

University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives

Krannert Center 50th Anniversary Oral History Project

Interviewee: Tom Roadcap

Interviewer: Deborah Miller

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Deborah Miller: So I am Deborah Miller, the senior director of development for Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. And I'm here with Tom Roadcap.

Tom Roadcap: Good to be here.

DM: So Tom, why don't you tell me what you're doing here at the University of Illinois?

TR: So currently I'm a master's student in civil engineering studying specifically railroad engineering and track infrastructure design. I did my undergrad here as well, also in civil engineering and a minor in music. And this is my going on sixth year here at the University of Illinois.

DM: Why don't you tell me about your experience with the Krannert Center as a student at the University of Illinois? What kind of resources have you taken advantage of here?

TR: Absolutely. My fall semester of my freshman year happened to line up with Ellnora. So the very first thing I did at Krannert as a student was come to Ellnora, the guitar festival. And saw Buddy Guy and a bunch of other great guitar players. John Scofield was here. It was fantastic. Great way to kick off this college career I suppose. But it's been great.

Since I've been in the music program, I've been playing in jazz groups and stuff with the jazz department, and we play here every spring and fall. And you know, family comes, and things like that. It's always a lot of fun and there's always so many great concerts going on here. Chicago Symphony Orchestra is visiting or there's a local, you know, Sinfonia de Camera and CU Symphony and then jazz artists are coming here. And there's different things and there's free concerts, you know, right outside here. After, after parties a lot so you can come by and check out a free show too. It's been great.

In many ways, Krannert, especially for the southern part of campus here, Krannert's like the cultural center, things going on. Especially musically, but in general as well.

DM: Absolutely. And I think the free performances and the ten dollar ticket price for the students-

TR: Exactly

DM: Makes it where it's really easy for you to hear all kinds of activities. And then again for you to perform on the stages and hear your friends perform on the stages is awesome. Great.

TR: Yeah, indeed, indeed.

DM: Now, do you also use it as a respite? Do you use it as a place where you study or eat or?

TR: Yes. In the café, definitely. Done a lot of studying there. I love the big windows, you get the light. And yeah, again especially freshman year it was actually right on the way between two classes so I would stop for an hour and always study or catch up on homework. It's definitely a good place to study and the café is one of my favorite spots.

DM: Do you remember, is there a particular performance or moment that you remember that was more impactful to you than maybe...?

TR: In college?

DM: No anytime.

TR: Or in general?

DM: Anytime. Anytime here at Krannert Center.

TR: Because I remember coming to see the Nutcracker when I was little and hearing Tchaikovsky's music and stuff was something that made me more interested in classical music than I would have been otherwise. And similarly, like even in high school we would come here and see the jazz shows and that's always, when you're trying to learn the art and learn the instrument and then you come see the professionals play it is really inspiring and motivates you to learn what they are doing. But I think the most impactful I would say was seeing those Nutcrackers when I was little cause there was nothing else like that. I mean you go to school, right, you go to church and stuff, but coming to the Nutcracker in the fall was like an event.

DM: Absolutely.

TR: It was really exciting and everybody's all dressed up and then they're selling nutcrackers outside and you go in and it's in the show and stuff. Just fantastic.

DM: I do love it. It's a tradition. Are there things that surprise you about the Center? Things that you learned that maybe you didn't know at different times or have you ever just been here and thought, 'Wow, I didn't know that about the Center?'

TR: I didn't know it was fifty years old until I came in here today. I guess I would say the diversity of things going on here. I usually think of music because that's what I'm interested in but there's all kinds of other events like the Uncorked that are happening and you can get a lot of exposure to each different parts of the arts. And also within music, all the different genres are here. Whether it's classical or jazz, rock, soul, blues, R&B. I think I've seen all of those here. Even some, I don't know, yeah other types of music too.

DM: That's great. Do you bring other people to Krannert Center at some time? Can you tell us about a time when maybe you brought somebody who had not been here to the Center before or you just brought them here for another event together?

TR: Yes. In fact, well, I bring my family all the time. Whether I like it or not they are here when I play. When I, when our jazz groups played for the spring semester, this spring, some of my friends from the civil engineering department who I work with doing rail research who hadn't been in Krannert before came, and there were foreign students from Taiwan and China and they came. They really enjoyed being here and seeing the jazz music and stuff cause it's totally different from what we do obviously working in the lab north of Green Street. That was a really exciting experience for them and it was exciting for me to see, you know, this is a different part of my life down here doing the arts and the music and stuff with Krannert that they didn't, you know, know or understand anything about before. But they really enjoyed seeing both my group play and the other groups play and seeing everything that was going on.

DM: That's wonderful. Well, I really appreciate your time today.

TR: Sure. Glad to be here.

DM: If there's anything else you want to state let me know, otherwise I appreciate your time. Thank you.

TR: Sure. No problem.