a blogger at <newsfromme.com>, ate frequently at the Farmers Market in Los Angeles. One day near Christmas, as a group of four young people were strolling around and singing carols, he noticed Mel Tormé, aka the Velvet Fog, sitting at a table eating an English muffin, drinking coffee, and reading *The New York Times*. Therefore, he motioned the carolers to come to him and told them that Mel Tormé was sitting at the nearby table. Because they were so young, they didn’t know who Mel Tormé was, so he explained that Mr. Tormé was a co-writer of “The Christmas Song,” which begins with “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire” After hearing this, the carolers approached

³⁸ Source: Harold Atkins and Archie Newman, *Beecham Stories*, pp. 34-5.

³⁹ Source: Warren Zanes, *Dusty in Memphis*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ Source: Leonie Cooper, “No bondage.” *The Guardian*. 8 August 2007 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2143652,00.html>>.

Mr. Tormé's table and started to sing "The Christmas Song." With a big smile, Mr. Tormé got up to sing a few lines near the end of the song. The head of the carolers had a worried expression on his face as he wondered whether this short, fat, elderly man could sing, but of course the Velvet Fog sang perfectly. Everyone sang the last line of the song together, and nearby auditors broke into spontaneous applause. The leader of the carolers told Mr. Tormé, "You know, you're not a bad singer." Of course, Mr. Tormé realized that the leader of the carolers had little idea who he was, so he said, "Well, I've actually made a few records in my day...." "Really," the leader of the carolers said. "How many?" Mr. Tormé replied, "Ninety."⁴¹

- In 1993, around Christmas, country music superstar Garth Brooks saw a man and woman carrying their one-year-old daughter and some bags of groceries. He gave them a ride to their home, during which he learned that the young couple's car had broken down, and they could not afford to have it fixed. Mr. Brooks returned in an hour to give them the keys to a 1986 Chevrolet Caprice Classic. (He gave them the car, too.) The woman thought she recognized him and asked if he was Garth Brooks, but Mr. Brooks said only that he was a fan of the popular country singer.⁴²

Clothing

- Atomic Records, an independent record store in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, gave away lots of free T-shirts to band members. Rich Menning, owner of Atomic Records, says, "In the early days, we'd give them away like candy just

⁴¹ Source: Mark Evanier, "Point of View." 9 July 1999
<<http://www.povonline.com/cols/COL245.htm>>.

⁴² Source: Laura Lee Wren, *Garth Brooks: Country Music Superstar*, p. 66.

for the thrill of maybe seeing them in a photo later on.” Giving the T-shirts away did result in a few thrills. Billy Corgan of the Smashing Pumpkins wore one for the artwork of their compilation album *Judas Iscariot*. A member of Teenage Fanclub wore one for the artwork of their “Norman 3” single. Dave Abbruzzese of Pearl Jam wore one while performing on *Saturday Night Live*. Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick wore one for their encore at a concert on Milwaukee’s lakefront. Mr. Menning, however, admits, “I’ve always figured the wearing of the Atomic t-shirt thing was more a matter of hygiene for touring bands and not so much a show of love. ... I figured the bands only wore them because it meant they could go one more day without having to stop and do their laundry.” Unfortunately, Atomic Records closed in 2009.⁴³

- Iggy Pop of Iggy and the Stooges had a talent for drawing attention to himself. One day, he admired a full-length dress that a young woman was wearing, and he convinced her to let him wear it. He ended up being arrested and taken to jail while wearing the dress, and the friends who got him his bail were shocked by what he was wearing. One friend asked, “Is that a woman’s dress?” Iggy replied, “No, this is a man’s dress.” (Iggy was wild and crazy; at his early concerts, he occasionally rolled around in broken glass, necessitating stitches. Oddly, he derived a benefit from this. When a young woman asked him if he were Iggy, he would say, “Sure.” If this didn’t convince the young woman, she would

⁴³ Source: Mehan Jayasuriya, “Requiem for a Record Store: An Interview With Atomic Records’ Rich Menning.” Popmatters.com. 11 March 2009 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/feature/70807-requiem-for-a-record-store-an-interview-with-atomic-records-rich-menn/>>.

say, “Show me your scars.” Iggy was able to use his scars as a form of ID.)⁴⁴

- While singing at a Three Choirs Festival, Astra Desmond stayed at the same hotel as composer Sir Edward Elgar. One morning at breakfast in the dining room of the hotel, Sir Edward asked her to show him her leg, which was hidden by the dining table. She did, and he looked at it and said, “No good.” Everyone was surprised by his actions, so he explained that one of the horses in a race was named “Grey Silk Stockings,” and if Ms. Desmond had been wearing grey stockings he would have taken that as a sign to bet on that horse.⁴⁵

- Some punk rockers dressed very well — in clothes they found in the garbage. Debbie Harry of Blondie once posed for a poster early in her career while wearing a zebra-stripe dress. Before it became a dress, it was a zebra-stripe pillowcase that someone had put in the garbage. Ms. Harry says, “New York has gorgeous garbage sometimes. Leather jackets, suits, and boots could be found in excellent condition.”⁴⁶

- In 1936, the always well-dressed Sir Malcolm Sargent conducted an orchestra in Australia, surprising the musicians with his impeccable suit and the red carnation in his buttonhole. During a break in the rehearsal, members of the brass section went outside, visited a street vendor, and

⁴⁴ Source: Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me*, pp. 249-250, 429.

⁴⁵ Source: Donald Brook, *Singers of Today*, p. 68.

⁴⁶ Source: Victor Bockris, *Beat Punks*, p. 151.

returned with decorations in their own buttonholes: each was sporting a red candy apple.⁴⁷

- After she started making lots of money, folk singer Joan Baez faced a dilemma. She enjoyed wearing expensive suits from such fancy places as Saks Fifth Avenue and I. Magnin, yet many of her songs were about the poor. She solved the dilemma by buying four of each outfit she liked and giving away three.⁴⁸

Comedians

- Comedian Rusty Warren talked about sex in public before “decent” women were allowed to talk about sex in public. For example, when sex researchers Masters and Johnson identified approximately 349 sex positions, Ms. Warren joked that she knew only three sex positions — but she knew them good. One of her hits was a song titled “Bounce Your Boobies,” which Air America host Randi Rhodes played occasionally. Later women comedians recognized her as the pioneer she was. Lily Tomlin requested an autographed photograph of her, and Elaine Boosler sent Ms. Warren a photograph inscribed, “Thanks for blazing the trail.”⁴⁹

- For comedian Gracie Allen, Paul Whiteman’s arranger wrote an original concert piece: “The Concerto for Index Finger.” This involved Gracie, after a big buildup by the orchestra, hitting the wrong note with her index finger a couple of times; eventually she gets it right and the entire

⁴⁷ Source: Dudley Moore, *Musical Bumps*, p. 86.

⁴⁸ Source: Roxane Orgill, *Shout, Sister, Shout!*, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Source: Gerald Nachman, *Seriously Funny*, p. 214.

orchestra cheers. Gracie performed this concerto at Carnegie Hall.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Source: George Burns, *Gracie: A Love Story*, pp. 182-184.

Chapter 2: From Competition to Education

Competition

- During the 1950s, Jamaican bar and dance-hall owners traveled throughout the United States looking for the best records to play. In these battles of the sound systems, a system owner with a good record would try to keep it secret from other system owners. Often, the system owner would either scratch the name of the producer and the title of the song off the record label or would paste a false label with a false name and a false title over the original record label.⁵¹

- Roy Henderson once sang with a small-town choral society in Yorkshire. At the end of the concert, the conductor asked what he thought of the choir. Of course, Mr. Henderson replied that it was a very good choir, and the conductor said, “Aye, an’ I don’t mind tellin’ ee that we ’ad four basses ready to taak thy part if tha’d conked out.”⁵²

Composers

- John Philip Sousa composed “The Stars and Stripes Forever” in 1896, while returning from a European tour. While he was on board ship, it seemed as if a band were playing in his head, and when he reached land, he wrote down the music the band had been playing. He felt strongly about the title — when his music publisher wanted the title to be “Stars and Stripes,” Mr. Sousa insisted that the word “Forever” remain in the title. Of course, this became his most famous composition, and it remained a part of his concerts until the end of his life. Paul Bierley, an expert on Mr. Sousa’s life and music, says, “He would have been tarred

⁵¹ Source: James Haskins, *One Love, One Heart: A History of Reggae*, pp. 68-69.

⁵² Source: Donald Brook, *Singers of Today*, pp. 122-123.

and feathered if he didn't play it. When the March King came to town, you had to hear 'The Stars and Stripes Forever.'" On March 6, 1932, Mr. Sousa conducted a concert in Reading, Pennsylvania. The last composition his band played was, as you would expect, "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Later that day, at age 77, Mr. Sousa died.⁵³

- Dan Penn and Spooner Oldham wrote a number of R&B hits of the 1960s, including "I'm Your Puppet," "Dark End of the Street," and "Sweet Inspiration." They worked hard, but their method of delivering their songs to the musicians was unusual — they wrote late until the night and early the next morning, then they left the pages on which they had written their songs on the floor for the musicians to pick up later. Mr. Penn says, "It was kinda like, take that! We worked hard, we wrote a good song, now there it is! You pick it up! Bend over!"⁵⁴

- Composer Giuseppe Verdi, composer of *La Traviata*, *Aida*, and *Otello*, was greatly loved by the Italian people. When he was old, he entered a buffet at a railroad station, and all present stood up with their hats off until he sat down. After he had finished his meal, all present stood up again and lined his path to the train with their cloaks, which Verdi stepped on as he bowed and acknowledged his countrymen's compliment.⁵⁵

- Famous bandleader and musician Tito Puente once guest-starred on *The Simpsons*. When he met Alf Clausen, who

⁵³ Source: Carmen Bredeson and Ralph Thibodeau, *Ten Great American Composers*, pp. 13, 15-16.

⁵⁴ Source: Alexis Petridis, "Soul Men." *The Guardian*. 15 June 2006 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2006/jun/15/popandrock> >.

⁵⁵ Source: Feodor Ivanovitch Chaliapine, *Pages From My Life: An Autobiography*, p. 235.

conducts the music for *The Simpsons*, Mr. Puente immediately asked, “What I want to know first is, am *I* going to tell *you* what to do or are *you* going to tell *me* what to do?” Mr. Clausen said, “Well, I’m a really good listener,” and Mr. Puente replied, “All right, *you* tell *me* what to do.”⁵⁶

- Bullies are common in English boarding schools. Edward Elgar showed up for his first day at school when a bully asked him for his name. He replied, “Edward Elgar,” but the bully snapped, “Say ‘Sir’!” So he said, “Sir Edward Elgar.” Later, after becoming a world-famous composer, he was knighted.⁵⁷

- Claude Debussy listened to the very first playing of his String Quartet, then told the musicians, “You play the movement twice as fast as I thought it should go.” He paused and let the faces of the musicians fall, then added, “But it’s so much better your way.”⁵⁸

- Arturo Toscanini respected the intention of the composers whose music he conducted. Once, a musician asked him if he wanted a crescendo at a certain point in the music. Toscanini replied, “*Brahms* wants that crescendo — not *Toscanini!*”⁵⁹

Concerts

- Cellist Pablo Casals and organist Gabriel Pierné were once supposed to do a concert at which the Dvorak Concerto for

⁵⁶ Source: Nancy Cartwright, *My Life as a 10-Year-Old Boy*, pp. 230-231.

⁵⁷ Source: Lewis C. Henry, *Humorous Anecdotes About Famous People*, pp. 155-156.

⁵⁸ Source: Charles Munch, *I am a Conductor*, p. 52.

⁵⁹ Source: David Ewen, *Famous Conductors*, p. 24.

'Cello would be played, but Mr. Casals withdrew from the concert when Mr. Pierné insulted the concerto by calling it “dirty music.” Because Mr. Casals had signed a contract to perform at the concert, he was sued, and he lost the lawsuit. Nevertheless, Mr. Casals had a lot of support from the music community for his refusal to perform with Mr. Pierné. Conductor Pierre Monteux told him, “The adagio of the Dvorak 'Cello Concerto is one of the most beautiful slow movements ever written. You were quite right in your refusal, *cher ami*.”⁶⁰

- Tenor Richard Lewis and some colleagues were going to sing at a concert in Wales. The concert committee had set the program, and when Mr. Lewis looked at it, he noticed that it was exactly the same program that they had sung there the previous year. When he inquired why they wanted the singers to perform the same songs as last year, the committee replied, “Oh, we just wanted to see if you could sing them any better!”⁶¹

- The orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera is made up — as you would expect — of highly skilled and educated musicians, and it has been for a long time. Gabriel Peyre, a violinist for the Met during the mid-1950s, remembered that the lights went out during a concert where the orchestra performed the *Semiramide* Overture. No problem. The orchestra finished the piece from memory.⁶²

Conductors

⁶⁰ Source: Doris G. Monteux, *It's All in the Music*, pp. 125-126.

⁶¹ Source: Noel Ross-Russell, *There Will I Sing*, p. 92.

⁶² Source: Mary Jane Matz, *Opera Stars in the Sun: Intimate Glimpses of Metropolitan Personalities*, p. 346.

- Meredith Willson, author and composer of *The Music Man*, once played in a symphony orchestra that used to hire itself out to anyone with money and the desire to say that he had been a guest conductor of the Philharmonic. Many of these guest conductors were not only monied and proud — they were bad. One such guest conductor used to insist on personally tuning each instrument before the concert. So he would tell the first cello to play his A string, then tell him, “Ah-ah-ah-ah, it’s juuuuust a little sharp — that’s better. There we are. Thank yo veddy much. Next!” However, the guest conductor didn’t realize that the cello section was on to him. All 10 members of the cello section, one after another, brought the exact same cello — just tuned by the guest conductor — out to the guest conductor, and each time the guest conductor had the cellist retune the cello.⁶³

- At one time, many operas were performed with many cuts so that they would end quickly; however, Arturo Toscanini wanted the operas to be performed with every note intact exactly as the composer had written them. One day, he was rehearsing the Metropolitan Opera orchestra when the musicians played the music as they were accustomed to play it — with deep cuts. Mr. Toscanini stopped them, crying, “But you do not play your parts!” The musicians stated that they were playing their parts, and when Mr. Toscanini looked at their sheet music, he said, “True, true. You play what is written — only it is not what the composer wrote. Let us open up those cuts, now, and hear the music as the composer intended it to be.”⁶⁴

⁶³ Source: Meredith Willson, *And There I Stood With My Piccolo*, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁴ Source: Rose Heylbut and Aimé Gerber, *Backstage at the Opera*, pp. 194-195.

- André Previn made his debut as a conductor at age 20 in Hollywood. At his first rehearsal, he stood in front of the orchestra, well aware of his youth, and wondering how he would be able to command the respect of the musicians in the orchestra, many of whom were his friends. He asked the oboe player for an A for the orchestra to tune up to, and he was shocked to hear an A-flat. He told the members of the orchestra, “Now everybody transpose a half-tone up.” Everybody laughed, and Maestro Previn had earned the respect of the orchestra.⁶⁵

- Even when he was an old man, conductor Arturo Toscanini was known for his rages when things did not proceed to his satisfaction at rehearsals. After Toscanini flew into a rage at a rehearsal with his last orchestra, the NBC Symphony, one of the musicians asked first trumpet Harry Glantz, who had played under Toscanini when he was conducting the New York Philharmonic, “Was he any worse in his Philharmonic days?” Mr. Glantz significantly pointed out, “He was 15 years younger.”⁶⁶

- Bruno Walter was a guest conductor with the New York Philharmonic when he was distracted by first cellist Alfred Wallenstein, who never looked at him, but instead looked at the walls or other places where Maestro Walter was not to be seen. Maestro Walter spoke later with Mr. Wallenstein and discovered that his ambition was to be a conductor. Maestro Walter replied, “I only hope you don’t have Wallenstein in front of you.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Source: Dudley Moore, *Musical Bumps*, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Source: B.H. Haggin, *Conversations With Toscanini*, p. 9.

