Peter Hendrickson
Interviewed by Peter Myers at the SPCO Center, January 29, 2008

Q The first few questions are basically about some of your earlier music experience. Talk about your childhood musical experience. What kind of music was there in your home, school, church, community? What were your earliest impressions of music?

A My father was a Lutheran minister, so of course I was surrounded by Lutheran chorales. In fact, one of the things that I did in the summertime – I got so enamored with these Bach chorales – that I would take the old red hymnal of the Lutheran, the Augustana Synod, and just play through all the Bach chorales. This was just totally on my own. And I was so enamored by, again, Bach, that I built a harpsichord as a shop project in high school. Got a blue ribbon on it, as a matter of fact. But I was just taken by it. And my parents were extremely musical. All five of us children were required to study piano and then another instrument of some sort. So I had music surrounding me all the time. In fact, my father never studied piano, but we had a pump organ, and he loved to just tinker around. And he opened up the hymnal to one of his favorite hymns, played it note for note perfectly, in the wrong key. He was just simply playing by ear. So we had music. And we were required to play for Christmas Eve, family kind of things. I had a trumpet solo with I was in 5th grade – I Love You Truly. I remember my legs just shaking up a storm like that. Then I started playing the church organ for my dad when I was 13. So I was surrounded by…if you want to talk about choral music specifically, it was mostly out of that hymn tradition that I kind of became acquainted with singing, so to speak.

Q What about any music in your schools growing up?

A Talk about in high school – my town was very small, so everybody did everything. I played all the sports and I sang in the choir, I played trumpet in the band, I was part of the musicals that the school had. So I had a real broad, broad cross section of music in my early life, in the high school area. I tried to quit football one year – my senior year – and I started to study the violin because I wanted to learn something about string instruments. And the town pressure was so bad, because I was the quarterback on the football team, so I felt kind of forced to go back to football. But I really wanted to study the violin at that point, and oftentimes wish I did.

Q What first attracted you to choral music?

A In high school I played trumpet and I was all-state band in high school. Then I went to Augsburg College as an undergrad, tried out for the band and my sisters just said, well why don't you try out for the chorus? Well I didn't make the band – it had such a large section of trumpets – but I did make the choir, which turned out to be sort of a wonderful experience. I worked with Lee Sateren and he, in a way, became sort of a mentor/surrogate father sort of a figure. Just sort of literally fell into it, in a way. I mean, I loved it. I loved singing. I loved music in general, whether it was piano or trumpet or singing, I loved it all. But I did sort of just fall into it. Then following college, Lee Sateren recommended me to go work with Dale Warland who at the time was at Macalester. And he always had a student who had graduated from college, assistant – assistant conductor. And I worked with Dale for two years. But that was on the recommendation,

again, of Lee Sateren. So once again, I just sort of fell into this wonderful opportunity to hang out with Dale Warland for a couple of years.

Q Talk more specifically about Sateren. What was he like and how did he help inspire you in your early years?

A Lee Sateren – if I were to describe my perception of him – was incredibly passionate and decisive about what he thought and what he believed and what he conducted. And it's sort of inspiring, because whether you liked it or not didn't matter. You just did it because he was so powerful in his description, his conducting. He was a very, very strong taskmaster. For example in the choir we did a Bach motet from memory every year. And those things are enormously hard. A lot of them double choir. But we worked a long, long time to perfect it and he just demanded it, in a sense. But he also was a wide-ranging conductor as well. That is, we did pieces in French, not just that Lutheran tradition so to speak, but he really did branch out and I'm very grateful for that. I consider him sort of a world mensch, in a sense, where he's got a world picture of himself as it relates to music.

Q Give a chronology of your career after Augsburg and include the time you spent in Germany.

