

Interviewee: Karyl Louwenaar
Interviewer: Robin Sellers
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Sellers: Tell me a little bit to start with, if you will, about where you grew up and how you got your musical training. You might want to start by telling me where your name came from.

Louwenaar: It's a strange one, I know. I grew up in western Michigan; I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and we lived in a small town about seven miles southwest of Grand Rapids called Grandville. Both uses of the word "grand" are named for the Grand River. Grandville is along the road between Grand Rapids and Holland, which is on Lake Michigan. The entire area was very heavily Dutch, Dutch immigrants. My grandparents' generation. I call myself a "purebred American wooden shoe" because all four of my grandparents were from the Netherlands.

Sellers: When did they come to this country?

Louwenaar: Oh, I wish I knew more about that. I started doing some research on it a few years ago. Now that I'm retired, I can probably pick up on it and do a lot more. It was late nineteenth century. My father was born in 1910, so they must have come right around the turn of the century. My mother's family was a little older; she was near the end of eleven children, and so that family (my grandparents on that side were older), they had come earlier. The name Louwenaar actually looks terrible and difficult to pronounce, but if you break it down into the two words that are represented there in the Dutch language, "naar" means near, it's the Dutch word for near, and "louwe" comes from the name of a lake or a sea in northern Holland which on some earlier maps is actually spelled Lauwer. So my ancestors on my father's side lived naar the Lauwe, so the name was Louwenaar.

Sellers: Makes sense.

Louwenaar: Well, I explain it to my students that way and they don't have quite so much trouble with it. And by the way, this is an aside, this is probably not part of the interview – do you know Mike Douma in history? He's from that same town, from Grandville. He's doing his masters and then his doctorate on the Dutch settlement in Grandville.

Sellers: Was there music in the family?

Louwenaar: Yes, my mother was a musician. My father liked music but he didn't play any instrument or so. But my mother was near the end of a line of eleven children, and I don't know

who taught the earliest ones, but the older children then ended up teaching the younger ones as they came along how to play the piano. My mother became ill when she was a junior in high school. We think from the way she described it she must have had mononucleosis, and she had to drop out of school. After she got better, it was too late to get back into that school year and she never finished high school. But in order to earn a little money, she started giving piano lessons in people's homes. She never had any formal training but she was an excellent musician; she had all the right instincts of a musician.

Sellers: Was there a piano in her home?

Louwenaar: Yes, there had been a piano in her home where the eleven children grew up. Of course, we had a piano in our home, and I kept going to it and fooling around. So when I was five, she started giving me lessons. She always felt – she didn't realize how good a musician she was, and she felt limited because she didn't have much instruction. So when I was eight, she sent me to another teacher. And later, after the kids were out of the house, she began to teach again. She had up to forty students at one point and the students just loved her. Then she petered off, she let it peter off. But yes, we had plenty of music. My brother was not musical. Actually, he's very musical but he never learned an instrument. But my sister is actually a music therapist, my younger sister.

Sellers: There's a lot of music in your family.

Louwenaar: Mm-hmm.

Sellers: When you graduated from high school did you go to music training?

Louwenaar: Yes. I went to Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, and I was a performance major in piano. I got a bachelor of music degree in piano performance from Wheaton in '62, 1962. I was born in '40.

Sellers: From there what did you do?

Louwenaar: I did a master's degree at University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign (or Champaign-Urbana). I wanted to finish in one year but I was unable to do so. I needed to do a little bit more work, one semester, but I didn't need to stay the whole two semesters. So actually I job hunted and Wheaton hired me to teach. And so for the first semester that I taught at Wheaton, I was driving back and forth for two hours and twenty minutes. Each week I stayed three days in one city and four in the other that first semester. But I managed to get my recital done and finish my degree. Then I stayed at Wheaton actually for a total of five years. I didn't think I would do that, but I did.

Sellers: That was as a piano instructor?

Louwenaar: Instructor, yes. I also taught some theory, music theory.

Sellers: When did the interest in harpsichord and things like that flower?

Louwenaar: Actually, that started at the University of Illinois. There was a musicology professor there by the name of George Hunter who played the harpsichord but he was familiar somewhat with a lot of early instruments. I don't know whether he's the one who was responsible for getting a good harpsichord for the University of Illinois, but it was in his office and he gave lessons on it. I was very fascinated; I took those lessons my second semester. During that semester, the Dutch harpsichordist Leonhardt, Gustav Leonhardt, came and played on that harpsichord in a large Methodist church in downtown Urbana or Champaign. I heard that recital and I couldn't believe what he was able to do with this harpsichord that has no dynamics, because it was very dynamic and interesting playing. I was hooked from then on.

After the five years at Wheaton, I went to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, to do a doctorate.