⁶⁷ Source: Oscar Levant, *A Smattering of Ignorance*, p. 8.

- In some cities, if you become famous enough, you will be honored with a plaque on the front wall of your house. While strolling through Bergamo, Italy, conductors Gianandrea Gavazzeni and Olivero de Fabritis saw such a plaque on the front wall of the house of opera composer Gaetano Donizetti. Mr. Gavazzeni said, “I wonder what they will write on our houses.” Mr. de Fabritis answered, “FOR RENT.”⁶⁸

- Erich Leinsdorf was a competent conductor, but one fault he had was a small beat. This was a problem for ballet dancers because dancing at a fast pace left little opportunity for catching his small beat. Some of the musicians in his orchestra also thought his beat was too small. At one rehearsal, one musician — a member of a strong union — used a telescope to focus on Mr. Leinsdorf’s beat.⁶⁹

- One advantage of being a prominent conductor is being able occasionally to get advice from the prominent composer whose work you are conducting. Pierre Monteux occasionally worked with Claude Debussy, who used to stand behind him at rehearsals and sometimes shout, “Monteux, that’s a *forte*, and when I write a *forte*, I want a *forte*!”⁷⁰

- Many great conductors have conducted without a score, and many great conductors have conducted with a score. When Hans Knappertsbusch was asked why he conducted with a score, he snapped, “Because I can read music.”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Source: Stephen Tanner, *Opera Antics and Anecdotes*, p. 170.

⁶⁹ Source: Barbara Milberg Fisher, *In Balanchine’s Company: A Dancer’s Memoir*, p. 121.

⁷⁰ Source: Doris G. Monteux, *It’s All in the Music*, p. 125.

⁷¹ Source: Stephen E. Rubin, *The New Met in Profile*, p. 78.

Contracts

- Atlantic Records' Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson once combed the backwaters of New Orleans looking for musical talent. They even walked to places where white taxi drivers feared to take them. Eventually, they found Professor Longhair playing in a shack and singing old-time blues. They listened for a while, and then Mr. Ertegun told Mr. Abramson, "My God, we've discovered a primitive genius." They then approached Professor Longhair, and Mr. Ertegun introduced himself and said, "You won't believe this, but I want to record you." Professor Longhair replied, "You won't believe this, but I just signed with Mercury."⁷²

- When Enrico Caruso was under contract to the Metropolitan Opera, he was forbidden to sing elsewhere unless he had the permission of the Met. Only once did he break his contract. At a benefit for World War I soldiers, he was recognized in the audience and asked to sing "Over There," which he did without hesitation. He then went to the Metropolitan Opera to tell its General Manager, Giulio Gatti-Casazza, that he had broken his contract. Fortunately, when he left Mr. Gatti-Casazza's office, he was beaming. Why? As Mr. Caruso told his wife, "He excuse me."⁷³

Crime

- As a young man in Paris, singer Cavaliere di Candia Mario was impoverished and stayed in a cheap lodging house filled with many other people. One night, he woke up to find a man standing over him. Discovering that the man was a robber who wanted the little money he had, Mario told him, "Take

⁷² Source: Warren Zanes, *Dusty in Memphis*, pp. 56-57.

⁷³ Source: Dorothy Caruso, *Enrico Caruso: His Life and Death*, pp. 144-145.

all you can find, my friend, but please let me continue my dreams and my sleep.”⁷⁴

- Giuseppe Verdi’s publisher tried to cheat him in a small matter. This aroused Verdi’s suspicions, so he checked his accounts with the publisher for the past 20 years. The publisher was forced to give Verdi 50,000 lira in back commissions.⁷⁵

Critics

- Tommy Ramone worked long and hard to make the Ramones a success. He continually called music critics Danny Fields and Lisa Robinson to get them to come to the Ramones concerts. Because Tommy was so persistent, Danny and Lisa decided that one of them should attend a Ramones concert. Danny was covering another concert, so Lisa went. After the concert, she told Danny, “You have *got* to see this band. Every song is fabulous, and nothing is longer than 14 seconds. You will love them.” Danny went, he liked what he heard, and he offered to be the band’s manager. Johnny Ramone replied, “Well, that’s very nice. But we really need a new set of drums. Can you buy us a new set of drums?” Danny visited his mother, and due to her generosity, the Ramones got both a new set of drums and a manager.⁷⁶

- Clint Black has been a popular country music for years, and he keeps working to find ways to make good music. In 2007,

⁷⁴ Source: Henry C. Lahee, *Famous Singers of To-day and Yesterday*, p. 72.

⁷⁵ Source: Victor Borge and Robert Sherman, *My Favorite Intermissions*, p. 107.

⁷⁶ Source: Danny Fields, “Foreword” to David Fricke’s booklet accompanying the Ramones’ compilation album titled *Ramones Anthology: Hey Ho Let’s Go!*, pp. 2-3.

he was working on an album to be released in early 2008. The album would include a 2007 single titled “The Strong One” and a duet titled “You Still Get to Me” with his wife, Lisa Hartman-Black. Of course, he works hard on his music, and he has a few ways to tell whether an album will be any good. Mr. Black says, “I have to keep inventing ways to make myself make a different, albeit better or worse, record. This one happens to be very, very good, according to me. And the guys who played on it, and the record company who sells it, and ... my dad.”⁷⁷

- Joan Hammond once starred in a BBC radio performance of an opera at which she was not present. The opera was *Turandot*, and she was scheduled to sing two performances. The first performance went well, but the second performance a few days later found Ms. Hammond ill and in bed. Fortunately, the BBC was able to use the recording of Ms. Hammond’s part that they had made in recording the first performance and integrate it with the live singers in the radio studio. Ms. Hammond states, “Some kind people even thought that I had sung better on the second night!”⁷⁸

- Bruno Walter could be a very good critic as well as a very good conductor. He once saw Lotte Lehmann perform Elsa in *Lohengrin*. The next day, Ms. Lehmann waited to hear what he had to say about her performance, but he remained silent, so she asked him point blank for his opinion. He told her, “Yesterday I saw something which I don’t ever want to see in you, which doesn’t go with you at all: routine.” Ms.

⁷⁷ Source: Keith Groller, “Country’s Clint Black still works on being an even better man.” 24 October 2007
 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/news/article/50230/countrys-clint-black-still-works-on-being-an-even-better-man/>>.

⁷⁸ Source: Joan Hammond, *A Voice, A Life*, pp. 188-189.

Lehmann listened seriously to his comments, and she wrote later, “Never again did I sing Elsa with ‘routine.’”⁷⁹

- While he was head conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, Artur Rodzinski used to have members of a carefully selected committee listen to new music, then make recommendations about whether the orchestra should play that music. On one occasion, all the members of the committee except one turned thumbs down on a piece of new music. The other members of the committee asked the lone member why he wouldn’t join them in condemning the new work. He replied, “I can’t condemn it — I wrote it.”⁸⁰

- Billie Holiday, aka Lady Day, once spent five days with Maya Angelou, and part of the time she was a good guest. However, near the end of her visit, Ms. Holiday went to hear Ms. Angelou sing in a nightclub, and Lady Day told Ms. Angelou, “You’re going to be famous — but it won’t be for singing.”⁸¹

- Son House, a great blues guitarist, was also a devastating critic. He once listened to a recording of a white blues pretender performing one of his songs. Mr. House was pleased that someone had recorded one of his songs, but he said about the performance, “Those are my words, all right, but it sure ain’t my music.”⁸²

⁷⁹ Source: Lotte Lehmann, *My Many Lives*, p. 95.

⁸⁰ Source: David Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, p. 123.

⁸¹ Source: Nancy Caldwell Sorel and Edward Sorel, *First Encounters*, p. 89.

⁸² Source: Raeburn Flerlage, *Chicago Blues as Seen from the Inside*, p. 76.

Dance

- Many people don't realize this, but the moves of Mick Jagger on stage at concerts are to an extent choreographed. No, no one tells Mr. Jagger exactly what to do each moment on stage, but people such as dance choreographer Toni Basil help him be on stage for two hours without repeating the same moves over and over — and without looking choreographed. Ms. Basil does give him ideas to use, such as “For this song, be a pimp like the Harvey Keitel character in the film *Taxi Driver*.” Or she can give him ideas about where to sing a song: “On this song, go out on the ramp and stay there and sing beyond the step.” And yes, she does create some steps so that Mr. Jagger looks good while performing.⁸³

- Edward Villella once was rehearsing the *Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux* on a very small stage for a performance with the New York Philharmonic. He was comfortable dancing on the very small stage, but every time he came close to the very front of the stage, closest to the orchestra pit, a cellist there was terrified that he would fall off stage and onto him and his instrument. During a break in rehearsal, the cellist showed Mr. Villella his cello and pleaded, “Could you please not come so close to me when you dance? Please! I beg you! This is priceless! It's a Stradivarius!”⁸⁴

- Choreographer George Balanchine was known for his even temper; he declined to get upset over most things. He once presented “Sixteen Delightful Balanchine Girls” at the London Coliseum; unfortunately, at the first rehearsal he

⁸³ Source: Rose Eichenbaum, *Masters of Movement: Portraits of America's Great Choreographers*, p. 51.

⁸⁴ Source: Edward Villella, *Prodigal Son: Dancing for Balanchine in a World of Pain and Magic*, pp. 188-189.

learned that the orchestra could not play satisfactorily the modern music he had written dance steps for. No problem. The orchestra's conductor was Dennis Stoll, the son of Sir Oswald. Mr. Balanchine simply asked, "Sir Stoll! What tunes does your little boy know?" He then wrote dance steps for the new tune.⁸⁵

- Lev Ivanov, the assistant of Marius Petipa, choreographed the swan dances in *Swan Lake*. As a young man, he demonstrated remarkable musical abilities. Pianist Anton Rubinstein once played through the ballet *The Grapevine* in a rehearsal hall. Listening to the music for the first time was Mr. Ivanov. After Mr. Rubinstein had finished, Mr. Ivanov sat at the piano and played much of the music back by ear — Mr. Rubinstein was delighted and astonished.⁸⁶

Death

- Ramones bass player Dee Dee Ramone had a rough life. He started taking illegal drugs as a child, and he eventually died from a heroin overdose. (He did write some very good songs during his life, and he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame before he died.) He remembers that when he got his driver license the female police officer didn't even give him a driving test; instead, she simply gave him a driver license and told him, "Have a nice day, kid!" Years later, he talked to her in a bar. Both were drinking heavily, and according to Dee Dee, she admitted that she had given him the driver license simply because she had hoped that he

⁸⁵ Source: Merrill Ashley, *Dancing for Balanchine*, p. xi. This story is told by Clement Crisp in the volume's Foreword.

⁸⁶ Source: Ann Nugent, *Swan Lake*, p. 38.

would end his miserable life quickly in a car accident. When he left, she told him, “Boy, it’s too bad you’re still around.”⁸⁷

- When Fanny Mendelssohn, the sister of Felix, was born, her mother looked at her hands and announced that she had “Bach fugue fingers.” Sure enough, Fanny played much of Bach’s difficult piano music during her lifetime. She and Felix were close during their childhood, though they saw much less of each other during adulthood. However, Felix kept his final promise to her. He had promised to be with her on her next birthday — November 14, 1847 — and although she died on May 14, he was with her on her next birthday. Felix died on November 4, and he was quickly buried by his sister’s side in a Berlin churchyard.⁸⁸

- Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla once created a new kind of tango music by combining jazz and classical music with traditional tango music. Some people did not like the result, and Mr. Piazzolla even received death threats as a result of his new music — people threatened to kill him if he ever again wrote that kind of music. Cellist Yo-Yo Ma, however, is able to look at the positive side of this story. He exclaims, “Imagine people caring so much about music!”⁸⁹

- When Lotte Lehmann’s mother died, Lotte was devastated. However, she was scheduled to sing at an important premiere, Richard Strauss’ *Arabella*, and no one was able to take over for her. Ms. Lehmann sang the part, and afterwards she wrote, “It seemed impossible, but the great blessing was granted me of becoming for a few hours a different person,

⁸⁷ Source: Dee Dee Ramone, *Poison Heart: Surviving the Ramones*, p. 42.

⁸⁸ Source: Gloria Kamen, *Hidden Music: The Life of Fanny Mendelssohn*, pp. 2, 67.

⁸⁹ Source: Lisa A. Chippendale, *Yo-Yo Ma*, pp. 70-71.

of being able to forget for a few hours what had been taken from me.”⁹⁰

- Duke Ellington died of lung cancer, and he knew he was dying. In the last days of his life, he sent his friends his final greeting. It was a card on which was a cross. In the middle of the cross was an O. Lettered vertically on the cross was the word LOVE. Lettered horizontally on the cross was the word GOD.⁹¹

Education

- Even early in her life, Joan Jett knew that she wanted to play rock and roll. She found a guitar teacher and told him what she wanted to learn, but it didn’t work out because she was so young and inexperienced that she didn’t realize that learning to play the guitar with a teacher involved a traditional educational process that she was unwilling to go through. The guitar teacher tried to teach her to play “On Top of Old Smokey,” but Joan’s response was, “Screw this.” Instead, she got herself a “Teach Yourself To Play Guitar” book, taught herself a few chords, and then started playing along with her records by Led Zeppelin and T.Rex.⁹²

- Thomas Beecham was a world-famous conductor, and he found it useful to know how to play various musical instruments. Occasionally, a musician would say that it was impossible to produce an effect that Mr. Beecham wanted, so Mr. Beecham would take the musician’s instrument and demonstrate that such an effect was possible. Learning the

⁹⁰ Source: Lotte Lehmann, *My Many Lives*, p. 58.

⁹¹ Source: Alistair Cooke, *The Great and the Good*, p. 185.

⁹² Source: Laura Barton, “Queen of noise.” *The Guardian*. 19 November 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2213115,00.html>>.

instruments, of course, took effort. When Mr. Beecham started to learn the trombone, his neighbors protested, and so he ended up practicing in a small boat in the middle of a lake.⁹³

- When pop singer/actress Mandy Moore was a little girl, her mother got her a voice teacher, but her mother told the teacher, “If she doesn’t have any talent, tell me. I don’t want to waste your time.” In 1999, teenager Mandy got a hit with the single “Candy,” which propelled her album *So Real* into a million-copy seller in only 12 weeks. Of course, Mandy quickly became a star. She said back then, “There are people selling ‘What Mandy signed in my fifth grade yearbook’ on the Internet and that’s just scary.”⁹⁴

- Throughout his life, Arturo Toscanini studied music. When he was an old man, he was found in his bed studying the scores of Beethoven’s nine symphonies, although he had conducted the symphonies hundreds of times and had memorized the scores. When his son asked why he was studying scores that he so intimately knew, Toscanini replied, “Now that I am an old man, I want to come a little closer to the secrets of this music.”⁹⁵

- Conductor Pierre Monteux taught at a school for conductors, where a young student tried to impress him while conducting Franz Schubert’s Eighth Symphony. For 25 minutes, Mr. Monteux watched the young student wave his stick in all directions and show off with many expressions, then he told the student, “Now will you please

⁹³ Source: Thomas Beecham, *A Mingled Chime*, p. 85.

⁹⁴ Source: Beth Peters, *Pop Princesses: The Dish Behind Today’s Hottest Teen Divas*, pp. 129, 132, 139.

⁹⁵ Source: David Ewen, *Famous Conductors*, pp. 25-26.

play it again? And this time you will think of Franz Schubert — *n'est-ce pas?* — and not of yourself!”⁹⁶

- Famed conductor Sir Thomas Beecham once said to a young musician after tea, “I’m going to throw you out now.” When the young musician asked why, Sir Thomas said, “I’m going to have a look at my scores.” “But,” the young musician said, “you always conduct from memory.” Sir Thomas replied, “It is because I’m going to throw you out that I can look at my scores so that I can conduct from memory.”⁹⁷

- Conductor Arturo Toscanini could get the best out of an orchestra. Occasionally, the members of one of his orchestras would be amazed at the beauty they had created under his direction. After a rehearsal of Debussy’s *La Mer*, a violinist in the NBC Symphony said to music critic B.H. Haggin, “You can quote me on this: We come here to go to school.”⁹⁸

- Emma Calvé was impressed by the upper notes of the castrato Domenico Mustapha, and she asked him how she could produce those notes. He told her that for 10 years she must practice singing with her mouth closed. Ms. Calvé was discouraged at first, but then she began practicing in that way. After two years, she discovered her “fourth voice.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Source: Fifi Monteux, *Everyone is Someone*, p. 116.

