

University of Washington

Women Who Rock Oral History Project

Transcript

Gretta Harley

Narrator: Gretta Harley

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Kim Carter-Munoz (KCM): This is Kim Carter Munoz here with Gretta Harley here in Seattle Washington, in the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Seattle on November 5th, 2010 and this interview is conducted as part of the Women Who Rock Oral History Project and we're grateful for your participation

Gretta Harley (GH): Oh it's great to be here. It's great to have you here.

KCM: So do you consent to this interview?

GH: Yes

KCM: Great. So please introduce yourself.

GH: My name is Gretta Harley and I'm a musician, an educator, I've been in Seattle for about twenty years making music. I compose, I perform, I teach music. What else do you want to know?

KCM: How would you describe the music communities that you've been a part of?

GH: Diverse. I've been involved with music communities from the early nineties, which mostly focused on rock music, and there's also very diverse avant garde community of which I'm also a part of. And I've written for concert music but I don't know too much of the concert musicians here, but I do know some, people who I've hired to play in some of my concert music. They are usually very supportive of, I think always, I've never come across a non-supportive musician. Um, I think we all help each other out, we play on each other's pieces or we attend each other's shows. It's a very supportive community all in all. Communities I should say, since I'm talking about a few of them.

KCM: So how is the rock community different from the other communities you've been a part of?

GH: I think just the music is different. I don't really see it. I can't really put my finger on a difference other than the music is different. But the motions are the same, you rehearse, you perform, and you make dinners for each other, you share each other's music. I'm part of a group called The Immersion Composers Collective in Seattle and once a month we try to get together, it's been harder and harder as our lives are busy, increasingly, or seemingly increasingly, so once a month on a Sunday we'll get together and play the music we wrote that weekend, we'll share a meal, some snacks, a bottle of wine and we'll listen to what we did that weekend, so you sort of immerse yourself and write, say I'm going to write twenty songs in twelve hours and, so there's that group. Very supportive of each other, we listen, we give a little critique, I have my band, and we're all in different bands as well. There's a couple of different projects we're involved in so getting seven people into rehearsal is often very challenging. Busy, I think busy describes musicians that I know.

KCM: What's the name of your band now?

GH: We Are Golden

KCM: Golden

GH: We are Golden. Three words.

KCM: And what kind of music do you play now?

GH: In that band?

KCM: Yeah

GH: It's original music, it's composed by myself and Sarah Rudinov who's a singer and actress. We have a seven-piece band, it's clarinet and cello, piano, guitar, drums, and Sarah sings. And we're starting to explore more electronic ingredients in that mix. Rob Whitner who plays in a lot of bands, Awesome is one of the bands he's in, and he's our clarinetist, and he's been playing some electronic textures within the music, and that's probably the only difference, the music is evolving. It's story oriented, a lot of it is, Sarah writes the lyrics and personal, like personal story oriented. It's kind of poppy, kind of jazzy, kind of cabaret, kind of classical arrangements as well, which I think is very, is something that we find more often today with this kind of mashup of styles, and it's a lot of fun.

KCM: And so when you share your compositions how do you do that?

GH: Can you be more specific?

KCM: You were saying that when you share what you've written or what you've done over the weekend, is that with another...

GH: That's with something different, that's with the Immersion Composer friends in my life. So, there are about five or six of us that try to get together every month and we're not always successful at it like I said, because we're so busy, so we will either share it on Sundays or, you know, once a month I'll either play my compositions live or I'll have recorded them over the week on either Garage Band or Logic, two software programs, Garage Band is just a quick little program I work on but sometimes I'll do more intricate drum parts or editing on Logic, which is on my Mac. Software. [laughter]

KCM: So you record your piano when you do that? On Garage Band?

GH: I have, yeah.

KCM: And then do you record your voice?

GH: Mhm.

KCM: Do you use the internal microphone?

GH: For sketches I do. Um, actually I had a microphone that broke and I was borrowing Sarah's, my band mate's, for a while and I actually need to get my own good microphone. I just did a recording last week and I went into my friend Pete, Dubtrain studio, and you know, if I want to do something that's actually going to be released I go into the studio.

KCM: What are some of your favorite studios?

GH: Well, Dubtrain is my friend Pete's studio. I like that quite a bit because it's friendly, it's intimate, and it's not that expensive. It's very user friendly. We Are Golden recorded our record at Jupiter Studio, which is a fantastic studio. Martin Feveyear was our engineer. He's got years of gold, it's fantastic. It's a little more pricey, but you're getting pretty, you know state of the art equipment and golden ears. And my friend Brian Nelson has a studio, I just had the studio's name in my head, he just mastered a piece for me. [...] Elliott Bay Recording Company.

KCM: And he does mastering, too? Why do you pick him for mastering? What is his forte?