A I got my undergraduate degree from Augsburg College, I worked at Macalester for two years. Then I was hot to go into music – choral music – at the time, but didn't feel quite ready. So I dropped out of music and I went to a retreat center called Holden Village in Washington and I walked into the director's office and I said, I don't want to do any music. And about a month later, I was in charge of all the music – playing the organ and conducting the choir. It was a phenomenal experience because there was a professional violinist from the Seattle Symphony that was spending a winter there and she and I went through all ten piano/violin sonatas of Beethoven, performed them. It was just amazing. And the choir was a totally pick up choir, but a lot of good musicians roll around in that place. So that was '78 to '80. Then I went to Germany and stayed there until 1984 and I studied conducting, organ and harpsichord. The most primary teacher of mine at that point was a harpsichordist named Bradford Tracy. Then I came back, in 1984, to the Twin Cities, conducted the Prairie Arts Chorale. I had an organ job as well. Prairie Arts Chorale is out is southwestern Minnesota, which is where I grew up, so I felt quite at home commuting out to Redwood Falls on Tuesday nights. Then in '86 I moved to NYC where I ultimately got my DMA from Manhattan School of Music. At the same time – sounds kind of weird – but I was working for two doctorates. One in performance – the DMA at the Manhattan School of Music – and the other was a PhD in Musicology at Columbia University. And I got ABD at that point for the…I just decided that Doctor Doctor wasn't…who cares? You can only say Doctor once. And in '89 I came back to the Twin Cities again. I was director of music and organist at Westminster Church downtown Minneapolis until '94. Then in '94 I went to Augsburg College where I'm director of choral activities. There are other musical experiences along the way. I worked with Dale again. I got advanced standing at Columbia because Dale and I put together – in the two years that I was at Macalester – an MA equivalency in choral music and Columbia accepted it. So that's kind of fun.

Q Talk about your time with Dale and how that helped to nurture your musical career.

A Well I have to say outright that Dale is probably one of the strongest influences in my musical life. There are so many things that I learned from him. Repertoire, for example, how he treated voices. He was always generous with the vocal chords, never pushing to the point where it hurt. I've seen other conductors who demand a certain quality of sound. Dale rather picked his singers, or asked them to sing in ways that was not hurtful to a voice. And I really, really appreciate that. In fact, one of the things that I am able to do at Augsburg is that I work very closely with the voice teachers and I get along with them extremely well because we have that same attitude toward the voice that I think Dale was the one that started, for me. Of course then I had an enormous number of musical experiences with Dale. I traveled to Sweden with the Dale Warland singers in 1977 – fabulous experience there. I met Esko Hamburg and Eric Ericson. They subsequently influenced me indirectly as well. Then I worked with him in the Dale Warland Singers, both by working with the symphonic chorus as well as the assistant conductor of the Dale Warland Singers for a while. Plus he's just a great guy and a good friend and I have always felt at home…he's been one of my personal champions, he's very generous with his time, his comments. We used to have breakfast once a week for those two years and we sort of commiserated about this, that and the other thing. So he's really one of the most influential and important people in my life. And what I really appreciate is that he has such high demands on his singers…I think he was influenced a lot by Robert Shaw and the Robert Shaw Chorale, which was totally professional. And I think that Dale was one of the first that really tried to elevate singers from an amateur status to a professional status. That's a really big credit to his work.

Q ….having worked with Dale all those years, what do you think were the elements that enabled him to fashion such a wonderful and definitive sound out of his chorus?

A I think Dale Warland, just in his approach to choral music, was from a very strong musical standpoint. I really think he was influenced a lot by Robert Shaw and his work with the Robert Shaw Chorale in that he wanted to elevate the singer to a professional status. They used to call them the musicians and the singers instead of all people who make music as musicians, so there was this sort of low status, low totem pole kind of thing, and he really, really pushed for that. Plus he has an incredible ear for choosing voices that will work together. I don't like the word blend. I don't personally use it because I think it has something to do with manipulation of a sound or a voice or a vocal structure. Rather I use the idea of chamber music to sing with or accommodate other people in that. And I think Dale did a lot of that both in choosing the voices but also choosing those voices that could accommodate each other, not stick out or…but he didn't use the word blend and I don't use the word blend either. I think that was a very, very important thing that he fostered here and certainly it affected me dramatically.

Q Now going back to your other comment a minute ago about MN obviously having a strong Lutheran Scandinavian tradition but there are other threads and influences in choral music. Talk about what you sometimes get from people outside of MN…what are their perceptions of MN choral music?