⁹⁷ Source: Harold Atkins and Archie Newman, *Beecham Stories*, p. 56.

⁹⁸ Source: B.H. Haggin, *Conversations With Toscanini*, pp. 15, 41.

⁹⁹ Source: Jürgen Kesting, *Luciano Pavarotti: The Myth of the Tenor*, p. 65.

Chapter 3: From Fans to Media

Fans

- American-born tenor Richard Tucker greatly impressed Pietro Moranzoni, retired conductor of the Chicago Civic Opera. Sitting with theatrical guru Danny Newman, Maestro Moranzoni listened to Mr. Tucker for a while, then asked Mr. Newman, “Theesa tenor, he ees Eetalian, no?” Mr. Newman replied, “No, Maestro, he’s American.” Maestro Moranzoni listened a while longer, then he asked Mr. Newman, “Eesa poppa and mamma, they Eetalian, ah?” Mr. Newman replied that Mr. Tucker’s parents were Romanian Jews. Maestro Moranzoni listened yet a while longer, then he asked Mr. Newman yet another question, “Eesa study in Eetaly, ah?” Mr. Newman replied that Mr. Tucker had studied in New York City. At this point, Maestro Moranzoni said, “Ah donta care, eesa the best Eetalian tenor ah ever hear!” By the way, Luciano Pavarotti stated in his foreword to the book *Richard Tucker: A Biography*, by James A. Drake, that the career of Mr. Tucker definitely showed that even non-Italians could become “great *Italian* tenors!”¹⁰⁰

- John Lennon had many, many fans, including some in positions of authority. Kim Polson was a long-time fan of Mr. Lennon and the Beatles, and she lived only a block from the Dakota apartment building where Mark David Chapman murdered Mr. Lennon on Dec. 8, 1980. Four months before he died, Ms. Polson saw him in a coffee shop, so she stuck around to hear him talk to a companion. Doing this meant that she arrived two hours late for her job. Her boss was understandably irate, so she said, “Ask me why I’m late.” He

¹⁰⁰ Source: Danny Newman, *Tales of a Theatrical Guru*, pp. 136-139.

did, she explained that she had been listening to Mr. Lennon talk to a colleague, and her boss was no longer irate.¹⁰¹

- Like many, many other young girls, Lilie Ferrari had a crush on Beatle George Harrison, and like many, many other young girls, she wrote him a fan letter. Fortunately, she received a reply to her letter — from George Harrison’s mother, who happened to be a fan of Lilie’s mother, a writer of romance novels. The correspondence continued for a while, but slowed as Lilie grew up, although she continued to be one of George Harrison’s fans. Eventually, Lilie married, and her husband, Colin, was OK with her fan-adoration of George Harrison. He even signed his cards to her with “Love from George and The Other One.”¹⁰²

- The world-famous tenor Leo Slezak was a stamp collector. He once met a man who told him that he too was a stamp collector and that he could show Mr. Slezak some interesting specimens. Intrigued, Mr. Slezak took the stranger’s card and later visited him. Unfortunately, it turned out that the stranger wasn’t a stamp collector at all, but had lied as a way to get a celebrity to visit him and his family. Having trapped Mr. Slezak into visiting him, the stranger asked for free tickets to a concert and then tried to sell him insurance. After

¹⁰¹ Source: “Fans Mark Anniversary of Lennon’s Murder.” 8 December 2005

<http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20051208/ap_on_en_mu/lennon25th_3;_ylt=ApAmoLNv1FMqqD8ZicP.OzVyIqAv;_ylu=X3oDMTBiMW04NW9mBHNIYwMIJVRPUCU>.

¹⁰² Source: Lilie Ferrari, “With love from her to me.” *The Guardian*. 26 March 2007

<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2042737,00.html>>.

that experience, Mr. Slezak kept his hobby a secret from the public.¹⁰³

- Joseph Burke played piano for Jenny Lind in the United States, and he loved her singing. Afterward, whenever he was asked to comment on the performance of another soprano, he would say, “Well, I once knew a lady and her name was Jane Lind and she used to sing to me very often; since then I have never really listened to anyone else, so my opinion of others would be biased and worthless.”¹⁰⁴

- Fans treasure things that their heroes touch. Music producer Don Fleming, who worked with Alice Cooper, attended a Ramones concert where Johnny Ramone was playing so fast and furiously that he lost a couple of guitar picks. Mr. Fleming managed to get one, which he later gifted to fellow Ramones fan Joan Jett.¹⁰⁵

- Country music superstar Chet Atkins once quietly joined a group of musicians who didn’t know who he was, and he played with them for an hour, then left. As he was leaving, one of the musicians called after him, “You ain’t no Chet Atkins, but you’re pretty d*mn good.” Mr. Atkins smiled.¹⁰⁶

- Lesbians often act pretty much like heterosexual women. At a rock concert, heterosexual female fans sometimes throw underwear on stage. At concerts featuring The Indigo Girls,

¹⁰³ Source: Leo Slezak, *Song of Motley*, pp. 217ff.

¹⁰⁴ Source: Richard Hoffman, *Some Musical Recollections of Fifty Years*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰⁵ Source: Everett True, *Hey Ho Let’s Go: The Story of the Ramones*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁶ Source: Andrew Tobias, “Daily Column.” 29 December 2006 <<http://www.andrewtobias.com/newcolumns/061229.html>>. This story is retold by contributor Larry Taylor, who heard Mr. Atkins tell it.

their lesbian fans sometimes throw underwear, flowers, and telephone numbers on stage.¹⁰⁷

- The Cliks are a queer band. At one time, it was an all-female band, but their guitarist/lead singer transitioned into a man named Lucas Silveira. How do you know when you're a rock star? Mr. Silveira knew after a fan asked him to autograph her breasts. He says, "It's a true sign of success."¹⁰⁸

Food

- Tito Gobbi made his debut in Parma, Italy, whose residents are opera knowledgeable, and whose approval means a great deal. Mr. Gobbi arrived in Parma in a new car, and immediately Parma's residents arrived — to look at *him*, not the car. The proprietor of a butcher shop even told him, "You should have come here with a special voice, not a special car." When Mr. Gobbi made his Parma debut, at first he thought that the audience was rejecting him, as he did not get applause in the usual places. However, the applause came in great waves at the end of his performance, and he learned later that the audience had refrained from applauding his very high-quality singing earlier simply because they were waiting to see if he could sustain the very high quality for the entire performance. The next day, Mr. Gobbi passed the butcher shop on his way to a restaurant, and soon after he entered the restaurant, the butcher also entered the restaurant, carrying a huge steak. The butcher yelled, "Where is the special baritone with the special car and the special voice? Here is a special sirloin for him!" The

¹⁰⁷ Source: Laura Jimenez, *Hear Me OUT!: A Dose of Lesbian Humor for the Whole Human Race*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁸ Source: Shauna Swartz, "Rockin' Out With the Cliks." 13 June 2007 <<http://www.afterellen.com/music/2007/6/cliks>>.

restaurant cooked the steak for him, and Mr. Gobbi enjoyed both the special steak and the special approval of the butcher and the other residents of Parma.¹⁰⁹

- When Emma Calvé was studying singing as a young student in Paris, she was very thin — so thin that she shocked the burly butcher whose market was next door. The butcher believed that she needed to eat more meat to gain weight, but he realized that young Emma and her mother had little money. Because he recognized Emma’s great talent as a singer, he told her mother, “To prove to you how much confidence I have in your daughter’s future, I’ll open an account for you at this shop. You can pay me when she makes her *début*.” Emma imagined that later, after she had become a famous singer, the butcher listened to her in the audience and told the people sitting near him, “Do you see that wonderful singer? It is entirely due to me that she is in such fine form!”¹¹⁰

- Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson knew how to ask for the things she and the people around her needed. She once was scheduled to perform a concert in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and a sponsor there had promised to feed her and her driver and her accompanist before the concert. All of them were hungry when they arrived for the meal, and Mahalia was astonished to see a table set with such things as punch, tuna salad, and cheese dip. Mahalia told her hostess, “Wait a minute, lady, I got to sing tonight. This is air — give me some food!” Her hostess fixed a real meal with real food for

¹⁰⁹ Source: Danny Newman, *Tales of a Theatrical Guru*, pp. 198-200.

¹¹⁰ Source: Emma Calvé, *My Life*, pp. 29-30.

Mahalia and the people traveling with her — they all ate well and Mahalia sang well that night.¹¹¹

- When opera singer Ernestine Schumann-Heink was a little girl, her pregnant mother developed a craving for Swiss cheese but did not have the money to pay for it. Little Ernestine went to the grocery shop owner and worked out a deal with her. If she gave Ernestine the Swiss cheese, Ernestine would sing and dance the Czardas for her. The deal was accepted, and the grocery shop owner was so pleased with the Czardas that she gave Ernestine an apple as a tip.¹¹²

- Mid-1950s Metropolitan Opera conductor Fausto Cleva made *gnocchi*, a particular kind of Italian homemade noodles. At one of his dinners, Mr. Cleva was delighted to hear fellow conductor Arturo Toscanini praise his *gnocchi*: “Bravo, Cleva!” Mr. Cleva joked, “Don’t say that, Maestro, or I will tell people that you praised me by saying ‘Bravo.’” Mr. Toscanini joked back, “Only for the noodles, Cleva.”¹¹³

Free Speech

- Many people opposed the United States’ invasion of Iraq, while many people supported the invasion. On March 10, 2003, the lead singer of the popular country-music group Dixie Chicks (who originated in Texas), Natalie Maines, told a crowd at a London concert, “I’m ashamed that the President of the United States [George W. Bush] is from Texas.” In the United States, many fans and radio stations disagreed. Many radio stations stopped playing their songs,

¹¹¹ Source: Roxanne Orgill, *Mahalia: A Life in Gospel Music*, p. 63.

¹¹² Source: Mary Lawton, *Schumann-Heink: The Last of the Titans*, pp. 33, 35-36.

¹¹³ Source: Mary Jane Matz, *Opera Stars in the Sun: Intimate Glimpses of Metropolitan Personalities*, p. 104.

and some of their albums were even burned in a manner similar to book burnings. However, many people widely and enthusiastically supported the Dixie Chicks, who went on tour in the United States, selling out every venue. Ms. Maines explained that the Dixie Chicks supported free speech, and she even encouraged anyone who wanted to, to boo them. At a concert, she told the audience, “We believe in freedom of speech. So let’s stop right now for 15 seconds of booing.” The audience didn’t boo; it cheered. The Dixie Chicks are brave in their support of free speech. At a concert in Dallas, Texas, they received a death threat. They went on stage and performed anyway.¹¹⁴

- During the McCarthy era, free speech was frowned upon — unless your free speech consisted of saying things no more controversial than this: “I love my mother.” African-American entertainer Paul Robeson used his First Amendment right of free speech to point out that at the time the Soviet Union was the only country that had made racial discrimination illegal, and as a result haters of free speech called him a Communist. Mr. Robeson was supposed to sing in Peerskill, New York, but he was not allowed to; instead, a mob called him “Commie” and shouted racial epithets at him. In addition, they beat up his crewmembers and destroyed his sound equipment. Eventually, his concert was rescheduled, and he sang — protected by 1,500 members of a New York union. Mr. Robeson sang well, but the protection by union members was necessary. A mob had gathered and threw rocks at cars as the audience left the concert. Folksinger Pete Seeger attended the concert, and several rocks hit his car. He picked up three rocks and

¹¹⁴ Source: Roger Ebert, “Shut Up and Sing.” *Chicago Sun-Times*. 19 October 2007
<<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071018/REVIEWS/71019002>>.

cemented them to his fireplace as a memento of the concert.¹¹⁵

- The record album cover for Nirvana’s *Nevermind* features a 4-month-old baby named Spencer Eldon swimming underwater. The baby’s penis is clearly visible, a fact that made the record company uncomfortable enough to want this particular piece of anatomy airbrushed out. Nirvana composer/singer Kurt Cobain suggested instead that the record company let the photograph remain untouched and instead put this warning label on the cover: “If you’re offended by this, you must be a closet pedophile.” The record company let the photograph remain untouched. By the way, Spencer’s father joked about his son, “He did what David Bowie and the Rolling Stones could never do: full frontal nudity.” (And when Spencer received a platinum record award due to the album’s success, his father hung it in Spencer’s room.)¹¹⁶

- Country musicians are known for their use of free speech — on both sides of the issues. For example, in 1992 Toby Keith wrote an American fighting song with the lyric “we’ll put a boot in your *ss, it’s the American way.” In contrast, Natalie Maines, lead singer of the Dixie Chicks, a band from Texas, considered Mr. Keith’s song “ignorant,” opposed President George W. Bush, and even said in a concert in London in 2003 shortly before the second war in Iraq, “Just so you know, we’re ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas.” Mr. Keith responded to the remark by performing in front of a huge faked photograph that purported to show Ms. Maines embracing Saddam Hussein.

¹¹⁵ Source: Anne E. Neimark, *There Ain’t Nobody Can Sing Like Me*, pp. 88-89.

¹¹⁶ Source: Jim Berkenstadt and Charles Cross, *Nevermind*, pp. 105-106.

Ms. Maines responded to T.K.'s action by wearing a T-shirt at a music-awards ceremony — the T-shirt displayed the initials “F.U.T.K.”¹¹⁷

- Because of the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act, which became law in 2005, the Federal Communications Commission can now levy fines of up to \$325,000 per violation. What kind of violation? The violations include offending viewers because of indecency. This law has led to very strange things as a result of fear of very heavy fines. For example, British singer Amy Winehouse has on her arm a tattoo of a topless woman. Before she performed on the 2008 televised Grammy Awards, the producers asked her to cover up the nipples of the tattoo. Ms. Winehouse used a ballpoint pen to draw a bra on the tattoo. (Something tells me that Ms. Winehouse was simply being polite and that she does not regard female nipples as indecent.)¹¹⁸

- The punk group the Sex Pistols sang their song “God Save the Queen” during Queen Elizabeth II’s Jubilee Year, which celebrated her first 25 years as Queen. The song contained the depressing refrain of “no future” and rhymed “God save our Queen” with “fascist regime.” It was popular, selling 150,000 copies during its first five days of release and reaching the number 2 spot in the charts. However,

¹¹⁷ Source: Sasha Frere-Jones, “Making Nice: The Dixie Chicks’ New Album.” *The New Yorker*. 24 April 2006
<http://www.newyorker.com/critics/music/articles/060501crmu_music>.

¹¹⁸ Source: Mark Morford, “New York condoms, Texas dildos.” *San Francisco Gate*. 20 February 2008 <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2008/02/20/notes022008.DTL>>.

newspapers declined to list the song, deciding instead to simply leave the number 2 spot in the charts blank.¹¹⁹

Friends

- Music is important to folksingers. Woody Guthrie once arrived for a visit with his friend Pete Seeger. Seeing Woody’s guitar, Pete unslung his banjo, and before they said “Hello” and shook hands, they had played “Doggy Split a Rye Straw,” “Fifteen Miles from Birmingham,” “Going Down This Road Feeling Bad,” “Sally Goodin,” and “Worried Man Blues.”¹²⁰

- Italian baritone Giuseppe De Luca was well liked by his colleagues, although he once had a problem with them because of gambling. Mr. Caruso taught Mr. De Luca how to play poker, and Mr. De Luca soon became so good and won so consistently that Mr. Caruso — and everyone else — declined to play with him.¹²¹

Gays and Lesbians

- The sister of country music superstar Garth Brooks is gay, and Mr. Brooks made a pro-gay statement in his song “We Shall Be Free.” Actually, it might be more accurate to say that he made a pro-love statement in that song, which celebrates love, whether it is between people of different races or people of the same sex. His sister helped educate Mr. Brooks, who is heterosexual, simply by being who she was. Mr. Brooks says, “The longer you live with it, the more

¹¹⁹ Source: Marc Aronson, *Art Attack: A Short Cultural History of the Avant-Garde*, pp. 152-153.

