

## Chapter 5: Academic Foundations

### *The College Years*

At the age of 18, I abandoned my midwestern and western roots to head east for college. Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was a very different environment from anything I had experienced in Kansas and Colorado. Most of my new classmates were from northeastern upper-class urban areas and seemed better prepared, more secure, and somehow more sophisticated. I had been accepted as a music composition major based on a choral piece with two-piano accompaniment that I had composed, performed, and recorded while at George Washington High School in Denver. However, freshmen in CMU's Music Department were not allowed to take any composition classes. We were required to be either a voice or piano major and only concentrate on theory and basic fundamentals of the discipline during our first year. This was somewhat traumatic for me because I did not wish to sing opera and had a lot of catching up to do in classical piano. I opted for the piano and went to work reviewing all the rudiments and repertoire of someone training to be a classical pianist.

This resulted in a major surge in my growth and expansion as a musician and as a student in general. I began to manage my time so that practicing and homework took a new precedence in my life. I had forfeited my scholarship to the University of Colorado to attend this very expensive private Ivy League College without a scholarship on a gamble that by my sophomore year, I would somehow earn one at CMU. The pressure was on, and I was up for the challenge. Applying myself as never before, I taught myself to take short naps so that I could return to work for long hours after dinner. The janitor in the Fine Arts Building and I made a deal that he would leave the door to the practice rooms open if I would lock up when I left (usually around 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. every

morning). It worked out very well because when I finished my schoolwork, I could stay in the practice room and switch to writing songs for the school musical until late into the night. The work paid off because I did earn scholarships every succeeding year.

Subjects like solfeggio, eurythmics, counterpoint, and orchestration became familiar to me. Dr. Rinaldo's stunning course in the History of Arts and Civilization exposed me to new cultures, classic artistic achievements, and numerous sources of ancient philosophies and wisdom. His course gave me insight regarding important connections between social, political, intellectual, and artistic movements. He used music, projected photographs of signature artworks, quotes, and riveting stories that humanized the iconic figures that shaped our history. This was the first time I comprehended the value and vibrancy of historical inquiry. I also witnessed the way that a good professor could ignite a classroom full of learners with his passion for the subject and an interdisciplinary approach to pedagogy.

The Pittsburgh Symphony, Pittsburgh Playhouse, Pittsburgh Grand Opera, and the Carnegie Museum of Art all brought artistic masterpieces alive in a way I had never before experienced. I took an enlightening course in the art of mime taught by the highly esteemed Professor Jewel Walker (who had studied with Marcel Marceau in Paris). Mr. Walker was quiet and intense and introduced me to yoga and a whole new approach to nonverbal narrative storytelling. Most of the professors were stimulating and dedicated to guiding us to a higher level of thinking and intellectual capacity. The most notable exception was the primary advisor on my degree track, my composition teacher. It is worth noting that he was a Russian-born, German-trained classical musician. He condescended to every form of music but the most technical and cerebral. He openly detested all art that was popular or sentimental. I had never experienced this depth of

cynicism.

Dwelling on this deeply painful and oppressive mentor-student relationship is not productive except to say that this was my opportunity to experience the difference between humility and humiliation. I also became cognizant of the devastating effects mentors can have on their students. This was the late 1960s when popular music was emerging as a potent and powerful vehicle for social and political transformation. Music was evolving, and although I was respectful of musical tradition, I was also interested in where it was going. This composition professor had the right to hate the Beatles and musical theatre and Leonard Bernstein, but I wonder what he hoped to accomplish when he called the varsity musical that I had written “very entertaining, but musical pornography.”

The value of this relationship was that it made me vividly aware of the wide range of teaching styles employed in education. This professor clearly knew his content. He taught me much about music theory and composition. Perhaps he felt he needed to be tough to get through to me. His harsh criticism did force me to take a close look at the kind of music I was writing and the kind of composer I wanted to be. More importantly, he forced me to look at teacher-student dynamics and examine what style of teaching elicits the best work from the student. Although I learned much in his courses and private instruction, I do not feel that he brought out the best in me. This atmosphere of contention and antagonism was something I wanted to avoid within the Lovewell context. I would be on the lookout for verification that a warm and nurturing learning environment could elicit better academic achievement than one in which students were demeaned and intimidated.

