

Freya Richman
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

The Transgender Oral History Project
Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies
University of Minnesota

November 2, 2017



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by

Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Freya Richman -FR
3
4 AJ: So, hello.
5 FR: Hello.
6 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project
7 at the University of Minnesota, the Tretter Collection in LGBT Studies. Today is November 2,
8 2017, and I am in south Minneapolis, and I am here today with Freya Richman. Hello, Freya.
9 FR: Hello, thank you for having me. It's nice to be here.
10 AJ: How are you?
11 FR: I'm good.
12 AJ: Yeah, very good. So, Freya, just to make sure that we have all the information correctly, can you
13 state your name, spell your name, your gender identity as you define it today, and your gender
14 assigned at birth, and your pronouns?
15 FR: I'm Freya Richman, spelled F-r-e-y-a; my last name is R-i-c-h-m-a-n. I was assigned male at birth
16 and I identify as female or, I would say, femme. Yeah, either of those.
17 AJ: OK.
18 FR: What else did you want to know?
19 AJ: Your pronouns?
20 FR: Oh, my pronouns. She/her/hers are my pronouns.
21 AJ: Awesome. So, I generally start with . . . you know, as a way to get people's memories going,
22 asking people just to recall the first thing that they remember in life?
23 FR: The first thing I remember in life, I suppose, my bedroom when I was a child. I have early
24 memories of that and of my mother comforting me as a child.
25 AJ: Where did you grow up?
26 FR: I grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin.
27 AJ: Is that right?
28 FR: My father was a professor at Lawrence University. Yeah, that's a small city in the northeastern
29 part of Wisconsin, about 60,000 people.
30 AJ: OK, so pretty small town.
31 FR: Yeah. Because of Lawrence University, it was a small town . . . a small city with some cultural
32 connections. Not as small as they come, by a long stretch.

- 1 AJ: No, it's average . . . I don't know. Wisconsin has a lot of small towns, some much, much smaller
2 than 60,000 people. So, you define it as a city?
- 3 FR: Yeah, for sure.
- 4 AJ: OK, very good. What did your dad teach?
- 5 FR: My father taught biology.
- 6 AJ: Did your mom work outside of the house?
- 7 FR: Not very much. She studied home economics in college and for a while she was a school
8 teacher. She started a nursery school, actually, in Appleton, Wisconsin. But, no, she mostly was
9 a homemaker and active in our synagogue, she was a volunteer for many organizations in town.
- 10 AJ: So, you identify as Jewish?
- 11 FR: Oh, yeah, I'm Jewish.
- 12 AJ: And did you have siblings at all?
- 13 FR: Yes. I'm the youngest of three. My brother is seven years older than me and my sister is 10
14 years older than me.
- 15 AJ: Hmm, cool. So, Freya, how does your family deal with your gender identity today?
- 16 FR: Well, you know, my family has learned to . . . my family has been very accepting.
- 17 AJ: Great, that's awesome.
- 18 FR: They've . . . pretty much, I've given them no choice, in a way, but to accept me as I am. I've
19 always been a little bit of . . . what? A bold personality in my family, so I don't think that it was,
20 in a way, too surprising to get a curve ball from Freya at a certain point. So, my family has been
21 very accepting. I'm lucky, I know a lot of people encounter a lot of resistance from their family.
22 But, for me, I think it was really just kind of normal growing pains. My family was quick to adopt
23 my name and my pronouns. I had a few moments where I had to school my father, in particular,
24 but my father is in his late 80s and he refers to me as his daughter when he introduces me.
- 25 AJ: Wow, that's beautiful.
- 26 FR: I've had very little problems with my family, as far as that goes. I did not transition until pretty
27 late. I was in my late 40s when I started to transition and I think . . . I really did not know what
28 was happening. I don't think I was really aware of queer culture when I started to transition,
29 and then I discovered it along the way and it was all a huge revelation for me to start to build
30 some queer community around me. But, at first, I was just kind of reacting to my own impulses,
31 coping with them in a way, and seeing them through somehow to their logical conclusions. I
32 think, at first, I thought I was maybe a crossdresser. I went through a little bit of an evolution in
33 my transition.
- 34 AJ: How many labels would you say that you've used to describe yourself over time?