Sellers: A doctorate is fairly unusual for a music professor, is it not?

Louwenaar: No, not any more, no. In fact, this school, Florida State University, was I believe the first school in the country to institute a doctoral music degree in performance.

Sellers: It seems that a lot of the professors who I've interviewed from the College of Music have been professors but have not had a doctorate.

Louwenaar: Yes, but those in my generation and now the newer ones, it's pretty well expected. Our younger piano colleagues that we've hired in the last few years both have doctorates. It's not absolutely required, but it's pretty normal now because it's offered generally in the country.

Sellers: When did you finish your doctoral studies?

Louwenaar: I stayed at Eastman for two years, and of course that took care of the course work but not the — their written document they called a "dissertation," and it was actually registered by University Microfilms in Ann Arbor. Most schools now don't call it a dissertation because part of what normally is the dissertation are the performances that you have to do for the degree. They called theirs a dissertation. At the point when I had finished those two years, I was not interested in writing a dissertation, but I was very interested in going abroad before I got into another job. So I applied for a grant, a Fulbright, but what I got was one from the German government, from the German Academic Exchange Service, *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, DAAD, the "DAAD," as we called it. I spent two years in Germany, in Cologne. I didn't really have to take any classes there, I was there to study piano and German culture and so forth. But I learned as soon as I arrived there that there was a harpsichord professor, so I took both piano and harpsichord. Then in January of my first year, my piano

professor died very suddenly. I was having so much fun with harpsichord and I'd studied piano for so many years – in fact, I was learning music to play in a public recital in Cologne – I thought, “I don't need to have any more lessons, I can do the recital by myself.” So I went to this manager who produced local concerts and did it that way. I continued to study harpsichord only, with permission from the DAAD. (It's like changing your major, and I had to go to their offices). I stayed there for two years, was able to do some traveling around Europe. Before I went, I ordered a Tourist Delivery VW, one of the red-orange color – tangerine color, that I drove all over Europe for a year and a half. I got it in the spring of my first year.

Sellers: Did you bring it back with you?

Louwenaar: Yes, shipped it back.

Sellers: Do you still have it?

Louwenaar: No.

Sellers: Oh, that's a shame.

Louwenaar: Yeah, it is in a way. But no air conditioning, and it was not very suitable here. So I sold it after one year at FSU.

Sellers: How did you end up at Florida State?

Louwenaar: Oh, that's an interesting story and I like to tell it, actually, to graduate students who are job hunting, to encourage them. During my second year in Cologne, I knew I had to get a job somewhere because one extension is all you get from the DAAD. So I was registered with the Eastman job search bureau and also with a business in Chicago called Lutton's Music Personnel Service. You've heard of it? And for Lutton's, if you got a job through them, of course you had to pay them a fee from your first year's earnings. But nevertheless – and they had the same system as Eastman where they would send out double postcards announcing the jobs. Well, first of all, you had to file all your credentials with both places and then they would send notices. If you were interested in applying for a particular position, you would tear the card apart and send one half back to them saying, “Yes, send my paperwork.” Then as the candidate searching, I would have to write a cover letter, send my vita and other papers – no letters of recommendation, they were all in the files that those two agencies provided – and a tape recording. That was the system. I actually made a trip back to the States at my own expense. I had gotten a little work over there, actually, playing harpsichord as part of a small chamber orchestra, and I had enough money to fly myself back here. I had three interviews at different places, but not at Florida State. After I visited family, then I went back to Germany without any kind of offer, without any kind of job. So I kept applying for other positions as I learned about them. It got to be late May and I didn't have a job yet, but it was a long holiday weekend, Pentecost Weekend, which they call *Pfingsten*. So a friend and I decided to toot down to the

Black Forest; I hadn't been there yet, so we were going to go. I came back to my apartment at about seven o'clock on Friday evening and found a letter in the mail – not an announcement from either Lutton's or Eastman, but a letter from Wiley Housewright, Dean of this School of Music. I opened it and it said, "We have a position open and I have learned about you from Lutton's –" and I immediately saw red because Lutton's had not sent me the card! This was totally unsolicited, and that's not the way it was supposed to work.

Sellers: What year was this?