A I do think there's a perception in the wider community, say US particularly, that there is sort of a MN choral sound. I had one woman that moved from Texas here to the Twin Cities and wanted to find out about the MN choral sound. She was a member of my symphonic chorus – the Masterworks Chorale – and I don't think that she found anything about the MN choral tradition except just what she sort of gleaned from it. It was not any particular ilk or sound. So I think there's a misperception that all choirs from

the MN area or the upper Midwest sound alike. They don't. And I'm very grateful for that, that we have different kinds of people, different sounds. I have a very different sound, I think, or different sound perception that I try to foster. And the biggest influence on me for sound, sort of quality of sound, was Eric Ericson and the Swedish Radio Choir. I found that when I saw them in concert and he conducted…not that choral conductors aren't good conductors, but he conducted like a symphonic conductor. That is, this mass of sound and drawing on all kinds of things that was not this sort of precise little thing like this…he was gesturing big. But the sound was also symphonic in my mind – a choral symphony, so to speak – or a choral symphonic group or…I don't know how to describe that specifically, but the sound was so free, it was full-throated. I mean these were big, big voices. But they worked together and created this enormous, beautiful, rich, rich, sound. And I don't think you find that a lot in the upper Midwest. I like to think that I move in that direction; that is my real sound ideal – that sort of symphonic, full-throated…and yet accommodating each other like chamber music.

Q Many of our choruses here were formed in the period of the late '60's, early '70's – Dale got going then, Plymouth Music Series, MN Chorale. You were around the scene at that approximate time. What do you think was happening at that particular time that fostered the genesis of several of our now major choirs?

A I think that choruses were started a lot at that time because everybody, I think everybody was of a mind to create a choral ensemble that was not just a church choir. In fact it was moving out into the wider musical community, be it symphonic chorus, not just a pick up group that performs with MN Orchestra but like Kathy Romey has developed over time the official symphonic chorus of the MN Orchestra, just like…again, I hate to keep harping on Robert Shaw but that's what he did in Atlanta. He had the principal chorus, the Atlanta Symphony Chorus, as well as the Atlanta Symphony. So I think all of these people were trying to create organizations that would be similar to symphonic organizations only from a choral standpoint and again elevating or raising that perception of singer as a lesser musician, but rather including singers as well trained, hard working musicians, just like instrumentalists are, and instrumental groups are. So you see the Dale Warland Singers, Plymouth Music Series, MN Chorale, the Bach Society…it's just elevating the status of the singer to that of musician, so to speak.

Q Great point. With all the choruses in this community in particular, what do you think distinguishes the Masterworks Chorale from a number of other fine community choruses in the Twin Cities?

A I like to think that the Masterworks Chorale is capable of doing, across the board, lots of things. They could do intimate a capella choral music, they can be full-throated in the Durufle Requiem, for example. I like to think that I have some influence on them in terms of sound but also rhythmic precision. Without rhythmic precision, for example, you can't really develop nuance you know, push and pull unless you're precisely in the groove, so to speak. Particularly a piece like Durufle Requiem, which is so based on chant, which is very flexible and yet you can't be flexible unless you have an absolute rhythmic precision and then you can sort of push and pull and make things stretch. That's where nuance comes, I think. And I like to think that that's what a group like the MN Chorale or the Masterworks Chorale is able to do and can do. We've done things with MN Orchestra, we've…huge orchestras that we've worked with – Haydn Creation, Brahms Requiem, Mozart Mass in C Minor, Berlioz Requiem – lots of different large

choral/orchestral works. And yet we can still do the intimate, sort of small, smaller sound so to speak and do it well.

Q Talk about one of the most rewarding collaborations that you have been involved with, with one of your choirs and some other ensemble or ensembles.