1 FR: Well, at least a couple. I was, for sure, a crossdresser for a while. I don't think I really
2 understood that there was the option of transition. It's funny to think about. For a while, I
3 guess, I felt like . . . looking back, I think I approached incorporating feminine things into my
4 routine kind of secretly, and, from the point of view of a man. To wear panties under your
5 trousers is a certain kind of thing for a man that's obviously very different than it is when you
6 have finally come around to identifying not at all as a man who is experimenting with something
7 . . . finding it titillating, but different from reacting to that as female. That took a certain amount
8 of time. For a while I did not think that I would transition medically, but after a certain length of
9 time, I think I came to the realization that I wasn't just trying on feminine things, that there was
10 something deeper for me than that. And, I remember . . . and I know this is somewhere in our
11 notes today, about organizations – things where you've come to find connections with
12 organizations, and for me it was really 20 Percent Theater in town, a theater that is devoted to
13 amplifying the voices of queer and trans and gender non-conforming people. I had a friend who
14 was in one of *The Naked I* productions and he let his community know about it and I went . . . I
15 looked into what this was. I think this was only the first new *The Naked I*. *The Naked I* was
16 originally a play that Tobias K. Davis penned and 20 Percent Theatre produced it as such, and
17 then later on they began to create new productions based on that, a compendium of scenes and
18 stories and spoken word, short scenes. I believe this piece that I saw was the first new new
19 production after that original one. When I found out what it was, I knew I had to see it and I
20 invited my spouse to come with me. This was a little before I had really, sort of, begun to show
21 outward signs of transition. I thought maybe this would be an opportunity to start a
22 conversation. I knew that something resonated with me about the kinds of stories that I was
23 seeing in that production. And then, two years after that, I made it a point to audition for the
24 next version, that was the version that you and I were in together. And, I played a part, I looked
25 at those sides in the auditions and I could see that there was this role that felt like me. I
26 basically went into that audition holding up this side and saying, "Excuse me, this person in this
27 scene, I think that's me. I would really like to portray this person because it feels like my
28 experience." They were willing to agree to that, they were willing to say, "OK, you be that
29 person." That was the first time that I sat in a circle at the beginning of this process for that
30 production and had the opportunity, right there, to redefine my pronouns. That was the first
31 time I'd been in a circle where we were saying our name and our pronouns, I'd never
32 experienced that before. At the time, I wasn't ready to declare new pronouns but I sure liked
33 the idea of it. By two years after that, I think that was . . . what I'm just talking about, that
34 production was *Insides Out*, I think that was the subtitle name: *The Naked I: Insides Out*. And
35 then, two years after that, was *Self-Defined*, I think was the subtitle: *The Naked I: Self-Defined*.
36 That production, I participated in as a writer and a performer because I was able to tell my own
37 story by then, two years later. During that production, my name became legal, my gender
38 pronoun became legal, and that was a real watershed for me. And that piece was called *Sailing*
39 *Upwind*, in which I drew an analogy between sailing, which I did a lot with my father when I was
40 young – we had a small sailboat and we'd sail around on Lake Winnebago near where I lived. I
41 drew an analogy between becoming yourself, evolving as a person, and the process of sailing
42 upwind. It's easy to sail with the wind, but sailing upwind requires a certain kind of process
43 because a sailboat can't sail straight into the wind. If you want to gain your course upwind, you
44 have to cross the wind and go back and forth, it's called tacking. You have to make these

