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Charles Larkowski, Former Faculty, Department of Music, Wright State University

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Retiree Association Oral History Project

Interview date: 3/9/2018

Interviewer: Abe Bassett (AB)
Professor Emeritus, Department of Theatre Arts

Interviewee: Charles Larkowski (CL)
Former Faculty, Department of Music

Abe Bassett: This is Abe Bassett, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Theatre Arts, and current member of the Wright State University Retiree's Association. Today is Friday, March 9, 2018, and I'm interviewing Dr. Charles Larkowski, former faculty member of the Department of Music, and this is part of the Retiree Association's Oral History Project. Charles, thank you for joining us today. May I call you Chuck?

Charles Larkowski: Please do.

AB: Okay, we're going to divide this interview into four parts. Your early years, your education years, your teaching years, and your post-teaching years. Okay, so tell me, where were you born?

CL: I was born in central Nebraska, Grand Island. We actually lived in the small town of St. Paul, about 20 miles north of Grand Island, there was no hospital there in those days.

AB: Right. Well, your dad was an engineer, you once told me. So, you moved around a lot.

CL: Yes, his company would bid on a job, open an office for a few years, finish the job, and build a bridge or whatever it was. Then close the office and transfer us all someplace else. So, when I was 6 we all moved to northern California, we lived in Contra Costa County, just inland from the San Francisco Bay area. We were there for 2 years. When I was 8 we moved to Orange County and lived in Buena Park. The last house we lived in was walking distance to Knotts Berry Farm. I finished elementary school there and started junior high and then we were transferred to Jacksonville, Florida, that was 1963. I finished the 8th grade there and then went through high school. I graduated in 1967 and went off to Michigan State University.

AB: Right, now you are a musician and how did you start in music? What was your first musical experience?

CL: Oh my gosh, it was singing in church choirs as a very young boy and then my parents got me accordion lessons starting when I was 8. Then I ended up in junior high in

southern California in a marvelous junior high choral program. This junior high in Anaheim did an operetta every year, it was really quite amazing. By the time I was finishing and getting through eighth grade, I was a soloist in the operetta, and it just stuck. And then again in high school, a wonderful choral director who came into that school the beginning of my sophomore year turned it into a state wide known program by the time I graduated. I just recently reconnected with him, by the way, he's retired in Pensacola, Florida. On the side I was still playing the accordion and picking up the piano on my own. So, music was always just something that was central to my interest.

AB: Yeah, the accordion, that's an interesting... because it's partly a piano and then it has all these strange buttons on the side. What did you learn with that left hand on the buttons?

CL: Well, the left side of the accordion is arranged in what musician's call the circle of fifths. This is something you have to learn when you get into theory class later on in college, and you learn about things called closely related keys, which is how composers modulate from one key to another. Well, the left hand of the accordion is arranged in that logical order and so I found out, much later on, that I had a leg up on some basic theory concepts that other people don't necessarily learn.

AB: So, you didn't learn the theory, you just learned how to use it.

CL: Yes. It was at my fingertips, literally.

AB: You also had some theatrical experiences. You were at one of the outdoor dramas?

CL: Well, that was in college years.

AB: Oh, that was college years, okay.

CL: But yeah, I was in some church things, I was in my first community theatre production in high school, it was my senior year in high school and it was the Little Theatre of Jacksonville. I was in the ensemble and played the village priest in *The Most Happy Fella*. That was my first big musical production.

AB: You know, I gotta tell ya, that's my favorite musical.

CL: We've talked about this before, you tried to get me in your production of it here and we couldn't work out my schedule.

AB: Oh, I failed to do that.

CL: Yeah, we couldn't. I had a performance conflict on one of your performance days.

AB: Oh well, that's too bad. Okay, so anyway, you graduated high school in Florida in Jacksonville, Florida. Why did you go to Michigan State?

CL: Well, I was a national merit scholar and I was the valedictorian of my high school class. I've always loved school and I've joked that I love school so much that I've learned a way to stay there for the rest of my life. Michigan State in the 1960's had the largest number of merit scholars of any single campus in the nation, and they actively recruited merit scholars all over the country. So, I was recruited, almost like an athlete.

AB: I take it you got a scholarship then?

CL: Yes, it was a virtual full ride to go to Michigan State.

AB: Making mom and dad happy.

