

**Dinner with Ernest (Alan, Vanessa, Mark & me)  
June 2008: the back stories and the afterword**

Note: *This is something of a personal memoir as shaped by my contact with Ernest Fleischmann. It is not so much a tribute to Ernest as a commentary about his influence on me, and some of his various innovations overlooked by those addressing his more epochal achievements.*

**A**lan Rich was actually the birthday boy, having turned 84 three days before. He chose the restaurant after reading Jonathan Gold's paean to a particular paella dish – the scruffy dean of American music critics about to test the metal of Pulitzer prize-winning food critic and former colleague at the *LA Weekly*. Surrounded by Spanish bric-a-brac and back-lit by the setting summer solstice, Alan possessed a certain sweetness at odds with his curmudgeonly take-no-prisoners reputation.

Mark and I came from a tour of the recent expansion of Pasadena Presbyterian's formidable organ. On the way to the western border of West Hollywood, the car radio commented on the recently dismissed George Carlin, an intemperate comedian consigned to exist forevermore in media archives, because he said "God doesn't give a flying [bleep] about America."

The three of us passed the time amicably before the rest of the party arrived. The talk began with Bach organ music, the blandness of most organ recital programs, and the lack of musical character and showmanship common to the fraternity (mostly) of organists these days. Mark and I offered that Gillian Weir might be an aging exception, but her recent Walt Disney Concert Hall recital program didn't inspire any of us to go. Point not made.

On the subject of organist Paul Jacobs, we shared past enthusiasms (his unbelievable Bach and Messiaen marathons!) and collective disappointment that, at age 27, he traded becoming his generation's answer to E. Power Biggs (albeit a long shot in a very changed classical music market) for academic security as chair of Juilliard's organ department. Jacobs is a natural and passionate teacher, but apparently loves the impossibly ponderous music of Max Reger – go figure.

Vanessa Butler swathed in an eye-popping coral blouse made her entrance with Ernest Fleischmann, about six months shy of the same chronological landmark as Alan. Dressed in all black, his striking head with piercing pale blue eyes and fading gray mane seemed to hover at Vanessa's shoulder above a body that hardly mattered anymore.

His face and demeanor still inspired awe; especially for me, whose forty some years of periodic memories of Ernest are tinged by deep admiration, fear and disappointment. As the central character in the LA classical music scene for as long as I could remember, Ernest was a distant all-knowing father figure, a withering presence, keeper of the keys, cosmopolitan, both establishment and radical, righteous in a good way, and a pitiless judge. The party began.

Continuation of the organ music topic was good for transitional conversation as we pondered the menu of tapas. Ernest, while eyeing the wine list, primarily regretted the lack of repertoire for organ and orchestra, now that Disney Hall and its famous organ are a marriage too rarely consummated. With the wine selected, gay marriage – an intellectual *and* moral no-brainer – and the appalling lack of religious skepticism in America was good for several short rounds.

This was the Ernest I remembered from our days fighting censorship during the culture skirmishes that began around 1988 and reached a tipping point in 1990 with the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts vetoing the peer-recommended grants of four artists. At the heart of the issue was public support of unpopular (queer/sexual) speech by the NEA. Multiculturalism was also on trial. I came to the issue from a decade spent immersed in video art, independent film and publicly funded non-commercial radio and television.

Ernest's background, as part of the European Jewish diaspora, was too historically informed and powerful not to see that the LA Philharmonic had to publicly stand on the side of the artists. He was in solidarity, not only with the modern dance legend Bella Lewitzky (from whom I took a master class in 1970, and who was the first to sue the government for censorship), but also with the so-called NEA Four – the quartet of provocative performance artists, two from LA, who prevailed over the agency in 1993.

As the battle in LA heated up, Ernest, alongside the Center Theater Group's Gordon Davidson, was one of the few representatives of big LA arts organizations to take a stand with the many smaller organizations directly threatened by the Jesse Helms-led harassment of the NEA. The Geffen Foundation, People for the American Way, the Writers Guild, GLAAD, and a state-wide arts advocacy group did most of the community organizing and strategy.

When the crisis first erupted in Congress, the annual conference of the National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture, of which I was co-chair, was wrapping up in Boston. I was asked to fly to Washington D.C.

to an arts summit joined by leaders of all the national arts service organizations. Most of us had no sense of what this unprecedented gathering was called to do, or how it would transpire.