1 oblique crosses back and forth, and so it's an incremental process and you take these oblique
 2 sort of tacks, you can't do directly towards your goal. I think that is a great analogy for how my
 3 life has evolved in the past . . . say five years, as I discovered who I was. I think that, for me, a lot
 4 of these changes felt very gradual, very incremental. But, for some of the people in my life, my
 5 family, these changes seemed much more abrupt than that. Because, for me, this was
 6 happening inside and I would make little outward manifestations, things that I wore and so on,
 7 but I think a lot of what was happening, for me, which felt really risky, really out there, sort of
 8 slipped by under the radar. People didn't really necessarily notice until it had already sort of
 9 progressed, in a way, to a certain kind of stage and then people suddenly felt like some of this
 10 was coming from out of the blue. We had some rocky times, my spouse and me. By the time
 11 this was happening for me, my children were already 14 and 12. I have a boy and a girl. That
 12 was tricky to navigate. Yeah, in my early days of transition, I spent a lot of time in my bathroom
 13 with the door locked looking at myself in the mirror in various outfits and wondering about
 14 them, thinking that some t-shirt with a little feminine . . . like a little feminine detail, like this, or
 15 some little shoulder that had some little gathers, a little puff sleeve – put it on and look in the
 16 mirror and thinking, "Holy crap, this is radical. If I go into the main part of the house wearing
 17 this, people are going to really . . . they're going to freak out."

18 AJ: Right.

19 FR: For a while, some of my community knew a little bit about what was happening for me, but I
 20 kept it from my family. I'd put clothes in a gym bag and end up at a coffee shop around the
 21 corner from my house and I would change clothes, like Super Woman in the phone booth. I'd go
 22 in and I'd come out in just simple femme clothing and it felt really dangerous and really risky and
 23 hugely exhilarating. I say in *Sailing Upwind* that it's so not about the clothes, but I think the
 24 outward manifestations are where a lot of us kind of begin.

25 AJ: I think that's a true statement. You mentioned that you invited your spouse to the first
 26 production of *The Naked I*. How did that interaction go and did it accomplish what you hoped it
 27 would?

28 FR: Well, it was really just the . . . it was really just like putting a seed in soil. There was no way . . .
 29 as far as planting a seed, it went exactly the way I had hoped, but I couldn't tell really. It was
 30 way too soon to tell what that was going to be. We're . . . well, I'm from a Jewish family, not
 31 adverse to conflict. Karen is from a Lutheran family, very averse to conflict – everyone is happy
 32 all the time. So, I think we largely avoid direct communication about it, as we did . . . plus, I'm
 33 sort of the Jewish, in your face kind of communication is sort of tempered with me by my
 34 Scorpio-ness, which is prone to become secretive about things. So, for a while, we did not
 35 address things very head on. Eventually, we had to begin to open up more of a dialogue and
 36 there was a lot of conflict. There were at least a couple of New Year's Eves that were really
 37 miserable. We never made it out of the house because we were having a conflict over what I
 38 was wearing.

39 AJ: You wanted to dress . . . in femme?

40 FR: Yeah, I wanted to dress all femme. I said in . . . it's a line from *Sailing Upwind* that I refer to a
 41 lot, "There's just no gradual change from pants to skirt. You can . . ." It's talking about clothing

1 again, but your neck line can go lower and you can have more of a scoop neck or pleats or
 2 gathers, tighter jeans, crops, things like that, but to go to a skirt or a dress is a huge kind of step
 3 and, for a while, especially at my . . . if we were going to my mother-in-law's house, it was a
 4 thing, we would get into a thing. She would ask me, "Just wear pants, anything with two legs
 5 will be fine." And we had some conflict about this. I have encountered some . . . I have
 6 encountered some negative reaction from family, it's not from my side of the family.
 7 Conservative, religious, suburban kind of reaction because I was . . . you would think that they
 8 would, in a way, come . . . they might have chalked it up to Freya and her artiness, because I was
 9 always, at least for them, kind of out there. "A theatre artist, what would you expect. Freya
 10 would show up wearing a . . ." They thought I was in drag, which, much later, I had to explain
 11 that this . . . that I was not in drag. But, you know, they thought that I was . . . and they would
 12 make the excuse that their children were uncomfortable and that's not really what it was. So,
 13 sadly, there's some relationships that have been, for a number of years, lost. But, everybody
 14 knows who is Freya. I expect that eventually these things will calm down.

15 AJ: Are you still partnered or married?

16 FR: Yeah, which is another interesting thing about my story is that . . . yeah, my spouse has
 17 managed to understand a certain kind of continuity about me. I think that's some of what I had
 18 written about here in my little notebook.