Louwenaar: 1972. Then my second thought was, "Okay, so why did he do this? It's getting late in the year and he doesn't want 150 applicants," because piano jobs were running about 150 that year. And so he called them [Lutton's] and got them to bypass the system and send a small collection of names of people they thought might be appropriate. So I had a better chance. Well, a holiday weekend, everything closing up, and it was seven o'clock on Friday. The post office was open only till noon the next day and I had only one set of my papers that I was supposed to send out – you know, the resume and all that. I had only one set left. No place to copy it. So I called a friend – I had made friends with a German family and there were a couple of brothers and their families, and one of the brothers had a business and I knew he had a copy machine. So I called him, and he agreed to meet me at his office on Saturday morning to make copies of my stuff. I got it all together and I got it to the post office and mailed it just before it closed at noon for the long weekend, and I went off to the Black Forest. Oh, I also called my mother who was sending out my tapes for me. She had sent the last tape she had available to the University of Hawaii. So I asked her to call the University of Hawaii immediately on Monday morning – that was a one-year position – and have them, whether they heard the tape or not, send that tape straight to Florida State as fast as possible, and I went off for the weekend.

Sellers: Well, what did Wiley say in his letter that made you want to do all of this after you calmed down?

Louwenaar: I needed a job!

Sellers: But did you know anything about Florida State?

Louwenaar: One of my friends at Eastman had graduated from Florida State with her master's degree, that's all I knew. I knew that it was a pretty good school and kind of large. But at that point I didn't care, I just wanted a job. I needed a job. I wasn't choosy.

Sellers: Had you ever heard of him?

Louwenaar: No, I had never heard the name.

Sellers: But it sounded good.

Louwenaar: Hey, a job! And it was a piano job. So I came back from the Black Forest on Tuesday evening. On Thursday evening my phone rang, and it was Wiley Housewright, and he offered me the job on the phone.

Sellers: Had he gotten your paperwork?

Louwenaar: Yes. I was surprised, but he'd gotten the paperwork. I had told him in the letter that I had already made one trip to the States, that I could not afford to make another trip, but that I would be available if he wanted me to perform. He offered me the job on the phone, and he told me then that there was some interest in my application because of the fact that I'd had a little experience with harpsichord, because they had just gotten the school on a waiting list for a harpsichord from William Dowd in Boston. However, it was a piano position, and of course I had to win the job on my "piano chops," as we say. So we talked for a little while and then he said, "Well, are you interested?" I said, "Yes, of course." So then he offered me a salary and he said, "Will you have your doctorate finished?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, I have to knock that down by \$500." I said, "That's fine" [Laughter]. I won't tell you the figure, but nothing like today [Laughter].

Sellers: Oh, I'm sure. [Laughs]

Louwenaar: I hung up on the phone, I just burst into tears. I could not believe it. The questions just flooded into my mind. Did the tape arrive? Was he doing this without consulting the piano faculty? Did he have any input from anybody else? I mean, who was this guy, what was he up to?

Sellers: Not knowing of course that he didn't need any of that, being who he was.

Louwenaar: Well, I didn't know him. I was absolutely on pins and needles until I got the actual letter from him, which took over a week. I came here sight unseen. I stayed in Germany as long as I could in August and then I flew back to Michigan, because when I left Rochester, my parents – you know what parents do – they drove out to Rochester, my dad pulling his trailer. They loaded all my stuff, they took it to Michigan; they towed my car to Michigan – not the trailer, the car. They had their car and my car full of my belongings. I flew back to Michigan, loaded up my stuff and then he pulled the trailer, drove me down here in late August, I guess it was. School started then – it was the quarter system – so it started in September.

Sellers: So this would have been August of '72.

Louwenaar: '72. I had no car for a while.

Sellers: Had you ever been South before?

Louwenaar: My mother's oldest sister had moved to Miami during the construction boom

back in the, whatever —

Sellers: Twenties.

Louwenaar: The twenties – because she had married a very fine carpenter who, in fact, with his colleagues down there did all the doors on the Fontainebleau Hotel. He was a furniture maker not just a carpenter. So we had made a trip during Christmas break when I was fourteen. The family all hopped in the car on Christmas Day (took the tree down early) and went down there.

Sellers: So you had seen the South in the wintertime.

Louwenaar: Yes. I just knew it was going to be beastly hot and I wouldn't like that, and I wouldn't stay long, you know. I needed a job, so I'll teach there for a few years and then I'll go where I want.

Sellers: Then you got here in August, which is only surpassed by September in its beastliness.

Louwenaar: We got out of the car at my apartment complex, and my mom and my dad and myself, and nobody said a word. We just started unloading. It was just drip immediately, you know. But the apartment was nicely air conditioned, of course.

Sellers: How had you gotten the apartment?