CL: Yes, absolutely!

AB: So, you entered Michigan State as a music major and you got your bachelor's degree in four years?

CL: Yes, in vocal performance. I went to Michigan State thinking I was going to be maybe an opera singer or some kind of singer, and I realized partly through the undergraduate experience that I probably didn't really have the voice for it, for that kind of thing. But I discovered music history as an academic discipline and that's where my career went.

AB: Okay so four years and you got a bachelor's degree, you stayed at Michigan State and got your master's degree. Was there a specialty in the master's program?

CL: My master's is an M.A. in Musicology, and my advisor was mostly a medieval scholar and that's sort of where I got steered, and so I was mostly doing medieval topics. I also brushed up my high school Latin, I took some medieval philosophy and history courses outside of the music school as well.

AB: Uh huh, and then you also got your PhD in Musicology and your dissertation topic was Johannes de Garlandia, a French music theorist whose life started in 1270.

CL: Yes.

AB: That is very rare. I mean, not many people know him or are interested in him.

CL: Right. He was a crucial step in the development of the precise notation of rhythm in western music. What I did was basically was a translation and commentary of the treatise that has come down to us.

AB: Right so that helped you in your teaching

CL: Oh certainly!

AB: Okay, and how do you pronounce his name again?

CL: Johannes de Garlandia. De Garlandia, by the way, comes from what was a neighborhood in Paris, near the University in Paris, the Coste De Garlande [*sp?*], which was sort of the student ghetto of the University of Paris.

AB: Okay so you got your doctorate in 1977 and now it's time to go to work, so you got a job not at Michigan State, but where?

CL: Actually, I got my first job back in 1976 and I was ABD for that year, I had all but the finishing of the dissertation. I got a job in Danville, Kentucky at Centre College in Kentucky, which many people will know is a very highly regarded liberal arts college that dates back to the early 1800's, and has produced Supreme Court justices, and it has a very illustrious history.

AB: So, was that a temporary, a one-year job?

CL: Yes, it was a one-year sabbatical replacement job. They had a little three-man music department, and she was actually the senior member of the department, and was on leave for that year. You know, it's hard to look at the camera- [*laughs*]

AB: [*Laughs*] okay, so the year following, you came to Wright State. How did that happen?

CL: Well, the chairman of the Music Department at Wright State was a man by the name of Bill Fenton, and Bill Fenton's son was a college student in that 1976-1977 school year at Centre College, and Bill Fenton brought the Wright State Chamber Singers down to Danville for a concert. We of Centre College, we housed the students and the people that came from Wright State. I ended up housing the graduate assistant who came along to sort of just assist with logistics and such, and we were just talking at dinner and I said, "I'm looking for a job for next year", and actually the pickings were slim, there weren't many job openings, and I was thinking that I might just have to go back to Lansing and work on the dissertation. My wife could probably have gone back to her full-time job and so forth, and so he said, "Well, you know we have a job opening at Wright State", and no, I didn't know. I had missed the listing somehow. So, I got busy and got my materials together and sent them up here and basically Bill Fenton was so impressed with what his son was getting at Centre College that- this is my interpretation of things- but I think Bill's attitude was "I'll hire anybody that Centre College will hire", so I got the job here, and arrived in the fall of '77.

AB: And you came in as an assistant professor?

CL: Yes.

AB: And in '77 do you remember what your first salary was?

CL: My first salary was \$13,500.

AB: Sounded good at the time, didn't it?

CL: Yes, it did, and as a matter of fact the standard starting salary for a new PhD assistant professor was \$13,000, and Bill Fenton made sure I knew that he had gotten me another \$500.

AB: So, what was your teaching load and your teaching classes that first year?

CL: Well of course, we were on the quarter system in those days, and basically, I taught eleven courses a year.

AB: Eleven?

CL: Yes, eleven 3-credit, 3 hours per week, courses per year. Divided somehow 4-4-3, 3-4-4, or something like that.

AB: Were those eleven classes repeats, or were they all new for preparation?

CL: It depended. Obviously, at the beginning they were all new. But, for example, I taught the music history sequence, which was a three-quarter sequence that lasted the entire year. I taught a similar sequence at the 100 level which was an intro to music literature. I taught general education courses, music appreciation courses, of which we had several in those days. Nowadays, we just have one big music appreciation class, but we had a number of them. They were almost structured like those major sequences but geared for non-majors. We had a music theory fundamentals for non-majors. In my first couple of years I taught like five different general education courses and those sequences for majors, and I taught single quarter graduate courses in music history in literature.