19 AJ: Feel free to share it, if you want.

20 FR: I will. There's a question for, I think . . . for me, for trans people, maybe, in general, just about
 21 nature versus nurture. What do you talk about . . . how far back do you go? Does that make
 22 sense? How far back do you go? Have I always been Freya somewhere in me? I would say, yes.
 23 But, in some ways, I didn't know it. I didn't know it until much later in life. There's another line
 24 from *Sailing Upwind*, someone asks me . . . these are all taken right out of things that have
 25 happened to me. Someone will ask me, "Oh, so you must always just have known, right? This
 26 must have been a thing that's just been nagging you for all these years." I'd be like, "Well, that
 27 seems to be the narrative that everybody wants you to have." Your parents would leave in the
 28 car and you were eight years old or something and as soon as the car was out of the driveway,
 29 you would run to your mother's closet and try on her slippers and her pearls or something. I'm not
 30 certain that's my story. In *Sailing Upwind*, I was using what if . . . what if that's not your story?
 31 What if you only just figured it out now when you're 40? Does that make you any less trans?
 32 No. Somehow . . . there's a continuity. You are now who you've always been and you've
 33 evolved because of all of the factors from the very beginning up until now. But, it doesn't
 34 negate the fact that you've had to make choices in the moment. Right? So, I decided, like,
 35 "Huh? I'm feeling like acting on something." And so, I did. I suppose a person . . . of course, it
 36 happens often, but you realize what these impulses are and you choose to avoid them. So, it's
 37 kind of a both/and situation. Have I always been Freya? I'm quite sure that I have. Am I really
 38 female? I'm quite sure that I am. But, did I make choices to become so? Yes. Do I feel like it's a
 39 charade or am I acting? I don't see it that way. I feel like I'm my best self now. But, I think that
 40 my spouse, going all the way back to the question, I think she's been able to find the continuity -
 41 you know, what's the same about Freya? And, realized that in many ways I'm the same person
 42 who I've always been and, in many ways, I'm better. I'm certainly happier. There's many things

1 that have calmed for me because I was able to transition. Sometimes, I feel like it's almost
2 embarrassing how happy I am. I feel kind of guilty about it sometimes because, you know, with
3 everything that is going on . . . the world is burning down in so many ways, and here I'm feeling
4 happier than I've ever felt. I guess I do feel like that kind of happiness is only good for the
5 world. I feel like I'm more connected to love, in the big sense, than I ever have been before. I
6 feel like there's a certain kind of good karma that has graced me because of that. I feel like my
7 natural daily encounters are filled with a lot of love because of that. Yeah.

8 AJ: OK. So, you guys are still married and you're raising two young people. That's awesome.

9 FR: Yes.

10 AJ: How have your children been with this transition?

11 FR: You know, like I mentioned, everyone has just kind of dealt with what's come, everyone has just
12 kind of rolled with what I've handed out. My incremental changes and eventually . . . well, there
13 again. That culminating *The Naked I* production that I talked about where I performed *Sailing*
14 *Upwind*, I was able to use that as a way to . . . I brought my family in. I think my family, Karen
15 saw that first piece that I acted in, which that first piece was about a couple who decide to dress
16 up in a way for the evening, they decide to trade genders for the evening and he dresses like she
17 and she dresses like he. So, that was a story about crossdressers. *Sailing Upwind* was not that,
18 *Sailing Upwind* was my story of transition. I was able to bring my family to that as a way to say,
19 "Here's some of the pieces that you might not know about some of the holes in the story. But,
20 my children, to their credit, I never got from them, like, "Don't drop me off at the door, drop me
21 off six blocks and I'll walk the last bit, lest any of my friends see you." There's been a little of
22 that. I got invited to a group of moms of high school boys, which I have, to get together and talk
23 about the trials of raising high school boys. There was a little bit of a question mark between my
24 spouse and me and my son and me about whether I could show up for that. For that, he said
25 no, "No, you can't show up for that." But, I don't think that's how it would go now, that was a
26 few years ago. So, everybody knows who I am, they certainly know that I'm trans, they know all
27 those things. Once in a while, early on, Sam would . . . I'd still have my old clothes in my closet
28 and Sam would say, "You know, look at this," he'd look at some suit or something, and say,
29 "Wow, I like this, you should wear that some time." And I'd say, "Sam, you know I'm not going
30 to wear that, I don't wear that anymore." So, everybody is up to speed now. I used to . . . I
31 would send little texts or something, like Emma would be at a violin lesson and I would be
32 picking her up or something, or making arrangements, and I would say, "When you refer to me,
33 be sure to use the right pronouns." She would text back, "Yeah, I'm not stupid." Like, "Yeah, I
34 know, I get it, I get it." That's because the girl is . . . at the time she was 17 and going on 25 and
35 the boy was 15 going on 14. It takes them a little longer.

