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instrument, it'll hurt your ears in the beginning. Just stay with it; be patient. And when you reach the point where you like to hear yourself play, then it's all downhill from there. You just keep working.

Mr. Lauer. Maybe it's a good time for you to relate to them also. You had a music teacher in your early life who had a pretty strong impact on your life.

The President. Oh, absolutely I did. I had a—well, my high school band director, Virgil Spurlin, is still a friend of mine, still writes me to this day. My grade school band director was a man named George Grey, who had a big impact on me. My vocal—my choir teacher when I was in elementary school, I still remember vividly. Her name was Lillian Rutherford. All the kids I knew had access to choir and could be in the band if they wanted to. And I'm so glad that John Sykes and VH1 and all these people are trying to make it possible for you to do this, because it's something—you don't have to—I was not as good as Billy Joel, see, so I didn't get to be a professional musician. But I had a wonderful time. It changed my life for the better. And it still benefits me, and I still play.

President's Legacy

Mr. Lauer. I'm sure at this point in your Presidency, you have to be thinking a lot about legacy. And you look at young people in the third and fourth grade—how do you want them to be a part of your legacy?

The President. Well, I want them to have more opportunity, more educational opportunity, than they had when I became President. And I want them to grow up in a country that is a more just and decent country, where there is less discrimination and where people work together more. And I think that that will be the case. But it's really important that kids are not deprived of opportunities like music, just because of where they happen to live and whether their parents have money or not. That shouldn't be what determines this.

Mr. Lauer. Just a suggestion: You've got some free time coming up in January, and Billy, you've got a little free time. I'm thinking, you go to the garage in Chappaqua; you get a little amplifier like you used to do in high school—[*laughter*]—aggravate the neighbors, and put together a little band here.

The President. I accept.

Billy Joel. How close is the next house over, because—[*laughter*].

Mr. Lauer. Thank you so much for coming in. Billy Joel, it's always good to see you. President Clinton, nice to see you, as well.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 8:08 a.m. at the Joseph C. Lanzetta School in East Harlem. In his remarks, the President referred to John Sykes, president, VH1; and former Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr., and former Representative Lee H. Hamilton, appointed to lead a Presidential Commission to investigate possible security breaches at the Los Alamos National Laboratory. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Mr. Joel.

Interview With Rebecca Rankin of VH1 in New York City
June 16, 2000

"VH1 Save The Music"

Ms. Rankin. "VH1 Save The Music," you've been involved for a while. When did you first hear about the program, and why did it draw you?

The President. Well, I'm trying to remember whether I first heard about it from my wife or whether I read something about it. But I actually wrote a letter to John Sykes because I was so excited about what they were doing. I had been in school music when I was a young person, starting at the age of 9. And I had been really, really upset about all these schools dropping their music programs when I was Governor. And Hillary and I redid the school standards in Arkansas. We tried very hard to protect the music programs and the arts programs and the physical education programs for the people who weren't in team sports. And so I realized that all over the country these schools were under more and more financial pressure, and

they thought that maybe the path of least resistance was just to get rid of the music programs. And so here was someone trying to do something about it. I was just thrilled, and I wanted to help.

Music in the President's Life

Ms. Rankin. Very cool. Growing up—I know, I've watched a lot of tapes on you. We did "Rock and Roll President" a while back with you.

The President. Yes, in 1992. I loved it.

Ms. Rankin. Exactly. They gave me a copy of that. Music education was really important to you, obviously, growing up——

The President. Really important.

Ms. Rankin. ——and music was really important. Looking at where you are now, arguably one of the most important people on the planet, what did music education do for you, and how has it come to play in your life now?

The President. Well, first of all, it gave me an outlet for all this energy I had. It gave me a constructive way to be creative. It also taught me discipline, and it taught me that to create something beautiful required hard work and discipline. It taught me how to be—to create alone and also how to work with a group, in a band, a jazz band or a combo. And it made me happy. I mean, it just made me happy. It's such a wonderful—when I was a kid and I'd have a tough time, as long as I could play, I could always be okay. I could just be in a private place. And it fueled my imagination. And it gave me an appreciation of things in life that has stayed with me to the present day.

I can still go in my music room that Hillary built me upstairs in the White House and play for 15 or 20 minutes, and all the cares of the world go away.

Congressional Resolution on Music Education

Ms. Rankin. Very nice. So you guys have got to remember that when you're playing. Mr. Clinton said it.

Let's talk about, there was a resolution passed in Congress a few days ago, unanimous resolution, saying that music education was extremely important. Why is it so important that this was passed, and what's it going to do in the future?