We met with distinguished legislators and their staff members in a congressional hearing room on Capitol Hill. *Time* magazine was given exclusive coverage of this meeting that was supposed to take not more than a day. We were informed that Democratic members of Congress wanted us, all of whom had very different perspectives on the crisis, to give them cover by drafting a statement that – after three days that none of us had planned for, or imagined – Congress did not get.

On the second day, I was drafted to a small writing committee. Despite a very fractious process that lasted into the pre-dawn hours, on the third day the group presented a unified front with an eloquent statement defending freedom of expression and support for the vilified artists.

My participation in this process evolved to become chair of the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression (NCFE), of which David Mendoza was a tireless executive director. The professionally diverse board attracted a top legal team including constitutional lawyer David D. Coles. NCFE ultimately filed the victorious landmark suit that went to the Supreme Court in 1996. Of course, it was a pyrrhic victory since the NEA's individual support for artists was soon abolished to satisfy the right.

The appetizer options included a sizzling dish of tiny imitation eels in spicy tomato sauce that merited comment. Why would anyone try to make ersatz eels, or even want to, I asked. Of course Ernest had once enjoyed the real thing, but speculated about the difficulty and cost of transporting worm-sized eels. Mark, who was born and raised away from seafood in Kansas and never developed much of a taste for water-born protein, let alone eels, suggested the artichoke hearts and ventured to inquire about whether Ernest was writing his memoirs.

If flattered at all, Ernest quickly foreclosed on that possibility. It was perhaps not surprising that such a man of action, drive and consuming work habits, kept little to remind him of the past. Ernest shifted attention away from himself to his teacher Albert Coates. He despaired over how little was on the internet about this important conductor and recording pioneer. At once Mark responded with tasty bits of Coatesiana to which only the most devoted former Tower Records clerk and fan of historic opera performances could have access in LA.

This inspired gambit for keeping the conversational momentum aloft, reminded me of the moment on our second date back in 1994 that, for me, sealed our bond. As chair of the Motion Picture Centennial Committee, for which I was compensated as a consultant by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, I had just stuck my foot in my mouth.

Mark and I were at a reception for Jane Russell before a rare screening of *The Outlaw* at LA County Museum of Art's Bing Theater. The subject of Ann Miller's tap dancing had come up in a small cluster. Opinionated to a fault, I stated that Miller's always happy dancing paled next to the sublime Eleanor Powell. It turned out the president of Miller's fan club was in the group turning beet red. Mark dispelled the awkward silence with the perfectly timed *bon mot* that made everyone laugh and the conversation fortunately took another turn.

Sizzling, the appetizers arrived. With the subject of Coates, Mark had also played to Alan Rich's strength. The three of them spun Mark's second-hand and their personal memories of Coates, while Vanessa and I looked on – she with her Cheshire Cat smile. Alan's eagerness to taste the "eels" mingled with a sincere offer to fill in Ernest's memoir chapter on Coates, "in a couple of afternoons." Alan's own memoirs *So I've Heard*, a brief best-seller on the *New York Times* list, had come out just two years before. Ernest demurred, "I can't afford you. I can't afford a ghost writer."

This statement from the man once known as having the highest compensation of a non-profit professional in LA to someone recently fired by the *LA Weekly*, caused a stunned pause in the conversation and a rapid shift to the soaring price of gasoline, the inevitable ripple effect on the economy, and the potential for political upheaval, if unabated. As it happened, the historic financial melt-down would follow in less than three months with other causes.

After reeling off an alarming history of energy blunders from the perspective of someone who grew up in Saudi Arabia and studied astrophysics, Vanessa wondered if this crisis would finally cause the human species to make the right choices.

She had come to the LA Phil right out of USC and was groomed by Ernest. Her many years there cemented a reputation as a very successful arts marketing professional. My introduction, at that point, of candidate Obama to the conversation elicited Ernest's fears that the presumptive Democratic nominee was already making dangerous concessions, by pandering to the ethanol lobby. Alan's confusion

about that particular danger begat a fast lesson from Ernest in why ethanol threatens the food supply and is not cost-effective as a fuel. I strained to point out that Obama's campaign structure of fundraising and voter mobilization made him potentially more accountable to the people. I offered that his situation differed from the circumstances surrounding Vanessa's litany of presidential blunders. Perhaps he will compromise initially, I said, and then make the tough decisions out of necessity – when the inescapable reality of climate change and economic upheaval converge. Ernest was ever pragmatic and dubious.

