

Deacon-Off the Record
Spring 2019
Sarah and Jenny

We're keeping the tradition to roast the conductor, which was begun by Marshall Chatwin ages ago. Unfortunately, Sarah was not able to make it tonight, but she was involved with archiving these statements, and sends her regards.

I have to say, Cyril, that you didn't put your foot in your mouth very often. Seems you were very careful not to, like maybe you were forewarned about this tradition! Fortunately, you occasionally did, and Susan did too, while holding much needed sectionals and extra Sunday rehearsals. By the way, thank you for throwing yourself into the tremendous amount of work required this semester, Susan!

Cyril was the master of understatement.

At our first rehearsal, as we ran through the Bach, Cyril said:
"Bach is not inconsiderate for the voice. It is virtuoso. It's do-able."

"Go over the words at home, whether it's ð or ó. That's it!"

"There was just one word that was not clear." Just ONE?!

To the men on the Bach:
"Yeah. Notice that place where you kinda screw up."

On the Palestrina Cyril cut us off and said:
"Let's figure out that mess that happened." To which Gayle said; "Which one?"

Also on the Palestrina, once when we ran through it Cyril said:
"The beginning obviously was a bit funny."

Susan had a few funny statements herself

On pulling out "Eternity" to sight-read through it the first time, Susan said:
"Let's see what happens to us."
Part way into it, she said:
"That's a really creepy beautiful part."

In one sectional Susan said:
"We want the Altos to do their stuff."

At times Susan was blunt. One night, she asked for all voices to sing and we didn't. She cut us off looking perplexed. When she realized only some voices sang, she said:

“Oh! That’s why it sounded so bad.”

On the Bach, at letter J, Susan said:

“Basses, you don’t have such a tough row to hoe, but it isn’t very pretty.”

At another rehearsal Susan was working on unifying our vowels:

“When I don’t see wide open ‘Duh’ mouths I get worried.

On the Sviridov Echo Chorus, Susan invited us to:

“Think high. Always think high.”

On Pushkin “Natasha” after a particularly difficult run-through Susan said:

“My advice to you is that you learn this piece. Learn the notes.”

Susan said:

“I’d like to correct what’s happening with the men at the end of the top of page 5.”

On the Sviridov “Echo”, Susan said:

“OK, let’s mess with page 39. Give me a slosh.” (Cheers!)

Cyril worked and worked with us on pronunciation and vowels. And notes.

On the Bach, he said:

“Altos, that was close. Let’s make it right.”

On the pronunciation of Ewig-keit:

“Practice the ‘A/E’ vowel. Then we can show the Bach festival how it is done.”

In the Palestrina there were all those editorial suggestions for whether a note was to be sharp or not. Poor Altos had an F# that was out, then in, then out, then in, all in one rehearsal.

On Sviridov #1 Cyril worked on our breathing:

“You are about to have a rest. Could you maybe NOT breathe there? In the middle of the word?”

On Sviridov The Echo #4 there is a part where we all *supposed* to come together and sing in unison:

“Guys. It is unison....only...it isn’t.”

And on the same one, after we butchered it for the fourth time:

“No! That is not the note! You just forced the Echo Chorus to do it again.”

Also on the Echo, when we were hopelessly ...composing:

“One more time Altos. Not too confident.”

Finally, we got to interpretation.

With a knowing smile, Cyril said:

“Natasha. It’s about some girl I know nothing about.”

On the Alleluia, Cyril instructed:

“There’s a little lift into the Loo.”

Many times Cyril wanted us to sing out fortissimo:

“There’s no need to be shy.”

On the Palestrina Kyrie:

“Each time the Basses come in, I’m waiting for the warmth of your voices. Some times it comes through, sometimes it doesn’t.”

To Sopranos on the Sviridov, on one of their wordy lines, Cyril said:

“The first part sounded, then the rest went ... somewhere.”

“The low voices are barely murky there.”

Regarding the high ratio of Altos to Tenors and Basses, Cyril said:

“We don’t have enough men.”

Laura Frank defended the Altos, “We have the quality!”

To which he replied,

“Quantity matters too. We might have to take some out.”

On the Palestrina, Cyril said:

“Your vowel has to happen on the beat. By the time you realize there’s a tempo change, I’ve been doing it for a while.”

Asking Seth to help the tenor line, Susan commented:

“Seth, you’re going to be transsexual tonight.”

I think she meant, trans-sectional! He said,

“Yes, that’s not to imply tenors are female or anything.” Oops!

Friday night, Cyril implored:

“Dress up, ladies! The guys are in fabulous tuxedos. Wear lipstick! Don’t forget it’s a performance.”

Nico has a few things to say about that!

Nico’s opera song

Then Tracy’s song