The other excursion into disquieting teacher-student dynamics involved my freshman English teacher. The course was called Thought and Expression and was designed to provide first-year Fine Arts majors with training in contemporary literature, creative writing, and self-expression. It carried the most weight in terms of freshman grade units and, in theory, it was a great concept. However, the course became a very unpleasant challenge and a rude awakening to the absolute abuse of power by an inexperienced dysfunctional English instructor over an insecure dysfunctional freshman music student. I agonized through those classes as he criticized my writing without explaining how to correct it. I may not have learned how to write in that class, but I did learn how to take criticism.

Most of my other professors were truly high caliber if not inspiring. I was at the same time awestruck and intimidated by the excellence of artistic achievement and creative expression surrounding me. The stimulating concerts, forums, art shows, and lectures created a rich interdisciplinary atmosphere. CMU was well-known for highbrow cultural events and rigorous conservatory training requirements. Students in Fine Arts were not automatically accepted back into the program each semester. We were “invited” back only if we were making the grade. It was always traumatic waiting to see who survived the cuts at the beginning of each new semester.

I started working evenings and weekends for some of the professional theatrical entrepreneurs in the Pittsburgh area such as Fred Rogers (1967) of *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood*, Don Brockett, and Bob McCully. My first jobs were as a stage manager and a lighting technician, both of which were good experiences but not what I really wanted to be doing. It was not long before I got involved with performing and writing. My experience in Denver with Bill McHale’s productions (1966) prepared me well for these jobs. It was not easy balancing the academic world with the commercial world in the late 1960s. This was a continuation of my fascination with and exploration of the relationship between the arts, entertainment, and education.

Observations made during these years at CMU still inform me as I continue to examine these issues and inherent conflicts through the lens of Lovewell Institute. Working on projects unrelated to CMU was greatly discouraged if not forbidden by both music and theatre departmental policy. But where else could I work my way through college doing something I enjoyed while getting valuable experience? In the conservatory atmosphere of the music and theatre departments, there was no sense that these “outside jobs” might one day contribute to interdisciplinary career options. In those days, there was little or no attempt by the university’s music or theatre departments to coordinate or cooperate with the top local professionals in theatre, music, and entertainment fields (with the exception of a few adjunct instructors who were musicians in the Pittsburgh Symphony). These struggles to maintain an interdisciplinary balance during my college career illuminated this issue and informed many later decisions concerning cooperation

between competitive disciplines.

I spent the summer between my freshman and sophomore years at CMU performing in a Don Brockett Musical Theatre Revue at the Hershey Hotel in Eastern Pennsylvania. The performers lived and ate in a ramshackle dormitory with the illegal aliens who were the kitchen help and gardeners for the resort (one had been murdered in a game of craps the week before we arrived). During the last 3 weeks of the summer, I had the opportunity to tour the United States in a Don Brockett CBS musical industrial show selling radio advertising time to media buyers and marketing executives. The cast of the show stayed in luxury hotels from Beverly Hills to New York; ate on an expense account in top restaurants; and were chauffeured between the airports, the hotels, and all of our rehearsals and performances. It was an eye-opening experience for a 19-year-old that sent me plunging into my sophomore year a week after classes had started. The realities of a life in the performing arts became vividly clear during this time. It was dramatic and often fun but nothing that would encourage or resemble stability. I did not know it yet, but stability was what I needed most as I returned to school.

Many Ivy League colleges had developed a “mask and wig” tradition in the form of a student organization that sponsored original student-written productions as an extracurricular activity during the school year. Harvard had the famous “Hasty Pudding” review, Princeton had the “Triangle,” and CMU had “Scotch N’ Soda.” Involvement in this organization was unquestionably the most valuable and joyful activity of my college career. The annual production my freshman year had been *Pippin* (Schwartz & Strauss, 1967), the first version of what later became the successful Broadway musical that won five Tony Awards (Schwartz, Fosse, & Hirson, 1972). I played the role of Pippin’s brother. That experience inspired me to start writing a show that I hoped would be

produced by Scotch N' Soda. In the spring of my freshman year, I submitted ideas for two musicals with the hope that one would be chosen for the following year. Stephen Schwartz, who had co-written *Pippin* (Schwartz & Strauss), also submitted an idea. I was shocked and delighted when the Selection Committee asked me if I would consider writing my musical as a one act. They asked Stephen to do the same. This resulted in *Twice Upon A Time* (Schwartz & Spangler, 1968), Stephen's one act about Voltaire combined with my one act based on Shakespeare's life and the authenticity issue of his plays.