GH: He's subtle. He keeps what's there and just does a really good job of rounding out the things that need to, you know, it always sounds so good after he works because it just comes together. And he, I don't think he's too extreme in his choices.

KCM: Cool

GH: I've known him a long time and he's done work for me for a long time.

KCM: And what's the first he did some mastering for you or recording?

GH: I'm pretty sure he did the Danger Gens record in 1994

KCM: So what was your first album you recorded?

GH: The first full-length album?

KCM: First thing you recorded.

GH: The first thing I recorded? Home studio or recording studio?

KCM: You pick, first home studio is fine.

GH: Well I had a little four track when I lived in New York City. I was twenty-something years old and I had an Akai cassette four track six channel mixer, four track recorder and cassettes and I had a little studio set up in my bedroom and my apartment was actually used for primal screaming sessions back in the '70s, so there were double doors on everything. Every room had a double door, and sound insulation was phenomenal because in the '70s there was a technique, you know, a therapeutic technique where people would go into a room and just scream, they called it primal screaming. So this particular apartment that I lived in still had all the double doors on it so next to my room was the drummer, and then I had my studio, and then a film maker lives in the other room, and I would be up until three in the morning recording and singing and nobody ever heard me, it was fantastic. I was there for four years. It was great. And then I guess back in New York was when I started recording in studios. I had a band called "Dot Dot Dot" and then they became "Slaves Dot Dot Dot" and we recorded there in Hoboken, New Jersey. And then Maxi Bad we had done some recording with a guy up in Wedgewood, Ralph, what's his first name? I can't remember his last name, I think that was the first recording I did here, and then we worked with Hanszek Audio, we worked with Kid Bealman, Martin Feveyear did the Danger Gens record, full length record. Nowadays, I mean it's so—technology's made it so user friendly that you can record at home. So I do demos from home, but I don't really consider myself an engineer, so I want to work with an engineer when I'm going to do something that's more professional recorded, that you know has a sound I feel—some people can do it out of their house but I just don't have those chops, and I don't really spend my time perfecting those chops, and I'd rather spend my time writing my music and playing my instruments and letting the people with the golden ears and technological finesse and expertise to help me find, you know, to help me realize the song or songs or pieces.

KCM: What about microphones? What's your favorite microphone to use?

GH: I don't really know much about microphones. See, that goes to the—I leave it to the engineers. I have a particular sound to my voice that if the right mic isn't used there's a real, and I think it's true with a lot of women, there's a, kind of a shriekiness or pointedness that my voice has, and it's a characteristic to my voice but also something in the recording studio that I'm interested in trying to smooth over in some way. And I had a very interesting situation, I was recording a song just last weekend over at Dubtrain [...] so I was at Dubtrain recording over the weekend and we got to the point of the project where we were mixing and I said, "Pete, take some of that high end, roll some of that high end off of my voice, it's too piercy" and he did, and we came up with a nice sound and then we listened back and I went, "It's just wrong," and he said, "I know, it's just crazy," because all the choices we had made with the arrangement was with that sound of that voice. And once he rounded off the frequency of the voice nothing else works, so we put it back [laughter.]

KCM: I can relate to that

GH: Can you? Yeah, it's interesting. It's fascinating really, the subtleties.

KCM: So I guess I wanted to ask you, can you talk a bit about when and where you were born and how that connects to your musical experience?

GH: I was born in Long Island. Um, I was born in the sixties and how it relates to my musical experience—I was very influenced by certain musicians that were popular at that time that influenced me greatly: Led Zeppelin, Joni Mitchell, Frank Zappa. I listened to a lot of things, I had a vast record collection. My records were very dear to me. I had three stylus needles, you know, and they were color coded and my records were color coded so that if I bought a record that was used I wouldn't use a very good stylus on that record, I would only use my brand new records on the red colored stylus. I was totally OCD, it was crazy, but that's how much I love music, it was just so special to me. When I was in the fourth grade, I think, *Jesus Christ Superstar* made a big influence in my life and I memorized the entire opera, I just thought it was the coolest sounding thing ever. And I committed it to memory and I actually just had the opportunity to perform a song from that, I played Judas at the City Arts festival two weeks ago at some—it's called Dolls and Guys and it was just fun, you know, it was out of my range and it's a very difficult song but I just acted like I was nine and ran around the stage like Judas did. And I got to see that play on Broadway, my parents took me, and it was life changing, and I, it's such a vivid memory, I remember it like it was yesterday. I think during that time music played such an important role in the lives of adolescents, not to say that it doesn't now, but it was a different relationship. We didn't have the onslaught of music, I don't mean to say onslaught in a bad way, because I think there's so much music being made and I think that's just wonderful. But we would wait for weeks for one release to come out, and maybe there would be three or four releases that month that were really special, and we'd get the album and we'd take it home and you could smell the vinyl, put it on your turntable, you're with the red stylus. And you know, you'd read

the lyrics and it was like a religious experience. And I think that act, that very solitude act, for me anyway, I didn't listen to new records with friends anyway, I had to take the record home and have that experience myself. I think that relationship with music, that intimacy was very special. And I think it created some desire in me to have that in my own life as a musician, and I took piano lessons from an early age and I grew up in a home that was kind of nuts and it didn't make much sense to me. So playing music was my salvation. It kept me sane, it got me through. I don't think I would have been the same person coming out of a situation that I grew up in without having that place where I could play music and that nobody could take away from me. And that made it very special. Survival, you know.