36 AJ: So, to the extent that you feel comfortable, Freya, can you describe what medical interventions
37 you have undergone in your gender journey and if you have plans for future medical
38 intervention?

39 FR: Yes. I've been on hormones three years. Hormones was also something that I started and I was
40 hiding. I was hiding that I had started this and, at a certain point, I had to blurt this out. That
41 was a very difficult moment. I wish that I had been able to be completely forthcoming about

1 what my plans were and what I could see coming down the road. But, I felt like that was a
 2 decision I kind of needed to make on my own. I didn't want to negotiate about it. Besides that,
 3 I didn't want to face having to have what, of course, is a difficult conversation, a difficult . . .
 4 what? I don't know how to describe it. And, it was a rocky time. But, yeah, I've been on
 5 hormones three years. I think it's important to say that I feel very strongly that we don't need
 6 any medical intervention at all to be legitimate trans people. There's another moment from
 7 *Sailing Upwind*, someone literally said this to me, "Oh, well, so, are you planning on transitioning
 8 all the way?" I was just like, "Um, excuse me? I've been transitioned all the way, I'm quite all
 9 the way." I know exactly what they meant by that, but I shut that right down.

10 AJ: Good for you.

11 FR: I feel grateful. Like I said, I felt like in a way I sort of invented all this myself. It was happening to
 12 me and then only later did I discover, "Whoa, people know about this." I found people in the
 13 community and I was just like, "I need to talk to you. Could I please come over to your house? I
 14 need to sit in your living room and talk to you." And, people were like, "Yes, yes – come over
 15 and we will spend an evening of calling you by different pronouns." Because I was freaking out,
 16 I needed someone to find to tell. And, once I had found that, things got a lot easier. So, I think
 17 it's important to reiterate that the change happens in here and you don't need any sort of
 18 intervention if you don't want it. That said, I am investigating gender-confirmation surgery. I
 19 marched into my medical doctor's office four years ago and said, "I want you to put in my record
 20 that I have whatever you want to call it – gender-identity disorder, if that's still what they're
 21 going with. I want this in my record." He was like, "Done." He was like, "I'll change your name,
 22 I'll change your pronoun right now." I was like, "Maybe not, I don't think I want to go there just
 23 yet. But, I want this noted." And he was like, "Sure, done." And, I started . . . we did a number
 24 of things. Here's a story. My spouse and I found a group . . . I don't know if I should say the
 25 name of this group, but it was a group for couples, a support group for couples, where one of
 26 the . . .

27 AJ: Is it a secret group?

28 FR: No, but I don't know, I'm going to say something about something that happened that I didn't
 29 think was very nice in this group.

30 AJ: OK.

31 FR: Anyway, it was a group that was for couples where one of the people in the couple had
 32 transitioned or was transitioning. This was a support group, really, for the people who weren't
 33 the transitioning person. Right? It was a support for the spouses or partners of the
 34 transitioners.