AB: It sounds like those first few years were difficult.

CL: It was intense. I had a new baby at home who was born about 8 days before my first classes here. That, too. So, yeah, life was intense in those days.

AB: Uh huh. But it didn't scare you away.

CL: Oh, I don't know. I think I've just always been a person who works well under pressure, and kind of needs the pressure.

AB: Yeah. I'm going to give some information now to our viewers and our listeners so that I don't embarrass you of making you tell me this, but you received some awards, some teaching awards. In 1999, in the honors program, you were teacher of the year for the honors program. In 2005, for the College of Liberal Arts you won the outstanding teaching award, and then from the years 2006 to 2009, you were the Robert J. Kegerreis Distinguished Professor of Teaching. Congratulations.

CL: Thank you, thank you very much, and let me say that the honors one, that was a nomination from the students in the honors section of our general education course that I taught that year, so that one felt particularly nice.

AB: Now, we had talked earlier, and you told me that at one point you went back to study Greek?

CL: Yes, I did!

AB: And you studied with Dr. Bill King.

CL: At first, yes

AB: Yes, at first, and you studied Greek for two years.

CL: Well, I took the whole two year, 100 and 200 [level] basic and intermediate Greek, and then I took a few of the advanced literature classes as well. So, I probably took, oh gee, maybe ten or eleven quarters.

AB: Of Greek?

CL: Of Greek, and a couple of Latin, too. I had had Latin before, but every once in a while there wasn't a Greek class that I was interested in, and so I would do a Latin class instead.

AB: Uh huh, and the person who started teaching those classes was Bill King.

CL: Yes.

AB: Was he a good teacher?

CL: He was a wonderful teacher, he was in an ebullient personality, he was witty, and he was interested in a variety of things, and he would break out in song in the middle of class. I thought he was fantastic, and we became good friends. We knew each other just very casually before. I think we'd served on maybe a faculty committee or two, but the experience of being in his class was magnificent.

AB: I wondered if being in his class in any way affected your teaching?

CL: Oh, I don't know! I think students would probably tell you that I was always a pretty intense, down to business kind of teacher, and some of them will tell you that I was terrifying. I think I did lighten up over the years, relax a bit, and so, you know, maybe some of that happened at around this same time, and so maybe there was something, I hadn't really thought of it.

AB: That idea of relaxing a little bit as a teacher, if you compare, say, your first five years of teaching and your last five years of teaching, would that characterize that? That you were more relaxed?

CL: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Well, almost. Even at the end, I think a lot of students would think that I was one of the more demanding and intense teachers they had. Students usually said that about me.

AB: But you always loved your teaching.

CL: Oh, absolutely. Standing up in front of the class and talking about music for fifty minutes, that was my idea of paradise.

AB: Well, that's also like performing.

CL: Oh, sure.

AB: And in the years that you were at Wright State as a professor- you came as an assistant, then associate, and then a full professor- you did a lot of performance.

CL: Yes

AB: In what way, what kind of performances did you do?

CL: A number of faculty recitals over the years, quite regularly. The very first one I think was my second year here. I actually did a little bit of voice studio teaching my very first year here and so I got to know the voice faculty quite well and I served on the vocal board, they now call it the jury, for many years of my career, and the voice faculty we put on a joint recital- we did opera, aria's, duets, and trios- that was at the end of my second year here, that was my very first faculty recital. I sang full solo recitals, I played the piano and the harpsichord and the organ, accompanied other faculty on their recitals many, many times over the years. Hardly a year went by when I wasn't on stage performing at least a little bit. We had, at the very least, in most quarters what was called the faculty smorgasbord recital, where faculty performed for the students to sort of kick off the new year, and I always performed in those. Then, for many years, starting in the late 80's and into the 90's, I was a member of a professional early music ensemble. We were headquartered out in Yellow Springs, the director was Patricia Olds, who was one of my music colleagues here, and we performed music of the middle ages, renaissance, and baroque periods. I started mainly as a singer, harpsichord player, and recorder player, and I soon became also a chrome horn player.

AB: A what?

CL: Chrome horn.