¹²⁰ Source: Anne E. Neimark, *There Ain’t Nobody Can Sing Like Me*, p. 74.

¹²¹ Source: Nigel Douglas, *Legendary Voices*, p. 60.

you realize that it's just another form of people loving each other."¹²²

- Lesbian singer/songwriter kd lang, aka Kathryn Dawn Lang, aka Kathy Lang, created a lot of buzz in the 1990s. In 1992, she even appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in a photograph that showed her sitting in a barber chair while supermodel Cindy Crawford shaved her. A male journalist once asked Ms. Lang what was going through her mind while she was posing for the photograph. She replied, "Pretty much what would have been going through yours in the same circumstances, I imagine."¹²³

Gigs

- Early in their career, the Ramones played in London on July 4, 1976. Some cool kids who called themselves The Clash hung around during a sound check before the concert and talked to the members of the band, mentioning that they played music, too, but weren't good enough to play in public. Johnny Ramone told them, "Are you kidding? I hope you're coming tonight. We're lousy. We can't play. If you wait until you can play, you'll be too old to get up there. We stink, really. But it's great." (Of course, this is a great example of punk rock's DIY — Do It Yourself — attitude.) The concert made headlines. A tabloid used the headline "Glue Sniff Shocker" because one Ramones' song was titled "Now I Wanna Sniff Some Glue." This amused bass player

¹²² Source: Laura Lee Wren, *Garth Brooks: Country Music Superstar*, pp. 58-59.

¹²³ Source: Robert Sandall, "The second coming of kd Lang." *The Sunday Times*. 13 January 2008
<http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/music/article3159573.ece>.

Dee Dee Ramone, who said, “I hope they really don’t think we sniff glue. I quit when I was eight.”¹²⁴

- Choreographer Toni Basil decided to get into show business at an early age. Her father was orchestra leader Louis Basil. One day, when she was very young, Toni and her mother walked to the Chicago Theater, where her father had a gig. Lots of autograph hunters were outside the theater, hoping to see her father, and when they saw Toni and her mother, they respectfully got out of their way. Toni says that it was like the parting of the Red Sea. Toni immediately thought to herself, “If this is show business, then I want to be a part of it.”¹²⁵

- Rockers in Muslim countries sometimes have problems other musicians don’t have. Pakistani rocker Salman Ahmad once was playing rock music at a gig, when suddenly Islamic fundamentalists ran in and smashed his guitar and drum set. Later, Mr. Ahmad commented, “I thought rock musicians were supposed to break their own instruments.”¹²⁶

Good Deeds

- After Nirvana released the best-selling album *Nevermind*, the band played a concert and signed autographs at a small Seattle record store called Beehive. This “meet-and-greet” was done at the request of the band’s record company, which may surprise some Nirvana lead singer Kurt Cobain fans

¹²⁴ Source: Danny Fields, “Foreword” to David Fricke’s booklet accompanying the Ramones’ compilation album titled *Ramones Anthology: Hey Ho Let’s Go!*, p. 6.

¹²⁵ Source: Rose Eichenbaum, *Masters of Movement: Portraits of America’s Great Choreographers*, pp. 50-51.

¹²⁶ Source: Omar Sacirbey, “The ‘Bono’ of the Muslim World.” 21 January 2006
<http://www.beliefnet.com/story/183/story_18350_1.html>.

because Mr. Cobain was not known to kowtow to record company requests. It turned out that Mr. Cobain had a secret motive for wanting to go to Beehive — he wanted to do a favor for a friend. He had with him five copies of his friend’s music fanzine that he wanted to sell to Beehive for \$2 a copy so the fanzine could be sold at the record shop. Usually, such fanzines are sold on consignment, meaning the creator of the fanzine could stop by once in a while to see if any copies had been sold; if a copy had been sold, the creator could pick up some money for that copy. However, Mr. Cobain was insistent that he be paid for the fanzines immediately so he could give the money to his friend. Eventually, the manager agreed, and when Mr. Cobain left the record store, he had \$10 to give to his friend. (By the way, *Nevermind* became a multi-million seller.)¹²⁷

- Good things can happen because of celebrities. Singer Avril Lavigne once wore a Home Hardware T-shirt on television — when she was growing up, her local Home Hardware outlet had sponsored her hockey team. Many, many fans saw her on television and requested similar T-shirts from the Home Hardware in Napolee, Canada, where she had grown up. The Napolee Home Hardware outlet sold 20,000 T-shirts and donated money to some of Avril’s favorite charities. Later, she wore a T-shirt from an elementary school in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, in her music video for “Sk8er Boi.” The school sold many, many T-shirts and used the profits to buy new computers. And Avril’s drummer, Matthew Brann, supports the Durham chapter of Autism Chapter Ontario. He helps bring

¹²⁷ Source: Jim Berkenstadt and Charles Cross, *Nevermind*, pp. 143-145.

awareness to the organization by displaying its logo on his drums at concerts.¹²⁸

- In 1931, tenor Joseph Benton, aka Giuseppe Bentonelli, went to Switzerland, visited the Longine watch factory, and bought a Rolex wristwatch before they were famous. He took good care of the watch and was proud of it. After 20 years, the watch needed major repairs because of a worn-out hairspring. The American branch of the Longine Company didn't have the necessary parts, so they sent it to Switzerland, where it received a complete makeover. The cost to Mr. Benton: Nothing. In his autobiography, Mr. Benton writes, "It is through treatment like that that the Swiss have maintained their reputation for integrity and honesty in business throughout the centuries. Would that other people were as honest and their handiwork as genuine as those who made my Rolex watch!"¹²⁹

- When Emma Calvé first traveled to Paris to get singing lessons in preparation for an operatic career, she sat by an attentive elderly gentleman on top of a stagecoach. Unfortunately, the elderly gentleman was a little too attentive, for when she fell asleep, he put his arm around her waist. This awakened Ms. Calvé, who slapped the elderly gentleman with such force that everyone in the stagecoach realized what had happened. The stagecoach stopped, voices were raised in discussion and argument, and a young man gave Ms. Calvé his seat inside the stagecoach and took her seat by the elderly gentleman on top of the stagecoach.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Source: Yvonne Ventresca, *Avril Lavigne*, pp. 40-42, 45, 79.

¹²⁹ Source: Joseph Benton, *Oklahoma Tenor: Musical Memories of Giuseppe Bentonelli*, pp. 108-109.

¹³⁰ Source: Emma Calvé, *My Life*, pp. 25-26.

- In Nashville, Tennessee, a group of musicians was playing at the airport. They were playing Johnny Cash’s “Walk the Line” when Mr. Cash, carrying a garment bag, walked into the airport. Of course, Mr. Cash recognized the song and the musicians recognized Mr. Cash, who walked up to the microphone, and joined in on the singing of the last part of the song. The audience of about six people gave an enthusiastic ovation, and Mr. Cash smiled, then picked up his garment bag and headed toward the security check-in.¹³¹
- When Marian Anderson was young, she showed great talent as a singer, but of course she needed special training to develop her talent. Her church raised money so she could be trained for a year by famous voice coach Giuseppe Boghetti. He was so impressed by her talent that he coached her a second year for free. Ms. Anderson became a world-famous singer and the first African American to sing at the Metropolitan Opera.¹³²
- Paul Robeson was a kind man. When Yousuf Karsh, the famed photographer, took his portrait, Mr. Robeson sang some spirituals for him. Mr. Karsh was so impressed by their beauty that he said that he would like for his wife to hear them. Mr. Robeson called her and sang for her over the telephone.¹³³

Husbands and Wives

¹³¹ Source: Andrew Tobias, “Daily Column.” 29 December 2006 <<http://www.andrewtobias.com/newcolumns/061229.html>>. This story was told by Tobias contributor Jim Busek.

¹³² Source: Carlotta Hacker, *Great African Americans in The Arts*, pp. 17, 21.

¹³³ Source: Yousuf Karsh, *Karsh: A Sixty-Year Retrospective*, p. 151.

- Luciano Pavarotti was amazed that Joan Sutherland could sing Amina at full voice during a dress rehearsal in the afternoon, then sing Violetta at full voice during a performance that evening without showing any fatigue. When he confessed to Ms. Sutherland that in contrast to her he felt tired, she replied that he was not properly controlling his diaphragm. Therefore, Mr. Pavarotti told Ms. Sutherland's husband, "Excuse me, but I am going to put my hand on your wife's stomach." She then demonstrated to him the proper control of the diaphragm.¹³⁴

- Country singers Tim McGraw and Faith Hill became attracted to each other while performing in their Spontaneous Combustion tour in 1996. Right before going on stage, Tim proposed to Faith, who didn't answer right away. But when Tim returned to his dressing room after singing on stage, he found Faith's answer written on his dressing room mirror: "YES!"¹³⁵

- Giacomo Puccini enjoyed hunting pheasant. While living in the country so he could work on composing a new opera, he used to hire someone to go to his composing room and play the music he had written so that his wife would think that he was working on the opera when he was really out hunting.¹³⁶

- Sir Rudolf Bing once sat near Mr. and Mrs. Richard Strauss as they attended a performance of Johann Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*. Sir Rudolf was astonished when he heard Mrs.

¹³⁴ Source: Jürgen Kesting, *Luciano Pavarotti: The Myth of the Tenor*, pp. 113-114.

¹³⁵ Source: Bonnie Hinman, *Faith Hill*, p. 37.

¹³⁶ Source: David W. Barber, *When the Fat Lady Sings*, p. 132.

Strauss tell her husband, “There, you see, Richard. *That* is music.” Mr. Strauss did not reply.¹³⁷

Illnesses and Injuries

- Joey Ramone, lead singer of the Ramones, suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder, making him do repetitive and unnecessary actions. Before leaving an elevator, he would sometimes get in and get out of it 10 times before finally exiting for good. In Spain, he once got off the curb, then on again, so many times that a driver who was waiting for him to cross the street finally drove by him, clipping him slightly. On one tour, the Ramones flew to England, and after they landed in London, Joey said that he needed to go back to his apartment in New York so he could exit through his door one more time. (He wasn’t able to do it, of course — he had to stay on tour.) Suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder did have one benefit. His friend Joan Tarshis would visit him, and he would hug her before she left. However, he would have to hug her more than once before his obsessive-compulsive disorder would allow him to let her leave. Ms. Tarshis says, “I’d be halfway down the hall, and he’d call me over and I’d go back for another hug. This’d go on three or four more times, every time.”¹³⁸

- After a skiing accident, cellist Pablo Casals called a press conference to announce that he had broken his arm and therefore would be forced to cancel several concerts. The reporters were surprised to see Mr. Casals in a good mood and asked why he was so happy instead of being upset by his accident. Mr. Casals explained, “Because now I don’t have

¹³⁷ Source: Sir Rudolf Bing, *A Knight at the Opera*, p. 86.

¹³⁸ Source: Monte A. Melnick and Frank Meyer, *On the Road with the Ramones*, pp. 152-155.

to practice.” (Chances are excellent that this anecdote is apocryphal.)¹³⁹

- Nineteenth-century pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk had a bad habit of biting his nails until he almost had no nails. In fact, a friend of his, fellow pianist Richard Hoffman, remembers looking at the piano keyboard after Mr. Gottschalk had played and seeing that the keys were covered with blood.¹⁴⁰

Improvising

- Jazz musicians strive for perfection in their improvising; in fact, this striving is what Oscar Peterson calls the “will to perfection,” which he explains by saying that “it requires you to collect all your senses, emotions, physical strength, and mental power, and focus them entirely onto the performance, with utter dedication, every time you play. And if that is scary, it is also uniquely exciting ... you never get rid of it. Nor do you want to, for you come to believe that if you get it *all* right, you will be capable of virtually anything.” As important as perfection is, however, one thing is more important than perfection: the striving toward perfection. Coleman Hawkins recorded a brilliant solo in the *Freedom Now Suite*, but as brilliant as the solo was, a squeak appeared in it. The squeak could easily have been edited out for the album, but Mr. Hawkins insisted, “Don’t splice that! When

¹³⁹ Source: Lou Marinoff, Ph.D., *Plato, Not Prozac!*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁴⁰ Source: Richard Hoffman, *Some Musical Recollections of Fifty Years*, p. 133.

it's all perfect in a piece like this, there's something very wrong."¹⁴¹

- While Patricia McBride and Edward Villella were dancing the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* to Prokofiev's music as performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony, the conductor set the tempo way too slow, forcing Ms. McBride and Mr. Villella to dance ahead of the music and to finish dancing before the music stopped. What to do? Ms. McBride started to bourrée off stage on pointe, but Mr. Villella grabbed her wrist and pleaded, "Patty, just stay with me." The two then improvised — well — a few minutes of dance.¹⁴²

Language

- Actor Will Smith started out as a well-respected Philadelphia rapper. He wrote his own lyrics, and sometimes he used profanity in those lyrics. However, one day his grandmother read a page of lyrics he had written, and across the top of the page she wrote, "Dear Willard, intelligent people do not use these words to express themselves." After that experience, he wrote lyrics without profanity.¹⁴³

- Choreographer George Balanchine's English was not perfect. He once played a game of Charades in which he gave the clues for "composer" and "three syllables." The contestants guessed Beethoven, Bellini, Hindemith, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, and Vivaldi. Unfortunately,

¹⁴¹ Source: Nat Hentoff, "Max Roach: The Constitution of a Jazzman." *The Village Voice*. 4 September 2007
<<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0736,hentoff,77705,2.html>>.

¹⁴² Source: Edward Villella, *Prodigal Son: Dancing for Balanchine in a World of Pain and Magic*, pp. 187-188.

¹⁴³ Source: Michael A. Schuman, *Will Smith: "I Like Blending a Message with Comedy,"* p. 21.

none of these was the correct answer, which Mr. Balanchine said was “Mo-tz-art.”¹⁴⁴

- Daniel Purcell — the brother of the composer Henry Purcell — was known for his puns. One day, he was challenged to make a pun. He asked, “On what subject?” The reply came back, “The King.” Mr. Purcell responded, “The King is not a subject.”¹⁴⁵

Media

- Punk rocker Patti Smith occasionally acted badly. Her second album, *Radio Ethiopia*, received mainly mediocre and bad reviews, and that put her on the defensive. At a press conference in London, a music reporter asked her why tickets for her tour weren’t selling. She screamed, “F**k you! You’re a rag! Get out of here!” She also took food from a plate and threw it. Next she was asked, “Which Beatle newsreel are you acting now?” She responded by climbing on a table and kicking away any objects that were on it. She then told everyone, “I’m the field marshal of rock ’n’ roll! I’m f**king declaring war! My guitar is my machine gun!” One of the journalists present was Julie Burchill, a young fan of Ms. Smith’s. She was horrified and in tears because of Ms. Smith’s actions. Later, Ms. Burchill wrote, “For a two-year-old it would have been a very impressive performance; from the Queen of Rock and Roll it was like watching God j*rk off.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Source: Barbara Milberg Fisher, *In Balanchine’s Company: A Dancer’s Memoir*, pp. 118-119.

¹⁴⁵ Source: Nick Harris, *I Wish I’d Said That!*, p. 45.

¹⁴⁶ Source: Victor Bockris and Roberta Bayley, *Patti Smith: An Unauthorized Biography*, pp. 166-167.

