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## Larry Wallach

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## **Simon's Rock Oral History Project**

Interviewee: **Larry Wallach**  
Faculty in Music (1972 - 2018)

Interviewer: **Russell Miller, College Archivist**  
Transcriber: **Russell Miller, College Archivist**

Date: **August 16, 2005**

Location: **Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, MA**

Collection: **Simon's Rock College Archives**

Contact: **archives@simons-rock.edu**

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## **Interview with Larry Wallach**

**August 16, 2005**

**Simon's Rock of Bard College (aka Bard College at Simon's Rock)**

**Selected excerpts from the Oral History Project interview. The full transcript may be restricted. To request access please contact the [Simon's Rock College Archives](#).**

**Keywords:** Robin Hendrich, South Berkshire Concert Series, Tom Lipiczky, Baird Whitlock, Kellogg, Board of Overseers, Nancy Goldberger, Sam Magill, merger, Bard, Leon Botstein, B.A. program, buildings, Daniel Arts Center, Hall College Center, Bernie Rodgers, Eileen Handelman

“In the middle of my second year we sent out ads soliciting applications for an ethnomusicologist. I determined that if we were going to be a two-person music department, and since I was covering western music, we needed somebody to cover the rest of the world. Or as much of it as possible. That search brought in Tom Lipiczky as my colleague, which as far as I was concerned was a very happy hiring. It was kind of serendipitous because I had broken my leg skiing during the winter break, and I remember Baird Whitlock coming into my hospital room with a box of letters responding to the ad, and dumping them on my bed. I leafed through them, and picked out the first one with a return address of Wesleyan University, which was Tom Lipiczky's, because Wesleyan has one of the foremost ethnomusicology programs in the country.”

“I was about two-thirds finished with writing my dissertation. I thought it was time to see if I could get a job, but I didn't want to leave Western Massachusetts, so I got the college guide [and] made a list of five colleges west of the Connecticut River. Those were the only colleges that I wrote to. That was my job search. I was fully prepared to go into house construction, or whatever else would be necessary to survive, because I really didn't want to leave Western Massachusetts. And, lo and behold, there was a job at Simon's Rock. Which, when I read the description of the school, I thought was some kind of nutritional faddist's institution, because Mrs. Hall had written something about how, with modern nutrition, people are maturing more rapidly. [Laughter.] “What is this?” But, quickly got the idea, from coming here, being interviewed – especially by three students. I was very impressed that they had students doing interviews; that, in the application process, they wanted three of my former students to write letters of recommendation.”

“I remember one very striking occasion when Baird Whitlock called the entire faculty together in the Faculty/Student Lounge – which is now the Faculty Lounge in the College Center. There were no walls there, so it included the Conference Room. It was just one big room. So that's where we met. And Baird said, ‘Okay, we're going to have interdisciplinary majors. We're not

going to have conventional majors, because we're too small a faculty.' He also announced that the school was going to be organized by divisions, and there were going to be no departments. We don't use the word 'department' here at Simon's Rock. That was abolished at that moment. So we had programs and areas, but not departments. What we had officially were...the organizational units were divisions. So we had four divisions, but we were going to have a number of majors, and the majors were going to be interdisciplinary. So, he basically said, 'Okay, who wants to suggest a major?' and people just raised their hands, and said, 'Well, we should have a Quantitative Studies major.' 'Okay, who wants to be on the faculty of the Quantitative Studies major?' [Laughter.] 'Raise your hands. Okay.'"

"[Leon] was saying, 'Look, your uniqueness is in your A.A. program. The B.A. program makes you look like everybody else, and it's not essential.' I remember I piped up and said, 'You're wrong. The B.A. program is essential, because the B.A. program gives the A.A. program its special flavor.' And he took that in. And even though he's made noises about the B.A. program from time to time, look at where we are. He basically understood that freshmen were going into upper-level classes if it was in their area of interest and they had the background and that was one of the things that was attracting them – the opportunity to work on that upper level."

"The brilliance of that slightly younger mind is very exciting. There's less kind of a jaded quality, and a willingness to entertain all kinds of ideas. Simon's Rock students are excited by doing interdisciplinary work. They always have been. They continue to have a big appetite for, 'I'm not just going to take pictures, I'm going to take pictures and tell my life story, and I'm going to put a soundtrack on it.' They are excited by those opportunities and possibilities."