KCM: Can you sing a little bit of Judas?

GH: *My mind is clear now
At last all too well
I can see where we all soon will be
If you strip away the myth from the man
You will see where we all soon will be.*

Then it goes
Jesus but, you know I would belt it but I can't do it here because it would blow your microphone out

And that's what happened this morning. Don't show that to anybody, okay? It's too embarrassing, okay?

KCM: You're joking right?

GH: Yeah

KCM: We can show it?

GH: Yeah, yeah, whatever. It's funny. But you didn't get the full effect with the move and I had like the fringe and I had a headband and I had a like, a vest, it was funny. I just was running around the stage. I don't know if you've seen the movie but Judas is like all over the place. It was fun to play Judas, and [indistinguishable name] who was Mary Magdalene, it was much more fun to play Judas.

KCM: I think Judas has some fun work in any story.

GH: Oh indeed. Indeed.

KCM: He's actually the saint of people who are looking for work.

GH: Oh I didn't know that. I have to brush up on my Catholic saints. Oh he wasn't a saint though, he's not considered a saint.

KCM: Maybe it's a different Judas. Could be a different Judas.

GH: I don't know. Was Judas considered a saint? After his betrayal? I don't know if the Catholic church would have...

KCM: He's Saint Jude

GH: Saint Jude I think is different from Judas. I don't think Judas is a Saint. He was the one who turned him in, so.

KCM: He's a traitor

GH: I could be wrong. I mean it's been a while since I visited my Catholic past.
[laughter]

KCM: Yeah, so how does the work life of your parents affect the life of your music. You already said it helped you to survive

GH: Well it's a tricky question. You know, we all have our stories. My mom died when I was very young. She was—she was an artist at heart. She did, you know she did what women do in the sixties, they get married. She was a painter, and she did not really—I don't think she was able to fulfill that artistic side to her because she was a housewife and had three kids and did the Sixties lifestyle which was very much um, I mean literally like Dad would come home and she was martini in hand and beautifully dressed and the kids were in 'jamas. So a different kind of life than I chose for myself. So I'm sure that played a role. I mean I think everything that, you know, that happens as a kid affects you. Um, my dad was pretty great in supporting my music. You know I had my lessons. I mean back in those days—because I teach kids now—the kids today have so many activities: you know, chess club on Monday and piano lessons on Tuesdays and dance classes on Wednesdays and soccer, soccer, soccer and ultimate Frisbee and, you know, “I didn't have a chance to practice because... I've been so busy.” And the homework that they give today, you know it seems very very heavy. Much more so than when I was growing up. And when I was a kid I took dance lessons and piano lessons and when I was twelve my father said, “Choose. Can't do both. Too many things.” Just very different. So I chose piano. And when I was in high school I was very serious, I played classical piano and I practiced five hours a day and my brothers hated me because my father, you know, “Quiet, no stereo. You're sister's practicing,” you know and he was very supportive and I think that was an influence, I think as well. Um, did I answer your question?

KCM: That does answer my question. Although I want to follow it up with another question which is, was your dad really supportive of you when you played in rock bands.

GH: No. No in fact We Are Golden was the only music he ever like that I've done or given him or had him listen to and given him that was not concert music. Which, I don't know what that says. But it's pretty. We Are Golden is very pretty music. But no, he did not support me in my rock and roll.

KCM: Wow, so let's—what was your best experience with music?

GH: Oh my god. Are you kidding? I don't even know how to answer that question. What is my best experience with music? I mean, it's got to be, has to have a more vague answer than something like a specific event. I just, I think, god, it's everything. It's some—when you're at that place when you're in the middle of something you just love. It's the three o'clock in the morning notating music because you can't sleep and you have to get it out of your head. It's the joy of playing music with people who you love playing with. Um, it's finding that great guitar sound you like coming out of an amplifier that you've been toying with for, you know, weeks. It's hearing a student play a piece of music that they've worked on for so long that they're finally making music, not just notes, but making music. It's, those, all these moments are the great moments of making music or experiencing music.

KCM: What was your first experience that you remember of music?

GH: My first experience that I remember with music... I've never thought of that question. Um, it might be my mother singing in the house when she had no sense of pitch at all and my brothers and I used to tell her to stop. Um, I remember begging my parents for a piano. And I think I was six. And my father gave me a clarinet that he had in the basement. And I didn't want to play that, I wanted a piano, but I played it and I took lessons but I kept asking for the piano, I kept asking for the piano. And when that piano was delivered to my house I was over the moon. That's this piano right here.