A A couple of collaborations that I've been influenced by or really inspired by. One was early on…in fact I think I was still in, just out of college, and it was Mahler's Symphony Number Two, the Resurrection Symphony, which for me was an absolute peak experience. When that last, the dominant 13th comes in at the very end – I get goosebumps just thinking about that, and I believe it was Klaus Tennstedt that conducted that, and what a conductor. Talk about someone who's got music in his body. It just oozes out. So that's one…I didn't prepare the chorus on that. I was just part of it. But that is a peak experience for me. Then I did prepare symphonic chorus – Warland Symphonic Chorus – multiple times, but one time in particular was preparing the chorus for Robert Shaw. I remember sitting out in the first rehearsal, listening to the ensemble – both chorus and orchestra – and second movement or the segue into the Kyrie from the opening requiem – I'll tell you the hair on my head just went back like this as oh my god this wall of tension, sound and just musical integrity and again that rhythmic sort of drive and power and yet nuance and flavor. And that is…I get goosebumps thinking about that moment. I felt so lucky to be the person who had prepared the chorus for that and to be able to sit and take it in, so to speak. And Shaw was very happy afterwards.

Q What do you look for when you're auditioning singers for one of your choirs?

A I've thought about what it is I truly look for in an audition. Above all, above everything else, is ear. If they can do well with my little tonal exercises that I do, some of which include tri-tones and odd things and that, if they can pretty much nail those things I usually will take them because I know that they can…they might be a leader or they might be a follower, they may have the incredible integrity of sight reading for example. Or they may be again a follower, someone who needs help along the way but because of the ear, they can move. But I also look for I guess a spirit as well, something that will be congenial or open, willing to do the work. I don't always exclude people because of that, but I have an intuitive sense of who they are, just by how they operate and how they respond to me and I look for that. And of course I...if I were to say one more thing it is the musicianship or musicality. There are some people – both instrumentalists and singers – who can't not sing a note musically. And I just love it when I find someone like that, that even singing Amazing Grace, for example, every note is musical. I just love that. If I get that, I love it.

Q Once you've got your singers and you're on your way with your season, how do you keep singers motivated and fresh and energized week after week after week?

A Well, I'm a bit of an introvert so I have to put on an act, so to speak, and become a professional extrovert. But it's not false. And I think what I can bring to a rehearsal, for example, is just simply an energy level, a passion for every note, a passion for the music, a passion for what I can bring out of people. I consider myself as a conductor more a facilitator than I do a dictator. I want to facilitate each musician's capability to do their best at any moment in time. And I think just a lot of the work that I do is because I'm so energized by the music itself. I wouldn't choose…I don't choose music that I can't

myself find some way into and my goal, frankly – and I've heard singers tell me this, that they are able to do this – that when they leave my rehearsal they are not depleted, but energized. And that's a big task for…I consider that a big, big task for myself; to create that atmosphere with the music and the energy level to make it seem like, that was 3 hours? Wow! That went fast. And they walk out feeling, phew, great and not just tired. Vocally they may be tired, but spiritually they're not. That's my goal.

Q How do you plan an effective rehearsal? What's the process you use prior to the rehearsal and during the rehearsal to make sure that you're using the time effectively?

A In planning a rehearsal I do think about the psychology or the psyche of the singer. What are they going to be able to do and how do you set it up for them to be able to do it? So I would say I go from the known to the unknown to the known in the process of the rehearsal, and the known at the end being as energetic a piece as possible. In other words, if you set them up in the rehearsal – especially if it's a long rehearsal, like a three hour rehearsal – if I set them up with a piece that feels good or they know or they…it creates a psychological positiveness that will, I think, help them moving into something that (can't understand) or sectional rehearsals or whatever, that you can really dig into. But I think the mind gets tired at the end of rehearsal, so try to do too much new stuff or unknown at the end, you're almost defeating the purpose. So then bring something back that is a known quantity and more upbeat than not. Then people walk out with a little bit of upbeat energy, so to speak.

Q In general, talk about the difference in the roles of the professional singer and the really good volunteer singer.