- In 1991, Tim Perlich wanted to interview Canadian jazz musician Oscar Peterson for a cover story in *Now Magazine*; however, Mr. Peterson checked him out first, telephoning him to ask, “What’s your interest in talking to me?” Mr. Perlich replied that he was impressed that Mr. Peterson had kept on playing and recording with the piano although many other jazz artists had long ago switched to electronic keyboards. This was good enough for Mr. Perlich to be invited to Mr. Peterson’s home for an interview, which was held in the basement den. Mr. Perlich expected to see many awards there and he was shocked to see many synthesizers instead. Mr. Peterson told him, “Shhhhhh! A man needs his toys.”¹⁴⁷

- Not every reporter knows much about music, even when assigned to write an article about musicians. When the Beatles first came to the United States, an American reporter asked what they most wanted to see. The Beatles replied, “Muddy Waters and Bo Diddley.” Surprised by the answer, the reporter asked, “Where’s that?”¹⁴⁸

- Sometimes a singer-songwriter will have a long wait between albums. When a reporter for MTV asked Tom Waits why six years had passed before he recorded a new album, he replied, “I was stuck in traffic.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Source: Tim Perlich, “Oscar Peterson, 1925-2007.” *Now Magazine*. 4 January 2008
<<http://www.nowtoronto.com/music/story.cfm?content=161198>>.

¹⁴⁸ Source: Charles K. Cowdery, *Blues Legends*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁹ Source: Cath Carroll, *Tom Waits*, p. 50.

Chapter 4: From Mishaps to Parties

Mishaps

- Spinal Tap’s biggest year was probably 1984, when actor/filmmaker Rob Reiner made a documentary about them titled *This is Spinal Tap*. In 2007, Mr. Reiner was able to reunite the members of the band so they could perform for Live Earth, a series of concerts designed to alert people about the danger of global warming. He found Nigel Tufnel raising miniature horses, with dreams of finding a race of miniature jockeys to ride them. He found David St. Hubbins running a clinic for hip-hop music — and for colonics. And he found Derek Smalls treating his Internet addiction with rehab. Viewers of the documentary and close friends of the band probably realize that Spinal Tap are not Mensa candidates — Mr. Tufnel personally plans to address global warming by taking off his jacket. However, the kinds of things the band does have been done by other bands. Getting lost backstage and not being able to find the stage so they can perform? That happened to Tom Petty and Heartbreakers.¹⁵⁰

- At Sheffield, Thomas Beecham produced one of the operas in Wagner’s Ring cycle. Unfortunately, as Brünnhilde was singing her farewell song, the curtain came down. Mr. Beecham pressed the bell-button repeatedly, and the curtain went up again, only to come down again almost immediately. Again, Mr. Beecham pressed the bell-button repeatedly, and this time the curtain stayed up until the end of the opera. Afterward, he learned that the individual in charge of the curtain had fallen asleep. When he woke up, it was long after 11 p.m. Since in his experience, no

¹⁵⁰ Source: Dan Glaister, “Rock’n’roll to the rescue.” *The Guardian*. 6 July 2007 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2119963,00.html>>.

performance had ever lasted that long, he concluded he had slept through it and so he let the curtain down. Hearing Mr. Beecham's bell-button, he had raised the curtain again, but then he remembered that his wife was expecting him for dinner at 11 p.m., and that she would be angry. This made him think that a mistake had been made somewhere and so he had dropped the curtain again.¹⁵¹

- Jessica Simpson endured a few mishaps early in her career. At her first recording session, she burped really loudly into a microphone, causing a producer to worry that some equipment had exploded. While opening for Ricky Martin at Madison Square Garden in New York City, she hit a high note and split her pants. Quickly, she disappeared backstage where her mother stripped off her jeans so that Jessica could wear them. Jessica was embarrassed, but she returned to the stage, saying, "I don't know who saw my booty, but I'm still gonna sing." This story does have a happy ending: Jessica's split pants were sold and raised \$8,000 for Rosie O'Donnell's charity for children.¹⁵²

- Mishaps did occur when Bob Hope was entertaining the troops. While on a plane headed for Iceland, Les Brown, who provided music for Mr. Hope's USO tours, learned that his drummer wasn't on board, so the plane turned around to get the drummer. Once back in the air, Mr. Brown discovered that the sax player wasn't on board, so the plane turned around to get the sax player. This time, the pilot of the plane wanted a head count before taking off again, but Mr. Brown said, "That won't be necessary. Get out your

¹⁵¹ Source: Thomas Beecham, *A Mingled Chime*, pp. 204-205.

¹⁵² Source: Beth Peters, *Pop Princesses: The Dish Behind Today's Hottest Teen Divas*, pp. 76-77.

instruments, fellas, and strike a chord. I'll know then if anyone is missing."¹⁵³

- Very early in her career, opera singer Ernestine Schumann-Heink sometimes sang at the Cathedral in Dresden. Unfortunately, she made a disastrous error when the King and Queen visited the Cathedral. Ms. Schumann-Heink was so busy looking at them that she missed her cue, then became so nervous that she not only sang the wrong notes but also sang them off pitch. (The 77-year-old conductor, Karl Krebs, even hit her with his baton and whispered to her, "You d*mn little goose — you are ruining my whole Mass!")¹⁵⁴

- The Ramones' double live DVD *Ramones: It's Alive 1974-1996* contains much material on the seminal punk band, including material that shows the band at its best — and at its worst. For example, sometimes lead singer Joey Ramone is unable to say all the words of a song or to pronounce all the words clearly either because the band is playing too fast or because he is exhausted or ill. One interesting moment is when a woman attempts to use sign language to communicate the lyrics of "Warthog" (sung by Dee Dee) but gives up and shrugs because the only word she can understand is "warthog."¹⁵⁵

- A performance on tour of the opera *Othello* was a disaster. The instruments, traveling on another train, were late in

¹⁵³ Source: Richard Grudens, *The Spirit of Bob Hope; One Hundred Years, One Million Laughs*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁴ Source: Mary Lawton, *Schumann-Heink: The Last of the Titans*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁵ Source: Jeremy Estes, "Review of *Ramones: It's Alive 1974-1996*." 16 November 2007 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/music/reviews/50784/ramones-its-alive-1974-1996-dvd>>.

arriving and so the performance did not even begin until 10 p.m. Even then, much of the orchestra was missing, and the musicians arrived one by one after locating their instruments. By 1:30 a.m., tenor Leo Slezak, playing Othello, was exhausted, so he whispered to Madame Rappold, playing Desdemona, to please go kill herself. Madame Rappold obligingly climbed the steps, lay down on the bed, squeaked, and “died” without Othello anywhere near her.¹⁵⁶

- German contralto Ernestine Schumann-Heink once wore a train on a formal gown while singing in a concert. Unfortunately, while walking on stage, her train caught on a steel tack and pulled loose. She responded well to a situation that would have embarrassed many singers. Ms. Schumann-Heink simply picked up the train, draped it across the piano, and said to the audience, “Vell! Unt vhat doo you teenk off dot!” This endeared her to the audience even before she had sung a note.¹⁵⁷

- Opera singer Helen Traubel suffered from stage fright, as did violinist Jascha Heifetz. Before performing at a New York concert, they compared notes. Mr. Heifetz asked Ms. Traubel to feel his hands. She did — they were like ice. She told him, “I can’t have you feel the inside of my throat, but it’s the same way.” Ms. Traubel was relieved to learn about Mr. Heifetz’ stage fright — she had thought that she was the only scaredy-cat in the music business.¹⁵⁸

- At one point, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson owned an apartment building in which she lived. However, she ran into

¹⁵⁶ Source: Leo Slezak, *Song of Motley*, pp. 51-53.

¹⁵⁷ Source: Joseph Benton, *Oklahoma Tenor: Musical Memories of Giuseppe Bentonelli*, pp. 35-36.

¹⁵⁸ Source: Helen Traubel, *St. Louis Woman*, p. 266.

a problem. She liked to sing whenever the spirit moved her, and the spirit moved her to sing loudly. Unfortunately, the spirit did not always move her tenants to listen to her. She once wrote, “Even though they were my tenants, the people still came flying upstairs to scold me when I sang loud to myself.”¹⁵⁹

- Bluesman Robert Lockwood once went into a town to look for himself. He played in Elaine, Arkansas, then went back home, where he heard that fellow bluesman Robert Johnson was in Elaine. Mr. Lockwood wanted to see Mr. Johnson, so he went back to Elaine, where he discovered that a mistake had been made. A man had seen Mr. Lockwood playing and had thought that Mr. Lockwood was Mr. Johnson.¹⁶⁰

- In Texas, country music singer Willie Nelson was pulled over by a state highway patrolman for speeding. When Mr. Nelson opened the door and got out, smoke got out with him — lots of smoke. (Willie does not identify the kind of smoke in his book *The Facts of Life and Other Dirty Jokes*, but we can guess.) The highway patrolman coughed, then said, “Willie, when are you gonna grow up?”¹⁶¹

Money

- Pat Sullivan and Rachel Cox are part of the sextet who make up the Brooklyn indie hard-touring band Oakley Hall. Pat’s Irish grandfather loved music, and he listened to it 18 hours a day — from the time he woke up to the time he went to sleep. He even had speakers rigged up in the trees and all

¹⁵⁹ Source: Barbara Kramer, *Mahalia Jackson: The Voice of Gospel and Civil Rights*, p. 75.

¹⁶⁰ Source: Peter Guralnick, *Searching for Robert Johnson*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁶¹ Source: Willie Nelson, *The Facts of Life and Other Dirty Jokes*, pp. 33-34.

over his property so he could listen to Irish music all day long. Pat, of course, spent time with him, and today he says, “It’s weird — now when I hear the Clancy Brothers, I know every single word and I have not listened to them in 25 or 30 years.” The members of Oakley Hall are not wealthy in financial terms, and perhaps they never will be wealthy in financial terms; however, Mr. Sullivan recognizes that different kinds of currency exist. For example, he and Ms. Cox well remember playing in Ireland. Mr. Sullivan says, “We played at a small fishing community called Myrtleville in Cork, and it was just this bed-and-breakfast where we played to a packed house by a fireplace, and everyone had Guinness Stout, and we had all these old fishermen just enraptured.” (And Ms. Cox remembers the snooker tables.) Halfway through their set, Mr. Sullivan realized that “it is *music* that has brought me here to this spot, to this moment.”¹⁶²

- Raeburn Flerlage once took some photographs of white musician Mike Bloomfield playing guitar and harmonica (aka blues harp) while sitting on a sidewalk in Chicago with a tin cup in front of him. Mr. Bloomfield came from a very wealthy family, and he didn’t need to busk on the streets, but he was emulating his blues heroes and doing what they did to survive. These blues musicians were worthy of emulation — not just for their music, but also for their kindness. Blues photographer Raeburn Flerlage, a white man, once met Leadbelly and told him that he owned every record Leadbelly had ever recorded for RCA, with the exception of

¹⁶² Source: Ryan Henriquez, “Flux as Inspiration: An Interview with Oakley Hall.” Popmatters.com. 14 February 2008
 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/features/article/52866/flux-as-inspiration-an-interview-with-oakley-hall/>>.

“TB Blues.” Leadbelly immediately played “TB Blues” on his 12-string guitar for Raeburn.¹⁶³

- When he was 18 years old, Italian baritone Giuseppe De Luca got a job recording arias onto cylinders used in a primitive kind of jukebox that played music whenever the customer inserted a small coin. This job was not quite ethical, but Mr. De Luca took it because his family needed the money. What was unethical about it? The arias he recorded were attributed not to him, but to the world’s greatest baritones. (As tenor and author Nigel Douglas points out, this may have been good training for Mr. De Luca’s later performances as Giacomo Puccini’s confidence man, *Gianni Schicchi*.)¹⁶⁴

- Pianist Richard Goode was careless about money. Students would pay him with a check, and Mr. Goode would tell them to put the check in a drawer that was filled with uncashed checks — some of them years old. Children believed that Mr. Goode was a very rich man because when they visited him they saw money lying on the floor. As you would expect, Mr. Goode was also careless in his housekeeping during his bachelor years. A student was present when a cabinet fell off a kitchen wall, resulting in broken crockery everywhere. When the student returned for a lesson two weeks later, the mess had not yet been cleaned up.¹⁶⁵

- Woody Guthrie taught fellow folksinger Pete Seeger the art of busking — getting money for playing music in a bar. Here is what you do: Go into a bar with your guitar strapped

¹⁶³ Source: Raeburn Flerlage, *Chicago Blues as Seen from the Inside*, pp. xiii, 8.

¹⁶⁴ Source: Nigel Douglas, *Legendary Voices*, p. 60.

¹⁶⁵ Source: David Blum, *Quintet: Five Journeys Toward Musical Fulfillment*, pp. 136-137.

ostentatiously on your back. Buy a beer for a nickel and sip it slowly. Soon, someone will ask about the guitar, “Can you play that thing?” Say, not too eagerly, “Maybe, a little.” A little later, someone will say, “Kid, I’ve got a quarter for you if you pick us a tune.” “Then,” Mr. Guthrie would conclude, “you play your best song.” Mr. Seeger did a lot of busking during his traveling days.¹⁶⁶

- African-American bluesmen Robert Johnson and Johnny Shines once played in a little town in Illinois where the residents had never seen black skin before. They stayed a couple of nights, but stopped when they realized that people were paying admission not to hear the music but to see the color of their skin. Mr. Shines says, “We didn’t want to be part of a freak show. The guy thought we wanted more money, but we just wanted to get the h*ll out of there. After all, a man have pride. What is it to sell his pride for a few pennies?”¹⁶⁷

- While playing jazz in Chicago, Fats Waller was approached by men who stuck a gun in his ribs and forced him into a limousine. Soon, Fats found out what the men wanted. Gangster Al Capone was having a birthday, and Fats was a gift for the boss. At the party, Fats performed for three days, playing request after request. With each request came a handful of paper money, and at the end of the three days, when he was finally driven away from the party, he was several thousand dollars richer.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Source: Edward Helmore, “Bruce blew my cover.” *The Guardian*. 1 February 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2003121,00.html>>.

¹⁶⁷ Source: Peter Guralnick, *Searching for Robert Johnson*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁸ Source: Nancy Caldwell Sorel and Edward Sorel, *First Encounters*, p. 19.

- In 1951, the BBC offered Sir Thomas Beecham the extremely low fee of £15 for the right to broadcast his arrangement of Michael Balfe's operetta *Bohemian Girl*. Insulted, Sir Thomas wrote to the BBC, "That arrangement has involved the thought of 25 years ... at no time and nowhere in the course of a long career have I received such a preposterously inadequate, thoroughly imprudent, and magnificently inept proposal from anyone." The BBC made a second, much higher offer.¹⁶⁹

- By age 20, Will Smith was a millionaire because of his rapping talent — he had not started to act yet. Like many young people, the way he spent money was fast and furious. He even owned six cars, even though his father told him, "Why do you need six cars when you have only one butt?" (Soon, Mr. Smith got into trouble with the IRS. Later, he got out of trouble with the IRS, but for a while, he says, "It was weird because I had six cars and couldn't buy gas.")¹⁷⁰

- Blues singer Bessie Smith's talent made her a lot of money. When she recorded with a young musician named Louis Armstrong, he received his very first \$100 bill, for which he needed change. Ms. Smith lifted her skirt, under which she was wearing a carpenter's apron with many pockets. In the pockets were stuffed wadded-up dollar bills of many denominations.¹⁷¹

- Tenor Tito Schipa was known for his very clear diction, which made him unpopular with the sellers of libretti in Italy. Because Mr. Schipa sang so clearly, members of the

¹⁶⁹ Source: Barry Hewlett-Davies, *A Night at the Opera*, p. 74.

¹⁷⁰ Source: Michael A. Schuman, *Will Smith: "I Like Blending a Message with Comedy,"* pp. 41-42.