This seriousness was on display at our first encounter. I was twenty-one when William Malloch, co-founder of the Gustav Mahler Society, audio producer, radio personality, musicologist, bohemian and conductor, yanked me out of the student rush line at UCLA's Royce Hall. His thick mane of gray hair was caught in a long heavy ponytail; Malloch had the ruddy complexion of a bicycle rider framed by a silver sculpted beard and emphatic eyebrows.

He was tall and virile with a sonorous honeyed voice. I, on the other hand had a curly mop and donned high-waisted black pinwale corduroy bell-bottoms, a vintage rayon terra cotta colored shirt, a sharp-shouldered black bolero jacket with black tassels on the sleeves scavenged from the MGM sale, accessorized with a black men's Japanese obi and white rubber orderly shoes. I had the youthful arrogance and silhouette to bring it off.

With a summer scholarship at Eugene Loring's American School of Dance completed, I was training in the rigorous UC Irvine dance program also directed by the choreographer of *Billy The Kid*. My peak experience in the program was a master class with Merce Cunningham. Even so, I was primarily a visual art (painting) major studying with Robert Irwin, Ed Moses, Vija Celmins, Tony DeLap, John Mason, Kenneth Price, Barbara Rose, and briefly with video pioneer Bruce Nauman. I had received both a Chancellor's Award and President's Fellowship for painting.

Dance was my second major, until Governor Ronald Reagan ended the inter-disciplinary degree program with his sweeping cuts to the UC system. Upon graduating cum laude from UCI, I changed my name to Patrick Marca Registrada, Latin for registered trademark – a statement about people becoming brands.

Malloch positioned me like a human shield before Ernest, who was heading for the entrance to hear Bernard Haitink conduct the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Mahler's *Ninth Symphony*. "This young man

wants to hear Mahler's *Tenth*, Mr. Fleischmann! Which completion of it do YOU favor?" In the music world, the subject of the unfinished symphony was a raging controversy over competing versions. Determined to hear the work live here, Malloch was a playful provocateur and the rare person willing to publically challenge Ernest.

At age sixteen I first met Malloch as the youngest member of the Gustav Mahler Society. How I was able to attend the Society's events when my very uninterested family lived sixty miles east in Riverside, is another story for another day.

The GM Society printed bumper stickers and sweat-shirts emblazoned "Mahler Grooves" when such things hadn't ever been done in the classical music world – getting attention in LIFE magazine with the help of Leonard Bernstein! Malloch hosted the annual Mahlerthon, an all-day affair that blasted out recordings of all ten symphonies and *Das Lied von der Erde* with the latest stereo equipment. On a Saturday afternoon, on the lawn of his looming house on Wonderland Avenue in Hollywood, I met the Mahler's surviving daughter Anna, a successful sculptor. For many years her angular bronze *Striding Woman* was mounted on a concrete pad in front of a Sunset Boulevard bank at Laurel Canyon.

Ernest was nonplussed by this bit of street theater, if you will, and I was utterly at a loss for words. He muttered with an air of disdain that the Philharmonic had no plans to perform the *Tenth Symphony*. Nonetheless, he did later emulate Malloch's brainchild with a live Beethoven Symphony marathon at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Despite occasional whiffs of cannabis and the hoopla of hippies gathered under the enormous chandeliers – made originally for the movie *The Great Waltz* – this financially daring event lacked a sense of adventure. Beethoven was not Mahler, not by a long shot. Regardless, Ernest began an indefatigable period of audacious experimentation in the marketing of the LA Phil.

An all-American concert at the Hollywood Bowl included some Charles Ives conducted by Lukas Foss. The solo trumpet in *The Unanswered Question* was heard from one of the giant lighting pylons. Foss conducted his new work for chorus and orchestra *Geod* (1969), with the chorus, one person deep, lining the inside curve of the bowl and surrounding the orchestra. The concept and execution of *Geod* made a strong impression on me.