35 AJ: Got it.

36 FR: It was all self-directed, there was no professional facilitator in the room. I felt like, in some
 37 ways, we were kind of in over our head because people were in some very vulnerable spots.
 38 There was one evening where I really got into some conflict with the people who were, in some
 39 ways, moderating this evening. Because they kept referring, one part of this couple kept
 40 referring to the person of the couple who had transitioned and that was someone who was

1 transitioning male to female, as being complete. What they were referring to was having
2 undergone surgery and now that they had done so, they were now complete. And, I just lost it.
3 How can you say that a person isn't complete until you've undergone this medical intervention?
4 I was just like, "Don't listen to that person. You're complete, you're complete . . . you're
5 complete. You may still be evolving but you're complete. Whether or not you have your outie
6 changed to an innie is personal preference and matters not at all to your completeness." I went
7 and I got the corroboration of my psychologist and I jumped through a bunch of hoops. I took a
8 lengthy MM-something or other . . .

9 AJ: MMPI.

10 FR: Yup, and got a bunch of letters together, getting my dossier in support of this procedure. That's
11 my plan, if I can make it work. Insurance is going to have to help. That's my next step is trying
12 to make a case with insurance who are in the business of not paying for things. They're in the
13 business of avoiding helping you, if at all possible for them.

14 AJ: Yeah, well thanks for sharing that. I really appreciate it. Looking back over your decision to
15 express your true gender identity, would you change anything?

16 FR: I think I would try to prepare my family a little sooner, maybe. I guess, in some ways, I've lived a
17 little bit of . . . you know, do something and apologize later. I think I have regret about that.
18 But, that's the main thing. I mean, I wish that I had realized sooner.

19 AJ: What have been some of the challenging aspects of expressing your true gender identity?

20 FR: Well, I used to have a more professional job than I do now. And, I feel like I have encountered a
21 bit of discrimination. It's nothing I feel like is actionable, but I feel like my starting to push the
22 envelope of gender expression was one thing that contributed to this organization's asking me
23 to leave. That's sad for me. On the other hand, I feel like it would have been much more
24 difficult in that role for me to make the changes that I did. I think it would have taken me a lot
25 longer and would have been a lot more difficult to really accomplish effectively. I think
26 energetically or karmically, there was a reason that I needed to leave that job because I needed
27 the space for myself to make those kinds of changes. That job was pretty public so when you're
28 regularly hosting events where there's hundreds of people in the room and you're at the
29 microphone and so on and so forth, transition is difficult because you're really in the public eye.

30 AJ: What did you do? What was your job?

31 FR: I was the Arts Director for a community center in St. Paul. I programmed a season of events –
32 concerts, entertainments, film.

33 AJ: So, an arts administrator?

34 FR: Yeah. I was the event planner, that sort of thing. I put together marketing materials and
35 brochures advertising these things and hosted these events. Actually, in many ways, I've come
36 around to . . . I still seize opportunities that are similar to that. Now, I got on the Transgender
37 Equity Council of the City of Minneapolis and very proud to be involved.

38 AJ: Congratulations.

- 1 FR: Thank you very much.
- 2 AJ: That's awesome.
- 3 FR: I know that you had something to do with the formation of that body.
- 4 AJ: Yeah, with the formation, but, I mean, the members are all based on your meritorious
5 applications.
- 6 FR: Well, thank you. That group is still in its beginning stages, but it's very, very thrilling for me.
7 And, I have to say, that it . . .
- 8 AJ: And, what do they do? Just to give a sense to the people who . . .
- 9 FR: Oh, well, the Transgender Equity Council is a committee set up by the City of Minneapolis as
10 really a volunteer advisory committee to the City Council on issues that affect transgender
11 people in the community, and gender non-conforming people. And, just to be a perspective
12 and, in a way, a liaison between our community and the city. And, in a way, to remind the City
13 Council that this community exists in the city and we need to be aware of them and honor their
14 needs and their presence.
- 15 AJ: Well, that's important work. Thank you for doing that.
- 16 FR: Yeah, it's really an honor for me. I am a dabbler, so I've managed to get myself involved in little
17 projects and my children play . . . they're both violinists. In fact, my daughter is now a freshman
18 at the Julliard School in New York.
- 19 AJ: That's wonderful.
- 20 FR: Thank you. They have come up playing chamber music in what's called the Artaria Chamber
21 Music School and a . . .
- 22 AJ: Artaria, can you spell that?
- 23 FR: Artaria? A-r-t-a-r-i-a. Artaria.
- 24 AJ: OK.
- 25 FR: And it's lead by a string quartet, a professional string quartet in St. Paul called the Artaria String
26 Quartet. They make a studio of student quartets, there's maybe 10 or 12 student quartets that
27 form this kind of society for learning how to play chamber music. A number of years ago, I
28 started to volunteer as the host of these recitals and I would talk about music generally and I
29 would talk about the composers . . . I'm a music aficionado and I helped bring up a couple of
30 violinists, so there's a lot of music in our house. That was some of my first return to public
31 speaking, a few years ago, as the host of these evenings as myself, as Freya. And so, that
32 community came to know me and, in a way, they kind of watched me settle into myself as the
33 host of these . . . it's been at least, I think, three seasons of three concerts a year. In fact, there's
34 another one, the fall concert for this year, is tomorrow. So, they've all . . .
- 35 AJ: And these happen at your home?