KCM: That same piano.

GH: Uh huh.

KCM: It's beautiful.

GH: Yeah, I've moved this baby across the country and thirteen times within Seattle city limits

KCM: And it's a baby grand

GH: And it's a baby grand

KCM: Well they didn't mess around when they got you your piano.

GH: Nope. But when I moved out here I had to fight to bring this with me. Because it was a lovely piece of furniture in the living room. “No, it’s not a piece of furniture, it’s an instrument.” I won. I won that fight. It’s a good fight to win.

KCM: So were your other family members supportive of you being a musician?

GH: Like I said when I was younger, my brothers had a nickname for me and it wasn’t pleasant because they couldn’t, you know, the scale, if they were sitting here right now, “God the scales [impersonating scale]” I practiced scales for a half hour every day. They hated it, they just hated it. But as I got older and pursued it as a profession they’re very supportive, my brothers are. My father, he’s come around a bit because I’m actually making a living—a very humble living—but he’ll ask me, you know because I’m teaching, he’ll ask me about the teaching. But on the whole I would say my family was not supportive. I think it’s a hard profession to get into. It’s hard to make a living a musician and so my father would’ve preferred I chose another course because parents, you know, they’ll worry about their kids’ futures. And my extended family I think the same. And I hear now at forty-something years old, “Wow, you’ve really pursued that and you’ve made a life, that’s great.” You know, but, at the time now. I don’t think people really want their kids to pursue art as a profession because it typically doesn’t bring in money.

KCM: I wanted to turn to have you talk a little bit about why Home Alive came into being, and how it came into being.

GH: Well the why Home Alive came into being was the response of a community of people who felt anger and shock at the death of Mia Zapata, who was a local singer artist woman, and I guess the how and the why, is that the question? The how and the why?

KCM: Let’s turn back to when. When did that happen?

GH: The when. 1993. So, this event happened, this guy decided he was going to take Mia’s life and we didn’t know who he was. He was still at large. We were freaked out. The community, whether people knew me or didn’t know me, it was a community, was completely freaked out. The police were not being very upfront about what happened. Um, they want, what they were telling friends and family they didn’t want to get out into the press. They didn’t want other people to know about it because it was brutal and I guess they felt at the time that that was information they needed to keep to themselves in order to, you know, if they found the guy, that information would be helpful to them. IT wasn’t at all embraced, that decision wasn’t at all embraced by the community because we felt that a) we wanted to know about our own safety, you know, moving on. We didn’t know if it was somebody who knew Mia, if it was somebody in our community. And Valerie Agnew and I had talked about getting some kind of concert together, raising funds to get our friends to have self defense classes. And we disagreed a lot in that conversation so we invited a lot of our friends to come to Valerie’s house one evening and about, I don’t know, twenty-

five or thirty people showed up to that meeting and, I mean a lot of things happened. But we decided that [...] let's see, let me go back because I got distracted by the phone. A lot of things transpired but the goal was to put on an event to raise money to bring up this self-defense organization to come up from San Francisco. And there were a number of us that were working on the show and through this course of putting the show together we decided we didn't want to work with this other organization. And a lot of, um, a lot of details I could get into, I don't know how much information you want, but the long and short of it I guess is that nine women ended up continuing an organization. We decided to get our nonprofit status. There are a lot of things we wanted to do. We wanted to have taxis drive people home from bars because people—we didn't want to stop our lives. We had a particular lifestyle we wanted to keep up. We didn't want to be afraid, we didn't want to not go out. We wanted to still go out, hear bands, enjoy ourselves, have a couple of drinks and still go home and get home safely. There was an energy going through community about helping each other get home safely. So you would never just leave a bar without a friend grabbing you and saying, "Hey, how are you getting to your car" or "How are you getting home." So it was a whole different culture than it is right now or was previously. And because of the certain things we wanted to, like I mentioned about transportation, we had to get insurance, and it was so—it got very complicated so... it's such a long journey, the beginnings of Home Alive and I think anybody in the organization through the years after I left would say the same things. So many things had happened in the organization—it was in existence for seventeen years. But getting to the three years that I was involved with it because I was a co-founder with eight other women and we were all involved for three years and then we opened it up to the community and we stepped back and said, "This is an organization that needs to keep going if people want it, if they want to keep it going." So I feel like kind of doing this there's a lot... a lot of information. So if you point a question a little more...

GM: Who were the founding members?

GH: Okay, so there was myself and Valerie Agnew. Stacy Westcott. Julie Hassee. Misch Levy, Jessica Lawless, Zoe Bermee and um, Laura Kidegucchi, and Christien Storm. I think that's nine, I was doing my fingers, I think that's nine.