Louwenaar: The Dean's secretary sent me a lot of information about apartments and I had just picked it out. Anyway, I learned after I got here that the tape had arrived, the piano faculty had met on Wednesday afternoon, their usual meeting time. They listened to three tapes and they chose mine, or they evaluated three applications and listened to the tapes and chose mine. Between that day and Thursday when he called me, he told me later, he got on the phone and called people whose names he found in the materials from Lutton's (I don't know if he had the other stuff with the letters, but the letters would have been the same) because he didn't want to spend the money and take the time to bring me over. He felt confident enough from that to actually hire me sight unseen. He said he'd never done that before and never did it after. I feel to this day that God just picked me up from Germany and planted me in Tallahassee. When I got here, I didn't like the heat but it turned out to be the perfect job for me. They were interested in having me do something with harpsichord. They never thought I was going to do as much as I did – I got a little carried away. I've worked under four deans here and every one of them was just outstanding. They all had the same attitude, which was to support the faculty, to help them do what they feel they need to do in order to do their jobs well. I could not imagine having had a better and more suitable job for me or a more congenial place, collegial. I mean, I've just had the best time here. I'm ready now to do something else, because I did thirty-five years here and then five years at Wheaton, so that's forty years of college teaching. That's kind of a nice round

number and time to close it off. Do some travel. Except I married a man who's ten and a half years younger than I, and he two years ago found the best job he's ever had. So he's not quite ready to travel yet. He loves to travel, so he's going to find a way. He's looking toward maybe fall, this big project he's working on —. Maybe he'll be able to break out.

Sellers: When you got here, what was your teaching schedule?

Louwenaar: I taught just piano lessons, and I was in the corner studio which was that corner of the building, the southeast corner on this floor, which is a huge room. It was Carlisle Floyd's room, the composer, who also taught some piano. He was a very fine pianist. I believe I taught in the mornings and he taught in the afternoons. I had just piano students (let me grab one of my class books) — I think it was probably about twenty — September '72 to December '74, piano lessons [looking through class books]. Oh my goodness, I gave an 'F' the first semester. [Counts number of students] – twenty-one. But, the basic load was twenty.

Sellers: Now was this a course that the students were vetted for before they got here, or was this the beginning piano course —

Louwenaar: They had to audition. These were all – I believe they were all music students that had been admitted to the School of Music at that time (now it's the College of Music) on the basis of their audition.

Sellers: How did you find their ability?

Louwenaar: I didn't have any really outstanding ones at the beginning, but I had a lot of good what we call "principals." There's performance major and then there's principal, and the principal level is for someone who is majoring in another area of music like music theory, music history or something like that. They still have to be able to make music whether it's voice or an instrument. But the requirements are not quite so high as to the level of playing, the amount of time expected to practice, and you know, repertoire to learn, the level of the repertoire and so forth. It looks as though I didn't have any majors at the beginning. I think I had all principals and maybe some secondaries who are just students who are majoring in another area of music and they're not required (or they may be required) to take piano even though their primary instrument is flute or something; then they take "secondary" lessons. I had students outside the College of Music who were competent to take secondary lessons – like physics students who had studied piano. Sometimes they played better than the music secondaries. After '73, it looks like the same load. Oh, interesting. The guy who got an "F" the first semester ended up with a 'B-' the second semester; he learned something.

Sellers: That makes you feel good, doesn't it?

Louwenaar: Yeah, it does, actually. Oh, this is interesting. Right away, the winter quarter of that first year, I taught six harpsichord students – and that was in a class, I remember. The

school had an old harpsichord, a different type that was not historically accurate. Kind of heavy, different kind of sound, not the nice resonant sound. It was sort of a cross between the modern piano and a harpsichord —

Sellers: You had said that Dr. Housewright had put the school on the list for a harpsichord.

Louwenaar: Edward Kilenyi, who was a piano professor here, apparently had accomplished that, I'm sure through the Dean, but it was his idea apparently or he's the one who pushed for it.

Sellers: So there was a real one coming?

Louwenaar: Yes, right. I got to do the specs and so forth for that about two and a half years later. That's a clavichord over there [pointing across the room], it dates from the '50s; that's also not historically accurate, but it's actually got a good sound and it's very stable. Professor Kilenyi was also very, very interested in clavichord and he played on it sometimes. He was just interested in historical keyboard instruments. The harpsichord that they had then he would play. But he also saw that the new type of harpsichord, which was more historically accurate, sort of began to sweep over the country at that time. It started in Europe, you know; they would make copies of the actual instruments that were in museums, the finest ones they could locate. The sounds are much more beautiful and full and rich, actually, maybe not quite as loud in some places. Those other ones with the cast iron frames, they could make them bigger, but the sound was not that of historical harpsichords.

Sellers: Did you have students that were interested in the harpsichord?

Louwenaar: Well, that first year I had six who took it as a class. It took a little while to get harpsichord passed through the channels to actually add it to the catalog, of course. I don't know any more how long that took, to be honest. I didn't have anybody major in harpsichord for a very long time. They were principals. But over the years that I've been here, there were between five and ten who got very interested and got a little bit carried away. One of them actually ended up playing in an international competition in Edinburgh.