AB: Which is?

CL: The chrome horn is a J shaped instrument with a double reed inside a cap, and it makes a soft, buzzy sound. Chrome, by the way, means bent. It's the bent tube of the instrument. Eventually, I also took up the viola da gamba, which is 6 strings and frets, but bowed and held like a cello. I took that up when I was almost thirty was I first played it. I was with the early music group for I'm not sure how many years, but we played not only locally, but we had Ohio Art Council grants more than once to play in museums all over the state, to play in libraries regionally, we played for the opening of the El Greco Exhibit at the Toledo Museum in front of the director of the Prado Museum and the Spanish ambassador that one year. So, that was also a big part of my performing, and then for a period of time in the early 2000's, I was also a church organist here in town, so doing a lot of playing in that respect.

AB: That was at Oakwood?

CL: Yes, that was at St. Paul's Episcopal in Oakwood.

AB: Right, and you also performed with a group out of the University of Dayton?

CL: Yes! It was called the *Schola Cantorum Daytoniensis*, under the direction of one of the Marianist brothers, his name was Todd Ridder, he died at a tragically young age. We were a Gregorian chant choir and we performed complete liturgical services, and occasionally other kinds of things, concerts of medieval music, we did a couple of staged liturgical dramas in the UD chapel. So, I did that for a number of years.

AB: Well your major professor at Michigan State would have been very proud of you because you took that medieval exposure and used it throughout your career.

CL: Yes, yes absolutely.

AB: Uh huh. Well, that's terrific. Did you ever give involved in any administration work in the department?

CL: I did a little bit. I was always averse to administrative work. We all have to do some, but I never enjoyed doing it. We had two different periods where we had an interim chairman of the department, when a chairman left and we were searching, and my colleague, Buddy Laws, became interim chair during both of those periods, and both of those times he asked me to serve as interim assistant chair, which was normally his position, and it had very defined duties, like the instrument inventory and things like that, and just general assisting to the chairman, of course. I briefly served as chair of our music history and literature committee, in fact two different stints doing that. I served on and chaired many, many faculty search committees over the years, and I did a brief stint as director of graduate studies for the department, but I always got out of it as soon as I could, as soon as the term was over.

AB: Well, for history's sake, when you came to Wright State, Bill Fenton was the chair, and then he left, and can you run through the chairs that you worked under?

CL: Well, let's see. Yeah, when Bill Fenton left, Bill Steinohrt became the chair. Bill played double bass with the Dayton Phil [*Dayton Philharmonic*], he was a wonderful composer, he's still alive and kicking, lives in Hawaii, and then Sarah Johnson- we all know her as Sally- became chair, and when Sally left a man by the name of Richard Knab came to the department. His chairmanship was kind of disastrous and brief, and was followed by one of those interim periods. Then we had Jerry Whiston, this is 90's and into the early 2000's, I believe. We had Sharon Nelson, who became associate dean, served as interim chair, before Herbert Dregalla came, and Herb moved over to at first the dean's office, and then he became the director of the transition of the semester system for the university, and that's when Randy Paul became the music chair. So, I think that's all of them.

AB: Well, you trained and worked under a lot of different styles, and you would be in a good position to become a chair now that you know all the bad things and what not to do.

CL: Well, as a matter of fact, many years ago Sally Johnson came to me when she was chair and said, "You know, I think you should think about being chair someday, and I can talk to the dean about this", and I begged her not to. I wanted no part of it.

AB: Yeah. Well, it takes you out of what you love, which is teaching and performance.

CL: It would've cut into both of those, obviously.

AB: Uh huh. Your students now. You know, Wright State growing up, there's a great music program at Bowling Green, Ohio State is huge, and the University of Cincinnati, CCM, is a real big program, still is-

CL: Akron is a sizeable music school.

AB: Right, so that made it difficult to get students.

CL: Yes, in those early days we were basically a local program, and almost exclusively music education. Training people to be public school music teachers. By the time I got here we had a fledgling Master's of Music Education program, but it was also local, full-time teachers. The master's program, I think, allowed us to pull from a little wider radius, because even further away, we were still the closest for a full-time teacher to come and do a master's program on a part time basis, evenings and summers. Then I think we benefited from a kind of snowball effect. Once we were pulling those master's students from a little further away, they were sometimes then sending their students. When I first came here, it was basically the Miami Valley, but within another ten or fifteen years, maybe now we're as far away as Lima and Findley and places like that. So yeah, our influence did spread.