I wrote the book, music, lyrics, and directed the one-act production in the spring of my sophomore year. Stephen did the same with his one-act musical. Our production was an unqualified success. My one-act musical won third place in the National Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) Varsity Show Contest. I was surprised that my musical could gain national recognition when so much of my writing and directing had been intuitive. Who were those other kids out there writing musicals and how could I be as good at it as they were? What was their training and where did they acquire it? What role had intuition and instinct played in writing, composing, and directing my first musical theatre piece? At the age of 19, it suddenly occurred to me that some of my dreams might actually be coming true. I must have had some bravado but no idea what real confidence was. This was confusing to a young man who felt that just a year ago he was so very far behind his peers in training and abilities.

Stephen and I grew to appreciate each other's musical styles and different approaches to creating musical theatre while collaborating on *Twice Upon A Time* (Schwartz & Spangler, 1968). Looking for another opportunity to work together, we decided to form a singing group, write our own material, and pursue a recording contract.

Stephen had just graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and was ready to go out and conquer the world. I had 2 years left at CMU. His first job after college was working in summer stock at the Barn Theatre in New London, New Hampshire. Stephen suggested that I come and experience what real “summer stock theatre” was. He had worked at the theatre before and arranged a job for me in the box office. After I was there a few weeks, the producers moved me into more creative jobs like choreography, musical staging, and performing in the Straw Hat Revue (a small show that toured to all the resorts and hotels within driving distance of New London drumming up business for the main stage productions). It did not take me long to learn that summer stock was all about doing the most possible war-horse crowd-pleasing musicals in the least amount of time on the smallest possible budget. It was fun for awhile. I created the choreography for *Pal Joey* (Rodgers, O’Hara, & Hart, 1940) and the musical staging for *Do I Hear A Waltz* (Rogers, Sondheim, & Laurents, 1965).

I was growing restless and impatient with summer stock. My interest was in creating new works that reflected current social, ethical and political issues. It was good experience in staging musical numbers but I knew I was not a choreographer. My interpretive arts experience was once again out of balance with my creative arts experience and it was time for me to return to my writing and conceptualizing, but where could I do this and support myself financially?

It is partly because of this summer stock experience that I later decided that the Lovewell Method would emphasize the creation of new works in all of the programs. It seemed to me that there were enough performing arts organizations dedicated to producing existing works. The creative content-oriented approach to musical theatre was simply a different focus that I felt was needed to balance the playing field.

While still in high school, I had begun to write a musical version of *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951) but slowed to a halt when I realized what a tremendous undertaking it would be. Coincidentally, during my freshman year at CMU, I learned that a student majoring in playwriting had adapted the novel into a play as his senior project. I

talked him into letting me score the incidental music for his production. It was an opportunity to use some of the music I had written and learn more about adapting a classic to the stage. In my research, I discovered that J. D. Salinger lived near New London, and I remembered a passage in *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger) wherein Holden made a case for contacting the author directly if the reader had any questions regarding the book. That was all I needed. I bought a rusty old car, quit the summer stock company before the season was over, and headed off into the mountains of New Hampshire to find J. D. Salinger.

I will not go into the details of the search for his secluded house, but I will say that the whole adventure gave me some faith in my investigative abilities. I stood on his porch and knocked on the door with more than a little trepidation. When he opened the door, I blurted out something about speaking directly with the author like Holden Caulfield had recommended in his book. His response was to turn and walk away from the door (leaving it open) and grumble about how “a man can’t even do his work!” (J. D. Salinger, personal communication, August 12, 1968). I said I understood, apologized for the intrusion, and started to leave. He turned back around and said, “I was about ready to take a break anyway, come on in.” The next hour was surreal. I was amazed that this notoriously reclusive author was so receptive to being ambushed by a young stranger in search of some classic coming-of-age answers. The mythically foreboding J. D. Salinger proved to be kind and funny and extremely helpful. I thought I tracked him down to get his permission or blessing to continue writing my musical of *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951). I never mentioned it. After hearing what a bad experience he had with a movie adaptation of one of his short stories and how even Elia Kazan had walked away from that well-publicized meeting at the Plaza Hotel convinced that *Catcher* should never

be made into a film, I was not going to utter a word about my little work in progress.