Sellers: As the years went by, did you see any kind of a change in the students? Were they coming to you better prepared or —

Louwenaar: Not in harpsichord.

Sellers: Not in harpsichord, okay. How about in piano?

Louwenaar: Yes. I would say they did come better prepared over time. Although I had some good ones. You know, piano has been part of the curriculum in colleges and pre-college training for a very long time and there were some very good pianists back then. I didn't get to teach them

because I was new and young and they, if they had a chance to request a teacher, would request the well known ones like Kilenyi, James Stroom, and Leonard Mastrogiacomio.

Sellers: Did that bother you?

Louwenaar: No, no. I had to earn my way up, I had to earn my stripes like everybody.

Sellers: What was the day to day relationship between the younger faculty and the older faculty? Did you interact with them on a pretty regular basis or was it kind of a “stand back and look at them in awe?” How did that work?

Louwenaar: No, we interacted, I think very nicely and very well. I was not a babe in the woods; I was thirty when I took the job – thirty-two, sorry. I’d been to Europe for two years and I’d taught for five years. You know, a master’s was a year and a half, and a little over two years at Eastman.

Sellers: So you weren’t completely starry eyed?

Louwenaar: No, but I was with Kilenyi, because I knew that he had quite a career and so forth. It was a very long time before I got around to calling him by his first name. All the other colleagues were on a first name basis immediately.

Sellers: You said that you worked with four deans and that they had all been very supportive. Tell me a little bit about each one and your perception of them.

Louwenaar: Dean Housewright had already been here, of course, a long time when I came. His field was music education (you probably know that). He was very supportive of my efforts, but I actually didn’t have a lot of contact with him. I didn’t have need to, actually. Mr. Mastrogiacomio was the coordinator for the keyboard area when I came, and we were all on the same floor. At that time Dr. Boda taught piano, Carlisle Floyd taught some piano; those were both composers. Tommie Wright, of course. And those people had been here for a long time; there were actually maybe eight people teaching piano but not full time. The composers were often teaching mostly composition. Housewright, I respected him, I liked him. I had no fights with him or anything like that. He was very supportive.

I got to order the harpsichord and write the specifications for it. That turned out to be an interesting process because I had to write the specs – I’d never done anything like that before. I tried to write the specs in such a way that Dowd would be the only viable bidder, because they had to go out for bid. Sure enough, somebody else came in and underbid him. So then I had to write a justification for going with the higher bid.

Sellers: Why did you particularly want Dowd?

Louwenaar: Well, actually, Eddie Kilenyi had gotten us on that list but I supported that.

William Dowd and Frank Hubbard in the Boston area began working together back in the late '60s, I believe, to make replicas of some of the harpsichords that they saw in museums, they had seen in museums. They were at Harvard, or had just graduated from Harvard or something, but they knew each other from Harvard. I don't know whether they had initially already been to Europe and seen some over there, but right there in Boston, the Museum of Art, they have fine instruments. I think some of those were there at that time. The one instrument after which our particular harpsichord was copied is in the Yale collection of instruments, and of course that's just up the road – or down the road. So they were part of a larger movement also in Europe on the part of people making harpsichords to go back to the historical harpsichord, because it actually had a more appealing and much better sound than these factory ones that had sprung up.

Sellers: So you had a lot of faith in this manufacturer?

Louwenaar: Absolutely, there was no doubt about that. Nobody could touch him at that time. And that continued for a very long time.

Sellers: So was that your justification? Did that work?

Louwenaar: Yes, it worked, and that was the justification then, that Dowd was the best builder in the country and a school like this deserves the best quality, it will hold up the best over time, and so forth and so on. Fortunately, this other bidder who had underbid had a shop in Michigan, and I had been there once when I was home in the summer. He worked out of the barn in back of his house, and he did not have a lot of experience and training and so forth. But he was interested in harpsichords and he wanted to make harpsichords. The one sticking point that I had placed in there that I thought might stop him – I called him about it, since I'd met him – I said, "Do you do this?" He said, "Yeah, I'll do anything you want." Anyway, that was my justification, that he would not produce a fine instrument. But then at somebody else's suggestion I asked Professor Kilenyi to write something also, and he did a half sheet handwritten, and his last sentence was, "A harpsichord by this man would be a dead loss in a few years." [Laughter] So this had to go all the way up to the director of purchasing for the state of Florida, and fortunately he understood the difference between a musical instrument and a desk or a chair for an office.

Sellers: Some of them don't. [Laughter]

Louwenaar: So the University paid \$5,500 for that instrument, and it came in '75, and if we were to put it on the market now, the asking price would be \$30,000 or more.

Sellers: Have the harpsichords themselves appreciated that much or —?