AB: Right, and you have some former students that you're particularly proud of.

CL: Oh, certainly. Right here in Dayton we have the Lorenz Music Company, which specializes mostly in church music and musical materials for educational programs.

AB: They're a publisher?

CL: Yes, they're a publisher. The president of Lorenz is one of my former students, Kris Kropff. I think she's the first president of that company to not be a member of the Lorenz family, I may be slightly inaccurate, but I think I was told that. I have a former student who works in the development office of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, having formerly worked for the Cleveland Settlement School, and having before that worked for the Denver Symphony. Couple of examples. Other students have gone on to doctorates and higher education positions and so forth. So, yes, a number of them.

AB: Yes, for a former teacher, to hear that your students have had success is just a wonderful thing.

CL: Oh, yes, and I claim as at least partly under my influence a number of people that people would certainly know locally. Jim McCutcheon did his master's with us, and I taught his music history classes, for example.

AB: Have any of your teachers become interested in liturgical music?

CL: Oh, I've got a number of former students who are active church musicians. Oh yes, quite a few.

AB: Well, a wonderful career, a wonderful career. And now the Department of Music is the School of Music. Can you explain that?

CL: Well, it happened after I retired, and so I honestly don't know the whole story about how it came about. Short answer, no, I really can't. I don't know the difference is.

AB: Alright, well, you left Wright State in 2004?

CL: No, 2012.

AB: 2012. Yeah, it's been 6 years. You have really been active in the theatre, the local community theatres, but actually when you were a student at Michigan State, in the summertime you participated in the outdoor drama there.

CL: Yes, but not there. I was a student at Michigan State, but I was in the outdoor drama Cross and Sword in St. Augustine, Florida. The summers of 1969, 1970, 1971. It was non-equity professional theatre, we got paid sixty bucks a week, which you could live on in those days. Not well, but you could live, and then my second and third summers I got paid sixty five bucks, because I had lines. You know, those things were set up with an

acting company, and a music company, and a dance company, and I was in the music company. It was the story of the founding of St. Augustine in 1565, kind of an ideal summer job for a college student. We had to be at the theatre every night about 7 or 7:30, something like that, and the curtain was at sundown and we were walking out of the theatre by 11 or 11:30, and we partied all night and slept all day, that's the bottom line.

AB: Yeah, a great college student's summer vacation.

CL: I had a wonderful time, and also it was my introduction to that professional world. We had a two week rehearsal period, and then the show opened. It was boom, boom, boom. We had to learn things quickly and be responsible and it was a wonderful experience.

AB: Yes, okay so you got a part at the Dayton Community Theatre at the Dayton Playhouse?

CL: Yeah!

AB: So that was in, '06? So, you were still teaching full-time at that time?

CL: Yes, and I had been on stage at the Music Department a couple times before that.

AB: Well, they had opera.

CL: Yeah, in the opera productions.

AB: And you directed opera, too?

CL: Later on, yes. At first in I believe 2000 was the first one. I talked my colleague, Kim Warrick, into doing my favorite Gilbert Sullivan opera, which was the opera, *Iolanthe*. It took some talking, and she finally came back to me and said, "Okay, I'll do *Iolanthe*, but you have to play the lord chancellor", and I thought "Oh, geez, how can I squeeze this in with my teaching schedule and everything else?" But I did it and had a wonderful time. It was one of those experiences where I hadn't been on stage like that in quite a few years, since my grad school days. I was briefly in a Gilbert Sullivan society in Lansing, and so I had some experience with that but I had never played this role. This was one of those "Gee I forgot how much fun this is" kind of things. Then a couple of years later, I was on stage again for Kim as the Duke of Plaza-Toro in *The Gondaliers*, and then another couple years, so now I think this is 2004 or so, as King Gama in *Princess Ida*, one of the lesser known Gilbert and Sullivan's. The original Women's Lib musical, I like to call it. In *Princess Ida* was one of our students, he had started as a music student, but he actually graduated with a theatre studies degree. His name was Adam Lay, and Adam and I were both in *Princess Ida* together. He graduated.. I'm getting ahead of myself. First, as his honors project to finish his theatre degree, he directed a production here on campus in the director's lab theatre here, of Steven Sondheim's *Assassins*. He cast me as Charles Guiteau in that production, and again it was one of those "Gee, being on stage in a