Ernest launched the *Contempo '70* festival in May of that year. Chamber music selected by Mel Powell,

the first CalArts Dean of Music, comprised a program. During an open rehearsal, I recall sitting behind Zubin Mehta who was ostentatiously studying an enormous score by the Danish composer Per Norgaard called *Iris* (1967). Looking over his shoulder, I saw that the height of the page was necessary to accommodate a great number of separate lines. Norgaard, with his blond Beatle haircut, was something of a counter culture figure and *Iris* was being talked about as psychedelic music. Mehta seemed bemused.

But the most talked-about concert of *Contempo '70* was Mehta's conducting of Frank Zappa's orchestral *200 Motels* at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion. Some 14,000 people of every imaginable background and fashion statement waited in their stadium seats for a long time, while the pick-up version of the recently disbanded Mothers of Invention wrestled with their gear. Massive speakers defined the playing area on the basketball court, while the LA Phil players bided their time in uncharacteristic ways. They didn't look happy, especially concertmaster Glen Dicterow, who though my age was already a seasoned musician.

Objectively speaking the concert was a fiasco. It felt like Zappa's vision had gotten no further than a problematic rehearsal witnessed by 14,000 on-lookers in various altered states. Yet to be there was to be part of a grand experimental happening, a cultural collision symbolic of the times – all of it made possible by the tenacity and bravado of Ernest.

By the fall of 1974, Ernest inaugurated the Sunday afternoon "Rug Concerts" – a heavy rubber dance floor rolled out with seams taped upon the Pavilion's Grand Hall carpet and screens to block the afternoon light. The audience was asked to bring cushions as no chairs were provided that first year. The recently founded Los Angeles Ballet, led by former New York City Ballet principal dancer and choreographer John Clifford, was given half a program, to his chagrin.

For the other half, word was out about a new modern dance collective rehearsing at UCLA without any bookings yet. Eyes Wide Open Dance Theatre, as it would be called, was being compared, before it had even debuted, to Pilobolus, the three-year-old leaderless dance sensation.

The buzz was generated by the presence of Bella Lewitzky's former dance partner Fred Strickler, and one of her company's most electrifying male dancers Gary Bates. Both were also very promising choreographers, as were the much admired solo dancers Kathy Copperman, Melanie Snyder and Karen Goodman, who completed the collective. All but Fred, and myself, were UCLA graduates.

I had already designed sets and costumes for Fred's ambitious student productions at UC Riverside, as well as Gary's direction and choreography for *Cinderella at Midnight*, the honest-to-goodness final production of the notorious Cockettes in San Francisco's Palace Theatre, October 31, 1973 – despite the contrary stance of the award-winning 2002 documentary about the Cockettes. *Cinderella* starred Goldie Glitters, who made national news winning as Santa Monica City College's homecoming queen with the motto, "put a real queen under your crown."

My second collaboration with Gary was for Monday Evening Concerts in April 1974. Leonard Stein was set to conduct an illustrious ensemble including solo cellist Joel Krosnick poised to join the Julliard String Quartet. The controversial music, *Vesalii Icones* by Peter Maxwell Davies, was intended to accompany a 45-minute dance solo overlaying the 16th century anatomy drawings of Andreas Vesalius and the fourteen stations of the cross.

My contribution was costumes, a Japanese style runway built from the stage into the middle of the house, slide projections and conceptual work. So it followed that, having collaborated with Fred and Gary, I became designer, music director, and the designated person to adjudicate artistic and management conflicts among Eyes Wide Open.

To Ernest's staff we insisted on opening this first Rug Concert by sliding down the grand staircase banisters wearing faux leopard skin trunks, tunics and tennis shoes in the style of Fred and Wilma Flintstone. The women also had sylph wings attached at the waist, such as you would see on ballerinas in Fokine's *Les Sylphides*. Were these outfits not outlandish enough, we brandished enormous black and yellow crepe paper pom poms (I think they have long since been banned as dangerous).

Heard close-up, the rustling sound of a dozen giant pom poms was intoxicating. This ingenious pep squad spoof was performed to a recorded arrangement for ten pianos by Louis Moreau Gottschalk of John Philip Souza's *Stars & Stripes Forever*. Fred gave his ludicrous dance the title *Tarzan Sprites*. Absurdity reigned the summer that Richard Nixon resigned the Office of President.