Louwenaar: Yes, because it's a Dowd and it turned out to be a very successful instrument. With each one being handmade, each one is different from every other one. There are some that, even from a shop that is that good, aren't as good as others. Ours is not the finest one he ever

made, but it's a very, very good one. Within a couple of years I realized that – well, even before the instrument came, I knew that the tuner that we had here, the tuner technician, knew nothing about harpsichords. So I thought maybe I should learn something. I got a small grant from the Foundation to spend the Christmas break in the Dowd shop in Boston. Bill Dowd was quite a character. He could be very acerbic. He could bite your head off if he didn't like something; very intense man. Brilliant man, but very outspoken. He was very helpful to me. He himself showed me how to do the quills. He let me work on an instrument that they had in the shop; he took out all the quills from one octave, all the jacks, the mechanism, and he gave me a set of jacks for which I had to make new quills using his instructions. He showed me how to voice them and cut them so they'd have the right sound and all that. He also taught me how to tune, and I feel very privileged to have had that week in the shop, even though – this is during Christmas break in Boston and the heat went out – it was 45 degrees in that shop for day after day after day. But that's probably like old Europe, eighteenth century Europe. [Laughter]

Sellers: That's the conditions they were working in.

Louwenaar: Anyway, that's the story of the first harpsichord.

Sellers: The next dean?

Louwenaar: The next dean was Bob Glidden, Robert Glidden. He was also just very supportive of the whole harpsichord business – we got another one in 1980. I can't remember when Glidden came, actually, but we got another Dowd harpsichord. Well, before we got that one, we did get a smaller, single manual instrument made by a couple guys in central Florida. They knew much more about woodwork and the case work than about the musical side of it. Later on we had somebody else re-do parts of it, and actually we still use that one a lot. It was redone by a man who used to work in the Dowd shop; he was the shop foreman. He's been down here three times to work on it and the two Dowds at the school. Dowd closed his shop a number of years ago; he retired and he refused to let anybody else make instruments under his name, so there's a limited supply of Dowds, which is why it's \$30,000 or more. But the man who was his shop manager took all the pieces and parts that were left over to his house. So he travels around the country servicing old Dowds. I think there were a total of maybe 500, I'm not sure about that. Ours is No. 315.

Sellers: Is there a younger generation that's able to do that?

Louwenaar: There has been, and most of them learned under Dowd. But I just had a visit from one last Saturday who made an instrument for me in the early '90s. He was coming through because his son was in school here. It had taken seven years, but he was finally graduating! [Laughter] The graduation was Friday night, he called me Saturday morning. He said, "This is Richard Kingston." I said, "Oh, where are you?" He said, "I'm in Quincy." I said, "WHAT!" So he came over to my house and checked out the instrument and we spent a couple of hours talking. But he told me that he's going to close his shop at the end of the summer. He's got back problems and so forth. He's made over 300 of them. And a couple of others in his

generation, which is between 40 and 50, who did very fine work also are either in the process of closing or they're already closed. He thinks that all of the really good instruments that that generation (the next generation after Dowd) made, along with the Dowds, will continue to appreciate because it's a limited supply now with those names on them.

Sellers: But is his generation training the next generation to maintain them?

Louwenaar: Well, to maintain, probably not. But anybody who buys a harpsichord who is a serious musician learns how to take care of it, because it's constant maintenance; it's a nightmare.

Sellers: Why?

Louwenaar: They don't have a cast iron frame, so they're all wood.

Sellers: So they warp?

Louwenaar: Exactly, they can warp. And they react to temperature and humidity like this. Very quickly.

Sellers: And a regular house is not climate controlled to the extent that you need.

Louwenaar: Right. Of course, in the old days in Europe, they had some of the same thing, same issues. But they didn't have the climate extremes that Florida has. In fact, I had an instrument that I ordered from a Dutch maker for a number of years, and it had a very beautiful sound but it didn't like even these winters. I tried to keep the humidity up enough in the winter. Mine did okay but it started to develop a few problems so I got rid of it, actually. But a colleague of mine at Oberlin liked mine so much, she ordered one from him; and in the twenty percent humidity at Oberlin Conservatory and at her house in the winter, it really did kind of fall apart. He took that one back.

Sellers: Yet he wouldn't have been responsible for the climate.

Louwenaar: No, but he - the first one he ever placed in this country was mine, and then hers, I believe, might have been the second one. He's had a few more in this country but not very many because I think he didn't want to make changes, because they would affect the sound. It had a wonderful sound, both mine and hers.

Sellers: You just couldn't keep it working or keep it together.

Louwenaar: Right. So anyway, that was during the Glidden time. By that time Baroque Ensemble had started and I was teaching a class in continuo playing, which is a style of playing in the Baroque period where the keyboard player is looking at a part or a full score that has just

the bass line notes and then numbers which indicate the harmonies, the intervals above the bass that provide the harmony. It's kind of a code that you have to learn. It has to do a lot with music theory, understanding, and the style of music. So I started that class and I taught it all these years.