We talked instead about writing, life choices, his children (who now lived across the road with his ex-wife), and some arcane Chinese poetry he showed me. When it was time to leave, he said he felt there was some reason I had searched him out. He wanted to offer some sort of mentor-to-student advice. I am happy he did because it was exactly what I needed to hear and, to this day, some of the most valuable advice I have ever received. He said that ultimately I should do in life what I loved to do. And that people who do what they love doing usually do it well, consequently they usually get paid well for it. How simple--and yet how difficult. J. D. Salinger certainly lived up to Holden Caulfield's expectations of an author. But the story was not quite over. As I was backing out of his long new gravel driveway, my car slipped into a ravine and got stuck. He immediately came to my rescue with his 4-wheel jeep and a heavy chain to pull me out. The metaphor was almost ridiculous. I was humbled, invigorated, and enlightened by my encounter with J. D. Salinger.

The sage advice from Salinger about doing what one loved to do inspired another component of Lovewell Institute's philosophy. The Lovewell Method encourages interdisciplinary artists to follow their dreams as they broaden their skills. This philosophy draws from the theory that education should focus on quality-of-life and character-building issues every bit as much as marketplace skill-building-type training (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Krishnamurti, 1981). The Lovewell Method endeavors to build confidence in utilizing the creative process as a method of problem solving. Lovewell students are given the opportunity to design new paradigms by exercising their imagination and creativity and channeling that energy into organized collaborative arts-based projects. With their intuitive skills validated, these students learn to trust themselves in their general efforts to achieve their goals and realize their dreams.

My junior year was one of the most difficult of my life. I was brooding from an unresolved situation with a girl I nearly married, and the Scotch N' Soda Board had rejected my idea of a new musical for their next production. The writers of the show that was selected called me months later in a last-minute panic to provide a few songs and orchestrations to doctor their show. I wrote some songs and orchestrations for them and remorsefully accepted the fact that the pressure was not on me to control the fate of their show. Characteristically, I had one foot in the academic track and one foot in the commercial track. Meanwhile, I had no money, my car gave out, and the National Armed

Forces draft lottery was being held to determine if I was going to be called up for service in Vietnam.

I was highly motivated to finish college and get my degree. I had worked very hard to get this far and was beginning to have paranoid thoughts that there was some cosmic conspiracy preventing me from finishing. I signed up for counseling offered through the university, and things got worse. The counselor, a psychology professor, was writing a book on the sexual practices of college students and all he wanted to do during the counseling sessions was interrogate me on “what happened in bed this week?” He prescribed Ritalin *and* Elavil, and I spent the following weeks accelerating the emotional roller coaster I was already on with free prescription drugs from the college pharmacy. Finally, out of desperation, I stopped going to that counselor, threw away the pills, and started planning the show I hoped to write for Scotch N’ Soda for my senior year. Focusing on what I loved to do in the midst of all the chaos proved to be my best temporary salvation. J. D. Salinger’s advice had been valuable. The show, *Something Personal* (Spangler & Pirolo, 1970), was accepted for production my senior year, and I once again had an achievable goal that excited me, motivated me, and would keep me in school.

Lawrence Carra, head of the theatre department’s directing program, asked me to compose, arrange, and record incidental music for CMU’s upcoming production of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (Shakespeare, 1966). This was a welcome challenge and a delight to work on. Never mind that Mr. Carra used my music the following summer in his Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park production without ever notifying me, giving me credit in the playbill, or recompense. This was one of my first opportunities to examine ethical issues involving the creation of new works in an academic setting.

This was the year our classical rock group, The Pipedream, landed a major recording contract with RCA Records. Stephen Schwartz had family connections in the arts and entertainment industry, a good agent, and a great job working for RCA Records as a staff producer. I was commuting from Pittsburgh to New York recording our first album. This is when the clash between college and career became most profound and damaging. I would agonize over each announcement of a CMU concert date. Attendance at rehearsals and performances was mandatory. These were evening and weekend events when I would be scheduled to be recording at RCA Studios in New York. Sometimes the conflict was with a local production job; the only thing paying my bills (RCA only paid royalties on records eventually sold). I was accustomed to conflicting commitments, but this level of intensity and intractability was becoming intolerable. The music department was not interested in hearing any excuses or making any special arrangements for my unique situation. I was recording an album for RCA, and my chorus teacher *and* composition professor were threatening to dock my grades for attendance and aesthetic differences.

Some of my compositions and musical arrangements were going to be recorded by members of the New York Philharmonic, and I was frantic to create an impressive and professional orchestration. When I laid the arrangements out on my composition professor's piano, he commented that he would not look at that "trash." My chorus teacher gave me a conditional failure because I could not make all the choir rehearsals. This is the first time I had ever failed a course. There was no way to make it up. I had received an A the previous semester, and I received A's the following two semesters. At this point, I questioned the value of grades. Ironically, this is the same year I was elected into Omicron Delta Kappa, the Collegiate Junior Honorary Society.