musical, this is lots of fun!” Then he became director of the Dayton Playhouse when he graduated, and he just kind of casually put me on an email list, and so I started getting the notices when the auditions were coming up and things like that, and I decided to try it. I had always shied away from it before. I’d been asked. I knew Paul Wayne- who was a well-known guy in town who did a lot of community theatre and at Sinclair, and was actually on the faculty here at one time- and his wife Dee, they had both acted in the community theater. They had asked me several times and I just always said “Gee, I don’t see how I can give the time to devote two or three weekends, plus a six week rehearsal period, and so forth. But Adam started a thing at the Playhouse that he called “The Flipside”. It was one-weekend-only productions, most of which were reader’s theatre. So it didn’t quite have the commitment of time demanded, and the very first Flipside production he did- he also tried to do edgier kind of repertory that would not be on the normal Dayton Playhouse season. The very first Flipside production I went and auditioned for and got casted was Sam Shephard’s *Buried Child*, and I was in the smallest role in the play, the role of Reverend Dewis, but oh my gosh, I had a wonderful time. During those first two years that the Flipside existed, I think they did ten or eleven of the Flipside productions, and I was in five or six of them. And then finally I went that next step and got myself in one of their full main stage productions playing the Emperor Joseph in *Amadeus*. That was my first full out Dayton Community Theatre production.

AB: The Emperor Joseph in *Amadeus*. Yes, the one in which Mozart comes to, and Salieri plays a welcome for Mozart.

CL: Yes!

AB: And then Mozart says “Oh, I think I can do that better”

CL: Exactly. That’s a wonderful scene.

AB: That is a wonderful moment, yeah.

CL: Then, not long after that, I had my first- what I consider my first really major role on a Dayton stage, and that was George in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

AB: Ooh!

CL: Yeah, that’s a biggie.

AB: That’s a big one! Well, if you can do that, you can do anything. Well, I know that your last time here on stage just here weeks ago was *King Lear*.

CL: Yes!

AB: Now, that’s harder than George.

CL: Yes it is. King Lear is the hardest thing I've ever done. I don't have to think about that!

AB: That's a very difficult role.

CL: It was a production at Clark State College in Springfield, directed by a friend of mine who works with a Cincinnati Shakespeare company, and so somebody I really trusted to do that project with.

AB: You've won a number of acting awards. Tell me about that.

CL: Well, in town most of the community and some of the college theatres are part of an organization, it's called the DayTony's/Dayton Theatre Hall of Fame, and there's a yearly awards banquet, it's kind of a mini Tony's or Oscar's kind of thing. The member theatres send representatives to each other's productions, and they submit ballots and the shows get evaluated, and then these DayTony's are given out in the categories you might expect; for acting, and supporting acting, and directing, set design, and sound design, and all of those kinds of things. I've won 16 DayTony's over the years, most of them for acting, but one of them for being the foreign language dialect coach for Amadeus, because there's all that Italian, French, and German that are spoken in that play. And I've gotten two of them for musical activities, for music directing or pit keyboard player, those kinds of things.

AB: Well, with your talents there's a whole end of people knocking on your door, and at your age now, there isn't a lot of competition.

CL: This is true. This is true. I think I told you before that sometimes I'll go to an audition and there will be a role for an older man, and there will be two or three of us in the running. Roles for middle age to older women, there will be 28 women in the room, all competing for the part, so that's a good thing.

AB: Do you have anything coming up next?

CL: I actually just had a show canceled, we had just started rehearsals and it got canceled, so I'm not doing anything right at the moment, but in about a week and a half I'm be auditioning at the Dayton Theatre Guild for their final production of the season.

AB: You gave me a list of shows that you've been in and it's really phenomenal. I went through it, and starting in 2006 you have four credits, the following year 5, the following year 5, that brings us up to 2009 you had 6 that year, 5 the year after, 4 the year after that. You certainly have been very, very busy, and probably you could become a teacher of theatre now.

CL: I think I know a lot of the repertoire, that's for sure!

AB: Well, you could teach voice-

CL: Yeah, yeah, and actually I did- for a few years back in the 80's- teach a history of the Broadway musical. Popular musical theatre, we called it. So I did that. I actually created that class at Sally Johnson's request, if I remember right.