Sellers: Were you involved in the creation of the Baroque Ensemble?

Louwenaar: Yes. It wasn't my idea to do it. One of the students who was studying harpsichord came to me and said, "I think we need to have a baroque ensemble." I said, "Okay." [Laughter]

Sellers: Talk a little bit about that. How'd you get faculty and the students together?

Louwenaar: Well, that didn't involve the faculty; that was just for the students.

Sellers: There is a faculty ensemble, is there not?

Louwenaar: There has been. I don't know what's going to happen to it now.

End side A

Sellers: So you had a student and he came to you —

Louwenaar: Yes. At the beginning, we would just have two or three other students and we were playing on the old harpsichord with modern instruments. The thing about baroque playing, baroque performance instruments, is that the pitch was lower then, and in fact modern violins that were made in the seventeenth century, in order to play as modern violins with steel strings, they've been changed. They've been reinforced to allow more tension on the strings, to raise the pitch to 440. Actually over time it came up gradually in Europe. So the whole neck of the instrument has been bent down. The baroque violin is a little more flat; it doesn't have that kind of bend that you see. And the bridge is higher to support the tension on the strings now. So at the beginning, we had all modern instruments – modern oboe, modern violins and so forth. The impetus for getting some period instruments here at the school came the first time that the opera department wanted to do a baroque opera with a period instrument orchestra. That was _____ [??] (It will come to me when I'm not trying to think of it).

Sellers: We can fill it in.

Louwenaar: Yes, we're going to have to. I'll blurt it out mid-sentence.

Sellers: Think of something else.

Louwenaar: I want to say Monteverdi's *Poppea*. I think that was probably it, but I'll be

certain later. So they brought in a fellow from New York who played the big lute called a “theorbo,” and we had two harpsichords in the pit. By that time, the early music ensemble had been formed by Dr. Kite-Powell. They had their own harpsichord, a smaller one, that actually a friend of mine in Atlanta had and wanted to get rid of and so they bought it; they got a good deal on that. It was appropriate for what they wanted to do. So that and our small single were in the pit. So for the performances of *Poppea*, the school was able to purchase three baroque violins. By that time Karen Clarke had gotten interested and was playing baroque violin, and her husband George Riordan had taken an interest in baroque oboe. We had some recorders. The oboe wasn’t part of that orchestra. In other words, there was already an interest formed then. Then we were able to get a baroque cello – maybe we got that for that performance, too. But now we have about five or six violins, we have a viola; we have a cello; we have, of course, recorders; we have baroque flutes, we have a baroque bassoon. There are baroque trumpets that Bryan Goff sometimes brings out. They’re all a different form of the modern instruments. Generally they’re a more mellow sound. Baroque horn has no valves. That’s probably the most challenging one. We have baroque trombones but we haven’t worked with them for a while. Later through the early music department with Jeff Kite-Powell, they also bought small tympani like they used to have. So we have baroque tympani, also. He’s got a whole collection of the renaissance and even some medieval instruments in the early music room in the other building. And also a continuo organ, a small cabinet organ that you can wheel around that is used also as part of the orchestra and sometimes to accompany choral singing.

Sellers: Will you continue with that career even though you retire?

Louwenaar: Well, that’s been a bit of an issue here recently because my position was a piano position and it really needs to remain as a piano position. But there aren’t very many people out there like me who do both piano and harpsichord on pretty much the same professional level. So, next year Dr. Corzine is retiring; he’s our organist. A lot of organists also play harpsichord, and there may be even more organist/harpsichordists out there than pianist/harpsichordists. Traditionally the organ teaching load has not been as high, although its been coming up recently. Anyway, the decision was made by the dean to do the search this year that’s just past for just a piano position, and they have found somebody and I understand she’s coming in. Then next year they will search for an organist/harpsichordist to cover these things. But many College of Music faculty have gotten used to being able to have these experiences for their students. The viola teacher will recommend to some of the better students in particular, “You know, you ought to take baroque ensemble for a little while and get interested, get used to it.” Because when particularly string players, but also some wind players, when they go off after they graduate and they get jobs in various places, they can probably pick up some money on the side if they can do the baroque instruments, particularly if they’re in large cities. Also, it just enriches the whole program here, because now we have of course very modern music, and we have very, very early music, and we have baroque, which is kind of middle-early. Now we also have a fortepiano, which is an early type of piano from the time of Mozart – a copy of one, of course. The flute professor, for example, is very concerned about her flutists because she herself does not play baroque flute but she encourages the students to do so. There’s a class even for baroque flute, and this last semester she was teaching on the London program and the FSU graduate that was

hired to teach for her that semester had good experience in baroque flute, so she taught a baroque flute class and there were seven people in it. And it wasn't even required, but they just wanted to. The school has a number of flutes.