The summer following my junior year was all about finishing the album. I spent a

lot of time in New York rehearsing and recording. This was the summer of Woodstock and finding myself in production in a major studio was a fantasy come true. I felt as though I had found where I truly belonged. I still feel that way about being in a recording studio working with music, words, sound technology, and talented artists. Being creative and productive certainly lifted my spirit. I was ready for my senior year.

My experience in New York had impressed upon me the importance of studying up on the latest technology in music composition. It was the early days of electronic music, and one of the great pioneers in electronic composition was Morton Subotnick. He had recently been hired to teach composition down the street from CMU at the University of Pittsburgh. I arranged to take private instruction with him and receive credit toward graduation at CMU. The University of Pittsburgh created a very different learning environment than CMU, and I was very pleased to have some fresh perspectives on art, music, and technology. The “Buchla” was a cutting edge music synthesizer named after the electrical engineer who invented it. Subotnick was the musician who helped Buchla develop the musical interface with the synthesizer. The music department had acquired a state-of-the-art model of the new synthesizer, and soon I was integrating electronic effects into many of my compositions. I composed music for my friends who were giving senior recitals, such as *Theme and Variations for Piano* (Spangler, 1970b); *Intermezzo for Woodwinds* (Spangler, 1969); and *Aeolus Sacrifice “A Song Poem”* (Spangler, 1970a) for soprano, flute, cello, piano, and prerecorded musical and sound effects. I also composed and arranged musical underscoring for theatre department productions of *Woyzeck* (Buchner & Spangler, 1969) and *Dracula: A Rite* (Katz & Spangler, 1970) written and directed by professors or visiting artists.

RCA released our record on November 11, 1969, and it began doing well. *Variety*

("Top Singles," 1969) listed us as having a top single, and the Gavin Report ("Bill Gavin's," 1970) put us on their "top hits" list. This forced me into one of the toughest decisions of my life. RCA Records wanted us to go on tour immediately. This was January, and I would have to drop out of school midway through my senior year. I had already damaged my grade point average the previous year by commuting to New York for the recording sessions. But for some reason, given this choice of dropping out or going on tour with the band, I opted to stay in school. The tour was canceled, the group disbanded, and the record fell into relative obscurity.

During my sophomore year, I had been offered a music publishing deal (a \$10,000 per year advance against royalties) with Motown Records that would have required me to move to Detroit. I also turned down that offer because of my determination to finish college. These are only two examples of the many times I was forced to make a decision between academic achievement and commercial success. This was forming a pattern. My decisions could be interpreted as either wise choices or acts of colossal self-sabotage.

So far, I was managing my time better, keeping my grades up, and making a little money working for local entrepreneurs in industrial shows. The most compelling activity of the year was writing and directing *Something Personal* (Spangler & Pirolo, 1970). Mark Pirolo, a theatre design major, was my collaborator on the book and lyrics and designed the set and costumes. I composed the music and collaborated with Mark on the lyrics and dialogue. Mark and I shared an apartment on the top floor of an old mansion near the campus. We were determined to make our senior Scotch N' Soda production the most elaborate and well-produced show in campus history. Mark and I worked very hard writing, designing, and staging the production. We built a rotating stage, devised complicated projections to enhance the scenic effects, and used electronic music to

heighten the orchestrations. Both of us were stretching our talent and training to the limits. We had the opportunity to share insights and skill sets that crossed many disciplinary boundaries. The show opened on April 10, 1970, to overwhelming response. Word got out and it was “standing room only” every night. *Something Personal* won first place in the 10th annual National BMI Varsity Show Competition (E. M. Cramer, President, BMI, personal communication, October 3, 1970). I signed a publishing contract with Chappell Music in New York and started receiving a modest but steady advance against future royalties. This alleviated some of my financial problems as I moved on to graduate school.

My father showed up at one of the performances. The show had some powerful antiwar (Vietnam) material that closed the first act. He came all the way from Kansas to perform a drunken tirade at intermission in the student union café. Evidently, he ranted on about how his son was a communist and disrespectful of the United States. Although I missed his performance, I thought it was pretty bold for a man who financially cut me off when I was 13.

I had no family at my graduation from CMU. I had put myself through college (with the help of large student loans) and did not feel lonely until the actual commencement ceremony. My mother and aunt had come to see my shows when they could. Since travel time and money were limited, I insisted that it was more important to see the shows than to attend my graduation. Graduation was more of a quiet personal triumph. The summer after graduation was spent going on another first-class whirlwind national industrial tour and performing in another Brockett production at the Hershey Hotel in eastern Pennsylvania.