What followed *Tarzan Sprites* was the appearance of a row of six televisions on rolling TV tray tables tuned to the granular b/w electronic picture noise known then as snow, while a scratchy vintage recording of Tchaikovsky's "Snow Scene" from *The Nutcracker* ballet played just long enough for a complete costume change behind the screens.

In the middle of the program, sitting on a stool, I read my short fiction *LA Stories* as accompaniment for a very energetic solo by Fred. Our roles reversed for my performance art piece *Sunday Best*. He read my wry commentary sending up the fashion industry and the conventions of concert-going attire. A quick-change booth in the plaza lobby at the base of the grand staircase allowed me to appear behind the audience, make an entrance through the center aisle, do a few turns and descend to change again.

By that time, almost a decade before Billy Idol became a punk rock superstar, I sported closely cropped hair bleached and toned stark white – at a time when even the television sportscasters were wearing their hair long and the natural look was ubiquitous. Those days, my "drag" was a "mash-up" of vintage gems (a jacket worn by Red Skelton's aunt), Indonesian garments, sports gear including down-filled snow booties and a green lacquered Japanese parasol. With black lipstick, the various looks anticipated the dystopian mix of cultures and periods seen in *Blade Runner* (1982).

Eyes Wide Open's program ended with an intricate piece of collective choreography entitled *Phrasing*. Six personal and idiomatic phrases were created in six studios during the same allotted time. They were then joined into themes, varied, fragmented and re-interpreted. The intention of our signature piece was to spurn the postmodern New York vogue of task dancing, the grim denial of any of the accepted characteristics of dance, including phrasing, advocated by Yvonne Rainer and her followers.

The musical accompaniment was "Chant des Oiseaux" a loony onomatopoeic vocal quartet by the early 16th century French composer Clement Janequin. After all, the essential goal of ballet is to create the illusion of flying – with swans *en pointe* and mythic birds aplenty. Whereas, the bare-footed modern dance aesthetic emphasized putting the dancer's weight into the floor.

*Phrasing* accomplished a reconciling of ballet and modern dance with recurring vocabulary abstracted from dribbling a basket ball and shooting hoops. The dancers' ability to phrase was what merged these contradicting historic impulses.

The concert was a sensation. Reviews welcomed a creative new dance force to the scene that embraced theatricality while having a sense of humor about both traditional ballet and post-modernism. How much of this enterprise, and my involvement in it, registered with Ernest, I will never know. It's unlikely he ever connected the human shield, with the

eager observer of his programming innovations, or the driving, sometimes transgressive, persona associated with Eyes Wide Open.

As our paths crossed in the years to follow, Ernest always behaved as though he was meeting me for the first time – an experience hardly unique to me, I'm sure. My next exchange with him was in 1988 when I was hired (as Patrick Scott) by the Los Angeles Educational Partnership to develop a new city-wide cultural model for collaboration among high school humanities teachers, –working together as Humanitas – and LA's institutions dedicated to arts and culture.

During my tenure, a news item came out praising the LA Philharmonic for performing Beethoven's *Fifth* at some of the larger school auditoriums around town. At that time, discussion of the literary Western canon versus a new stream of "alternative" voices was on every educators lips, and multiculturalism was a controversy Humanitas embraced.

In response to bringing Beethoven to the schools, I asked Margaret "Peggy" Funkhouser, the highly influential and respected president of the LA Educational Partnership, to sign a letter directed to Ernest suggesting that the Philharmonic should have a performance of the *Sinfonia India* of Carlos Chavez ready to perform for the student audiences heading precipitously as they were toward a Latino majority. No reply was received.

The Humanitas Cultural Collaboratives made a tremendous impression on its intended constituency, as well as funders including the Rockefeller and Ahmanson Foundations. This success increased national attention for the program as a model led by Neal Anstead, director of the Cleveland High Humanities Magnet.

Humanitas also came to the attention of Peter Sellars, who had just moved to LA with the promise of a major festival. He knew my friends the Long Beach-based video artist Bill Viola and his wife and artistic partner Kira Perov. Through their introduction I became one of Peter's first friends in Los Angeles.

Eventually Peter and I worked together on the ambitious 1990 LA Festival, with me in charge of the education program. Given the huge scope, staggering amount of venues, ambition of the festival's multicultural programming goals, and the limited resources available for education, I chose to focus the program solely on teacher preparation. I believed then, as I do now, that the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in a child's educational success.