A The…I don't know if there's a difference between volunteer and professional. The volunteer does it more because they want to, because it's a desire…they're not getting paid to do it. They're there because they want to, so they come in a way with an open spirit. And its not that professionals don't. But they come hungering for something. They hunger for being able to sing with a group or learning a piece of music. The professional…it could be the same way, depends on the professional. But sometimes they're a little bit more lackluster in terms of spirit or energy. And again, I'm not…I don't want to denigrate the professional singer because it can be both, I guess. Certainly what a professional can bring – if I were to hire say a professional section leader – what I look for is somewhat spirit, but I also look for quality of sound. I've experienced when I have one very, very powerful with gorgeous sound, professional singer it emanates out and everybody rises to that level, which I think is phenomenal. So I really want professional singers around me because they create a sound ideal or a sound potential that I think everybody wants to strive for. Everybody that's a singer, I believe, wants to be as good as they can be and sing as well as they can and those are inspirational people – the pros. They can inspire other people to, wow I can sound like that, too. And they really can, sometimes, which is, I think, great.

Q I couldn't agree more. How do you go about developing your concept, your philosophy of how you're going to prepare and perform a particular piece?

A In preparing a piece for a performance I think it's absolutely critical that, first of all, I'm drawn to it. It's very difficult to teach a piece when I don't have some personal connection to it. And I mean personal in terms of understanding or desire. But I think the most important thing is to get the music in my body, because it will then ooze out

through the conducting. It's just…if I can center it down here, in my heart and my belly and…it's almost like dancing in a sense. You just move automatically because the piece needs that there or demands that there or the singer needs that there. The Durufle Requiem for example has, I don't know, 400-some meter changes. It's like every other bar is a different meter. And oftentimes at those meter changes someone needs a gesture to find out, well how does that 7-8 relate to the 3-4 before? So in preparing a piece I like to think of, again, myself as a facilitator. How can I facilitate so they feel relaxed, comfortable and empowered to give me and give the audience and the music their absolute relaxed best, so to speak. So I guess if I were to say one thing, what I do in preparing a piece, I put it in my body; I get it inside. So I don't have to think about how I'm going to conduct it. It just comes out.

Q This goes back to our earlier discussion about the Lutherans…we have a great choral tradition based largely, or at least to a large degree, on the Scandinavian, German, Lutheran heritage. How have you brought other musical styles to your groups to get them to be excited and willing to explore musical styles they might not have grown up with?

A In studying musical styles, so to speak, I feel very fortunate that I had the opportunity to live in a foreign country and also travel in, I don't know, 30-some foreign countries as well. And I think what that does, or what that did for me anyway – I'll put it in the personal way – what that did for me is it made me acutely aware that other people think differently. So my task, in a way, is to how can I mesh that? I've always enjoyed working with composers and commissioning things like Steve Heitzig, Carol Barnett, Stephen Paulus I worked with in a new piece…that's been an incredible experience, in a sense. But also I see myself, I guess I see myself as a world citizen, which means that nothing to me is foreign; nothing is out of the realm of possibility. And at Augsburg, when I worked there, there's a Lutheran tradition, so to speak, comes out of the Norwegian Free Church, Lutheran Free Church, so what I've tried to do is honor the tradition and yet expand the scope. And I expand it because, frankly, I work in an educational institution and to simply pretend that this a capella group – the Augsburg Choir, for example – is creating a church service, I think is doing a disservice to the student. So I'm totally for doing all kinds of stuff. For example with the Masterworks Chorale I did a piece called, The Pilgrim, written by the Norwegian composer…I'm sorry, I forget at the moment, but the piece is about his sojourn in China I believe it was. So he wrote things with Norwegian chorales, Lutheran chorales so to speak, as well as things that were incredibly Chinese. In fact, it was for dual orchestra – symphonic orchestra like we normally have and an 8-piece Chinese orchestra with an (instrument words) – it was just an amazing combination. And frankly because I love it so much, my singers love it so much. So I think I can move into any direction. Last year we did a piece in Chinese and it was extraordinary. Fortunately I had a woman who spoke Chinese, could help us, but once again my openness to bringing in the world, so to speak, makes my singers want to do it. And here's my conviction because I think one of the questions down the line here might be that, how do you create community or how do you bring religions together, religious tolerance for example? And my philosophy in terms of that is, again, in a worldview way you don't have to believe what you sing. You're not required to if something's Christian and you're Jewish, you don't have to believe that, but you do have to put on the attitude as if I were to believe that, this is the power it would be for me. So you don't have to necessarily believe it, but you have to act as if you did believe it and perform it with that level of connection. And I think it's so important that we do that because we're such a huge world…wider than we would like to think. Part of

it's the web of course – everything's just coming together all the time. But to have the tolerance to understand another culture's beauty, so to speak, and religious thought for example, or philosophical thought, and to embrace that trying to understand that as best one can, I think is incredibly important.