The concept of the Lovewell Method was well established in my subconscious by now. I would have dreams and isolated moments of clarity regarding the vision of a cultural community of the future involving the fusion of education, social transformation, and the creation of interdisciplinary works of art. There was so much to know and so much to learn about how to fit it all together. I had no conscious awareness at this point of how to frame this big idea or what my role would be in manifesting the vision. I had just completed 16 straight years of education, so part of the academic picture was clear. The worlds of industry and the marketplace were still a mystery to me, and the notion of community was still circumscribed by my family and school friends. I knew I lacked a strategic plan or

vision of how these separate worlds could eventually interface.

The immediate most compelling motivation was my desire to create another interdisciplinary artwork that resonated with the culture, touched the soul, and connected with the spirit. The formation of Lovewell Institute would have to wait until more of the pieces were in place. All I wanted to do right now was write and direct another production so I could experience the thrill of reality building all over again.

Studying electronic music composition with Morton Subotnick convinced me to transfer to the University of Pittsburgh for my master's degree. Mark Pirolo continued at CMU for graduate work. This would qualify us to create the Scotch N' Soda production for the following year. Coming off such a success, we were selected again to create the new production. I was obsessed with the idea of turning the ancient myth of Orpheus into a musical theatre piece. Researching the origins of the myth was enjoyable and thoughts of how to translate the story into contemporary musical theatre flowed easily. The dramatic themes and events in classical mythology lent themselves well to the passion and lyricism I wanted to express through the music, lyrics, and dialogue. Mark also was intrigued with the idea and so we went to work.

Meanwhile, Dr. Leon Katz, on the CMU Theatre faculty, had written an adaptation of S. Ansky's classic *The Dybbuk* titled *Toy Show* (Ansky, Katz, & Spangler, 1970). Rena Yerushalmi was a visiting director from Israel with whom I worked on *Woyzeck* (Buchner & Spangler, 1969) and *Dracula: A Rite* (Katz & Spangler, 1970). They had arranged to produce the show in New York at the legendary off-Broadway theatre LaMama, ETC. We opened on November 5, 1970, in the heyday of avant-garde theatre. The famous Broadway producer and director, Hal Prince, was in the audience. After the performance, he complimented me on my work, and I remember thinking this New York theatre thing was going to be easier than I thought. How wrong I was, but at

21 years of age, that kind of ignorance was bliss.

As a graduate assistant in the master's program at the University of Pittsburgh, I taught an undergraduate History of Jazz course to several classes of nonmusic majors. This helped with my tuition and gave me experience in the classroom at the college level. The professor of jazz handed me a syllabus of the course at our first meeting and I never saw him again--literally. I really enjoyed most of the classroom sessions. I could soon tell that most of the students took this course with the expectation of very little work and an easy grade. Evidently, over the preceding years, the course had acquired that reputation. I did not entirely dispense with the tradition, but I did try to give the students an experience that would honestly challenge them and enhance their appreciation and knowledge of music.

I asked the students to bring musical instruments to class (anything that made a sound) and taught them the simple 12-bar blues structure by actually playing it instead of just reading about it. I played them examples of current popular music that had been influenced by jazz, and I staged a New Orleans voodoo ceremony to help illustrate the cultural origins of American jazz. The major challenge was that the course was cosponsored by African American studies, and some students understandably did not like the idea of a young White man teaching them about their music. It was a difficult situation but one that demanded I communicate on higher and deeper levels than I had previously. The University of Pittsburgh campus is located near the Hill District depicted in the classic TV series, *Hill Street Blues*. During the 1960s from the CMU campus (only a few blocks away), I had seen smoke rising from this neighborhood more than once. Racial tension was something I had never encountered at close range until now. Being raised and educated in a predominantly White middle-class and midwestern agricultural

environment had not prepared me for the world that was unfolding around me.

The contemporary concept of diversity as a social construct was taking shape in my consciousness. This would become a guiding force in the development of my vision for the Lovewell Method. There was no sense of cultural diversity in Belleville, Kansas. A few Catholics were the only minority. Things changed a few years later after moving to Denver where many of my best friends were Jewish. I now had many more opportunities to become familiar with diverse cultures. At CMU, I dated a classmate from an Orthodox Jewish family and learned much by being accepted into her home for special holidays and occasions.