KCM: Yeah, and what were the bars people were going to in the community at that time.

GH: Oh god, in Capitol Hill there was Moe and The Comet was across the street. The Offramp, Rock Candy, The Crocodile. Um, let's see what other clubs were going on in ninety—other smaller bars, Gibson House.

KCM: Linda's right? No.

GH: Not so much then, I don't think Linda's... yeah, uh, somewhere in there Linda's—I'm not sure what year she opened that up but it was somewhere right in there

maybe. But it was more—we really targeted more around the live music clubs and there were a lot of benefits. A lot of music benefits that would happen. People would either from the organization or volunteers get up during a show and talk about the organization, there were tables set up. So Home Alive is an organization that—was an organization that when I was involved the idea was raising money and awareness around the issues of self-defense. And the money would go towards funding self-defense classes and a variety of class so people could choose a class that fit their personality or their needs. Some people wanted to know how to use a gun. Other people did not want that and wanted to understand about verbal boundary settings. Or some kind of a martial art. Or kickboxing, so there was a variety of classes available to people, but we didn't want money to stand in a way so we offered the classes for free and then later they were offered at low cost because we were advised—there were all sorts of people we were talking to over the years helping us with the business aspect of it. You would never get turned away for funds, but there's this funny psychology of people sometimes when something's free, there's some people that don't put a value to it I guess is the idea. Like if you were paying something you would have some kind of ownership in it. Maybe a little bit more. I think it's some kind of weird psychological thing we do. But again we wouldn't turn anybody away for lack of funds. We would just have a suggest donation, you know, five bucks, you know something like that. But if you don't have money that's okay, come on in.

KCM: Do you remember the first benefit?

GH: Uh huh

KCM: When and where did that happen?

GH: You know you said, "Do you remember" and I said yes so quickly but now I'm second-guessing myself, but I think it was Rock Candy. I'm pretty sure it was at Rock Candy. And it was a bit of a wash in my head that night because there were interviews, there were TV stations down there. We got some press, which was nice to get that message out. I think there was always this kind of line. We didn't want to always talk about Mia's, we didn't want that to be like a, you know—it's tricky thing, you know, a tragedy like that happens. IT's a person, it's a life and it's a difficult line to pay respect to that life and not, you know kind of hold it up as something. But the press had always sort of, that was the story, you know what I mean? It's sensitive. That's a sensitive issue. Or part of that. And it was a lot of work to put on and it had a bitter sweetness to it because it was successful and there were so many people and it had so much attention but the why we were there was so profoundly awful. You know? So it's um, yay we put all this energy into making a successful event, that was great, yet... but, what the fuck are we doing here? You know, this sucks.

KCM: Yeah, I hear that. So do you think gender played a role in why Mia was killed?

GH: Uh, well, she was raped, so I can't speak for that asshole at all. I—you know? We know he was caught, he's in prison, he's abused women his, you know, he's an abusive man towards women, so, yeah.

KCM: Did mean participate in Home Alive?

GH: Oh yeah, absolutely, absolutely they did. And we had classes for men as well as women. We had co-ed classes.

KCM: What were the first bands that played at the benefit?

GH: you know there's a poster some place. There are five bins now sitting some place. The organization's folded and the founding members have taken it on ourselves to keep the pertinent material as a historical record, and we're currently trying to decide where to house it. So amongst those bins there's a poster that would answer that question, but...

KCM: Did your band play?

GH: I don't remember, but I think it's possible that we did.

KCM: What band was it?

GH: That would have been Maxi Bad. If we did. I just can't remember, honestly. I know we played benefits, I just can't recall if we played the first benefit or not.

KCM: Did Seven Year Bitch play?

GH: Could be. I mean, this was twenty years ago, not twenty—thirteen almost fourteen years ago. No, about thirteen and a half years ago. My memory of the particular of the show. You know, like you asked me if I remember. I remember the feeling, but do I remember the details? Not so well.

KCM: Okay, so what strategies did you invent for overcoming or going around the obstacles that came up to the organization of Home Alive. You mentioned that you were involved for three years, and you mentioned that at first the classes started out as free, so... things like that maybe.

GH: That's, I need more. Can you be more specific? I don't know how to answer that question.

KCM: Was it hard to keep Home Alive going at the beginning?