¹⁷¹ Source: John and Kirsten Miller, *Legends 2*, p. 96.

audience did not need to buy a libretto on nights when he sang, thus cutting the profits of the sellers of libretti.¹⁷²

- Jazz saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker once had a chance to play in Duke Ellington’s band — until he mentioned how much money he wanted to be paid. Shocked, Mr. Ellington told him, “Bird, for that much dough I’d work for you.”¹⁷³

- Graffiti are often witty. Back when millions of dollars were in dispute during the divorce of Paul McCarthy from Heather Mills, this graffito appeared on a wall outside Abbey Road studios: “Marry me, Paul. I have my own money.”¹⁷⁴

Names

- This should be obvious, but even rock gods have families and personal lives. Suzi Quatro’s name at birth was Susan Kay Quatro. The name “Quatro” actually came from when her paternal grandfather immigrated to the United States, and an American immigration official changed her grandfather’s name — Quattrocchi — because he thought it was too hard to pronounce. Suzi’s parents were an Italian father and a Hungarian mother, and Suzi says, “Mom always said to me that they were ‘paprika and garlic — boy, oh boy, what a mix!’” Suzi performed her rock and roll while wearing a leather jumpsuit — a sexy outfit that helped many teenaged boys get through puberty — and her mother once

¹⁷² Source: Helena Matheopoulos, *The Great Tenors From Caruso to the Present*, p. 28.

¹⁷³ Source: Ron Frankl, *Charlie Parker*, p. 67.

¹⁷⁴ Source: Alexis Petridis, ‘Nepotism? I’m all for it.’ *The Guardian*. 15 November 2006
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,1947847,00.html>>.

told her that her music was “very nice, but do you have to stand with your legs so far apart?”¹⁷⁵

- The name “Ramones” comes from a pseudonym that Paul McCarthy used while traveling: Paul Ramone. Of course, there’s more to the story of the name than that. Founding member Tommy Ramone points out, “It sounded tough. Like the streets of the city. Yet it also sounded ridiculous, like a joke. It was like something absurd yet dangerous. It really struck you.” Tommy was instrumental in creating the Ramones’ uniform — torn blue jeans, tennis shoes, T-shirts, leather jackets — and he insisted that each band member change his professional name to Ramone. By the way, Tommy was born Tamas Erdelyi in Hungary. He once watched a movie in Hungary about the “decadent west.” It featured a soundtrack with “animalistic” music from America, and Tomas fell in love with rock ‘n’ roll.¹⁷⁶

- Eleanora Fagan was born on April 7, 1915, in Baltimore, Maryland. Later, her mother, Sadie Fagan, married her father, Clarence Holiday, and Eleanora Fagan became Eleanora Holiday. As a youngster, she admired film star Billie Dove, and so she began calling herself Billie Holiday. As a young woman, she started singing and waiting tables at clubs where the other women would pick up their tips with their thighs. Billie declined to do that, and the other women taunted, “Look at her — she thinks she’s a lady.” Billie then became known as “Lady.” After Billie became a well-known jazz singer, saxophonist Lester Young shortened her last

¹⁷⁵ Source: Stuart Jeffries, “I’m kinda different.” *The Guardian*. 2 August 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2139679,00.html>>.

¹⁷⁶ Source: Steven Lee Beeber, *The Heebie-Jeebies at CBGB’s: A Secret History of Jewish Punk*, pp. 104, 107, 118-119.

name, using only its last syllable, and so Eleanora Fagan, aka Billie Holiday, became known as “Lady Day.”¹⁷⁷

- When the teenaged Lou Reed started riding a motorcycle with a guitar on his back and a sneer on his face, his parents forced him to undergo a series of shock treatments before he started his senior year in high school. The shock treatments erased many memories and strengthened his desire to shock his parents. He once brought home a nice Jewish girl whom his parents loved. A year later, the nice Jewish girl was still his girlfriend, but her new name was “Miss Trash,” and she dressed like her name. Mr. Reed, of course, was a founding member of the Velvet Underground and recorded the music he wanted to record, not the music he thought would be popular.¹⁷⁸

- Rap musicians sometimes “sample” the works of other musicians — that is, they will take bits and pieces from someone else’s song and use it in their own music. For a while, this was not a problem, but when rap became big business, suddenly the musicians whose works had been sampled wanted a cut of the profits and so rap musicians had to get permission or clearance to sample the works of other musicians. Biz Markie found this out the hard way. He had sampled Gilbert O’Sullivan’s “Alone Again, Naturally,” without permission, and a court ordered his company to remove the album with the offending sample from the marketplace. Fortunately, Mr. Markie bounced back. A few

¹⁷⁷ Source: Bud Kliment, *Billie Holiday*, pp. 21, 24, 40-41, 56.

¹⁷⁸ Source: Steven Lee Beeber, *The Heebie-Jeebies at CBGB’s: A Secret History of Jewish Punk*, pp. 13-14.

years later, he released another, legally unoffending album, which he wittily titled *All Samples Cleared*.¹⁷⁹

- Jazz saxophonist Charlie Parker was known by the nicknames “Yardbird” and “Bird.” One story about how he got the name was that he enjoyed eating chicken, a bird that ran loose in many yards and was therefore called a yardbird. Mr. Parker would look at a menu, see chicken listed, then say, “Give me some of that yardbird.” Another story is that the car that he and some other musicians were riding in hit and killed a chicken. Mr. Parker picked up the chicken and kept it, and once they had reached their destination he cooked and ate it. The other musicians teased him about this and called him “Yardbird,” which was later often shortened to “Bird.”¹⁸⁰

- Comedian Steve Allen was a talented musician. While attending college, he would enter an unoccupied room with a piano, start playing, then look up 20 minutes later and see 104 people in the room listening to him play. He was a serious jazz musician, but since he didn’t think critics took him seriously, he sometimes recorded under a pseudonym. After he recorded an album of boogie-woogie music using the pseudonym Buck Hammer, a critic in *Downbeat* wrote that he had a bright future.¹⁸¹

- When country musician Amy Grant started writing her book titled *Mosaic: Pieces of My Life So Far*, she did not want to think about so great an undertaking as writing an entire book. Therefore, she told Vince Gill, her husband, “You can’t call it a book. We’ll call it anything but a book.”

¹⁷⁹ Source: K. Maurice Jones, *Say It Loud: The Story of Rap Music*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁸⁰ Source: Ron Frankl, *Charlie Parker*, pp. 53-54.

¹⁸¹ Source: Gerald Nachman, *Seriously Funny*, pp. 158, 173.

Therefore, for a while, they called it a flier. When she had gotten some pages written, they called it a pamphlet, and when she had written more pages, they called it a booklet. Eventually, she published the manuscript — an entire book.¹⁸²

- Comic singer Anna Russell was so famous that the street where she lived had its name changed to Anna Russell Way. When Ms. Russell was older and people had begun to think that perhaps she was a little deaf or a little senile, a woman asked Ms. Russell her name. Of course, she answered, “Anna Russell.” Then the woman asked Ms. Russell where she lived. Of course, Ms. Russell answered, “Anna Russell Way.” The woman then said, “No, no, no, dear — that is your name. Where do you live?”¹⁸³

- Stephen Foster decided to write a song, and he asked his brother to name a Southern river that he could write the song about. His brother suggested the Pee-dee River, but Mr. Foster rejected his suggestion and instead wrote the lyric “Way Down Upon the Swanee River.” (The title of the song is “Old Folks at Home.”) Advertising copywriter Edward S. Jordan writes that Mr. Foster’s brother knew geography, but Mr. Foster knew rhythm.¹⁸⁴

- Frank Zappa and Gail, his wife, gave their children odd names: Dweezil, Ahmet, Diva, and Moon Unit. Actually,

¹⁸² Source: Liz Garrigan, “Off the Record.” *Nashville Scene*. 18 October 2007

<http://www.nashvillescene.com/Stories/Cover_Story/2007/10/18/Off_the_Record/>.

¹⁸³ Source: “Goodbye Anna Russell.” 19 October 2006

<<http://www.abc.net.au/southeastnsw/stories/s1768984.htm?backyard>>

¹⁸⁴ Source: Edward S. Jordan, *The Inside Story of Adam and Eve*, p. 81.

Dweezil's legal name is not Dweezil — it's Ian. When Dweezil was born, a nurse at the hospital refused to write the name "Dweezil" on the birth certificate.¹⁸⁵

- Many rappers have interesting names. L.L. Cool J's name is short for Ladies Love Cool James. KRS-One's name is short for Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone. And the "Kane" in Big Daddy Kane's name is short for King Asiatic Nobody's Equal.¹⁸⁶
- At Birdland, emcee Pee Wee Marquette showed a lot of originality in introducing the musicians. For example, Mr. Marquette introduced one-of-a-kind jazz musician Thelonious Monk as "The Onliest Monk."¹⁸⁷
- Composer Jean Madeleine Schneitzhoeffner's name was so consistently mangled by the French that he had cards made up that stated, "Schneitzhoeffner (pronounced Bertrand)."¹⁸⁸

Old Age

- Professional violinists seldom like to give up their instrument even after their playing days are over. Josef Gingold met Joseph Szigeti after he had retired, and he noticed that Mr. Szigeti was carrying a violin case with him,

¹⁸⁵ Source: Tony Sclafani, "Honor Thy Father: An Interview with Dweezil Zappa." 6 December 2007
<<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/features/article/50272/honor-thy-father-an-interview-with-dweezil-zappa/>>.

¹⁸⁶ Source: K. Maurice Jones, *Say It Loud: The Story of Rap Music*, pp. 57, 60, and 81.

¹⁸⁷ Source: Nat Hentoff, "Remembering Fred W. McDarrah, 1926-2007." *The Village Voice*. 13 November 2007
<<http://www.villagevoice.com/nyclife/0746,hentoff,78362,15.html>>.

¹⁸⁸ Source: David W. Barber, *Tutus, Tights, and Tiptoes: Ballet History as It Ought to be Taught*, pp. 44-45.

so he asked him if he was still playing. Unfortunately, Mr. Szigeti had gotten so old that the violin strings cut his fingers, but he explained, “Since I was six years old, I’ve been traveling with the violin. It feels so nice to hold it.”¹⁸⁹

- Pierre Monteux once conducted pianist Artur Schnabel and the San Francisco Symphony in Beethoven’s Fourth Concerto. All went excellently, and at the end both Mr. Monteux and Mr. Schnabel were weeping. Mr. Schnabel took Mr. Monteux’s hands in his own and whispered to him, “We are two old fools who love music very much, Monteux.” Too overcome with emotion to say anything, Mr. Monteux nodded in agreement.¹⁹⁰

Opera

- Although Jon Vickers had made a name for himself as a tenor in Canada, his career was not advancing internationally, and so he decided to get out of opera on June 30, 1956, unless he had made a major breakthrough by that time. In the meantime, he went to New York to work with coach and accompanist Leo Taubman, who frequently invited colleagues to listen to Mr. Vickers sing. This led to a few good offers to sing in New York Town Hall, in Philadelphia, and in New Orleans. More importantly, on May 9, 1956, Mr. Vickers received a telegram inviting him to sing in Covent Garden — this telegram saved him from a too-early retirement. (Ironically, because of previous engagements, he was unable to go to Covent Garden immediately, as the telegram requested. Instead, he went to

¹⁸⁹ Source: David Blum, *Quintet: Five Journeys Toward Musical Fulfillment*, p. 109.

¹⁹⁰ Source: Fifi Monteux, *Everyone is Someone*, pp. 72-73.

Covent Garden a month later, sang two auditions, and was offered a contract.)¹⁹¹

- Rutland Barrington, despite being a not particularly good singer, created many comedy roles in Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas. During the opening night for *Patience*, one of Sir William Schwenck Gilbert's friends said to him, "Barrington's in good voice. He's singing in tune." "Yes," replied Sir William, "opening night nerves."¹⁹²
- Among the many debts that we owe to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is that he inspired Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky. When Tchaikovsky was about 10 years old, he saw a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; the opera so impressed him that he decided to devote his life to music.¹⁹³
- When he was general manager of Covent Garden, Henry Higgins worried that the orchestra would drown out the voice of Irish tenor John McCormack. Mr. McCormack's reply is a classic: "Then make your d*mned orchestra play softer."¹⁹⁴
- For a while, the Met had two African-American sopranos: Martina Arroyo and Leontyne Price. One day at the Met, Ms. Arroyo was mistaken for Ms. Price. She replied, "I'm the other one, honey."¹⁹⁵
- The Italians are serious about opera. In 1876, Giacomo Puccini walked a long distance — nearly 50 miles one way

¹⁹¹ Source: Opera Magazine, Ltd., *Tenors in Opera*, p. 83.

¹⁹² Source: Barry Hewlett-Davies, *A Night at the Opera*, p. 65.

¹⁹³ Source: Ann Nugent, *Swan Lake*, pp. 24-26.

¹⁹⁴ Source: Nigel Douglas, *More Legendary Voices*, pp. 135-136.

¹⁹⁵ Source: Sir Rudolf Bing, *A Knight at the Opera*, p. 120.

— with some friends to hear the opera *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi.¹⁹⁶

Parties

- Elsa Maxwell once held a party at which she invited modernists such as Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger, and Igor Stravinsky, as well as traditionalists such as Anton Rubinstein and Jascha Heifetz. At first, the two groups stayed apart, and the traditionalists declined to perform with the modernists. However, the traditionalists listened to the music of the modernists, reluctantly at first then with growing admiration, and at the end of the night members of the two groups hugged each other and swore to be friends eternally.¹⁹⁷

- Jazz pianist Herbie Hancock calls himself a frustrated techie because he loves to fix things. While he was attending a late-night party, he noticed that a telephone socket was broken, so he crawled under a table and fixed it. Puzzled, a guest asked, “Why is the telephone man here in the middle of the night?” Another guest replied, “That’s not the telephone man; that’s Herbie Hancock.”¹⁹⁸

- As an opera singer, soprano Helen Traubel had to take care of her voice. When she sent out invitations for a party, the invitations requested, “IF YOU HAVE A COLD, PLEASE STAY HOME.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Source: David W. Barber, *When the Fat Lady Sings*, p. 129.

¹⁹⁷ Source: Grace Moore, *You’re Only Human Once*, pp. 71-72.

¹⁹⁸ Source: Interview by Laura Barnett, “Portrait of the artist: Herbie Hancock, jazz pianist.” *The Guardian*. 6 November 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2205864,00.html>>.

¹⁹⁹ Source: Helen Traubel, *St. Louis Woman*, pp. 39-40.

Chapter 5: From Practical Jokes to Work

Practical Jokes

- After Dee Dee Ramone left the Ramones, he started another band and toured throughout Europe. One day, Chris, his guitarist, passed out after drinking too much, providing an opportunity for a practical joke. Chase, Dee Dee's drummer, used Wite-Out and a black Magic Marker to make up Chris's face like that of Kiss vocalist/guitar player Paul Stanley, who while on-stage had a white face with a black star over his right eye. (Chris was a good sport, especially at first, although perhaps he was not so good a sport after realizing that the Magic Marker was *permanent*.)²⁰⁰
- Basso Luigi Lablache, a large man, once stayed at the same hotel as General Tom Thumb, a little person. A celebrity-hunter knocked on Lablache's door, hoping to see Tom Thumb. Discovering the celebrity-hunter's mission, Lablache identified himself as Tom Thumb. Of course, the celebrity-hunter was astonished, saying, "But you were much smaller when I saw you on the stage yesterday." Lablache agreed that that was true: "Yes, that is how I have to appear, but when I get home to my own rooms I let myself out and enjoy myself."²⁰¹
- When opera singer Enrico Caruso was made Honorary Captain of the New York Police Force, he asked the Police Commissioner if he could now arrest people. The Commissioner replied that he could, and Mr. Caruso said, "I must go to the Metropolitan right away. I will play a funny

²⁰⁰ Source: Dee Dee Ramone, *Legend of a Rock Star: A Memoir*, p. 141.

