

Deaconoff the Record – Fall 2019

Sarah Saxby and Jenny Paduan

In the tradition begun eons ago by the late Marshall Chatwin, we are honored to present a roast of our conductors, Cyril Deaconoff. We are calling it, “Deaconoff the Record.”

Language

In *Northern Tale*, Cyril said: “The tricky thing is, you’re singing in English but you have to sing with a Russian sound.”

On the Berlioz, Cyril said: “Our audience doesn’t speak French, but for ourselves at least it would be good to make the words more intelligible.”

As we started *O Come All Ye Faithful* just after we’d taken our break, Cyril stopped us and said: “OK, now that we’ve consumed all the cookies, they’re all chewed and swallowed, it’s much better. The ‘Eeyeh eeyeh’, the cookies were still being chewed. Can we do it again?”

Vocal production

To the Altos in *Northern Tale*, Cyril said: “Make the ‘Ah’ brighter in your face.”

Susan made so many contributions to our preparation this semester. Thank you. She also made some contributions for this presentation. Last week she said, as she warmed us up: “If you allow your jaw to drop you can’t make the ugly sound.”

Trying to get a triple-forte in *Canite Tuba*, Cyril said: “There’s lots of *screamando* in that!”

Pitch

In the *Virga Jesse*, Cyril said: “Here’s the soprano’s high A. And the basses’ low A. Somehow they have to be the same.”

On Paert, Cyril said: “Basses, that [note] was again, in the vicinity.”

On *Da Pacem Domine*, Susan said to the Altos: “Okay. Altos, there were several notes and there should be only one.”

In the *Cum Sancto* of the Rutter, Cyril said: “The tenors did their own thing, in their own time, on the wrong note.”

Tempo

After a bout with *Canite Tuba*, Cyril said: “Practice with a metronome and hope for the best.”

On *He is Born* as we approached a ritard, Susan said: “Don’t drag it down before I drag you down.”

On the last movement of the Rutter *Gloria* to the choir, Cyril said: "This is about rhythm! Something singers usually don't like."

O Rex Gloriam, Cyril said: "Basses, you're in your own tempo, not in ours..."

On *How Can I Keep from Singing*, Cyril said: "Don't just rush to the races on the La La's."

Cyril said to the Basses on the *Gloria*: "It was good on the 4/4. Why did you run away?"

Frustration

Cyril wanted the Basses to keep working on tempo on *Tomorrow Shall be my Dancing Day*. He had them tap it out over and over. He wanted to try again: "With the metronome AND the piano. Everything to the rescue."

Susan regarding the Rutter *Gloria*: "I want you to surprise Cyril when you are on and all this Brass is flying."

Cyril and Susan both inspired (implored) some competition between sections

In exasperation Cyril gave the struggling Basses an ultimatum: "Basses, do you want me to bring in the Tenor helpers or do you have your pride? You want to do it right?"

And Susan, in *O Rex Gloriam*, trying to balance volume between parts: "Sopranos, you sound beautiful, but you sound too beautiful for the rest of the group."

In *How Can I Keep From Singing*, Cyril said: "All listen to the Bass...and the Bass *has to be* right."

On the *O Rex Gloriam*, Cyril said: "Basses were a little bumpy on the Alleluia. Then sopranos came in and kind of saved you."

On *Northern Tale*, Cyril said: "Altos, that was close to perfect."

In Rutter's *Gloria*, Cyril asked the Basses to sing together with the Tenors in the fugue. David Canright asked if it was more sound he wanted. Cyril said, "Yes, and they (the Basses) have nothing to do anyway."

Cyril replied to an Alto's question on Rutter's second movement when dividing up multiple parts: "Altos have been joining the Tenors and Basses in those bars." Cyril admonished: "No. Quit them! Quit them!"

Cyril sometimes expressed himself rather creatively

In the midst of *Dancing Day*, Cyril said: "It feels like pulling a big, huge weight." (Mime pulling so very heavy, grunting.)

Also on *Dancing Day*, Cyril said: "Some people are rushing, some people are slowing. Like a cow on ice." (Mime splat with hands.)

Some of the criticisms we got from Cyril and Susan were even ... nasty

On *Canite Tuba* regarding the octave interval drop for Sopranos, Cyril said: "Down into Hell you go."

During a warm-up, Cyril said: "We need to do a few more because Sopranos are going to get really high."

Susan said to the women in a sectional: "Let's see what happens if we do it together."

Susan on the Rutter: "Tenors you've got to come in and do it."

And the one you were all waiting for:

In *O Come All Ye Faithful*, trying to get a poppish sound rather than a classical sound, Cyril said: "Sopranos, don't sound sweet. It's not sweet. It's nasty. Be nasty."

To What Sweeter Music:

What sweeter music can we bring,
And fit it is we find the tune,
And sing on pitch, a hea--venly song.

(We see him come...)

We watch him some or maybe not.
We're behind tempo, yet again,
Turning his patient smiles to glowers.

(Dark and dull nights....)

Lag--ging beats fly hence away
Or as a choir we will pay
He'll use the [metronome] and clap away.

(We see him come...)

Speed up the tempo, watch him swat.
Ooooo now we've got it, thanks a lot!
All our hard work has begun to flower.

(What sweeter music...)

What sweeter music can we bring,
to Cyril, than to sing,
In tune, in time,
Our heavenly songs!