Q Choral music has a capacity to bring together people of different religions or nationalities and the power to address social issues, to raise awareness of social issues, social justice issues. Can you think of a performance or situation you've been in, which has been powerful for you not only because of the sheer musical experience, but because of the social context that it may have created?

A Well first of all, I think that humans by nature are social creatures, so…and especially with singers the instrument is your body, totally your body. You can't produce sound without your entire body being engaged. Not that instrumentalists can't do that, but they have an external thing to work with whereas a musician has only his or her body. So those bodies have to connect and I think that, in a way, creates community immediately, because it's my body next to your body and we have to work together with our physical beings in order to make sound in a chorus.

I would hearken back, again, to The Pilgrim, which was a combination of Norwegian, obviously Americans, singing that stuff as well as Chinese instruments, Chinese sounds. And the audience was a cross section. It was an audience of, that included a lot of Asians – Chinese in particular – who might not necessarily come to my normal choral orchestral Master Works concert. So I saw this as an incredible mix of cultures and that's exactly what Sig (name), the composer, tried to do. That was what he intended to do. He intended to cross the cultures, use the two kinds of orchestras for example. The same thing that YoYo Ma is doing with that Silk Road project – trying to make the crossover between cultures, or among cultures frankly, and be able to, again, understand and come together, creating a different kind of social community.

Q Talk about commissioning new works. Why is it important that we continue to commission new works of choral music when we have tens of thousands of pieces already existing that we could perform for the next hundred years?

A For many, many years everything that was played – up until say 1800's, somewhere in there – it was always new music. People rarely played anything except a brand new piece. It was only with the advent of Mendelssohn's revival of the St. Matthew Passion, for example, and then harkening back in 1850's, 1860's with early music gatherings – Bruckner had one of those – where they began to look backwards at pieces and revive them. So frankly what I think is, again, we need to honor the tradition – where have we come from? And we have these people, today, who have compositional skills that need to inspire us with today's sound or today's world, today's community building – whatever they can bring out of music in their own mind. So I think its an obligation, frankly, that any musical organization needs to foster something else. Unless you're a very specific group like I'm working right now with a consortium which is totally Renaissance, early Baroque, specific kinds of performance. But if one runs the gamut of performance from 20th century way back to 16th century, I think it's really important that everybody looks to the new, as well. Also I was heavily influenced, once again, by Dale Warland who…I don't know, his Dale Warland Singers commissioned two or three hundred. I'm not sure of the exact number, but what a champion. What a champion of new music and composers and I think that elevates everybody's mind and

integrity towards new music is ok. Its great and we should have it. Doesn't mean we should ignore everything else, but that's part of our lives now.

Q How can we continue to instill a passion for singing in the younger generation?

A That's a difficult question. I think children learn by example and if we are wonderful examples – passionate about music, passionate about singing – it's going to come through. My own children have found some kind of passion – it's their own and in their own way – but they've found some kind of passion for music, certainly an understanding and a love of it. And I think they do that because of example. Their mother is professional cellist and I work in various capacities as a musician. So in a sense it's by example. Now that becomes hard in a situation like a public school, for example, that doesn't have a lot of funds for music training. But there are those people who are working their hearts out, so to speak, to inspire those kinds of people. And I think if you have passion for something, it trickles down to everyone else. It really does. And I think it's important that we, as musicians or choral conductors or whatever we want to call ourselves, that we absolutely have passion for what we do. It's going to come down. That may be a very simplistic answer, but that's what I really believe is important in a musician – is to have passion and let everybody else see it.

Q If you were mentoring an aspiring young choral conductor today, what kinds of things would you want to impart to them?