Sellers: Seems to me that the music students are a group that are very much willing to take more than what is required.

Louwenaar: That seems to be the case.

Sellers: They're here for the love of the music and they want to learn, where in a lot of other colleges and schools the students are here because they need to get a degree to get a job.

Louwenaar: Our music students need jobs, too. You're right.

Sellers: There's so much extra involved in a music degree, and the learning and practice, and dedication that comes with learning things, that I think it makes them much more goal-oriented in a professional way rather than a money-making way.

Louwenaar: Right. You're correct about that.

Sellers: We were running down deans.

Louwenaar: Oh. [Laughter]

Sellers: Running down the list of deans! [Laughter]

Louwenaar: Better said. The next one was Jon Piersol, of course. And in terms of support of the early music stuff, he just pretty well continued. Of course, Don Gibson has only been here two years and he's got to deal now with my retirement and what to do with the whole thing. He's very interested and very supportive. And back to that, there is a plan for me to do some part time teaching during just one year, the next year, to cover. But I told him that I really don't want to do it more than one year. So that sort of put the pressure on him to find somebody who can do it because like I said, forty years —! I've loved it and I still love what I do, you know, and have done. But it's just time to reinvent myself, at least to some extent.

Sellers: What do you think are some strong points about the FSU College of Music?

Louwenaar: I think the strongest point is the professionalism, the level of competence and professionalism across the board, on the part of the faculty, the deans; the standards are high and they know what they're doing.

Sellers: If you were trying to talk a student into coming here as opposed to somewhere else?

Louwenaar: What I tell them is that this is a good place. The people, not just the music, the people are good. They're supportive, they're helpful to the students, we get along. We have our differences; we're musicians, after all, you know, we're temperamental. But it doesn't last long, and if it becomes a problem, it's dealt with swiftly and professionally. I have been saying all these years, we're here for the students, to help them, to help them prepare and get ready for what they're going to be doing when they leave. I tell the parents, if their kids come here, they'll be treated right.

Sellers: Maybe not weak points, but if there's something that you could change before you left, what might that be?

Louwenaar: Oh, I haven't thought of that. Well, frankly, I would like to see someone in this early music business (it would require another faculty position, which is not likely to happen) who does nothing but that. All of us who do, who are involved in early instruments, and also the voice teachers who deal with students who want to sing in that style, it's a sideline. And although I got approval years ago for a performance degree on both the bachelor's and master's level in performance in harpsichord, no one has ever done it. I've had inquiries; people come here and audition. And I know it's because it's not a big program. They go to places like Indiana. I just got a message from a young woman who auditioned here, came down and auditioned in person and I showed her around and everything. I think she would have liked to have studied with me; and this past year there was another one who would like to have studied with me. But there's not enough going on. There's not much of a baroque orchestra like some schools have now. The University of North Texas, for example, they have a huge program. Somebody poured a whole bunch of money into that. They've got seven or eight harpsichords, they've got a full orchestra of all early instruments. They just sort of built a new department, and we don't have that kind of money, we don't have the facilities, either, to handle what they've got. I don't think it's part of the vision for the future. So I think while everybody's interested in it and wants to encourage it, I think it will probably – in this school, unless some drastic changes happen – will remain an integral part of the school and an important one, but not a large one. There won't be a separate department of early music, for example, I don't think. If the resources were available and the space and so forth, I would like to see that happen here. I would have liked to have seen it happen. I never pushed for it because, frankly, I didn't think it was realistic for the entire picture, the entire situation here, including space.

Sellers: What have I not asked you that you would like to add?

Louwenaar: I don't know; I've never done an interview like this before.

Sellers: Well, I think you've been very thorough.

Louwenaar: Well, that means you've been thorough, asking questions that pull it out of me. I've had a wonderful time here. I can't imagine having been in a better place. I wouldn't have stayed here if it hadn't been good. I did apply for two other jobs in the earlier years, and one I

withdrew my application even before they got around to deciding who they wanted to invite because I decided I wasn't interested in that after all. The other one, actually I went to interview, and when I came back from the interview I was kind of interested in going to that school if they offered it to me, but by the next day I had changed my mind on that one. Well, they didn't offer it to me, so I had no decision to make. So sometimes it's good to interview somewhere else and come back and realize how good you have it here.

Sellers: So you came and you've been here 35 years?

Louwenaar: Thirty-five years. The five years at Wheaton earlier, that's 40 years of college teaching.

Sellers: Sounds like a good place to end it.

Louwenaar: I think so.

End