Another friend in Pittsburgh who opened my awareness of cultural diversity was Josephine Cuccaro. Her cousin was a fellow music major at CMU, and her parents had emigrated from Italy when they married. They were a large embracing Italian family who never failed to include me in every family function they had--weddings, birthdays, and more holidays than I knew existed. Going home to Kansas was usually not an economic option so I spent a lot of time with the Cuccaro family. They effectively adopted me during my years in Pittsburgh, opened my eyes to the immigrant America that was emerging, and gave me an inside look at the struggles of cultural assimilation. I loved the food, the music, the "old world" celebrations, and the strains of ancient Catholic mysticism that were still alive and functioning within their family traditions. Several years later, Josephine and I went to Italy to visit her relatives, thus ending a family estrangement that had lasted over 50 years. These personal experiences, along with teaching the jazz course at the University of Pittsburgh, opened my eyes to how much more I needed to learn. These new awarenesses also alerted me to the way the arts enliven and facilitate interaction between diverse cultures as exemplified by Lovewell Institute's successful international cultural exchange programs in Sweden (Lovewell Institute, 1996a, 2003c, 2004c, 2005b).

While at the University of Pittsburgh, I took graduate courses in electronic music composition, analytical techniques, acoustics, opera, avant-garde music, and research methods. If CMU was the classic conservatory atmosphere, then the University of Pittsburgh was the laboratory for contemporary studies. Most of the professors were stimulating, and the courses were enlightening. I was not only allowed by my professors to experiment with new forms and structures, I was encouraged. It was a different story with my classmates.

Fellow graduate music students frequently ridiculed me for composing pieces that were too programmatic, too emotional, too romantic, or too commercial. Other music composition majors could usually easily intimidate me, but there was a

point when I felt that defensiveness was not the appropriate response. I had attended their concerts and shared seminars and classroom discussions where I detected a palpable lack of awareness of the audience who would be hearing their music. The students seemed more interested in stylistic techniques or technical delivery methods than they were in what their composition was saying or how their audience would be affected by their creations.

I designed the Lovewell Method to create an accepting interdisciplinary arts learning environment where students could share stories that were meaningful to them while learning to exercise awareness as to what effect their stories might have on their audience and their community. I honestly did not know how to respond to the criticism of my peers who insisted that my music was too accessible or trapped by the stories it told. There were some moments of encouragement that helped me *hold my own*.

The chair of the University of Pittsburgh Theatre Department asked me to write the score for his production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare, 1936). This was a delightful experience and well received by the audience and press. In an excerpt from his review in *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Miller (1971), drama critic, stated,

Add to this the splendid accompaniment, composed, arranged and conducted by David Spangler, through the courtesy of the Pitt Department of Music. The music is nothing short of brilliant, with an Elizabethan air but also a strong beat and melody which do much to get us over the dry spots on stage. (p. 16)

It was encouraging to be appreciated for extra departmental activities. At CMU, I never received course credit for any work done outside the music department (which was, in fact, more work than I had done inside the department). The same was true at University of Pittsburgh, but at least they acknowledged my efforts.

One professor challenged us to conceptualize a composition without any regard for limitations or restrictions. My experience had always forced me to face compromise on budget, size of the orchestra, number of performers, and time limitations. Here was a man asking us to think beyond the boundaries. He was a big balding hippie with a long

beard and sandals. He had a profound effect on me as an artist and on my future work developing the Lovewell Method. I did not really know him well or what he had accomplished, but he had a gift for inspiring and igniting my creativity in a way no one else had.

I took his challenge seriously and conceived an interdisciplinary piece called *The ReCreation* (Spangler, 1971). It was a composition written for one person as a reflection of the life he or she wished to live based on the life actually lived. It would allow the person (who commissioned the piece) to relay the relevant facts of a dramatic series of personal events to the composer, then edit, amend, delete, or enhance them as they are transformed into a work of art. The concept of the piece requires that the composer and the “commissioner” work together to create a piece of dramatic musical theatre wherein the events and emotions are refashioned to form a desirable conclusion. The process gives the commissioner the opportunity to rewrite his or her personal history--hence *The ReCreation*. This process involves revisiting one’s past, taking control over one’s reactions (or potential reactions), and facing the truth of one’s life situations with the understanding that whatever happened in the past can be re-experienced, redirected, and reinterpreted in the present. These were the themes I explored in this liberating exercise. This concept became one of the fundamental building blocks of the Lovewell Method.