AB: That should be a popular class.

CL: Oh, it was. Mostly theatre majors in the class, of course.

AB: Is there one particular class that you would rather teach more than anything else?

CL: The class I loved teaching, which I taught only on and off earlier in my career, but for the last I'm not sure how many years, maybe twelve or fifteen years of my career, it was a course called the Form and Analysis, and that was my favorite class to teach.

AB: In a word, what is Form and Analysis?

CL: Well, some of it was a survey of some of the standard forms of the Baroque Classical and Romantic periods, Sonata Allegro form, which all composers use for first movements in sonatas and string quartets and symphonies and so forth. Rondo form, various other kinds of things. But simply, techniques of analysis for musicians who need to figure out what makes a piece of music tick, and who need to know why a particular place in a music needs a pause because of the shape and form of the piece. This is something that good performers do. And then techniques of analysis for 20th Century music as well, which can sometimes be baffling by the traditional and theoretical concepts.

AB: Now, you're very active in theatre, but you're still doing musical things. I know that at the Yellow Springs Chamber Music Series that you often introduce the music.

CL: Yes. I have been giving these concert previews for a long time, actually the very first one I ever gave here in town was my second or third year in town, for the Dayton Opera, way back in the late 70's. Some people might remember the Dayton Journal sports writer, Ritter Collett. He was also an opera buff, and he and I appeared on a couple panels discussing opera for the Dayton Opera. He was a wonderful man. I've done them for the Dayton Opera, I've done them for the Bach Society, I've done them for the Dayton Philharmonic, but then in the last- oh, it's gone on for several years- I was the concert preview lecturer for the entire Chamber Music Yellow Springs season. The last couple of years I've just been doing one or two concerts in each season.

AB: Yeah, the Yellow Springs Chamber Music is a wonderful organization.

CL: Oh, It is fabulous.

AB: They bring some wonderful performers there. And Ritter Collett, he was associated with OU, I think- Ohio University- and I remember him, and he would refer to plays that he's seen here and there and so forth. He was a very interesting man.

CL: He was very knowledgeable about opera, I remember he and I being on a panel about *La Traviata*, I think that was the first one. Verdi's *Don Carlo*, I believe, he and I sat and discussed, and maybe Puccini's *Turandot*? I associate him with those somehow, but my memory could be faulting on that.

AB: Well, for retirees who may be listening to this and watching this interview, I think you're an inspiration in terms of what to do with your life when you quit –

CL: - Can I just say one more thing please?

AB: Yes, please!

CL: And that is that I also serve on the reading committee for the Dayton Playhouse Future Fest and this is Dayton Playhouse's summer festival of new plays. Six plays get produced in one weekend, and what we call the original committee narrows the submitted plays down to a semifinal of 12 to 18, it varies slightly from year to year. This year we have I think a little under 250 submissions. We have a committee of about I think we have 15 of us this year, and each play is guaranteed five reads. This means everybody on the committee is probably going to read about 90 plays by the time the process has worked itself out. I think I've read, I don't know, probably 70 so far this year.

AB: Yeah, that's a chore.

CL: It is. It is, and to be frank, sometimes you don't finish a play, if you know it's never going to go any place and it's not good enough to make the cut. Sometimes you skim very quickly. But then sometimes you really get absorbed, and you spend the 2 or 2 ½ hours reading a play carefully.

AB: And you've performed with the Future Fest?

CL: Yes.

AB: And that's only one performance, but four weeks of rehearsals sometimes.

CL: Yes. Three of the plays are presented as readings, and sometimes they are just as simple as sitting with a music stand and reading. Other times you're up on your feet staging it, but you've got the script in your hand. But three of the productions are full productions. So, yeah. My very first Future Fest was 2006, I think, or 2007. I'm not sure, but I was in two plays. I was in both of the Sunday plays, I was in a staged reading Sunday morning at 10 o'clock, and then I was in a fully staged 3-character play at 3 pm. I've never been so tired in my life after that!

AB: Well, Chuck, Charles Larkowski, I appreciate you coming in for this interview. I think you have had a fascinating life, I admire you greatly, and I think our viewers of this video and the people who read it are going to be equally impressed. So thanks very much.

CL: Well, thank you! This has been a lot of fun.