GH: It was always a challenge because we worked as a collective and collectives by nature can be difficult. We were nine very different women and we would agree on a lot of things and disagree on some things. Some things became more important than

others. But you know, on the whole we were very motivated and energized for years, and there are people in the organization who were very focused on trying to get different types of events happening. Art shows, or music shows, so there was always something to do and I think that this idea of, "This is your passion, to create this event, you go off and take care of that and... someone else do this," so we also delineated our responsibilities a bit and someone oversaw the book and someone took care of getting the nonprofit status happening. So we all had sort of our own jobs. But the, what's the word I want to say? The philosophy of it was, I think it was the more times you spend on something the more detail things can get. And so as an organization we were challenged with issues that would come up or event happen and I don't mean a musical event but... a life event happening that would challenge what we were doing and create dialogue around like, "Well what do we do with this?" And we were always brewing, we were all very articulate and strong-willed and strong-minded and smart. And I think that that dynamic can be difficult yet productive. And did we always do everything gracefully? No. Did we pick up and keep going? Yes. There's like a, it's just an interesting thing when you have that much focus on one thing and time helps to shape that, you know, the topic of having an organization. Just kind of, I feel like I'm speaking a little abstractly but I think that yeah, there are always challenges when you have this kind of focused project that goes on for years with strong-willed people.

KCM: That's a good answer. So how do you compose music?

GH: How do I compose music? Like the logistics of composing music?

KCM: Well what's your process of composing music. How...

GH: It's really different. It's really—it's so different depending on what's going on. Sometimes I'll wake up in the middle of the night with a melody in my head. Or I'm walking down the street and something comes to me and I come home and I try to work it out. Sometimes I just sit at the piano or the guitar and I improvise. Lately I've been doing a lot of improvisation and I'll just record them. It's great, I have this little voicemail on my iPhone and I love this thing. You used to have to find a tape recorder or get out a recorder. Now it's just like "dink." And then all the voice memos are there and I'll just link up my computer and it goes into iTunes and I have a folder of music to do and I'll just pop it back on the iPhone and I'll just listen to different fragments as I'm walking my dog or driving a car or doing the dishes or whatever. And so that's kind of where I'm at right now with a lot of pieces. I'm going away this weekend, taking my guitar, and I have three little pieces I just want to send some time with so I can just shape them and see what happens. There's a lot of music that never gets finished. It's really sad. [laughs]

KCM: Who are some of the—you mentioned some of the performers you've worked with, but who are some of the performers and artists you've worked with over time who just sort of stay with you.

GH: Well I don't know if there's this numerous pool of artists I've worked with because I tend to either compose music and other people perform the music or I have bands and, you know, they all are dear to me and they all stay with me. Every member of every band stays with me. Teslata is a woman I was in a band with for yours in Maxibad slash Danger Gens and she and I are still friends for twenty years now. She's majorly influenced my life as an artist and as a person she's very sincere and incredibly energetic and prolific. The woman I'm working with now Sarah Rudinoff, they remind me of each other with their energies. They're both those kinds of people where you say, "You have seven hours of the day I don't have." I don't know here you have the time to do all that and be up on pop culture. It's mind boggling to me. But there are some people who just do this and it's pretty phenomenal. So, you know, I love collaboration. I love working with people who there's a connection with, and I think that type of connection is something that's very precious to me.

KCM: What does it feel like when a project ends with someone you've been working with for a long time?

GH: Well, a couple of things come to mind. I've been doing a lot of theater work so we'll have this intense rehearsal schedule for five week where you see these people every day and they're long hours and you've just come off of tech rehearsals which are twelve hours a day. Then there's a preview process and through that whole time you're still changing things and shaping things and giving notes then you go to the opening and it's just, "Ahh" and you have a cocktail and you walk away from it and it's over and it's a feeling of accomplishment and sadness and joy at the same time. And I think with music, if you're lucky, there are, you have several chapters. You know, I mean I wrote a piece of music I had the honor of hearing played by the Seattle Chamber Players. It was a four-instrument chamber piece and the first time I heard it I just couldn't believe it. It was amazing, it was so otherworldly. And that was just at a rehearsal. Then I go to the concert and I just, it's funny being a composer because you're not playing and you have no control. When you're performing it's a very different thing than when you're composing and just sitting in the audience and you're just like, you know, nail biting and when you're performing you're just in it. You're not really thinking about anything other than right now. And you're somewhat controlling and you're not when someone else is playing. So I heard that and then it was over and it was just this empty feeling. I wanted to make that last longer. But I had a concert at the Triple Door last year and I had another group play that piece so it had another leg and so that's really fun. You can make it last.

KCM: So now you're in a chapter that's really—you still have your band, We Are Golden. But have you always been a composer? And had people play your music? Or in the time when you were playing in bands like Maxi Bad were you also doing composition in that time?

GH: Mhm, yeah, I've been writing music since I was twelve.

KCM: Wow, that's really cool.

GH: I don't really understand it. I don't know where it came from. I remember wanting to write music and I only played piano. Because I had this classical background I was afraid to make a mistake. You know, it's kind of weird. So I picked up the guitar and I taught myself how to play guitar and that's how I started writing songs on the guitar. I had to get away from the piano and this correct thing. Then my brain started getting in the way a little bit and I started getting that anxiety, so I started detuning my guitar and I didn't know what chords I was playing and I started doing it purely by ear. And something about that, that technique has stayed with that I like. But it messes with me too, in a way. Sometimes it's all here and I want to bring the mind more into it and I don't. I don't know, it's kind of this weird abstract relationship I have with myself.