Dr. Marvin Tartak, a musicologist, taught us how to use the library and other resources to research our papers. Most of my writing and directing projects required research and that was always one of my favorite parts of the process. Dr. Tartak’s class gave me some tools that made my research even more thrilling and productive. Dr. Tartak loved research and passed his enthusiasm on to his students. The University of Pittsburgh had just opened a beautiful new library but this was still before the use of computers or

the Internet. I applied these new research skills directly to my Orpheus project, *Festival--A Rock Myth* (Spangler & Pirolo, 1971) that was to open at CMU on April 16, 1971. I found that the Orpheus myth occurred in various forms throughout many civilizations. Comparing the details of the different interpretations provided me with numerous options as I conceived the play. Mark Pirolo and I had been working through the year to create this musical on an even more elaborate scale than the year before.

I have very fond memories of *Festival--A Rock Myth* (Spangler & Pirolo, 1971). It was one of those nearly perfect moments of expression in one's life where all the elements come together to form a sort of miracle--the birth of a beloved brainchild. Chappell Music, my publisher, was very happy with the results and sent a producer to Pittsburgh to record some of the songs as demos to help sell the show in New York. Samuel Liff (David Merrick's associate producer and an alumnus of CMU) came from New York to see the show. Mr. Liff and the publishers arranged to secure a good literary agent for me and explore the possibilities of taking *Festival--A Rock Myth* (Spangler & Pirolo, 1971) to Broadway or off-Broadway. My third trimester in graduate school was altogether somewhat magical.

The summer of 1971 was full of activities involving running back and forth between Pittsburgh and New York following up on the dizzying series of events resulting from the successful productions over the past year. My agent was Flora Roberts. I was repeatedly told how fortunate I was to have the same agent who represented Stephen Sondheim and several other luminous Broadway icons. She arranged for a promising young playwright in her stable to rewrite the book for *Festival--A Rock Myth* (Spangler & Pirolo, 1971), making it a more valuable commodity on the "Great White Way." Thus began my sojourn into the world of high-powered agents, producers, and publishers.

What I was to learn on this sojourn would prove to be valuable when the time came to apply it to the formation and development of Lovewell Institute.

I was happy to return to school for the final trimester required for my master's degree. The structure was comforting and working toward a well-defined achievable goal was helpful. New York, exciting as it was, did not seem like a place that I wanted to live. I liked the trees, hills, unique neighborhoods, and parks of Pittsburgh. Schoolwork was more demanding than it had been in undergraduate school, and as I look over my assignment books for those years, I wonder how I handled it all.

I also did occasional projects for local advertising agencies. I won an award for Creative Excellence in Communications for a radio campaign for Point Park College. I came up with the concept and wrote the music and lyrics for the *Knowing Where You're Going* commercials (ACE Awards, 1971). This was my first encounter with educational marketing. The sheer volume of activities and serious deadlines helped prepare me for what was to come.

On October 8, 1971, only a few weeks into my last trimester in graduate school, I received a call that would permanently alter the course of my life. John-Michael Tebelak had written and directed the classic American musical *Godspell* (Tebelak & Schwartz, 1971) as his master's thesis at CMU the previous year. It became a big hit in New York, and he was in London on another project when he called. J. Tebelak (personal communication, October 8, 1971) said he wanted me to come to New York and compose the score for his production of *Elizabeth I* (Foster & Spangler, 1972) by Paul Foster who had recently written the off-Broadway hit *Tom Paine* (Foster, 1967).

I finished my final trimester with the question of my thesis deadline up in the air. I had completed all the hours required for the master's degree. I thought that perhaps this

new project could be part of the thesis. Chappell Music Publishing was eager for me to move to New York and they were being very helpful in setting up all my living arrangements. I would report to New York right after the first of the year to sign a lease, sign the new contract with Chappell, and start work on the score for *Elizabeth I* (Foster & Spangler, 1972) scheduled to open that spring off-Broadway (it would actually open on Broadway). There was no turning back now.

CMU and the University of Pittsburgh offered much to my training and experience in interdisciplinary arts. The high level of professionalism and the intense learning curve made an indelible impression on me. I had been able to write and direct numerous original works during these 5 1/2 years in the form of musical theatre, concert pieces, music for television, and incidental music for dramatic plays. The intellectual and psychological value of creating these new works would transfer to the Lovewell experience as a solid philosophical foundation that creative process was beneficial in many ways to the individual, to the organization sponsoring the creative activity, and to the community touched by the issues being examined.