²⁰¹ Source: Henry C. Lahee, *Famous Singers of To-day and Yesterday*, pp. 68-69.

on Mr. Gatti.” (Mr. Gatti was Giulio Gatti-Casazza, General Manager of the Metropolitan Opera.)²⁰²

- At a recital, tenor Richard Lewis once gave an encore in which he sang the “Oliver Cromwell” song (folk text; set by Benjamin Britten). After singing the line “If you want any more, you can sing it yourself,” he disappeared.²⁰³

Practice

- As you would expect, cellist Mstislav Leopoldovich Rostropovich took music, including practicing music, seriously. One day, Olga, his daughter, was supposed to be practicing the cello, but thinking that her father had left their house, she decided to read instead. Big mistake. Her father was present. Hearing that she was not practicing, he stormed in, grabbed her cello and started chasing her, threatening to kill her with it and ordering her to stop running. (She decided not to stop running.) Outside of their house, they ran into Dmitri Shostakovich, who convinced Mr. Rostropovich that his daughter did not deserve to die. (Presumably, she practiced assiduously after this experience.)²⁰⁴

- Muggsy Spanier left his trumpet one evening at a nightclub. The next morning, he needed it, so he went to the nightclub to pick it up. There he found Earl Hines, the father of jazz piano, practicing. But instead of practicing jazz or blues piano, he was playing the classics: Mozart and Beethoven piano concertos. Mr. Spanier was surprised, but

²⁰² Source: Dorothy Caruso, *Enrico Caruso: His Life and Death*, p. 67.

²⁰³ Source: Noel Ross-Russell, *There Will I Sing*, p. 91.

²⁰⁴ Source: Steven Isserlis, ‘He is a superman.’ *The Guardian*. 15 March 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2034094,00.html>>.

Mr. Hines simply smiled and told him, “Just keeping the fingers loose.”²⁰⁵

- Reality can be fabulous — you never know what you will see. World-renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma once got a flat tire while traveling on Germany’s speedy Autobahn. After calling for help, he practiced his cello along the side of the Autobahn to help get ready for a concert that night in Frankfurt. Mr. Ma says about the passing motorists, “People couldn’t believe what they were seeing!”²⁰⁶

Prejudice

- Good musicians can do some very bad things. Early in his career, Elvis Costello performed at the Agora Club in Columbus, Ohio. Following the performance, he drank with rock veteran Stephen Stills and promptly made an *ss out of himself, infuriating Mr. Stills. Mr. Costello called James Brown a “jive-ass n*gger” and Ray Charles “nothing but an ignorant blind singer.” Lots of bad publicity resulted, of course, but the great Ray Charles was forgiving although he still made his opinion of Mr. Costello’s remarks known, saying, “Anyone could get drunk at least once in his life. Drunken talk isn’t meant to be printed in the paper, and people should judge Mr. Costello by his songs rather than his stupid bar talk.” Ironically, Mr. Costello had a few months earlier sung at a Rock Against Racism concert.²⁰⁷

- When soprano Beverly Sills married Peter Greenough, she faced prejudice because of her religion. Her new relatives shunned her because she was Jewish, and her Jewish relatives shunned her because she had married someone who

²⁰⁵ Source: Alistair Cooke, *The Great and the Good*, p. 180.

²⁰⁶ Source: Lisa A. Chippendale, *Yo-Yo Ma*, pp. 36-37.

²⁰⁷ Source: David Sheppard, *Elvis Costello*, pp. 22-24.

was not Jewish. Ms. Sills decided to have a party for an old friend, and she sent out invitations for 40 people, most of whom accepted. She then hired a caterer and musicians and bought flowers. On the evening of the party, only two of the 40 people whom she had invited showed up.²⁰⁸

- When Gustav Mahler was conductor of the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, anti-Semites made fun of his prominent nose, which they called Jewish. Tiring of the anti-Semitism, Mr. Mahler eventually left Berlin and began working in Vienna. Because of Mr. Mahler's talent as a conductor and as a composer, Berlin music lovers wanted him back, and they soon wrote him that conditions in Berlin had changed. Mr. Mahler wrote back, "Conditions may have changed, but my nose is still the same."²⁰⁹

- In 1942, music researcher Alan Lomax became very aware of prejudice in the South. Mr. Lomax, in a conversation with another white man who happened to be the Sheriff of Tunica County, referred to African-American blues musician Man House as "Mister." The sheriff was not amused. A little later, Mr. Lomax, who was now suspected of being an "outside agitator," was informed that it would be a very good idea for him to leave Tunica County. He did.²¹⁰

- Jazz singer Billie Holiday was light skinned. During the Jim Crow days, while she was performing with the Count Basie Orchestra at the Fox Theater in Detroit, the theater's management worried that patrons might think that Ms.

²⁰⁸ Source: Bridget Paolucci, *Beverly Sells*, p. 47.

²⁰⁹ Source: S. Felix Mendelsohn, *Let Laughter Ring*, p. 38.

²¹⁰ Source: Charles K. Cowdery, *Blues Legends*, p. 29.

Holiday was white and that the Count Basie Orchestra was integrated, so they insisted that she wear dark makeup.²¹¹

Problem-Solving

- Mahalia Jackson knew what was right for her kind of music, and she knew how to get what was right for her kind of music. Ed Sullivan often had African-American entertainers on his TV variety show, even at a time when some businesses were leery about advertising on shows with African-Americans. That makes him one of the good guys. However, he wanted Ms. Jackson to sing a gospel song with accompaniment by a choir and an orchestra. Ms. Jackson wanted to be accompanied by only a piano and an organ. Therefore, she barged into Mr. Sullivan's dressing room before the show started. Mr. Sullivan was in his underpants, but she told him, "Don't worry about your shorts. I'm Mahalia Jackson, and I just came to tell you I don't want all those horns blowin' behind me when I sing. All I want is my piano and my organ and my own way of singing." Ms. Jackson got what she wanted.²¹²

- Early in their careers, before making it really big, the four members of the vocal group 98 Degrees decided that they would like to sing the national anthem at a Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team. They sent in a demo tape, but they were told that singers were already signed up for the national anthem for the rest of the season. However, the members of 98 Degrees decided to take action on their own. They went down to Dodger Stadium on a workday and sang outside the stadium on the sidewalk. Many people stopped and listened to them, including many members of the Dodger

²¹¹ Source: Bud Kliment, *Billie Holiday*, p. 60.

²¹² Source: Barbara Kramer, *Mahalia Jackson: The Voice of Gospel and Civil Rights*, p. 60.

organization. Eventually, the booking executive for the Dodgers came out to talk to them, and because of their talent, she offered them their choice of a few games at which to sing the national anthem. Ohio boys all, the members of 98 Degrees choose to sing at a game between the Dodgers and the Cincinnati Reds.²¹³

- The musicians who make up the music group They Might Be Giants — John Linnell and John Flansburgh — occasionally create engaging oddities of music. For example, on their 2007 album *The Else* appears a song titled “Contrecoup,” the lyrics of which contain the words “contrecoup” (which means an injury that is caused by a secondary blow), “limerent” (which means intensely and romantically desiring another person), and “craniosophic” (which means having a comprehensive knowledge of skulls). Why would They Might Be Giants write a song with lyrics that contain those three particular words? Because lexicologist Erin McKean, editor in chief of the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, wanted them to. She is afraid that these words will vanish because of disuse, and to prevent that from happening she wants creative people to begin using these words.²¹⁴

- Mahalia Jackson was active in the civil rights movement, singing often to raise money for the cause. She also was occasionally able to get involved in integrating audiences who had come to hear her sing. At a Baptist church in Corpus Christi, Texas, Mahalia saw that her audience consisted of

²¹³ Source: Tim O’Shei, *98°*, pp. 28-30.

²¹⁴ Source: Len Righi, “They Might Be Giants opt for something else.” 28 November 2007
 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/news/article/51442/they-might-be-giants-opt-for-something-else/>>. This article originally appeared in *The Morning Call* (Allentown, PA).

both black people and white people — and that the two groups of people were segregated. Blacks were sitting in the balcony and in the back of the main floor, and whites were sitting in the front of the main floor. Mahalia told the audience, “Some of you people in the balcony might want to come on down here in front — got some seats down here. And any of you folks rather sit back a little from the singing, feel free to take any seat that’s vacated.” Some people changed seats, and Mahalia started singing to an integrated audience.²¹⁵

- All too often a rock band will have a stellar first album followed by a mediocre second album — the result of putting the band’s best material on the first album. How to solve this problem? Johnny Ramone of the Ramones knew how: “We already had 30 to 35 songs, and we recorded them in the chronological order that we wrote them. I didn’t want the second album to be a letdown by picking through the best songs for the first one and using the lesser songs for the second album.” Fortunately, the Ramones’ material was strong enough that both their first and second albums are stellar.²¹⁶

- Lucy Lawless, the actress who played the title role in the TV series *Xena: Warrior Princess*, is also a singer and problem-solver. In January of 2007, she performed at a sold-out concert in the Roxy Theater in Los Angeles. Unfortunately, she was plagued by a bad sound system for her first two songs, so she asked her fans to turn around and face the sound booth. Then Ms. Lawless told the people in the sound booth that these people “want to hear me.” The

²¹⁵ Source: Roxanne Orgill, *Mahalia: A Life in Gospel Music*, p. 61.

²¹⁶ Source: Nicholas Rombes, *Ramones*, pp. 71-72.

sound problem was quickly fixed — no one wants to face 500 angry *Xena* fans!²¹⁷

- The Rolling Stones occasionally go on worldwide tours, for which they warm up by playing at a small venue. In 1981, at a nightclub in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Stones played in front of 275 fans instead of their usual many thousands. Of course, many more fans showed up than could get inside the nightclub, meaning that police also showed up en masse. Fortunately, the police handled the situation well. They simply opened the doors of the nightclub so that the Stones' music could be heard, and the fans danced rather than rioted.²¹⁸

- Bluegrass vocalist Rhonda Vincent keeps talented musicians around her, including learned drummer James Stroud. Often, she likes a lighter sound for the drums, one that sometimes involves drumming on cardboard boxes with brushes. Mr. Stroud continued in that vein in order to get a light percussive sound: He used Pizza Hut boxes. Ms. Vincent says, "James checked out all their pizza boxes for the right tone — small, medium and large [pizza boxes]. He chose the medium. And, no, it was not deep-dish."²¹⁹

- At one time, songs were expected to be short and radio DJs would not play long songs. The Righteous Brothers' great song "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" was 3 minutes and 45 seconds long, but Phil Spector insisted that the label on

²¹⁷ Source: Christie Keith, "Xena and Gabrielle Still Going Strong." 21 January 2007 <<http://www.afterellen.com/node/4575>>.

²¹⁸ Source: Stuart A. Kallen, *The Rolling Stones*, p. 72.

²¹⁹ Source: Walter Tunis, "Rhonda Vincent knows she has a good thing going." McClatchy Newspapers. 15 January 2008 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/news/article/53114/rhonda-vincent-knows-she-has-a-good-thing-going/>>.

the single inaccurately say that the single was 3 minutes and 5 seconds long because he was afraid that DJs would not play the single if they knew how long it actually was.²²⁰

- In the Broadway musical *Red, Hot, and Blue!*, Ethel Merman was supposed to sing the lyric, “Here I sit above the town in my pet pailletted gown” — paillettes are long, narrow spangles. She wanted to wear a pailletted gown while singing the song, but the producer protested that a pailletted gown would cost \$1,000. Ms. Merman replied, “No gown, no song.” The producer paid for the dress.²²¹

- Very early in his career, Russian bass Feodor Chaliapine knew a chorus singer named Sessin, who used a remarkable means to keep from going hungry. Whenever he was low on food and had no money to buy any, he found himself a fiancée, and he would eat with her and her family, and sometimes even borrow money from her family. Oddly, Sessin never seemed to marry any of his fiancées.²²²

- Working-class people are often good problem-solvers. While investigating the Berlin punk music scene for *High Times* magazine, journalist Victor Bockris slept late following a night of partying. The hotel maids wanted to clean his room, but they couldn’t while he was sleeping, so to wake him up, outside his room they turned on six vacuum cleaners. This solved their problem very quickly.²²³

²²⁰ Source: Everett True, *Hey Ho Let’s Go: The Story of the Ramones*, p. 56.

²²¹ Source: Roxane Orgill, *Shout, Sister, Shout!*, p. 45.

²²² Source: Feodor Ivanovitch Chaliapine, *Pages From My Life: An Autobiography*, pp. 126-127.

²²³ Source: Victor Bockris, *Beat Punks*, p. 249.

- Conductor Serge Koussevitzky wanted to be the first to conduct Ravel's *Bolero* in America, and he managed to do so although two other conductors were supposed to give the piece at the same time, although in other cities. Mr. Koussevitzky made sure that he was first to conduct the piece by starting a few minutes early.²²⁴
- French showgirl Mistinguett could not sing well, so she compensated by doing other things. Once when she was singing, a man in the audience yelled, "Higher," so Mistinguett lifted her skirt up and asked, "How much higher do you want me to go?" The theater manager was pleased by her action and gave her a raise.²²⁵
- Publicity stunts can solve the problem of how to draw attention to a particular product. Marvel Comics maven Stan Lee once helped create a comic book starring the members of the rock group Kiss. As a publicity stunt, the members of Kiss pricked their fingers and dripped some drops of their blood into the red ink that would be used in the comic book.²²⁶
- Politicians can be creative problem-solvers. In Australia, a politician got tired of the loudness of some rowdy roughnecks in his neighborhood, so he devised a means of driving them away. He simply played on loudspeakers the

²²⁴ Source: Charles O'Connell, *The Other Side of the Record*, p. 266.

²²⁵ Source: Andrea Stuart, *Showgirls*, pp. 26-27.

²²⁶ Source: Stan Lee and George Mair, *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*, pp. 199-200.

kind of music that he knew they would NOT like — for example, Barry Manilow’s “Mandy.”²²⁷

Rehearsals

- Sir Thomas Beecham once undertook an Australian tour during which he had the opportunity to rehearse a number of times the Australian orchestra he would conduct. He went through the program once, then excused the musicians. He did the same thing the next day and the following day — at which time he announced that there would be no further rehearsals. Because extra rehearsals had already been paid for — six in all — the orchestra manager asked why Sir Thomas would not use them. Sir Thomas replied, “My dear fellow, this orchestra was lousy at the first rehearsal, lousier at the second, and incredibly lousy the third. I can’t let this go on; think what it would be like at the performance!”²²⁸

- Cellist Mstislav Leopoldovich Rostropovich challenges himself and works hard at his art. Within a few weeks in London, he played 35 cello concertos, most of which he knew but a few of which were unfamiliar to him. One night, he discussed with conductor Gennadi Rozhdestvensky a concerto that they were to rehearse the following morning. After asking for information about tempi, he confessed that he did not know the concerto. As you would expect, Mr. Rozhdestvensky was concerned about the next morning’s

²²⁷ Source: Stuart Jeffries, “Government tips on how we dads should talk to our children will make us less cool than ever.” *The Guardian*. 16 June 2006 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,1798807,00.html>>.

²²⁸ Source: Charles O’Connell, *The Other Side of the Record*, p. 75.

rehearsal, but Mr. Rostropovich played the concerto perfectly — to learn it, he had stayed up all night.²²⁹

Revenge

- Early in his career, Italian baritone Titta Ruffo sang magnificently the role of Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Because of the huge audience response, Mr. Ruffo was scheduled to perform *Rigoletto* at a later performance, but after observing one dress rehearsal, Nellie Melba, who was supposed to star with Mr. Ruffo, reported that Mr. Ruffo was too young to sing with her. This rejection stung. Eight years later, Ms. Melba wanted Mr. Ruffo to sing with her in Ambrose Thomas' *Hamlet*. However, Mr. Ruffo declined, sending back this message to Ms. Melba: "Signor Ruffo considers that you are too old to sing with him."²³⁰

- Musicians can get revenge in unusual ways. The Violent Femmes once asked singer-songwriter Tom Waits to produce a song for them. He declined, so when the Violent Femmes performed Mr. Waits' song "Step Right Up" on a tribute album titled *New Coat of Paint: The Songs of Tom Waits*, they mutilated it — as Violent Femmes member Brian Ritchie noted on the album liner notes.²³¹

Tempi

- Pianist Artur Schnabel disliked the tempo that conductor Otto Klemperer was setting for a Beethoven concerto, so he signaled — behind the maestro's back — the tempo he preferred to the other musicians. Mr. Klemperer noticed, and

²²⁹ Source: Steven Isserlis, 'He is a superman.' *The Guardian*. 15 March 2007
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,,2034094,00.html>>.