KCM: Sounds a little, yeah. Sounds like, bodily almost. Like in your body.

GH: Yes, music and body relationship is something that's really important to me because I just, when I was younger I felt this need to explore the body-music connection thing. To me it was always just there. Maybe it was from running around my living room at nine years old to Jesus Christ Superstar and Elton John, I don't know. So I started working with this music technique called Elkros Eurhythmics, which is learning music through the whole body and that's something that I teach now. It's profound, because I think especially in our culture a lot of us play music from here up, especially when you're dealing with classical musicians and jazz musicians, I see it a lot. And we don't think a lot about the whole body playing. Even singers, you know, you think about classical singers. And once you get the entire body feeling the space between the notes and the shape of a phrase and the breath that's inherent in communicating sound in a meaningful way, a beautiful way it has to come from everywhere. It can't just be the limbs. I think about punk rock and, you know, the head banging and the jumping up and down—it's a full body explosion. A full body experience. That's part of why it sounds that way and why people move to it that way, it's connected. This need to [mouth's screaming] explode.

KCM: Yeah

GH: And it's the most powerful thing. It's powerful.

KCM: That's true. Please talk about your connection to the city of Seattle in general. You've stayed here for while now.

GH: I've been here twenty years. I came here on vacation and I never went back. Except to get my piano. I came out here, it's kind of a funny story. My brother had a girlfriend out here and my girlfriend back East, we were trying to plan a camping trip and she called me at work one day and said, "I can't find a campground anywhere, everything's booked up but I have some friends in Seattle. So do you

want to go to Seattle?" So I'd never been there and I said let's go. It was the summer, so we took a plane ride out here and we stayed with some friends of hers for a night and we stayed in the San Juan islands and my brother, who had the girlfriend in I think it was Kingston—he said go say hi to Sally's parents. But meanwhile, I had been envisioning myself in a house with a piano by the beach or in the woods so I could just write for a week because I was working all the time. That's the biggest problem with being a musician and having to making a living. You want to spend time playing music but you're busy all the time making money, so it's a juggling act. "I just need a week, I just need a week to finish this." So I came back home and my brother said, "Did you look up Sally's parents?" and I said, "No." And it was beautiful here and I liked it but it was like, you know, seemed small town coming from Manhattan and I didn't really think I'd be living here ever. So my brother said, "Sally's parents are going out of town and they wanted to meet you because they wanted to see if you'd want to house sit for them" because I wasn't working at the time, oh I was, I was temping. But I didn't have a *job* job, I was temping. So... it's kind of a long story, sorry, is it okay?

KCM: It's fine, that's what this is for.

GH: Alright good, so I said to my brother, "Well is their house by the water or in the woods," and he said, "Yeah the front of their house is in the woods and the back of their house is on the water," and so I thought to myself, "Well ask, and you can't turn it down." I never said I wanted a house to do this week in New York and so I jumped on a plane and came out to Seattle and I stayed out here for three months and I met Andy Davenport who was a fabulous musician, he started Sister Psychic, he was in Pure Joy and I moved into a house with him and I had two rooms and I had a studio set up in one room and my bedroom and we had a basement. I put a band together and he had a band. Maxi Bad was formed in there and he had Sister Psychic playing in there, too. It was a band house, it was great. And before that I remember going to the Sound Garden, it's now fenced off, you can't even get there anymore over by Magnusson and it was a windstorm and it was a windstorm and I was walking through the Sound Garden and all the sounds from that beautiful sculpture just resonating all around, I just, there was some feeling in me that felt like I was home. It was very strange. And it's been good. It's been a really good city to me and I hope I've been good to it. It's a special place. I think meeting Andy and meeting musicians right away—I met, this is when I met Bryan Nelson who was the recording engineer I talked about earlier. Elliott Bay Recording. And a handful of the Purdens, it was a band, The Purdens and Gorilla, Stumpy Joe, Sister Psychic, The Seven Year Bitch, I mean there were a couple of little enclaves of band pods and Alcohol Funny Car and The Gits, there were so many bands in those days and we'd go to a show and then we'd go to somebody's house and stay up 'til five in the morning, it was crazy and just listening to music and playing music and it just—I didn't have that experience in New York City. It wasn't like that at all. The camaraderie and that willingness to support each other was something that I hadn't felt before. I felt more isolated in New York. I had a band I mentioned it earlier, but trying to get a gig in that city is very difficult. It wasn't that "let's hang out with each other" feeling that I had here.

Not to say that it didn't exist. I just didn't find it there. I found it here and it just felt like home.

KCM: Beautiful. What about your connection women in other music scenes?

GH: Women in other music scenes?

KCM: Yeah, well you're in a lot of music scenes

GH: So you want to know about the women in other music scenes?