The President. Well, I think it was important that it was passed because it shows that the Representatives of the people of both parties have now—are acknowledging that it's important and it's a problem because there are so many schools that don't offer it anymore. And I think it will tend to increase public awareness of this, public support for maintaining the music programs.

The President's Advisory Commission on Music and the Arts did a study a couple of years ago, and Hillary was the honorary chair of the committee. They found that local pressure, parental involvement, community involvement was the single most important factor in either keeping or restoring music programs to the schools. And so I think that's why it matters.

I think also, though, the Congress and the President have a responsibility to keep putting as much money out there to the schools to pay for their other expenses as possible—the buildings, the teachers, to have smaller classes—so the schools will have the money they need for the music programs.

But you know, there's lots and lots of research on this now which shows that if a good school music program increases academic performance, that a lot of young people learn in different ways and are dramatically stimulated by music. So that's another reason we ought to be for this. It actually will help the overall learning enterprise.

"VH1 Save The Music"

Ms. Rankin. Yes. That's an important point because I think everybody thinks of it as just an art, and it stops there——

The President. Not true.

Ms. Rankin. ——and it's culture, and it carries through.

We've had a lot of artists helping us this week with "VH1 Save The Music" week and the "Today Show." Mariah Carey was out yesterday; A.J. McLean from the Backstreet Boys; the Goo Goo Dolls. Today we have Bon Jovi playing at the "Today Show" in Rockefeller Center. Are you a Bon Jovi fan?

The President. He's great. I love Bon Jovi. I really—I think he's great. I'm a music fan of his. I like his acting. He's doing very well in the movies now. And he's a marvelous young man. He's been to the White House to visit Hillary and me on several occasions. He's really—he's a very nice man. And I'm pleased for his success, and I'm grateful that he's helping today.

Ms. Rankin. What does it say to the public to have such important sort of star power behind a program like "VH1 Save The Music?"

The President. Well, I hope that it increases the public's awareness. I hope it says, hey, this is really important. I mean, these people could all be doing something else. And I hope it says to them, if all these people who do music for a living think it's important for all our kids to have access to music, maybe it is.

New York City Schools

Ms. Rankin. All right. These guys—do you go to this school, P.S. 96?

Audience members. Yes.

Ms. Rankin. All right, so the program and what's happening with the New York City school boards and public education and music and what's going on here today—can you talk a little bit about what's being presented today and what's going to——

The President. Yes. If you look at these students here, VH1 has given them these instruments, so they're going to start a music program. Now, just a couple of years ago, this school had one of the worst performances in New York. And they've gone from having 80 percent of their kids not read at grade level to having three-quarters of their kids read at or above grade level in only 2 years. So they want this school to be one of the best schools in New York.

They have a school uniform policy, as you see, which is a very positive thing, I think. And now they want a music program. And what they know is not only will these children learn music and they'll enjoy it; it will further increase the academic performance of this school.

So I think they're all excited about it, and they're all proud of their school. Aren't you?

Audience members. Yes.

Ms. Rankin. It's just kind of exciting to have President Clinton here, too, right?

Audience members. Yes.

Ms. Rankin. Oh, yes, just a little.

Audience member. An honor.

Music in the President's Life

Ms. Rankin. An honor. A big honor.

One last thing. TV moments, music moments on television—what stands out in your mind as a huge one growing up, present day?

The President. When the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan. When Elvis Presley was on Ed Sullivan. I think those two things, when I was very young, made a big impression on me.

Ms. Rankin. Cool. All right. Thank you very much. I think you have to go back downstairs, so—[*laughter*]. These are things—I can't see what's going on, but I think my 5 minutes are up.

Thank you so much. It was such an honor.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was videotaped at 8:40 a.m. in Classroom 200 at the Joseph C. Lanzetta School (Public School 96) for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to John Sykes, president, VH1; and musician Jon Bon Jovi.

Remarks on the "VH1 Save The Music Today" Campaign in New York City

June 16, 2000

The President. Thank you very much. Good morning.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. I'd like to begin by thanking Barry Rosenblum and Time Warner; Sumner Redstone. Thank you, my long-time friend Billy Joel; and Brian McKnight, whom I admire so much. Thank you, Chancellor Levy.

I'd like to thank the student band over here from Dr. Susan McKinney Junior High School. Thank you for being here. I see Comptroller Green, President Fields, Senator; thank you all for being here.

I'd like to thank Randi Weingarten and the people from the United Federation of Teachers who are here. I don't know if any Members of the Congress are here. I think they're still voting—[*laughter*]—which is not a bad thing.

So what I would like to do now is to begin with the important things. First, my long-time