²³⁰ Source: Nigel Douglas, *More Legendary Voices*, pp. 215-216.

²³¹ Source: Cath Carroll, *Tom Waits*, p. 100.

he pointed to the podium, then told Mr. Schnabel, “Klemperer is here!” Mr. Schnabel replied, “Klemperer is there, and I am here. But where is Beethoven?”²³²

- Johannes Brahms once conducted the finale of one of his concertos much, much faster than he usually conducted it. Violinist Fritz Kreisler protested, but Mr. Brahms replied about playing a fast tempo, “Why not, my dear friend? My pulse is faster than usual today.”²³³

Travel

- The Ramones were an odd-looking group to many people in the American Midwest. On one tour, they had been in a van for hours, and when they finally got out — somewhat bedraggled — and went into a Texas gas-station mini-market, the gas-station attendant turned to tour manager Monte A. Melnick and said, “It’s so nice of you to take care of those retarded boys.” Other people grouped the Ramones with such bands as the Sex Pistols because they played punk rock. Of course, the Sex Pistols were loud and crude in their personal lives, and they trashed motel rooms. In the 1970s, in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Ramones stayed in a motel where the Sex Pistols had stayed, and Mr. Melnick saw this note behind the desk: “Watch out for the Ramones. They are dangerous.” Actually, the Ramones didn’t trash many motel or hotel rooms — they simply weren’t making enough money to pay for the damage. Not making much money led to some creative cost-cutting maneuvers. They discovered that in exchange for a few autographed photographs, they could often get free meals at such restaurants as the Cracker

²³² Source: David Ewen, *Dictators of the Baton*, pp. 15-16.

²³³ Source: Charles Munch, *I am a Conductor*, p. 63.

Barrel, and so they carried around a lot of autographed photographs just for that purpose.²³⁴

- Americans have an international reputation as litterbugs. An example: The German pianist Walter Gieseck was riding on a train to Cleveland when he bought an apple from a boy and began to peel it. Soon he had a couple of feet of peel hanging from the apple and nowhere to dispose of it. Taking thought, he threw the peel under the seat, then told his companions, “Like the Americans.” Another example: Oberlin College accompanist W.K. Breckenridge was traveling in Switzerland when an American companion threw some litter on the ground. Immediately, a Swiss boy picked it up and stuffed it into his pocket. “You don’t want that, do you?” asked the American. “No,” answered the Swiss boy, “but I don’t want you to get arrested.”²³⁵

- Jerry Clower used to tell funny stories at meetings at which he sold fertilizer. At one meeting, someone in the audience taped him, then sent the tape to MCA Records. The people at MCA telephoned Mr. Clower and told him that the next time he was in the vicinity of Los Angeles to come in and talk with them about recording for them. Mr. Clower replied, “I ain’t never gonna be in that vicinity. Fellow, you don’t leave Yazoo City, Mississippi, and just drop by Los Angeles.” However, Mr. Clower kept talking, and he discovered that MCA Records had contracts with country singers Loretta Lynn, Bill Monroe, Jeannie Pruett, Ernest Tubb, and Conway Twitty, so he signed a five-year contract, and 30 days later he had his first gold record.²³⁶

²³⁴ Source: Monte A. Melnick and Frank Meyer, *On the Road with the Ramones*, pp. 87, 112-113, 121.

²³⁵ Source: W.K. Breckenridge, *Anecdotes of Great Musicians*, p. 12.

²³⁶ Source: Jerry Clower, *Stories from Home*, pp. 4-5.

- As general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, Edward Johnson sometimes led by having good spirits. Once, when the Met was on tour and leaving Bloomington, Indiana, on a train on a rainy morning with nearly everyone's spirits low, Mr. Johnson brightened everyone up by going from car to car in the train singing, "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'."²³⁷

Wit

- Gioacchino Rossini had a ready wit, which came in handy for defeating bores. A bore asked him to look at two songs he had written and recommend one for publication. Mr. Rossini looked at the first song, then told the bore, "I'd print the second one. It couldn't possibly be worse than the first." Another bore asked him to listen to two piano pieces he had composed and tell him which one he liked better. Mr. Rossini listened to the first piece, then said, "Never mind playing the second. I like it better already."²³⁸

- Blues musician B.B. King spent a lot of time on the road, a fact that contributed to some failed marriages. Therefore, he was not as eager as some of the women he dated to get married. He once said, "It really hurts me when a lady says, 'We've been to dinner three times. What are your intentions?'" In one case, a woman gave him an ultimatum, saying that if he didn't marry her then she would marry someone else. He replied, "Go ahead. I'll bring my guitar and sing at your wedding."²³⁹

²³⁷ Source: Stephen E. Rubin, *The New Met in Profile*, p. 182.

²³⁸ Source: Stephen Tanner, *Opera Antics and Anecdotes*, pp. 186-187.

²³⁹ Source: David Shirley, *Every Day I Sing the Blues: The Story of B.B. King*, pp. 108, 110.

Work

• Chip Dayton took a lot of photographs of the Ramones, many of which appeared in this book: *Ramones: Photographs by Chip Dayton*. He had “access all areas” status, and he was privy to much of what the Ramones did backstage. One thing that impressed him was that the Ramones would meet backstage to perform a ritual before performing. Tommy would drum on a table or on a little drummer pad. Johnny and Dee Dee would strum their guitars. Joey wouldn’t sing, but he would go “D-D-D-D-DUN, D-D-D-D-DUN.” The Ramones would be really intense about this ritual, and definitely no talking was allowed in the dressing room while they went through it. Mr. Dayton says that it is obvious why they did it — “so they’d be a groove when they walked out [onstage] and plugged in. I never saw another band do that.”²⁴⁰

• Nina Simone started out as a classical pianist, and she hoped to become the first African-American concert pianist; however, she started to play music in a bar in Atlantic City to make money, and she became a singer through an accident. Harry Steward hired her to play at the Midtown, and he enjoyed her piano playing her first night on the job; however, when he had hired her, he had thought that he had hired a singer, so after he had complimented her on her piano playing, he asked her to sing the next night. When she told him, “I’m only a pianist,” he replied, “Well, tomorrow night you’re either a singer or you’re out of a job.” She did sing the next night, and she was immediately popular.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Source: Chip Dayton, *Ramones: Photographs by Chip Dayton*, inside back cover.

²⁴¹ Source: Kerry Acker, *Nina Simone*, pp. 46-47.

- According to Meredith Willson, author of *The Music Man* and at one time a piccolo player with Mr. John Philip Sousa's band, every member of the band was an accomplished musician — with one exception. The exception was a man who played second bass clarinet in the band for five years. Everything went fine until the musician who played first bass clarinet became ill. As soon as the second bass clarinet was asked to play first bass clarinet, he quietly and quickly packed his bags and left town. It turned out that the musician couldn't play a note, but no one ever noticed because a bass clarinet has a mild tone, was placed in a noisy section of Sousa's band, and second bass clarinetists don't play solos.²⁴²

- As a 23-year-old musician, Branford Marsalis got to play with some true jazz greats, including pianist Herbie Hancock, drummer Tony Williams, and bassist Ron Carter. Mr. Marsalis was in awe of these musicians, but unfortunately, his awe badly affected his playing ability. Mr. Carter even told him, "We're delighted by the fact that you're in awe of us. But we're playing you money to play, and you ain't playing!" The talk helped, and Mr. Marsalis started playing better — and the next time he played with these greats, he was able to hold his own. This time he said, "I felt like a peer, not a subordinate."²⁴³

- First Leopold Damrosch, and then his son Walter Damrosch conducted the New York Symphony Orchestra, which was eventually disbanded despite rumors that Harry Harkness Flagler would have continued to give money to make up its deficits if someone else were to conduct the

²⁴² Source: Meredith Willson, *And There I Stood With My Piccolo*, pp. 37-38.

²⁴³ Source: Bob Bernotas, *Branford Marsalis: Jazz Musician*, pp. 41, 53.

orchestra. At the orchestra's final concert, Maestro Damrosch, *films*, gave each member of the orchestra a pair of cuff links. Georges Barrere, a flutist with the orchestra, complained, "First he takes the shirt off our backs and then he gives us cuff links."²⁴⁴

- Otis Williams is the last of the original Temptations, the group that brought the world "Ain't Too Proud to Beg," "Can't Get Next to You," "Get Ready," "Just My Imagination," and "Papa was a Rolling Stone." (The group is still going strong despite its changing line-up of musicians.) In addition to his talent with music, he has a talent with words. In 2007, instead of saying that he has no plans to retire at the current time, he said, "I'm going to ride the hair off the horse. When I get off the horse, the horse will be bald."²⁴⁵

- Siegfried Jerusalem entered the world of opera a bassoon player, but became a tenor. While playing bassoon for the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, he and the orchestra started to record *Zigeunerbaron* for television. Unfortunately, the tenor failed to show up. His colleagues urged Mr. Jerusalem to offer himself as the tenor. He did, and he won the part, thus beginning a major career as a tenor in opera.²⁴⁶

- In the early 1980s, Monte was a well-known figure outside — and sometimes inside — the Metropolitan Opera. He used to hawk opera tickets that were unwanted by subscribers

²⁴⁴ Source: Oscar Levant, *A Smattering of Ignorance*, p. 40.

²⁴⁵ Source: Leonard Pitts Jr., "The Temptations are turning back the hands of time." 25 October 2007
 <<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/news/article/50270/the-temptations-are-turning-back-the-hands-of-time/>>.

²⁴⁶ Source: Opera Magazine, Ltd., *Tenors in Opera*, p. 43.

who were too diffident to approach people on the street to offer to sell them their tickets. He worked for tips, and his manner of making money made him a one-name celebrity in the manner of Madonna.²⁴⁷

- Gioacchino Rossini was composing some music in bed when a page of the music he had composed fell on the floor. Since he didn't feel like getting out of bed and picking up the sheet of music, he composed a duet. Later, a friend stopped by and picked up the sheet of music. Rossini didn't want to throw it away, so he added it to the duet he had just composed and made it a trio.²⁴⁸

- Justin Jeffre of the singing group 98 Degrees knew at an early age that he wanted to be a singer. However, he knew that it would be a good idea to have a back-up plan in case things didn't work out. Therefore, he decided on an alternative career to pursue if he didn't make it as a singer: He would become a cowboy.²⁴⁹

- The Ramones were known for playing short sets early in their careers and for playing faster than any other band — and they speeded up their playing as they got older. Someone asked guitarist Johnny Ramone why the Ramones' songs were so short. He replied, "They're actually fairly long songs played very, very quickly."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Source: Patrick J. Smith, *A Year at the Met*, pp. 161-162.

²⁴⁸ Source: Victor Borge and Robert Sherman, *My Favorite Intermissions*, p. 62.

²⁴⁹ Source: Tim O'Shei, *98°*, p. 13.

²⁵⁰ Source: Dee Dee Ramone, *Legend of a Rock Star: A Memoir*, p. 204.

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Appendix B: About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy — me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine's brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka "The Joker," decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name — David — ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn't been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don't often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for "sounds like" and "two words," then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn't let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor's degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy. Yes, I have my MAMA degree.

Currently, and for a long time to come (I eat fruits and veggies), I am spending my retirement writing books such as *Nadia Comaneci: Perfect 10*, *The Funniest People in Comedy*, *Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose*, and *William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*.

If all goes well, I will publish one or two books a year for the rest of my life. (On the other hand, a good way to make God laugh is to tell Her your plans.)

Appendix C: Some Books by David Bruce

Anecdote Collections

250 Anecdotes About Opera

250 Anecdotes About Religion

250 Anecdotes About Religion: Volume 2

250 Music Anecdotes

Be a Work of Art: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

The Coolest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in the Arts: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Coolest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

Create, Then Take a Break: 250 Anecdotes

Don't Fear the Reaper: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Art: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Books, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Comedy: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Dance: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 4: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 5: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Families, Volume 6: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes

The Funniest People in Music: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Music, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Music, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Neighborhoods: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Relationships: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Sports, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Television and Radio: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People in Theater: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes
The Funniest People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 1: 250 Anecdotes
The Kindest People Who Do Good Deeds, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
Maximum Cool: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Movies: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Politics and History: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Religion: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People in Sports: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People Who Live Life: 250 Anecdotes
The Most Interesting People Who Live Life, Volume 2: 250 Anecdotes
Reality is Fabulous: 250 Anecdotes and Stories
Resist Psychic Death: 250 Anecdotes
Seize the Day: 250 Anecdotes and Stories

Retellings of a Classic Work of Literature

Ben Jonson's The Alchemist: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Arraignment, or Poetaster: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Bartholomew Fair: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Case is Altered: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Catiline's Conspiracy: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Devil is an Ass: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Epicene: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humor: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Fountain of Self-Love, or Cynthia's Revels: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Magnetic Lady, or Humors Reconciled: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The New Inn, or The Light Heart: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Sejanus' Fall: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's The Staple of News: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's A Tale of a Tub: A Retelling

Ben Jonson's Volpone, or the Fox: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Complete Plays: Retellings

Christopher Marlowe's Dido, Queen of Carthage: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: Retellings of the 1604 A-Text and of the 1616 B-Text

Christopher Marlowe's Edward II: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Massacre at Paris: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's The Rich Jew of Malta: A Retelling

Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Parts 1 and 2: Retellings

Dante's Divine Comedy: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Inferno: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Purgatory: A Retelling in Prose

Dante's Paradise: A Retelling in Prose

The Famous Victories of Henry V: A Retelling

From the Iliad to the Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose of Quintus of Smyrna's Posthomerica

George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's Eastward Ho! A Retelling

George Peele's The Arraignment of Paris: A Retelling

George Peele's The Battle of Alcazar: A Retelling

George's Peele's David and Bathsheba, and the Tragedy of Absalom: A Retelling

George Peele's Edward I: A Retelling

George Peele's The Old Wives' Tale: A Retelling

George-a-Greene: A Retelling

The History of King Leir: A Retelling

Homer's Iliad: A Retelling in Prose

Homer's Odyssey: A Retelling in Prose

J.D. Gent.'s The Valiant Scot: A Retelling

Jason and the Argonauts: A Retelling in Prose of Apollonius of Rhodes' Argonautica

John Ford: Eight Plays Translated into Modern English

John Ford's The Broken Heart: A Retelling

John Ford's The Fancies, Chaste and Noble: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lady's Trial: A Retelling

John Ford's The Lover's Melancholy: A Retelling

John Ford's Love's Sacrifice: A Retelling

- John Ford's Perkin Warbeck: A Retelling*
- John Ford's The Queen: A Retelling*
- John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore: A Retelling*
- John Webster's The White Devil: A Retelling*
- King Edward III: A Retelling*
- The Merry Devil of Edmonton: A Retelling*
- Robert Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Retelling*
- The Taming of a Shrew: A Retelling*
- Tarlton's Jests: A Retelling*
- The Trojan War and Its Aftermath: Four Ancient Epic Poems*
- Virgil's Aeneid: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 5 Late Romances: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 10 Histories: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 11 Tragedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 12 Comedies: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 38 Plays: Retellings in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry IV, aka Henry IV, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 1 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 1: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 2 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 2: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's 3 Henry VI, aka Henry VI, Part 3: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: A Retelling in Prose*

- William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Coriolanus: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Cymbeline: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Hamlet: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry V: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Henry VIII: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King John: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's King Lear: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Love's Labor's Lost: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Macbeth: A Retelling in Prose*
- William Shakespeare's Measure for Measure: A Retelling in Prose*
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William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale: A Retelling in Prose

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