KCM: Or your personal connection to women who now maybe don't live in the Seattle music scene. I think we're talking about place, like in other towns and scenes now. Are you still more locally based?

GH: I really think of myself as locally based. I'm kind of like a wherever I am I am person. And I think there are good things and bad things about that. I tend to work really hard and I have a close knit of friends that I keep in touch with and musical contacts. I'm not great at keeping long term—I wish I was better at it. I wish I could, there are a couple of people I met, I met a woman named Eve Buglarian in New York, I did a paper on her in New York. I did a research paper on her when I was in college. I did a research paper on her and I interviewed her and when I went to New York I met her and we had lunch and she was wonderful and she's so active and vibrant and I love her music and I wish I kept up with her. The networking thing, it's not my forte. I'm really—I'm like wherever I am I'm really good at and that's where I am kind of thing. And I think some people are really good at keeping up those connections and networking and that's probably why they do a lot better than I do. But I'm sort of like short attention span woman over here.

KCM: Where did you go to school?

GH: Cornish College

KCM: Recently?

GH: I graduated there at 2002 as a composition major and I teach there now. I've been teaching there since I kind of got out and turned around and went back in.

KCM: That's great, they don't always hire people that go to school there. That's great.

GH: Yeah, they've been really good to me there. You asked me about women in other communities, and there are a few people i—I mean the women in Seven Year Bitch, I know Celene just came out with a record, Liz still plays bass, I just had dinner with Valerie, she was up from San Francisco and she was talking about playing music again. She hasn't been so much. My friend Kristin Berry who is from Seattle, she's on the East Coast now and she has a couple of kids and she just got her Ph.D. in

Psychology. I don't know if she's playing music now. I know she wasn't because of having a family. There are a lot of... there are not a lot of, in my world there are not a lot of women from the past that played music in my life. I think there are more women today playing music than there were when I was younger. In my twenties when Maxi Bad happened people would call us a girl band, and we weren't, there were two girls and a guy and we never thought of us like that. But whenever we got reviewed we were compared to women musicians even though our music sounded nothing like the other but I think that's happening less now. I hope, I mean I think. Music is music. And if you're going to make a sound comparison, which I get it, but it's kind of weird also at the same time, I think it makes sense to compare the music, not the fact that they're chicks. You know? I'm trying to think of who we were compared to some—we were compared to people that just had nothing to do with what we were doing. Remotely. But I think today like at Cornish there's a lot more students—women. In 2002 when I graduated there were two women in the composition department. There are more now, I think there's six. I could be wrong, there might be more, but I just see more women in the halls and there are some pretty rocking women in this town right now. Beth Fleener is an incredible musician, she's a clarinetist but she's an improviser and she runs an agency called the Frank Agency where she manages musicians and she puts on events and shows. She's more connected to the mock tail creative concerns or improvisational. She does some noise stuff. She's very, I think she's very cutting edge and extremely cool. But she has a band with Paris Hurley who also plays in, oh gosh, there's my brain again. It's gone. My brain is not working—I need more food—I need lunch.

KCM: Okay. Looking forward twenty years from now, how do you imagine music communities and scenes will be different from today?

GH: Oh that's such an interesting question. How music scenes are going to be different in twenty years. We're in this really bizarre place musically with all the technology and the ways of delivering music. It's so fascinating. When Maxi Bad was a band we'd go do a recording, we'd get it on a cassette tape, we'd hand draw the cover and go to Kinkos and cut them out by hand and fold them by hand and stick the cassette in and sell them at shows for three bucks and then we were lucky enough for somebody to pay for us to get CDs manufactured. Today you can do that at home. You can get CDs run off if you wanted to. CD manufacturing is pretty affordable. OR hey, who needs CDs? Just put the stuff on a website or get it over to iTunes, CD Baby. Music is so readily available, that's why there's so much out there. But how the people make money anymore is the tricky thing. And I think that we're in a transitional phase right now as musicians and music industry—people don't really know how to move forward yet in a way where, you know, commerce is exchanged. There's not really a solid business model right now. And I think the technology is moving so quickly that I have no freaking idea what it's going to look like in twenty years. I mean, are we going to be communicating only through internet and you know? Because there's always this, "Oh no, this technology is going to take musicians away." Remember when the samplers came? "Musicians aren't going to be able to find work anymore." Or when orchestras started using recorded

music in the pit. Musicians are always gonna be there. There's always going to be music being made. And people are people and we're always going to find ways of communing—being in communication with one another and being present with each other and I can't imagine that changing at all. I can't imagine communities going away or music going away. I think that basis will always be there, but the delivery systems will be different. And I don't know what that's going to look like.

KCM: Well thank you for your time. I wanted to maybe record a little bit of music, but I wanted to give you a little bit of a break, we've been talking for a little bit over a break, but thank you.