A If I were mentoring a prospective choral conductor I think there are probably three things that I would recommend or offer as my advice towards them. One is learn every gesture you possibly can. Practice all the patterns, learn how to cut off every fermata, anything you need to do physically. Just practice that, learn how to do it. The second thing is, with any piece of music – get it inside your body. Because if you have the technical tools and you have it in your body, your body will tell you what to do as a conductor. I really believe that. And I think those people who are natural conductors are the ones that it just oozes out. I think like Klaus Tennstedt for example, or even Osmo Vanska – you can tell it just exudes from his body. Or Leonard Bernstein. Oftentimes criticized for jumping around at the podium, but he couldn't not do it. I think he really had it in his body, and that just boomed through with his conducting. Then the third thing would be when you get on the podium to conduct an ensemble, is get your ego out of the way and think of yourself as a teacher, a facilitator, someone who inspires. But your job – I believe that your job up there is to let the music shine and let the players do, or the singers do, as much as they can, as powerfully as they can and let them make the music. It's a collaboration. I have to be an inspiration to them as well, but as soon as it becomes about me I thinks something is lost in the translation. In fact, I find for myself when I'm conducting, that if I'm suddenly becoming aware of myself as the conductor, that's when I screw up. That's when I make a mistake. If I think about me. If I think about the music and the players, facilitating them, I can conduct 400 meter changes in the Durufle without even thinking.

Q If you were advising a high school choral director, he or she might be wondering, how do I go about finding good repertoire that is substantial enough musically but that is vocally appropriate for the ages of the choir that I have?

A Choosing repertoire I think is a tricky task for any group. There are certain things that…for example I mentioned this Eric Ericson's multi-disc recording. He has pieces on there that I think are inaccessible to a lot – in fact probably most – choral ensembles. Like the Deutsche motet of Strauss is extremely difficult. I have not heard yet another performance of that since the 1970's. But there are some pieces on that recording that I know I can do with my Augsburg Choir, for example. So in a way you have to almost experiment some. There's all kinds of repertoire standards like for example the ACDA has different repertoire exposes – what works, what's possible. A lot of it is just listening to your neighbors. But I think also sometimes – I'm not sure about this, but I think sometimes we don't have the ability to make an analysis of something. I had a very powerful teacher when I was at Columbia named Ian Vent. He wrote the definitive article for the New Grove on analysis and the one thing that I learned from him was in looking at a piece can you find what is most important at any moment? And if you think of that in terms of your ensemble, could they master that moment? Could they pull that off? Go for it. And if they can't, take a left turn, find something else. So I don't know. It depends on the ensemble, it depends on the conductor's experience. Certainly listening to a lot of pieces, looking at repertoire. I was really lucky to work with Dale Warland who had an incredible awareness of repertoire. I still admire him for that. So there's a lot of different ways. Part of it is one's own capability to analyze a piece. Just look at it and say, can my choir function at that moment doing that particular thing? Two is to listen to other people – what are they doing out there? In a way it's almost a group collaboration to help each other find a path, for example. The stuff I've chosen for the Augsburg Choir, never been too hard yet. We didn't necessarily do something quite like I would have liked, but pulled it off.

Q I don't know if legacy is the right word but, what lesson would you like to leave with your students and with other younger singers, conductors that are coming after you that would sort of warm your heart if they took it to heart?

A I think a lot of it is related to how one lives one's life, frankly. And I would say that…first of all, passion for what you do is…you can't function without it, I don't think. And that passion will come through to other people. And I don't mean just in music. I think that whatever one does, do it passionately. You may not necessarily be convinced of it or convicted, but do it with passion, with integrity, saying if I'm going to do it I'm going to do it well. When I see people working in their field or working with their particular group and I can in a sense intuit that kind of passionate connection for their music as well as for their group – that's what I would like to see for anybody, frankly. That passion is just exuding. After all, performance is…the real definition of perform is to bring something to fruition. And you can't bring it without some kind of knowledge, and awareness, and passion and connection with your musical ensemble, which then will translate hopefully to some kind of moving experience for an audience. So passion, I guess, is the key.