1 FR: No, these happen at a church in St. Paul.

2 AJ: Got it.

3 FR: I think four years ago, I asked, very sneakily, someone in that organization if when they get on
4 microphone and they thank me for this or that – I wasn't Freya then, I had my old name, but to
5 refer to me with a female pronoun, just to shake it up.

6 AJ: Oh, wow.

7 FR: Just to slip that in there and she was like, "OK," like, "Let's do it, let's shake it up."

8 AJ: Hmm. How did you come to your name – Freya?

9 FR: Well, you know, I wish there were a better story. I don't really like to say it because it only begs
10 the question of what my old name was sometimes. If you were Edwin and then you were
11 Edwina or something, you just say, "Well, it was a derivative of my old name," or something.
12 But, a better answer than that is that she's . . . well, Freya, is the Norse goddess of love at war,
13 which suits me.

14 AJ: You're a warrior.

15 FR: I think I'm . . . yeah.

16 AJ: A love goddess, but you said a love goddess of war.

17 FR: No, I usually say, "Freya, yes, she's the goddess of love – and war, so don't fuck with me."

18 AJ: OK, we won't fuck with you, Freya. So, we only have a few more minutes, we have hit an hour
19 already. I know you had some thoughts that you wanted to share.

20 FR: Yeah, well it was just a little bit that I wrote about . . . in a way, I touched on it because I was
21 talking about who you are now, who you were then, things like that. People who know . . . one
22 wonderful thing is that now where I work, and I really love where I work now, at the Co-op, at
23 the Lakewinds Co-op, everyone knows me. Nobody knew me from before, so all the people at
24 the Co-op, they only just met me now. So, it's not difficult for them and I hear this all the time,
25 it's not difficult for them to view me as female, to view me as Freya. They know that I'm trans,
26 but once in a while, probably every third or fourth day, somebody calls me sir or something. My
27 friends and my co-workers are like, "What? That's absurd." They can't figure it out. I say,
28 "Well, my voice is too low, my hands are too big, blah, blah, blah." And they're like, "I don't see
29 that, I don't see that because I just see Freya." And so, I just wrote this little blurb: *It's most
30 difficult to be around people who knew me from before I transitioned because they often can't,
31 or won't, view me as Freya, who I see as my best self. They see the old me dressed differently.
32 They hear my voice and ascribe it to someone they used to know. People who have come to
33 know me recently know Freya's voice and no one else's, but people who have been acquainted
34 with me for longer, sometimes think I am now what I was then. What they don't understand is I
35 was then what I am now. They can't know what has been in my heart this whole time and they
36 can only see outward manifestations. I am a woman, trans is only one adjective that describes
37 me.*

- 1 AJ: Wow, that's actually a really, really perfect place to end, Freya. Wow.
- 2 FR: Thank you.
- 3 AJ: Well, thank you so much for . . .
- 4 FR: Thank you for giving me this opportunity.
- 5 AJ: . . . being willing to participate in this project. I think it's really important that we hear from all
- 6 the voices, as many voices in our community as we can. I'm ecstatic that you were able to
- 7 participate.
- 8 FR: Thank you. I'm delighted to be part of it, I really am.
- 9 AJ: Well, until we meet again, my friend.
- 10 FR: Thank you very much.
- 11 AJ: Thank you.