The LA Festival Education Program was experiential, interactive, conversational and conducted in a Buddhist Temple, an historic African American nightclub, on the stage of a pivotal theatre for the labor movement, and in a Baptist church hall.

It was suggested to me at the LA Festival post-mortem conference organized by The Getty Center and UCLA, that I call Frank Solomon, the powerful New York artist manager. I learned that he was looking for someone to develop an education strategy for the 35-year old British conductor Simon Rattle's pet project "Revolutions of Expression."

In his Manhattan office, Solomon explained that Rattle wanted to tour the U.S. with three orchestral programs focusing on the dazzlingly revolutionary years 1911-13. Solomon wanted me to develop for LA a city-wide strategy involving multiple institutions that would investigate various revolutions (a shocking number of them, it turned out) during those three tumultuous years. The plan was for me to meet with Ernest and convince him that the LA Philharmonic should take the lead on this education initiative.

Unbeknownst to me, Solomon and Ernest were not on such good terms at the time. I had also not put two and two together that Ernest's recent feud with Andre Previn over the appointment of the young Turk Esa-Pekka Salonen, may also have left Rattle, the LA Phil's Principal Guest Conductor from 1981-1994, somewhat out in the cold.

It should have been obvious to me that Ernest was utterly committed to Salonen's success, and this high-profile project of Rattle's was a non-starter. My meeting with a pre-emptive Ernest was very short and the intense research work needed to present a feasible strategy was made moot.

The years that followed this phantom project were something of a juggling act. As a consultant I produced professional development workshops for Humanities teachers in interdisciplinary thematic teaching using the arts to explore ideas. My role in the on-going culture war flew me to meetings and conferences across the country.

Leadership of the Motion Picture Centennial Committee fell suddenly into my lap when the much-admired program director of the Academy for Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, Douglas Edwards, died abruptly from well-concealed AIDS. I learned about it before boarding a plane to New Mexico where I was helping promote a state-wide media literacy strategy led by TV legend Hugh Downs' daughter.

Around 1996, my friend from years of advocating on behalf of increased funding for the California Arts Council, Leni Boorstin had me called to ask if I would be interested in applying for a position as Education Director for the Philharmonic. Leni was Ernest's trusted expert in community relations and government affairs. Of course the prospect filled me with the giddiness of a dream possibly coming true, but also trepidation.

My first test was to devise a program for fifth graders, ten-year-olds. I named it *What I Did on My Summer Vacation*. I recall *The Little Train of the Caipira* by Villa-Lobos, and I believe the contrasting of Handel's and Stravinsky's Fireworks was included. The program wasn't so unusual except for the inclusion of Michael Torke's short orchestra piece *Bright Blue Music*.

I knew that the kids would be intrigued by the title, engaged by the idea of music having color, and would genuinely enjoy, on first hearing, a dazzling piece of orchestration by the 35-year old composer of *Javelin* for the 1994 Atlanta Olympics. As it turned out, Ernest was really not a fan of Torke's music. I was not disqualified, but had I suggested Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* instead, I might have had a better chance of passing the next test.

An artist manager recently observed that Ernest's way of testing a conductor's mettle with the LA Phil was to assign a first date at the Hollywood Bowl with a daunting program and not enough rehearsal time. He added that Ernest was not so interested in mere mortals. This came as no surprise to me since I proved my mortality with Ernest's second test.

Having no forewarning, I entered his office for my interview with Ernest only to find, seated in a row, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Grant Gershon and two doubtless important men, who were completely obliterated by their company. Now, I had made no secret of the fact that I was not a musician, neither trained in music theory, nor capable of reading music. How it came to be that I was in that room, for that reason, given that fact, seems utterly amazing to me now. Esa-Pekka was as implacably cool as his reputation. Grant, on the other hand, smiled warmly and his eyes were kindly and encouraging. I know that I mustered every hormone-drenched synapse of survival instinct and finesse, but after Ernest's relentless hot seat interview technique, I left the room like a wounded fighter.

As it happened, Ernest hired Sue Knussen, wife of the composer Oliver Knussen, and producer of the BBC's outstanding series, *Leaving Home: 20th Century Orchestral Music* featuring Sir Simon Rattle.

Ironically, the conductor's fascination with the 1911-13 period of revolution is reflected in more than one of these innovative programs.

In 2003, some five years after Ernest retired from the LA Phil, Mark Alan Hilt and I founded Jacaranda. By its second season Ernest's close friend the philanthropist/photographer Betty Freeman was a regular attendee and very vocal fan, as was Alan Rich. I don't know if Alan's and Betty's enthusiasm influenced Ernest, but he soon recommended to the Colburn Foundation that they award funds to our fledgling series – support that has continued since.

Allison Sampson, my friend and colleague from the LA Festival and Ernest's former deputy, was the director of the Colburn Foundation. In 2006, she joined Ernest, the media arts curator Julie Lazar, *LA Times* senior music critic Mark Swed and me for dinner between the first two concerts in Jacaranda's Pan-American Music Marathon at Barnum Hall.

Sitting on outdoor benches we happily consumed tamales supplied by Border Grill and talked about Jacaranda's temporary displacement from the First Presbyterian Church due to extensive renovation. Ernest talked about his fondness for Jacaranda trees and memories of them in South Africa. I learned later that the evening's performance of the wacky but fiendishly difficult *Piano Trio* by Charles Ives was the finest Ernest had ever heard.

About a year after the charmed dinner of faux eels, I wrote Ernest to ask if he would join Alan and Betty Freeman, as the inaugural recipients of the Forte Award. Betty was a long shot because she hated such honors. She was furious at John Cage for naming his 32 near-impossible violin studies the *Freeman Etudes*. True to form she declined, but then Ernest followed suit. Vanessa was close to both of them and did what she could to persuade.

The inaugural 2008 recipients of the Forte Award, which recognizes outstanding achievement in the promotion of new and modern music, were the legendary Alan Rich and the remarkable pianist Gloria Cheng. Jacaranda's achievements were regularly reported in his column "A Lot of Night Music."

In 1988, Gloria performed in a Humanitas program I produced with Sheila Tepper's Dame Myra Hess Concerts for live broadcast by KUSC that Alan had written about – a Kristallnacht 50th Anniversary event with the Goethe & Schoenberg Institutes. Gloria also appeared on Jacaranda's first season. A host of composers, as well as critics and audience members admired her. Alan and Gloria were ideal.

As you can tell by the arc of this memoir, I was keenly aware that Ernest was the single person at the time who most embodied the achievement that the Forte Award was created to recognize – and time was running out.

A year later, I contacted him again through one of his close friends, who saw Ernest several times per week and lived nearby. His health had declined; a surgery did not produce the desired outcome, and his travels were quite limited. Several months earlier he had managed to attend a Colburn School event in his honor, so I asked his neighbor, Lyn Keinholtz, the art historian, founder and president of the California International Arts Foundation, if she would approach Ernest on my behalf. Would he be willing to receive the Forte Award from Jacaranda in October 2009?

Sadly, Lyn relayed to me that Ernest graciously declined my request due to the unpredictability of his health. When I replied that the distinguished composer/conductor/timpanist William Kraft was the only other person suited to receive the honor, given their many years of friendship and achievement together, Lynn reported that Ernest heartily agreed and he accepted my request that his name be among the members of the Forte Award honorary committee.

Kraft was the first LA Phil composer-in-residence and director of its New Music Group. He also conducted *Ionization* by Edgard Varèse and the *Concerto for Violin & Percussion* by Lou Harrison on Jacaranda's 2006 Pan-American Music Marathon. Grant Gershon, Music Director of the LA Master Chorale and Associate Conductor of the LA Opera, conducted and sang for Jacaranda's two-year Messiaen centenary celebration. They accepted the 2009 Forte Awards.

Although my experiences with Ernest were sometimes harrowing, no day passes that I am unaware of his legacy. The Los Angeles of the 21st century, with its emblematic Walt Disney Concert Hall and progressive musical culture, would not exist but for Ernest. Jacaranda owes him the conditions that made it possible to flourish – his tireless advocacy for innovation – and his effective signals of support.

As a parting gesture, although it may seem frivolous, maybe less so hearing Gwendolyn Fairfax's assertion of it in Gerald Barry's thorny but hilarious operatic treatment of Oscar Wilde's famous play commissioned by the LA Philharmonic – there is music in the name Ernest.

For me there will always be music in that name.